



Gender, Peacebuilding, and Reconstruction

Edited by Caroline Sweetman

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Editorial

Caroline Sweetman

The contributors to this collection examine the impact of current and past wars on women and men, and on relations between them. They go on to argue that peace and reconstruction processes need to be founded on a vision of equality between the sexes, if a sustainable peace is to come about. Looking at war and peace through the lens of gender analysis enables us to see how gender stereotypes perpetuate inequality and conflict. Women are depicted as powerless victims, or as earth mothers promoting peace. Stereotypes of men divide them into allies (who are saviours of weak and powerless women and children) or enemies (who are agents of violence and destruction). Writers here argue that conflict is justified, perpetuated, and intensified by such powerful stereotypes, which are invoked by politicians and leaders to 'sell' the idea of war. Building and sustaining peace requires us to reject these ideas. Instead, what is needed is a mature understanding of the more complex realities that such ideas conceal.

31 October 2000 was a landmark in the process of building a global legal framework to promote peace and security. On that date,

the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, calling for a gender perspective to be built into the policy and practice of reconstruction and peacebuilding. In a press release to mark the adoption of Resolution 1325, the UN summarised the three key points addressed by the resolution as follows.

First, the resolution formally recognised that there are aspects of women's and girls' experience of armed conflict which are not shared by men or boys. Gender identity affects the ways in which people are caught up in armed conflict, and what happens to them during and after it. As a result, lack of a gender analysis of the impact of conflict has led to reconstruction and peacebuilding policies which ignore the gender-specific interests and needs of women and girls. Second, the resolution asserted that the key to peaceful and harmonious societies is democratic decision-making – that is, full and equal participation in governance and all decision-making in social institutions. Peace depends on the full and equal participation of women, and all other marginalised groups, in decision making at global, national, and local levels. Only then will

there be a chance of ending the economic inequality that is so often a precursor to armed conflict. Third, Resolution 1325 recognised the need to draw on the specific skills and knowledge that arise from women's positioning in society: as mothers and carers in the family, as workers positioned on unequal terms in global and national marketplaces, and as citizens who remain distanced from decision-making forums at all levels.

In the following sections, each of these three points is discussed in more detail.

Acknowledging that conflict is a gendered experience

The first of the points recognised in Resolution 1325 deals with the recognition of the differing experiences of conflict of women and men. The resolution suggests the need for policy makers to design and implement interventions to maintain and build peace, and reconstruct post-war societies, with the realities of women's, girls', men's, and boys' experience of conflict in mind.

Obviously, all who are swept up in armed conflict find their lives torn apart by violence, but gender stereotypes suggest that women and men have totally different experiences of this. In essence, gender stereotypes depict adult men going into battle, in order to protect the women and children left in relative safety at home. But, while women's and girls' experience of conflict is indeed very different from the male experience, this is not in the way in which the stereotypes would suggest. The reality is that women are not distanced from armed conflict, in any sense.

Analyses of cultures in which armed conflict has become the normal state of affairs – for example, in apartheid-era South Africa – have shown that gender stereotypes become heightened in militarised states, in which different social groups are at odds with each other over economic resources

and/or political power. Dominant images in the media depict male fighters going to war, leaving 'their' women and children at home, 'keeping the home fires burning' (Cock 1989). Soldiers are, thus, provided with an idealised picture of a family and community whose interests must be served and protected. Women are depicted as creatures of innocence, purity, and fidelity, who nurture, comfort, and command male protection. Paradoxically, it is this polarisation of gender roles, and idealisation of family and home, that provides male fighters and their commanders with a moral justification for waging war, often not only fighting and killing 'enemy' men, but slaughtering and brutalising 'their' women and children (Brownmiller 1993).

Gender analysis of women as actors in conflict reveals a very different truth. It is a myth that women are 'angels in the house', standing somehow removed from the business of war, and untainted by complicity in it. There are many different, socially expected, roles for women to play in supporting the war effort, supplying provisions for fighters, and maintaining morale. In addition, some women exercise a degree of choice to join armed conflicts as soldiers. This is controversial for proponents of women's rights, since it is tempting to believe that women are intrinsically more likely than men to find non-violent means of conflict resolution. Could women joining an army possibly been seen as a victory over gender discrimination and stereotyping, or is the fact that women are not morally or ethically 'above' armed conflict a terrible truth which deserves to be mourned?

The answer to this question lies in the insight that individual women possess a range of interests: not only 'gender interests' which arise from their sex, but interests which arise from their class, their nationality, their age, and so on. Gender analysis, done properly, needs to cross-cut analyses of race, class, religion, and other variables, to arrive at an understanding of

the differences between particular women, as well as priorities that they may share. Women can potentially play other social roles than those of wife and motherhood. They may decide to privilege their national, ethnic, or religious identity at particular moments. For example, in many national liberation struggles women have become freedom fighters, because they perceive the goal of the struggle as the best option they have to pursue their interests, and those of their dependants. In her article, Julie Cupples discusses these complex aims and loyalties of women, in relation to the case of Contra women in Nicaragua.

As Cupples' article reveals, this insight of difference among women is critically important for policy makers. Reconstruction initiatives may be based on the naïve belief that women's shared gender interests are sufficient to eclipse all political and economic differences between them. This causes tension between the intended project beneficiaries, and unexpected outcomes for the projects. While women may wish for peace, differences between them – which often result in economic and political inequality – present a challenge which ultimately they may be unable to overcome.

In an article on the Gujarat Harmony Project, funded by CARE India and the Royal Netherlands Embassy and run by CARE in collaboration with partner organisations, Sara Ahmed records a powerful and useful story of reconstruction and bridge-building in traumatised communities torn apart by violence. In Gujarat, conflict arises from the political manipulation of religious difference. The two goals of the project are rehabilitation and the fostering of social harmony. The organisations address the economic, as well as political, aspects of conflict, in their focus on seven areas of work: livelihood restoration, social reconciliation, habitat security, psycho-social care, advocacy to promote social harmony, community education, and knowledge building and documentation.

A second myth that gender analysis of conflict is able to challenge is the idea that non-combatants – women, girls, boys, or elderly people – are safe in wartime, preserved by a chivalric code of ethics which leads men to target only enemy adult males. In spatial terms, the conflicts of modern times do not take place on battlefields far from human habitation, but in the streets of cities and border towns, while fields and pathways to rivers are strewn with landmines.

In reality, women and children, as well as men, live on contemporary battlegrounds. In ethical terms, armies often do not distinguish either enemies or allies by age or sex. Brutalised by fighting, soldiers coerce civilians to 'join the war effort': children and elderly people, as well as young and middle-aged adults; and women as well as men. Countless women, men, girls, and boys do not *choose* to take part in armed conflict, but are, at best, conscripted or, at worst, abducted. Many of them end up actually fighting. However, they are not often leaders or decision makers. As Susan McKay documents in her article in this issue, the roles played by women and children in conflict are usually subordinate to adult male 'commanders'.

Age, as well as gender identity, determines people's experience in battle. Children of both sexes are commonly used as 'cannon fodder': sent across mined land to ensure that soldiers can pass safely; or abducted, brainwashed, and forced to commit atrocities which will forever distance them from innocence. Both children – particularly girls – and adult women are used for sexual purposes: as slaves to be raped repeatedly, or 'married' to combatants, or kept, used by tens or hundreds of men, and ultimately murdered. Being female exposes one to an additional range of atrocities, since heterosexual sex involves the possibility of pregnancy. Many women and girls become the traumatised mothers of children conceived through rape; and, eventually, despised outcasts from their original homes and communities.

Those who can escape often endure journeys of hundreds or even thousands of miles in the most extreme circumstances of hunger, thirst, and terror. The lucky ones end up in relief camps and asylum centres, far from home and often made very unwelcome by the host community. As the press release marking Resolution 1325 put it: 'Members of the Council recognise that while entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict, women and girls are particularly affected....Women also constitute the majority of the world's refugees and internally displaced persons' (UN Press Release SC/6816). The interests and needs of ex-combatants and refugees in the post-conflict period are shaped by their gender identity, as was their experience of conflict.

In her article in this collection, Susan McKay highlights the failure of policy-makers charged with providing post-conflict support and rehabilitation to address the needs of women and girls caught up in conflicts in three African contexts: Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. Sexual abuse during wartime is at best a stigma and at worst a reason for complete rejection. Post-conflict support must address this. Necessary measures include counselling and support at community level to reduce the likelihood that returnees will be rejected; education, training, and financial support so that returnees can make an independent living; and medical treatment for the diseases and disabilities associated with abuse.

Building democracy as a prerequisite for sustainable peace

The second major issue addressed in Resolution 1325 is that of democracy and its relationship to peace. Peace needs democracy. If particular groups are marginalised from decision making, the resulting decisions are not owned by all. If they were well

intentioned, they are highly likely to be informed by flawed reasoning. If not, they may be deliberately discriminatory or exploitative. The unequal allocations of money, material resources, and services that result cause resentment and unrest, which inevitably generate renewed conflict and violence.

In respect of this point, the UN press release states that, in Resolution 1325, 'Members ... note that although women have begun to play an important role in conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peace-building, they are still under-represented in decision-making in regard to conflict. If women are to play an equal part in security and maintaining peace, they must be empowered politically and economically, and represented adequately at all levels of decision-making, both at the pre-conflict stage and during hostilities, as well as at the point of peacekeeping, peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction' (ibid.).

How does this point play out in practice? Democracy may be either participatory – that is, a system in which everyone in a community has an equal say in decisions affecting all or parts of the community – or representative – that is, a system in which people elect a representative to make decisions on their behalf. Participatory democracy is the goal of development projects which focus on finding solutions to conflict and inequality at the community level. Drawing on her experience of co-ordinating a UNHCR/Oxfam GB initiative in Kosovo, Agnes Kalungu-Banda considers the scope for participatory democracy offered by post-conflict reconstruction activities. She observes that post-conflict reconstruction is often funded and administered in ways which make such participation very difficult to achieve. The result is that, all too often, interventions fail to respond fully to the economic and social needs of women, men, and wider communities, or to the political imperative to foster peace between different factions.

Peacebuilding requires the prevention of future conflict, as well as work to promote healing in the wake of violence. Jasmine Whitbread and Rosemarie McNairn offer two very different articles on conflict reduction. Development work to support sustainable livelihoods can be a key to building and sustaining peace. Whitbread gives an account of her leadership of Oxfam GB's global programme on conflict reduction and discusses how this work was enriched – and rendered easier and more efficient – by taking a gender perspective. McNairn focuses on an innovative development initiative in Rwanda, in which former differences are acknowledged and present livelihood initiatives founded on this awareness. The approach involves financial support to individuals and their households, democratic decision making on use of the money, and training in conflict-resolution methods.

In contrast to the focus on participatory democracy taken in community-level development work, the goal of many internationally funded reconstruction activities is to ensure a lasting peace through promoting the participation of women and minority groups in government. Women's role in political participation and decision making is still a minor one in almost all countries, and in most of them women's role is miniscule.

In his article, Simon Harris discusses two interesting initiatives in Sri Lanka which aim to increase the participation of women in high-level decision making in the wake of armed conflict. In this context, the impact of Resolution 1325 has been felt in the sense that former adversaries are being expected to involve women in all aspects of reconstruction and peacebuilding. However, Harris argues that putting Resolution 1325 into action requires that it is itself 'owned' by Sri Lankan society; it will otherwise be perceived as an imposed condition, attached to the disbursement of international aid. For the resolution to mean something locally

and achieve the desired results, the participation of women in leadership positions needs to be supported by training and education.

Drawing on women's skills and knowledge in peace and reconstruction

Closely related to the latter point is the need to draw on the skills and knowledge of all in peace and reconstruction, if these are to be lasting. Resolution 1325 recognised that if societies are governed in a way which marginalises the views and experiences of women and girls, this carries a cost: '[D]uring times of armed conflict and the collapse of communities, the role of women is crucial in preserving social order, and as peace educators both in their families and in their societies, thereby playing an important role in fostering a culture of peace in strife-torn communities and societies' (ibid.).

In her article, Jackie Kirk argues for the particular role of education – and women teachers in particular – in post-conflict reconstruction. Building a peaceful future depends in part on ensuring that children – both boys and girls – understand how to resolve conflict without violence, and reject the gender stereotypes which so often are used to justify the unjustifiable.

Schools are often among the first community organisations to start functioning again in the post-conflict period. They offer an opportunity to ensure that the values and analysis on which society is rebuilt are true to the experience of all – including women and girls. Women teachers in particular should be 'supported to be change agents in their societies' (Kirk, this issue).

Conclusion

Integrating a gender perspective into peacebuilding and reconstruction is an essential step in the process of ensuring democratic decision making at all levels of

society. Sustainable peace requires an understanding of the ways in which our experience unites us with people who share one aspect of our identity; it also requires a lack of the fear of difference. Decision makers who invoke and manipulate gender, race, or religious stereotypes in order to justify armed conflict are gambling with the safety and security of women, men, and children throughout the world. In order to establish what the CARE project in Gujarat terms 'social harmony', people need to empathise with others who do not share all aspects of their identity. In the post 9/11 atmosphere of heightened tension and mistrust, the human rights of women, children, and other marginalised groups, and the gender stereotypes that are invoked as justifications for conflict, must be challenged with renewed energy.

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Counter-revolutionary women: gender and reconciliation in post-war Nicaragua

Julie Cupples

In Nicaragua, gender ideologies – and, in particular, discourses of motherhood – have frequently been manipulated by political forces. In the early 1990s, at the end of the civil war, Sandinista and Contra women in Waslala united to form a group which aimed to end the political polarisation within their community and promote development. Aid agencies provided funds on the understanding that both sides would work together. Discourses of reconciliation were both powerful and pervasive, offering a way of overcoming the hatred caused by war, and bringing about a sustainable peace. These discourses draw on ideas of women as mothers and peacebuilders, which are appealing to many, including women themselves. Yet these simplistic characterisations of women are a flimsy basis on which to initiate reconciliation. This is because women's gender identities do not exist in isolation, but intersect with other identities, including those derived from political allegiances. Ultimately, this led to the failure of reconciliation in Waslala.

This paper explores the efforts made by women themselves, and other actors, including donor agencies, to bring about reconciliation between Sandinista and Contra women in the 1990s in Waslala, in Nicaragua's central northern highlands. Waslala is in the north-east of Nicaragua, about 250km from the capital, Managua, and is part of the Autonomous Region of the North Atlantic (RAAN). Its location in Nicaragua's interior and its proximity to Honduras (where many of the Contra bases were located) meant that it was a zone of intense conflict during the Contra war.

My research draws on qualitative research conducted in Waslala in 1999 and 2001. The article foregrounds the experience of Contra women,¹ documented via a series of in-depth and unstructured interviews. The research focused on seven women, all of whom had fought or collaborated with the Contras.² Two were combatants, while the others were collaborators. In addition, the majority were wives or mothers of men who

fell fighting for the Contra forces. Some had also had close connections to the Somoza dictatorship, in the sense that family members were *guardias* (members of Somoza's National Guard).

The context

The war between the US-backed Contra force and the ruling Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) raged from the early 1980s. The Sandinista Front had been in power since 1979, when it had overthrown the brutal Somoza dictatorship after prolonged guerrilla struggle. The main aims of the revolution were to reverse the extreme concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a minority, through a process of revolutionary transformation.

Through the 1980s, the war seriously compromised the Sandinistas' attempts to bring about revolutionary change in Nicaragua. The government was forced, as the war intensified, to divert spending from

social programmes and into defence. It implemented an increasingly unpopular military draft, forcibly recruiting young men to fight for the Popular Sandinista Army (EPS). Despite on-going US support, the Contras were never able to defeat the Sandinistas militarily. By the end of the decade, 30,000 Nicaraguans on both sides of the conflict had been killed, and the economy was devastated. The USA imposed a trade embargo, and this, along with Sandinista economic mismanagement and a stark contrast between the lifestyles of many party officials and the difficult living conditions of the majority of the population, undermined support for the FSLN. People were tired of the military draft, food shortages, hyperinflation, and austerity.

In 1990, the Nicaraguan population voted for a new government: a centre-right coalition, the National Opposition Union (UNO), led by Violeta Chamorro. The new government came to power on a platform of national reconciliation. Chamorro is the widow of the editor of the conservative daily newspaper *La Prensa*, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, who was assassinated by the National Guard in 1978 during the Somoza dictatorship. Like many families in Nicaragua, Chamorro's family was a politically divided one. Her four children became politically prominent in Nicaragua, but on opposing sides; two were Sandinistas, while the other two were anti-Sandinista. In her electoral campaign, Violeta Chamorro consciously manipulated her identity as a reconciling mother and widow, stressing how she had managed to unite her family in spite of their political differences. The implicit suggestion was that her brand of maternal politics could reconcile and heal the entire nation (Kampwirth 1996).

It is widely believed that the vote for the Chamorro government was an overwhelmingly female one. Many women voted against the FSLN in the elections, in the hope of bringing an end to the draft and the suffering associated with war (Metoyer

2000). Although the new government promised to promote more traditional gender identities for women, and called for women to return to the home to be good wives and mothers, it also promised to end the military draft, which was of course highly appealing to women who were mothers. Many had lost sons and daughters in the Somoza dictatorship and/or the Contra war, and were anxious to avoid the recruitment of younger children into fighting forces.

'Economic stabilisation' and social unrest

Within months of the Sandinista electoral defeat, the Chamorro government began negotiating with the IMF and the World Bank. This led to the formal implementation of a series of measures to stabilise the economy, followed by a formal structural adjustment programme (SAP) in 1991. As a result of these agreements, 300,000 State employees were laid off (Green 1995), at the same time as thousands of demobilised soldiers began to seek alternative forms of employment. In addition, floods of cheap imports, as a result of rapid trade liberalisation, led to the rapid demise of small businesses (Babb 2001). Studies have shown that SAPs have a distinctly gendered impact, and, in Nicaragua as elsewhere, reductions in social services and welfare provision, and declines in formal-sector employment, have drastically increased the burdens of low-income women (Babb 2001; Metoyer 2000; Renzi and Agurto 1997).

The early 1990s were marked by widespread unrest, caused by increasing levels of unemployment and the failure of the Chamorro government to successfully reintegrate thousands of demobilised soldiers into civilian life (Close 1999). Shortly after the elections, the size of the Sandinista army was drastically reduced, and the Toncontin accords were signed

with Contra leaders, bringing about the demobilisation and disarmament of the Contra soldiers. In return for handing over their weapons, soldiers received civilian clothes, US \$50 each in cash, and a promise of land (Abu-Lughod 2000). In many ways, the ex-Contra combatants and supporters found themselves in an unenviable and ambiguous situation. While the Sandinistas had been defeated in the elections, the Contras had not won the war, nor were they being rewarded for their anti-revolutionary activities by either the new government or the United States.

The situation for many ex-Contras was one of economic desperation: many had lost their land and homes. While agrarian reform had been a significant aspect of the Sandinista programme (Abu-Lughod 2000), the Contras had never focused on land reform as a goal. Despite this history, upon demobilisation, the poor economic situation in Nicaragua led demobilised Contras demand land. Their demands came into conflict with those of owners of confiscated land who were pushing to regain property after the Sandinista electoral defeat. The US government supported the former owners of confiscated land, and the Chamorro government also, in practice, prioritised former owners in land-distribution programmes. As far as the Contras were concerned, the government's policy of reconciliation between them and the Sandinistas was somewhat contradictory. The government intended, but failed, to resettle ex-Contras in 'development poles', conceived of as areas with schools, health centres, water, electricity supplies, and land to farm. The poles were intended to be protected by a rural police force, consisting of ex-Contras.

The idea of the poles was based on an assumption that Contras and Sandinistas could not live together (Abu-Lughod 2000). Many Contras were, however, in favour of development poles, and for many it proved to be an incentive to demobilise. But a

combination of factors, including Sandinista resistance, the slow arrival of international aid, and the existence of landmines in many rural areas, meant that the government failed to keep the promises made to ex-Contras with respect to the development poles. While some areas were set aside, they were not serviced with water, electricity, or transport; consequently many ex-Contras were forced to leave for other areas.

Hard times: post-conflict life in Waslala

In the early 1990s in Waslala, a group of women from both sides of the conflict became engaged in efforts to bring about more sustainable peace, and put the horrors and trauma of war behind them. When I first met the group in 1999, they identified themselves as Mothers of the Resistance. They had formed into an organised group within a larger organisation, called the Association of Mothers and Victims of War. Unlike many Sandinista women, particularly middle-class women, who had supported the revolution out of an ideological vision and drive to create a better society, these women adopted counter-revolutionary positions not because of ideological convictions, but because of personal circumstances. Although the differences between the personal and the ideological are not always so simple, most of these women became counter-revolutionaries because of the political decisions taken by their husbands, sons, and employers.

Most of the ex-Contra women in Waslala expressed their relief at the end of the war, but this relief was tempered by the economic difficulties they had endured since 1990. One told me:

I feel happy, because when the war finished, everything came to an end. All the young men could live in their houses without worrying; they were no longer afraid that they were going

to be sent to the mountains. The draft came to an end. We were afraid of the draft, and it came to an end. Afterwards, young men could live at home, children too. But on the other hand, as you know, Nicaragua is really poor now. There is no money. That is life. There are many economic problems.

(Mercedes Hierro, 20 November 1999³)

Another said:

We are clear that [the situation] is better in the sense that that fear is over, all the fighting, but the situation is really difficult for us, for single mothers. It is hard. I have a bit of family, but I wonder what these poor mothers do to feed their children, when there are no jobs. The life we have here is very difficult.

(Norma Aguilar, 20 November 1999)

In addition to the general difficulties that women have faced as a result of economic structural adjustment, the promised benefits of demobilisation have been elusive. Although Mónica Avilés had been a combatant for four years, she missed out on demobilisation and its benefits because she had just given birth, and was unable to leave Honduras and travel to the place in Nicaragua where ex-Contras were being disarmed. She said that to demobilise would have meant giving away her child, as she could not have carried her children and her weapons back to Nicaragua. When she did return to Nicaragua, she was not even provided with transport, and had to return on foot through the mountains. The father of her children left her to go and demobilise after their return, and she did not see him again. Mónica talked about the benefits she had heard about, but missed out on:

[The ex-combatants] received seeds, clothes, food, money, shoes, kitchen utensils for women. [...] I was there four years and I still haven't had any help from anyone, and we are poor. I live on my mother's farm. I work there to meet our needs. To plant beans and corn. Because we don't have land to farm. I am still at my mum's place. We work there.

(Mónica Avilés, 21 November 1999)

For some women, whose partners and sons had been combatants, the end of the war and demobilisation had brought the hope that they might now return home. But for many of them, it brought instead the tragic confirmation of their deaths. Isabel Quezada had been told that her husband had died, but she clung on to the hope that it was a mistake, and he might still be alive. She took a job as a cook in Kubalí, a village 25 kilometres from Waslala, where ex-Contras from that area were turning up to hand over weapons.

To be sure, I went to the demobilisation in Kubalí. I went there with my kids to work in a kitchen. I spent the four months I was there working waiting to see if he came back, to find out if it was true. Then his commander told me that my husband had died, that I should stop hoping that I was going to see him again. Then he showed me the documents that they were carrying, I saw the name of his unit, and then I was sure ... there were so many demobilised soldiers there from that same area, so I realised that it was true.

(Isabel Quezada, 21 November 1999)

Discourses of reconciliation

Many ex-soldiers were unable to make the transition to peace-time life and continued to use violent means to press for political change. Some ex-Contras, as well as some ex-Sandinista soldiers, re-armed to press demands for land, training, and employment. Chamorro's time in office was marked by high rates of political violence and kidnappings, with re-armed groups operating throughout the countryside. These re-armed groups became known as *recompas* (re-armed Sandinistas) and *recontras* (re-armed Contras). However, some re-armed groups were composed of former soldiers from both sides. In spite of their differing political sympathies, demobilised Contras and Sandinistas who were similarly affected by the economic problems caused by neo-liberal policies

found common ground and fought together as *revueltos*, groups made up of a combination of *recompas* and *recontras*.

In contrast, others were motivated by the calls for peace and reconciliation. The end of the war brought hopes that political differences could be put aside to prevent further violent conflict in Nicaragua. As Cynthia Cockburn (2001) has argued, hatred is the strongest survivor of war, and processes of reconciliation are important for social healing. Not long after the electoral defeat, a number of ex-Contra and ex-EPS joined forces with the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG) to create a national coalition known as the Coordinadora Nacional Campesina (Wright 1995).

As stated, most of my interviewees in Waslala had lost sons or partners in the war, and all were economically devastated by it. Yet, in the interests of improving economic well-being and ending the polarisation in their communities, women in Waslala from both sides of the conflict tried to put the past behind them and unite in their political demands. Sandinista and Contra women initially found common ground in the difficulties both groups were encountering when trying to secure from the Institute of Social Security the war pensions to which they were entitled. The procedure for obtaining a pension was proving to be extremely difficult, and many women were becoming entangled in bureaucratic complications with the government department. Some of them realised that their struggle to obtain pensions would be more effective if they pressured the government jointly.

Joint work for reconciliation and development

The joint effort in Waslala led to the formation of a Mothers' Committee, consisting of two Resistance women and three Sandinista women. Isabel Quezada was part of this committee. From the beginning, the committee talked of the need for reconciliation:

We began to see how many of them were in pain, as we were. It is true that my husband went to war and died, but their husbands had died in this way too. It was the same pain, and so we agreed that we had to diminish this hatred, and we began to work in the organisation.

(Isabel Quezada, 21 November 1999).

However, the hatred and resentment created by the war were not easily overcome, and not all of the women were in favour of unity and reconciliation. For many, the hatred and trauma created by years of conflict could not simply be put aside. Isabel was heavily criticised by other women of the Resistance for her involvement in the committee; they accused her of being a *revuelta*. She even received death threats for her association with Sandinista women.

Working together for development goals

Despite these difficulties, by 1993 the organisation had become part of a National Commission of Reconciliation, and had managed to secure funding from international agencies for a number of development projects. Many of my informants were beneficiaries of these projects. Sandinista and Resistance women were jointly organised in a self-help housing project, known as El Progreso, which built 26 houses for Mothers of the Resistance, and 26 houses for Sandinista women. Unlike the development poles, El Progreso had an aim of creating a mixed community in peaceful co-existence. The rationale was that it would bring the two communities together, as well as resolving housing needs. The *barrio* was inaugurated by President Violeta Chamorro. Isabel Quezada stated:

So when we joined our organisations, we set up a housing project. I managed to include 26 women of the Resistance as beneficiaries. In the same project, there were also 26 Sandinista mothers, and they all live together in the same barrio. Then I also managed to set up a crèche

for the children of the barrio. [...] But it was difficult, because we women feel hatred towards the other women, because they were the wives of compas, and we were wives of counter-revolutionaries. But I kept talking to them. But it was really hard. Once they understood when I first brought them together, they didn't want to talk to the other mothers. But not any more; if one of them runs out of salt, the other lends her some. It is nice, and the 52 women celebrated their homes in the presence of Doña Violeta, we persuaded her to come. And she thought the project was very nice.

(Isabel Quezada, 21 November 1999)

Despite successfully providing 52 women with houses, the project received little support from the local government. Roads through the *barrio* had not been provided, so the streets filled with mud when it rained, and the inhabitants had to tap illegally into the electricity supply.

A number of Sandinista and Resistance women jointly created a construction co-operative in which beneficiaries learned to make bricks and build latrines. Subsequently, the organisation received funding from a German agency to purchase a house in which they could run an office and hold meetings, workshops, and courses. Once they had purchased the house, other initiatives followed, including a revolving credit fund, the provision of art classes for street children, and training courses for women with disabilities in beauty therapy, floristry, bakery, and dressmaking.

Although these achievements are impressive, they depended upon significant amounts of persuasion. The need for aid for housing and sources of employment was inseparable from the issue of reconciliation. Isabel continually had to stress the importance of working together to secure funding for projects, because funding would be provided only if working together was demonstrated. Emphasising women's identities as mothers and widows, and their common experience as mothers who had suffered because of the war, was a way of overcoming economic hardship.

I said to them, 'If we don't make up with those women, and don't talk to those women, we are not going to get the houses. Do you need houses?' 'Yes.' 'Well then, let's drop all the hatred and resentment, because the war is over. We all lost, all our children have lost their fathers, we have all lost sons, but you don't know who killed my husband, and I don't know who killed yours. So if we are going to make progress, let's forget it all and live in peace.' There was so much crying, one was crying, the other was crying. But they are grateful to me, because we would never have achieved anything if it hadn't been for that kind of reconciliation. We wouldn't have achieved anything. None of the projects that we set up would ever have been achieved.

(Isabel Quezada, 21 November 1999)

Building peace in the next generation

This reconciliation was not only a conscious attempt to gain resources, however; women also focused on their children, wishing through genuine reconciliation to prevent their growing up feeling the same resentment towards others that their mothers had felt. By focusing on the next generation, discourses of reconciliation became powerful and persuasive.

We have to concentrate on our children who are growing up. Even with my two sons, I mustn't tell them to hate the compas, or to hate the children of the other Sandinista mothers. As a mother of the Resistance, I have my two sons and I am going to give them the example that I created. That we made up with the mothers, that mostly we are not to blame for the war, we weren't in agreement with our husbands going to war, and especially not our children, because our children are fragments of our lives. If they see that we are filled with hatred, they'll grow up with that hatred. I could say to my sons 'Don't play with the kids of that other Sandinista mother, because they are enemies of ours because they killed your dad.' But I don't know if her husband killed my husband, and she doesn't know if my husband killed hers, these were the conflicts of wartime

combat. So for me the most important thing is that the children of mothers and widows of the Resistance and of the Sandinistas love each other, that they play together, that they are never going to have this hatred which comes from the death of relatives, their fathers, uncles, mothers, because there are also mothers who died in the war.

(Isabel Quezada, 21 November 1999)

The failure of reconciliation

However, despite the strength of the joint organisation, the power of the discourse of reconciliation, and its success in attracting funds for development projects, reconciliation did not last. Ultimately, the Sandinista and the Contra women once again separated into two different organisations. This separation occurred despite much of the aid having been received on condition that they worked together, and the fact that many of the members of the organisation lived together in El Progreso and were obliged to co-exist on a daily basis.

While Isabel reproduced discourses of reconciliation beautifully, as the quotations cited above demonstrate, closer probing revealed far more conflicting responses. According to Isabel, the Sandinista women took over the house that was purchased, and the Resistance women were no longer able to use it. Isabel said:

However, in the Mothers' Association, they never even gave me a job. After I did everything for them, they have never given me a job. There are some women who earn \$115, \$120 in the association that I founded. But they haven't given me a job at all. Or in the women's co-operative, in none of the projects have I ever been considered for employment. They have totally isolated me, it has become just a Sandinista organisation. With our signatures, our efforts, we achieved it all, but now they are the only ones there. [...] So we have a separate organisation once again. The organisation of the Resistance is separate. And that is not a good thing. They conducted campaigns just to nominate Sandinista women

for the assembly. We didn't realise what they were up to, so when it came to the assembly, only those that were on the list had a say. That is what they did to us. So they have taken over the organisation that I put so much effort into. I am the founder of the organisation, of the Mothers' Association. It is because of me that they have all that, and they wouldn't give me a job. There are just Sandinista mothers there. And when the aid agency comes, they tell them that we are also beneficiaries, but it is not true. And I have never earned a penny. In the committee, there are only Sandinista mothers, there is not a single mother from the Resistance.

(Isabel Quezada, 21 November 1999)

Why does reconciliation between women fail?

The work of Marie Mulholland (2001) with women in Northern Ireland has shown that Protestant and Catholic women have been able to collaborate successfully across the political divide. Solidarity was forged in this context in order to ensure that gender equality would be a central component of the peace process and any settlement. Women achieved this solidarity by emphasising their common gender identities as mothers, wives, and widows, and their common experiences of discrimination and inequality, rather than their 'political identities' or allegiances.

Women in Waslala attempted to achieve reconciliation in a similar manner, by focusing on their common difficulties as mothers and widows. However, in Waslala, reconciliation collapsed because of the impossibility in Nicaragua of separating the gender identities of motherhood and widowhood from political allegiances. These gender identities have been manipulated in Nicaragua by political forces on the Left and the Right.⁴

In addition, friendships and solidarity between women are often difficult in

Nicaragua, since it is a cultural context in which dominant expressions of masculinity in the form of *machismo*, and the prevalence of both serial polygamy and paternal irresponsibility, encourage women to see each other as rivals and competitors for scarce resources, rather than friends. Evelyn Hernández, who lived at El Progreso, described her relationship with another woman as being 'like sisters', but in fact she did not have close friendships with other women in the *barrio*. She told me one day: 'When people come from elsewhere like you, we share friendship. But we are different, we don't really like each other' (interview, Evelyn Hernández, 22 May 2001).

If friendships with other women are difficult in Nicaragua, they are even more unlikely when they are complicated by political resentment. Through the war, women's identities as mothers became entrenched in politics, and, despite moves towards reconciliation between women, these identities have been strengthened since 1990. Ironically, this is perhaps because it has been possible to openly assume a Contra/Resistance identity only since 1990; it would have been too dangerous to do so in the 1980s. Consequently, moving away from conflict and towards peace has paradoxically further politicised gender identities and perpetuated ideas of conflict and irreconcilability of views.

More than a decade after the end of the war, anti-Sandinista feeling persists among many of the Contra women, despite the common experience of economic hardship which cuts across women's political identities. Luz Marina Castillo compared the difficult economic situation to an ongoing war, which she called the *guerra de hambre* and the *guerra de medicinas*, 'the hunger war' and 'the medicine war'. She perceived these 'wars' as a Sandinista legacy, despite popular understanding of neo-liberalism in Nicaragua and the role of the IMF in determining the economic path that the country has taken. Luz Marina did not relate Nicaragua's economic situation to the

economic model, but tended to blame the FSLN, rather than the USA or the IMF, for all of Nicaragua's current problems. This blame easily translated into resentment towards individual Sandinista women.

Ironically, Luz Marina was critical of her Sandinista neighbours at El Progreso who seemed to making progress, such as the Sandinista woman whose garden was overflowing with corn and yucca that she had planted. According to Luz Marina, this woman had *una boca como una ráfaga de balas* ('a mouth like a burst of gunfire'). Memories of the war and political upheaval remain; they seem hard, or impossible, to forget. Luz Marina Castillo had extremely negative and persistent memories of the revolution and the war. She told me she had worked as a domestic servant for one of Somoza's colonels in the 1970s, and was imprisoned and tortured by the Sandinistas after the triumph of the revolution in 1979. They confiscated all her possessions, including money and jewellery, before she was released. She had never forgiven the Sandinistas for this experience.

The persistence of anti-Sandinista sentiment was augmented also by fear of the Sandinistas, and the possibility that they might return to power. Norma Aguilar, who lost her two oldest sons after they were recruited by the FSLN to fight in the EPS, was fearful for the next two, who were too young to have been recruited in the 1980s but had now grown up. The Sandinistas lost the general elections in November 2001, but at the time of interviews earlier that year, a Sandinista victory seemed likely. Norma saw a possibility that military service might be reinstated by a Sandinista government.

Conclusion

It is clear that the implementation of structural adjustment in a post-war country has made reconstruction and reconciliation in Nicaragua difficult. The war is over, but violence continues to be manifest in daily life – what Luz Marina

called the 'hunger war' and the 'medicine war'. Although the poverty created by both war and structural adjustment provided important motivations for reconciliation, there is no doubt that the dynamics of structural adjustment undermined women's attempts to bring about sustainable peace and went some way to account for the failure of reconciliation. The reconciliation work took place in a political and economic context in which there are limited employment opportunities, on-going struggles for land, unacceptable levels of malnutrition, and growing crime and delinquency. In the war, women lost family members and livelihoods, and suffered varying degrees of political repression. The development initiatives created through the joint efforts of Contra and Sandinista women have addressed the needs of a small number of women for training, employment, and housing. However, these benefits were extremely limited, and my participants felt that some of them had not been fairly distributed to Contra women.

Discourses of reconciliation on the part of the government and the aid agencies appealed to many women in Nicaragua in the early 1990s. They draw upon powerful cultural identities created by dominant social understandings of motherhood and widowhood. In addition, despite different interpretations and experiences of what it means to be a mother or widow, women in Waslala themselves strategically drew upon crude, simplistic stereotypes, since there was a good reason for doing so. They employ a language of victimhood, based on Catholic images of suffering motherhood, both to name their organisation and to seek funds. Gender identities – in particular, motherhood and its connotations of sacrifice and nurturing – can enable women to attempt reconciliation with former 'enemies'. Reconciliation in Waslala was built on understandings of women's common suffering in war as wives and mothers, as well as women's ability to make and nurture peace.

Yet women's experience of motherhood, widowhood, and other gendered roles is socially constructed and historically produced. In particular, ideas of motherhood and widowhood are subject to constant renegotiation in times of hardship, social change, or political upheaval. The tensions between competing identities, and the tendency for women to draw upon essentialist understandings of womanhood because they are appealing, at the same time as rejecting them as excessively confining, made reconciliation initiatives in Waslala highly complex and contradictory. Motherhood, widowhood, and other gendered identities of women are simultaneously powerful and tenuous as a basis for reconciliation or subsequent political action or development initiatives.

Women in Waslala could not put aside the animosity created by years of warfare simply because they were all mothers or widows. The resulting projects required women to co-exist and work together as if no differences existed between them, in the office, in the housing project, and in the co-operative. Aid was given on the condition that they would live and work together. But gender inequality and political polarisation intersected in a way which made lasting reconciliation an impossibility. The war, the revolution, and post-war circumstances had led women to think of their gender identities as inherently bound up with their political allegiances. The failure of reconciliation was further fuelled by the difficulty experienced by Waslala women in forming friendships with other women, because of the ways in which constructions of masculinity and femininity embedded in society tend to create antagonisms between women. Bitterness and resentment have prevailed, because the process actually intensified political differences. In many ways, the wartime identities of women in Waslala have become entrenched as their identity as mothers has been used to promote discourses of reconciliation.

Aid agencies and governments need to think very carefully before implementing initiatives for post-conflict reconciliation which invoke solidarity and reconciliation among women on the basis of shared identities and experiences. These discourses present women exclusively as mothers and widows, ignoring their political differences. In an attempt to foster peace and reconciliation, aid agencies have unwittingly reinforced, and further polarised, separate political identities.

In conclusion, there was also evidence of openness among women to the idea of working in ways that would be less politically confining (Cupples 2002). While discussion of this evidence is beyond the scope of this paper and will be dealt with in a forthcoming article, there is clear evidence that counter-revolutionary women are open to political forms of organisation, such as working in co-operatives, that can be considered to be legacies of the revolution. Many of these women have experienced significant personal transformations since the deaths of their husbands; they believe that they have been empowered through their experience of political organisation. Indeed, they express a high degree of feminist awareness. They are now highly critical of the *machismo* of their deceased husbands and of local political leaders, and are committed to struggles for greater gender equality.

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Notes

- 1 This contrasts with most research on gender and conflict in Nicaragua, which has focused on the experiences of Sandinista women (although see Kampwirth 2001).

- 2 The Nicaraguan Resistance was the term used by the Contra to refer to themselves.
- 3 The names of all informants quoted in this paper are pseudonyms.
- 4 Discourses of motherhood were used by the Somoza dictatorship to confine women to particular types of debate, and were also used during the Sandinista revolution to encourage women to produce more children for the revolutionary cause (and to sacrifice them to it). These pro-natalist discourses often clashed with revolutionary notions of women as combatants.

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Reconstructing fragile lives: girls' social reintegration in northern Uganda and Sierra Leone

Susan McKay

In many contemporary African wars, girls and women participate in fighting forces. Their involvement is sometimes voluntary, but often they are coerced or abducted. In these forces, their roles range from porters, domestics, and 'wives' of male fighters, to spies and commanders. Few girls go through official UN processes of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR). Their human rights severely violated, girls face enormous challenges to physical and psycho-social recovery. Typically, they return directly to their communities, or migrate to where friends or relatives live, or resettle in urban areas, where they are at increased risk of forced prostitution, sexual assault, and/or sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. This paper examines the experiences of girls who have returned from fighting forces in the recent conflict in Sierra Leone and the continuing conflict in northern Uganda. These experiences are compared with those of women who recalled their experiences when they were girl participants during the Mozambican war which ended in 1992.

In this paper, my focus is girls. They, together with the intersecting categories of orphans and disabled children, are among the most vulnerable in post-war contexts. I analyse gendered issues of post-conflict reconstruction, with reference to the situation of girls in northern Uganda and Sierra Leone. In northern Uganda, war has raged from 1986 to the present. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continues to abduct children and perpetrate atrocities against the Acholi people. During the war in Sierra Leone, from 1991 to 2002, widespread abduction of children into the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel force occurred, and girls and boys also participated in civilian militias and pro-government forces.

Gender and post-war reconstruction

As argued by Cynthia Enloe, the end of a war is 'crowded with gendered decisions' (Enloe 1993: 261). Few, if any, of these decisions

benefit girls and women, because nationalistic loyalties are more valued than notions of gender equality (McKay 1998). Thus concerns about post-conflict construction override interest in promoting women's equal status and opportunities within a society. Consequently, gender relationships in post-war contexts tend to reinforce traditional patterns, rather than new roles that girls and women may have adopted during armed conflict. At community level, at the level of the institutions which distribute resources, and at the level of national policy formulation, women and girls are usually rendered invisible or are, at best, marginalised by being perceived only as leaders and facilitators of cultural and social reconstruction.

In the post-conflict period, communities play key roles in social and cultural reconstruction, and community support is essential for ensuring girls' human rights and security. Unfortunately, communities typically are low on the priority lists of governments and donors when they are

planning reconstruction. Most must rely upon their own meagre resources to cope with changes wrought by war (McKay and Mazurana 2004). Also, the policies and programmes of international funding agencies typically concentrate upon reconstruction of physical, political, educational, and economic infrastructures, not people's lives. While rebuilding infrastructures is crucial, these initiatives must occur in tandem with developing community capacity, and enhancing collective human security (Commission on Human Security 2003; McKay 2004; UN 2002).

Because girls and women bear heavy responsibilities for rebuilding social and cultural infrastructures and are significantly affected by post-war decisions, they must be publicly recognised and empowered as key actors, wherever reconstruction policies are developed. Yet, asking girls and women for their views on how post-war reconstruction should be planned and implemented is almost never a part of local, national, regional, or international agendas (McKay 1998). Further, their specific interests are seldom acknowledged in peace accords, even when newly created constitutions guarantee equal rights (Anderlini 2000).

A snapshot of girls' reintegration

More than a decade ago in Mozambique, and more recently in Sierra Leone, children were returning from time spent with fighting forces, especially rebel factions — as they are doing at present in northern Uganda. Regardless of whether they reintegrate within rural or urban communities, they return with memories of terror and day-to-day suffering (Derluyn et al. 2004). Many fare poorly, and face dismal futures. The residue of past hardships is evidenced in fragile bodies and minds, which experience persistent pain from injuries, physical deformities, and diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and parasites (McKay and Mazurana 2004).

Girls often return from a fighting force with children born as a result of forced

sexual relations. The presence of these 'war babies' can worsen their situations, because these girl mothers and their children are often subject to resentment, due to the children's unknown paternity, or because their fathers are known to be rebels (Carpenter 2000; McKay and Mazurana 2004). Returning is particularly difficult when one or both of a girl's parents — especially her mother — are dead, or her community has been destroyed.

Some girls are unable to reintegrate, for various reasons, and find themselves in an untenable situation. They may migrate to an urban setting, in hopes of escaping and finding a means of economic survival. Some, such as the so-called 'night commuters' in present-day northern Uganda, leave their rural communities each evening at dusk and travel to a nearby city to sleep, in hopes of gaining some protection (Human Rights Watch 2003). Few, if any, of the benefits of political, economic, and social reconstruction trickle down to improve the lives of these girls.

In towns, as occurs presently in northern Uganda, some girl mothers live together to conserve scarce resources and help each other with child care (McKay et al. 2004; McKay and Mazurana 2004; Save the Children Denmark 2003). A study of 20 girls who returned from the LRA to stay at Gusco rehabilitation centre in northern Uganda concluded that five of the eight girl mothers preferred living in town because they felt that their home community was not safe enough for them, or they worried about being re-abducted (Save the Children 2003).

Mozambique: the context twelve years after war

An overview of the present-day situation in Mozambique provides an example of the realities of social reconstruction in a country where the war (from 1976 to 1992) ended more than a decade ago. Today, people struggle to survive against odds that are

lengthened by illiteracy, lack of job skills, missed opportunities for schooling, an impoverished infrastructure, and inadequate access to health care and clean water. Infant and maternal mortality rates are high. Between 1985 and 2001, in Mozambique the estimated maternal mortality rate per 100,000 births was 1,100. In 2001, 125 infants died per 1,000 births, and 197 children per 1,000 died before the age of five years (McKay and Mazurana 2004). Compounding the damage wrought by the war, heavy flooding from 2000 to 2001 increased the danger from unexploded landmines and other buried explosives, because floodwaters dispersed them downstream. Flooding also exacerbated problems of unsafe water, poor sanitation, and disease (Wareham 2000; World Health Organization 2001).

For women in Mozambique, cultural rules and formal law limit their development and maintain their subordinate status (National Human Development Report 2001). Large numbers of women head households (South African Research and Documentation Centre 2000). In recent years, HIV/AIDS has become an increasing threat, further jeopardising girls' and women's futures (*ibid.*).

Girls in FRELIMO and RENAMO forces

Although their presence was generally denied, significant numbers of girls participated in both the FRELIMO government force and the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) force. From 1975, girls were recruited by FRELIMO; others were press-ganged into service. In RENAMO, girls came predominantly from rural families, and were conscripted or kidnapped. Some joined or were press-ganged (McKay and Mazurana 2004). In these forces, girls were fighters, spies, domestic servants, medics, and, in RENAMO, the 'wives' of captor-husbands.

With the exception of a limited number of young women who were officially demobilised from the FRELIMO government force, girls did not participate in

official demobilisation processes, and only boys took part in programmes to rehabilitate child soldiers (McKay and Mazurana 2004). This was consonant with the fact that the use of girls in fighting forces had been widely dismissed and denied by both forces. For the most part, girls and women in RENAMO returned to their families after the war, although some went to urban areas or to the villages of their rebel-captor 'husbands'.

It seems that many of today's young women in Mozambique believe that they wasted their childhood and potential. Abubacar Sultan, presently with UNICEF in Angola but previously an NGO worker in Mozambique, said in an interview that he thought that those disabled during the war had even stronger feelings (Abubacar Sultan, interview in Maputo, Mozambique, 3 October 2001). Their human rights were violated, and nothing has been done to seek justice on their behalf. Because they lack resources, few of their children have been educated, thereby contributing to the continuation of poverty. Communities seldom benefited from outside assistance during the slow process of healing and rebuilding.

Girls in fighting forces

In many contemporary wars, as in Mozambique, girls participate in fighting forces. Between 1990 and 2003, girls were part of fighting forces in 55 countries throughout the world, and involved in armed conflicts (all civil wars) in 38 of them. The 14 African countries where girls were or still are present in government forces, paramilitaries, militias, or armed opposition groups include Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, and Uganda. In all but Libya, girls participated in armed conflicts. With the exception of Eritrea and Libya, girls were

abducted into forces as a major entry route (McKay and Mazurana 2004).

Girls' entry into forces

Each conflict has its unique and complicated history, and the uses and roles of girls within fighting forces in any country also have distinct patterns. Depending upon the context, girls enter fighting forces through recruitment, joining, abduction, being born of mothers who are in a force, or because they leave home to escape abuse (McKay and Mazurana 2004). In Africa, the predominant – although not exclusive – pattern has been for girls to be abducted or coerced into forces, either being taken from their homes and communities, or being forcibly recruited in a school setting (McKay and Mazurana 2004).

Whether girls freely choose to join a fighting force is a contested point, since joining may appear to be voluntary in some cases; but it may in reality be their only hope for survival. For example, Paez (2002) found that girls in Colombia joined the armed conflict there to flee or find an alternative to maltreatment, sexual abuse, overwork, or domestic violence at home. In Eritrea, although many girls and women wanted to be liberation fighters, some joined because they wanted to escape arranged marriages, or get out of bad marriages (Barth 2002).

Girls' roles

Girls play differing roles, according to their age and the length of time they spend in a force. Fighting forces depend upon girls and women to provide essential services such as carrying water, food production, finding food, cooking, and washing clothes. Contrary to the widespread portrayal of girls exclusively as 'wives' of captor husbands and sexual slaves, this is not the only role that girls play. Many play multi-faceted roles: some girls in Sierra Leone who were forced to be 'wives' of commanders eventually gained authority within a force. It seems that the majority, except for very young girls, are trained in how to cock and

load a gun. Many girls – particularly the older ones – participate as fighters who loot, commit atrocities, and kill. They are first-aid workers, spies, and porters; they train fighters, hold command positions, serve in intelligence and communications functions, and act as messengers. When a force attacks or loots, girls may be sent to sweep mine-fields or serve in forward ranks. In some countries, girls are suicide bombers. Because of their many possible roles and their value in supporting the functioning of a force, girls may be the last to be released, even when disarmament and demobilisation are underway.

Girls' experiences

Like boys, girls endure great hardships, deprivation of adequate food, shelter, health care, and education. In wars such as those in northern Uganda and Sierra Leone, large numbers of girls became ill, or disabled, and/or died. They travelled long distances and often slept in the bush. Girl mothers carried babies on their backs during battles, with babies sometimes drugged to keep them sedated.

Almost universally, these girls were brutally subjected to forced sexual relations, sometimes by many perpetrators within a single day. In Sierra Leone, girls had the letters 'RUF' tattooed on their bodies, often across their breasts. Some were given contraceptives in the bush that were obtained during raids on medical clinics. Girls resorted to self-induced abortions, using herbs or other methods, and many died during pregnancy or childbirth because of lack of care or difficult circumstances. Depending on the context, pregnancy could potentially give a girl a measure of protection from gender-based violence – for example, from her captor 'husband'. Conversely, pregnancy might increase girls' vulnerability to gender-based violence, for instance when abortions were forced, or pregnant girls' foetuses were cut from their bodies.

Some girls escape a fighting force before the war ends, as occurred in Sierra Leone,

and currently in northern Uganda. Isatu, a six-year-old deaf girl, is an example of a Sierra Leonean girl who escaped from the RUF. When her mother was away on a visit in a nearby town, Isatu was abducted from her home in Kono. She remained in the RUF for three years. Her role was to take care of younger children and run errands for breast-feeding mothers. One day, she travelled with her captors to a market across the border in Guinea, where she hid and escaped. Later, when she was walking along a road by herself, crying, a Sierra Leonean woman stopped to assist her. Isatu went to this woman's home in Makeni, lives there now, and attends a school for hearing-impaired children. Isatu's father is dead, and she has not seen her mother since she was abducted (Sierra Leone, interview, 6 June 2002).

Disarmament and demobilisation

Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration Programmes (DDR) are intended to demobilise soldiers, remove guns from circulation, and enable ex-combatants to return to civilian life. In Mozambique, as in other places, DDR has been overwhelmingly aimed at boys and men, who are perceived to be the key actors within a force. In this respect, DDR programmes reflect funding priorities informed by conventional views of gender roles, which understand war as armed conflict between males. In Sierra Leone also, relatively few girls were demobilised under DDR programmes because of a gender-discriminatory framework which saw girls and women only as 'sex slaves', 'wives', and 'camp followers'; they were therefore not viewed as appropriate recipients of DDR benefits, such as skills training or schooling (McKay and Mazurana 2004). A total of 6,052 boys and men – 92 per cent of the total – participated in Sierra Leone's DDR, in contrast to only 506 girls and women. Most girls in Sierra Leone did not know that DDR existed. The majority went directly back to their communities, a move referred to as 'spontaneous reintegration'; or they were taken in by friends, relatives, or helpful adults.

The low rate for girls' participation in DDR reflects not only the denial of their participation in war, but also the fact that the structure and process of DDR favours boys and men. The set-up of DDR in centrally located sites discouraged girls' enrolment because of its public nature, the insecurity and violence that existed at DDR sites, and the lack of medical and hygienic facilities (McKay and Mazurana 2004). Moreover, in the early phases of DDR, girls could not produce weapons to prove that they were combatants, because boys and men claimed the weapons to make themselves eligible for DDR benefits. Later, in Sierra Leone, group demobilisation became possible, with a group presenting one weapon between them. After this, more girls participated, although the number still remained small.

Reintegrating girls: five examples

The success of girls' reintegration is linked to factors such as whether they entered a force voluntarily or were abducted, how long they participated, the military roles they played, and the manner of their return (McKay and Mazurana 2004). To illustrate the day-to-day difficulties that confront girls in reintegrating in war-torn northern Uganda and post-war Sierra Leone, I include five case examples here.

Nighty and Marie: girl mothers in northern Uganda

In 1996, Nighty, then 12, was abducted on her way to school. She was taken to Sudan and given to an LRA commander to be his 23rd wife. The commander subsequently died. After this, Nighty escaped with three other child mothers, who were all wives of the same commander. When she returned to her community, she found that both her parents were dead, so a brother provided housing for herself and her child. Because many formerly abducted children in northern Uganda are re-abducted by the LRA, she feared for her security. Also, she

was called names by community members. She then decided to move to Gulu to live with an aunt. Unable to return to school, she acquired business skills and started a small business (Save the Children 2003).

Marie, a 17-year-old school girl, looks as if she is aged around 14. Slight, bright and ambitious, she was captured by LRA forces at the private girls' school that she attended. She said that in the fighting force she was 'very cruel', but she had no choice. When she returned home, people sang and danced in celebration. Religious leaders came to her house and told her, '*Don't think backwards, only forwards*'. Marie described how the clan leader had told her that she was '*...a useful girl, and I should set an example...and keep praying for those in the bush. They believed in me*'. In her village, only two children of 27 abducted returned; the rest remained in the LRA, or died. Consequently, some parents dislike Marie and say, '*You are back, but where is mine?*'. Now in school, Marie leaves her daughter Grace in her village with her step-mother. She doesn't like to go home, because she fears re-abduction by rebels who are active near her village, so when she visits Grace, she sleeps in the bush. Her Christian beliefs are important in reconciling her past life in the LRA and her current attempts to try to forgive her abductors and the rebels who took her father and killed her mother. Her goals are to finish her education, get a job, and help her family financially. She does not want to marry (northern Uganda, interview, 25 November 2001).

Zainab, Fatmata, and Rose: girl mothers in Sierra Leone

Born in Kambia in western Sierra Leone, Zainab returned from the RUF with twin boys. Their father was killed in the bush. A lively and quick-witted girl with an infectious smile, Zainab was given little assistance by family, friends, or humanitarian organisations. Her mother died during the war. With the exception of her 23-year-old brother, with whom she lives, her family ignores her, because she did not return with a husband or money.

Her daily routine follows a pattern. When she awakens, she takes care of her seven-year-old twin sons. Then she picks potato leaves from her garden, which she sells at the market. She uses this income to buy food for her children. If one of her children is ill, she uses the money for medical assistance. Zainab's other source of support is a paid sexual relationship with one regular partner. She says that she gets her partner to use a condom in an effort to prevent infection from sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. She wants to enrol in a training course to acquire marketable skills, but she cannot find a sponsor (Sierra Leone, interview, 17 October 2003).

Fatmata, a heavy-set girl who looks depressed, was abducted into the RUF. Now, living in Kambia Town, she says that she is provoked by people in the surrounding community from the time she gets up in the morning, as is her seven-year-old daughter Agnes. She reports that Agnes runs to her in tears, saying, '*Mama, that person told me I'm a rebel*'. Fatmata wants her daughter to be able to go to school, but she cannot find financial assistance. Fatmata is a sex worker, but fears sexually transmitted diseases. If she is ill and has money, she goes to the hospital for treatment; otherwise, she uses native herbs (Sierra Leone, interview, 17 October 2003).

When Rose returned to her village in western Sierra Leone, her parents welcomed her and cooked biscuits and sweets for her. She carried her daughter, Aisha, whom she was breast-feeding. People in the community were happy to see her and performed a ceremony because she had come home alive. However, some community members provoked her. Rose went to the paramount chief, who ordered the town crier to announce that the provocation should stop. The message carried by the town crier to the community was that Rose had not wished to join the rebels in the bush, but had been captured. The provocation then ended. When Aisha was weaned, Rose married. She is the second wife of a man who

has little income and is unable to pay for Aisha's schooling. Rose reports that she has 'pain in her bones' and headaches from walking so much, and from the beatings she received in the RUF. She uses traditional medicine, because she has no money to pay for health care at the local clinic. Rose occasionally talks about her experiences to friends who were in the bush with her. They converse quietly, because they don't want others to know what they did in the RUF. Rose wants to enrol in skills training, but has nobody to care for Aisha; the skills-training programme does not provide a crèche (Sierra Leone, interview, 19 October 2003).

When girls return

Girls usually find their way home without formal assistance, and slip back into their homes and communities. Concerning these girls, a researcher who has studied children's reintegration in Sierra Leonean society has observed that: '...a lot of their strategy is secrecy. They slink back home and don't want anyone to know what happened to them...they look at various strategies for reintegration, and the best strategy for them is just to go back to their village and downplay what happened to them. They initially go back to their own family, and if that works out, they stay there. But often it doesn't work out, and they go someplace else' (Susan Shepler, interview, 5 April 2002).

In essence, girls can remain hidden because they easily blend into community life and are silent because they want to fit in. But in the case of girl mothers, the presence of their children makes it impossible to deny their bush experiences and the ways in which their behaviour has violated community norms; for example, the fact that they have had under-age and unmarried sexual relations.

Responses of parents and the community

Parents often react with fear, thinking that their daughters will kill them. Often these

girls are considered 'spoiled goods' and targeted for sexual assault by male members of the community. Sometimes, they are forced by their families to marry the perpetrators. Community members are usually too uncomfortable to acknowledge the issues suggested by the return of these girls. In addition, community members themselves are affected by the conflict, and struggling with memories of painful experiences and losses. In many cases, they were the victims of the children who return.

Responses of girls themselves

In northern Uganda and Sierra Leone, girls have returned to poverty-stricken conditions, in communities whose infrastructure has been destroyed. Often, one or both of their parents and siblings are dead. Marie's reluctance to return to her village, and the nightly migration of large numbers of northern Ugandan children seeking protection, illustrate the ever-present fears of re-abduction, even when girls are no longer (or never were) in a fighting force (Women's Commission 2001).

Girls learned how to survive during the conflict. On reintegration, their survival mechanisms can hinder their reintegration. Girls who were in a fighting force for a long time may deviate seriously from the norm in terms of their behaviour: they may be aggressive and quarrelsome, use offensive language, abuse drugs, smoke, and kill and eat other people's animals (McKay and Mazurana 2004). Because they usually are not the girls that their parents remember, they may be treated as outcasts (Women's Commission 2001, 2002). Also, to reintegrate successfully, they may have to renounce feelings of independence and power gained in conflict, although this varies by gender, age, status and roles within a force, and the nature of the force itself (McConnan and Upward 2001). Girls may have little knowledge of the traditional gender roles that the community expects of them, and must learn them if they are to fit in. If girls are required to assume roles which are

unfamiliar or unacceptable to them, they might opt to leave the community.

For some girls, another factor in opting to leave a community after an effort to reintegrate is relationships. Girls who find their parents dead and nobody else to take responsibility for them might find that leaving is their best option. Some girls find that the relationships they formed during the conflict are stronger than those with their family or community, especially when communities do not readily accept them back. Some leave to return to people with whom they formed relationships while in the fighting force, including captor 'husbands'.

Psychological, social, and cultural reintegration: key issues

To further elucidate girls' situations, in this section I identify some key aspects which need to be prioritised in reconstruction programmes, to promote girls' post-war well being.

Schooling and skills training

Girls returning from a fighting force may not want to marry. As stated earlier, some girls opt to live together for reasons of practicality and mutual support. While they may plan to marry later, they need to make independent livelihoods. Some establish micro-enterprises, and others resume their schooling or learn a trade. However, many girls – because they have children, or poor health or disabilities, and lack opportunities – are unable to find ways to earn income. Prostitution or begging may then become the only viable options for survival.

Often, girls' first priority is to attend school, and/or to gain economic skills to sustain them and their children. This was true of all the five girls whose cases I described earlier. However, a widespread problem is that pregnant girls, and girls with children, are often prevented from attending school, and skills-training programmes may

not offer child care, as in the case of Rose, cited above. In any case, school fees may be beyond girls' means. Other inhibiting factors are that the girls may be the heads of their households, or required by their families to spend long hours doing domestic work.

Health care

In northern Uganda and Sierra Leone, health problems of the girls who participated in the CIDA/Rights and Democracy study (McKay and Mazurana 2004) ranged from diseases, including malaria, tuberculosis, and cholera; through diarrhoea, parasitic infections, and infections related to malnutrition; to war-related injuries. These ranged from severe disabilities, including loss of sight or hearing, and amputation of limbs, to scars or burns from torture or injuries inflicted during battle. Girls suffered from headaches, stomach aches, generalised pain, and genital injuries and infections. On return, most are reported by health professionals to be infected with sexually transmitted diseases, although systematic testing for STDs is not carried out. Because they suffer from so many war-related injuries, including those caused by pregnancy and childbirth in the bush, and gender-specific violence, they require reproductive-health services. However, few girls receive the health services that they desperately need, because no care facilities exist, or they cannot afford to pay (McKay and Mazurana 2004). Therefore, a real danger is present of continued transmission of STDs, including HIV/AIDS, because of a lack of testing and treatment.

Psycho-social effects

Many of the effects of conflict which need to be addressed during reintegration are 'soft', in the sense of being psychological, social, and cultural, and therefore less obvious than physical injury or disease, or economic desperation. They must, however, be addressed if girls are to heal and gain a sense of agency and control over their own lives,

within their families and communities. For example, girls may need support in re-establishing relationships with parents, families, and communities. Also, they may think that they have no choices and that no help exists for them.

A key psycho-social issue facing many girls is shame. This stems from girls' perceptions of having violated cultural taboos, ranging from having under-age and unmarried sex, to serving as combatants, and committing atrocities. They face negative attitudes from community members because they are no longer virgins. This judgment is amplified because of traditional gender norms. For many, their shame is compounded by the tattoos, carvings, and scars on their bodies, which are a constant reminder of life during the conflict. Girls with scars and tattoos who would benefit from their removal may not know how to get help.

Reconstructing girls' fragile lives

Rituals of welcome

In northern Uganda and Sierra Leone, when children return, rituals may welcome them back into the community, as occurred with Rose and Aisha. Rituals may be traditional ceremonies, religious practices, such as the prayers and talk offered to Marie by religious leaders, or a combination of these. Cleansing rituals drive out dead spirits, protect the community from contamination, and call upon ancestors for assistance. Some rituals are the same for boys and girls, such as stepping on an egg or slaughtering a goat in northern Uganda. Others are specific to one sex. In tandem with these rituals, girls must know that they are forgiven and that they are supported. One way is through community affirmations that they are useful children.

Rituals can serve important functions in facilitating psycho-social reintegration, healing, and reconciliation with families.

They also can be used to impose 'rules' of community behaviour, or to convey advice and encourage girls – for example, when the town crier in Rose's village carried the paramount chief's message to the community that she was not to be provoked. Another example is when rituals are used to forbid the community to utter words such as 'rebel wife' or 'rebel baby'. Safe rituals which respect girls' human rights can facilitate healing for girls, and for the communities that failed to protect them from harm (McKay and Mazurana 2004).

Increasing girls' agency

Girls must gain a sense of agency and control over their lives, if they and their children are to survive and thrive. As illustrated in the five cases in this article, girls formerly involved in fighting forces want to be useful, to go to school, or learn skills for a trade. They want to acquire basic literacy and numerical skills so that they can support themselves, and they need other services, perhaps including start-up finance for income generation.

In Sierra Leone, some girls with DDR benefits participated in skills training, although most did not. Girls passing through rehabilitation programmes in northern Uganda also benefited from such programmes. In both northern Uganda and Sierra Leone, some NGOs have developed initiatives to raise girls' skills levels, or get them into school. For example, FAWE (Forum for African Women Educationalists) has branches throughout Africa. In Sierra Leone, FAWE promotes girls' education and training, and includes pregnant girls and mothers with babies in its programmes.

Access to primary health care is another important way to empower girls. Unless they and their children attain a minimal level of physical and psychological health, and in particular receive treatment for the sexually transmitted diseases that are endemic among groups of reintegrating girls, it will remain hard for them to cope and function well in society.

Addressing gender-specific violence

Violence against girls and women is starting to be addressed. In post-war Sierra Leone, and increasingly in northern Uganda, population-based surveys and other studies have brought into public awareness the prevalence of sexual violence, and the violation of girls' and women's human rights (see for example, Isis-WICCE 2001; Physicians for Human Rights 2002). Approaches are being developed to address the effects of violence more openly than hitherto, with attempts to reduce its incidence. For example, at a local level, committees can be formed within communities to seek local solutions. This work is often facilitated by indigenous NGOs. An instance of this is the case of an NGO, Christian Children's Fund, which has worked with a cohort of war-affected communities in Sierra Leone to establish a programme for sexually abused girls called 'Sealing Our Past: Securing Our Future'. The members of the committee on sexual violence come from the community and are responsible for negotiating, advocating, and dealing with past and present issues of sexual violence. Attitudinal change in wider society is promoted through the media – for example, via radio messages.

The role of older women in girls' reintegration

In some communities, older women help returning girls by performing rituals, talking with the girls, and helping them to learn or relearn positive modes of female behaviour, thereby building their confidence and self-esteem (McKay and Mazurana 2004).

For example, women elders in the village of Mambolo in western Sierra Leone were initially afraid of the girls when they returned, thinking they would continue to do the bad things that they did in the bush. Consequently, in common with the rest of the community, they would not go close to the girls, nor assist them. Later, however, these women elders recognised that if the

girls left, they might become prostitutes. They then tried to help them by talking with them and giving them small sums of money, cloth, and traditional medicine. In addition, they taught some girls 'how to cure', using traditional medicine and midwifery so they could make money through a socially useful role in the community. They encouraged the girls through singing, so the girls could forget the past (Sierra Leone, interview, 21 October 2003).

Advocacy for girls' reintegration

If girls' fragile lives are to be reconstructed, their post-war needs must be a focus of advocacy at all levels. In designing peace accords and DDR programmes, developing community-based reintegration programmes, and establishing reconstruction goals, the effects on girls of gender discrimination must be openly acknowledged and addressed. Research into their situation is a first step in this. In developing holistic approaches to girls' reintegration, gendered physical, psychological, spiritual, and social aspects of reintegration should be considered within the economic and political contexts in which these girls live. People with strong influence in the community, family members, child-protection workers, and girls themselves should all collaborate to find ways to facilitate the positive reconstruction of their lives. The goal of this should be to ensure that girls have meaningful futures, find physical and psycho-social healing after their experiences, and acquire the resources that they need to make a livelihood and view themselves as making a positive contribution to their post-war communities.

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Post-conflict programmes for women: lessons from the Kosovo Women's Initiative

Agnes Kalungu-Banda

This paper considers the relationship between the concept of participation in development and the concept of sustainable development in the aftermath of a war. For sustainable development to take place after a period of armed conflict, the intended beneficiaries of a reconstruction programme must be supported to take charge of the process, and hence own the results.

Following the 1999 peace agreement that ended the war in Kosovo, a great deal of money was granted for reconstruction, by foreign governments and international non-government institutions. Among the funds allocated for rehabilitation was a US government grant of US\$ 10,000,000 to a programme called the Kosovo Women's Initiative (KWI). The inspiration for KWI was the Bosnia Women's Initiative (BWI), which was developed in late 1996 under the leadership of UNHCR and in consultation with Bosnian women's associations. Since the creation of BWI, three similar women's initiatives under UNHCR direction have been developed: the Rwanda Women's Initiative (1997), the Kosovo Women's Initiative (Baines 1999), and the Afghanistan Women's Initiative (2000).

The main aims of KWI were to promote the recovery of traumatised women, and to redress gender inequalities within Kosovo via programmes aiming to support the sustainable reconstruction of society.

Despite the obviously long-term nature of the second goal, the donors required the money to be spent within one year. This paper argues that such pressure to spend money creates challenges for both the programmes and the organisations contracted by donors to oversee their implementation. In the case of KWI, Oxfam GB was contracted by UNHCR to play this role in two areas: Pristina and Gjilan. This article focuses on the projects in Gjilan. It argues that the donor's imposition of a time-limit on the expenditure of funds, and differences of opinion concerning participation by beneficiaries and stakeholders (in this case, Oxfam GB and UNHCR), had a negative impact on the sustainability of the projects implemented through KWI in Gjilan. Ultimately, projects which aim to support gender equality need to be treated as long-term initiatives which involve potential beneficiaries at all stages of the project cycle.

Kosovo: the context

The Kosovan conflict and its causes have been well documented. Briefly, in 1988, Slobodan Milosevic, then President of Serbia, proposed a constitutional amendment revoking the autonomous status of Kosovo. In 1989, acting under extreme pressure, the Kosovo Assembly accepted the constitutional amendment. The revocation of Kosovo's autonomy signalled an increase in human-rights abuses and discriminatory government policies which were designed to 'Serbianise' Kosovo. Over the same period, an armed rebellion by ethnic Albanians gathered momentum. In an attempt to gain independence from Serbia, the Kosovan Liberation Army (KLA) led attacks on Serbian police outposts and on supposed Albanian 'collaborators'. With the rise of the KLA, there was an increase in the already pervasive police harassment and brutal treatment of ethnic Albanians by the Serbian authorities.

In 1998–99, expulsions, killings, and human-rights abuses by Serbs against ethnic Albanians took place on a very wide scale. These eventually provoked an international response, which included the bombing of Serbia by NATO forces, leading to the signing of a peace agreement which placed Kosovo under international civil administration. The agreement included the deployment of troops to act as peacekeepers throughout Kosovo, and the appointment of a United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). UNMIK was responsible for civil administration, humanitarian assistance, institution building, and reconstruction.

International organisations that had previously left Kosovo on account of the war returned after the signing of the peace agreement, aiming to facilitate the rehabilitation process. Oxfam GB (referred to as 'Oxfam' throughout the remainder of this text) was one of these. Before the war, Oxfam had been working on long-term development initiatives to support the empowerment of women. With the

intensification of war in 1998, its focus had shifted to meeting the needs of displaced women and children. Oxfam, with other international NGOs, withdrew from the area before the onset of the NATO attacks, but continued working with displaced Albanians in camps in Macedonia until the peace agreement was signed. Upon its return after the war, Oxfam continued its work on gender through KWI.

The KWI project

Various women's organisations put forward project proposals, which were then developed with support from Oxfam staff. A number of women's organisations had been active in Kosovo before the NATO air strikes, but most of them were in the process of re-establishing themselves when KWI came into being. The women's groups were formed on ethnic lines. For instance, all of the following groups consisted only of Albanian women: Liria, Vlëra, Malesia e Tuxhevcit, Legienda, Apoteoza, Lidhja e Gruas, Handikos, Era Humanitare, and Iliria. The groups that consisted only of Serbian women included Sloboda, Korminjaka, Glas Moravke, and Kosovka Devojka.

The projects in which most of the Albanian women were involved focused on training in sewing and computer skills, literacy classes, English-language classes, and awareness raising on issues of health, democracy, and women's rights. While some of these activities would be useful in helping participants to earn a living, such was not the primary rationale. The projects for Serbian women, on the other hand, focused expressly on income generation, through activities such as bee keeping for the sale of honey, wine making, and chicken rearing for the sale of eggs. In addition, some were concerned with knitting and crocheting items for sale and distribution to vulnerable people in the community.

It was because women's groups were only recently forming or re-establishing

themselves that UNHCR recommended that in the initial stages international organisations should play a substantial role in the KWI, transferring increased responsibility to local organisations over the following year. Oxfam project officers, including myself, therefore played a central role in the implementation of the KWI in Gjilan Area of Responsibility. The procedure in the KWI programmes was that women's groups, in consultation with the intended beneficiaries, should identify the projects that they wanted to implement. The women's groups would then write the project proposals, following a format that had been developed by UNHCR. The proposals were written in Serbian or Albanian, and it was Oxfam's responsibility to have the project proposals translated into English before submission to UNHCR. At meetings attended by all parties, a case could be made for funding particular project activities; UNHCR then decided which projects to fund.

Background to the study

This article draws on my experience of employment by Oxfam in Kosovo after the conflict, from June to December 2000, as Programme Manager for KWI in Gjilan. This involved liaison with other international NGOs and UN bodies to co-ordinate Oxfam's work with theirs. In particular I worked with UNHCR, the co-ordinating agency for KWI, recruiting and managing staff for the programme, ensuring that Oxfam's personnel practices were followed, and ensuring the effective implementation of the KWI programmes with women from all the various ethnic groups. Before taking up this short-term post with Oxfam GB, I had gained an understanding of the role of women in the development process through work for three national women's organisations in Zambia. Although I was new to working in a post-conflict situation, my view was that the full participation of beneficiaries throughout the project cycle (that is,

at the stages of problem identification, programme design, programme implementation, monitoring, and evaluation) was key to any development process, regardless of the context.

Participation in development initiatives may be broadly defined in terms of beneficiaries influencing and sharing control over decisions and resources that affect their lives. An emphasis on participation recognises that sustainable development (or, as in the case of Kosovo, reconstruction) cannot be externally directed: it requires local ownership, with external support if necessary to guide the process, through building the skills and capacity of beneficiaries (Fowler 1997, Kabeer 1994). Conversely, development interventions are sustainable only if they have popular support and ownership.

Women were noticeably absent from the discussion of development theory and practice during the first UN Development Decade of 1960–1970. However, the shift from focusing on economic growth to the elimination of poverty and meeting basic needs in the 1970s helped to ensure that women are seen as critical agents of the development process, in addition to being potential beneficiaries. Nyerere and Rahman, quoted in Kabeer 1994, argue that women are capable of promoting their own development, that the role of development agencies is to recognise and support their efforts and initiatives, and that projects are unlikely to succeed without the full and equal involvement of women.

In the first days of my work as Programme Manager for KWI in Gjilan, I began to observe some differences in attitudes and approaches to development in post-conflict contexts which suggested that my views were not shared by all stakeholders in the projects. I continued to observe and learn, and began forming some opinions based on my observations.

At the time that I was recruited, I was pursuing my MA in Development Studies at

the Development Studies Centre in Dublin, Ireland. Although my research topic had already been approved by my supervisor, I decided to change it to one that would give me the opportunity to assess whether my impressions of the KWI programme had a basis in fact. I would undertake a formal case study of KWI in Gjiilan, focusing on the importance of beneficiaries' participation in the project cycle. My Oxfam manager allowed me to collect data for my research while I was working in Kosovo. I used a combination of methods to collect data, including document review, focus-group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation.

In the next section, I share some of the key findings of my research into the participation of women identified by donors as potential beneficiaries in the project cycle, and the impact that lack of real participation has had on the sustainability of the projects that were being implemented through KWI in Gjiilan.

Principal lessons from the study

Balancing donors' priorities with those of 'beneficiaries'

A sum of US\$ 10,000,000 was granted to assist women affected by the crisis, and particularly survivors of the war-related sexual/gender-based violence and trauma, to re-establish sustainable coping mechanisms for their livelihoods. It was the responsibility of UNHCR to disburse the money to the intended beneficiaries. The international organisations contracted by UNHCR to implement the KWI programme submitted project proposals, explaining how they intended to implement it in their Area of Responsibility. (UNHCR had divided the whole of Kosovo into four Areas of Responsibilities, according to geographical contexts.) Oxfam's project proposal, dated February 2000, stated that Oxfam's aim in Gjiilan and Pristina was to support

women's initiatives, and to encourage and empower women in making decisions on circumstances that affect their lives. Some of the specific objectives were to provide support to six women's organisations that pre-dated the conflict, to support 12 newly formed organisations and facilitate their development, and to facilitate and encourage the development of women's groups in at least 40 villages. Gjiilan had a total number of 57 villages, 41 Albanian and 12 Serbian, and four mixed villages. Oxfam received proposals from the local women's organisations, describing how they would facilitate the implementation of KWI projects aimed at enabling women to participate in decision making and democratic processes and improving the livelihoods of vulnerable women and men in the communities. Further it was expected that discussions would be held with the communities on gender roles and relations, and support would be given to activities that aimed to balance the existing inequalities.

Although the programme-planning stage is the foundation for the sustainability of all development interventions, and therefore calls for the participation of all stakeholders in decision-making, I found that in the quest to utilise the US\$ 10,000,000 within a short period of time, KWI failed to ensure the participation of potential beneficiaries. There was a clash between the need to use the funds quickly, thus meeting the requirements of KWI, and the need to ensure that potential beneficiaries were involved fully in the process of identifying and analysing the problems to be addressed in the project, and planning suitable activities.

Participation in planning and implementation

I convened 25 focus-group discussions, of which 22 were with Albanian women and three with Serbian women, to find out the extent of their knowledge of KWI, their participation in the project cycle of KWI, their views about issues concerning women

and whether or not these were being addressed, and views about the project's contribution to the process of facilitating sustainable development for the project beneficiaries. Each focus-group discussion was attended by between 10 and 15 people.

None of the potential project beneficiaries who took part in my focus-group discussions reported being involved in the planning process of the KWI programmes. Interviews held with Oxfam staff responsible for KWI confirmed this lack of participation. Prior to the establishment of KWI in August 1999, the women's groups that had been in existence at the time in Kosovo were consulted. However, there were only two women's groups in existence in Gjilan: Legjenda and Apoteoza. The co-ordinators of Legjenda participated in the initial discussions held by UNHCR about the launch of the KWI programme. Oxfam and other international organisations also participated in this initial discussion. Most of the women's groups that I talked to during my research were formed after the inception of KWI, for example Vlëra, Liria, and Glas Moravke.

Soon after the initial KWI discussions had begun, the process of the programme design encountered difficulties, due to increasing tension between ethnic groups. Gathering people together within a closed space, two months after the war, and expecting fruitful dialogue, was described by the Oxfam staff as being too ambitious and demonstrating a lack of understanding of the situation. One of the Oxfam staff interviewed remarked: *'This is December 2000, and I am sure you have seen for yourself that the tension between the ethnic groups is still quite high. So, can you imagine how it was two months after the war? In my view, efforts to initiate any dialogue immediately after the war were ... set to fail.'* I could indeed imagine those tensions, because I was in Kosovo about ten months after the end of the war, and the tensions between the different ethnic groups were still high. For instance, none of the Albanian staff whom I was managing

was willing to go and work with the Serbian women's groups. Despite knowing the Serbian language very well, they were not prepared to speak Serbian at all.

According to the Oxfam staff who were present at the inception of KWI, and representatives of local women's organisations in Pristina, there was an urgent need to spend the funds earmarked for KWI, and it was decided to constitute a small working group to conduct a programme analysis, outline the programme framework, identify the programme objectives, draw up an implementation strategy, and propose criteria for the selection of beneficiaries. The small working group mostly consisted of international staff working with UNHCR, and other international organisations.

The fact that the BWI in Bosnia was the inspiration for donors wanting to form and fund the KWI in Kosovo suggests that KWI's programme was based on an existing blueprint, without making an assessment of the Kosovo situation. When I asked members of the Albanian and Serbian women's groups in Gjilan whether or not the KWI projects were addressing the problems that were affecting them, most of the beneficiaries, in both the Albanian and Serbian groups, replied that the projects were not adequately addressing their needs. The problems identified by Serbian women were unemployment, stress, isolation, poverty, and restricted freedom of movement. They attributed all these problems to the effects of the war. Most had been working in the 19 factories that were functional in Gjilan before the war. One Serbian woman lamented, *'Nobody is employed, except for a few female teachers and health workers'*.

The problems identified by Albanian women were low levels of education, unemployment, general lack of information on topics such as health, legal rights, and women's rights, lack of support for girls to proceed to high school, lack of support for widows, and violence against women. Unlike the Serbian women, who saw their problems as linked solely to the war, the

Albanian women perceived their problems as due to various reasons. For example, two reasons were advanced for their low level of education. First was the ten years of oppression of other ethnic groups by the Serbian government. Second was the traditional attitude towards girls' education. Parents preferred to send boys rather than girls to school. One woman attending a focus-group discussion in Kmetovc had this to say about the standard of girls' and women's education:

I agree that the Albanian traditions tended to support the boys' education rather than girls', but I do not think this is still the reason why the education levels among women are low. Look at all these young girls who are supposed to be in school but are taking the sewing course. If they can be allowed by their parents to attend the sewing course, why would they be stopped from going to school? For me, many young women are not going to school because their parents have no money to send them to school.

The sewing course was one of the projects that was being supported by KWI funds. All the materials were provided, and the participants did not have to pay anything.

Oxfam staff and representatives of other international NGOs whom I interviewed made comments which help to explain why women's participation as potential beneficiaries was lacking when the KWI's activities were set up. They said that the programme was a good idea, but the circumstances under which it was launched greatly contributed to the shape that the programme took. For instance, they felt that the level of local consultation was limited because KWI was initiated at a time when the emergency programme in Kosovo was still operational. For the emergency programme there were no consultations with the beneficiaries. Although KWI was not an emergency programme, the respondents were of the view that the amount of money allocated and the pressure to spend the money made it appear to Oxfam and other

international organisations as an emergency programme. The urgency of the situation created a lot of pressure on Oxfam and the other international organisations that were umbrella agencies for KWI. Within a short period of time women were expected to get organised, get projects going, and monitor and evaluate progress. I remember attending one of the meetings of all KWI umbrella agencies, when it was announced that by a certain date the international organisations would have handed over their responsibilities to the local women's organisations, having conducted an evaluation of all the projects and submitted reports to UNHCR. For the six months that I had been in Kosovo I had not seen any move towards preparing the local organisations to take over responsibility from international organisations and so I was wondering how they were going to manage. KWI would definitely be spending money beyond the capacity of the local women's organisations.

On the other hand, the fact that UNHCR had clearly made an effort to facilitate the participation of potential women beneficiaries in programme design – an effort which had failed due to tension among the ethnic groups – implies that the participation of local people may have been seen as important by UNHCR. So the main obstacle may have been the problem of identifying techniques and processes appropriate to a post-conflict situation, in which there are tensions between different groups of beneficiaries.

However, the lack of participation of beneficiaries in the initial stages of the project cycle could be attributed to the organisations' different interpretations of 'participation'. UNHCR is an organisation which does not necessarily promote the participation of beneficiaries in its programme design. Much of its work takes place in emergency situations, in which huge sums of money are disbursed and spent within a short period of time. This may make it difficult for the organisation to

explore how to facilitate the beneficiaries' participation in problem analysis, programme identification, and planning. Oxfam does make a commitment to involve communities in planning work which affects them, but in Oxfam too emergency programming is by definition planned and implemented more swiftly than work in stable peaceful contexts.

If participation had been interpreted as a process through which the potential project beneficiaries were to play an active role in making decisions and shaping the activities of the KWI, participation in the initial discussion would not have been limited to the women's groups, but would have involved women in the wider community.

The impact of the KWI programme

Livelihoods

Despite this lack of participation in planning, some women from both the Albanian and Serbian women's groups were of the view that the project activities supported through KWI funds had helped them to come together and thereby break the isolation that they had suffered during and after the war. However, the women to whom I talked were not sure whether or not the projects were helping them to create sustainable livelihoods or strategies for addressing gender inequalities.

For example, during one of the focus-group discussions held with the women beneficiaries of a KWI-funded sewing course that was being implemented by Liria, an Albanian women's group, I learned that the goal of the project was to train 450 women in nine villages. The expectation, according to the project document, was that 400 of the 450 women would, at the end of the course, be able to sew garments for their families. This expectation raised a lot of questions in my mind, because there were no other activities, active or planned, to enable the women to generate income so that they

could buy the materials needed to make garments for their families. Although the women were happy with skills they were learning, they realised that such skills were limited in value. For instance, from the class of 33 in the first intake in Llashtice village, only two had gained employment as tailors in some private business. One woman who had been on the sewing course had this to say about it:

I am happy that I can get out of the house and socialise with other women, which was not the case before and during the war. Meeting with other women is helping me get over the trauma of the war. My only concern is that I do not know what I will do after I complete the course. The six months' period for training is not enough for us to acquire enough skills, especially since the machines and materials are not enough for everybody. In addition, many women in most of the areas in Gjilan are being taught how to sew, but nobody is being employed, because the textile factories were damaged during the war and have not started operating again.

One might ask why the women were taking the sewing course, if they were not going to be able to use the skills to earn money. Due to the limited education of most of the Albanian women, it was hoped that the diploma certificates obtained at the end of the course would help them to get jobs once the textile factories were reopened. But none of the UNMIK officials in Gjilan, or the women themselves, had any information about when the textile factories were likely to re-open.

Similarly, women taking English and computer courses were hoping to get jobs with UNMIK or another international NGO, as such skills were said to be among the qualifications that were required for employment in these institutions. Again the hopes of employment were not based on any factual information about, for instance, the number of local staff who were to be employed, or the duration of the INGOs' operations in the area.

The views of the Serbian women about the projects were slightly different. This was so because most of them had been working in the factories before the war, and lost their jobs only as a result of the war. Most had skills that they could use for income-generating activities, but their main problem was their restricted freedom of movement. For instance, the chicken-rearing and wine-making activities of some of the women depended on material resources which could be bought only in Serbia. At the inception of the projects, the women were able to go and purchase the required items from Serbia, despite the security problems. However, this stopped soon after the projects had begun, when tension between Serbia and Kosovo intensified. Oxfam had to assist in obtaining the required items for the projects, and also in marketing some of the products, which exceeded what the local community could consume; due to their restricted freedom of movement, the beneficiaries needed help in selling the products. This was not a sustainable solution, because Oxfam's role in KWI was intended to last only for the first year; but there was no sign that the ethnic tensions would be resolved within that year.

Challenging gender inequality

Most of the projects in the KWI programme did not seem to be challenging the existing gender inequalities as outlined in the Oxfam project document. The approach was one of Women in Development (WID), rather than Gender and Development (GAD). As observed by Appleford (2000:82), despite the conceptual shift from WID to GAD, gender issues still tend to get distilled down to 'the women's projects'. Donors see women's groups as the principal means of dealing with issues of gender, but this is not necessarily the case – as I observed in the KWI projects. As stated in the Oxfam Gender Policy (1993:1), 'unless gender related inequalities were addressed, it would not be possible to address poverty and sustainable development'.

Other problems identified by the study

Conflicting expectations about leadership

The local women's organisations had expected to take a leading role in the implementation of KWI, but UNHCR decided to subcontract Oxfam to do this. The decision seems not to have been welcomed by most of the local women's organisations. Some of the leaders of the Albanian groups took any available opportunity to express their anger over the leading role that international organisations were playing in the implementation of KWI. One of the leaders remarked at a meeting in Pristina that was considering the 'Role of Women in Peace Building in Kosovo': *'Kosovar women lobbied for the KWI funds from the US government, but it is surprising that international organisations are taking a leading role and leaving out the local women's organisations.'*

Complex proposal procedures

Oxfam staff involved in the implementation of KWI programmes said that they found the whole process of submitting a project proposal for approval to be frustrating and time-consuming. Much time was spent working on project proposals with the women's groups, and both the groups and Oxfam found the format to be too complicated. After the translations had been done, it was usually found that a lot of information was lacking, so Oxfam had to do follow-up consultations with the women's organisation to obtain the missing information. Despite all the time spent on preparing the proposals, there was no assurance that the project would be funded. Oxfam, which worked directly with the women's groups, had a better understanding than UNHCR of why women were interested in the activities proposed; yet the main voice in decision-making on funding was that of UNHCR.

Disagreement over goals: sustainable livelihoods or recovery from trauma?

There were different views in UNHCR, Oxfam, and women's groups about the main goals of programme activities. At a meeting that I attended at which project proposals were reviewed, UNHCR rejected a knitting project proposed for the Serbian women's groups, on the grounds that other similar groups had failed to market their items, due to restrictions on their freedom of movement. One Oxfam staff member, reacting to this decision, argued:

It is not fair for you to base your decision only on the marketing aspect of the project. I have had the opportunity to interact with some of the women who are involved in the knitting projects, and of course, while they wish their items could be sold, they do not think the projects are a failure. Through the knitting projects, the women have been given an opportunity to come together in one place away from their homes. They see this as a way of breaking the isolation and a way of supporting each other after the trauma of the war.

One of the UNHCR staff responded:

We do not want to use our money for projects that we know have failed in the past. If you want us to fund more knitting projects, find the market first.

(personal experience, Kosovo July 2000).

While UNHCR emphasised projects that would help women to earn money, Oxfam and the women's organisations were more concerned with giving the women an opportunity to come together to share their experiences during and after war. If it was the knitting projects that would give them this opportunity, then the women were ready to take this up – despite the fact that there was no market for the knitted items. One Albanian member of Oxfam's staff lamented:

I don't understand UNHCR. Whom did they come to help? All the project proposals for Albanians have been rejected, because they do not want to support sewing and computer

courses any more. They don't understand that Albanian women in the last ten years were not given opportunities to go to school or to work, and now they expect us to think about income-generating activities. During those ten years the Serbian women had all jobs, and now all the donors want to give them the support.

Such mistrust and conflict could have been avoided if all stakeholders had participated in making the decisions on the implementation of the programme. As observed by Pretty *et al.* (1995), when all the stakeholders participate in decision making, this marks the adoption of collective responsibilities for outcomes.

Conclusion and recommendations

For long-term sustainable peace and reconstruction projects, we need to plan well and ensure the participation of all the stakeholders in decision making. Allocating such an enormous sum of money to KWI, to be spent within a short period of time, was not the right approach to facilitating a sustainable peace and reconstruction process for the women in Kosovo. According to some of the leaders of the local women's groups and representatives of international organisations, including Oxfam, KWI was throwing money at groups that could not use it, and expecting results on sustainable livelihoods and challenges to gender inequality in an impossibly short time. It would have made more sense if less money had been given in the beginning. There is no logic in spending excessive money in the first year of a major initiative such as KWI, when the groups on which the initiative depends are just starting to get organised.

The KWI initiative was not informed by an in-depth analysis of the situation in Kosovo after the war. Rather, it was based on the success of a similar initiative in Bosnia, which was conceived and implemented in a very different context. If an in-depth analysis of women's economic, social, and political

context had been carried out in Kosovo, it would have had an impact on the decisions about the types of activity that KWI should fund. Further, the in-depth analysis would have called, beyond doubt, for the real participation of all stakeholders. As one Oxfam staff member observed to me, involving the women in the process of problem analysis and project identification would have required a particular approach in Kosovo, where tensions were still high between ethnic groups. A consultation with all concerned at the start of the planning process could have given the various groups the opportunity to reflect on what had happened during the war, and its impact on current and future opportunities for women to work together in trying to rebuild Kosovo. It is probable that the consultation process would have added value to the programme, by making the focus narrower and the objectives clearer, more realistic, and relevant to women's realities. KWI would have been developed with an understanding of the local situation, culture and tradition, environment, and way of living.

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Mainstreaming gender in conflict reduction:

from challenge to opportunity

Jasmine Whitbread

This paper draws on the author's experience of leading the work of Oxfam GB on conflict reduction and attempting to mainstream a commitment to gender equality into it. It highlights the difficulties faced and reflects on what did and did not work along the way. Finally, the author draws out some wider lessons about leading gender mainstreaming in development work. While gender mainstreaming in development programmes is widely seen as a challenge to be overcome, it can in fact be an opportunity to increase impact dramatically, or to achieve breakthroughs in situation analysis and programme design.

'Getting clear on what we should be doing on conflict reduction is hard enough, leave alone adding gender to the mix!'

'How is gender relevant to this work? Hmm...I suppose there are some women's peace groups...'

'It's the men who are in charge of these issues in our communities – that's the traditional role we play.'

(Personal communications from staff of Oxfam GB and partner organisations in West Africa, 2001)

In 1997, Oxfam GB adopted as its mission statement 'to work with others to overcome poverty and suffering'. To achieve this mission of change, it began to organise its work around a conceptual framework of 'strategic change objectives' (SCOs). One of these SCOs states that 'Fewer people will suffer personal or communal violence, forced displacement, or armed conflict'. We refer to the work that we do to further this aim as 'conflict reduction'. Another of Oxfam's strategic change

objectives is that 'Men and women will enjoy equal rights'. Oxfam is attempting to achieve this objective by integrating a gender perspective into all its work, to ensure that everything that it does supports the attainment of equality between the sexes. We refer to this aspect of our programming as 'gender mainstreaming'.

Gender inequality and conflict-reduction work in West Africa

As Regional Director in West Africa from 1999 to 2002, I was responsible for leading the realignment of Oxfam GB's programme in the region to meet the Strategic Change Objectives. Early on, I decided that we needed a focused plan to ensure that gender issues were properly mainstreamed into the programme. In a fairly amateurish way (I am not a gender expert), I got this plan written and subsequently agreed. Although the plan was supported by a budget, for a number of

reasons we were severely delayed in recruiting an adviser to help to implement it. Nonetheless, I felt we were making some progress on gender in several areas of our work.

In contrast, I felt stuck before we even started when it came to integrating gender concerns into our work on conflict. The quotations at the head of this paper summarise the perceptions of staff when challenged by managers to consider how gender was relevant to their work on conflict reduction. Responses ranged from denial that gender equality was a relevant concern in this area, to theoretical acceptance of the challenge of integrating gender issues – tempered by a concern that in practice it would be too complicated. A third view was that gender mainstreaming is simply an issue of acknowledging the traditional roles played by women. I give below some examples of situations that we faced, in order to illustrate the importance of integrating gender concerns into our programme.

In the poor and marginalised northern areas of Mali and Ghana, there is an ever-present risk of conflict, which often becomes a reality. Here, Oxfam has been supporting local communities for decades. Together with other organisations, it delivers a range of inputs designed to secure livelihoods, promote access to health services and education, and facilitate public access to information and the forums where major decisions are made. Our staff and partners examined the causes of the conflicts through economic, political, and sociological lenses. The role of women in conflict resolution was recognised by some as crucial; the Oxfam programme manager in Mali had identified it as an important matter on which to reflect and learn. The first question I wanted to ask was: was this process of reflection supported and steered to ensure that it included a consideration of the role of men in conflict, and the impact of ideas about masculinity? The second question was: what recommendations for programming had been made as a result of this process of reflection?

In another location – the (similarly marginalised and poor) south of Senegal – Oxfam had recently begun supporting community efforts to campaign for an end to long-standing conflict in the region. The work included support for a community radio initiative, a landmines-awareness project, the training of journalists to support them to report responsibly on the conflict, and plans for a cross-border peace festival, which was intended to put political pressure on the governments of Senegal and Guinea Bissau to resolve the conflict. Men dominated all these initiatives, but it was very heartening to talk to the young girls who were training to be journalists and learning to speak out confidently and ask forthright questions. My question here was whether Oxfam had asked its partner organisations to do a gender analysis of the problems that they sought to address, and whether we had supported them to design their projects accordingly.

In a third example of its work on conflict reduction in the region, Oxfam was campaigning to strengthen the arms-trade treaty of the Economic Community of West African States. Oxfam supported the treaty secretariat (all men), lobbied the Heads of State (all men), and supported the efforts of civil society to make the treaty meaningful. Women's groups were some of the most vocal in this nascent movement. However, the gender dimension of this work was barely visible. Nor was Oxfam's Global Conflict Campaign highlighting gender issues at this time. My question here was: should we acknowledge this, and challenge ourselves and the global team working on gender to regard gender mainstreaming as an opportunity to differentiate Oxfam's campaigning from that of other organisations, and to do something very powerful as a result?

The answer to all my questions at the time was 'no' or 'not yet'.

Why the difficulty? One of the reasons was that staff and partners working on conflict reduction were not confident in

dealing with gender issues. We did not have the capacity to offer them training, because the regional gender adviser was not yet in place, and although advisers did come from the head office in the UK, we needed a sustained approach which was sensitive to the context. Also, we had not been able to identify a strong gender-oriented partner organisation with whom to engage on conflict reduction. By contrast, on trade-related issues, we had a gender and trade specialist leading our work and we worked in alliance with UNIFEM, among others, which played an important role in highlighting gender concerns in our joint campaigning. Another reason for difficulty was that conflict reduction was the least well-resourced and well-led area of programming for Oxfam in West Africa. Everything is harder in this context, including gender mainstreaming. The final reason was the fact that (in my opinion) Oxfam was trying to do too much, which made it impossible for staff to focus properly on this particular area of our programme. There were hard choices to be made about what to do and not to do.

These reasons could explain the difficulties in mainstreaming gender in any area of programming. But I think there are two further complications specific to conflict-reduction work. One is the conventional assumptions associated with conflict: staff either perceive women in their traditional maternal role, which is often conflated with the role of peacemakers, and they therefore prioritise support for women's peace groups; and/or they perceive women as victims, who therefore need to have services provided for them. While these responses are both valid, they are unlikely, on their own, to lead to a genuine assessment of – and challenge to – unequal power relations between men and women, and the pressure on men to conform to the traditional masculine role of fighters. Nor are they likely to lead to an understanding of how gender issues play out in conflict itself, and

in conflict-reduction programming. The second complication is the sensitive nature of conflict-reduction work. Where staff are already managing a lot of risks by engaging in conversations about conflict, in contexts where challenging power can be a life-and-death issue, the idea of simultaneously addressing gender inequality (another, very personal, challenge to power) can be truly daunting.

With these two additional factors compounding the challenge of mainstreaming gender in conflict-reduction work, it is easy to understand why development organisations can get stuck. But this should never be an acceptable excuse for not tackling the issue. Any conflict-reduction work that does not consider gender issues will most likely reinforce existing problems and power imbalances between women and men, thereby undermining any chance of real development for the whole community, including women and girls. However, from another perspective, the issue of gender stereotyping on the one hand, and sensitivity to power issues on the other, can perhaps be seen to provide an exciting opportunity – if the one is used as an entry point for the other.

Our programme in Mali had begun to do this. Oxfam began to listen to the analysis of women and men across communities in conflict, using discussions of the traditional roles played by men and women to explore sensitive issues about grazing rights, retribution, and security, and questioning those roles in the process. An unforeseen and welcome change in people's lives (in addition to the better management of conflict) has been the increased political voice of women, who now stand for election because they feel empowered to. This programming evolved over years. The question was: how could we learn from this, and encourage pro-active programme design to use the issue of gender equality as a way into responding to entrenched and difficult problems?

Leading Oxfam's global programme on conflict reduction

In 2001, while still in my role as Oxfam GB's Regional Director for West Africa, I was given responsibility for leading the organisation's conflict-reduction programme throughout the world. This was at a time when we had unresolved concerns about this work, which I describe below. It was also a time when Oxfam was re-affirming the importance of taking practical measures to mainstream a commitment to gender equality in all its work. I will consider each of these concerns in turn.

The ways in which the SCO on conflict reduction was interpreted in Oxfam's programme varied widely. In Central America and the Caribbean, the focus was on young people and urban violence. In Rwanda, Oxfam supported village peace-building initiatives. In India, Oxfam partners researched the causes of inter-communal violence. In the UK, we campaigned for tighter regulation of arms exports.

Ironically, part of my job as the lead on conflict reduction turned out to be what might be termed internal conflict-reduction work. Organisationally, there was a great deal of unease about the efficacy of the work. Staff involved in particular projects were passionate about it and had no doubt whatsoever about its value. Certainly, women, men, girls, and boys living in poor, conflict-prone parts of the world had testified that their lives had improved as a result. Yet we had to address some legitimate concerns which had not previously been clearly articulated across the whole organisation. As a result, staff involved in conflict reduction often perceived their work as under-valued. Some felt frustrated by what seemed like unexplained stalling and vacillation when they submitted conflict-reduction programmes for approval, or when they faced what they felt to be unduly detailed questions about what

exactly the money was to be spent on, and what impact the work really could demonstrate. As a result, divisions had arisen among some staff, and an unhealthy perception had arisen that some staff were in favour of conflict-reduction work, while others were against it.

I needed to persuade people from different parts of Oxfam, with very different realities and roles and very different starting points, to listen to each other and work together in an unthreatening manner, to find a way forward. One of my first tasks was to identify the various concerns that lay beneath the problem and articulate them clearly and openly, as risks that needed to be managed. I describe these concerns below.

The risk of exceeding Oxfam's charitable mandate

Oxfam is a registered charity in the UK. Our charitable status gives us certain rights and responsibilities. Broadly speaking, we have the right to recover tax on the money that people give us, and we have the responsibility to spend our money on actions that will directly address poverty and suffering, and are not related to party politics. What such actions may or may not justly include is obviously a matter for judgement, but we make it with the guidance of the Charity Commission in the UK. Conflict-reduction work can include some actions that might be open to differing interpretations – for example, facilitating a series of meetings between two parties to a conflict.

The risk of undermining Oxfam's identity as an impartial humanitarian actor

We are a signatory to the Red Cross Code of Conduct, which commits us to ensure that our actions are always impartial – that is, that our humanitarian aid is given on the basis of need, and need alone. Also, when we work in places of conflict, it is usually important that all sides see Oxfam as neutral – not taking sides. If we fail to maintain this discipline, we risk losing our identity as a

neutral humanitarian actor, the safety of whose staff should be respected by all parties in the conflict. For example, if Oxfam calls for arms not to be supplied to a particular government in a conflict, that government might conclude that we have taken sides and are no longer playing the role of an impartial humanitarian actor. This may expose our staff to the risk of attack, or lead to Oxfam being asked to leave the country.

The risk to the security of staff and partners

The closer an organisation comes to addressing what it perceives to be the causes of a conflict or the means by which violence is perpetrated, the more likely its staff are to face security risks, as those who hold the power begin to feel threatened or exposed. For example, if Oxfam or its partner organisations do research which uncovers the networks of powerful organisations and people who are benefiting from a war economy, staff may be threatened or attacked.

The risk of acting on a superficial understanding

Conflicts are usually inherently complex. Without a substantial history of engagement with affected communities, it is all too easy to miss important nuances in the analysis of a conflict situation and to draw incomplete or wrong conclusions. This could lead, for example, to encouraging co-operation between two factions in a conflict and inadvertently excluding a third faction. The organisation might be perceived as interfering in the conflict, and thus being party to it. For example, purchasing arms from fighters with the intention of destroying them can be seen simply as purchasing arms!

The risk of attempting to work beyond our competencies

When in 1997 Oxfam changed its mission from 'relieving' to 'overcoming' poverty and

suffering, working with others became imperative. Change of this magnitude could be achieved only by working with a wide range of other actors. Nowhere is this truer than in the area of conflict reduction, which has always been a small part of Oxfam's global programme, with relatively few Oxfam staff experienced in this area of work. Oxfam needs to work with and draw on the experience and expertise of a wide range of actors specialising in conflict reduction, ranging from multilateral agencies and the UN, to governments and NGOs.

The risk of being unable to demonstrate the impact of work on conflict reduction

All Oxfam's activities should have a demonstrable positive impact on the lives of poor people. Programme design should make clear what changes in policies, practices, ideas, and beliefs we seek to bring about. Progress should then be reported clearly and critically, to enable future learning and programme development. Proposals that are clear only about the inputs (for example, funding for meetings to be held) and outputs (for example, the number of people trained) will not be approved.

Having identified the risks perceived by Oxfam staff in conflict-reduction work, I then went on to assign explicit responsibility for managing these risks. The eight Regional Directors managing Oxfam's international programme were requested to oversee personally the design and management of conflict-reduction programmes in their regions. They would be accountable for ensuring that the risks were identified and actively managed. Although they could delegate management responsibility, Regional Directors were asked to take a closer personal interest in this work than they might in some other, less risky, areas of programming. Accountability was to be monitored through normal performance management in the management-reporting line. This first initiative, that of active risk

management, took some of the negative emotion out of the debate and succeeded in removing obstacles to crucial work.

Setting the direction for future work

Having got the management of risk under control, I then set about rallying people to the task of setting the direction for Oxfam's conflict-reduction work. It was encouraging to find that, no matter what their perspective, nearly everyone agreed on the urgent need for a global strategic framework which set out Oxfam's proposition and rationale for working on conflict reduction. In this framework, we needed to summarise Oxfam's distinctive competencies and provide guidelines on how to make careful judgements about when and how Oxfam might best intervene in each context. The framework should also include specific changes that we wished to support through our work. Finally, we needed to produce an outline of programme plans and resources.

The process of agreeing the strategy was as important as the outcome. We invested significant time in ensuring the full participation of staff in formulating the strategy, including several rounds of consultation and drafting that lasted for nearly a year, and a meeting of staff from all over the global programme that took place in March 2003. A senior manager in the Policy Department reflected: 'It was really encouraging to see the central role which the programme implementers played in defining policy – the power of their collaboration over a few short days.' This process resulted in the production of a document and agreement on a direction for the work, both of which were fully supported by a wide group of staff, ranging from field-based practitioners to centrally based advocates and senior managers. However, we were always clear that the strategy must be in line with Oxfam's mission and policy as a development and humanitarian actor, and that the

final decision on programme direction rested with senior management. The following is an extract from the strategy:

Oxfam's concern: Armed conflict is a major cause of protracted suffering, abject poverty, and the destruction of the basic rights of men, women, children, and the elderly. Armed conflict often prevents the development work and humanitarian assistance that would otherwise be able to meet the vital needs of individuals and communities. It is a threat to the development, protection, and assistance Oxfam works to provide under all of its Aims.

The strategy goes on to propose a four-pronged approach, consisting of the following elements:

- Support for civil-society organisations and initiatives that work to reduce conflict and to build peace by promoting dialogue, co-operation, a culture of tolerance, respect for diversity, and the rule of law.
- Development of livelihood programming and conflict-sensitive development for men, women, and communities at risk of resorting to violence.
- Campaigning to promote a reduction in the availability and flow of arms.
- Advocacy to promote the timely and effective engagement of international agencies and regional bodies in the reduction and prevention of armed conflict.

We now have much greater clarity of direction – not only in principle, as reflected in official documentation, but also in practice. All the staff involved in this work, and their managers, are reasonably clear about the direction of our programme on conflict reduction, and the risks to be managed; and we can expect programming to show a reasonable degree of alignment with this overall framework.

The next step is to review our conflict-reduction programme to check this alignment and to identify effective strategies

and good practice from the experience of both Oxfam and other agencies with expertise in this field. We will compare findings with the conclusions in the Strategic Framework and confirm Oxfam's areas of comparative advantage. We want to make this a learning journey for staff and partners engaged in conflict-reduction work, so that lessons start being put into practice even as the review takes place.

Mainstreaming gender into Oxfam's global conflict-reduction programme

In my work as the global lead on conflict reduction, I consciously decided to try to mainstream gender from the start. Indeed, I expected to be held accountable for doing so, given that Oxfam had prioritised gender mainstreaming. I knew from my West Africa experience that it would not be easy. Rather than seeing gender analysis as a way into the problematic issues raised by our role in conflict-reduction work, most staff saw gender as an additional complication.

I asked a gender specialist to help me to ensure that gender issues were put at the centre of our Global Framework. Getting gender into a document is not the same as mainstreaming, but it's a start! It is good for clarity and accountability, and – if nothing else – it will raise debate and visibility. Working with a gender adviser and digging out the background documents on gender dimensions of conflict in international agreements also had the added benefit of pointing me to external sources on this subject, beyond the internal confines of the debate about Oxfam's own work in this area.

It was interesting to see the responses from staff as they read the early drafts of the global framework and noticed references to women, men, girls, and boys, to CEDAW (the Commission on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women), and to the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women in conflict and peace-

building. In all the internal documentation on conflict work that I had seen to date, gender was rarely or minimally mentioned. People sent me emails from all around the world, either to applaud the explicit references to gender issues, or to complain that we had overdone it!

Another important step was to use a gender and diversity 'lens' in working with staff on the Global Framework. By this, I mean that we consciously adopted a gender perspective to look at the composition and the dynamics of the wider reference group, and the smaller group that participated in the global meeting. I believe that striving for a process that was balanced in terms of gender (and other aspects of social diversity) contributed significantly to encouraging mutual respect among people with differing views, and achieving a shared vision for our work.

However, the final text of the global framework is not as strong on gender as it could be, despite the input of gender specialists. All the basics are there, but we failed to make a breakthrough in terms of identifying what really could make a big difference in the impact of our work, in terms of challenging the power imbalance and gender roles in armed conflict.

One reason was the way in which we dealt with gender in the global meeting. I did not ensure that the (very able) adviser was sufficiently briefed, which in turn was a result of not having a dedicated gender adviser on the team from the beginning (instead, I had taken advice from wherever I could get it). The session started too far back, explaining the basics of gender analysis to a room full of people, many of whom have been personally committed to gender equality-work for many years, and who grapple with the practicalities of mainstreaming gender every day of their working lives. They were eager to share experiences and think of ways forward, but not keen to hear about the theory behind gender mainstreaming. We also failed to keep a

gender analysis going throughout the meeting.

The global framework guides our current programming, and I believe the challenge to mainstream gender equality fully in our work therefore remains to be taken up. A review of our conflict programme is currently in progress, and this should provide Oxfam with another opportunity to consider the issues, by uncovering and sharing examples of good practice, and in particular by using a gender perspective to address difficult conflict-related issues.

Conclusion: lessons learned

Mainstreaming gender into development, humanitarian work, and campaigning, including conflict-reduction programmes, is too often seen as a challenge to be overcome. Although progress can be made if this is the dominant view among staff, it needs determination and commitment, and is inherently a limited way of addressing questions of gender relations. Instead, gender mainstreaming should be seen as an opportunity to increase impact dramatically, and to achieve a breakthrough in analysis or programme design.

Often this is easier to do when standing back and redesigning a project or campaign – for example in the conceptualisation of Oxfam’s campaign for a global arms treaty, in which the campaign objectives and strategies have been developed to have a positive influence on gender relations. A breakthrough will come if this is followed through (for example, in the commissioning of photographs and stories, and in the links to project work on the ground), to realise the potential of making all the more impact because of having taken a gender-sensitive approach.

More challengingly, we need to understand how to shape long-standing work and influence the work of partner organisations, to ensure that gender issues are understood

as offering an opportunity for breakthrough. Usually this will mean challenging some of the work perceived as successful to date – for example, a project in which 30 male journalists were trained in conflict-sensitive approaches to reporting, but the lack of female participants was excused because there were no women ‘ready’; and the support given to a women-only peace march (on the grounds that peacemaking is the role of women, not men). Hard questions need to be posed about the potentially negative impact of such otherwise positive initiatives. Then ways forward need to be found, so that our work breaks out of these traps and challenges gender stereotypes in conflict and peacemaking, to achieve a more substantial impact in people’s lives.

Linked to the need to make this mind-shift (from seeing gender mainstreaming as a challenge to seeing it as an opportunity) is the importance of looking outside our own organisations. Forging alliances and partnerships with new and non-traditional agencies, including those with a specialist focus such as gender and conflict, can help us to view things from new perspectives.

The importance of the leadership role should not be underestimated. The leader must be personally convinced of the imperative need to mainstream gender – not only in the programme, but in the organisation too. However, I believe that the leader does not have to be an expert in the area in which he or she is leading. In fact, there are benefits to approaching an issue without a prior agenda, in being able to ask innocent questions, in needing to consult widely, and in having to adopt a common-sense approach that is sure to be simple enough to engage other non-experts. It is important that the leader is seen to have unquestioned commitment and integrity, which includes being able to admit shortcomings and mistakes. Also, if he or she is not an expert, the leader must be able to rely on expert advice throughout the process. Broadly, the leadership task is about creating the clarity,

climate, and competence for staff throughout the organisation to feel empowered and accountable for interpreting the overall programme direction in their day-to-day work, including mainstreaming gender.

The role of the gender adviser is also critical. This person's first responsibility should be to provide advice and coach the leader, so that authoritative advice permeates the whole project. It is important to resource this function properly; the old adage that you get out what you put in remains true. Making do with the scrapings of various advisers' time is not going to produce a high-quality result.

It is crucial to keep plans realistic and well resourced. This means making hard choices about what not to do. Over-ambitious plans will mean that staff are over-stretched, and that new or more difficult issues (like gender and conflict reduction) are not properly addressed.

Finally, valuing experience, and learning from it, is vital, both for the individual and his or her immediate colleagues, but also for sharing with the wider organisation and for documenting lessons for the future. As I discovered when I inherited my global lead role, lessons learned years ago about gender mainstreaming in Oxfam were being re-learned all over again. I would certainly have benefited from exposure to the considered views of staff who had already invested time in considering the issues. The purpose of writing this article was to reflect on what I have learned from my experience, and to share the learning with people who face similar challenges. I encourage others in Oxfam and in other organisations to value, reflect on, and learn from their own experiences. Ultimately, this will enable us to make more of a difference in the lives of women, men, girls, and boys who are living in poverty and, in this case, threatened by conflict.

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Promoting a gender-just peace: the roles of women teachers in peacebuilding and reconstruction

Jackie Kirk

Schools – however temporary and improvised they may be – are often among the first community organisations to start functioning after a crisis. It is important that they set a high standard in encouraging the active participation of women in reconstruction and peacebuilding after conflict. This article examines the potential of women teachers for significant participation in building a gender-just peace, and the challenges that exist for women to fulfil this potential. Drawing on examples from a number of different contexts, especially Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and south Sudan, it discusses women teachers' personal and professional development. It identifies some of the challenges faced by women in becoming teachers, and strategies to support women teachers to become agents of change in their societies.

At any time and in any context, women teachers are critical actors in education processes. In conflict and post-conflict contexts, they have the potential to make a significant contribution to the long-term processes of peacebuilding and reconstruction. The roles of women in schools are often defined in terms of their 'natural' affinities with young children, and their innate love of teaching and their ability to do it. However, this article argues for a recognition of women teachers' potential to act as agents of change for a gender-just peace. If women can experience personal and professional development through being teachers, they can be empowered as key agents of structural and societal transformation that is built on principles of gender equality.

I begin with an overview of policy perspectives on women teachers, in the context of Education for All and the

Millennium Development Goals. Then, drawing on examples from a number of different contexts, especially Afghanistan, Ethiopia and south Sudan, I discuss women teachers' personal and professional development, and how this can contribute to the transformation of social systems. I then identify some of the challenges to be faced by women in becoming a teacher in the first place, and the challenges of imagining and enacting the role of change agent. The paper ends with some examples of initiatives that are being taken to recruit, retain, and support women teachers, and makes some recommendations for further action.

Women teachers and gender equality in education

In the context of the internationally agreed Education for All (EFA) targets and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),

women teachers are the subjects of considerable attention by policy makers.¹ They are considered critical for improving gender equality in education, primarily in terms of increasing girls' enrolment and retention in school. The UNESCO EFA monitoring report (UNESCO 2003) indicates that across the world girls' enrolments rise relative to boys' as the proportion of female teachers increases.

As a means of increasing gender equality in enrolment, increasing the numbers of women teachers has proved to be an effective strategy. In sub-Saharan African countries in which there are roughly equal numbers of male and female teachers, there is more or less equality in enrolment of boys and girls. However, in countries where only around 20 per cent of teachers are female, enrolment of girls is much lower. The countries with the lowest proportions of women teachers are generally the countries in which overall enrolment is low, and gender-determined disparities are widest. Bangladesh is an example of a country where deliberate policy measures have been taken to increase the recruitment of women teachers, especially in remote and rural areas, and this has had a positive impact on girls' enrolment.

In contexts where the education systems have been devastated by conflict, and where girls' enrolment and retention in schools has suffered because of family displacement, poverty, lack of accessible schools, and other conflict-related reasons, the lack of women teachers is often an added disincentive for girls to attend school. In Afghanistan, there are some villages and some families who will allow their daughters to be taught by male teachers. However, in many, girls' access to education depends very much on the presence of a female teacher, teaching an all girls' class in a nearby home. In south Sudan, and in refugee camps in Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ethiopia, there are particular initiatives designed to increase the numbers of women teachers as an

important strategy for improving girls' access to education. Women teachers can be powerful role models for girl students, and can encourage, counsel, and help girls to complete their studies. Increasing the numbers of women teachers may also mean that girls in school are safer, and less vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse from male students and teachers.

If the increased presence of women teachers in schools does create improvements in the educational opportunities and experiences for girls, this is a highly significant step in transformation for gender-just peace; it has huge implications for the empowerment of future generations of women. However, women's access to employment as school teachers is also a gender-equality issue in its own right. As a key institution of the community in which it is located, the school acts as a model to the wider communities, and therefore ensuring women's participation in schools is important. If women are appointed to respected positions as teachers, and if they are seen to be playing active roles in schools, then a positive impact may be expected on the individual women teachers themselves and on the students in the school (and especially the girls), but also on the community as a whole. The education system is also one of the State's most important institutions, and women should have opportunities for active and equal participation in leadership and decision-making roles, as do men. This point is particularly important in contexts of conflict, as schools – however temporary and improvised they may be – are often among the first community organisations to start functioning after a crisis. It is important that they set a high standard for gender equality in staffing and encourage the active participation of women.

Teaching as a route to women's personal and professional transformation

Becoming a teacher may also be a way for women to provide important income or supplies for themselves and for their families. This is a critical issue in conflict contexts, where there are often high proportions of female-headed households because of the large numbers of men killed or displaced. In south Sudan, for example, war-related deaths and population movements have increased the ratio of women to men (18 years and over) to slightly more than 2:1. This means that many families are headed by women, and are dependent on women's economic activity (SoE 2004). While the Secretariat of Education is still unable to pay its teachers, agencies and NGOs offer some incentives (in cash and in kind), all of which can make a significant impact on the well-being of teachers and their families. Especially while teaching conditions remain very challenging, such strategies are used to help to retain teachers in the profession. Providing food and clothing for teachers' families (and particularly their husbands) can also reduce family resistance to women working outside the home.

In addition to meeting the practical gender needs of women, becoming a teacher may also start to address women's strategic interests. The personal and professional development that women experience through training and employment as teachers can be empowering in different ways. Being able to support their families may have an important impact on the psycho-social well-being of women who have been affected by conflict. Teachers in Afghanistan, for example, have indicated that instead of being alone, surrounded by their own problems, and constantly reliving the trauma and loss of the conflict, the opportunity to teach gives them something else to think about. One woman teacher

interviewed as part of The Healing Classrooms Initiative of the International Rescue Committee (IRC)² stated: *'School helps me forget my problems and sorrows – before I was teaching, I was very sad all the time. I enjoy being with the children, and it helps me forget my pain. They learn from me and I learn from them too.'*

The opportunity to teach and therefore to play a significant role in a community also benefits women psycho-socially, in that they feel a sense of contributing to their community, knowing that they are doing their best, and contributing positively to the future. In some countries it is harder for women than men to be active in the public realm, but teaching may be a culturally acceptable way to do so. In Afghanistan, several of the women teachers involved in the project had returned from Pakistan to find that the girls in their villages had no opportunities to go to school at all. Being able to do something for these girls, and for their community, is clearly important to these women, even though they have no formal training as teachers. In a refugee camp in Ethiopia, a young Kunama woman teacher who has not completed her own secondary education explained that she was nominated by the community to teach because there were no other, more educated women. Although she lacked confidence in her skills, she felt that it was important to share with the students what she had learned in Eritrea before she had had to flee. Other teachers in the camp expressed their feeling that, while there were no opportunities for them to continue their own formal education (that is, to continue to secondary school), teaching was a good way to extend their own knowledge.

Women can also gain status and respect in a community through becoming a teacher. This is particularly important in male-dominated societies such as Afghanistan, where women rarely hold important positions in communities. The same woman teacher quoted above said: *'The community is*

very happy that I am teaching, and whenever they see me they give me respect and say how much I know.' Another, a young woman of only 18, who is teaching a class in her home village in the afternoons while attending secondary school herself in the mornings, said: *'I'm proud to be a teacher, for myself, and also in the village – they know I teach without pay, and I get respect for it.'* A third woman explained that, as an outsider who married into the village, becoming a teacher has been for her a way of settling into the village. Through teaching, she has gained the trust and respect of the local people: *'For example, when there are parties and ceremonies, I go, and if everyone is sitting on the floor, then they bring me a mattress – and everyone, young and old, calls me "Teacher".'*

Education and transformation for peace

In post-conflict contexts, schools are the places in which new curricula will be taught that are oriented towards peace, living together, and active citizenship in a democratic society. Children need to learn new information, skills, and attitudes which will protect them through the difficult transformation towards peace, encourage them to assert their rights, and enable them to participate actively in development and reconstruction processes. New teaching and learning materials are required to do this. Transformation of classroom processes, and teaching methods in particular, can mean that schools are places for healing processes to take place, encouraging war-affected children to feel part of a community and to play an active role in creating brighter futures. Transformation within the education sector can be a critical force for broader societal change.

As teachers, women have important roles to play in all these processes; they have perspectives and experiences to share with their students which may differ from those of men. Because of the different ways in

which they are positioned in societies and communities, women experience, interpret, and enact peacebuilding differently. Women also have perceptions of curricula and teaching and learning processes that are different from those of men, and different demands to make of learning opportunities. Educational reconstruction and transformation are critical in post-conflict contexts, requiring the complementary contributions of both men and women. As the classroom is such an important site of transformation for peace, the work of women teachers is an important component of peace processes.

In a programme document of the Sudan Basic Education Programme,³ the following reasons are given for 'Why We Need Female Teachers':

- Female teachers are making an important contribution to the future of southern Sudan.
- Women have important knowledge, ideas, and experiences to share with children.
- A democratic education system needs to strive for gender equality at all levels.
- Education for a peaceful future has to include women's perspectives as well as men's.

However, the reality is that in south Sudan, as in many conflict and post-conflict contexts, there are considerable barriers to women's entry to the teaching profession. There are also reasons why women teachers are not able to fulfil their potential as change agents. Governments, agencies, and NGOs are working to develop and implement particular strategies to overcome some of these barriers, and to encourage more women to become teachers. It is more challenging, however, to address the limitations that constrain women once they are within the system.

Recruiting and retaining women teachers after conflict

Many of the agencies and organisations involved in educational provision in emergency and post-conflict situations are aware of the need to recruit more women teachers. The International Network on Emergency Education (INEE), for example, includes women-teacher recruitment as an important gender-equity strategy. The following section examines some of the obstacles to women's entry into the teaching profession.

Barriers to women's employment as teachers

As part of the interplay between cause and effect, low enrolment of girls in schools means the creation of only very small pools of young women who are adequately qualified to become teachers. In Ethiopia, for example, where the International Rescue Committee has helped the Kunama and Tigigna refugee community from Eritrea to set up a school in their camp, the Kunama population as a whole suffers from low literacy rates. This is a result of the very inadequate provision of teachers in their region of origin in Eritrea. For women, education levels are particularly low: very few of the refugee women have completed primary school, let alone entered secondary school. This means that recruiting female teachers for the school is very difficult. The women who are teaching have fewer years of schooling than the male teachers, and are therefore understandably less confident about their teaching abilities. The women teach the lower grades in the school, and the split-shift system means that the female students in Grades 3 and above do not have direct contact with these women.

In south Sudan, few women have the command of English required for teaching,⁴ and this is an additional barrier, on top of their generally very low levels of education.

Here, only about 6 per cent of all teachers are women. In the regions of Upper Nile and Bahr El Ghazal, the figures are as low as 2 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. Girls' enrolment in education, although rising, remains at approximately 11 per cent of the total (Secretariat of Education 2004). For girls especially, completing primary school is a challenge in itself, in a context in which conflict-related poverty means that families often need their daughters to marry early, in order for them to obtain bride-price. There are very few secondary schools for girls in south Sudan; in the regions mentioned above, there is not a single one. Any girls who complete their primary schooling in these regions and who have the resources (and also the resourcefulness) to continue their schooling have to travel to other regions to find secondary schools.

The rudimentary – or even half-destroyed – school buildings, with inadequate toilet and washing facilities, are a contributing factor in the low levels of girls' enrolment *and* the recruitment and retention of women teachers. In south Sudan, almost half of existing schools do not have access to water, and only 30 per cent have latrines (UNICEF/Africa Educational Trust, 2002). Especially during menstruation, such environments are particularly hostile to girls – and to women teachers – and can be a cause of absenteeism and eventual drop-out.

It is clear that with so few girls completing their education, identifying potential women teachers in south Sudan is a challenge. Concessions are made to permit the recruitment of women with lower levels of education, especially in the Community Girls' Schools which are currently being established in communities where the general desire for education is strong, but there is no formal school. In these schools, priority is given to finding women from the community to teach, even if they have only Grade 5 or 6 education themselves. Although these women may have well-developed understandings of the local

children, and of their needs, experiences, and aspirations, they also need and want as much training and follow-up support as possible.

Even if there are well-qualified women who could potentially become teachers, the need to earn an income is often a significant barrier. In contexts where teachers are unpaid volunteers, or they rely on occasional payments from school fees collected, or on incentives provided by NGOs for training or other activities, many women simply cannot afford to become teachers. This is particularly the case in conflict-affected communities where women are heading households, and their families are dependent on their economic activity. Women's time is dedicated to activities which will generate at least a small but regular income, such as selling food and other produce in the local market. They usually have to balance their income-generating activities with other household and child-care responsibilities, which can leave them exhausted and with little time for any volunteer work such as teaching. Men, on the other hand, tend to have fewer household responsibilities; they are therefore more easily able to combine teaching for part of the day with income-generating activities – such as farming or working as casual labour – for the remainder of the day.

Models of teacher training reflect male experiences. This fact, and the relative ease which with men can travel and leave their home base, serve to perpetuate the low enrolment of women. Extended periods of residential training, away from family and community, are not easy for women. In addition to their responsibilities for provisioning and caring for their families, pregnancy and childbearing are also challenges in a context such as south Sudan, where the birth rate is high. With families of five or more children being common, it becomes difficult for women to enter and remain in the teaching profession, because of regular cycles of pregnancies and childbirth.

In particular, when women are engaged in in-service 'phased training', which involves annual residential training sessions during the school holidays, the full three-year training is often interrupted, and many women do not complete the full cycle.

In some other contexts, there may also be cultural barriers to women leaving the home and working in the public realm, and therefore potentially being in contact with unknown men. This is particularly the case in rural areas of Afghanistan, although in Kabul it is quite acceptable for most women to travel around the city, especially if accompanied by other women or known men, and to teach in girls' schools, or in mixed primary schools. In other countries such as Haiti, however, where there are few job opportunities for men, it may be considered as men's right to take what positions are available, and therefore women are not encouraged to become teachers in schools.

Women teachers may also be discouraged by a hostile male-dominated school management and administration which exclude women teachers from decision-making processes and marginalise them to perform menial tasks, such as tea-making and cleaning. It is also problematic that women teachers may be assigned additional responsibilities for girls' well-being, without the necessary recognition or workload adjustment. The only female teacher in a secondary school in south Sudan was absent from class for several days in July 2004. She had had to travel to the hospital in the nearest town with a girl student who had fallen sick. She lives in the school, very close to the girls' dormitories, and is responsible for the pastoral care of all the girls. Although the school authorities are very appreciative of her work, while she was away her lessons were not being taught, and the other girls in the school were missing her presence.

Strategies for recruitment and retention

The following section describes some of the strategies which may increase recruitment

and retention of women teachers. In post-conflict contexts, windows of opportunity may open for quite radical changes to be made in the content and processes of education. These may include a rethinking of what children need to learn in schools, and how and by whom this should be taught. Donor interventions in refugee camps and in communities can try to ensure that education promotes gender equality, and they can provide funding, as well as technical assistance, to develop programmes to bring women into teaching. At the same time, however, the post-conflict context may also mean that there are complex barriers against women entrants. These include conflict-related poverty, low levels of female education, increased economic responsibilities in situations where traditional coping mechanisms have broken down, and fragmented systems and infrastructures which do not allow for easy mobilisation and communication.

One of the most obvious strategies is to reduce the entry requirements for female candidates for teacher training. This means that women who have not necessarily completed their own education, but nonetheless have basic literacy skills and a grasp of pedagogy, can become primary-school teachers. This strategy may be very effective, but it has serious implications for the quality and quantity of training that is needed by potential women teachers. It may also mean that confidence levels plummet among the women who are teaching already, if they feel that they do not necessarily meet the standards required to be a teacher. For example, women nominated as teachers by the Kunama refugee community, who have not completed their own education, felt particularly uncertain of their own skills and worth as teachers. When asked in an interview what motivated her to be a teacher, one of them stated simply, *'I wanted to share my little knowledge with the students'*.

Other strategies to address women's limited formal qualifications and language skills include accelerated English programmes

and basic education programmes, offered specifically to women. The aim is to prepare them either for further pre-service training, or directly for employment in the classroom. In male-dominated, refugee-camp schools in Guinea and Liberia, the International Rescue Committee is implementing an innovative programme to develop female classroom assistants. In this programme, local women who do not have the formal qualifications to become teachers are hired as classroom assistants to work on specific tasks in the classroom with the teacher. They have a particular responsibility to support the girls in the schools and to protect them from sexual exploitation. However, these women also have the opportunity to complete their own schooling, to take other training courses, and eventually become teachers themselves. In this way, it is hoped that the gender balance of the teaching force will shift to include more women, and that classrooms will become safer places for girls.

In the long term, working to increase girls' enrolment in schools, and to ensure that their learning experiences are as positive and as empowering as possible, should lead to more young women going into teaching. In south Sudan, there are concurrent initiatives to provide additional financial support to women entering the first cohorts of a new pre-service teacher-training programme, and to provide support to girls in secondary schools. Linked to the direct financial support to girls in secondary education (a school-fee subsidy) is a future programme component, being designed to encourage girls to visit local primary schools and engage in activities with young children there, in order to inspire the younger girls to complete their primary education and show them that possibilities exist for secondary studies. Such activities may also encourage secondary-school leavers to think about becoming teachers (SoE/ SBEP Gender Team, 2004).

At present, there is little formal evaluation from which to adequately assess the long-term impact and effectiveness of

such strategies. Programme and project reporting and evaluation generally do not go beyond trying to assess immediate impacts, using quantitative measures. Qualitative studies, such as the Healing Classrooms Initiative, would provide more insights into the actual lived experiences of women who become teachers, and into their perceptions of their roles as regards peacebuilding and societal transformation. These insights should then inform more gender-aware programme development, especially teacher education and teacher support.

Moving ahead: women teachers as agents of change for a gender-just peace

Education has a critical role to play in peacebuilding and reconstruction processes, and these processes should be informed by a concern for gender equality in its broadest sense. For this reason, we need to encourage women to be teachers right now, and support them as important agents of change. This is in addition to working on a longer-term strategy of promoting girls' education, out of which more women teachers will emerge. A general imperative to recognise women's roles in peacebuilding is issued in the UN Security Resolution 1325,⁵ and reinforced by the recent Agreed Conclusions of the recent United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (March 2004).⁶ In conflict and post-conflict contexts especially, achieving gender equality in and through education implies promoting equal opportunities for women to participate as teachers in peacebuilding processes and activities that take place in schools.

Women teachers as change agents

Women should be given as much encouragement as possible to consider their potential role in the broader processes of peacebuilding and reconstruction, and in promoting gender equality in their societies. Both women and men have important roles to play as teachers in the structural

transformations of societies, and the ways in which they can do this may be quite different. The very transformations of teaching and learning processes, curricula, and materials discussed above should also serve to promote and develop teachers' own sense of agency for change. Women who may traditionally not have played such an active role in the public domain, and whose roles have been defined as 'reproductive', may, however, require more encouragement to think about themselves as agents of transformation. Teacher-education curricula and processes need to shift from apparently gender-neutral technical training, to be grounded in women's as well as men's experiences and perspectives, and to promote an empowering personal and professional development. It is this personal and professional empowerment of teachers that can be a driving force for the multi-levelled transformation of the education system described above. Agencies and organisations involved in teacher training need to continue to develop – and fully evaluate – their practical measures and strategies to increase recruitment of women teachers. At the same time, however, they should be considering this task from the perspective of social transformation, rather than thinking of it purely in terms of increased girls' education. Improved girls' education should lead to greater participation of women in peacebuilding activities in the future. However, women teachers can be encouraged and supported as participants in such processes right now.

Moving beyond stereotypes

It is important to move beyond ideas that women are all necessarily natural nurturers and carers who enjoy working with children. Such notions may on the one hand encourage women to become teachers, but they are also limiting, stereotyped discourses which may do little to empower women once they are in the profession. It would be equally wrong to assume that all women teachers are natural peacemakers and

peacebuilders. Quite apart from the gendered prescriptiveness of such discourses, they fail to acknowledge the many competing priorities of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. Their own survival and well-being and that of their family take precedence, and women teachers who are coping with the multiple pressures of school work, household tasks, child-care responsibilities and also perhaps other income-generating activities may not have the time or the energy to think beyond the practical and immediate aspects of the lessons that they give. For example, on my visit to a new, large secondary school in south Sudan in July 2004, I found that the single woman teacher on the staff was so preoccupied with other tasks that she was attending school only for the specific lessons she had to give. This is a common situation. In such situations, it is hard for women to conceptualise their role as anything beyond a technical deliverer of lessons, and very difficult for them to be engaged in the school community and in the administration and management decisions and activities that take place outside the individual lessons.

Strategies to support women as change agents

In order to develop women teachers' potential as change agents in their societies, numerous strategies and considerations for international agencies, organisations, and governments emerge from research and programming experience:

- Gender training for all teachers needs to address their own experiences as men and women, and their own different potentials and limitations in broader processes of societal transformation towards achieving a gender-just peace.
- Although it is important to provide inexperienced teachers with the practical skills and techniques, there also needs to be a greater emphasis in teacher training on empowering teachers as agents of transformation

within the education sector and within society as a whole.

First, additional training or workshops specific to women teachers should be considered, not as 'remedial' strategies for women, but as opportunities for them to work with confidence with other women, to consider gender issues from their own experiences, and to develop their capacity for leadership roles in schools and in communities.

Second, support should be provided for women teachers to form associations, through which isolated women might have an opportunity to meet with colleagues and share experiences, concerns, and ideas. Assigning women to schools in pairs may help to avoid isolation and provide mutual support. Collaboration with local women's organisations and groups may be another means of support for women in schools.

Third, in reconstruction processes, when ministries or departments of education are able to certify (or re-certify) teachers and to register them at certain levels on an official payroll, specific attention needs to be given to ensuring fair treatment for women teachers who may be formally less well qualified than men, but who have accrued significant teaching experience and skills.

To summarise, the agency of women in schools to contribute to a more gender-just peace should be recognised and promoted. Women's roles in promoting the multi-level transformations taking place within the education sector are as important as their roles in promoting fundamental changes in the society as a whole. The strategies suggested above, if carefully monitored, evaluated, and constantly adjusted according to the shifting realities of particular contexts, may contribute to achieving a more substantial and substantive participation from women in peacebuilding processes.

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Notes

- 1 Education for All (EFA) target 5: 'Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015'. Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3: 'Promote gender equality and empower women'. Target: 'Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015'.
- 2 Data quoted from interviews with women teachers in Afghanistan and Ethiopia were collected during field-based assessments in 2004 for the Healing Classrooms Initiative of the International Rescue Committee (IRC). For further details, contact Rebecca Winthrop, Education Technical Advisor, International Rescue Committee. Email: rebeccaw@their.org
- 3 Internal document, Gender Equity Support Program of the Sudan Basic Education Programme and the Secretariat of Education, 2004.
- 4 Although mother-tongue instruction is used in grades 1–3, English is the medium of instruction in upper-primary and secondary schools in south Sudan. Teacher training is conducted in English, and teaching materials are published in English. Women whose own education was in Arabic or who studied in English but have not practised it since their own school days are not able to become teachers without first up-grading their English skills.

- 5 For further information on Security Council Resolution 1325, see www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html
- 6 For further information on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, March 2004, see www.peacewomen.org/un/ecosoc/CSW/CSW2004.html

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Gender, participation, and post-conflict planning in northern Sri Lanka

Simon Harris

The 'mainstreaming' of gender issues throughout all aspects of peace and reconstruction processes has been widely advocated for at least a decade. However, women are often absent from peace processes, and most post-conflict planning for reconstruction continues to ignore, or inadequately account for, gender issues. Hence, gender inequalities go unchallenged. This article examines two key challenges in promoting greater female participation and ensuring the effective inclusion of gender issues within peace and reconstruction strategies. First, there is a need for institutions which are sensitive to gender issues, and committed to promoting gender equality as a part of peace processes. Second, women's full participation in these institutions needs to be supported through capacity building. This article discusses two initiatives in Sri Lanka which aim to respond to these challenges.

Between 1983 and 2001, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) engaged in armed struggle against the Sri Lankan government, fighting for an independent Tamil homeland. This brought almost two decades of violent conflict, internal displacement, and isolation to the people of the northern Wanni area of the country. Much of this region was under continual LTTE control throughout the period of conflict. Its main urban centre, Kilinochchi, is now the seat of the Tigers' administration. Although these areas of the Wanni are today almost entirely Tamil, there was previously a significant Muslim community, who were forced to migrate. Hostilities ceased in December 2001.

The current period could be described as one of *post-conflict transition* – or perhaps, more accurately, *pre-post-conflict transition*. It is a critical juncture for Sri Lanka in general, and the Wanni in particular. Although the

outcome of the peace process will undoubtedly shape the future of Sri Lanka as a whole, it is likely to have a more fundamental impact on the development and direction of society in the Wanni region itself, as the region emerges from years of social, political, and economic isolation from the rest of the country.

Since the subsequent signing of a ceasefire agreement between the government and the LTTE, a fragile and halting peace process has ensued. Peace talks have been held in abeyance for over a year, and the government of President Chandrika Bandaranaike is struggling to maintain a coalition of divergent interests. Despite successive rounds of talks under the previous United National Party (UNP) government, which was credited with initiating the current peace process, there now seems an absence of any consensus between the parties on the basis for further peace talks.

The LTTE is also experiencing a major challenge to the status of the dominant militant Tamil nationalist party that it has enjoyed since the end of the 1970s. The recent formation of a break-away faction by the LTTE's former commander in the East has undermined the LTTE's claim to be the sole representative of the Tamil cause.

Transitional roles for women

The peace and reconstruction process does, however, seem to be making progress in including women and countering the assertion that they are generally absent, or at best under-represented, in post-conflict decision-making (Johnston ed. 2001). The abundance of women in visible positions of power and authority is one of the most striking images to confront the first-time visitor travelling into the LTTE-controlled Wanni region of northern Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan police who check one's passes at the barrier, or who issue on-the-spot fines for speeding farther along the road; the customs officials who impassively inspect vehicles and bags for contraband; the soldiers carrying arms and munitions to their positions in the jungle, or loitering to chat under the shade of a tree – all are invariably women.

At a policy level, the need for women's views to be incorporated across all aspects of the peace process seems to have been recognised by both parties to the conflict. Media images have suggested that women are prominent at a diplomatic level in the peace process between the LTTE and Sri Lankan government. Recent television and newspaper pictures have shown the LTTE's male chief negotiator, the head of the political wing, meeting the government, with Norwegian third-party facilitators; frequently, the only other LTTE representative pictured alongside him is a woman, one of the Tamil Tigers' senior negotiators, and a co-architect of their peace proposals.

However, these images do not reveal the full picture. It has been argued that most of

the decision makers, managers, and administrators involved with the peace and reconstruction process have generally 'no practical or theoretical bases from which to help them address the complex issues that face a transitional society emerging from years of protracted conflict' (Harris and Lewer 2004: 29). Who defines the scope and priorities of reconstruction and reconciliation? How do women contribute to this process of definition and participate in setting the agenda?

Donors expect gender issues and women's participation to be taken seriously in Sri Lanka. There are positive examples of gender mainstreaming in other peace and reconstruction processes. One is the establishment of a Gender Affairs Unit as part of the UN transitional mechanisms to support the integration of gender as part of the process of institution building in post-independence East Timor, and another is the attempt to integrate gender issues into reconstruction in post-genocide Rwanda (El Jack et al. 2003).

In June 2003, the declaration that concluded the Tokyo Donors' Conference on the reconstruction and development of Sri Lanka linked the scale and commitment of international aid and assistance directly to substantial progress in the peace process. The conference highlighted ten key indicators that the donor community would use for monitoring progress. These included the 'effective inclusion of gender equity and equality in the peacebuilding, the conflict transformation and the reconstruction process, emphasizing an equitable representation of women in political fora and at other decision-making levels' (Tokyo Donors' Conference 2003).

In this light, should the approximately US\$ 4 billion in aid that has been pledged for post-conflict reconstruction be viewed cynically as four billion factors motivating the parties to enhance their inclusion of gender in the process? Or should this nexus between international donor requirements and progress towards gender equity be

viewed as a positive component of conditionality, one that is establishing an international partnership which is helping to advance the inclusion and participation of women? What are the implications of this relationship between aid and gender issues? How are other international stakeholders, such as humanitarian aid organisations and educational providers, positioning themselves *vis à vis* the gender provisos of the Tokyo Declaration? To what extent are new forms of patriarchy merely replacing the old? As Cynthia Enloe notes, post-war periods are 'crowded with gendered decisions' (Enloe 1993: 261).

Within the confines of this paper, it is not possible fully to answer all of these questions, or to unravel each of the multitude of decisions on gender issues facing the Wanni. The paper is limited to two main issues: first, it explores the attempts of the LTTE and Sri Lankan government to meet the donor requirement of developing a gender framework for planning reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reconciliation through the creation of the unique, and potentially enabling, Sub-Committee on Gender. In the second part, the paper moves on to explore one response to the need to build the capacity of women from the Wanni to participate in such policy-making bodies. I examine the joint SS /University of Bradford educational initiative, which seeks to enhance women's and men's capacity to engage effectively in peace and post-conflict planning and policy formulation. This article draws upon my years of experience of peace and development work in Sri Lanka with Oxfam GB, Cordaid, and most recently a peace-education programme linking the University of Bradford (UK) with a local research institute, the Social Scientists' Association (SSA).

Policy, planning, and donor priorities

After twenty years of militarisation, authoritarian control, and the complete

stagnation of social, political, and economic development, the LTTE, the people of the Wanni, and other stakeholders must now respond to the real challenges of peace that lie beyond the negotiation table. These include the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the physical infrastructure of the region; the establishment of transparent, accountable, and democratic institutions; and the rebuilding of social networks and trust between people, enabling different groups to participate equally in civic life. Central to these challenges are issues related to gender equality.

Since the ceasefire, there has been increased potential for accessing support and specialist advice on gender through the academic and activist community, both within the wider Tamil community in Sri Lanka and beyond it in the diaspora. Efforts have also been made by the international diplomatic community and peace-oriented agencies to provide LTTE representatives with opportunities to see and learn from peace processes and constitutional models in countries such as Ireland, South Africa, and Switzerland. However, the opportunity to review ways in which gender inequality has been addressed in other post-conflict situations would also be valuable. Unfortunately, direct involvement with much of the academic debate on gender and peace emanating from the UK, USA, and India is restricted, due to the proscription of the LTTE in these countries.¹

During the third round of the Norwegian-facilitated peace talks in Oslo in December 2002, Sri Lanka established a joint Sub-Committee on Gender Issues (SGI), consisting of representatives of the government and the LTTE. The SGI, drawing upon United Nations Security Resolution 1325 as its reference point, acknowledges the need for women's issues to be fully incorporated into 'all aspects of peace-making, peace-building and reconstruction'. The SGI's terms of reference explain that ensuring women's participation enhances the legitimacy of the peace process by 'making it more

democratic and receptive to the priorities of all segments of the populace' (SGI 2003:1). This bias in framing the Sub-Committee's mandate towards women's issues rather than gender issues is significant and, as we shall see, may militate against the SGI's broader objectives.

The SGI's terms of reference define the group's role as fourfold:

- to work towards effective inclusion of a gender perspective in all aspects of peacemaking, peacebuilding, rehabilitation, and reconstruction;
- to assist in identifying gender concerns, needs, and interests so that they can be integrated into the peace agenda, influencing the formation of policy and administrative and legal reform in this transition period;
- to assist with the building of a rights-based peace and reconstruction and development agenda that is sensitive to gender issues;
- to engage in close co-operation and constant dialogue with the other Sub-Committees and other mechanisms set up in the peace process. (The government delegation of the SGI has direct access to the Prime Minister's Office and other key government ministries, through regular briefing sessions. Their counterparts have similar access to the higher echelons of the LTTE.)

In defining its key areas of interest, the SGI has been careful not to limit itself to 'traditional' women's concerns, such as reproductive rights and health care, but has adopted a broad mandate. This includes the peace process itself; displacement and resettlement; services and infrastructure; employment and livelihood; political representation and decision making; security and safety; social and health issues; reconciliation; and education, training, and capacity building.

However, while the SGI can make recommendations for the inclusion of gender-sensitive planning and equitable participation in the peace and reconstruction process, there is no provision that compels compliance with these recommendations. There is also a danger that the creation of the SGI promotes compartmentalisation, rather than integration, of gender issues within the peace and reconstruction process.

One has only to look at the composition of the other sub-committees and secretariats – the Peace Secretariat being a prime example – where women are either absent, or at best severely under-represented, to appreciate the extent to which gender marginalisation and exclusion have already pervaded post-conflict institutions in Sri Lanka. To engage actively in politics alongside male counterparts – a domain that has traditionally offered few opportunities to women – requires women to possess confidence and self-assuredness. Lack of knowledge, skills, and confidence limits their effective and meaningful participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction (Pankhurst 2000: 21).

Nevertheless, the SGI represents an attempt to 'ensure the effective inclusion of gender' (SGI 2003:1) in the peace process, and this is a significant development towards putting the rhetoric of gender mainstreaming into practice in a context of divergent ethno-nationalist aspirations, where neither party to the conflict is able to secure an outright military victory and where a *de facto* State within a State has been established by the separatists.

The existence of the SGI owes much to the sustained efforts of Sri Lanka's women's movement, which argued for the formation and inclusion of such an institution, rather than to any initial fundamental concern for gender issues within either the government or the LTTE. As 'Cat's Eye', a feminist column in one of Sri Lanka's national daily newspapers, commented, 'the formation of this committee is the result of continuous

lobbying by human rights and women's groups for increased space for the participation in civil society in general and women in particular' (Cat's Eye, *The Island*, 15 January 2003).

Bringing together these different experiences is a unique and potentially empowering opportunity to develop new insights and creative solutions to the gender-related challenges facing women and men in a post-conflict society. Yet careful attention is necessary to ensure that the dynamics and relationships between the representative parties are managed in a way that does not militate against the SGI's achievement of this objective.

Problems of women's participation in the SGI

The influence of Sri Lanka's women's groups on the development of the SGI is clear, in that all five government-appointed representatives on the committee are recognised activists and academics in the women's movement. However, while it is laudable that the Sri Lankan government has recognised the qualifications of these women to represent the State on issues of gender, it is perhaps a matter of some concern that all the members are co-opted from civil society, and there is no actual representation from within the government administration *per se*. The extent to which this will affect the credibility and capacity of the SGI to effectively influence policy on the government side remains to be seen.

The contrast between the female government representatives and the five female LTTE representatives sitting on the SGI is striking. While the government side is weighted with academic and activist experience in the women's movement, the LTTE side comprises women with little formal education and years of service in the military – which, by popular definition, is a 'masculine' institution. The profile of the

LTTE representatives on the SGI reflects, first, the fact that the majority of women (and men) in the Wanni between the ages of 18 and 40 have not had the opportunity of benefiting from higher education, particularly if they have served within the LTTE.² Second, due to years of authoritarian control, during which views inconsistent with the party line were not tolerated, the Wanni region lacks a vigorous independent civil society or indigenous women's movement.

The five women representatives of the LTTE on the SGI are all serving within the administrative cadres of the party, such as the Women's Political Wing, the Media Unit, and the Research Unit. Despite the problematic issues of militarism that female recruitment presents for the role of women in society, military service does seem to have had some positive benefits in helping to instil self-confidence in women who served as officers with the LTTE. The young women who played an active role as combatants with the LTTE are now emerging as the next generation of leaders, entrusted with senior positions in the various administrative institutions that are being created in the Wanni.

The fact that the LTTE women are all drawn from the military poses a number of troubling questions. Does female participation in decision making in the Wanni depend entirely upon women who have gained respect from male superiors in military service? To what extent do the other women in Wanni society, whose participation is extremely limited, accept the legitimacy of LTTE women to represent the needs and views of civilians? How effectively can they identify with the needs and views of those who have a totally different experience of the conflict – as forced migrants, mothers, breadwinners, or widows? Furthermore, after years of service within a highly regimented, authoritarian, and male-defined institution, in which space for alternative philosophies is negligible,

can LTTE women identify with aspirations to gender equality and social transformation?

The absence of men in the SGI on both sides also needs to be considered. Although the strategy of mainstreaming gender within the peace process and post-conflict reconstruction rightly focuses on women's issues and participation, it is primarily men's attitudes and patriarchal institutions that require reform, in order to achieve gender equality. The inclusion of gender-sensitive men within the SGI (although potentially problematic in the eyes of some feminists) could have been tactically advantageous in strengthening the group's efforts to influence the policies of male-dominated institutions.

Participation, capacity, and education

Long-term strategies need to be developed to increase the participation of women who do not come from a military background. Civil-society activism is becoming manifest, with the rise of grassroots groups of women and parents, protesting against and resisting LTTE recruitment (de Alwis 2004). Yet the reality for the foreseeable future is that the military is going to be the main recruitment pool for administrative and political positions in the Wanni.

Pre-demobilisation education

In response to this, the quality of women's participation in the political arena could be improved by developing the reservoir of talent constituted by the armed forces, as part of a demobilisation strategy. The objectives would be to lay the foundation for a process of female demobilisation, demilitarisation, and reintegration, and the creation of a democratic society in which women participate equally with men. However, given that a peace deal has yet to be reached, and security issues are

still a major concern for both sides, this may be some years away, particularly as women continue to comprise a sizeable and therefore strategically important part of the LTTE's military capabilities.

Consideration, therefore, needs to be given to pre-demobilisation education. Education could be introduced in the form of flexible learning pathways that would enable women to undertake secondary-level educational programmes and then graduate to higher studies in fields such as management, strategy planning, economics, finance, development, and conflict resolution. Learning English and Sinhala (the majority language of Sri Lanka), acquiring gender awareness and community life skills, would also help to equip women, and particularly the demobilised female cadres of the future, to play a more active role in post-conflict development and peacebuilding.

Ideally, any such strategy for learning should aim to incorporate similar provisions for civil society and provide opportunities for a shared learning environment in which LTTE and non-LTTE women can interact and learn from each other's experience. This would avoid the danger that without any officially agreed commitment to demobilisation, such educational provisions could serve only to reinforce the dominance of the LTTE in civil society.

Peace-related learning in civil society

Opportunities for peace-related learning across the whole educational spectrum are limited in the Wanni (as in the rest of Sri Lanka). As stated earlier, very few of those tasked with making peace and reconstruction work in Sri Lanka are able to draw upon the support of a learned knowledge-base of peace, conflict resolution, and post-conflict recovery in their policy planning and practice.

One initiative seeking to develop the theoretical awareness of decision makers and practitioners in the Wanni, and other parts of Sri Lanka, is the Peace Studies Programme / Social Scientists Association.

This programme conducts education that leads to a post-graduate diploma in Conflict Resolution and Peace Preparedness, validated and awarded by the University of Bradford, UK. The stated objective of the course is to provide people living and working in conflict-affected areas with the opportunity to enhance their understanding of the dynamics, challenges, and possibilities of peace by developing an informed and applied framework for peace preparedness and conflict resolution (Harris and Lewer 2004).

International donors have recognised the utility of such a course, and the Wanni programme is funded by FLICT (Facilitating Local Initiatives for Conflict Transformation). Previous courses in government-controlled areas have been supported by the British government's Global Conflict Prevention Pool. Given the hierarchical system of control in the Wanni, the fact that the programme has been able to take place at all signifies that the course has been approved at the highest levels. This is an extremely positive development, bearing in mind the content of the course. Students come from a range of important post-conflict administrative units in the Wanni to engage in critical peace and post-conflict planning. The course should provide them with the analytical and conceptual skills needed to address these issues more effectively.

The course content

Although this is a post-graduate diploma under the British university system, the Peace Studies Programme recognises that most participants will not have first degrees. In line with this, the selection criteria take into account not only the candidates' ability to produce work in English (though courses in Tamil and Sinhala are being planned) at the required level (evidenced through an interview and written test), but also their motivation, work experience, and potential contribution to peace. Students have included local government planning

officers, senior military commanders, clergy, humanitarian aid workers, and police officers.

An important feature of the course is that it takes place close to the students' workplaces, making it much more accessible than traditional university-based courses. The programme also creates a neutral 'space', in which participants can freely discuss otherwise sensitive peace-related issues, and interact with students and lecturers from a wide range of backgrounds.

The diploma consists of eight modules, from which students have to select six. The modules are Conflict Dynamics and Conflict Analysis; Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice; Human Rights, Reconciliation, and Justice; Gender, Peace, and Conflict; Culture and Conflict Resolution; Development and Peace; Comparative Peace Processes; and Religion and Conflict Transformation. Each of these modules was developed by local academics and practitioners, in collaboration with the Centre for Conflict Resolution at the University of Bradford. Each student is assessed on the quality of an essay submitted for each module. They are also required to undertake a dissertation, which many choose to link to their workplace and interests.

Gender issues in the course

The majority of students on the Wanni course are male; only eight applications were received from women, out of 60 in total, of whom four had the requisite English-language skills.³ However, the 'Gender, Peace, and Conflict' module is one of the most popular, indicating that the importance of this subject is already well understood. This module aims to provide students with a broad understanding of the gendered dimensions of conflict, peace processes, and peace movements. Theoretical discourses and practical examples are examined, together with the Sri Lankan context and experiences from here and from other conflict-affected countries. The course introduces concepts

relating to the nexus between gender and nationalism, which plays a defining role in many conflicts. It also examines how men's and women's experiences of conflict are differently determined; it does this through considerations of themes such as masculinity and femininity, violence, religion, and the politics of peace (Silva and Haniffa 2002).

In the context of the Wannu, this module helps students to develop critical awareness and confidence to explore many of the gender-related issues that they are facing in their own lives and workplaces, as they strive to address the challenges of peace. However, as only the modules dealing with conflict resolution and conflict dynamics are compulsory (as specified by university regulations), the specialist gender module is not necessarily an option selected by every student. To ensure that each student gets at least some exposure to gender-related issues, it was felt by the course planners that the compulsory modules could be redesigned, so that gender becomes a cross-cutting theme.

Assessing the impact of the course

The real impact of the course can be evaluated only in the long term, as students move to influential positions in Sri Lankan society. However, positive attitudinal change among students already seems to be taking place. During a series of evaluation interviews with recent graduates, a senior military field commander commented that the course had improved his understanding of the particular difficulties faced by female soldiers serving in operational areas, and also the trauma faced by civilian women crossing army check-points. Other graduates have spoken of the enhanced sense of self-confidence that the course has helped to inculcate. One senior police officer remarked that before taking the course he had always felt somewhat disadvantaged when researchers, diplomats, and international NGO representatives came to interview him about security and the

peace process. However, after following the course, he was able to engage with these people on a more equal footing.

The Peace Studies Programme has established an alumni group and will be conducting refresher courses and longitudinal impact assessments with this group, to evaluate whether such attitudinal changes affect practice and policy changes in the graduates' sphere of influence.

Conclusion

When practitioners and theorists write about the changes necessary to address issues of gender equity in peace and post-conflict planning, they often fail to conceptualise these issues in terms of a realistic timeframe. The integration of gender-related concerns and the equitable participation of women in peace and post-conflict planning are, like the very process of achieving a sustainable peace itself, long-term – perhaps even multi-generational – projects.

Initiatives such as the SGI and Peace Studies Programme, whatever the motives behind their foundation, can make important contributions. They should be encouraged, but only if their limitations are recognised, and their gendered contexts, dynamics, influences, and impacts critically appraised in order to inform a continual process of learning, development, and progress. Both experiences demonstrate that attempts to advance the integration of gender into peacebuilding and post-conflict planning are fraught with complications and moral conundrums. How should local stakeholders respond to the conditions laid down by international donors? How can they ensure that efforts to incorporate gender-awareness are substantive, and not merely superficial ploys to satisfy donors? Should women in the military, such as those within the LTTE, who are already privileged in terms of male-defined power, be permitted to benefit from educational opportunities that are inaccessible for the vast majority of other women?

There is a danger that the establishment of a structure such as the SGI, or an educational initiative such as the Peace Studies Programme, provides the parties with an opportunity to satisfy donors' requirements without making any substantive progress towards addressing the underlying social structures or reforming the institutions that are actually restricting the effective integration of gender equity. Neither the authoritarian, hierarchical, and militarised structure of the LTTE, nor the almost feudal system of patronage and patriarchy that underpins the political structures in the rest of Sri Lankan society, seems capable of accommodating an alternative view or the sharing of power. Unfortunately these are precisely what the integration of gender equity into the process of peace and reconstruction calls for.

International organisations and humanitarian agencies could be more effective in monitoring and evaluating the progress of the government and LTTE parties in achieving gender equity and inclusion, as agreed at the Oslo talks. Already, organisations such as UNICEF and Save the Children have adopted vigorous advocacy and awareness strategies, informing both parties of their responsibilities to uphold the rights of children, in line with donors' conditions established at the Tokyo conference. In the case of the LTTE, this has involved sustained lobbying for an end to under-age recruitment to the military. However, where women's rights and responsibilities are concerned, many of the international agencies that are active on the ground are focusing exclusively on a narrow range of gender issues at a grassroots level. What is needed is a comprehensive strategy of advocacy, challenging the parties to act on their commitment to gender equality. This would support creative local initiatives such as those discussed in this paper, which aim to further the inclusion of gender issues in the peace and reconstruction process.

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Notes

- 1 For example, the US government has recently reiterated its position that until the LTTE renounces violence in word and deed, it will remain on its list as a terrorist organisation. Such proscription prevents members of the organisation from travelling to the USA.
- 2 Although the war disrupted education, primary and secondary-level schooling was able to function in the Wanni throughout the conflict, albeit often subjected to the constraints of repeated displacements, military recruitment, mobility restrictions, and security concerns. Higher educational opportunities were available outside the Wanni.
- 3 As in other isolated rural areas of Sri Lanka, there have been few opportunities in the Wanni to obtain good-quality English-language education during the past 20 years.

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The gender dimensions of post-conflict reconstruction: an analytical framework for policymakers

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In this paper, we propose a conceptual framework to ensure that gender issues are included in the analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation of post-conflict reconstruction work. The normative foundation of this paper is rights-based, identifying three interrelated kinds of rights which must be guaranteed to women in the post-conflict period: the right to participate meaningfully in policy making and resource allocation; the right to benefit equally from public and private resources and services; and the right to build a gender-equitable society for lasting peace and prosperity. The paper is divided into three corresponding sections. Dimension 1 discusses women-focused activities; Dimension 2 promotes gender-aware programming; and Dimension 3 proposes ways for societies to transform gender roles. Within these dimensions, we argue that women are assets for successful reconstruction, and that failure to recognise and address gender-related impediments may undermine efforts, while purposeful efforts to strengthen gender equality may strengthen results. Thus all three complementary dimensions assert that successful post-conflict reconstruction depends on women's rights and gender equality.

From the Women and Armed Conflict plank in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) (United Nations 1996), through government commitments in the June 2000 five-year BPA review, to Security Council Resolution 1325 (SC 1325) (United Nations 2000), the world has increasingly acknowledged the impacts of conflict on women – and of women on conflict. Many excellent papers have addressed women's meaningful participation in peace negotiations, peacekeeping, and peacemaking, resulting in significant progress. This paper builds upon them, shifting the focus to women's inclusion and gender issues in the phases that follow violent conflict, humanitarian assistance, peacemaking efforts, and peace negotiations, namely during *reconstruction*. Our concern is with the gender dimensions

of *development* – social, economic, and political – but within a particularised context that is post-conflict.

The first gender dimension is women-focused activities, i.e. those that *compensate for gender disparities* – in rights, education, resources, and power – and thereby enable women to contribute equally and fully to reconstruction. The second dimension takes a more economic approach, recognising that *gender-related impediments diminish the effectiveness of economic and governance programmes*. Characterised by urgent needs for leadership, resources, labour, and talent, post-conflict societies cannot afford to bypass women or to ignore gender-related impediments and opportunities. The third gender dimension (the most strategic) is transformative, as it advocates *gender-oriented activities to change conflict-ridden societies of*

inequality to peaceful societies of respect and equality.

We take the position that WID (women-in-development) and gender-mainstreaming approaches are complementary and are both necessary. WID activities are required when it is necessary to work with women alone, to help them to reach the same starting point as men. This is the case when women lack capacity, resources, or knowledge of their rights. In other cases, however, it is also important to pay attention to gender: the gendered roles and responsibilities of women and men, and the ways in which they relate to one another. In such cases, it is important to work with men as well as women, and with them together; and it is also important to integrate attention to gender into mainstream programming or policy-making through 'gender mainstreaming'.

Dimension 1: women-focused activities

Post-conflict reconstruction offers opportunities to establish new norms and rules, engage new leaders, and build new institutions. Each of these processes offers an opportunity to focus on women's rights, and respect them; and to acknowledge and value the contribution of women in reconstruction. Yet, in addition to these processes, activities which focus on women as a specific group are required to redress gender disparities in women's access to essential services and resources. For example, a World Bank project trained exiled Afghan women in Peshawar as teachers of Afghani girls who lacked schooling because of Taliban prohibitions against female education (World Bank 2004a). This 'women-in-development' (WID) approach aims to eliminate gender inequality.

This section considers four sets of rights which require a WID approach. These are women's rights to political participation, property ownership, employment, and freedom from violence.

Political rights and participation

As the Beijing Platform of Action emphasises, women have the right to draft constitutions and elect representatives (UN 1996). Furthermore, post-conflict countries with larger female than male populations present opportunities for women to fill positions previously held by men.

Many post-conflict countries have taken steps to increase women's political participation. The dominant parties in South Africa (ANC), Mozambique (Frelimo), and Namibia (Swapo) have all established women's quotas on candidate lists. Quotas can increase women's representation, but have attracted controversy (Tinker 2004). Controversy erupted in Kosovo in early 2004 when the UN Special Representative supported women's representation quotas, despite a campaign by the Kosova Women's Lobby and Kosova Women's Network, demanding 'open lists' to ensure representatives' accountability to constituencies (Kosovar Women's Voice 2004). Some have questioned women's quotas on the grounds of women's qualifications for political work – a criticism that is not encountered in respect of unqualified elected men. Strategies have been found to address this criticism. For example, when the National Council in Timor Leste rejected quotas in 2002, the Timor-Leste Women's Network (REDE) sought UN funding to train 200 women to compete effectively in elections. Women now comprise 26 per cent of elected Constituent Assembly members (UNIFEM 2004).

In Rwanda, where females constitute more than 60 per cent of the post-genocide population, women won 49 per cent of parliamentary seats in the election of late 2003. Rwanda now has the largest female parliamentary representation in the world. In Afghanistan, women are about to occupy at least 25 per cent of seats in the lower parliament, despite the religious fundamentalism and negative traditional attitudes towards women that still pervade the

culture of the country. This result has come about through the work of strong Afghan women's groups, and pressure from international bodies (including pressure from countries which cannot claim such impressive proportions of women in their own parliaments; for example, the USA, where women hold only 14 per cent of congressional seats). On the other hand, women's representation in some post-conflict parliaments is far lower. For example, it is only 8 per cent in Guatemala's lower house.

With or without quotas, it is necessary to strengthen women's capacity for leadership if female politicians are to succeed in office. It is also necessary if voters are to support them (and thereby eventually eliminate the need for quotas). This strengthening requires resources to be spent on developing women's ability to run for office, win seats, and serve effectively. Part of serving effectively means being able to collaborate effectively with men, as coalition partners and political-party leaders. Finally but most importantly, electing women is important not only in itself, for reasons of equity, but because of the experience that they share with women in the electorate of unequal treatment with men. For the exercise to bring about wider social transformation and an end to gender inequality in particular, training for women who are running for office needs to ensure that women are willing and able to promote gender equality when governing.

Property rights

Post-conflict reconstruction often involves resolving disputes over property ownership, and drafting property laws which uphold the rights of individuals to property. Such processes must guarantee women's full and equal rights to own property, *de jure*, and their ability to enjoy those rights, *de facto*. Too often, as in Namibia, Rwanda, and Uganda, customary law, which does not recognise women's rights to own property,

prevails even after new civil laws which uphold gender equality are promulgated. The consequences can be devastating. For example, if the spouse of a rural Namibian woman dies, she usually loses access to land that she farmed and becomes homeless. If she herself becomes ill, she may experience violence, be abandoned by her family, and lose her rights to property and children (Muhato 2003). Currently in sub-Saharan Africa, high death rates due to AIDS are making inheritance and property rights ever more important. Women can rarely benefit *de facto* from new property laws without understanding their legal rights and having resources (including literacy, money, and power). Post-conflict reconstruction programmes must develop women's legal literacy and access to justice.

Employment without discrimination

While post-conflict reconstruction often entails new legislation forbidding gender discrimination, employers frequently ignore laws if enforcement mechanisms are weak. This problem pervades transition economies. Allowing employers to discriminate in favour of men reinforces gender disparities, violates women's rights, and constricts women's contributions to economic growth. This is discussed further in the section concerned with Dimension 2 and employment.

The right to freedom from violence

Post-conflict reconstruction often requires protection of these rights of women and girls, because male demobilised soldiers are accustomed to life in a military sub-culture (often involving extreme forms of abuse of women, including rape, forced 'marriages', and sexual slavery). Accustomed to the use of force, empowered by the possession and exercise of weapons, often searching for a role in the post-conflict economy, and prone to alcohol consumption that is linked to violence against women, ex-combatants are frequently brutal and unfamiliar with respectful, equitable gender relations.

Challenges to women's rights-based approaches

Some post-conflict reconstruction programmes have included laudable women-focused approaches. In Rwanda, Pro-Femmes Twese-Hamwe, a women's umbrella organisation, trains members as leaders. UNESCO developed Rwanda's Mandela Peace Village (MPV) to provide shelter and literacy programmes to displaced widow-headed and orphan-headed households. However, conditions are poor: many of the impoverished MPV women still walk several hours daily to fetch contaminated water and fuel.¹ Pressured by women's groups and donors, the Rwandan Parliament passed legislation giving women equal rights to property and inheritance (Zuckerman 2000). The international community has also funded major women's initiatives in Bosnia and Kosovo. In response to pressure from women's groups, Serbia's first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in late 2003 allocated 7 million to develop women's capacity (Vladisavljevic and Zuckerman 2004). Yet despite such achievements in some countries, it is a challenge for advocates of women's rights to persuade most governments and donors to allocate sufficient funding for women's rights-based approaches. It is important to programme sustainable funding.

Beyond funding, women-focused activities must address other challenges, such as the need to ensure that women political representatives are genuine advocates of gender equality – not merely well-connected, compliant politicians. Gender-equitable laws and policies require a critical mass of capable women who argue articulately and garner collegial support. *Their challenge is to engage all stakeholders, including older male leaders and younger men, to accept gender equality.*

Dimension 2: gender-aware programming

Gender-aware programming is our term for what others call 'gender mainstreaming' – that is, identifying and addressing gender issues that may obstruct or improve development programmes and projects. This is required in all macro-economic and micro-economic development activities associated with post-conflict reconstruction. Post-conflict reconstruction programmes often flounder because they fail to address unequal gender relations and power dynamics (Strickland and Duvvury 2003). Financiers like the World Bank may produce excellent gender studies, and use powerful gender rhetoric, but fail to incorporate them into investments (Picciotto 2000; Zuckerman and Wu 2003).

Macro-economic issues

To date, little attention has been focused on the ways in which gender relations intersect with macro-economic policies (Zuckerman 2000; *World Development* 1995, 2000). These policies affect women and men differently because of their different economic roles in society. Lack of attention to this fact may both cause negative impacts on women and undermine socio-economic objectives (Elson 1991).

Macro-economic reforms as part of post-conflict reconstruction programmes include reallocations of budgets, privatisation of State-owned enterprises, liberalisation of price and trade liberalisation, streamlining of civil services, and decentralisation of governance. Many countries undergoing post-conflict reconstruction have to make difficult choices in response to severe scarcity of resources. Post-conflict reconstruction programmes rarely recognise the impact on women, men, and gender relations when decisions are made to reallocate resources from one sector to another. Removing gender barriers in setting priorities may affect development

outcomes significantly, as reflected by women urging reallocations from weapons to social programmes.² Often, post-conflict cutbacks in expenditure deprive new single mothers or widows of public support.

Studies demonstrate that women bear the brunt of painful structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) which have been integral to many post-conflict reconstruction frameworks (Elson 1991; Vladisavljevic and Zuckerman 2004; Zuckerman 2000). A typical example of a SAP is that of Serbia and Montenegro, which requires State-owned enterprises to be closed, restructured, and/or privatised; cuts to be made in public expenditure, including employment in the civil service and the provision of social services; and the liberalisation and commercialisation of a financial sector which is reduced in size. The design and implementation of such programmes neglect to take account of their differing impacts on women and men. Cutbacks in spending on health services mean that women have to spend more time caring for sick household members, which reduces time available to them for paid work. Cutbacks in the civil service and other formal-sector jobs result in women – who are more likely to have junior-level posts – being the first to be made redundant and the last to be re-hired. This process is also in part attributable to the fact that there is still a widespread assumption on the part of employers that women are secondary breadwinners, and hence that household livelihoods do not depend on their earnings. In reality, increasing numbers of households are female-headed, and changing patterns of economic development are also leading to job losses among unskilled or low-skilled men, meaning that many male-headed households are now dependent on women's earnings. Men who are unemployed often develop alcohol-related problems, and increased domestic violence results – a fact which also needs attention from policymakers (Greenberg et al. 1997; Greenberg 2000).

The design and implementation of post-conflict reconstruction programmes must prevent such negative and unplanned impacts on women, men, and wider society. This requires greater awareness of gender equality as a human right, and of the role of gender equality in economic recovery and development. The effective participation of women in reconstruction planning is a key element in achieving this. Ensuring women's involvement is likely to enhance gender equality, accountability, and transparency. An example of this is the role that women have played in various contexts in the monitoring of public expenditures, in gender-budget analyses – for example those in South Africa, Uganda, and Tanzania (Budlender 1999; Commonwealth Secretariat 1999; Esim 1998). All countries undergoing post-conflict reconstruction should support gender-budget analyses, improving spending patterns so that more government funding benefits women.

Access to credit

Credit is a popular post-conflict reconstruction tool. It has been well established by now that both women and men need access to credit, and that women living in poverty face particular barriers to obtaining it through conventional channels. Commercial banks set conditions on their lending which often mean that women are unable to obtain loans. For example, they may require that their clients are literate, or demand collateral in contexts in which women lack the rights to own land or property. Hence, both borrowers and lending officers are almost all men. This general observation holds in places which have recently endured conflicts, as well as other contexts. Micro-credit programmes set up with a developmental aim have tended to target women as a means of addressing these issues. However, while micro-credit programmes have shown women to be more reliable re-payers of credit than men, banks' attitudes towards women have not tended to shift.

In post-conflict reconstruction, some women and men who are returning from conflict or displacement not only lack money to start or maintain a business, but also lack relevant skills and knowledge. Hence, they need not only credit, but information and skills relating to business development. For example, many Eritrean and Angolan fighters who had been living in the bush for many years lacked experience in handling money, and needed confidence when entering the market economy. Some female ex-combatants who borrowed through micro-credit schemes failed in their enterprises because of insufficient training. They ended up in abject poverty (Greenberg 2001).

Many post-conflict reconstruction credit programmes do not target women at all. An example is the World Bank Sierra Leone Economic Rehabilitation and Recovery Credit Project (III) (World Bank 2003), which does not even acknowledge women's important role in the economy.

Methods to remedy gender inequalities include targeting credit to women and men equally, ensuring equal training opportunities for new bank jobs, using non-property collateral methods, and maintaining sex-disaggregated records to identify and remove gender disparities.

Agricultural development

Worldwide, agriculture is becoming 'feminised', in the sense that increasing numbers of men are leaving the land to migrate to cities for employment. Hence, increasing numbers of women are taking over previously 'male' agricultural activities. Conflict accelerates this trend. However, post-conflict reconstruction activities often assume farmers to be men. For example, while men were at war in Angola and Rwanda, women maintained their farms (Greenberg et al. 1997). Nevertheless, post-conflict agriculture programmes in these countries and in most other post-conflict countries mainly target ex-combatants, excluding women farmers. It is crucial that

post-conflict reconstruction agricultural production and agribusiness programmes should recognise that both men and women farm, and target all training and other activities at both sexes.

Demilitarisation, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR)

Substantial resources flow from donors into DDR, which finances typical development activities like credit and training, but targets these activities mainly at male ex-combatants. More than 10,000 male ex-combatants in East Timor registered for DDR assistance, but women who had carried arms and occasionally fought were excluded (UNIFEM 2004). Angola's DDR programmes excluded women who followed soldiers into the bush to perform 'non-military' service as carriers, cooks, and forced sexual partners (Greenberg et al. 1997).

DDR's male focus perpetuates gender stereotypes, unfairly discriminates against women ex-combatants and others who supported combat, and hampers women from contributing to economic growth. Instead, DDR programmes should support the demobilisation of women and men with comparable levels of assistance, prepare men for respectful, non-violent household and community relations, and meet gender-specific needs with support: for example, counselling and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases in the case of rape survivors, as suggested in the next section. Finally, they should support families and communities to welcome and reintegrate returnees – a task that often requires contributions by women and attention to gender roles in households and communities (de Watteville 2002). In Dimension 3, later in this paper, we discuss ways in which attention to transforming gender relations can help.

Demography and health

Conflicts cause demographic changes, including the loss of men in combat and through temporary or permanent migration

(rural to urban, or international). Age-related changes include increased numbers of dependent children or elderly people, and reduced numbers of young or middle-aged adults to support them. Gender-related changes include increased female-to-male ratios, female-headed households, and young women living alone in cities.

For example, in post-conflict East Timor, nearly half – 45 per cent – of adult women are widowed (UNIFEM 2004). In post-conflict Rwanda, females comprise more than 60 per cent of the population. The majority of households are female- or child-headed. Rwandan women play significant roles in all post-conflict walks of life (Hamilton 2000). In Eritrea, following the war that ended in independence from Ethiopia, some women fighters who had had sexual relationships with male fighters in the bush were spurned by conservative families and wider communities when they tried to return home. Abandoned and rejected, many single mothers settled in Asmara, needing homes, jobs, and community support. Without jobs, some in desperation turned to prostitution – providing services, in many cases, to post-conflict reconstruction peacekeepers (Greenberg 2001).

In relation to health, as suggested in the previous section, some diseases, including sexually transmitted infections, are particularly prevalent in post-conflict populations. These are often passed on by infected combatants returning home, or by women who have undergone rape and sexual slavery in wartime. They often increase once an end to conflict allows for increased mobility of people and of goods: for example, along the Angola–Namibia border. In addition to diseases, women often suffer from the long-term effects of untreated injuries, including those associated with forced sexual relations and unattended childbirth. They may suffer psychological problems stemming from a wide range of war-related traumas. Finally, an ever-expanding population suffers physically and mentally as victims of landmines.

Women working in agriculture or searching for fuel may face daily danger; if wounded and in need of prosthetics, they may find themselves relegated to the back of the queue (Greenberg et al. 1997). Post-conflict reconstruction programmes can help to prevent such tragedies if they pay attention to gender issues.

Human capacity and life skills

Interrupted schooling, shortage of teachers attributable to epidemics of HIV-AIDS, and destroyed school infrastructure can all result in a shortage of human resources and skills, which must be addressed by post-conflict reconstruction programmes. Women and girls often have less opportunity for schooling than men in general, but in post-conflict contexts these disparities are exacerbated by structural adjustment cutbacks in public expenditure that force many young girls to care for families and seek informal-sector employment, denying them the opportunity to attend school. In Angola, younger women have had less education than some older women who were educated before the conflict or in bush schools. There are many reasons for this: the need for girls to attend to family members with war injuries and AIDS, the dislocation of communities, the destruction of schools, and dangers encountered by girls when travelling to school.

Post-conflict reconstruction may represent a moment at which societies can take stock and plan for a brighter future. It can present an opportunity to aim higher than merely recreating the pre-conflict situation. In terms of education, this could mean that individual women and men develop skills in learning environments free from restrictive gender stereotypes. New opportunities, such as information-technology training, should be available to women and men alike. If they are not planned with an explicit focus on equitable access, they may inadvertently have a negative impact on women and gender relations. Many post-conflict reconstruction programmes launch

training activities too quickly, without ensuring equal access or investigating why some potential beneficiaries do not take advantage of the opportunities offered. In addition, as stated at the start of this section, the gender-determined needs of women may be revealed by social analysis, but they may disappear at the project-implementation stage. For example, the West Bank and Gaza Palestinian NGO II Project, funded by the World Bank, identifies women as the most marginalised group – but allocates no funds to train them (World Bank 2001b). Taking deliberate measures to ensure that women can participate in education and training is essential if post-conflict reconstruction is to avoid reinforcing gender biases. For example, child-care responsibilities and other family responsibilities often prevent women from travelling. The family of a Kosovo female lawyer selected for training in Prishtine forbade her to stay alone in a hotel. Thoughtful organisers relocated the training course to the woman's own town.³

Besides developing men's and women's vocational skills to increase opportunities to earn income, post-conflict reconstruction programmes must also teach men and women social and civic skills and values that are essential for building a non-violent society. This includes training women and men to work collaboratively and respectfully together.

Employment

Generating employment is a top priority for constructing a sustainable post-conflict economy, because high unemployment may trigger renewed conflict. Post-conflict training programmes for formal-sector employment mainly target male ex-combatants. Concern to prevent men whose social connections, sense of purpose, and activities are conflict-derived from destabilising society is understandable. The current experience of Iraq demonstrates that demobilising armies without providing alternative occupations for ex-combatants can be explosive.

It is all too common in post-conflict situations for women to lose their jobs in the formal sector and return to the household or to the informal sector (Greenberg et al. 1997). Many had replaced fighting men and had acquired skills that would contribute to growth. In Kosovo, women who were pushed out of the workforce back into their homes lost their skills and regressed to home-based roles.⁴ The pattern is similar in Serbia and Montenegro (Vladislavljjevic and Zuckerman 2004; Zuckerman and Jordan 2002). Post-conflict reconstruction programmes must prevent such discrimination by providing equal opportunities to men and women. While it is crucially important to focus on employing men, missing the opportunity to engage women in formal economic activities weakens the prospects of post-conflict recovery. Yet post-conflict reconstruction programmes often exclusively focus employment on demobilised men. For example, the World Bank's West Bank and Gaza Industrial Estate Project, approved in 1998, promoting employment, does not target women, despite their potential contribution to the economy (World Bank 1998). The point that women are assets that a national economy cannot afford to ignore is illustrated by Angolan women who survived economically in Luanda for decades (from the mid-19970s to the 1990s) as businesswomen in the second largest informal market in Africa, while men were engaged in combat.

Finally, as suggested in the earlier section concerning SAPs, post-conflict reconstruction programmes, like development programmes in peacetime contexts, commonly fail to recognise, value, and support women's contributions in the informal and reproductive areas of the economy, where most economic activity occurs.

Physical infrastructure

Much post-conflict reconstruction rebuilds destroyed infrastructure. Donors insist on rapid rebuilding, ignoring opportunities for

gender equality and sustainability. Yet taking the time to conduct gender analysis in various contexts can reveal special infrastructure-related needs. Women must participate in identifying and designing infrastructure to reflect their gendered needs, such as day-care centres and water systems that permit them to work and their daughters to attend school. Gender relations may create particular needs, depending on social norms: for example, in Afghanistan, women require private roadside rest areas for their own and their children's needs.⁵ In general, security while travelling on public roads is critical for women, who are vulnerable to sex-based crimes, but this need increases in post-conflict environments, where security is a major problem amidst armed, unemployed ex-soldiers. Livelihoods in post-conflict contexts often depend on safe infrastructure. In countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, where women historically have been traders, insecurity impedes travel for work. In addition, attention to security is necessary for girls travelling to schools.

Women and men have been shown to prioritise the rebuilding of different types of infrastructure, due in part to their different roles in the gender division of labour and different conceptions of well-being. For example, while men often prioritise the construction of main roads, to enable them to reach cities to search for work, women may prefer rural roads, to give them access to markets, water, schools, health facilities, and other essential services. But post-conflict road-building projects too rarely solicit female and male preferences. For example, the World Bank's Guatemala Rural and Main Roads Project, approved in 1997, which emphasised road maintenance nationally and rural road construction in the post-conflict ZONAPAZ region, did not address gender issues, although one objective of the project was to enhance access to social and other public services (World Bank 1997).

Another issue relating to gender and physical reconstruction is that women often face discrimination in obtaining food-for-work infrastructure jobs. These are a common feature of post-conflict development work, intended to provide short-term employment, income, food, and skills. While such jobs could potentially enable women to develop skills and experience in occupations which are commonly associated with men, this is a relatively rare occurrence.

Water supply and sanitation are basic needs for all humanity. In the poorest countries of the world, it is almost always women and girls who perform the daily task of water-collection over long distances. Billions of dollars of investments in roads, safe water supplies, and sanitation have not relieved females of this onerous task, which steals time from schooling, income-generation and other work, and much-needed sleep and rest.

Gender concerns should also apply to the question of which companies are selected for public-works contracts. Project consultations should incorporate female inputs and integrate gender analysis into feasibility studies. A positive example is gender-equality training in the new Swedish-supported reform of Kosova railways management. However, the process of contracting often involves corruption, and the biased selection of poorly performing companies which generate low-quality infrastructure. Although some studies demonstrate that women's involvement reduces the likelihood of corruption (particularly involvement of women in civil society, as watchdogs), female beneficiaries rarely participate in procurement decisions (World Bank 2001a). Most contracted companies are owned, managed, and staffed by men.

Dimension 3: transforming gender roles

In an analysis of the literature on gender in the context of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, Strickland and Duvvury find a 'slow but positive shift in international opinion and understanding about the consequences of conflict on women and the importance of their participation in peacebuilding processes and social transformation' – but find that 'gender discrimination continues through political exclusion, economic marginalization and sexual violence ... denying women their human rights and constraining the potential for development' (Strickland and Duvvury 2003). They suggest that sustainable peace requires a more permanent transformation of social norms relating to violence, gender, and power, and they call for transformative approaches to achieve gender equality premised on more gender-equitable relationships. This call inspires Dimension 3 of our analytical framework. This dimension calls for transforming the violent and dominating power relations which are widely associated with masculinity, war, and militarised societies with alternative values of co-operation, peaceful dispute resolution, and equality. Without gender equality, it is impossible to achieve economically and physically secure societies, cleansed of structural violence (Strickland and Duvvury 2003).

In this section, we respond to Strickland and Duvvury's challenge by proposing some ways to transform gender roles that could heal the traumas associated with violent conflict, and re-build social capital (a term used here to denote social networks that would contribute to successful development by restoring trust in communities and wider society). This dimension addresses the traumas of conflict; gender factors in rebuilding social capital; and gender equality as essential for sustainable peace.

Addressing the trauma and breaking cycles of violence

Nearly every war-affected demographic group needs healing. Male combatants must learn to function in a non-violent culture, resolve differences without force, and resolve their alienation and fears. Female victims of gender-based violence and witnesses of violence must heal and move on. They must not transmit their experiences to their children as hate, or urge revenge. To meet these aims, post-conflict reconstruction programmes must include measures to heal the trauma. According to a survey of 750,000 people in East Timor, 40 per cent of respondents had experienced psychological torture, 33 per cent had experienced beatings or mauling, 26 per cent had experienced head injuries, and 22 per cent had witnessed a friend killing a family member (UNIFEM 2004). Reports abound from the Balkans to Rwanda of family members watching male relatives killed or mothers and sisters raped. In Croatia and Kosovo, people who had previously lived amicably with their neighbours burned their houses down and committed sexual violence against them. Gender-focused trauma work can assist boys who were child soldiers, girls who were abused in military camps, both perpetrators and survivors of sexual violence, and returnees who are unaccustomed to living in families or communities. All these groups may harbour anger, yearn for vengeance, lack purpose, and/or suffer depression, boredom, and frustration.

Building social capital after conflict

Social capital is essential to peace, and hence post-conflict reconstruction programmes must rebuild social capital. Conflict leads to the disintegration of groups and networks that previously bound communities together, and burdens households and individuals with uncertainty and mistrust. The loss of family members through conflict may redefine roles among survivors: widows or children may become household heads.

New roles and responsibilities need to be defined, and respect and collaboration must be built between household heads and members. This process contributes to strengthening new household structures.

Some post-conflict reconstruction efforts to build social capital are women-focused: the type of intervention on which we focused in Dimension 1 of this framework. For example, grants from the World Bank's Post-Conflict Fund support: (1) the Bosnian 'Knitting Together Nations' project, which aims to create employment opportunities for displaced women in the knitwear business, and revive and sustain traditional multi-ethnic cultural ties among designers and producers; (2) the 'Empowering Women: Socioeconomic Development in Post-Conflict Tajikistan' project, which aims to empower women, nurture social cohesion, and reduce potential conflict through creating employment and women's associations; (3) a project in Northern Albania and Kosovo which focuses on early childhood care and development, but with the objectives of supporting social cohesion and preventing conflict through strengthening community dynamics and enhancing the role of women as mediators and representatives of non-violent conflict resolution (World Bank 2004b). These laudable 'WID' projects constitute a minority of World Bank post-conflict reconstruction projects. From its 1997 inception through September 2004, only 3 per cent of the World Bank's Post-Conflict Grants – or 5 per cent of their total funding – targeted women as a specific group (Zuckerman and Greenberg 2004).

Gender inequality and preventing violence

Our final point draws on a recent World Bank study which linked gender inequality to violence (Caprioli 2003). Caprioli examined the impact of gender inequality on the likelihood of intrastate violence, through a regression analysis⁶ covering 1960–1997, a literature survey, and an analysis of structural and cultural violence. She

concluded that gender inequality is not merely an issue of social justice, since it harms women's status and hampers them from developing livelihoods, but that it also increases the likelihood of internal state conflict (Caprioli 2003). Constructing sustainable peace requires offering opportunities to all – and that means gender equality.

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Notes

- 1 Elaine Zuckerman interviewed MPV residents in their homes in 2001.
- 2 Marcia Greenberg participated in a Beijing +5 PrepCom meetings in Budapest and Geneva in 1999, where Balkan women pressed this point.
- 3 Marcia Greenberg interviewed rule of law programme staff in Prishtine in April 2004.
- 4 Marcia Greenberg interviewed Sevdie Ahmeti, founder and Executive Director of the Center for Protection of Women and Families in Prishtine, April 2004.
- 5 Marcia Greenberg interviewed Judy Benjamin following assessment of gender issues related to proposed US-funded roads project in Afghanistan.

- 6 Regression analysis is a statistical technique that analyses data from more than one variable and makes quantitative predictions about one variable from the values of other variables.

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Building capacity to resolve conflict in communities:

Oxfam experience in Rwanda

Rosemarie McNairn

This article focuses on a development project in Rwanda which directly addresses the connections between conflict and poverty. It is based on the idea that peace in communities that have suffered violent conflict will be promoted if individuals, groups, and institutions are able to manage conflict in a constructive and non-violent manner. Conflict management can also lead to greater livelihood sustainability for communities, by enhancing equitable access to resources and decision-making processes, and ensuring that decision-making bodies are accountable to all.

Oxfam GB has worked in Rwanda since 1962. In 2000, in a context of potent conflict and communal violence across the Great Lakes region, Oxfam GB (hereafter referred to as 'Oxfam') identified reconciliation as the priority for its work in the country. Its strengths were an historical presence and grassroots acceptance in the country, and a global awareness and experience of development in post-conflict environments. Oxfam piloted a new approach in 2001–2 which is unique in Rwanda, in that Oxfam is the only organisation aiming explicitly to promote good governance through transforming the root causes of violence at community level.

The overall aim of this programme is to contribute to building a society in which security is assured for all of Rwanda's people. Security means freedom from violence, poverty, inequality, exploitation, and exclusion. Security ensures fair access to resources and decision-making processes, and accountability, based on a system of

social justice which respects fundamental human rights.

Rwanda: rebuilding peace and promoting development

In 1994, Rwanda captured the world's attention when close to one million Rwandans of Tutsi origin, and those of Hutu origin branded as political moderates, were murdered at the hands of State-sponsored extremist militia, government troops, and an efficiently mobilised public. The root causes of this conflict were a mix of dispossession and division which left the majority of Rwandans powerless to participate in decision making, living in abject poverty, and manipulated by powerful elites. A series of conditions existed which created an environment where hatred and tensions were politically organised and manipulated to destroy a targeted population. As a result of these events, more than 10 per cent of

Rwanda's total population was annihilated, solely on account of ethnic origins and/or political beliefs.

Since 1996, the Rwandan government has aimed to create a governing structure based on participation and inclusiveness, and particularly in relation to development at grassroots level. The government's stated goal is that this will lead to national unity and reconciliation. Its assumption is that good governance, and a reduction of poverty, will help to prevent widespread violence from re-occurring. The National Decentralization Policy includes election processes which have empowered locally elected leaders and community development committees to represent the population 'from below'. The aim of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) is to ensure that reconciliation remains a priority and is mainstreamed throughout government, civil society, and private-sector initiatives. As part of this process of reconciliation, a community-based judicial process, known as *Gacaca*, to adjudicate the cases of more than 100,000 people accused of genocide, has been piloted in several areas. Full implementation of the process began in August 2004.

The Rwandan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, produced as part of the Highly Indebted Poor Country initiative, acknowledges national unity and reconciliation as a key objective. One of these strategies is a grassroots initiative, *Ubudehe*, aimed at building social capital from below, empowering communities through participation in local development initiatives, and reducing poverty at the lowest administrative level. The legacy of armed conflict is being addressed through the Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, to ensure the successful reintegration of up to 60,000 ex-combatants, both from rebel and government armies.

With such an ambitious programme for 'reinventing' the social, political, and economic structure of Rwanda, it would

appear that the nation is moving beyond its destructive past and guaranteeing a positive future for its people. As part of this process, a new constitution was approved through a referendum in May 2004; and presidential and parliamentary elections were held in August and October 2003 respectively. Rwanda now claims the largest proportion (48.3 per cent) of women parliamentarians anywhere in the world. Elections for women's representatives on governing committees at district, sector, and cellule levels were held in July 2004.

However, while a number of appropriate policies have been officially incorporated into government structures, their implementation is now a challenge to be faced. Rwanda remains one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 159 out of 173 on the Human Development Index (2004).¹ Approximately 60 per cent of the people in Rwanda live in poverty, with higher rates in rural areas, especially for women-headed and child-headed households. Resources are not equitably distributed and shared. Whereas nine out of ten households have access to agricultural land, the size of their holdings ranges from an average of 0.55 hectares for the most poor to 1.18 ha for those relatively 'well-off'. Forty-five per cent of the Rwandan population has insufficient food to satisfy daily requirements.²

Gender inequality is a feature of life in Rwanda, as elsewhere. Social and political factors condition women's experience of economic poverty. Rwanda ranks 135 out of 146 on the Gender Development Index in the UNDP 2002 report. Gender divisions and inequality based on traditional cultural beliefs, attitudes, and practices have resulted in continuing and increasing economic want, and social and political marginalisation of women. The existence of a large number of widows and female-headed households has led to the practice of polygamy and/or 'concubinage', which often creates conflict within communities and families.

Other aspects of identity also contribute to marginalisation and economic want. In the period leading up to the genocide of 1994, most Rwandans were classified as Hutu, Tutsi, or Batwa ethnically and were divided into urban elite / rural poor, and/or Northerner / Southerner. Batwa communities, approximately 3 per cent of the population, continue to be marginalised and often discriminated against. These divisions both contribute to, and are the result of, a long history of conflict and poverty. Since the genocide, social classifications are much more complex. While the previous ethnic divisions are being challenged through government policies, new divisions have surfaced. These include those between survivors and perpetrators of the genocide. Additionally, complex divisions exist between different sorts of returnees (returned refugees), conditioned by factors that include the time at which they returned ('new caseload' returnees, who returned to Rwanda after 1996 from the refugee camps set up upon the exodus in 1994, and 'old caseload' returnees, who returned immediately after the genocide, mainly from Uganda).

The project context

Oxfam currently implements its programme in the provinces of Ruhengeri, Umutara, and Gitarama. These provinces are among the poorest in Rwanda, in a country that is among the poorest in the world. Cellules (or communities, the smallest administrative unit in Rwanda) in which Oxfam works have high numbers of female-headed households, orphans, and, particularly in Ruhengeri, a large number of Batwa.

People in the areas in which Oxfam works identified six economic levels: *indigent, very poor, poor, fair, rich, and very rich*. In all the cellules, the overwhelming majority of the population are classified in the first three categories, from *indigent* to *poor*. In one cellule – Ruminantege, in Gitarama

Social effects of poverty

'Long ago, rich people helped the poor, but nowadays they close their houses.'

'The old people are suffering, even those who have married children. Everyone is struggling for his own life, and they don't visit their parents.'

'You cannot visit a friend with empty hands, according to Rwandan culture.'

(Focus group, Gitarama)

– people attending a meeting called by Oxfam to discuss their needs talked of the migration of men to urban areas for employment, women working for food in neighbouring cellules, and the high rate of children who leave primary and secondary school because of family poverty. Food security is a major issue; few people have access to medical care; and many children do not attend school. Lack of sufficient land for subsistence farming or for cash crops is a consistent problem, compounded by poor soil fertility and lack of fertilisers. Cassava is the only source of income in the Gitarama cellules; due to unfavourable weather conditions and diseases, harvests are always in jeopardy. The few people in Gitarama who may have larger pieces of land have difficulty working it, because so many of their family members were killed in the genocide.

Espérance

My husband died in 1999. I have eight children. My first son is 20 years old and has psychological problems. Nobody from my husband's family wants to help me, because I refuse to become their wife.

I go to Rwerere sector to find work in the fields and I pass there seven days. I am paid in small money, or they give me potatoes and maize. My children stay alone without someone to help them.

(Kabira, Ruhengeri)

People were asked to rank the characteristics that contributed to well-being. Most cellules rated peace (or a variant, for example, living in harmony with others) as the most important. Traditionally, communities have used a number of methods to resolve conflict or maintain peace. The first level is that of the family, whereby respected members of the extended family adjudicate problems or disputes. Disputes among different families are resolved within the *nyumbakumi*. *Nyumbakumi* literally means ten households (although it often includes up to 20); it is the smallest administrative unit in the cellule, rather like a neighbourhood committee. Fees are paid to the *nyumbakumi*, a fact which disadvantages the poor and can create inequitable judgments. The imposition of fines can cause hardship, again especially for the poor. If adjudication at this level fails, sector-level and district-level authorities are frequently called upon to resolve conflicts. This also involves expenditure, which again disadvantages the poor. Courts are a last resort, most frequently used for disputes about land and property.

Participatory research undertaken by Oxfam shows that in the three provinces, communities have a shared memory of historical events; but there are significant differences between people in their recall and analysis of these events. The year 1959 marked for them the beginning of ethnic conflict. A large number of Tutsi fled the provinces for Uganda in what was called the 'wind war', after a Hutu government took power and widespread violence was inflicted on Tutsis. Examples were given of coexistence among different ethnic groups before the genocide: Tutsis who helped Hutus during the famine times of 1943, and Hutus who helped Tutsis in 1959 (they hid them and took some of their goods to them where they were in exile). Most could not understand how the genocide happened.

In Ruhengeri, the commonest interpretation of the events surrounding the genocide was that the Rwanda Patriotic Force (RPF) started the war in 1990 and

seized power in 1994 after the genocide. There was a brief interim of peace, followed by 'the infiltrators' war' (ex-FAR and *Interahamwe*) during 1997 and 1998. The effects of that war are still felt, and some claim that it cost more lives in Ruhengeri than the genocide. There is little mention of returnees in Ruhengeri, yet in Umutara they are seen as a matter of major consequence.

In Umutara, returnees from Uganda were settling as early as August 1994, following in the wake of the RPF. During 1996–97, refugees were forcibly returned from Zaire, and others came from Tanzania, Kenya, and Burundi. Land sharing and a process of villagisation to accommodate the vast influx of returnees were of major significance to the communities, especially Umutara. Partly in response to the housing crisis, but also to further its longer-term unification goals, the government in late 1996 established a National Habitat Policy which introduced villagisation. Whereas most Rwandans had previously lived in dispersed settlements, farming the land on which they dwelt, they were now required to settle in newly created villages, or *imidugudu*. Many moved from the homes that they had been occupying. Some lost their farmland to resettlement sites, and land was often divided between former owners and new arrivals. Umutara absorbed many of the 750,000 returnees from Uganda, because the parkland there was the only area in Rwanda that could provide grazing for the cattle that many brought with them. In addition, Umutara became home to 'new caseload' returnees from the camps in Zaire and continues to be a destination for new returnees.

Gitarama province was severely affected by the genocide: several hundred thousand people were massacred. Hostility, conflict, and mistrust between survivors and families of prisoners are named as the most critical sources of conflict in the cellules where we work. Additionally, Gitarama has a relatively large number of people resettled from the Congo and from Kenya.

The government's National Unity and Reconciliation Policy is founded on the premise that ethnicity is no longer an issue in Rwanda: that everyone is a Rwandan. This is the public discourse, both nationally and in the cellules. Communities in Umutara are more open than those in Ruhengeri to discuss social relations (including ethnicity) and problems within the cellules. When people were first resettled together in Umutara, the others saw those from Tanzania as *interahamwe*; those from Uganda were seen as RPF who would kill everyone else because of the genocide. Now, people insist that the cause of conflict is not ethnicity, but disputes between cultivators and pastoralists, and differences between the rich and the poor.

In Gitarama, the main source of conflict is between survivors and the families who have men in prison. Women have not heard from their husbands in prison for a long time, and the survivor children want to know who killed their parents. There is a great deal of fear about the *gacaca* process, as prisoners will be released back into the communities. There are disputes about sharing land between new repatriates and genocide survivors. Inter-marriage between Tutsis and Hutus, which was relatively common before the genocide, now causes great conflict. Parents will often ostracise the offending couple and leave them without support, either socially or financially. Couples sometimes prefer to live together without marriage, because their parents refuse to contribute to or participate in the wedding. The children produced are considered illegitimate and also ostracised.

Generally, there is little understanding of gender inequality and its social and economic impact on communities. In Matara, for example, men see the concept as something being forced on them by the authorities; women believe it is for intellectual women only. In spite of the impressive gains made by women on the national political scene, the position of women and girls in all cellules relative to

that of men and boys remains unequal. There are fewer opportunities for income generation for women. Land inheritance is generally restricted to sons, even though the laws have changed to allow daughters to inherit. The right of girls to inherit family property is opposed by most men; when girls do inherit, they frequently sell the land, because they do not trust their brothers to allow them to continue ownership. Women's participation in *njyanama* meetings (*njyanama* is the cellule decision-making body comprising women and men over the age of 18) is much lower than that of men. Female literacy rates are markedly lower than those of men: for example, in the 10 cellules in Ruhengeri in which Oxfam works, the average literacy rate for men is 58.5 per cent and for women, 38.5 per cent; 53 per cent of girls and 62 per cent of boys respectively attend school. Women's low rate of literacy is one of the reasons given by communities for their low representation on governing committees.

Marianne

I can't talk during the njyanama meeting because of fear to be called someone who talks in the place of a man.

Also I have to be submissive to authority, because if I don't do that and I have a problem, they will not receive me.

(Ruhengeri)

There are a large number of female-headed households in all three provinces. For example, in Gitarama, the average for the ten cellules is 19 per cent. In Gitarama, the female-headed households include those whose husbands are in prison, accused of genocide. In Gitarama especially, but also in Ruhengeri and Umutara, the much lower number of men in the community directly affects the ability of households to survive. In some instances, neighbours will refuse to carry a woman to hospital (in the rural ambulance system) because she does not

have a husband to return such community services. Traditional practices such as polygamy are no longer so frequent, because men can no longer afford more than one wife and because of changes in the law. However, 'concubinage' and illicit relations are a source of serious conflict in most communities. Widows are mistrusted and held in suspicion by wives, and very often accused of being adulterous.

The Oxfam GB project

The project adopts a three-pronged strategy. The first element is conflict management and budget support at community level, to promote peace and sustainable livelihoods. The second element aims to build on this community-level work, to support the conflict-sensitive practice of positive national policies. These policies focus on decentralisation, poverty reduction, national unity and reconciliation, and the reintegration of ex-combatants. The third element also builds on community-level work, by supporting the process of linking civil society into the government policy environment, particularly unity and reconciliation.

The community-level work on conflict management and budget support consisted of three phases:

- 1 Assessments in selected communities to provide base-line information on current skills, attitudes, and behaviour (practice), which will then be used to measure changes in conflict attitudes as part of a monitoring and evaluation strategy.
- 2 Training in progressive conflict management for community-chosen women and men, local authorities, and identified groups with specific needs.
- 3 Providing direct financial support to communities for poverty reduction, to put into practice the skills necessary for coexistence: co-operation, tolerance, inclusive decision making, and participation.

Identifying where to work

In Ruhengeri, Umutara, and Gitarama, full-day meetings were held with district and sector-level authorities to explain the programme and its approach. Criteria for sector and cellule selection were developed, with the full participation of district executive committees, sector and cellule co-ordinators, Community Development Committees, representatives of women's organisations and youth associations. The criteria included both conflict-management issues and issues of poverty.

If we learn the peace and reconciliation culture, we will achieve it. Just as those who were trained in genocide put it into action.

An old man, Niyamirama, Gitarama

The selection of areas in which to work was influenced by the following factors:

- those not already receiving assistance from international NGOs;
- deeply rural and isolated sectors;
- those characterised by a large number of conflicts;
- those in which gender issues are not integrated into the development processes or where gender issues are more critical.

An additional two meetings were held with authorities in each province, to select the sectors and cellules according to the established criteria. Within the areas, selection of cellules was based on the following criteria:

- large numbers of widows and female heads of households;
- a large number of orphans;
- the presence of minority and marginalised groups (especially Batwa) ;
- large numbers of ex-prisoners (*genocidaires*) being re-integrated;

- large numbers of ex-combatants for reintegration;
- large numbers of poor families and other vulnerable groups.

At the start of the project, *njyanama* meetings were convened in 30 cellules by Oxfam and sector officials to explain both the conflict-management training and the budgetary support for poverty reduction. Critical to the Oxfam approach is that conflicts over development resources should be managed by the community, with the help of the Oxfam-trained conflict-management facilitators.

The training component began with communities electing two women and two men trainees from each cellule, according to agreed criteria. These included moral integrity (*inyangamugayo*), personal motivation and drive, representation of the cellule's social diversity, six years of primary school, and age above 18 years. In two of the communities in Umutara, there was only one literate woman. As a result, Oxfam decided to develop specialised and innovative training in conflict management for non-literate women. District-level and sector-level officials selected representatives to participate in training alongside cellule members. These representatives included the district gender representative.

Conflict-management training: the impact

The training is conducted in courses lasting three or four weeks, spread out over a period of three or four months. Participants are resident during the five-day sessions, with child-care provided to enable the full participation of women. For most trainees, this is the first experience of sharing sleeping space and eating with members of the Batwa community. The training is based on a Rwandan conflict-resolution manual, field-tested in the Oxfam programme and published in French, English, and Kinyarwanda by Oxfam in collaboration with the National

Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) and Réseau des Femmes Ouvrant pour le Développement Rural (Pro-Femmes). Using Rwandan material and case studies and guided by Rwandan trainers, the participants acquire self-awareness, an understanding of what causes conflict, and the effects of unresolved conflict upon themselves and others. This leads to a transformation in their ideas, perceptions, and in behaviour. They also learn the skills of mediation, negotiation, and counselling necessary for them to become conflict-management facilitators in their communities. Gender issues are included in points for discussion in the case studies, as well as in gender-specific material.

The impact is almost immediate among the participants and in the communities. For example, in an exercise called the Tree of Life, participants talk about the events and people that helped to shape their lives. This is intended to lead to greater self-awareness, as well as to greater ability to understand other people's experiences, and the impact on their lives. For many, this is the first time they have had the opportunity to reflect on their lives and share their thoughts with others in a non-threatening environment. The non-literate women are especially open, because they feel free to talk without men and 'intellectual' women present. Women from the Gitarama training course said, 'We have hearts full of suffering and sadness. We could never tell anyone. But in this training we have learned to trust each other and can finally speak.'

The training often changes long-held traditional attitudes to gender roles. The personal behaviour of some of the men changed when they returned home. A male trainee shocked the elders in his community in Ruhengeri when he helped his wife with the housework. Another man in Umutara took his sick child to the hospital, a task normally undertaken by his wife. A demobilised soldier brought his young child to the training course for several days, because his wife had other business to attend to.

The training experience often results in participants resolving conflicts within their own lives, or within their families. Within the community, the facilitators are called upon to help to resolve a variety of conflicts: family disputes, land conflicts, and conflicts between the rich and the poor. Further disputes are resolved at cell level, and authorities report a decrease in the number of disputes taken from the cellules where Oxfam works to the sector level for resolution. Facilitators are also being called upon to resolve conflicts in neighbouring cellules. For example, the Mayor of the town of Muvumba requested assistance in managing a land dispute between old and new returnees in Muhambo cell, next to Cyagaju cell. A facilitator from Cyagaju successfully settled the dispute, and the land was shared to everyone's satisfaction. Facilitators from Cyembogo helped to resolve a border dispute between Ugandan and Rwandan customs officials, after Rwandan authorities asked for their help.

In most communities, non-literate women are little valued, and the women, the community, and the officials were very surprised that Oxfam had chosen to include them in specialised training. The impact has been extensive. When they return to the cellules after the first week of training, they report to the *njyanama* what they have learned. For most, this is the first time they have ever spoken at such a meeting, and the level of confidence and the knowledge they display has changed attitudes towards them and towards other non-literate people. A husband, initially sceptical, now encourages his wife to participate to 'tell me what you have learned'. Some of the non-literate women are also taking steps to learn how to read and write; several have graduated from literacy centres.

The training has given both non-literate and literate women the confidence to participate in governance within their communities. Normally few women attend *njyanama* meetings, being represented instead by their husbands or other male

Eugenie

My neighbour got a piece of land 35 years before from my parents. During the genocide, he did not want to save me. After the genocide, I wanted revenge and to get back the piece of land, as I know he has no document to prove it.

The case is going to court. But after attending the conflict-management training, I have decided to give up the case, let him have the land, and end the hate.

(Kigarama, Gitarama)

members of their family; even fewer speak at the meetings. But women now outnumber men in attendance at *njyanama* meetings and are speaking and being listened to in all the cellules. Some women who have been trained now have the confidence to seek positions in the elected governing structures. Voters who felt that her lack of literacy disqualified her challenged a woman standing for election in July 2004.³ She responded that it didn't matter that she couldn't read, as she had been trained by Oxfam to do the job. She was elected to the sector-level mediation committee. A further nine Oxfam-trained women were elected. In the elections for women representatives at district level, one Oxfam-trained woman was elected; at sector level, four; and at cellule level, 27, three of whom are non-literate. Eleven women were elected as *gacaca* judges, two of whom are non-literate.

A pilot training course for demobilised soldiers began in July 2004 in Umutara. Participants include demobilised soldiers from the Rwanda Armed Forces, the Rwanda Patriotic Army, and Ex-FAR / *interahamwe*. A total of 42 ex-combatants are being trained to become conflict-resolution facilitators in the communities in which they have resettled. The diverse group includes women and men, Muslim and Christian, Batwa, former officers, ordinary soldiers, and some disabled by armed conflict.

The project also undertakes training of trainers (TOT) in conflict management.

In Umutara, people were chosen for their integrity and their motivation to implement the Oxfam approach and for their capacity to train others. Included in the selection from Umutara were two non-literate women. It is planned to incorporate some of the graduates into next year's training as trainers, alongside the professional trainers whom Oxfam currently uses. It is hoped that cellule-level trainers will conduct all of our training in the future and be available for other organisations and communities. Sector-level and district-level trained officials are also promoting the training to their colleagues in the government. The staff of Muvumba District will be trained by TOT graduates, at the request of the Mayor.

To further ensure sustainability, Oxfam continues to work with the old cellules, offering refresher courses for the previous year's trainees, and making follow-up visits on a regular schedule. Oxfam also facilitates meetings between old and new cellules, so lessons can be shared and connections established. There will be more than 250 new people trained in 2004 in conflict management, in addition to approximately 100 participating in refresher courses. People who have heard about the programme have specially requested to be included in the course: for example, a woman representing demobilised soldiers, and male and female youth representatives of the Ndiza Unity and Reconciliation Association in Gitarama province. In Umutara, the head of the provincial Batwa association has been included.

The impact of the project on livelihoods

Grant projects are an important component of the programme. Oxfam has put in place processes to help to ensure transparency and equitable allocation of funds. The *njyanama* approves projects according to agreed criteria, in meetings facilitated by the conflict-management trainees. Grant

committees overseeing the projects are composed equally of men and women; if the president of the committee is a man, the vice-president must be a woman, and *vice versa*. One criterion for approval is that the project must promote gender equality in project planning, decision making, and management. The project is then reviewed by a gender-balanced 'oversight committee' consisting of the Oxfam Project Manager and Social Mobilisers, and sector- and district-level officials (variously, Community Development Committee chairperson, *Ubudehe*, *Gacaca*, Gender, Youth, and/or NURC representative). The oversight committee can offer advice and support, but the decision of the *njyanama* is final, unless it is clear that the criteria have not been met, or there is evidence of corruption or manipulation.

Some cellules use their money to buy goats, which will be cared for by *nyumbakumi*. The first task is to build a shelter for the goats, to be shared by the *nyumbakumi*. With the grant, the cellule purchases tin roofing, poles, nails, and a door. Women and men build the shed together. Goats for sale can be found in the same cellule, or in a neighbouring cellule. Sometimes they are found in the local market, in most instances a four- or five-hour walk away. From wherever the goats are purchased, the transaction helps the local economy. Payment to the sellers is made in full view of the community, to ensure transparency. It was impressive to see the role of women in the goat-buying process in Nyendo cellule. The treasurer, who handled all cash transactions, is a woman. The vice-president, who played a major role in the goat selection, is a woman. Finally, a check person, who took details in a notebook of all transactions, which was then crosschecked with the treasurer's accounts, is also a woman. There has been a 100 per cent return on investment from some goats already, and the *njyanama* agrees who will receive the offspring.

In Cyembogo, where they had three projects, all have been successful. Goat

Criteria for the approval of micro projects

- Contributes to coexistence.
- Contributes to poverty reduction among vulnerable groups.
- Promotes gender equality in project planning, decision making, and management.
- Assists men and women equitably.
- Reflects cellule's social diversity.
- Is managed in a transparent manner and is based on democratic principles.
- Is reasonably sustainable.

breeding has allowed almost all households to receive a goat, beginning with the vulnerable, disabled people, and widows. Only ten families are still waiting for goats. The cellule now has 91,000 RFW (c.US \$1000) in its bank account, from the proceeds of its milling machine and community centre.

But more importantly, the community is working together to build peace and reconciliation. The two non-literate women chosen from Cyembogo to be trained have made several presentations to the *njyanama*, explaining what they have learned, and they are teaching their skills to others. The people of the community are very proud of these two women, and the impact they have had in helping to resolve conflicts in the community.

Inevitably, conflicts arise during the grant process. For example, the grant provided is insufficient to provide a goat for each household in cellules that choose goat rearing. But the project aim is that, through the experience of negotiating, making decisions on the implementation of the project collectively, and sharing the work, relationships among women, men, and children will be built across formerly mistrustful boundaries. When a community is involved in making decisions about grants, the opportunity exists to work together for the benefit of all, and for development decisions to be made by the women and men themselves.

Asking forgiveness

We Hutus must have the courage to accept that we committed a serious fault when we did the genocide. We must also ask forgiveness of our brother Tutsis, so as to build a new peaceful and developed country.

Jean, a Hutu at *njyanama* meeting, Cyembogo

In one cellule, Yabisindu, this process promoted a positive change in gender relations. Here, the cellule chose brick making as their project. They had to negotiate with the neighbouring cellule to rent swamp-land on Lake Muhazi, and they have subsequently included some of the households from this cellule in the project. Brick making is traditionally a male occupation; when women suggested that they should do more than just carry the bricks to the kiln, there was much opposition from some of the community. This was resolved by the *njyanama*, assisted by the conflict-management facilitators: women are now taught to make bricks and they are included equally in the project. Each household works on the project and is paid per brick. The earnings are used in some instances to subscribe to the government health scheme, thus providing a measure of health security. The bricks will be sold, and the profit put into a community fund for other projects that will be selected by the *njyanama*.

Oxfam Project Managers and Social Mobilisers have been specifically trained to train grant managers in project management, basic accounting, and gender awareness. In 2003 a total of 105 members of grant-committee members were trained. There has been ongoing support to the grant committees from Oxfam staff in project management and accounting. Additionally, during the gender training, a number of people asked about the new marriage laws, and other laws relating to the rights of women and children. Oxfam now distributes as a resource to each facilitator a book on the

new laws, produced by Réseau de Femmes, and continues to support the facilitators in addressing these issues.

Lessons from the project

The evaluation of the pilot project upon which the current programme is based recommended that 'The second phase of the project should be more proactive in attempts at equalizing gender participation'.⁴ The Oxfam team rethought the processes and procedures of the pilot project to ensure that gender was effectively mainstreamed throughout the new programme.

Every stage of planning and implementing the programme now includes the active participation of both women and men. In addition to ensuring gender balance in all the activities, gender-awareness training has been given to the communities and officials trained and to the grant-management committees. Gender issues were incorporated into the training manual, and Oxfam ensured that the conflict-management trainers were informed about and sensitive to gender issues. The team itself has been trained in gender-equity issues, and is now more able to identify and flexibly respond to gender disparities that might inhibit the equitable impact of the programme. A case in point is the unplanned-for training of non-literate women, which has had such remarkable success. Community members are now demanding more information on gender issues and on new laws regarding the rights of women and children, have requested more gender training, and are challenging gender stereotypes at cellule level. Women are now brick makers in Yabisindu, and women are successfully participating in the management and implementation of development projects in all cellules. The gender approach also led to an increased awareness of the marginalisation of other groups, particularly the Batwa, prompting positive and successful efforts to include them in the programme and cellule activities.

Sustainability is incorporated into the approach and methodology of the programme. The programme does not establish new structures: it uses existing local and national structures and strengthens their capacity to put into practice existing policies of reconciliation, decentralisation, and good governance. As a result of Oxfam's approach, more women are now incorporated into those local structures and are working equally with men to build peace, national unity, and reconciliation. At the grassroots level, the involvement of women in governance is beginning to emulate the success of women leaders at parliamentary level.

The Oxfam GB Rwanda Peace Building and Development Programme is funded by Oxfam GB, Oxfam Ireland, Development Cooperation Ireland, and other major donors. Rosemarie McNairn has been Oxfam GB's Country Programme Manager in Rwanda since 2003. She was formerly Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Women and Gender Studies, Makerere University, Uganda. rmcnairn@oxfam.org.uk

Notes

- 1 Human Development Indicators, UNDP *Human Development Report 2004*.
- 2 Rwanda Development Indicators, Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Republic of Rwanda, 2002.
- 3 The participation of non-literate people in public life is much less than that of those who are literate: 7 per cent, compared with 19 per cent (NURC Opinion Survey on the Process of Decentralisation and Democratisation in Rwanda, 2004).
- 4 Amr Abdalla, Noa Davenport, and Mutahi Ngunyi, *Peacebuilding Pilot Project Impact Assessment*, Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy and ConsultAfrica, 2002.

Sustaining peace, re-building livelihoods: the Gujarat Harmony Project

Sara Ahmed¹

In February 2002, a burning train carriage set off some of the worst communal riots in the prosperous state of Gujarat that post-Independence India has ever witnessed. Civil society remained largely silent, partly out of fear, and institutional response was limited. This paper describes how the Gujarat Harmony Project is attempting to reconcile Hindu and Muslim communities who have traditionally been living alongside each other, though not necessarily always in peace. The article focuses especially on the difficult role of women as survivors, actors, and leaders at the community level, and explores their efforts to work through their pain and transform conflict situations.

Shattering the peace

On the morning of 27 February 2002, an irate mob began to stone the Sabarmati Express train as it pulled out of Godhra station, in the district of Panchmahals in eastern Gujarat, India, which is dominated by *adivasi* (tribal) communities. Some 20 minutes later, coach number S-6 was burned to cinders, along with some 58 passengers, many of them women and children. What happened is unclear, although the forensic evidence suggests that the train was burned from inside. Among the passengers were a large number of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) activists and supporters, returning from a rally at the disputed Babri Masjid site at Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh.² It is well established that they had been harassing fellow passengers, particularly Muslim women. One of the students whom I encountered in my capacity as a university lecturer conducting admission interviews had been in the coach, and had witnessed the harassment.

This incident and its aftermath catalysed violence against Muslims on a scale never before seen in so-called 'modern' India. Instead of trying to maintain peace, the Chief Minister of Gujarat reacted to the incident with the statement: 'I want to assure the people that Gujarat shall not tolerate any such incident. The culprits will get full punishment for their sins. Not only this, we will set an example, that nobody not even in his dream, thinks of committing a heinous crime like this' (Narendra Modi, Chief Minister, on State television on 28 February 2002, cited in Varadarajan 2002). Official figures account for 1,000 dead and 150,000 displaced people, mostly Muslims, yet unofficial estimates claim that at least 2,000 men, women, and children were raped, killed, or burned alive, and more than 200,000 people were rendered destitute, their homes and livelihoods plundered and destroyed. As notable as the numbers of victims of these atrocities was the degree of brutality used. Many women were not only raped, but also mutilated: 'their bodies [became] battlefields to avenge, subjugate

and even eliminate, an entire community' (Mander 2004:16). As a consequence, thousands of Muslim families moved to relief camps in urban areas, largely maintained by various Islamic committees, with support from some NGOs and the International Red Cross, which was one of the few organisations allowed to work there.

The communal carnage of 2002 in Gujarat, and its aftermath, were met largely by silence and inaction on the part of both national and international actors. The lack of response is in marked contrast to the massive outpouring of national and international aid for the survivors of the Kutch earthquake in northern Gujarat, one year earlier in January 2001.

More than two years later, after numerous international and national fact-finding commissions and human-rights tribunals have come and gone, no one has been convicted of involvement in the atrocities, and the fight for justice continues. Hundreds of Muslims have been illegally detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) for the Godhra carnage, yet many Hindu perpetrators of the ensuing violence against Muslims continue to live freely. The Supreme Court of India has recently called for the reopening of all the riot cases, and one notorious case³ has already been transferred to the neighbouring state of Maharashtra for re-trial.

The Gujarat Harmony Project: objectives and structure

The Gujarat Harmony Project (GHP) stands out as an important example of restorative justice in the face of the failure of the retributive justice system. Equally important, it illustrates the potential role that 'outsider' agencies – in this case, CARE as a donor development agency – can play in facilitating reconciliation through civil-society partnerships.

This paper draws on insights from a mid-term review of the GHP which I jointly

facilitated for CARE and its partners over a period of 20 days between February and May 2004. During the course of the review I met eight of the ten partner organisations, both the strategic partners, most members of the Project Advisory Group, and the CARE project support team in Delhi and Ahmedabad. In addition, focus-group discussions were held with a range of affected communities, both Hindus and Muslims, to discover how they were rebuilding their lives and inter-community relationships.

CARE has worked in India for more than 50 years. It has played a significant role in responding to emergencies, mainly arising from natural disasters, in several parts of the country. In recent disaster contexts (Kutch earthquake 2001, Orissa super-cyclone 1999), CARE has worked through forging multi-level institutional partnerships, involving the government (central and state), local NGOs, and community-based institutions. Internationally, CARE has been involved in a number of complex conflict contexts, such as those in Sri Lanka and Bosnia. However, the vision inspiring the work in Gujarat – of a collaborative civil-society partnership which works to mitigate the impact of conflict and facilitate reconciliation – is new for CARE.

The GHP was initiated in May 2002, with financial support from the Royal Netherlands Embassy (RNE). Its aims are to provide emergency relief, rehabilitate displaced communities, restore livelihoods, and facilitate social reconciliation in conflict-stricken areas of Gujarat. It is a unique partnership, which brings together ten diverse development organisations, including eight NGOs, which are both new and seasoned organisations based in Ahmedabad, the old state capital; one trust, the Thribhuvandas Foundation, working on women's health issues through the network of dairy co-operative societies in rural Anand and Kheda districts; and one strongly feminist collective – Olakh (meaning 'identity') – in the city of Baroda, south Gujarat.

The organisations involved in the GHP were selected because of their visibility during the relief phase. Most of the partners were working under very difficult and often dangerous conditions in the relief camps, and this was where CARE first came into contact with many of them. I was told during the review of the GHP that I undertook in 2004 that CARE felt it was important to ensure that not only was there synergy between diverse partners, but that their various skills and strengths were being shared in the most effective way possible. Therefore, the number of partners was kept small and manageable, because reconciliation work was a new undertaking for all the partners. Apart from covering both rural and urban affected areas, it was necessary to bring in culturally embedded institutions such as the Gujarat Sarwajanik Welfare Trust (GSWT), which predominantly, but not exclusively, works with Muslims. In addition, the project brought in groups working on justice and rights issues, such as the St. Xavier's Social Service Society. However, the GHP project was not able to involve any expressly Hindu body, because the situation was still volatile and sensitive: anti-Muslim sentiments were high, and there was no apparent desire for rapprochement on the part of any Hindu organisations. Two other organisations provide strategic support to the partnership; one (Unnati, in Ahmedabad) in the area of organisational capacity building, and the National Institute for Mental Health and Neuro Sciences on psycho-social trauma counselling and life-skills education.

A Project Advisory Group oversees the general direction of the work, approves partners' proposals, and keeps them focused on the overall objectives of the project, as well as on its core operating principles. The group consists of individuals from the fields of academia, health care, development practice, and government service. It has been meeting regularly every month to support the project-management team,

based in Ahmedabad. In addition, it reviews partners' work in the field from time to time.

Key intervention areas, strategies, and principles

During the first phase of relief work, CARE, GHP partners, the Project Advisory Group, and other stakeholders came together at a workshop in Ahmedabad (July 2002) to identify areas for intervention, strategies, and activities that would enable the project to meet its desired objectives of rehabilitation and social harmony. Seven key types of intervention were outlined:

- livelihood restoration
- social reconciliation
- habitat security
- psycho-social care
- advocacy to promote social harmony
- community education
- and knowledge building and documentation.

Seven key strategies were then defined to guide the activities undertaken in these intervention categories, taking into consideration the core strengths of the various partner organisations involved in the GHP; the need for collaboration between the partners; and the need to ensure sustainability both at the community level (in terms of project activities and interventions) and in the partnership process (the relations between the different organisations involved).

The strategies were as follows:

1. Promote positive relationships between different communities, at both individual and associational levels, through working to promote livelihoods, education, secure living conditions, and recreational and sporting events.
2. Enhance the awareness of opinion makers in society and key institutions of the need for social harmony, through building links between them by means of cultural events, workshops, and meetings.

3. Support people who had lived through the violence to return to a sense of mental well-being and health, working at both institutional and community levels.
4. Strengthen links among institutions involved in work to promote social harmony.
5. Build the institutional capacity of the GHP partners.
6. Prepare educational material to facilitate learning and documentation on the GHP.
7. Strengthen leadership (especially of women and youth) at the community level, and encourage leaders to promote the idea that social harmony is important and relevant to the life of people in their communities.

Strategies (the principal methods agreed upon by all partners collectively to achieve the GHP objectives) embed the fundamental choices made to govern the use of minimal resources, and day-to-day actions, in a social context still fraught with tension. The GHP strategies demonstrate how 'positioning' (the different expertise of partners) and 'perspective' (their values and ways of working) guide project activities and provide a framework for social action (Smillie and Hailey 2001: 91).

Connecting these strategies are a number of core principles. Most of them are non-negotiable for the partners and CARE. For example, they include a commitment to gender sensitivity and inclusion, respect for diversity and partnership, the notion of 'do-no-harm' (that is, do not incite further conflict) (Do No Harm Workshop Report, Ahmedabad: CARE GHP Project Team), and community ownership and participation, through a collaborative and consultative approach.

The core theory of social change underlying the GHP is the principle of *restorative justice*, a term which first emerged in the global discourse on peace, human rights, and justice in the late 1980s. Restorative justice helps a society to live with a violent

past, not by forgetting it, but rather by understanding the reasons for transgression, admitting the brutal loss of humanity, and projecting new meaning into the present (Carnegie Council 1999). While retributive justice is offender-specific and (as we have seen in the recent riots in Gujarat) subject to all sorts of legal and political manoeuvres, restorative justice involves rebuilding relations between perpetrators and victims, through processes of reconciliation aimed at transforming society. In this vision, justice is seen as a set of dynamic and 'participatory processes through which we develop the desire and ability to live peacefully and productively in our community with those who have harmed us, and/or those we have harmed' (Forget 2003: 3).

However, in seeing conflict resolution as offering a potential for development (CARE 2002), we need to understand that the principle of forgiveness underlying restorative justice involves a social transaction between a person who forgives and a person who is forgiven. That is, while the person who forgives may annul the need for 'punishment', the one who is forgiven has certain obligations to repair the past, and must acknowledge his or her personal accountability, even if it is done in an informal way. This comes about through self-examination and questioning, and informal or formal social interactions with the 'other', which brings a growing sense of empathy, understanding, and ultimately healing. Restorative justice is inextricably tied to the notion of a peaceful, just society. It also becomes clear that restorative justice needs to be supported by activities which build people's skills, knowledge, and social networks, and rebuild livelihoods harmed by the conflict.

It is not possible to consider critically all the activities of the various partners in the GHP. However, in the next sections I highlight a few examples which focus in particular on the complex gender dimensions of livelihood-restoration and conflict-transformation processes.

Livelihoods, capacity building, and reconciliation through women leaders

Women were a key group targeted in the GHP. This was not only because poor urban and rural women were the major victims of these communal riots. It was also due to the fact that it was easier for many of the partners to work with women in these communities, since they were building on previous work with them. They had already facilitated a number of women's groups including different religious identities at the community level, mainly linked to access to credit, income-generating opportunities, and questions of empowerment. Ilaben Pathak, the founder-director of the Ahmedabad Women's Action Group (AWAG), one of the GHP partners, commented (interview, Ahmedabad, April 2004): *'Sisterhood is the bond which binds our women together in conflict situations'*. However, in order to attain this sense of solidarity between women, activities were required to encourage open discussion of prejudices about each other, challenge them, and build a sense of shared identity and purpose. Different partner organisations adopted different strategies to do this.

For example, AWAG held social reconciliation workshops separately with Hindu and Muslim women, to break down myths that they had internalised about 'the other' (for example, 'Muslims are bloodthirsty because they eat meat'), and then brought them together in an inclusive or joint workshop. From this process, committees of interested women (committed, responsible, and sensitive to complex issues) were formed and taken to the AWAG centre for leadership training. So far, ten mixed women's peace committees have been formed. Through them, AWAG is facilitating discussion on religious fundamentalism, and other sensitive topics in the areas in which women live – in the main, the urban *challis* (neighbourhoods) of Ahmedabad.

At first SAMERTH, based in Ahmedabad, found it difficult to form mixed-religion self-help groups (SHGs) with women because of the socially created, geographical divisions between women of different religions. So it facilitated separate self-help groups of Muslim and Hindu women, and then brought them together at various religious festivals (for example Ramadan and Diwali), and public occasions such as Independence Day. They have now initiated inter-group loans between Hindu and Muslim self-help groups and have begun forming mixed groups and federating them. They are also creating a common marketing platform for self-help groups, facilitated by other partners (specifically, the 'younger' NGOs). These groups are engaged in income-generating activities, and they need marketing support.

SAATH, a large NGO with many years of experience in the Ahmedabad slums, worked with Hindu women leaders from the Sakhi Mahila Mandal (a federation of self-help groups registered in 1996) and young people (both women and men) from the Ekta Yuva Mandal. These entered the neighbouring riot-affected areas, initially assisted with distribution of relief items, and later facilitated the development of community-based organisations. For the Hindu women, going into a Muslim-dominated area during the peak of the riots wearing the vermillion *bindi* mark on the forehead, a visible sign of Hindu identity, was in itself a significant challenge. Many Muslim women regarded them as 'the enemy', and, unsurprisingly, questioned their intentions. SAATH's grassroots women leaders helped to promote a pre-school programme, based on Montessori principles, in these riot-affected neighbourhoods. Today, children and teachers from both communities are enthusiastic about the programme, not only as an activity in its own right, but also because it provides an opportunity for parents to come together and share common concerns as parents, cutting across the cultural divide.

Several of the partner organisations organise income-generating activities for young women. In the main, these focus on developing traditional skills, such as sewing or tailoring, *mendhi* (henna) application, and jewellery making. The classes are facilitated by members of the local community, who are paid a small honorarium by the partner organisation concerned. Costs for participants are subsidised, through GHP programme support. But there are issues to resolve here. First, questions have been raised about the reinforcement of traditional home-making skills, rather than literacy (very low among Muslim women, many of whom dropped out of school). Second, very few of the partners have the resources to address issues of quality, design, and marketing. Solving these problems is critical to sustaining production and providing a means of livelihood for women (albeit, supplementary). Otherwise – as happened in Kutch after the earthquake – there is a danger in ending up with a producers' market in which there is over-supply, little demand, and consequently low prices. For example, Unnati, a GHP strategic partner, is finding it difficult to market its line of Kutch handicrafts, made by women and young girls in a livelihood-support programme after the earthquake. I evaluated this programme for Unnati in mid-2003, and one of our joint recommendations was the formation of a small company to promote marketing of good-quality hand-made products.

Some partners also offer computer classes for local youth – usually in mixed batches and at a nominal cost, compared with more commercial operations. These classes are increasingly popular, particularly for young people who want to study English.

Olakh: transforming conflicts, transforming selves

Olakh was initiated in 1996. It is one of the few women's organisations in Gujarat to describe itself as feminist. Olakh brings a

strong feminist perspective, rooted in identity formation, to its work on conflicts.⁴ The central focus of Olakh's work is strengthening women's leadership. It sees women as actors, rather than mere victims of the violence, leading the process of reconciliation and peace. In its work, it uses dialogue, group-based interventions, and information sharing on laws, policies, and rights, to extend women's skills and knowledge, and develop their perspectives on key issues. Olakh does not seek to exclude men from its peace work; while its main focus is women, it runs computer classes for young people of both sexes, and involves men in an on-going dialogue to form local peace committees.

Olakh has mobilised *sangathans* (collectives) of both Muslim and Hindu women, in two urban slums in Baroda and in Maretha villages (about 30 km away from Baroda city). This mobilisation has been facilitated by co-ordinators called *samaj shilpi* (literally, builders or sculptors of a peaceful society). These young women come from both communities. Some were affected during the months of violence, while others – particularly Muslim women – faced enormous pressure from their families, who opposed their working in the public domain under such uncertain conditions. But Olakh made a conscious effort to employ and sustain these young Muslim women, because it realised that it had no diversity of identity among its staff when the violence started: nearly all its staff at that time were middle-class Hindu women. Olakh has also taken stories and songs about women's struggles from Gujarat and presented them to women around the country, and has offered them trauma-counselling facilities.

Olakh faced two kinds of constraint in the first few months of work. One was organisational or internal: the problem of staff turnover. One member of the Olakh staff team explained: '*We need to recognise the alienation that young women staff go through from their very own close families and friends; even we were being constantly questioned by*

communities as to what gave us the right to come and help them' (staff group discussion, February 2004). Olakh has now made a conscious decision not to employ male staff (except for one accountant, who has been with the organisation since 1996), because it feels that including men creates relationships centred on power, whereas women staff can relate directly to the pain of women in affected communities.

The second constraint has come from the external environment: the process of crossing internal boundaries in affected communities has been slow, requiring constant interaction and support from the Olakh team. Olakh faced considerable resistance from the majority community, particularly in Maretha village, when they were searching for premises in which to open a community centre. One staff member reported: *'We received lots of threats, then when a room was offered by the panchayat [village council] and we went to take possession of it, we found that someone had tied a buffalo there, a signal that we were still not welcome in the community. The rabari and patel community [dominant castes] maintained that it was all right for us to work on development issues, but not on ekta [unity]'* (group discussion with staff, March 2004). However, it was the *angawadi* (day-care centre) worker, a *thakur* (upper-caste) woman fighting a land-rights case of her own, who brought *dalit* (scheduled castes) and Muslim women together.

When a *dalit* woman in Maretha lost her husband recently, all the women in the *sangathan* visited her to show their support and solidarity; but the *dalit* men asked their wives, *'Why are you going?'* (anecdote shared by women at a group discussion at the Olakh community centre in Maretha, 2004). Similarly when a group was being organised to participate in the World Social Forum (WSF) at Mumbai (January 2004), a *patel* farmer went to the home of one of the *dalit* women members, got her husband drunk, and told him that he should not let his wife go to the WSF – it would only lead to more

trouble for him. The woman's husband beat her up severely, and prevented her from going to the Forum (*ibid.*).

Exposure visits to other women's and rights-based organisations, as well as workshops on conflict issues with external facilitators, have helped to develop the leadership capacity of the community and the team. Although for many women the fear and pain have lessened – they are meeting in each other's houses, drinking water together, and sharing food – they have still not begun to celebrate common festivals together, as they previously did before the violence. A Muslim woman at the group discussion at the community centre in Maretha stated: *'We do not feel like celebrating from the heart; earlier we used to buy new clothes at Diwali, and the tazia during Moharram⁵ was kept in the faliyas [hamlets] dominated by rabari and patel families, but for the past two years this has not been happening'* (group discussion at community centre, Maretha village, March 2004).

Similar sentiments were expressed at the meeting at Olakh's community centre in Kalyanagar slum, Baroda (March 2004): *'No one played Holi⁶ with us this year'*, said some of the young Muslim girls, referring to their Hindu friends, who were too scared to come over. Part of the reason for this fear is the fragility of peace in Baroda, which was shattered at the end of February 2004 in a stray, but fatal incident of violent stabbing, 'commemorating' the second anniversary of the communal riots. This type of incident illustrates the enormity of the task facing Olakh, which is one of the few NGOs in the city to address these issues at the grassroots. The alliances of power that Olakh has to confront are considerable – whether it is the builders' lobby in Baroda, spreading rumours of demolition or impending trouble in the slums, or the power of the six *patel* families in Maretha, which is derived from their close relationships with political leaders.

While the *samaj shilpi* are increasingly being recognised for their role in resolving conflict at the community level, the women

from the riot-affected communities still need a lot of support, in terms of livelihood restoration and peace-building. When I asked a group of Muslim and Hindu women in Kalyanagar what they would like to see in the future, one replied: *'Our world, the way it was before 2002'* (group meeting, March 2004). For me, this resembles the global desire for a return to the world before the events of 9/11: it summarises the universal desire for peace between friends, neighbours, and nations.

Over the last two years, Olakh staff have realised that conflict and oppression arise from complex and dynamic relations of power, including class, gender, caste, and culture. At a discussion with Olakh team members, they revealed how their work is closely linked to themselves: *'Working with women is a personal journey towards transformatory change – the pain of self-awareness, the contradictions between our "personal" and "organisational" selves, that is, what we work on and what we are in terms of our domestic spheres. This is something we all have to confront. Thus, [conflict] transformation is a capacity-building process for all of us'* (discussion with Olakh team members, February 2004).

Looking ahead: sustaining peace

The GHP has made some impact at the local level, through the work of its partners. This is particularly so in Ahmedabad, where the eight NGOs and the two strategic partners have had more opportunities for interaction. Yet the sum total of all these efforts is still small, when compared with the vast number of development NGOs in Gujarat that refuse to address critical issues underlying communal conflicts. Without wider institutional support, and in the face of a State which has neither accorded justice, compensated victims, nor worked to build bridges between communities, the task ahead seems monumental. Sadly, RNE-CARE support for the GHP will end in

November 2004. However, the partners unanimously agree that the reconciliation work has only just begun.

On the other hand, there are many who feel that, despite the scope for flexibility and innovation provided by a range of multi-stakeholder and multi-institutional strategies, partnerships are organically embedded and cannot be 'imposed' by a donor. In the same vein, some partners maintain that the GHP has lost its vitality, that it has been driven by targets rather than processes, and has become just another development programme. *'When there is conflict, then we partners are all focused; but when there is peace (relatively speaking), then we start working in a project mode'*, explained one of the partners (personal communication, April 2004). And then, the notion of reconciliation may become diluted.

Reckoning with the past is an ethical challenge to which the GHP partners have risen well, in their work to bring communities together. However, reconciliation is based on a social transaction between perpetrators and victims (the person who is forgiven, and the person who forgives), and not simply on 'accepting' that we have to live with the other. Underlying this social contract is an obligation based not only on admissions of personal accountability and trust invested in the person who is forgiven, but also a commitment to finding the truth, fighting for compensation and justice. This is beyond the mandate of this project.⁷ Truth, as we know, is the first casualty in any conflict, but survivors have the right to know what happened, why, and who was responsible, even if they decide to reconcile and to forgive. Otherwise, playing together, eating together, and all the other associational activities that partners have undertaken will continue to touch only the tip of the enormous pain with which they still have to come to terms.

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Notes

- 1 This paper is based on a review of the GHP that I undertook this year. Neither CARE, nor any of the GHP partners, is responsible for, or necessarily in agreement with, the comments made here.
- 2 Alleging that the Babri Masjid was built over a temple to Lord Ram, Hindus brought down the mosque on 6 December 2002; the site is currently under the jurisdiction of the court, but continues to be disputed.
- 3 The Best Bakery, where 14 Muslims were burned alive.
- 4 Gujarat has a number of women's organisations and several gender-progressive mixed NGOs. Olakh is one of the few organisations which has a non-hierarchical structure and a flexible, participatory working environment.
- 5 The *tazia* is essentially a model of the shrine of Imam Hussein at the holy city of Karbala, and Muharram is the celebration of his martyrdom by Shia Muslims.
- 6 Holi is celebrated all over India as the festival of colours, marking the advent of spring.
- 7 CARE India was established in 1950 through a bilateral treaty signed by the then President of India. There are legal limitations on its work.

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Resources

Compiled by Erin Leigh

Publications

Development, Women, and War: Feminist Perspectives (2004) Haleh Afshar and Deborah Eade (eds.), Oxfam GB, 274 Banbury Road, OX2 7DZ, UK.

www.oxfam.org.uk/publications

Development, Women, and War is published in association with the journal *Development in Practice*. It combines a guest-edited issue on the theme of women and war with selected articles from the journal and beyond. Contributors, academics and practitioners, consider the roles and experiences of women and men on the ground during active conflict and in the peace and reconstruction phase. The role of NGOs in conflict resolution is also considered, as is women's agency. Contributors include Donna Pankhurst, Lesley Abdela, Judy El-Bushra, and Suzanne Williams.

Maneuvers: the International Politics of Militarising Women's Lives (2000) Cynthia Enloe, University of California Press, c/o California/Princeton Fulfillment Services, 1445 Lower Ferry Road, Ewing, NJ 08618, USA.

www.ucpress.edu/press/

Enloe's *Maneuvers* is her latest analysis of gender and the military, building on previous work such as *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, and *Does Khaki Become You?*. It explores the wide-reaching impact of militarisation, which she describes as a process in which 'something

becomes controlled by, dependent on, or derives its value from the military...', and which relies on a privileged masculinity. Enloe traces this process of militarisation in seemingly unrelated things such as soup and laundry, and goes on to examine the lives and experiences of militarised women, such as wives of military men, sex workers servicing the military, and women nurses.

Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence (2001) Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark (eds.), Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF / Room 400, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 100010, USA.

<http://zedbooks.co.uk>

This book is a result of Moser's work with the World Bank on violence in Colombia, and a two-day conference on gender, armed conflict, and political violence. Twelve of the conference papers are published here. It begins with chapters addressing contextual issues, and then moves into more specific gender issues such as gender-based violence in conflict, women as actors in armed conflict, and more – but seeks to make visible women's agency in conflict. Useful for policy-makers, it links new empirical evidence with operational concerns. Countries considered include South Africa, Croatia, Israel and Palestine, India, El Salvador, Colombia, Guatemala, and Northern Ireland.

Where are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and After War (2004) Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana, Rights and Democracy: International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, 1001 de Maisonneuve Blvd. East, Suite 1100, Montreal, Quebec, H2L 4P9 Canada.

www.ichrdd.ca

This book, underpinned by a gender-analytical framework, begins by considering girls' roles during conflict and in post-conflict situations generally, finding that gender-based violence normally increases during conflict, and that in its aftermath girls and women are encouraged to revert to their traditional roles, instead of advancing on any gains made. This is followed by a broad analysis of the presence of girls in fighting forces, finding that in 55 countries girls are part of the military, or rebel forces; in 38 of these, they are in the frontlines. In the particular cases of Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique, the authors examine the gendered experiences of girls, including their relative absence from reintegration programmes, and the difficulties that they experience in post-conflict phases. Aimed at donors, NGOs, and multi-lateral organisations, the book is intended to document the problem and support these actors to protect girls who are in, or have served in, fighting forces.

Terror, Counter-Terror: Women Speak Out (2003) Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma, Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF / Room 400, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 100010, USA.

<http://zedbooks.co.uk>

In this thought-provoking collection of essays, Joseph and Sharma have collected a wide range of women's responses to the 'war on terror' as it unfolds. The contributors are women from around the world who are opposed to the war on terror, speaking directly to its protagonists. For

example, included in the collection is Rigoberta Menchu's anti-war letter to George W. Bush, and Barbara Lee's unique statement to US Congress, opposing the use of military force. Other contributors include Martha Nussbaum, Susan Sontag, and Women in Black.

The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation (2001) Sheila Meintjes, Anu Pillay and Meredith Turshen (eds.), Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF / Room 400, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 100010, USA.

<http://zedbooks.co.uk>

The Aftermath examines both changing and reinforced gender relations and women's gains and losses in the process of peacebuilding and reconstruction. The reality that women's lives are not necessarily any more peaceful or free of violence in the aftermath of war is highlighted, as are common concerns such as identity and solidarity building. The second part of the book analyses post-conflict situations where women have been able to challenge unequal gender relations and work towards transforming their situations.

Gender, Peace and Conflict (2001) Inger Skjelsbaek and Dan Smith (eds.), PRIO and Sage Publications, 6 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4PU, UK.

www.sagepub.com

This publication is the result of a meeting of experts organised by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), and the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO). The articles compiled here are a combination of theory, case studies, and policy-based literature review, covering a range of issues, including whether women are inherently peaceful, and the role of women in decision-making. It also includes case studies of gender and conflict from Colombia, Yugoslavia, and Sri Lanka.

Women and Civil War: Impact, Organizations, and Action (2001) Krishna Kumar (ed.), Lynne Rienner Publishers, c/o EDS, 3 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 8LU, UK.

www.rienner.com

Women and Civil War presents analysis drawn from USAID's work in Bosnia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Georgia, and Guatemala. It asks three questions: what is the impact of conflict on gender relations, and how have they influenced women's different responsibilities; what type of women's organisations have emerged, and have they been successful; and finally what has been the impact of international assistance on these organisations? It presents a framework for such assistance, and includes a final chapter on 'lessons and recommendations for the international community'.

Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood to Agency (2001) Rita Manchanda (ed.), Sage Publications, 6 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4PU, UK.

www.sagepub.com

Women, War and Peace in South Asia is an important contribution to the literature on gender and conflict, which is normally focused on Africa, Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and South and Central America. It seeks to challenge the construction of women as victims, and to make visible their agency in conflict situations. Conflicts in Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka are all examined.

What Women Do in Wartime: Gender and Conflict in Africa (1998) Meredith Turshen and Clotilde Tagiramasiya (eds.), Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF / Room 400, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 100010, USA.

What Women Do in Wartime considers conflict in South Africa, Mozambique, Rwanda, Chad, Namibia, Sudan, and Liberia, and the

human-rights violations committed against women during civil wars. It addresses women's experiences as both victims and combatants, and was the first book to examine the issue of rape and other gender-based violence in African civil wars.

The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict (1998) Cynthia Cockburn, Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF / Room 400, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 100010, USA.

<http://zedbooks.co.uk>

Cockburn's analysis draws on action-research which she conducted with three women's organisations in conflict-ridden societies, all of which engage with, and comprise, women of differing ethnic backgrounds or nationalities. The book considers the practicalities of 'transversal feminism' (feminism which allows women from diverse backgrounds to work together while retaining their 'roots', learning to acknowledge and sympathise with other women's positions, and gradually shifting into collaborative feminism). Some of the author's photographs of the organisations' work are included in the book. Organisations profiled are the Women's Support Network in Belfast; Bat Shalom, a group of Israeli Jewish and Israeli Palestinian and Arab women; and Medica Women's Therapy Centre in Bosnia/Hercegovina.

Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect: Women Speak Out About Conflict (1995) Olivia Bennett, Jo Bexley, and Kitty Warnock, Panos, 9 White Lion Street, London N1 9PD, UK.

www.panos.org.uk

This is a compelling collection of women's oral testimonies of their experiences and thoughts on war. It was published as a means of highlighting women's individuality, diversity, and agency, especially in the face of images and constructions of conflict which erase their individual experiences. Included in the book are personal stories from 85 women around the world, including

Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe.

War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa (2001) Joshua S. Goldstein, Cambridge University Press, The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK / 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA/Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa. <http://uk.cambridge.org/>

Goldstein explores the gendered dynamics of war and considers why it is predominantly men who fight, although he also analyses the phenomenon of women combatants. Gender relations, the role of testosterone, and gender norms of masculinity and femininity are examined. Goldstein suggests that a propensity to kill in war is not a natural tendency for either women or men.

War's Offensive on Women: the Humanitarian Challenge in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan (2000) Julie A. Mertus, Kumarian Press, 14 Oakwood Avenue, West Hartford, Connecticut 06119-2127, USA. www.kpbooks.com

This accessibly written publication is intended to reach a wide audience, from practitioners to policy-makers and beyond. It begins with an introduction to the different ways women and men experience war, followed by an analysis of the three case studies – Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan – and then it considers the legal framework that supports gender equality in conflict and post-conflict situations; the final chapter offers conclusions and recommendations.

Women and War (2003) Jenny Matthews, Pluto Press and ActionAid, Pluto Press 345 Archway Road, London N6 5AA, UK www.plutobooks.com

Women and War is a collection of photographs taken by documentary photographer Jenny Matthews over the past two decades. Images of women as soldiers, victims, and

survivors are presented from around the world. The photographs are accompanied by extracts from the photographer's diary.

Journals

Conflict Trends

The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) produces the magazine *Conflict Trends*, which provides a mix of brief overviews of conflicts, and their resolutions, and more in-depth analysis. Issue 3 in 2003 focused on 'Women, Peace, and Security'.

Gender and Peace-building

www.cfd-ch.org/English/english.html

The newsletter *Gender and Peace-building* provides information and analysis on approaches and practices for the promotion of gender-sensitive peace-building. It is published every three months by CFD (Christlicher Friedensdienst), an NGO for women's empowerment, based in Switzerland, as part of its work on gender and peace, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation. Two thematic issues have been published to date. The first addresses the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and the second considers the intersection between militarisation, gender, and development co-operation.

Security Dialogue

PRIØ, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, Fuglehauggata 11, NO-0260 Oslo, Norway.

www.prio.no/sd

Security Dialogue is a peer-reviewed quarterly journal which encourages reflection on new and traditional security issues such as globalisation, nationalism, ethnic conflict and civil war, information technology, biological and chemical warfare, environmental security, and human security. It provides a forum for analysis of the normative dimensions of security, theoretical and practical aspects of

identity and identity-based conflict, gender aspects of security, and Critical Security Studies. By providing a medium for interdisciplinary dialogue on theoretical innovations in security thinking, it seeks to encourage critical thinking about traditional policy assumptions.

Electronic resources

Gender Justice and Accountability in Peace Support Operations: Closing the Gaps (2004) International Alert

www.international-alert.org/pdf/pubgen/gender_justice_accountability_peace_operations.pdf

Available in print from Catherine Hall, Communications Officer

(chall@international-alert.org)

This report from International Alert argues the need for peace-support operations (PSOs) to adopt gender-sensitive approaches and support women's rights in post-conflict situations. Using international agreements as an overarching framework, the report provides recommendations to the UN and regional PSOs concerning the creation of gender-sensitive operations. It also suggests ways for PSOs to be accountable to the communities whom they serve, and to eliminate violations perpetrated by the PSOs themselves.

BRIDGE Cutting Edge Pack on Gender and Armed Conflict (2003)

www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/reports_gend_CEP.html

Also available in print.

BRIDGE's series of Cutting Edge Packs provides comprehensive analysis and information on particular themes, including armed conflict. The pack on Gender and Armed Conflict includes an overview report by Amani El Jack, a supporting resources collection, including summaries, and Development and Gender *In Brief*, which is a brief and accessible primer on the issues, with case studies from Peru and Palestine.

Women, War, Peace (2002) Elisabeth Rehn (Finland) and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, UNIFEM

www.unifem.org/index.php?f_page_pid=149
Also available in print.

Women, War, Peace is Volume 1 of the UNIFEM publication *Progress of the World's Women 2002*. It was commissioned in response to Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace, and security, to provide further study of the issues. The authors, both government officials, visited conflict areas and interviewed women about their thoughts and experiences of conflict and peace. Issues addressed include gender-based violence, the role of women in peace keeping, and the impact of displacement.

Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Issues and Sources (1998) Birgitte Sørensen, UNRISD

www.unrisd.org

This literature review of post-conflict reconstruction challenges the image of woman as victim by focusing on women's role as actors in peacebuilding. It also considers changing gender relations and structural constraints in post-conflict societies.

Pastoral Women as Peacemakers (2003) Community Based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiology Unit (CAPE) of the African Union's Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU/IBAR)

www.eldis.org/fulltext/PastoralWomenAsPeacemakersApril2003.pdf

This is a combined research report and workshop report on pastoral women's role in peacebuilding in Africa. It considers the role of women as peacebuilders, and finds that their informal power in the household is an important resource on which to draw in peacebuilding initiatives. The findings support the participation of women in formal structures of peacebuilding, and remind the reader of the importance of including rural and pastoral women in these initiatives.

Tools

Addressing the Needs of Women Affected by Armed Conflict: An ICRC Guidance Document (2004) International Committee of the Red Cross, Distribution Sector, Production, Marketing and Distribution Division, 19, avenue de la Paix, CH 1202 Geneva.

This document builds on the ICRC study entitled *Women Facing War*. It is a practical tool that is intended to support staff of ICRC, and other organisations with similar mandates, to implement a gender-sensitive approach to addressing the needs of women who have been affected by armed conflict.

Rethink! A Handbook for Sustainable Peace (2004) Agneta Soderberg Jacobson
www.iktk.se/publikationer/rapporter/pdf/Rethink.pdf

This handbook, produced by Kvinna Til Kvinna Forum, an organisation working on gender and conflict, supports the integration of women into peacebuilding processes. It is based on three conflict-related phases: during conflict; the post-conflict, peacebuilding phase; and finally the reconstruction phase. In each of these phases, the importance of women's participation is highlighted within civil society, and at the national and international levels.

Gender and Peacekeeping Training Course (DFID)
www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/genderandpeacekeeping/menu-e.asp

This on-line training course is designed for personnel of Peace Support Operations (PSOs). It consists of eight modules, with materials for both trainers and participants to help them to understand and engage with gender-equality issues. The modules include Introduction; Gender and Culture; Why Gender Matters; Gender in the Context of Peace Support Operations; Gender, Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law; Gender and the Conflict Phase; Gender and the Post-Conflict Phase; The Way Ahead.

Websites

Peace Women Project
www.peacewomen.org

PeaceWomen.org is a project of the UN Office of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, in New York City. The Peace Women Project monitors and works toward rapid and full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security.

Women, Peace, and Security
www.womenwarpeace.org

The *Women, Peace, and Security* website, supported by UNIFEM, provides a wealth of information. The website offers profiles of conflicts across the globe, their historical contexts, the gender-specific impacts, and the work of women's organisations and UNIFEM in response to them. It also includes links, resources, and more.

The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)'s Women's Portal
www.iansa.org/women/index.htm

IANSA is the global network of civil-society organisations working to stop the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. The website offers resources, analysis, and details of actions, campaigns, and projects around the world.

Gendercide Watch
www.gendercide.org

Gendercide Watch seeks to confront acts of gender-selective mass killing around the world. It believes that such atrocities against ordinary men and women constitute one of humanity's worst blights, and one of its greatest challenges in the new millennium.

Eldis Gender and Conflict pages
www.eldis.org/gender/index.htm

Eldis is an on-line gateway to high-quality information on development issues. Its

Gender Resource Guide aims to contribute to best practice in the area of gender analysis, by providing access to a range of resources. One area of specific focus is gender and conflict, on which it provides summaries, analysis, and links to documents, organisations, discussion lists, and newsletters.

Organisations

Women Waging Peace

625 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA. Tel: (617) 868-3910; Fax: (617) 995-1982.

information@womenwagingpeace.net
www.womenwagingpeace.net

Women Waging Peace campaigns for the full participation of women in formal and informal peace processes around the world. The inclusion of all sectors of society helps to find fresh, workable solutions to seemingly intractable conflicts. Sustainable peace, and therefore international security, depends on such innovations.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

1, rue de Varembe, Case Postale 28, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland. Tel: (+41 22) 919 70 80; wilpf@iprolink.ch
www.wilpf.int.ch

WILPF is the oldest women's peace organisation in the world. It was founded in April 1915, in The Hague, by some 1300 women from Europe and North America, from countries at war against each other and from neutral ones, who came together in a Congress of Women to protest against the war then raging in Europe. WILPF is an international NGO with national sections in 37 countries, covering all continents.

Women in Black

www.womeninblack.net

Women in Black is not an organisation, but an international peace network, a means of mobilisation, and a formula for action. Its vigils were started in Israel in 1988 by women protesting against Israel's Occu-

pation of the West Bank and Gaza. Women in Black has developed in countries such as Italy, Spain, Germany, England, Azerbaijan, Colombia, and in FR Yugoslavia, where women in Belgrade have stood in weekly vigils since 1991 to condemn war and the Serbian regime's policies of nationalist aggression. Women in Black groups have been formed in many cities in the United States since September 11th 2001.

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

122 East 42nd Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10168-1289, USA. Tel: 212-551-3088/212-551-3111; Fax 212-551-3180

info@womenscommission.org
www.womenscommission.org

The Women's Commission is an expert resource and advocacy organisation which monitors the care and protection of refugee women and children. It speaks out on issues of concern to refugee and displaced women, children and adolescents, who rarely have access to governments and policy makers to argue for change. It also provides opportunities for refugee women and youth to speak for themselves through briefings, testimony, participation in field assessments, and international conferences.

Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice

Anna Paulownastraat 103, 2518 BC The Hague, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 (0)70 365 2042; Fax: +31 (0)70 392 5270
info@iccwomen.org
www.iccwomen.org

This caucus is a network of individuals and groups committed to strengthening advocacy on women's human rights and helping to develop greater capacity among women in the use of International Criminal Court, the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, and other mechanisms that provide women with access to justice.

Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Division

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th floor, New York, NY 10118-3299 USA. Tel: 1-(212) 290-4700;

Fax: 1-(212) 736-1300

wrd@hrw.org

www.hrw.org/women/conflict.html

Human Rights Watch is the largest human-rights organisation based in the United States. Its researchers conduct fact-finding investigations into abuses in all regions of the world. Their findings are published in dozens of books and reports every year, generating extensive coverage in local and international media. One focus is on women, armed conflict, and international justice. Reports and publications are available about the organisation's work in various conflict-affected countries including Iraq, Afghanistan, Rwanda, Kosovo, and more.

International Alert

346 Clapham Road, London, SW9 9AP, UK.

Tel +44 (0) 20 7627 6800; Fax +44 (0) 20 7627 6900

general@international-alert.org

www.international-alert.org

International Alert is an NGO based in the UK, established in 1985 by human-rights advocates, including Martin Ennals, former Secretary General of Amnesty International, in response to the rise in violent conflict around the world and the subsequent abuse of individual and collective human rights. Today there is an ever-more pressing need for conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. International Alert has extensive resources and analysis on gender and peacebuilding, including the campaign website Women Building Peace (www.womenbuildingpeace.org), and numerous publications such as *Women Building Peace: Sharing Know-How* and a report on South Asian Women's perspectives on UN SC Resolution 1325.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

19 avenue de la Paix, CH 1202 Geneva.

Tel: ++ 41 (22) 734 60 01; ++ 41 (22) 733 20 57

www.icrc.org

The ICRC works around the world on a

strictly neutral and impartial basis to protect and assist people affected by armed conflicts and internal disturbances. A humanitarian organisation with headquarters in Geneva, mandated by the international community to be the guardian of international humanitarian law, it is the founding body of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. ICRC has produced significant analysis on women and war, and has an ongoing resource project called 'Women Facing War', which produces publications, reports, videos, and more.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Case Postale 2500, CH-1211 Genève 2 Dépôt, Suisse. Tel: +41 22 739 8111

www.unhcr.ch

The UNHCR is an impartial humanitarian organisation, mandated by the United Nations to lead and co-ordinate international action for the world-wide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems. Based in Switzerland, UNHCR has two basic and closely related aims: to protect refugees, and to seek ways to help them restart their lives in a normal environment.

International Criminal Court

Maanweg, 174, 2516 AB The Hague, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 (0)70 515 8186; Fax: +31 70 5158555.

pio@icc-cpi.int

www.icc-cpi.int

The International Criminal Court was established by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on 17 July 1998. This is the first-ever permanent, treaty-based, international criminal court established to promote the rule of law and ensure that the gravest international crimes do not go unpunished. The ICC has jurisdiction over cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Encompassed within 'war crimes and crimes against humanity' are various types of gender-based violence, including rape.

