

Norwegian Church Aid

**A gender perspective in the
prevention and resolution of
violent conflict**

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About this study:

TARGET AUDIENCE: Anyone interested in the area of conflict prevention and sustainable peace building initiatives as well as programme officers, staff and partner organisations working in countries at war or engaged in a violent conflict.

PURPOSE: To provide a brief overview to better understand the gender dimension in conflict prevention and resolution.

CONTENTS: Main issues related to gender and conflict in general and in the different conflict phases; selected case studies of women's peace initiatives and international efforts to increase women's participation in conflict resolution and peace processes; concrete ways in which non-governmental organisations can intervene and make a positive difference.

This study presents an introduction to gender perspectives in the prevention and resolution of violent conflicts. It is by no means a comprehensive study of the topic, rather an initial attempt to address a complex issue and encourage a collective and constructive reflection process. The idea behind this analytical effort originated as a follow up to a conference on gender and conflict held in Copenhagen in 1997, and organised by **the Gender Orientation on Development (GOOD) network of Aprovev agencies**. Aprovev is a group of European development agencies belonging to the World Council of Churches.¹

The original intention was to produce a set of *guidelines* for programme and desk officers working in the agencies connected to the GOOD network, staff of other non-governmental organisations who work in countries characterised by violent conflicts, and anyone interested in conflict resolution and sustainable peace building initiatives. Although the target audience is still the same, the conceptual tool chosen is different. We have opted for a study rather than a set of guidelines, feeling that these can be highly misleading at an early stage of the reflection process.

Guidelines may give the impression of providing a fixed framework for analysis and action. However, it is important to emphasise that the nature of conflicts and gender roles is by no means static. *Conflicts are, by definition, the outcome of a set of circumstances that are constantly changing*. The reasons why conflicts erupt may be clear at first, but may become obsolete as the conflict is violently consumed. People can fall prey to a sophisticated propaganda machine or simply become victims of something bigger than themselves. *Gender roles are also directly shaped by conflict: before, during and after. Women and men assume different roles as a result of conflict*. Some roles are individually chosen, like that of becoming politically engaged, while others are imposed by the state or are a result of social pressure.

¹ GOOD core group member agencies: AG KED, Brot für die Welt, Christian Aid, Church of Sweden Aid, Swiss Coordination Office Women in Development, DanChurch Aid, EZE, ICCO, and Norwegian Church Aid.

INTRODUCTION

Definitions

Conflict means different things. Occasionally, it can even be a positive force. In this study however, the term conflict is used to describe a high degree of violence that involves the use of weapons and is a threat to people's lives. All violent conflicts are unique and must be perceived as such. Although there may be common underlying causes that spark violent conflicts such as ethnic rivalry or a drive for nationalism, no conflict is the same as another. *Violence is a dynamic process*. It does not always manifest itself in the same way and for the same reasons. The present study explores the relationship between conflict and gender in conflict prevention and resolution.

Gender refers to *those culturally assigned behaviours and meanings, such as sex roles, attributed to the distinction all human societies make between male and female*. For most scholars have taken for granted that gendered behaviour is shaped by historical forces and thus has nothing to do with biology.² Although a gender analysis, by definition, focuses on *the relationships between the two sexes*, this study does indeed have a «woman bias».

Documenting women's initiatives

Selected case studies focus on women's initiatives to promote reconciliation and peace in war-torn societies. This is because there is a need to document such initiatives and to demonstrate that women actively participate in conflict resolution, although they are rarely involved in high-level peace negotiations. Although women participate in both prevention and resolution of armed conflicts, their initiatives are seldom documented. This is particularly so in non-western societies where women are less educated than men, have little access to resources and technology, and frequently confront severe social sanctions for being outspoken or for challenging imposed norms of behaviour.

Men are the ones who, almost invariably, make decisions on whether or not to wage a war, when to stop it and how to implement peace. The fields of international politics, arms control, and war and peace have to a large extent been dominated by patriarchal thinking. It is only in the last few years that a gender perspective has been applied to conflict-related issues and that, as we shall see in this study, initiatives are being launched across continents to collect women's stories and record experiences of conflict from a gender perspective.

² *The Dictionary of Anthropology*, Barfield T., Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1997; pg. 217.

Gender and Conflict in International Documents

International organisations have addressed the issue of violence against women ever since the First UN Conference on Women was held in Mexico City in 1975. This meeting marked the beginning of the UN Decade for Women and set out goals and objectives for the next decade.

Ten years later, in Nairobi, the Third World Conference on Women was held. This was the first world conference where conflict prevention and resolution were placed on the agenda. In what came to be known as the **Forward Looking Strategies (1985)**- the document adopted by the international community at the conference in Nairobi - *peace is, for the first time, directly linked to gender*. «The questions of women and peace and the meaning of peace for women cannot be separated from the broader question of relationships between women and men in all spheres of life and family»³. The document emphasises that both men and women must play central roles as intellectuals, policy-makers, decision-makers, planners, contributors, and beneficiaries of development. The contributions of both men and women are needed for the development of society.

Peace, in the true meaning of the word, is not sustainable in the long-run unless other unequal power relationships are also addressed. Paragraph 13 of the *Forward Looking Strategies* says that, «peace not only includes the absence of war, violence and hostilities at the national and international levels but also the enjoyment of economic and social justice, equality and the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedoms within societies». Positive peace goes beyond the mere absence of violence and is not synonymous with a return to the pre-conflict status quo. Positive peace addresses the root causes of the conflict itself and the inequalities that characterise a given society. Including the unequal power relations between women and men.

The need to include women in peace negotiations and their potential contributions to this process are also addressed in a more recent international document, **The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action**. «...The equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security (...) If women are to play an equal part in securing and maintaining peace, they must be empowered politically and economically and represented adequately at all levels of decision-making».⁴

The consequences of war on women and the need for their participation in conflict resolution is further mentioned in the 1996 UN commissioned study

³ Forward Looking Strategies, paragraph 257.

⁴ Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China 4-15 September 1995; Platform for Action, section on Women and Armed Conflict.

The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. In reviewing the plight of children in conflict zones around the world, the study recognises the critical roles women play during conflict and in post-conflict reconstruction processes, and calls for the inclusion of women as key members in the planning and implementation of relief, rehabilitation, peace-making, reconciliation and reconstruction programmes.⁵

While our study was written in year 2000, several important international initiatives materialised. Recognising that important lessons learned are not always learned, more focus was now onto how in to mainstream gender perspectives in practice, how to commit the international community and how to ensure the participation of women and men as equal partners and beneficiaries in peace processes.

One result of these efforts was that **UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations** (Lessons Learned Unit) finalised a report on *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations (July 2000)* – a guideline with concrete recommendations on how to secure a gender perspective in field operations of UN. This report was based upon recommendations from *The Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on “Mainstreaming of a Gender perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations”, Windhoek 31 May 2000*. These documents will form the basis of the forthcoming work in UN and other agencies work on gender and conflict.

Another important initiative was formed and lobbied actively throughout the year: **Women Building Peace Campaign** – a collaborative effort by *The NGO Working Group on Women and International Peace and Security* ⁶. Intensive advocacy work towards UN resulted in the adoption of *Resolution 1325 - Women and Peace and Security, October 31 2000 by United Nations Security Council*. This is a historical resolutions with a number of implications for UN, Governments and international organisations on the protection of women in conflict zones and for the inclusion of women`s groups and civil society in peace processes. It is in fact the first time UN Security Council has discussed women in their own right, also listening to voices directly from the field, acknowledging that women and men are affected differently in wars and conflicts.

⁵ *Women at the Peace Table. Making a Difference* by Sanam Naraghi Anderlini. United Nations Development Fund for Women, pg. 7.

⁶ International Alert, The Women`s International League for Peace and Freedom, Amnesty International, The Women`s Commission for Refugee Women and Children and The Hague Appeal for Peace played a leading role.

CONFLICT PREVENTION

Understanding the causes

Conflict prevention commonly refers to the capacity to diffuse tensions or to peacefully protest an unjust status quo. To diffuse tension in the short run means to open up venues for dialogue and to encourage a peaceful confrontation. In the long run, it means promoting a culture of peace, ideally starting from the family and the schools. It is rare to come across documented cases of successful conflict prevention; instances where a conflict has been strategically avoided. After all, when no conflict erupts there is less pressure to document the prevention strategy. As women have traditionally been conflict mediators within their families and communities, their efforts at the grassroots level have often been taken for granted and therefore have remained invisible.

Before a conflict breaks out there are usually signs of social distress and tension. These range from sporadic incidents, threats and ideological accusations based on racial hatred to tighter police control, night curfews, attacks on specific groups of people and even disappearances. When analysing a conflict situation one must seek to understand what happened before the violence escalated, what led to the escalation and how people reacted. What kinds of social pressures are in place and how have these affected men and women?

Language is a powerful tool and the choice of words is neither coincidental, nor gender neutral. Recognising that *neither men nor women belong to homogeneous groups*, it is crucial to understand how those who have been fuelling the conflict have targeted both groups. What kind of discourse has been used to reach men? What language has been used to reach women? What kind of symbolism has been drawn into that discourse?

Mobilising for peace

What is often documented in the literature are instances when people have organised to protest against a potentially explosive and dangerous situation. This is what makes the news, especially if the strategy is effective and if it happens in an area not too far removed from major media centres. The end of communism in Russia and the fall of the Berlin Wall were cases where the potential for conflict and violence was high but fortunately it was contained.

Women have often mobilised through peace marches, parliamentary petitions and collections of signatures. Mothers and female relatives have gathered in public squares to protest the disappearances of their male relatives (Argentina and Kurdish mothers in Turkey), or their involvement in war (Chetchnya and Russia). Croatian women have written letters to their politicians to protest discriminatory policies towards Bosnian refugees.

Countless examples of this type of involvement exist, partially also because it suits the traditional gender role of peaceful females mobilising against violence.

Expectations and stereotypes

In most countries women who mobilise for peace are perceived positively. This behaviour fits the stereotype of women as non-violent beings, givers of life and therefore protectors of it. It is much harder for societies to confront a situation where women themselves are perpetrators of violence. A recent example is that of Rwanda, where Hutu women were found to have actively participated in the slaughter of the Tutsi minority. Women who kill go against the traditional view of women as bearers, thus protectors, of life.

As women and men are perceived distinctly in all societies, their duties and obligations, during a pre-conflict or an emergency phase, but also post-conflict, differ according to their social positions. In many countries men are on stand-by for military duty while women are encouraged to safeguard the household and to protect the most vulnerable. Nationalist propaganda is used to increase support for military action. While men experience increased pressure to «defend the nation», women come to symbolise the nation itself, «the mother country» or «the collective territory». The population policies of fascist Germany and Italy served the nationalist purpose of expansionist regimes. Women in both countries were encouraged to live up to their reproductive role and to provide «children for the nation». Not surprisingly, women are often at the centre of nationalist construction and propaganda.

Gender awareness and women's networks

If and how women mobilise to prevent the eruption of a conflict also depends on *how they perceive themselves as women*. The level of gender awareness and gender based organisation women possess before the escalation of violence will determine how and if they will oppose the conflict, and the kinds of arguments they will bring forward. Women's political actions do not always begin as such. They often start as spontaneous protests to attacks on other family members or to a general climate of terror and intimidation. When the situation normalises women may no longer present a united front or working together against other injustices. They might be forced back to their traditional roles of various reasons. It can also happen that they decide to stick together and continue advocacy work on other issues.

In a report entitled *Women, War and Peace*, Elizabeth Ferry refers to a study of women in social protests movements that presents four types of issues around which women organise: economic survival, nationalist or racial/ethnic

issues, humanistic and nurturing issues, and women's rights issues.⁷ Although there is considerable overlap between these categories, it is nevertheless important to identify the motives that prompt women to mobilise together - if at all - during the pre-conflict phase.

The nature of women's involvement in peace negotiations and reconciliation activities is deeply connected to the role they play before the conflict erupts and their own self-awareness as women activists. How women decide to protest against the escalation of violence reveals how organised they are as a movement, their degree of political commitment, and their level of representation in society. All of these aspects determine how women will experience the conflict and what their roles will be during and after.

⁷ *Women, Violence and Non-Violent Change* edited by Aruna Gnanadason, Musimbi Kanyoro, and Lucia Ann McSpadden. World Council of Churches Publications, Geneva, 1996, pg. 16.

CONFLICT PHASE

Gender stereotypes

In situations of militarisation, traditional gender ideals are heightened and sexual differences are frequently exaggerated. Men's 'masculinity is called on to take up arms in defence of their country, ethnic group or political cause - and in defence of 'their women'. Women become the bearers of the culture that men are fighting to defend. What is 'feminine' and appropriate behaviour for women is often redefined. In former Yugoslavia women were assigned the mythical role of 'Mother Juvoica' - the mother who sacrificed nine sons and her husband to the homeland, without tears - and 'Daughter of Kosovo' - the daughter who takes care of wounded soldiers.⁸

In the collective psyche women are often perceived to be the «victims» of violent conflict, while men are the ones who wage wars and die in combat. This simplistic view assumes that men are inherently more aggressive than women, and that women are naturally peace-loving and nurturing beings. It overlooks the fact that, because of their role as soldiers, men make up the majority of casualties in situations of conflict and, as we have seen in former Yugoslavia, they can also be selected for death or imprisonment purely on the basis of their gender. *Perceiving women as 'victims only' automatically rejects the notion that they can also be perpetrators of violence and supporters of the conflict itself.* The widely reported case of Rwanda indicates that women are capable of participating in horrific acts of genocide. Most frequently, women participate in wars by providing economic support to the 'war effort', inciting men to commit violent acts, refusing to protect or feed the 'enemy' and, most importantly, by passing on to their children a militaristic ideology.⁹

The impact of conflict on gender roles

During conflict everyday life and work are disrupted. What are normal points of reference and rituals in peacetime, are turned upside down in times of conflict. Basic resources become scarce, social structures break down, along with the traditional gender division of labour. Men are drafted and, as a consequence, more women may be obliged to join the labour force. As women and men have differential access to resources - especially in terms of power and decision-making - they experience conflict differently. Rather than viewing war as a 'male' phenomenon only, it is essential to understand how gender relations are affected and how gender identity becomes politicised during times of conflict.¹⁰

⁸ Gender, Conflict and Development. Volume I: An Overview, by Bridget Byrne. A BRIDGE publication, December 1995, pg. 14.

⁹ Ibid, pg. 17.

¹⁰ *Development and Gender Brief*, a quarterly update from BRIDGE. Issue 3: Conflict and development, June 1996, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, pg. 1.

As men constitute the majority in armies and militias, they are often the main targets of attacks. When they fail to live up to masculine ideals of courage and physical strength they may be ridiculed or stigmatised by society and their peers. In the absence of men, women bear the burden of providing for their families in situations of extreme physical insecurity, where they are vulnerable to looting and asset seizure. *Women also suffer a specific trauma, that of sexual violence or rape, which has officially been recognised as a war crime in 1998.* To get to male relatives, husbands or sons, the enemy may purposely decide to target women. The rape of women in conflict situations is intended not only as violence against women, but as an act of aggression against a nation or a community, a reflection of the traditional gender perception.

Researcher and author Bridget Byrne explains that “because of the structural disadvantage and socio-cultural and ideological constraints faced by women, they may derive benefits from wartime shifts in gender ideologies, whereby they are accorded enhanced status in their role as guardians of cultural identity and as mothers”. During times of peace these roles are often taken for granted and women’s contributions to national development are underestimated. Byrne also adds that some women may support conflicts as a means to give them access to public arenas normally closed to them, such as employment opportunities outside the home.¹¹

Women mobilise

During conflict women seem to mobilise in a reactive manner. They set up humanitarian organisations or networks to respond to the urgent needs of fellow citizens. Many become involved in relief work, assist wounded soldiers and take care of orphans, disabled and elderly. International organisations hire local women as on the ground project staff or as interpreters. But there are also women who mobilise proactively, against the perpetuation of violence and the escalation of conflict. In the Balkans and the Caucasus, women resisted the military recruitment of husbands and sons by hiding them, lying to the authorities and even marching to the front lines to take them home. In Colombia women who participated in the Peaceful Road of Women Campaign walked together to the most violent regions of the country.¹²

Through these experiences women have a chance to build on newly acquired skills and on the social organisations formed during the conflict. A few examples are the informal sectors traders in Somali, the Mamà Maquín organisation¹³ of women refugees in Guatemala, the widows groups in Rwanda

¹¹ Ibid, pg. 21.

¹² Anderlini. United Nations Development Fund for Women, pg. 12.

¹³ This organisation, established in 1987, lobbied the elected Permanent Commission to address women’s needs and representation when negotiating the return of refugees to Guatemala. They also set up literacy and income generating projects in refugee camps.

or the female Afghani teachers in Pakistani refugee camps.¹⁴ These organisations have been crucial for rebuilding civil society and for promoting women's participation in the decision-making process.

Women also organise themselves in refugee camps. Only recently international organisations have started to pay attention to *the special needs of refugee and internally displaced women*. Sexual harassment and rape have been a problem in cramped refugee camps and so has equitable distribution of food and medical supplies. Unequal power relations between men and women persist in refugee camps, where women are exploited by male guards or male refugees.

Women's national liberation movements

Women also mobilise during conflict by choosing to become fighters in national liberation struggles. In Eritrea, Namibia, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa women have served in guerrilla armies and even held military command positions. Struggles for national liberation or revolutions often appeal to aspirations of social justice. Greater gender equality may be part of the overall goal of creating a more democratic society. However, researchers agree that the relationship between national liberation, revolution and feminism is far from simple.

Within struggles for national liberation there is often great suspicion of feminism and the call for attention of gender interests. In times of resistance, when unity is crucial, there is fear that taking up gender concerns will lead to divisions. One response by women's movements to this prevailing fear has been to prioritise the resistance struggle over a struggle for gender interests. This was the case of Palestinian women who, during the Intifada (Palestinian Uprising against Israeli soldiers), chose to struggle for national liberation while making no attempts to challenge the central, patriarchal unit of the family in Palestinian society. Participation in nationalist liberation struggles has enabled women to claim for themselves public and political roles otherwise off limit to them. However, they have often discovered that the liberating ideology of their comrades in arms does not necessarily extend to the liberation of women as equal citizens in post-conflict situations.

One should not underestimate the transformative possibilities that may exist for women in conflict situations, just like the possibility of renewed conservatism surrounding gender relations.¹⁵ National liberation struggles for instance, do not necessarily form the basis for transformative outcomes for women, at least not in obvious ways, and often lead to disillusionment among women fighters and activists. Once the conflict is over, they will be encouraged

¹⁴ Bridge, Issue 3, pg. 2

¹⁵ Bridget Byrne, Volume I, pg. 22.

to go back to their traditional roles and to abandon their aspirations for gender equality.

The changing nature of wars

The way wars are being fought is changing. If male soldiers constituted the majority of war casualties in the past, now it is *civilians*, for the most part women, children and the elderly who suffer the most as a result of violent conflict. As wars increasingly rely on sophisticated military technology, at least for the developed countries. Physical strength is no longer a pre-requisite for joining the armed forces. More women are finding a place in the armies of Western countries in non-combat positions. Approximately 10,000 US female soldiers participated in the Gulf war. Although, they were not allowed to engage in ground combat, they were 'permitted to drop patriot missiles' over Iraq.

The issue of women joining the military has been considered by many feminist organisations in the West as a step towards gender equality and female emancipation. Whether or not this leads to empowerment and liberation, as we have seen in national liberation movements, is doubtful and highly debatable. The military continues to be a patriarchal institution where notions of masculinity are symbolised by movie characters like Rambo and where the most common insult for a soldier is to be called 'homosexual' or 'sissy'. It is no wonder that women who join the army often experience sexual harassment and discrimination.

Military training is still, predominantly, a man's activity. Only 2% of the world's military personnel are women. And in countries where there is a relatively high percentage of women in the armed forces - Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States - the role of women soldiers is different than that of men.¹⁶ The sexual division of labour within the military is rigid and women are often relegated to clerical and nursing jobs. There is also indication that the military opens up to women the moment the national draft is abolished. In other words, when there is scarcity of human resources and a need for «cheap labour».¹⁷ In some cases joining the military, for both men and women, is the only opportunity people have to earn a minimum salary, receive basic education and climb the social ladder.

¹⁶ *Gendered Battlefields, A Gender Analysis of Peace and Conflict* by Inger Skjelsbæk, PRIO Report 6/97.

¹⁷ Professor Nira Yuval Davis, during a lecture on Women and the Military held in Oslo, Norway on March 14th, 2000.

POST CONFLICT PHASE AND PEACE BUILDING

High level of tension and stress

Post-conflict societies are usually characterised by a ravaged economic system, high unemployment rates, and collective as well as individual *traumas*. When returning to their communities both men and women are subjected to high levels of stress which can result in *increased violence towards women and children*, as well as family breakdown. Although violence may cease to be visible on the outside, it may continue to express itself in the privacy of a home. Alcohol consumption, suicide rates and domestic violence have a tendency to increase once the conflict is over as the post-conflict society struggles to come to terms with what has happened.

The end of conflict also brings with it the problem of repatriation and rehabilitation. For many of those returning from refugee camps –for the most part women, children and the elderly - the future they face is extremely uncertain. Their experience as refugees will also clash with those who remained in the country, thus increasing tensions over scarce resources and delaying the healing process.

Re-negotiating gender relations

The end of conflict represents a period of transition where gender relations and identities are re-negotiated. This period can offer opportunities for women to formalise their increased participation in public life and assert new roles for themselves. However, it can also be a time when women become more *vulnerable* and often pushed back into an unequal position versus men. As international aid is withdrawn or re-directed, and the competition for power and resources continues, women risk being *marginalised*.¹⁸ Those who have lost their husbands or are left without any male protection may be subjected to discrimination. In some countries widows may lose land rights or be denied access to resources. Special care must be taken to ensure legal mechanisms for women's access to and control of resources in this phase.

The capacity to make peace

Women know how to make peace just as much as men do. One could even claim that women are more experienced than men in making peace than in waging war because of the way they have been educated and the values that are normally passed on to them. This is not because women are inherently more peaceful than men, but because of the gender roles societies have traditionally ascribed to them. Although women have also perpetrated violence,

¹⁸ Gender, Conflict and Development. Volume I: An Overview, by Bridget Byrne. A BRIDGE publication, December 1995, pg. 31

men have historically been the ones responsible for waging wars and for institutionalising violence.

The effect of militarisation is often that of increasing divisions within society and of further marginalising specific groups. Peace negotiations take place between authorities controlling different areas, who do not necessarily have any accountability to the populations they control. The peace process may therefore have more to do with high-level negotiations and bargaining than actual peace and reconciliation. However peace, if it is to be sustainable, must be developed at the local level. Here the participation of women has been significant.¹⁹ At the grassroots and community level women have often organised to resist militarisation, create space for dialogue, and weave together the ripped fabric of society. They have spoken against the use of violence as a strategy for personal or collective gain and have fought for the recognition that violence can never be compatible with human development. But no matter how involved women have been in preventing or halting a conflict at this level, the tendency to push them aside during official peace negotiations continues to prevail.

Exclusion from official peace processes

Women have traditionally been excluded from official reconciliation processes for many reasons. The most important ones are connected to *political and economic marginalisation*. In many countries access to the political structures and recognition of women as political actors are explicitly prohibited or looked down upon. Political power often rests firmly in the hands of an exclusive, predominantly male elite, that may perceive the concerns and actions of women as separate from the formal political processes. A clear example of this attitude occurred at the Burundi peace talks, when male delegates told the facilitator that, “women are not parties to this conflict. This is not their concern. We cannot see why they have come, why they bother us. We are here and we represent them”.²⁰

In some extreme cases women who are politically active may experience *physical as well as psychological harassment*. In Colombia, Senator Cordoba Ruiz was abducted and physically threatened for her efforts to facilitate a dialogue process for peace among parties to the conflict. In Georgia, peace activist Nani Chanishvili, now a Member of Parliament, was held hostage by Abkhaz separatists. While in Cyprus, members of the Women’s Movement for Peace and a Federal Solution, were derided by local newspapers as “sexual maniacs” and were told to sit at home and care for their children.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid, pg.54

²⁰ Anderlini. United Nations Development Fund for Women, pg. 10.

²¹ Ibid pg.11

Women's participation to peace negotiations can also be perceived as *a threat to local traditions and culture*. Human rights activist Rita Manchanda says that in Kashmir, the justification for excluding women is, "that their involvement would make them more vulnerable".²² Palestinian veteran peace activist and negotiator Hanan Ashrawi says that when the immediate dangers diminished and the Middle East peace process officially began, the men adopted a very patronising, patriarchal attitude of "good for you, you have done your national duty, now go back to the kitchen".²³ In some cases *women's own attitudes* towards open political activism have also contributed to stifle women's anti-war organising and participation in peace processes. The fear of being looked down upon in their own communities may discourage women from pursuing other goals such as women's empowerment and education once the conflict is over.

In some countries the process of electing women officials has just begun, but only a handful of nations have a percentage of women in parliament that exceeds what is known as «the critical mass» of 30%. Many Western countries lag behind this target percentage and often fail to address women's concerns through appropriate legislation. *Running for office also requires money*, a resource that many women do not have enough of. As people's attitudes towards women running for office are still biased, fundraising can be a difficult task. Access to the political establishment is also connected to *education and to the capacity to network*. Women who are involved in peace negotiations at the grassroots level are usually less educated and less experienced in organisational and leadership skills compared to their male colleagues.

In Bosnia, says Mevlida Kunosic-Vlajic, women were excluded once the peace process began in 1995 primarily because they had little understanding of how to strategize politically. As women have historically been less involved in politics than men, it is often more challenging for women leaders to develop effective strategies for engaging their constituency. Despite an estimated 400 women's groups working on peace-building and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, there is still limited participation of women in the political power structures.²⁴

The right to participate

Despite the obstacles they encounter, women all over the world are learning new ways of making their voices heard. Their activism before and during conflict often results into an extensive network of women's groups and associations. Through these networks women can build a broad-based coalition

²² Ibid, pg.11

²³ Ibid, pg. 11

²⁴ Ibid, pg. 12

that transcends deep ethnic, religious and political divisions. In post-Yugoslav states feminist solidarity survived ethnic nationalist propaganda in the region and rejected its attempts to create 'national enemies'.²⁵ In Guatemala, as in other Latin American countries, women have been actively involved in human rights groups and have often used their gender identities as mothers and wives as a pretext for entry into the public arena.

Participation at the peace table can offer women the *opportunity to secure political gains on a wide range of issues* related to the advancement of women's rights and gender equality. These include economic security, social development and political participation. Women's participation in high-level peace negotiations does not, however, mean they automatically represent women's interests or needs. For meaningful peace-making to occur it is essential that a wider process of representation be developed, one that is recognised by a broad spectrum of women's organisations.²⁶

The existence of a *strong women's movement can provide opportunities for women to enter the political process*. Existing networks and political experience can provide a platform for women to lobby for access to peace negotiations.²⁷ Indigenous women in Guatemala gained entry into the peace process through the women's movement. Their presence in civil society forums and at the peace table eventually drew attention to their living conditions and led to the establishment of the Office for the Defence of Indigenous Women.

Women's groups who manage to present a united voice and focus their campaign on a priority issue seem to be more effective. In Cambodia, the women's organisation known as Khemara chose to in 1991 around a single issue that was a common concern: elections without violence. Liberian Women chose disarmament before elections as their advocacy focus. In 1996 the Liberian Women's Initiative developed a strategy to target all parties to the talks and to initiate a programme to physically assist in the collection of arms. Women went to the disarmament sites to give the fighters a glass of cold water and a sandwich and thank them for giving up their arms.²⁸

The following section presents a few examples of how women have mobilised against violence and injustice to promote peace and heal social and psychological wounds. Although they highlight different strategies and points of departure, all testify to the courage of women and to their significant contributions in restoring peace. These examples have been chosen because they represent well known cases of women mobilising in challenging contexts,

²⁵ *Linking Arms. Women and Wars in post-Yugoslav States* by Maja Korac. Life and Peace Institute, Uppsala, June 1998, pg. 45.

²⁶ Byrne, Volume I, pg. 30.

²⁷ Anderlini. United Nations Development Fund for Women, pg. 14.

²⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 20.

in different parts of the world. There are undoubtedly many more initiatives of this kind, although only a few are documented. In some countries, such as Afghanistan, Sudan and Iran, women are mobilising but they are also afraid of making their efforts visible for fear of retaliation. The documentation process is therefore necessary and can be supported in different manners.

CASE STUDIES

SIERRA LEONE ²⁹

Prior to March 1991, Sierra Leone was a relatively peaceful country. After a series of military coups the country precipitated into a senseless war that caused massive destruction and an unprecedented loss of human life with devastating effects on women, children, families and the entire nation. The women of Sierra Leone began to organise themselves in December 1994 around the issue of the ongoing civil war. In 1995 a group of like-minded women from all over Sierra Leone joined forces to form the *Women's Movement for Peace* (WMP).

This movement aimed to resolve the conflict through peaceful negotiations. It encouraged women to form branches all over the country and to act in concert with one another in order to create an impact. The movement put pressure on both the government and the rebel group. In March 1995 WMP members wrote an open letter to the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF) pleading them to negotiate with the government and to call for a cease-fire. Another prominent women's group that greatly contributed to promote a culture of peace was the *Women Organised for a Morally Enlightened Nation* (WOMEN). This group became the leading NGO mobilising women for active participation in Sierra Leonean politics.

On the 29th of November 1996 the government and the RUF signed a peace agreement and initiated a cease-fire. Women played an active role in promoting change and supporting a campaign for elections to formally establish a democratically elected President and Parliament. The elections were scheduled for February 1996. Women's organisation were involved in voter education, encouraged people to register, volunteered as electoral staff, recruited and trained local election observers and articulated and promoted women's issues for inclusion in the agendas of all political parties.

One month before elections women's groups came in direct confrontation with the military government when this latter tried to postpone elections on the grounds that the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone was now ready to negotiate over peace. The women responded with a public demonstration demanding that the elections proceed as planned and not be subjected to other priorities. Women continued their activities up to election day - 12 February 1996 - defying scare tactics by the military.

Women played a significant role in the two consultative conferences (Bintumani I and II) held in order to determine the course and conduct of elections. They not only lobbied hard to get more women delegates to formally participate in these conferences, but also demanded and obtained that peace negotiations and elections proceed simultaneously.

A total of 16 women participated in the first conference, a significant increase compared to the 3 women only representation originally proposed by the government. These women worked hard to present themselves as a unified front even though they represented different groups, organisations, districts and chieftaincies. They agreed on issues of peace, type of electoral process, women's representation, health and the army's position during and after the elections. The second consultative conference was chaired by a woman and was held in February 1996 with the objective of discussing the status of the peace accord and its implication for the upcoming elections. It was held also as a result of the increasingly tense

²⁹ This case study is taken from *Women's Participation in the Peace Process in Sierra Leone*, a publication sponsored by Femmes Africa Solidarité, February 1997.

climate preceding scheduled elections. The women's position won the vote at that conference and elections were held as planned.

Throughout the peace negotiations, women activists demanded from the government that they be included in the various committees set up. They also demanded to be kept informed on the evolution of the peace negotiation process. Prior to the general election the Women's Forum issued a press release to all political parties stating the women's position on key electoral issues and requesting that 50% of any peace delegation be composed of women. Although this did not happen, one cannot diminish the role played by women in influencing the delegation that eventually signed the peace accord.

Prior to reaching the accord, Sierra Leonean women's groups and NGOs sent a delegation to the President of the Republic requesting him to include four resolutions into the government's peace agenda: 1) that women want a permanent cease-fire; 2) that women want a permanent cessation of all forms of violence, hostilities and molestation, particularly against civilians; 3) that women want the leader of RUF to be specific as to what he thinks needs to be done to promote lasting peace, and 4) that, no matter what, women support the establishment of a democratic system.

Although the government chose not to include women in the official delegation, the RUF did. The three women who were part of the Rebel's delegation actively participated in the negotiations and supported the socio-economic aspects of the peace accord.

The *Commission for the Consolidation of Peace* (CCP) was formed in 1996 with representatives from the government and the RUF. Two women were included in this political body. When a civilian President was finally elected under a new multi-party constitution in 1996, one of the first gestures of the neo-elect government towards the women's movement was to create a Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs. A 1997 mission to Sierra Leone organised by Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), an organisation that seeks to address the root causes of conflict by promoting and strengthening the leadership of African women, stated that, «the role women and women's groups played during the peace process in Sierra Leone cannot be over-emphasised (...) Women successfully advocated for and promoted the peace process and initiated policies for equitable access for other women».

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE ³⁰

The *Jerusalem Link* consists of two independent women's centres, one Palestinian and one Israeli, respectively located in East and West Jerusalem. Formally established in 1994 with an EEC contribution, the organisation is the outcome of the first International Palestinian-Israeli women's conference held in Brussels in 1989 and entitled *Give Peace a Chance: Women Speak Out*.

During this conference participants acknowledged their commitment to, «a peaceful resolution of the conflict on the basis of the recognition of the rights of all people in the region to live in dignity and security, the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination alongside Israel, and the right of all sides to the dispute to choose their legitimate representatives».

The goal of the *Jerusalem Link* is to promote women's political, social and cultural activities, as well as leadership, for the purpose of fostering peace on the basis of justice and equality. In the words of Mary B. Anderson³¹, the *Jerusalem Link* is a, «pioneering attempt to build an institutional tie between Israelis and Palestinians based on the principles of equality and reciprocity». As such, it provides a model of coexistence between two peoples, highlights joint interests of women on both sides and emphasises the commitment of those involved for a just political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on U.N. resolutions. The *Jerusalem Link* shows that women can take a lead and develop linkages across conflict that cannot, for a variety of reasons, be crossed by men.

Founders of the *Jerusalem Link* stress the importance of linking gender and peace issues. This combination of topics provides a specific analysis of the impact of the conflict on women's lives. The kind of peace that the organisation seeks reflects feminist principles and ideology. The programs aim to increase the empowerment of women in each community and, simultaneously, encourage the expression of concerted women's voices vis-à-vis the political agenda. Interventions address women's immediate and practical needs as well as the political issues of peace in both Palestinian and Israeli societies. Although gender consciousness varies across the Israeli-Palestinian divide, women are capable of relating to one another.

The organisational structure of the *Jerusalem Link* reflects a shared willingness to move beyond the political divide. EEC support for the first two years was divided exactly half and half between the two Centres. While each of the Centres has its own Director, staff and Board of Directors, the linkage between the two is ensured through a small Joint Steering Committee whose main task is to plan for joint activities. This committee includes five women from each side, the same ones who have been involved in the project and have known each other since 1989.

Joint programming between the two Centres focuses on five areas: peace and human rights education, leadership seminars, information sharing, and media work. Activities include direct action, demonstrations, public education campaigns, joint public statements, organising conferences and workshops. Each Centre also runs a series of separate programs for their own constituency, addressing the different needs of Palestinian and Israeli women. The proportion of separate and jointly-sponsored activities fluctuates according to political and social circumstances.

³⁰ This case study is taken from a paper on the Jerusalem Link written by Mary B. Anderson.

³¹ President of The Local Capacities for Peace Project and author of a paper on the Jerusalem Link.

In 1995 the Jerusalem Centre for Women, in East Jerusalem, focused on training and empowerment activities for Palestinian women. Workshops aimed to increase gender awareness and encourage independent thinking. They included courses in public speaking, communication skills, conflict resolution and problem-solving techniques, self-assertiveness, leadership and feminist awareness. Another training course that focused on women's human rights specifically targeted young Palestinian women aged 17 to 25. This course was intended to prepare young women for the upcoming elections. Alongside national and political issues, participants also discussed the Document of Principles on Women's Human Rights, the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the origins and history of human rights and of the women's movement. The topic of domestic violence was included in some lectures.

The Jerusalem Centre for Women also monitors and documents human rights violations in the area. Such violations focus on the confiscation of women and men's ID cards and on issues of family division and reunification. JCW identifies and tries to provide direct support to people whose rights have been violated. JWC activists often contact directly members of the Israeli Knesset to persuade them to address these violations. In West Jerusalem, Bat Shalom also raises these issues with members of the Knesset and other Israeli authorities to pressure for changes.

Bat Shalom/Daughters of Peace in West Jerusalem focuses most of its activities on promoting peace and human rights through public education. They sponsor tours of settlements, confiscated lands and demolished houses in the Jerusalem area. They arrange meetings with representatives of various organisations including those involved in litigation, information dissemination, human rights advocacy and research. In the past, they obtained entrance permits for hundreds of female students from Gaza who could not otherwise have attended their schools in the West Bank as «closure» confined them to Gaza.

Stressing the importance of reaching out to Arab women from other countries, Bat Shalom activists have invited women from Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon to visit Israel. Bat Shalom has also developed a Resource Centre of materials on women, peace and the Middle East. They have included materials in three languages (Hebrew, Arabic and English) and have created a comprehensive archive of newspaper clippings on the region. The Education for Educators programs provides a forum for women educators to learn about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and to discuss feminist perspectives on the conflict. The aim of this programme is to enable teachers to prepare their students to become agents of social change for peace.

The Jerusalem Link offers an effective mechanism for Palestinian and Israeli women to work together towards a shared vision of peace. Several features of its design have been critical for its survival and success amidst continuing political turbulence: 1) the mixed composition and the role of the Joint Steering Committee has made a difference. Women in this group have broad representation in their respective societies, are committed to the vision of the project, know and trust each other; 2) the possibility of running joint as well as separate programs has given both Centres the flexibility to prioritise activities and respond to the needs of their respective constituencies; 3) the commitment to reciprocity with a recognition that basic asymmetry exists between the two sides in the conflict - namely Occupier and Occupied; and 4) the acknowledgement that the external political context does indeed have an impact on program activities and on the capacity to think of ways to reduce tensions and go beyond internal organisational conflict.

ARGENTINA ³²

Disappearances of political activists and opposition leaders in Argentina began in 1974/75. In those first two years approximately 600 people disappeared. This number increased tremendously from 1976 onwards, the year the military government led by Videla came to power. The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo movement grew spontaneously, as a result of the continuous disappearances and the growing frustration of close relatives who felt abandoned and threatened by their own state.

At the beginning of their campaign, the Mothers did not have a well-defined political strategy. This gradually grew out of their activism, while mobilising in the context of a repressive and authoritarian regime. Their protest was initially dismissed by the military elite as a naive attempt to draw attention to the plight of the mothers. After all their disappeared relatives were considered by the military to be «terrorists» and «agitators». But the Mothers' persistent public demand for justice and their growing national and international support eventually became an embarrassing nuisance to the military government. A nuisance that had to be silenced.

The Mothers met every Thursday afternoon in one of Buenos Aires' main squares, the Plaza Rosada. Initially, they did not march but simply sat around the plaza on the benches. As their numbers swelled, they marched in a circle, carrying photographs of their loved ones. The Mothers comforted each other and drew strength from their shared grief. They demanded a response from the military government. They wanted to know the truth about what had happened to their children. Soon enough the military police was on their back, following them, threatening them, and ordering them to leave the square.

The Mothers claimed their right to meet regularly in a public place and resisted the military's attempts to scare them. They presented themselves as a united front and learned to respond strategically to the threats of the military regime. As the years went by they grew in number, determination and strength.

They chose to wear a white scarf over their heads in order to stand out in the crowds and to be recognised as members of a movement. When they could not meet in the Plaza because of the military police, they met in different churches or local parishes. When priests did not publicly condemn the deeds of the military, the Mothers outwardly criticised the churches' lack of courage and cowardliness. They wrote petitions and collected signatures, demanded to meet the President and skilfully learned to «use» the press. When President Videla refused to meet them, they staged dramatic protests, and disrupted official state visits with foreign dignitaries in order to draw the attention of foreign journalists. On several occasions they chose to go on a hunger strike. And in 1985, when Alfonsín was President, they even managed to seize and occupy the governmental house.

The Mothers' persistent demand for justice did not only bother the military regime but also many Argentinean citizens who preferred to dismiss what was happening in the country. The Mothers were ridiculed by many of their fellow citizens who perceived their behaviour to be «anti-national» and a threat to the status quo. This attitude was particularly strong during the World Football Cup, hosted by Argentina in 1978. On this occasion, the repression against what

³² The history of the Mothers Movement was summarised from their web site: www.madres.org

were perceived to be «disruptive» groups grew fiercer. The fear of drawing negative international attention prompted the military regime to react strongly.

Many of the Mothers were arrested, beaten and jailed repeatedly. Dogs were used to control the Plaza and tear gas was fired in more than one occasion. The World Cup was a chance for Argentina to present its best face to the world. Everyone, from the leaders of the Catholic Church to the Unions and the press, was a football fan and was proud to host such a prestigious event. No one was permitted to spoil the occasion and least of all shame the government.

The Mothers of Plaza the Mayo always chose peaceful forms of resistance to denounce the human rights violations of the military regime. When feeling entirely powerless vis-à-vis brutality and cruelty, they simply resorted to collective public prayers. Although initially it was their experience as mothers that brought them together, with time their experience as women has been equally important. Throughout the years the Mothers have been supported by different women's groups and despite the fact that they may never have had a feminist agenda, their demand for justice and fair treatment has gradually expanded to other domains.

In 1992 during the celebrations for the 500 years of the discovery of the Americas, the Mothers were invited to preside over an alternative summit held in Madrid. This international non-governmental meeting exposed and denounced the violations committed against native Americans. One year later, during Menem's government, the Mothers supported the struggle of more than 5,000 prisoners across Argentina who demanded a reform of the penitentiary services and a better treatment of prisoners. In that same year they participated in a massive anti nazi march held in Germany on the 60th anniversary of Hitler's rise to power. In 1994 when the indigenous population of Chiapas, Mexico rose against the government, the Mothers sent them letters of support and assembled outside the Mexican embassy in Buenos Aires demanding that the government stop the repression and address the fundamental issues that sparked the uprising.

The Mothers of Argentina have inspired and encouraged many other mothers to denounce injustices and to mobilise support. An international network known as «Mothers who Struggle» has been created to address a variety of concerns. It includes mothers from other countries in Latin America whose children also disappeared without leaving a trace, mothers from the Saharai desert in West Africa, mothers of Ukrainian children who are victims of ecological crimes, groups of women who fight the Mafia in Italy and those who combat extreme right wing movements in Israel, women who assist victims of war in post-Yugoslav states and victims of oppression in Palestine, Spanish mothers who support their sons' refusal to serve in the army and many others.

Although Argentina is no longer governed by a military regime, the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo continue their struggle for justice. They demand that former members of the military force be tried for their crimes and pressure the government not to grant amnesty to those responsible for crimes against humanity.

CROATIA AND SERBIA ³³

I. The Centre for Women War Victims, Zagreb

Formerly known as the Centre for Refugee Women, this group was founded in the Croatian capital in December 1992. It was one of many initiatives organised by different women's groups to tackle the consequences of civil war. As women felt unable to stop the war and incapable of preventing the logic of it, they took on the tasks of organising community care, humanitarian aid and war protests. In the words of author Rada Boric, «the Centre is a concrete example of how women organised across the ethnic divide, in working with other women to counteract the effects of war and to empower each other in building a better society».

Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian women worked together with other women who suffered male violence during the war in former Yugoslavia. They interacted with women in refugee camps, collective centres and private houses. They provided aid, clothes and fed women, children and elderly. By February 1993 a team of 24 women activists trained in counselling began work with women refugees. Much time was spent talking and visiting women refugees, making them feel safe and able to articulate their traumas. In the Centre itself the women built a small multi-ethnic community for local women in difficulty, refugee and displaced women.

Through the Centre women who survived the war became restorers of life to other traumatised women. One of their main goals was to restore women's dignity and self-confidence, enabling them to cope with and overcome what they had experienced during the war. Self-help groups and psychological group counselling were set up to empower women and enable them to regain control of their lives. According to some of the founders, the pre-war experience of many of these women and the prior feminist awareness were fundamental to the success of the project.

Many of the women who worked at the Centre used to support victims of domestic violence before the war. Later, when the conflict erupted, they shifted their focus to war-induced violence. During the war, women's associations kept contacts alive with other women's groups scattered in what used to be Yugoslavia. They wanted to stop the growth of hatred across boundaries and therefore tried to share experiences in any way they could, by email or by telephoning through a third party. Women's groups reached one another even when the telephone lines across boundaries were shut.

When in 1993 the war between Croats and Bosnians intensified, Bosnian women refugees in Croatia felt increasingly unsafe and unwelcome. The relationship between the Croat government and those groups that provided support to Bosnian refugees also grew tense. At this point the Centre chose to actively engage in politics and thus began to pressure the Croatian government to respect human rights of all people residing in Croatia, regardless of their ethnic background. The Centre opposed xenophobic propagandist attitudes through the state media and decided to send letters of protest to both Parliament and the media.

³³ These two cases have been taken by *Linking Arms. Women and Wars in post-Yugoslav States* by Maja Korac and Padovese, Marina and Vaccaro, Salvo, 1996, *Donne Contro La Guerra: Interventi e Testimonianze dalla ex Yugoslavia*, La Zisa Publications, Palermo.

The Centre chose to protect Bosnian Muslim refugees in Croatia at a time when the Croatian government was embarking on a policy of exchanging Bosnian refugees for Croatian prisoners of war. In 1994 the Centre opened a house for Bosnian women refugees and children. Support was provided through psychosocial therapy, skill building to improve education and increase employment opportunities. A number of income-generating programmes were also set up. Most importantly, all members of facilitator teams were of mixed background. Some were local residents, others were displaced, and some were refugees. The teams also represented different ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs. In 1994 the Centre provided counselling for over 1000 women and supported another 1000 with practical means.

In 1995 the Centre expanded its operations to areas outside of Zagreb in order to meet the needs of women affected by military actions in Western Slavonia and northern Krajina. One of the main goals of the Centre during this stage of the conflict was to protect the remaining minority of Serbian women by providing psychological support and practical assistance. In some parts of the former Krajina, the Centre was the only NGO providing some kind of assistance. In the philosophy developed by the Centre, providing assistance to other ethnic groups was a practical way of bridging broken relations between communities. A necessary step when promoting reconciliation at a later stage.

The Dayton Agreement signed in 1995, marked the end of the war in former Yugoslavia and the beginning of the reconstruction phase. The war in former Yugoslavia resulted in approximately 200,000 deaths, 250,000 people without a home and over 2.5 million refugees.

After the formal cease-fire and the signing of the Dayton Agreement, the Centre has become engaged in more activities. The return of refugees to their original homes is a slow process and many have nowhere to return to. Refugee women are often confronted with high levels of unemployment, poverty and domestic violence. The Centre reaches out to Croatian and Muslim women from Bosnia living in former Serbian villages. Programmes now focus on rebuilding trust, and re-learning socialisation and integration skills. Psychological counselling and legal advice is available to all refugee women. The Centre has begun to network with human rights and peace groups in Serbia and Croatia. Staff members are also committed to protect the rights of Bosnian women who are not willing to return to Bosnia.

II. The Women in Black, Belgrade

The Women in Black, Belgrade was founded by a group of feminists in 1991 mainly as a result of the failure of the anti-war protests carried out by women/mothers and the overall invisibility of women's voices in peace movements. The group made its first appearance in Belgrade on October 9, 1991. Since then, every Wednesday afternoon, the Women in Black have stood in silence in the Republic square, in the heart of the city, protesting against war, militarism, nationalism and violence against women. These women were inspired by an Israeli group who wore black and protested in silence against their government's actions towards Palestinians, as well as by Italian and German women who protested their government's involvement in the Gulf war.

One of the founders of the Belgrade group, Stasa Zajovic, explained that some men in the anti-war movement have perceived women's expressions of anti-militarism, «as part of our traditional women's role - mothers and sisters who get together to support their sons and brothers». But, she adds, «lots of women who have joined our group during the war have all resisted that (notion), and have been explaining that they are not mothers and sisters, that

their activism is not just that». Experienced feminists who became involved in the initial anti-war protests could not help but register the gender bias and prejudice that characterised the peace movement itself.

After joining several anti-war groups Zajovic observed, «that the peace movement is also overwhelmed with patriarchal models of repression». Although she admitted that in such groups the oppression of women is subtler, she also pointed out that the peace movement perpetuates the same forms of women's subordination as in the dissident movement during the period of state socialism. «The language was different, but the model remained the same. In addition, war and all that care for others have been shifted onto women's shoulders, although they have been literally invisible as voices of anti-war protests». The creation of the Women in Black, Belgrade was therefore a conscious feminist effort to mobilise against the war and all other forms of violent repression.

The silent street protests of the Women in Black became a crucially important and transparent way of breaking the invisibility of women in the peace movement. This form of protest has required a considerable level of courage and commitment by Serbian women. Not only because they expressed their anti-war politics publicly, thus risking the consequences of the regimes' attacks, but also because they exposed themselves and «their bodies» to the mercy of violent attacks, often physical, on behalf of fellow citizens obsessed by militant politics of ethnic nationalism in Serbia. Apart from risking the stigmatisation and overt physical attacks by their political opponents, the visibility of these anti-war protests has also been a way to reach out to those who share similar political views and to encourage them to join the protests.

The Women in Black, Belgrade have publicly and unequivocally expressed their political views regarding their government's responsibility for initiating and fuelling wars in the region. In a public statement issued on June 10, 1992 they stated that, «the Serbian regime and its repressive structures (namely the Federal Army and paramilitary formations) are responsible for all three wars, in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina. The Serbian regime leads wars in the name of citizens of Serbia. This way all the citizens become hostage of their imperialistic policies».

Anti-war politics has helped many women to re-establish their sense of dignity as human and political beings that have been unwillingly caught in the politics of violence, destruction and intolerance perpetrated by their governments. Although feminists have been persistent in their efforts to organise their own anti-war group, they have continued to support and collaborate with other anti-war initiatives in Serbia. One of the groups' main priorities has been the co-operation among predominantly women's anti-war groups within the region of post-Yugoslav states. They have made an effort to establish a network of such groups and to link it with similar international associations. This endeavour has resulted in an annual meeting of women's solidarity against war, nationalism and violence. Since the summer of 1992, this international gathering has been held every year in Novi Sad, a city located in northern Serbia.

The significance of this event must be considered in the wider political context of these wars and the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism, in which any forms of contact across ethnic national lines has been considered as anti-patriotic and subversive to the political interests of the new nation-states. In such a political situation, especially during the years of

the armed conflict (1991-1995), the participation at these meetings was highly risky for all women delegates from post-Yugoslav states.

Regardless of the many difficulties and obstacles created by the regimes, these women succeeded in keeping and further developing their contacts. Women's commitment to keep communication open across ethnic national boundaries is also revealed by the fact that during the first years of the wars, these meetings were the only organised and recurring public gatherings for the people who had been divided by the wars and borders of their new nation-states. Such co-operation efforts were not without tensions; however, over the years these feminists learned to accept differences and to create new forms of solidarity among women in the region.

INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

What follows are a series of international initiatives aiming to document and promote women's involvement in peace building and conflict resolution. These efforts are first attempts *to give visibility to the role women have played and continue to play in trying to resolve conflicts*. Different institutions are developing strategies for bringing such experiences to the forefront so that other women and men can learn from successes and failures. Some of these initiatives have a regional focus while others are more global; some have a definite women focus while others are more general. Due to the limited perspective of this brief study, only a few examples are reported here. The main goal of this section is to show that *organisations are mobilising on these issues and efforts can be strengthened rather than duplicated*.

1. Women Building Peace: From the Village Council to the Negotiating Table

An international campaign launched by International Alert, UK

This campaign was launched in May 1999 by International Alert in collaboration with Amnesty International, The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and the Hague Appeal for Peace – joined by UNIFEM. This campaign, rooted in more than 100 civil society organisations worldwide, aims to raise global awareness of women's experiences and perspectives of peace and conflict, and to help women better realise their potential as peace-builders from the village to the national level. It seeks to affect the policies of international agencies and strives for greater commitment to gender analysis in peacebuilding and conflict transformation, and to include women at all levels of peace processes and security planning.

Within the UN-system, UNIFEM has taken a strong lead in promoting women's leadership and training for women to participate in peace negotiations and conflict resolution processes.

The international campaign focuses on five main themes: 1) including women in peace-making and peace-building as decision-makers; 2) placing women at the heart of post-conflict rehabilitation and reconciliation; 3) strengthening the protection and representation of refugee, internally displaced and returnee women; 4) ending impunity for crimes committed against women; and 5) giving women the support and resources they need to build peace.

Campaign activities have focussed on raising public awareness and initiating a policy process targeting international policy-makers. Among the activities have been a Post Card Campaign, a Millennium Peace Prize for Women and a Video Exhibition showing the work of prize winners and their organisations. As part of the policy process, IA and its campaign partners will research, formulate and advocate policies, which integrate a gender perspective into the security and development strategies of the international community.

The strategic policy objectives of the campaign are as follows: to ensure that governments comply with the commitments made at the 1995 Beijing conference regarding women and conflict; to make women's peace-building central to EU development and foreign policy by pushing for an EU Resolution on Women and Peace-building; to push for a UN Security Council Dialogue and Resolution on Women and Peace-building, leading to a report to the General Assembly; to secure women's involvement in peace negotiations by demanding that the UN include 30% of women in all peace missions.

The major achievement of this campaign has been the **Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security** was passed in **UN Security Council** in October 2000. This is a historic resolution with a number of critical implications for protection of women and girls in conflict zones and inclusion of women in peace processes. In Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) took up the challenge with regard to work in the Balkans. Concerns that once again the voices of women would be ignored, an appeal was launched and lately **The Gender Task Force (GFT)** was formed late 1999. The GFT seeks to promote women's political participation and promote gender equality at regional and national level.

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2. The Women Peace Programme (WPP)

An Africa/Great Lakes Region project launched by International Alert, UK

WPP was developed in 1996 as a direct response to needs identified by women and women's organisations working for peace in *Burundi, Rwanda and the wider Great Lakes region*. Programmes aim at facilitating dialogue between women from different ethnic groups within Burundi and Rwanda and also within and with the diaspora. International Alert supports individuals, structures and organisations that have a role in developing sustainable peace in the area. Capacity building has been directed at women working in local NGOs and associations, women community workers working in grassroots communities, and women operating at higher decision making levels.

The specific objectives of the Women Peace Programme supported by International Alert have been to strengthen the engagement of women in the politics of peace-making at all levels of society; to encourage and enable contacts and dialogue between ethnic and political adversaries, to strengthen local capacities for peace-making and peaceful reform; to continue to learn and analyse issues, interest and forces that have an impact on conflict and/or peace processes in Burundi, Rwanda and the region; to contribute to international information, understanding and policy making; and to advocate for appropriate policies and action.

In *Burundi* International Alert has continued capacity-building efforts for *CAFOB*, a collective of 35 women's organisations working for peace and development. The programme has provided *CAFOB* with funds to cover office costs such as rent, office supplies, salaries for personnel, communication and maintenance costs. This has enabled *CAFOB* to engage in activities aimed at the reinforcement of the operational capacities of its member associations. Activities have focused on peace-building issues, anti-poverty advocacy, promotion of women's rights and gender equality, advice sessions on legal matters affecting women, training on project management and reproductive health for grassroots women and information sharing skills.

The programme in Burundi has also supported a network of 45 community level women peacemakers. Between June 1996 and October 1999 these women have participated in a series of six gender and conflict transformation workshops. The group included social workers, community workers, teachers and religious leaders from the three main ethnic groups. The

overall purpose of the training was to reinforce the participant's capacity for conflict transformation analysis; to link gender analysis and conflict transformation; to strengthen the understanding of the role of women in the peace process and in political institutions; and to formulate strategies to strengthen the work of women's groups in the country. One of the major outcomes of the workshop series has been the creation by the women of a network of community trainers called Dushirehamwe, which means, «let's reconcile» in Kirundi language. The women of this network have implemented conflict resolution workshops in local communities, internal displaced camps and have trained women leaders at the grassroots level.

One last programme has supported the dialogue between women from Burundi and women from the diaspora. A diaspora dialogue meeting took place in Nairobi, Kenya from 23 to 27, July 1999 with twelve Burundian women, six living in the country and six living in exile.

In *Rwanda* the Women Peace Programme has supported *the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians*. This Forum ran a series of six three days meetings in five prefectures with constituents. The target groups were women's representatives and local decision-making authorities. The objectives of the meetings were to raise awareness at the local level on the problems faced by women, on the need to promote and respect women's rights and on their role in development and maintenance of peace. As a result of the Forum's lobbying efforts, a new succession law has been introduced. This will ensure gender equality in terms of rights of inheritance. Rwandan women parliamentarians have also travelled to South Africa to meet with women parliamentarians there and to exchange ideas about political strategies and lobbying methods.

The programme in Rwanda supports *Pro-Femmes*, a collective of 35 women associations, to carry out peace-related activities at the community and national level. Pro-Femme has supported through its programme *Campagne Action pour la Paix*, the research activities of its three member associations looking at Youth and Peace, Violence against Women and the role of women in the traditional conflict system Gacaca. In December 1999 the third in a series of workshops was held with 25 women from member organisations of Pro-Femmes. The objective of this workshop was to reinforce the participant's capacity to carry out peace-building activities.

The Women's Peace Programme has also carried out networking activities with women from peace organisations in the region. In May 1999 International Alert invited a group of 10 African women from *the Federation of African Women Networks for Peace (FERFAP)* to a conference in London on Women in Conflict. These ten women were part of a larger group coming from South East Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

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3. Women Waging Peace Initiative

Launched by the Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Boston, USA

This initiative was launched as a result of a two-week meeting held in December 1999 at the Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Boston, USA. On such an occasion over 100 women involved in peace efforts in the most violent areas of the world convened to share their experiences and form a global network. These women work to prevent conflict, stop war, reconstruct ravaged societies, and sustain peace in fragile areas. Participants came from Armenia/Azerbaijan, Colombia, Cyprus, India/Pakistan, Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland, the post-Yugoslav region, South Africa and Sudan.

Women Waging Peace was created in response to the requests of peace builders on the front lines. Two symposia, one co-sponsored by the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflicts held in August 1998 in Sarajevo and another one held at the Kennedy School in Boston, USA only a few months later, brought together leaders from conflicts in Afghanistan, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Cyprus, Cameroon and the Balkans. As women exchanged experiences, it became clear that sharing their approaches and ideas was not only of practical value, but met an important nurturing need as well. Following these first two meetings, the Harvard Women and Public Policy Program held consultations in New York, San Francisco, Washington, Belfast, The Hague, Zanzibar, Nairobi, and Boston with hundreds of international experts. From these discussions the Women Waging Peace Initiative was conceived.

During the December 1999 two weeks conference the delegates met in groups of 20. Two from each area representing different sides of the conflict tried to discuss what is peace, what obstacles women face as peace builders, and how to craft strong and lasting coalition across divides. As participants shared their stories of success and failure, conflict and peace, they made deep and lasting relationships. During the conference delegates also interacted with local and international experts in the areas of conflict resolution, research, media, public speaking, human rights, and political and social theories to discuss the issues surrounding conflict and peacebuilding. All one hundred of the founding delegates left Cambridge, Massachusetts were trained on donated laptop computers that they took home. Networking among delegates is expected to continue via the Internet through an already active web site.

The Initiative is now expanding to include representatives from more conflict areas, while a second conference is being planned for November 2000. A dozen multi-national corporations are forming a corporate board, and an alliance of donors is being organised to sponsor individual delegates. A handbook of successful strategies is also in the making. This will include examples from among the delegates to inspire and inform not only other activists, but also founders, policy makers, media representatives and scholars.

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Women and Public Policy Program

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4. Community Based Building of Peace and Democracy in the Horn of Africa

The Life and Peace Institute, University of Uppsala, Sweden

Since 1992 the Life and Peace Institute, an international and ecumenical peace research institute based in Sweden, has supported locally based peace processes in *Somalia and Somaliland*. By the time the UN peace keeping force UNOSOM left Somalia in 1995, the Life and Peace Institute had established an ongoing support and capacity building programme all over the country, which was later extended to Somaliland. The aim of such programme is *to identify and support broad-based, long-term participatory peace processes, based in the communities, initiated and owned by the people in those communities*.

Four major components have been part of the programme all along: 1) provide support to locally initiated elder's reconciliation conferences; 2) promote capacity-building/institutional support programmes for district and village councils; 3) provide a capacity building programme for women; and a 4) Civic Education Programme. Since the beginning of its work in the area, the Life and Peace Institute has aimed at supporting and strengthening women, particularly at the community level, in their work for peace, and in their efforts to participate as «full members» in the Somali society.

There is ample evidence that women in Somalia have a natural inclination to be bridge builders between clans. A woman belongs to her father's clan, but through marriage close ties are created with the husband's clan. This bridge-building role that women have had in this cultural context has always been used to create bonds between clans, also in traditional reconciliation processes.

In 1994, two women from each region were trained as Life and Peace Institute (LPI) resource persons. They were responsible for assisting LPI to arrange training sessions in each region for women in the districts. Since then 960 women have participated in 24 workshops in 18 different places in Somalia. Women who are active at the community level come from all clans and all areas of Somalia. During workshops they discuss how they can work together for peace, organise themselves, straighten and support each other and find ways of working together with the men for a better future for their families and people. Since tensions and suspicions between clans can be intense, these workshops have provided a possibility for the women to come together and build bridges across clan lines. Workshops for businesswomen and women politicians were also held. New resource persons have been trained and are now present in all regions of Somalia and Somaliland.

The women's programme has recently been integrated into the Civic Education Programme. This was done in order to promote mainstreaming of women's issues and concerns. When programmes were separate there was a tendency for women's programmes to develop on the sidelines.

Some issues stand out as particularly urgent for Somali women. There is a need, for instance, to identify and formulate what it means to be an Islamic Somali woman. Equally important is for women to find ways to organise themselves and work together around a common agenda. This is a challenging task because the existing hierarchical power structures that often serve as a model for new organisations do not encourage co-operation and power sharing.

The central element to LPI's approach to peace building is to empower local actors. The approach starts at the community level where it aims to lay the foundations for regional and national reconciliation processes. It is through the work with women that LPI has recognised the need to develop a more holistic approach to peace work. As one Somali woman said, «we cannot just have peace, we also need a life!»

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5. The Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa

Launched by UNESCO, in co-operation with the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) and the African Women's Commission for Development

A Pan African Women's Conference on a Culture of Peace was held in Zanzibar, Tanzania, from 17-20 May 1999. This Pan African meeting provided a forum for African women leaders, politicians with experience in peace-building, gender and peace researchers, educators, national and community based peace activists, media professionals and information mediators committed to peace and non-violence, to voice their concerns, compare experiences, exchange ideas, prioritise strategies and co-ordinate actions for conflict resolution and peace building.

The *Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa* was the result of this three-day meeting. The Agenda addresses the root causes of violence in Africa including poverty, exclusion, economic, social and political injustices, unfinished democracies, the violation of human rights and the absence of the rule of law. It further outlines possibilities for overcoming obstacles and reducing the climate of violence while accelerating the peace of reconciliation and post conflict reconstruction, including resettlement of displaced and refugee women and their families. The Agenda also stresses the importance of relevant gender sensitive research, education and training necessary for societies to build a culture of peace.

The overall goal of the initiative is to achieve gender equality, the full empowerment of women and a culture of peace in Africa through the following strategic objectives:

1) promoting the role of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building in the continent; 2) integrating women fully in democratic processes, notably in decision-making; 3) including a gender perspective in mainstream security issues; 4) strengthening women's community based organisations and networks as a nurturing ground for building a culture of peace; 5) pursuing strategies and initiatives that facilitate the changing of attitudes and gender stereotypes; 6) engaging women's information services in Africa as active partners in peace-building processes to help ensure transparency, strengthen early warning systems and give visibility to women's peace and development initiatives; 7) providing education and training for a culture of peace; and 8) encouraging research and documentation of traditional and innovative methods of conflict resolution and women's best practices for peace-building.

The *Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa* calls on women to consistently *monitor government's national budgets and advocate for more resources to be allocated to peace building actions* and the improvement of the continent's economic situation. African women will *continue to advocate for a reduction of military expenditures and re-allocation of saved resources to education, health and peace promotion activities*. African women appeal to governments, financial institutions and to the international community to invest in programmes that support women's efforts to build a culture of peace.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the European Commission for Africa (ECA) and the OAU's Women's Unit have recently established an autonomous African Women's Committee

for Peace and Development. Such a committee must be strengthened and supported in order to promote networking, information sharing and the development of appropriate media programmes. National committees with broad representation must be established in order to celebrate properly the International Year for the Culture of Peace in 2000.

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6. The War-Torn Societies Project

Is a joint activity of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and the Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies (PSIS) of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva.

The *War-torn Societies Project* (WSP) was launched at a seminar held in Cartigny, Switzerland from 29 November to 1st December 1994. The seminar brought together more than eighty representatives from war-torn societies, from governmental to non-governmental sides, to discuss conflict prevention, emergencies and conflict resolution.

WSP encourages main external and internal actors in developing countries to collectively analyse the complex interactions between peace-keeping, relief, rehabilitation and development activities, and between local, national and external actors. Participatory action-research is used as a tool to jointly define policies that could lead to a better integration of different forms of international assistance - humanitarian, economic, political and military - and to a better alignment of such assistance with local and national efforts. WSP has completed fieldwork in Eritrea, Mozambique and Guatemala and is currently conducting field work in Somalia.

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CONCLUSION

Topic and methodology

In the process of researching and writing on this topic it soon became apparent that more time should have been allocated to it from the beginning. Finding case studies of women and men mobilising together for conflict resolution and peace-building has been harder than anticipated at the outset. This partially reflects *the lack of systematic documentation efforts and emphasises the need for supporting such initiatives in the future*. On the other hand, some case studies are documented but in non-mainstream publications. Only a narrow audience is aware of their scattered existence and just a selected few can benefit from reading about these experiences.

Another problem encountered during the research process is connected to the nature of existing gender-based literature on conflict prevention and resolution. With the exception of some UN publications, most of the available literature on the topic is written from an academic perspective. Theoretical and philosophical arguments on gender roles dominate these sources, while concrete examples and personal accounts are rarely found.

The increasing number of international efforts on behalf of NGOs and academic institutions aiming to document women's peace initiatives is promising, just as much as it is unexpected. In the future, more and more case-studies will be collected and presented together in a book format. In a world where information is in excess, coming across selected and pre-packaged studies can be very useful, especially for those who work at the grassroots level and who may not have the time to weed through large amounts of information.

Internet availability is also important for dissemination of information. Although many women groups are still lagging behind in their use of this medium, it was encouraging to come across a web site by the Argentinean Mothers and one by the Women's Coalition for Northern Ireland. The Women Waging Peace Project is also setting up a web site that aims to keep all participants in touch with each other and to expand its network. In countries where there are conflicts, like in Sudan and Sierra Leone, and where the general level of education among women is low, it is harder to share information on peace initiatives. Efforts to document women's peace initiatives through various mediums have been more frequent in countries where women are relatively well educated and have access to modern communication technology, like in former Yugoslavia and Argentina. Although this is not a surprising finding, it makes a difference when selecting case studies as choices are limited and skewed.

Supporting a more “gender balanced” approach

What is by now clear from the case studies presented above, is that women can make a significant contribution in preventing conflicts, fighting repressive regimes and promoting peace at all levels. The variety and complexity of women’s politics is an indication of their capacity to engage as political subjects and challenge the escalation of violence. *Excluding women from participating in peace processes will jeopardise the sustainability of the peace itself.* Women’s involvement is crucial in creating a more just and equitable society. The presence of women in peace delegations should be representative of women’s real needs and concerns and not just be a facade. The same goes for male delegates. Lasting peace requires broad-based consensus and representation.

Having briefly looked at gender roles in relation to conflict, what can a network of agencies like *Aprodev* do to support women’s involvement in preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and reconciliation? The above case studies give us an idea of what can be useful to do and what is being done by different international organisations to empower women and promote their participation as members of official peace delegations. Elise Kant, in her presentation of the gendered toolbox at the 1997 GOOD’s annual conference, gives some concrete suggestions.³⁴

Kant, like other researchers and women activists, emphasises *the importance of building on the capacity of local women leaders by providing training on mediation techniques, communication and leadership skills as well as gender.* Training is a central feature of the International Alert program in the Great Lakes region and of the Life and Peace Institute Peace and Democracy programme in the Horn of Africa. As these cases well illustrate, making training available does not mean inviting foreign experts, rather enabling local women leaders to organise such meetings with whomever they feel is suitable. Informal discussions between women and between women and men should also be supported. This is the case of the Women in Black in Serbia. With the assistance of foreign donors the movement was able to organise annual meetings with other women’s groups from post-Yugoslav states and thus keep the channels of communication open despite the divisive nationalist propaganda.

International conferences and conventions legitimate women’s demands for *participation* and thus strengthen their campaigns. The Beijing Platform for Action advocates for more women to participate in peace missions. This will increase team diversity and include other perspectives. As participation is not

³⁴ *The Gender Dimensions of Conflict Situations* by Elise Kant, a presentation given at the annual GOOD conference held on the 24-25 September 1997 in Lyngby, Denmark.

always welcome, women have also undertaken women-only peace missions or have launched advocacy efforts to include women in official peace delegations. International NGOs can strengthen women's networks locally as well as internationally. The support of other women's groups can provide practical help as well as moral support in difficult contexts. Women from organisations scattered around the world can learn from each other's experiences in struggling against oppression and violence. The Mothers of Argentina are now one of the many mothers' groups that have been created world-wide. Their campaigns tackle distinct issues but their discourses focus on the language of human rights and maternal care.

International donors are often reluctant to fund the organisational hardware. Since they want something to show for themselves they prefer to fund activities like training workshops or service centres. However, women's groups, like all other civil society associations, need the basics first. Without a place to meet, store office equipment and work, women's groups are bound to remain limited realities without enough leverage to advocate for change or engage in conflict prevention and resolution. *Fundraising* for many of these groups is an impossible task for two reasons: 1) the societies they operate in are too poor to sustain such grassroots initiatives and, 2) what these groups campaign for often challenges the status quo and thus makes them controversial in their own societies.

Aprodev agencies can contribute to *document* conflict prevention and peace building initiatives. Although internationally there are some attempts at documenting women's experiences with conflict prevention and peace building, the gap between what is known and what actually happens on the ground is still enormous. International organisations that have projects in the field, in areas of conflict, can build on their local network of contacts to promote first hand documentation of women's anti-war activities and peace initiatives.

Appendix I: Elements of Conflict Situations and Possible Gender Dimensions ³⁵

Elements of conflict situations	Possible Gender Dimensions
Pre-conflict stage	
Increased mobilisation of soldiers	Increased commercial sex trade (including child prostitution) around military bases and army camps.
Nationalist propaganda used to increase support for military action	Gender stereotypes and specific definitions of masculinity and femininity are often promoted. There may be increased pressure on men to 'defend the nation'.
Mobilisation of pro-peace activists and organisations	Women have been active in peace movements – both generally and in women-specific organisations. Women have often drawn moral authority from their role as mothers. It has also been possible for women to protest from their position as mothers when other forms of protest have been denied by the authorities.
Increase in human rights violations	Women's rights are not always recognised as human rights. Gender-based violence, such as rape and sexual harassment, may increase.
Conflict Stage	
Psychological trauma, physical violence, casualties and death	These may tend to be primary combatants. Yet, in various conflicts, women have made up significant numbers of combatants.
Social networks are disrupted. The family changes in composition and structure	Gender relations can be subjected to stress and change. The traditional division of labour within a family may be under pressure. Survival strategies often necessitate changes in the gender division of labour. Women may become responsible for an increased number of dependants.
Mobilisation of people for conflict. Everyday life and work are disrupted.	The gender division of labour in workplaces can change. With men's mobilisation for combat, women have often taken over male traditionally male occupations and responsibilities. Women have challenged traditional gender stereotypes and roles by becoming combatants and taking on other non-traditional roles.
Material shortages (shortages of food, health care, water, fuel, etc.)	Women's role as provider of the everyday needs of the family may mean increased stress and work as basic goods are more difficult to locate. Girls may also face an increased workload. Non-combatant men may also experience stress related to their domestic gender roles if they are expected, but unable, to provide for their families.
Creation of refugees and displaced people	People's ability to respond to an emergency situation is influenced by whether they are male or female. Women and men refugees (as well as boys and girls) often have different needs and priorities.

³⁵ This table is extracted from *Gender Equality and Peacebuilding: An Operational Framework* by Beth Woroniuk CIDA – Gender Equality and Peacebuilding, April 1999.

Dialogue and peace negotiations	Women often excluded from formal discussions given their lack of participation / access to pre-conflict decision-making and institutions
Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Stage	
Political negotiations and planning to implement peace accords	Men's and women's participation in these processes tends to vary, with women often playing only minor roles in formal negotiations or policy making.
Media used to communicate messages (peace accord, etc.)	Women's unequal access to media may mean that their interests, needs and perspectives are not represented and discussed.
Use of outside investigators, peacekeepers, etc.	Officials are not generally trained in gender equality issues (women's rights as human rights, how to recognise and deal with gender-specific violence).
Holding elections	Women face specific obstacles in voting, in standing for election and in having gender equality issues discussed as election issues.
International investments in employment creation, health care, etc.	Reconstruction programmes may not recognise or give priority to supporting women's and girls' health needs, domestic responsibilities or needs for skills training and credit.
Demobilisation of combatants	Combatants often assumed to be all male. If priority is granted to young men, women do not benefit from land allocations, credit schemes, etc.
Measures to increase the capacity of and confidence in civil society	Women's participation in community organisations and NGOs is generally uneven. Many organisations often lack the capacity and interest in granting priority to equality issues.

Appendix II: Highlights from the study

Stages	Analysis
Pre-conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of gender roles prior to the conflict outbreak • Study root causes of the conflict • Investigate how violence escalated • Be aware of the kinds of social pressures and gender stereotypes women/men have been subjected to • Remember that men and women are not homogeneous groups • Be aware of whether or not women's groups existed before the conflict and what their mandate was • Ask yourself how representative are existing women's groups • Ask whether women's networks are involved in conflict prevention • Ask what has prompted women and men to organise • What strategies are there to diffuse tension/oppose the conflict
Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate how women and men are affected by the conflict • Know what are the prevailing gender stereotypes • Study the gender impact of the nationalist propaganda • Be aware of how the propaganda appeals to men and women • Ask yourself whether violence patterns are gender-based • Know if and how women's organisations are mobilising • Investigate the relationship between women and the military • If women are in the military, investigate what roles do they have • Be aware of the impact of humanitarian aid on the gender roles
Reconstruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study how violence is expressed • Ask men and women how they define violence • Investigate the nature of discrimination cases • Ask men and women their perception of peace • Know whether or not aid has been re-directed and how • Find out whether or not women's groups are being supported • Ask women what they want out of the peace accord • Understand how representative the negotiating team is • Identify who best represents women's interests and concerns • Ask women what do they want out of a peace accord • Investigate legal rights for widows
Possible interventions during all phases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the capacities of local women leaders • Provide training on conflict resolution, media approaches, leadership and communication skills, lobbying, etc...) • Support collection of gender-desegregated data • Support information sharing and networking activities of women • Support informal dialogue between different groups of people • Increase participation of women in peace missions • Support women's organisations on a practical level (office space, equipment, overhead and core staff salary) • Support peace education and gender training in schools • Provide funding for documenting women's initiatives to prevent conflict and promote peace • Institution building of civil society and women's groups • Link women's NGOs to international organisations & networks

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance the role of women leaders in national and international peace-building
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Gender Orientation On Development

GOOD started in 1990 during a gathering of gender advisors from European development and humanitarian aid agencies, which work together with the World Council of Churches. GOOD is based on a shared understanding of the importance of transforming development models. GOOD's role is to help the APRODEV agencies put policy into practice by learning from each other.

In April 2000, GOOD was incorporated into the APRODEV Secretariat with which a new phase started. Representatives at the APRODEV Annual Meeting in June 2000 agreed to rename the GOOD Working Group and call it the *Gender Advisory Group* on GOOD. The Gender Advisory Group has a broader mandate and will work in close cooperation with APRODEV's Policy Advisory Group. GOOD activities have now become an integral part of APRODEV's work programme.

An additional component has been added to the GOOD agenda, which is lobbying at the EU level. The aim is to include a gender perspective in the lobbying work of the APRODEV Secretariat on development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

Workshops and Annual Conferences organised by GOOD since 1990:

HIV/AIDS –Grasping the Reality of its Gender Dimension, (2000)
A GOOD look at Microcredit, Savings and Gender (1999)
Breaking the Barriers to Dialogue with Partners on Gender (1998)
Gender perspectives in Conflict Prevention and Resolution (1997)
Living beyond our means...Gender, Economics and Development (1996)
Leaving the monuments behind? Gender, Theology and Development, (1995)
Gender Planning Frameworks (1992)
Initial survey of the gender policies and strategies of agencies (1991)

APRODEV is the association of the 15 major ecumenical development and humanitarian aid organisations in Europe, which work together with the World Council of Churches.

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