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## **Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies**

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### **Master of Arts Degree in**

### **International Relations and Diplomacy**

#### **Topic**

**The Role of Women in Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa: A  
Case Study of Liberia //**

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**Declaration**

This research paper is my own original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

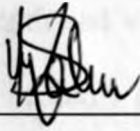
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Above all I thank God for the strength and wisdom to complete the paper. Being as limited as we are, nothing could go on without His intervention.

Acronyms

**CD Dedication**

Committee on the Organization of the ...

**This is a special dedication to my mother ...you have made me what I am and as an appreciation, this is for you.**

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**Acronyms**

<b>CEDAW</b>	<b>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</b>
<b>DRC</b>	<b>Democratic Republic of Congo</b>
<b>ECOWAS</b>	<b>Economic Community of West African States</b>
<b>FPU</b>	<b>Female Police Units</b>
<b>FFPU</b>	<b>Female Formed Police Unit</b>
<b>IFOR</b>	<b>International Fellowship of Reconciliation</b>
<b>INPFL</b>	<b>Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia</b>
<b>LTTE</b>	<b>Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelams</b>
<b>LURD</b>	<b>Liberians for Reconciliation and Democracy</b>
<b>MARWOPNET</b>	<b>Mano River Women Peace Network</b>
<b>NGOs</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organizations</b>
<b>NPFL</b>	<b>National Patriotic Front of Liberia</b>
<b>UK</b>	<b>United Kingdom</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>UNMIL</b>	<b>United Nations Mission in Liberia</b>
<b>US</b>	<b>United States</b>
<b>WANEP</b>	<b>West African Network for Peace Building</b>
<b>WIPNET</b>	<b>West African Network for Women in Peace Building</b>
<b>WIPSA</b>	<b>Women Initiative for Peace in South Asia</b>
<b>WISCOMP</b>	<b>Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace</b>

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# **Chapter 1: The Role of Women in Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa: A Case Study of Liberia**

## **Abstract**

This study works towards establishing the role played by women in peace building in various settings around the world, with Liberia being the case study for various reasons. Liberia is one of the African countries that has been plagued by civil war for over a decade leaving a trail of suffering and destruction with women majorly on the receiving end.

At the same time, Liberia remains one of the few countries that have put in place systems that have seen women in the front line towards rebuilding peace and re-establishing trust with its citizens who in most cases had suffered under the hands of the perpetrators, most having been men. This has included having a police women unit and the democratic election of one of the first woman president in Africa, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

## **Introduction**

Peacekeeping has occupied a central place in the UN activities in a number of past decades. Scores of peacekeeping missions have been mounted in troubled spots; Somali, DRC (the largest so far), Liberia, just to name a few. While such interventions have led to cessation of hostilities, it has not necessarily resulted to a permanent peace nor has it fully addressed the factors that led to the conflict themselves or other post-conflict challenges like trauma and phobia.

That calls for another intervention- peace building. A formula needs to be sought that will allow a successful transition from peacekeeping to peace building. And as this is done, it has to be noted that peace building goes beyond the need to secure the peace. This understanding



has been lacking and is among the major reasons as to why many peace building initiatives have not born as much fruits as they should.

The reasons for this shortcoming have had to do with the people involved in such processes; many of which have been involving the leaders of warring parties. This is okay since it might lead to the end of the armed conflict, but it does not lead to internal peace of the people who were affected. True peace does not necessarily mean the absence of war.

Liberia is such an example of strategy that brings about true peace after a long time of conflict. Ever since Liberia had her first democratically-elected post-war president, she decided to put women in the forefront in bringing about peace. Many of the war victims were women. Furthermore, large portions of the Liberian society had lost confidence in men since majority of them were on the forefront committing atrocities during the war. This involved bringing about the concept of police women among others.

How far has this strategy succeeded? Can this strategy be emulated by other countries as well? It is the task of this paper to establish that.

The paper will start by looking at the preliminaries; background, objectives, hypothesis, theoretical framework, literature review etc. The second chapter will give the background information about Liberia. It will focus on the war itself (both in its two phases) and the women's contribution in bringing about peace. Chapter three will look at, strategically, why women need to be involved in peace building looking at their strengths and successes. Chapter four will be dedicated to recommendations that, if followed, would make the strategy mentioned in Chapter three workable. Chapter Five will conclude by giving the highlights from the paper.

## Background

Samuel Doe took power in a popular coup in 1980 against William R. Tolbert, becoming the first Liberian President of non Americo-Liberian descent.<sup>1</sup> Due to some dissatisfaction with the leadership style of Doe, Charles Taylor, who had left Doe's government after being accused of embezzlement, assembled a group of rebels in Côte d'Ivoire who later became known as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL).<sup>2</sup> As the opposition against Doe was inflamed, Prince Johnson, an NPFL fighter, later split to form his own guerrilla force and named it Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL).

By the middle of 1990, a civil war was raging. Taylor's NPFL soon controlled much of the country, while Johnson took most of the capital, Monrovia. The Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) attempted to persuade Doe to resign and go into exile but he refused. He was later captured by Johnson on September 9, 1990, and tortured before being killed.<sup>3</sup>

Peace was still far off as both Taylor and Johnson claimed power. There broke a civil war. This civil war, which was one of Africa's bloodiest, claimed the lives of more than 200,000 Liberians and further displaced a million others into refugee camps in neighboring countries. Entire villages were emptied as people fled.<sup>4</sup> Child soldiers committed atrocities, raping and murdering people of all ages.

The Second Liberian Civil War began in 1999 and ended in October 2003, when the UN and US military intervened to stop the rebel siege on Monrovia and exiled Charles Taylor to

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Liberian\\_Civil\\_War#Background](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Liberian_Civil_War#Background) Retrieved 26<sup>th</sup> February 2009, First Liberian Civil War

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Liberian\\_Civil\\_War#Background](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Liberian_Civil_War#Background) Retrieved 26<sup>th</sup> February 2009

<sup>3</sup> Armon, J., and Carl, A. <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/liberia/chronology.php#1990> Retrieved 26<sup>th</sup> February 2009. *Conciliation Resources*. The Liberian peace process 1990-1996

<sup>4</sup> Duyvesteyn, I., *Clausewitz and African War* (Frank Cass: London/New York, 2005), p.27

Nigeria until he was arrested in 2006 and extradited to The Hague for his trial on atrocities against mankind. By the conclusion of the final war, more than 250,000 people had been killed and nearly 1 million displaced.<sup>5</sup>

Years of conflict have had devastating consequences on the humanitarian situation in Liberia. The 14-year civil conflict left many people dead.<sup>6</sup> Innocent civilians were murdered while hundreds of thousands became refugees and were displaced throughout the region. One of the main tragic consequences of the Liberian-Civil war was the use of children as soldiers. An estimated 15,000 children fought in Liberia's civil war, most of whom have now become vulnerable and are suffering from either "drug addiction", or "post-traumatic stress syndrome".<sup>7</sup> Women and girls were reported to have suffered the most; as they were raped and murdered with impunity by all the fighting groups.

After the war, Liberia had to restore the peace that had been there, which called for peace building initiatives. The challenge however, was on how best this would be achieved. It was clear that most of the atrocities were committed by men; the victims mainly being children and women. It was therefore probable that the society would doubt the genuineness if the whole initiative was being spearheaded by the same men. This therefore called for the involvement of women; the major victims of the war.

If women came to terms with what had happened, they would be in a better position to convince the whole society to forget the past and concentrate on nation building. This was part of the strategy that was adopted by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Liberian elected president

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy*, (Hurst & Company: London, 2001), p.57, 67-68

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy*, p. 67

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy*, p. 68

after the civil war. The question remains, “how far has it succeeded?” This paper will undertake the task of establishing this.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of this research are among others to:-

1. To establish the contributions of women towards ending the Liberian civil war.
2. To establish the extent of involvement of women in the Liberian Post-Conflict peace building initiatives.
3. To establish the effectiveness of involving women in the Liberian Post-Conflict peace building initiatives.

## Literature Review

This literature review will look at the various arguments advanced as to why women need to be involved in peace building in general. Later it will shift its attention to the recent developments as far as women involvement is concerned. The current debate will also be considered and later, the women contributions in peace building will be looked at.

This literature review will highlight the challenges faced by women during conflicts. The focus will later shift to looking at women as peace builders and thereafter the challenges they face in this process.

### *The Need to Involve Women in Peace Building*

Despite growing awareness on the roles women play in conflict prevention and peace building, resistance to the intentional inclusion of women is still internationally widespread. Many activists on behalf of women inclusion spend a great deal of their time simply explaining to others why it is important for women to be involved in these processes.<sup>8</sup> According to Poehlman-Doumbouya (2001)<sup>9</sup>, there are multiple ways of asserting the importance of women involvement in peace building. First, the women populations' makes up more or less half of every community, and are equipped with skills and resources necessary for the complex tasks of peace building. Secondly, as central caretakers of their families, everyone suffers when women are oppressed, victimized, and excluded from conflict prevention and peace building. Their centrality to communal life makes their inclusion in these activities essential. Finally, women have the capacity for both violence and

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<sup>8</sup> Manchanda R., Redefining and Feminizing Security, *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 22 (Mumbai: 2 June 2001), p. 34

<sup>9</sup> Poehlman-Doumbouya S., and Hill, F., Women and Peace in the United Nations. *New Routes: A Journal of Peace Research and Action* 6, no. 3, 2001.

peace and in many areas of the world are, in fact, actively supporting violent solutions to conflicts.<sup>10</sup>

Women must be encouraged to use their special qualities in building peace rather than violence. Women can bring unique insights and values to the process of peace building. Socialization processes in many cultures teach women to foster relationships and avoid violence. In addition, the historical experience of marginalization and unequal relations allows many women to empathize with those oppressed in violent contexts.<sup>11</sup>

Since women and men have different experiences as regards violence and peace, women must be allowed and encouraged to bring their unique insights and qualities to the process of peace building.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, women empowerment should be seen as inherent to the process of building peace because sexism, racism, classism, and ethnic and religious discrimination originate from the same set of beliefs that some people are inherently better than others.<sup>13</sup>

Like other social structures that set up some people as superior to others, the sexists believe that women's lives are less valuable than men's, a belief that leads to violence against women. When women engage in peace building, they challenge these sexist beliefs along with other structures that discriminate against the general population.

Finally, women have proven themselves to be successful peace builders. Basing their strategies on the principles of inclusivity and collaboration, and on the methodology of multi-

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<sup>10</sup> Pohlman-Doumbouya S. and Hill, F., Women and Peace in the United Nations. *New Routes: A Journal of Peace Research and Action* 6, no. 3, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Schirch, Lisa, Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peace builders, in *Women and Post-Conflict* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 2002), p. 78.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Schirch, Lisa, Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peace builders, p.78

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Schirch, Lisa, Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peace builders, p.79

track peace building, the case studies show how women groups conceptualize strategies and produce peace building outcomes that are broad-based and sustainable.<sup>14</sup>

### *Recent Developments on the Inclusion of Women in Peace Building*

During the 1990s, a broad coalition of women began to discuss how to engage the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on the impact of armed conflict on women and women contributions to peace.<sup>15</sup> This diverse coalition of women from war zones, representatives of women national and international NGOs, eventually formed a working group on women, peace, and security. This civil-society campaign led to the October 2000 signing of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.<sup>16</sup>

UNSC Resolution 1325, hereafter referred to simply as 1325, like other council resolutions, is a binding international law that for the first time recognizes that women and children are the vast majority of those negatively affected by conflict and endorses the participation of women as significant contributors to peace and security.<sup>17</sup> 1325 includes calls for women participation in conflict prevention and resolution initiatives; mainstreaming gender perspectives in peace building and peacekeeping missions; and protection of women in regions of armed conflict. It sends an important gender-sensitizing message to the UN system. It also speaks to civil-society actors engaged in preventing armed conflict. While many international NGOs are including women concerns and women actors in their peace building programs, many are yet to.

There still remains a conceptual separation between traditional women concerns and the issues embraced by civil-society actors involved in conflict prevention or peace building

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Schirch, Lisa, *Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peace builders*, p.79

<sup>15</sup> Meintjes, S., Anu P., and Meredith T., eds. *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation* (London: Zed Books, 2002), p. 58.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Meintjes, S., Anu P., and Meredith T., eds. *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*, p. 58

<sup>17</sup> Ekiyor Thelma, *The Female Combatant* (Monrovia: WANEP From the Field Publication, 2005), p. 23-30.

activities. The UK-based organization International Alert, launched a Women Building Peace global campaign with the support of a hundred civil-society organizations around the world to lobby for a council resolution and later to urge the implementation of 1325 recommendations both within the UN and across civil-society actors. The campaign aims to address women exclusion from decision making processes that address peace, security, and development.

### *Current Debate*

Women are challenging the UN, regional, governmental, and other civil-society actors in a variety of ways. Many groups focus on preventing or recovering from civil and international wars. This emphasis on overt direct violence between large groups of people is important, yet it often fails to fully challenge the structural origins of public violence and the private violence (often against women and children) that accompanies public violence. One key debate centers on women civil-society actors insistence on examining the web of violence that accompanies public violence, pointing to the growing incidence of domestic violence in regions of armed conflict.

The examples of Bougainville, South Africa, and the former Yugoslavia<sup>18</sup>, where instances of domestic violence rose sharply during and after the armed conflicts, lie at the heart of the current debate on developing holistic responses to the challenges that the complex relationship between militarization, misogyny, and domestic violence presents. Manchanda, R. (2001) a women peace activist from India, notes that women are more likely to see a

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<sup>18</sup> Maguire, S., Researching 'A Family Affair': Domestic Violence in Former Yugoslavia and Albania Gender and Development, *Violence against Women* Vol. 6, No. 3, (Taylor & Francis, Ltd , 1998), pp. 60-66 <http://www.istor.org/stable/4030504> Retrieved on 1st March 2009



continuum of violence because they experience the connected forms of domestic and political violence that stretches from the home, to the street, and to the battlefield.<sup>19</sup>

Women are also challenging how governments and other civil-society actors are defining peace and security. Women groups assert that the values of empathy and building community can contribute significantly to a discourse on peace and security that is based on coexistence and cooperation.<sup>20</sup> They advocate for a broadening of the definition of security from one confined to territorial and military security to one that considers issues of individual dignity, water security, food security, humane governance, and environmental security as central to the shaping of what is considered essential to the field of international security concerns that were earlier considered soft issues.<sup>21</sup>

Further, making a distinction between negative and positive peace, they associate the former with the absence of widespread overt violent conflict where other forms of violence, cultural and structural continue long after the guns have gone silent.<sup>22</sup> In this context, the notion of positive peace might be introduced as one that includes processes that facilitate social justice, gender equity, active coexistence, economic equality, and ecological security.<sup>23</sup> For instance, several women groups working in the context of the peace process between Pakistan and India asserted the need to move beyond a peace that involves a mere absence of military

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<sup>19</sup> Manchanda, R., Redefining and Feminizing Security. *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 22 (Mumbai: 2 June 2001), p. 78.

<sup>20</sup> Poehlman-Doumbouya S., and Hill, F., Women and Peace in the United Nations, *New Routes: A Journal of Peace Research and Action* 6, no. 3, 2001, p. 45.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Poehlman-Doumbouya S., and Hill, F., Women and Peace in the United Nations, p. 45

<sup>22</sup> Schirch, Lisa, Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peace Builders, in *Women and Post-Conflict* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 2002), p. 56.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Schirch, Lisa, Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peace Builders, p. 56

conflict and arms races. They advocated for a paradigm that privileges inclusive and mutually beneficial processes for transforming the conflict.<sup>24</sup>

For Bhatia Ashima (2001), a genuine peace requires not only the absence of war but also the elimination of unjust social and economic relations, including unequal gender relations.<sup>25</sup>

Women groups have introduced these new ideas of peace and security into the political diplomacy in the region. Finally, women challenge other civil-society actors to walk boldly toward greater gender equality.<sup>26</sup> An issue around which there has been considerable debate is the widely held belief that once there is a critical mass of women in positions of decision making, the discourse on peace and security will undergo significant change.<sup>27</sup>

Das Gupta (2001) insists that it is important that a discussion on women and peace building not be limited to a preoccupation with numbers or what has been termed as 'add women and stir'.<sup>28</sup> In other words, while the goal of getting a critical mass of women into decision making positions in peace building organizations is vital, this can only be a starting point. Simply adding women to existing programs or structures is unlikely to bring about lasting change.<sup>29</sup>

Anderlini Sanam (1999) sees the challenge as one that lies in building a discourse on peace and security that includes the perspectives of both women and men and holds as central the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Schirch, Lisa, *Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peace Builders*, p. 57

<sup>25</sup> Bhatia, A. K., *Recreating Spaces, Transcending Fault lines: The Quest for a Culture of Peace* (New Delhi: WISCOMP, Foundation for Universal Responsibility, 2001), p. 101.

<sup>26</sup> Basu, S., *Building Constituencies of Peace: A Women's Initiative in Kashmir: Documenting the Process* (New Delhi: WISCOMP, Foundation for Universal Responsibility, 2004), p. 80.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Basu, S., *Building Constituencies of Peace: A Women's Initiative in Kashmir: Documenting the Process*, p. 80

<sup>28</sup> Das Gupta, S., *Breaking the Silence: Women and Kashmir* (New Delhi: WISCOMP, Foundation for Universal Responsibility, 2001), p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> WISCOMP *Stakeholders in Dialogue* (New Delhi: Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2004).

values of coexistence, nonviolence, and inclusivity.<sup>30</sup> Real structural, economic, political, and social change in the ways all people relate to each other must be the ultimate goal, she insists.<sup>31</sup>

### *Women Contributions to Peace Building*

Peace building seeks to prevent, reduce, transform, and help people recover from violence in all forms, even structural violence that has not yet led to massive civil unrest. There are four categories of peace building including efforts to first, wage conflict nonviolently through activism and advocacy; second, reduce direct violence through peacekeeping, relief aid, and legal systems; third, transform relationships through dialogue, mediation, negotiation, and trauma healing; and fourth build capacity through training and education, development, military conversion, and research. Women play important roles in each of the four categories of peace building.

### *Wage Conflict Nonviolently*

As activists and advocates for peace, women wage conflict nonviolently by pursuing democracy and human rights through strategies that raise awareness of conflict issues and pressure others to bring about change.<sup>32</sup> In the case of Argentina, for example, women mobilized themselves as mothers and grandmothers and sustained a weekly public protest at a time when other activists had gone into hiding due to severe governmental repression. In so doing, they emerged as one of the most profound examples of women waging conflict through advocacy and nonviolent action to achieve truth and justice.

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<sup>30</sup> Anderlini, S., Manchanda, R., and Karmali, S., *Women, Violent Conflict, and Peace Building: Global Perspectives*. International Alert, 1999, p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Anderlini, S., Manchanda, R., and Karmali, S., *Women, Violent Conflict, and Peace Building: Global Perspectives*, p. 35

<sup>32</sup> Bhatia, A. K., *Recreating Spaces, Transcending Fault lines: The Quest for a Culture of Peace* (New Delhi: WISCOMP, Foundation for Universal Responsibility, 2001), p. 105.

In the case study from Liberia, Mass Action for Peace demonstrated that the sustained presence of women demonstrating outside the Liberian peace talks helped create the needed pressure to keep rebel and government leaders at the negotiating table until they reached an agreement.<sup>33</sup> In Bougainville, the Leitana Nehan Women Development Agency raised awareness of the connections between private and social violence. They brought the issues of rape as a tool of war, domestic violence, and substance abuse to national attention through the use of large-scale nonviolent protests.<sup>34</sup>

### *Reduce Direct Violence*

As peacekeepers and relief aid workers, women contribute to reducing direct violence. In countries around the world, women groups provide relief and charity work to people in need in their communities, often through their churches, mosques, or temples. They run soup kitchens to provide food to the hungry, offer clothing to those in need, and set up orphanages and shelters for those with no place to go. Women groups in Bougainville built secret networks for humanitarian assistance when no other groups were able to provide relief to victims of the civil violence. In the war-torn region of Jammu and Kashmir in India, the Athwaas women initiative works to identify and meet the needs of women whose husbands have been killed or disappeared in the fighting.<sup>35</sup>

### *Transforming Relationships*

As mediators, trauma-healing counselors, and policymakers, women also work to transform relationships and address the roots of violence. In times of intense conflict, women dialogue initiatives are often the only channel of communication between hostile

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Bhatia, A. K., *Recreating Spaces, Transcending Fault lines: The Quest for a Culture of Peace* p. 101.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. Bhatia, A. K., *Recreating Spaces, Transcending Fault lines: The Quest for a Culture of Peace* p. 101

<sup>35</sup> Anderlini, S., Manchanda, R., and Karmali, S., *Women, Violent Conflict, and Peace Building: Global Perspectives*. International Alert, 1999, p. 36.

communities/nations. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Jerusalem Link and Women in Black serve as two important examples of women building bridges across the lines of conflict.

In the context of the conflict between Pakistan and India, groups such as Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP) and Women Initiative for Peace in South Asia (WIPSA) facilitated sustained dialogue between women groups in the two countries, even when official diplomatic communication has been caught in war rhetoric and political jingoism and civil-society engagement has been irregular and limited.<sup>36</sup> By providing opportunities for face-to-face interactions and dialogue in settings of hostility, the women have facilitated a much needed humanization of the conflict situations.

The two women groups have fostered a multi-track approach to peace building with a broad cross-section of civil society, including NGOs, media, the business community, educators, and community leaders in the two countries. Such multi-track peace building plays a vital role in sustaining negotiated political agreements brokered at the highest levels of government.

### *Build Capacity*

As educators and participants in the development process, women also build the capacity of their communities and nations to prevent violent conflict. Mothers can nurture the values of peace, respect, and empathy for others within their children. The West African Network for Women in Peace building (WIPNET) trains women in the skills of peace building to increase their capacity for ongoing peace work in their organizations, communities, and nations.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Anderlini, S., Manchanda, R., and Karmali, S., *Women, Violent Conflict, and Peace Building: Global Perspectives*. International Alert, 1999, p. 36

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Anderlini, S., Manchanda, R., and Karmali, S., *Women, Violent Conflict, and Peace Building: Global Perspectives*. p. 34.

Through grassroots initiatives in peace education and socioeconomic empowerment, *Athwaas* has emerged as one of the few groups in Kashmir that has transcended the fault lines of faith, ethnicity, class, gender, and political persuasion to facilitate an inclusive, gender-sensitive, and sustained dialogue among diverse stakeholders in the conflict.

### *Challenges Facing Women during Conflicts*

Conflicts have an impact on women and girls in very specific ways - ways which have too often been ignored or unrecognized: as primary caretakers of children and the elderly, as victims of war rape, as refugees, and increasingly as armed combatants themselves. War is a much gendered activity, and any intervention in eliminating it must incorporate a gender perspective.<sup>38</sup>

Woodward (2000) argues that armed conflicts are never gender-neutral. Whether it is economic deprivation, displacement, poverty or gender-based violence, the costs of conflict are borne disproportionately by women and their children.<sup>39</sup> However, she argues that women's identity as victims often obscures the important roles they play in peace building processes. She therefore asserts that inasmuch as we focus on women as major victims of armed conflicts, this should not overshadow the role they play in peace building.

### *Women as Peace Builders*

Ekiyor Thelma (2005) starts by admitting that it would be incorrect to assert that all women are natural peace builders.<sup>40</sup> She says that experiences from regions of protracted conflict such as Liberia, Sothern Sudan, Sri Lanka, the Middle East, and Kashmir reveal that women

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. Anderlini, S., Manchanda, R., and Karmali, S., *Women, Violent Conflict, and Peace Building: Global Perspectives*. p. 34

<sup>39</sup> Woodward, A. E., *Women at the Peace Tables: Making a Difference* (New York: UNIFEM, 2000), p. 95.

<sup>40</sup> Ekiyor Thelma, *The Female Combatant* (Monrovia: WANEP From the Field Publication, 2005), p. 80.

have also been active agents in perpetuating violent conflict.<sup>41</sup> However, she argues that the contributions of women to peace building have been highly significant<sup>42</sup>.

According to Peohلمان-Doumbouya (2001), women networks in West Africa brought international attention to the lack of women and other civil-society actors in the Liberian national peace talks; how the women of Bougainville initiated a peace settlement between secessionists and the Papua New Guinean government; how women in Argentina protested the disappearance of their grandchildren during the civil strife under a severely repressive government; and how Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh women crossing enemy lines in Kashmir, India, continue to initiate joint projects on development, trauma healing, and reconciliation.<sup>43</sup> This convinced the international community of why women need to be involved in peace building and thereby incorporating and also listening to their voices.

#### *Main Challenges Facing Involvement of Women in Peace Building*

In some areas, the involvement of women is an experiment in developing a gender perspective into peace work. Woodward (2000) recognizes that women play multiple roles in conflicts -as victims, occasionally as perpetrators- and most of all as leaders with innovative ideas about peace-building.<sup>44</sup> To her, incorporating a gender perspective –looking at the power relationships between men and women and at how women and men may be affected differently by the same event- raises some very problematic issues.<sup>45</sup>

Schemeild Sussanne (2002) queries on when traditional sex role stereotyping or unequal power relationships should be confronted, and when they should be accepted. And whether

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Ekiyor Thelma, *The Female Combatant*, p. 81

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Ekiyor Thelma, *The Female Combatant*, p. 81

<sup>43</sup> Poehlman-Doumbouya S. and Hill F. Women and Peace in the United Nations, *New Routes: A Journal of Peace Research and Action* 6, no. 3, 2001.

<sup>44</sup> Woodward, A. E. *Women at the Peace Tables: Making a Difference* (New York: UNIFEM, 2000), p. 46.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. Woodward, A. E. *Women at the Peace Tables: Making a Difference*, p. 46

the definition of peace work can be expanded to include development issues, such as income generation.<sup>46</sup> During the last decade development agencies -and their funders- have realized the close links between development and peace, and the key role women play in both. Without peace, development is impossible. Pankhurst Donna (2000) therefore contends that without women, neither sustainable peace nor development can take place.<sup>47</sup> Organizing an income generating project that brings women from different communities together can have many benefits, but does not fit in with a traditional peace or reconciliation framework.<sup>48</sup>

For Moser Caroline (2001), another problematic issue is the definition of peace itself.<sup>49</sup> What is the exact difference between 'peace time' and 'war time' to a woman being beaten by her male partner or a girl being sold into prostitution?, she asks.<sup>50</sup> According to a study commissioned by the World Health Organization, some 40 to 60 percent of women and girls in any given culture will experience rape, domestic abuse and/or incest.<sup>51</sup> Basu Soumita (2004) therefore wonders how this 'private' violence humanly differs from the 'public' violence of armed conflict.<sup>52</sup>

Yet another issue is the crucial question of increasing women's access to political power and political decision making. Women are not just victims. Groups like the Liberian Women's Initiative and Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace; the experiences of female United Nations election monitors in South Africa; the role of church women in ending Bougainville's brutal

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<sup>46</sup> Schmeidl, Susanne, and Eugenia Piza-Lopez, *Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Framework for Action*, (London: Save the Children, 2002), p. 105.

<sup>47</sup> Pankhurst, D., and Sanam A., *Mainstreaming Gender in Peacebuilding: A Framework for Action* (England: Women Building Peace Campaign, 2000), p. 89.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. Pankhurst, D., and Sanam A., *Mainstreaming Gender in Peacebuilding: A Framework for Action*, p. 89

<sup>49</sup> Moser, C., and Clark, F., eds. *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (London: Zed Books, 2001), p. 68.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. Moser, C., and Clark, F., eds. *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, p. 68

<sup>51</sup> United Nations, *Women, Peace and Security: The Report of the Secretary-General* (New York: UN, 2002), p. 93.

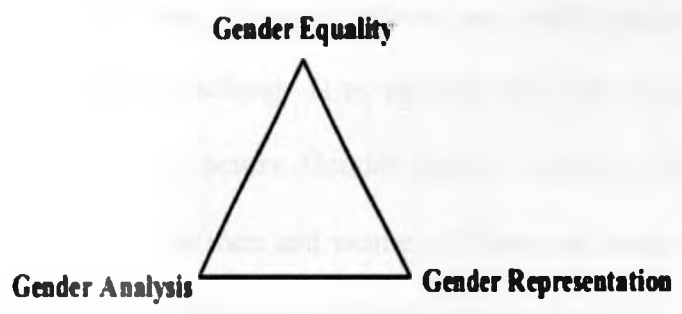
<sup>52</sup> Basu, S., *Building Constituencies of Peace: A Women's Initiative in Kashmir. Documenting the Process* (New Delhi: WISCOMP, Foundation for Universal Responsibility, 2004), p. 79.



war.<sup>53</sup> These cases and more show that women are leaders in peace and reconciliatory efforts. Yet without access to political decision making, women's solutions go ignored.

Again the term mainstreaming gender captures the idea that women want more than simply joining in existing peace building approaches. Mainstreaming gender means challenging the way governments, intergovernmental and regional peace and security organizations, and other civil society actors go about their work so that everyone at every level in every peace building project uses a gender lens in planning, implementing, and evaluating their work.<sup>54</sup>

Gender mainstreaming, represented in figure below, requires ongoing gender analysis, the goal of gender equality, and including women who represent the concerns of other women in all peace building planning, implementation, and evaluation.<sup>55</sup>



*The three Key Steps to Mainstream Gender in Peace building*<sup>56</sup>

According to El-Bushra Judy (2004), the first challenge is the inclusion of gender analysis in all planning, implementation, and evaluation of conflict prevention and peace building programs.<sup>57</sup> Conflict and violence analysis tools are important guides to all peace building

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Basu, S., *Building Constituencies of Peace: A Women's Initiative in Kashmir: Documenting the Process*, p. 79  
<sup>54</sup> Cockburn, C., *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict* (New York: Zed Books, 1998), p. 67.  
<sup>55</sup> Ibid. Cockburn, C., *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict*  
<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Cockburn, C., *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict*, p. 67  
<sup>57</sup> El-Bushra J., *Women Building Peace Report* by International Alert Gender and Peace Building Programme (New York: Sharing Publications, 2003), p. 57.

planning, yet they often leave out the significant differences between male and female experiences and roles.

Gender analysis requires data about how war and violence affect men and women differently; the gender roles of men and women in local cultures including the division of labor and resources; the needs of women from different economic classes, religions, ethnic groups, and ages; and how women are included in all peace building processes from relief aid distribution, peacekeeping programs, and grassroots dialogue, to formal peace talks. Infusing a gender analysis into peace building requires concrete action.<sup>58</sup> Some experts call for formation of truth commissions on violence against women.<sup>59</sup> Specifically, such a commission would analyze the causes of, and connections between, violence against women in times of war, domestic violence, and trafficking of women.<sup>60</sup>

The second challenge is to embrace the goal of gender equality as a central value for all peace building actors. Gender equality refers to the goal of equal opportunities, resources, and respect for men and women. It does not mean that men and women become the same, but that their lives and work hold equal value.<sup>61</sup>

According to McAllister (1991), peace building programs will only contribute to gender equality when this goal becomes integral to every aspect of peace building and not relegated to one or two programs for women.<sup>62</sup> Since women and men do not have equal access to

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., El-Bushra J., *Women Building Peace* Report by International Alert Gender and Peace Building Programme (New York: Sharing Publications, 2003), p. 98.

<sup>59</sup> Juma, M. K., *Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace: Peace Building in Communities Fractured by Conflict in Kenya*, An Interim Report, (New York: UNDP, 2000), p. 103.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Juma, M. K., *Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace: Peace Building in Communities Fractured by Conflict in Kenya*, p. 103

<sup>61</sup> McAllister, P., *This River of Courage: Generations of Women Resistance and Action* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1991). P. 95

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. McAllister, P., *This River of Courage: Generations of Women Resistance and Action*, p. 95

opportunities, resources, and respect in most communities, peace building programs need to take affirmative action to ensure equal treatment and opportunity.

The third aspect of gender mainstreaming is including women and women organizations in every stage and activity of peace building alongside men and male-led organizations.<sup>63</sup>

Moser and Clark (2001) contends that women leaders and organizations need to have access to and enjoy active relationships with all peace building actors so that they can communicate their analysis and ideas and can coordinate their energies with other peace building activities.<sup>64</sup>

Women-only forums are important for building bridges between women from different identity groups, collect information about the types and effectiveness of current programs to address violence against women, and set priorities and strategies for addressing violence against women. Funders can urge recipient organizations to include women at every level of decision making and ensure that these women have the support of other women and women organizations and are not just token representatives.<sup>65</sup>

### *Overview of the Literature Review*

It is clear from the review that women are the major victims of any armed conflict. The admission of this fact by the UN means that it is an undeniable fact. There is a strong indication that many women are coming together under different umbrella groups to ensure that their voices are heard as far as the debates and actual implementation of peace building is concerned.

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<sup>63</sup> Meintjes, S., Anu P., and Meredith T., eds. *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation* (London: Zed Books, 2002).

<sup>64</sup> Moser, C., and Clark, F, eds. *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (London: Zed Books, 2001), p. 68.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. Moser, C., and Clark, F, eds. *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* , p. 69

It is clear that women are contributing a great deal in bringing about peace and continuing the work of peace building. Despite the much they have been able to accomplish, it is also a fact that they are faced with a number of challenges. These challenges need to be surmounted. Some of the challenges are structural while some are upon the organizational ability of the women. Based on that, it is therefore important to note that for any successful inclusion of women in this process, all stakeholders, which include the society at large need to be brought on board.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Clarification of Terms*

Peace and such related terms as peacebuilding have had varied means depending on the period within which they have developed, circumstances, players etc. Because of their close connection (interlink) to conflict, the same dynamics have applied - there has been different understanding and interpretations, different theories as to their causes, different understanding as to their magnitude (thus the difference between armed conflict, unarmed conflict, structural conflict etc.). Such differences in understanding have also led to the varied understanding as to the main players in conflict and peace (and its related terms). For that matter, this theoretical framework will first clarify on how it is going to apply the different main terms: conflict, peace and peacebuilding. Clear understanding of these major terms will provide the avenue of explaining and understanding the theory that the paper will be based on. The close linkage between conflict and peace necessitates this paper to treat them as such - by first clarifying on the theory that explains well the causes of conflict and eventually, using the same theory, to explain the most effective peacebuilding strategy.

### *Conflict*

Conflict has had different definitions depending on period, its magnitude and players (as well as victims). Generally, conflict is categorized as either armed or unarmed. Armed conflict is where weapons are used; spears, machetes, guns etc. Normally the destruction is first and foremost physical and easily visible. Unarmed conflict is where no physical force is used. In structural conflict, for example, people suffer injustices like unfair distribution of resources. That is an example of unarmed conflict. In such cases, it is normally not easy to see the

damage caused without an analytical outlook. Conflict, as applied by this paper will mainly refer to armed conflict.

### *Peace and Peace Building*

Generally, there are two types of peace: negative peace (absence of war - no armed conflict) and positive peace (justice, equity and other social goods).<sup>66</sup> This paper will focus on the negative peace - a situation where parties in conflict previously are now able to stay together harmoniously without physically attacking each other.

There have been a number of interpretations as far as peacebuilding is concerned. Since the term first entered public usage in Secretary General Boutros Ghali's 1992 *Agenda for Peace*, a number of interpretations have been appended on it. Boutros Ghali, drawing on work by John Galtung and other peace researchers, initially defined peacebuilding in relation to a conflict continuum that passed from pre-conflict prevention through peacemaking and peacekeeping. Peacebuilding was associated with post-conflict phase and defined as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict."<sup>67</sup>

Boutros Ghali's *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace* (1995) dropped the notion of phases and extended the term across the conflict spectrum of pre-conflict prevention, actions during warfare and post conflict measures. The paper will focus on peacebuilding after the cessation of armed conflict.

### *Theories of Conflict*

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<sup>67</sup> Charles T. C., *Ending Wars and Building Peace: International Response to War-Torn Societies*, International Perspectives (2008) 9, p. 1-21.

As it was pointed out earlier, there is a close connection between conflict and peace. That link is brought about by such facts as: the parties to a conflict are the ones who, in some cases, participate in developing peaceful atmosphere; in order to understand the best way to bring about peace it is crucial to understand its underlying conflict dynamics etc. Based on that, it is important to explore the different conflict theories before embarking on peacebuilding.

The possibility and/or nature of a human person to engage in conflict has been debated by a number of sociologists, philosophers and psychologists. And all their arguments, without a doubt, points to the fact that it is natural for human persons to conflict; what varies is the nature and magnitude of the conflict. Of them all, there is none that explains it well as does Thomas Hobbes. According to Hobbes (1588-1679), human beings are by nature equal, bodily and mentally. Deficiency in one respect is compensated for by other qualities. This natural equality produces in all human persons the hope of attaining their ends. Thus, every individual seeks and pursues his own conservation leading to competition and mistrust of others. Furthermore every human person desires that the other should value him as he values himself. This brings about three principal causes of quarrel among human persons: competition, diffidence (mistrust) and glory. This means that human persons are in a state of war with one another until they live under a common power. This nature of war does not necessarily consist in actual fighting but in the knowledge that during all time there is no assurance to the contrary.<sup>68</sup> For him, therefore, the relationship between human persons is that of *homo est homini lupus* (man is wolf to man). This sometimes results in to armed conflict. Since the human person will not want to be in this state of armed conflict

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<sup>68</sup> Hobbes, T., *Leviathan- Revised Edition*, eds. A.P. Martinich and Brian Battiste. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2010, p.13.

perpetually he/she will look for remedy, one of which is peacebuilding. How best this can be done has been one of the struggles throughout human history.

At this point, therefore, this paper will focus on theories of causes of conflict and thereafter look at the effective peacebuilding process. In building the best theory for causes of conflict and consequently peace building, the paper will focus on the theory that focuses more on the victims as it is said “the shoe wearer knows where it pinches”. This means that it is the victims who can be engaged into meaningful, genuine and long lasting peacebuilding process. The paper will borrow from the field of psychology in advancing its argument since human actions are manifestations of mental/psychological orientations.

There are a number of theories that explain the causes of conflict. Among them: economic, psychological, political, rational choice and constructivist among others.<sup>69</sup> This paper will anchor on to the psychological theory in explaining the causes of conflict and thereby justifying the unique role that women will need to play to make this model a success.

Psychological theory contends that people engage in conflict due a certain psychological orientation. This theory has a number of dimensions: aggression, relative deprivation, misperception, cognitive dissonance, expectations and righteousness.<sup>70</sup>

- *Aggression*: aggression is a disposition, power, or manifestation characterized by assault, attack or invasion. Aggression provides the inward motivation to attack the perceived enemy.
- *Relative deprivation*: This is a perception that something rightfully belonging to a given person has been denied him/her. For an understanding of conflict, relative deprivation is most appropriately understood as a sense of injustice in comparison

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<sup>69</sup> Sambanis, N., *Making War and Building Peace: The United Nations Since the 1990s* (Yale University), p. 41.

<sup>70</sup> Rummel, R. J., *Understanding Conflict and War* (California: Sage Publications, 1977), p. 21



with others. This sense of injustice fundamentally defines the class consciousness necessary to the class struggle within all organizations, including the state.

- *Misperception*: misperceptions are the mindsets about someone or something that is not actually true. They may underlie conflict, which then can be seen as a means for correcting the misperceptions or enabling people to cooperate despite them. Manifest conflict, however, also can result from a real opposition of interests and true perceptions.
- *Cognitive dissonance*: this is a situation where the mind does not resonate with the reality. Dissonance may create opposing interests and thereby provoke the different parties to conflict.
- *Expectations*: it said that expectation is the basis of satisfaction while satisfaction is the basis of judgment. That means that once somebody sets an expectation that is not achieved, he/she will not be satisfied and therefore will judge negatively. This negative judgment may lead to conflict.
- *Righteousness*: the feelings about how one ought to be treated are basic to understanding conflict and violence at the level of societies. As a central ingredient in the class struggle, righteousness provides an explanation for the appeal of a political formula. Such moral conflicts have been a source of armed conflict.

This paper will adopt the aggressive dimension. According to this perspective, a human being enters into conflict due to aggression. The core notion is of a forceful setting upon, either as tendency or behavior. In social relations it is a disposition to behave towards others offensively, and it is woven into the process of conflict. As Rummel puts it, "aggressive

needs add fuel to the process, aggressive attitudes add substance and aggressive temperaments add style.”<sup>71</sup>

In many of such arguments as far as conflict is concerned, there has been the aspect of generalization. Many of the arguments assume that all human persons (male, female, and children) are the same. That implies, therefore, that they contribute equally to conflict. It is in this respect that some scholars have come up with arguments that place different responsibilities to men and women as far as their contributions to conflict is concerned. Brock-Utne (1989), argues that it is the men who have innate tendencies to conflict.<sup>72</sup> That is to say that there is an innate aggressive nature in men. They are therefore easily prone to conflict; armed conflict for that matter. Therefore, although all human beings are prone to conflicts, for men it is worse due to their high aggressive tendencies. It is in this respect that women are absolved from conflict and by that become good instruments for peacebuilding. He argues that women are natural peace builders and men, on the contrary, war makers. This, according to him, starts at the onset of human development where young girls tend to share and cooperate while young boys tend to compete.<sup>73</sup>

For Johann Galtung (1996), women are naturally peaceful. He states that “women have innate qualities that make them peace loving. High in empathy, their characters are horizontal and centripetal, making them more prone to peaceful relations, combined with chemical programming of the cyclical and complex oestrogen and high level of mono amino

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<sup>71</sup> Rummel, R. J., *Understanding Conflict and War* (California: Sage Publications, 1977), p. 21

<sup>72</sup> Brock-Utne, B. *Educating for Peace: A Feminist Perspective* (New York: Pergamon, 1989), p. 99.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Brock-Utne, B. *Educating for Peace: A Feminist Perspective*, p. 100

oxidase, the chemical responsible for controlling violence.”<sup>74</sup> In contrast, men are argued to be war makers and perpetrators of violence. Galtung (1996) cites the low empathy, vertical, centrifugal, expansionist character of man, pointing out that 95% of direct violence is committed by men.<sup>75</sup> There is something in the nature of men that makes them fight, as Skjelsback (2001) points out.<sup>76</sup> Military thinking, adds Ruddick (1990), is imbued with male values.<sup>77</sup> In view of the above group of scholars, it is clear that men play a big role in perpetrating conflict. It would therefore be a big challenge engaging them to any constructive peace building initiative.

### *Link of Conflict to Peacebuilding*

Players in International Relations (both scholars and practitioners) have devoted increasing attention to how cease-fires, once achieved may be translated into sustained peace. This is quite vivid through the efforts put in place by the United Nations (UN) and other governments in revamping their institutional infrastructure for addressing post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. Such efforts led to the creation of UN Peace Building Commission (PBC) in 2006 and its related mechanisms, a Peace Building Support Office (PBSO) and a Peace Building Fund (PBF).<sup>78</sup>

Concern for peace building comes as a result of many such initiatives failing. The paradox is that; as many fail, there are those that succeed. Why? Both experience and scholars point to a series of weaknesses in the failed peacebuilding initiatives, weaknesses some of which this paper will address. This paper emphasizes the importance of understanding conflict

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<sup>74</sup> Galtung, J., *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace, Conflict Development and Civilization* (London: Sage, 1996), pp. 40- 43.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid Galtung, J., *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace, Conflict Development and Civilization* (London: Sage, 1996), pp. 40-41.

<sup>76</sup> Skjelsback, I, 'Is Femininity Inherently Peaceful? The Construction of Femininity in War' in Skjelsback, I. and Smith, D. (Eds.), *Gender Peace and Conflict* (London: Sage, 2001), p. 65.

<sup>77</sup> Ruddick, S, *Maternal Thinking: Towards Politics of Peace* (London: Women's Press, 1990), p. 145.

<sup>78</sup> Charles T. C., *Ending Wars and Building Peace: International Response to War-Torn Societies*, International Perspectives (2008) 9, pp. 1-21.

dynamics, clearly pointing to the combatants and victims with the emphasis of looking at peacebuilding through the lenses of the victims than those of the combatants. In short, what makes the difference between a good peace building process and a bad one is the theory that each has about the cause which will later inform the mitigating strategy.

The paper focuses peace building at a micro level involving individual victims, looking at their emotions and interaction patterns rather than the macro level of institutional reconstruction, security sector, transitional justice, or economic recovery.

In any armed conflicts, both combatants and victims experience losses. These losses are normally in varying degrees. This makes each entity (combatants or victims) to harbor emotions, which to a great extent are proportional to the perceived loss. An everlasting peace process needs to take into consideration these emotions as well. As we appreciate that the starting point needs to be that part where the combatants down their tools, the next efforts need to focus more on those who experience greatest losses and therefore have got the strongest emotional attachment to the process of attaining peace. These calls for special attention and focus on women's involvement.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 1325 in 2000 to increase the participation of women in all the UN field operations and ensure gender element in all peacebuilding initiatives.<sup>79</sup> That clearly shows how the association of women with peace is considered strong and internationally recognized. There are a number of women peacebuilding initiatives besides the UN arrangements. This paper will therefore bring out this close link between women and peacebuilding. In order to do that successfully, it is crucial that it is built on a sound theory that backs women involvement in meaningful peace

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<sup>79</sup> Resolution 1325 (2000) Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213<sup>th</sup> meeting in October 2000 (S/RES/1325(2000)) [http://www.un.org/events/res\\_1325e.pdf](http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf) - Resolution 1325 Retrieved on 3rd March 2009

building processes. The theory's understanding as to the cause of conflict will be paramount since peace building and conflict are two sides of the same coin; clear understanding as to the cause of conflict provides an avenue for an effective peacebuilding process.

Following from above, it is therefore vivid that in order to understand the unique role of women in peace building, it is important that their role in conflict is well explained. As already stated, there is a close link between understanding conflict dynamics and the means to achieving sustainable peace. In other words a fruitful and sustainable peacebuilding initiative needs to have a sound theoretical basis that has a strong link to explaining the causes of the conflict.

For a strong anchoring, in a bid to showcase the indispensable role of women in peacebuilding, the above can be supported by an argument stemming from the basic human nature. According to this argument, which is based on day to day experience, any person suffering the greatest loss/negative impact in any undertaking is bound to engage in genuine mitigation measures. Since data shows that women are the major victims of armed conflict, then it follows necessarily that they will engage in a genuine and meaningful peacebuilding initiative.

Former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan stated that "existing inequalities between men and women, and patterns of discrimination between women and girls, tend to be exacerbated in armed conflict".<sup>80</sup> Alonso (1993) has also attested that in war, women "were the ones to suffer most, both in perpetual violence against women and through the deaths of sons,

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<sup>80</sup> Annan, K., Speech to the UN Security Council 28 October 2002, Press Release SG/SM/8461, SC/7551, WOM/1366. <http://www96.reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/secretary-generals-statement-security-council-women-peace-and> Secretary-General's statement to Security Council on women, peace and security - Retrieved 28<sup>th</sup> February 2009

husbands, lovers, brothers and fathers”.<sup>81</sup> Moser and Clark (2001) add that women suffer severe forms of victimization and men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators.<sup>82</sup>

The Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, acknowledged the particular suffering women experience from, “murder, torture, systematic rape, forced pregnancy and forced abortion”.<sup>83</sup> Benderley (1997) has presented a record of such sufferings by women in former Yugoslavia.<sup>84</sup> In addition, women become sustainers of communities in times of conflict, suffer disruption of social and economic life and, with children, make up over 80% of refugees.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, if women generally experience conflict disproportionately to men, an affinity for peace is unsurprising.

### *Conclusion*

A successful peacebuilding initiative is crucial for two reasons; one, when peacebuilding fails, parties to the conflict often unleash greater conflict than in the prior war<sup>86</sup> and two, war erases the gains of development that have been made since the cease-fire. In that respect, it is important to employ a strategy that will bring sustainable peace. The fruits of involving women in peacebuilding are clear, as this paper will show by means of the available information and data. The theory and argument above provide clear basis as to why this is so

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<sup>81</sup> Alonso, H., *Peace as Women's Issue: A History of the US Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993), p. 57.

<sup>82</sup> Moser, C. and Clark, F. *Victims, Perpetrators, or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (London: Zed, 2001), p. 8.

<sup>83</sup> Platform for Action, 1995, Paragraph 11. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/> Beijing, China - September 1995, Action for Equality, Development and Peace – Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009

<sup>84</sup> Benderly, J, 'Rape, Feminism, Nationalism in the War in the Yugoslav Successor States' in West, *Feminist Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 66.

<sup>85</sup> Potter, M, *In their Own Words: A Research Report into the Victims Sector in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Training for Women Network, 2004), 35.

<sup>86</sup> This is attested by the nearly 2 million deaths that occurred in Angola in 1991 when a peacebuilding initiative failed. The same case happened in Rwanda during the genocide in 1993-1994.

<http://www.lemuseum.org/en/chronology/1946-to-present/1990-2000/un-verification-mission-angola-1991-1994/> UN Verification Mission-Angola: 1991-1994 Retrieved 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009 and

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan\\_Genocide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_Genocide) Rwandan Genocide - Retrieved 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009

and will help in soliciting for support from various stakeholders to give women a chance to be among the main players in peacebuilding.

## **Justification**

### *Academic*

This paper will add strength into the Complexity Theory of Peace Building and Conflict Management by giving a concrete case of where a number of actors need to be considered in peace building processes. For a long time, women involvement has been ignored, as not many people have thought about their contributions in war and in peace building process. In view of that, therefore, the extracts of this paper will find its way into learning institutions.

### *Policy*

The general principle is that, good and sustainable practices should be based on sound theory. During implementations of these practices, policies, which are designed based on theories, are put in place. This paper will therefore be an eye opener to policy makers, into understanding the role that women play in peace building and conflict management both as victims and as those who contributed to the conflicts. Structures will therefore be put in place to ensure that women are involved in these processes.

## **Hypothesis**

1. Women are major victims of conflicts
2. Women contribute significantly to peace building processes

## **Methodology**

This paper will use both primary and secondary data.

The primary data will be collected by interviewing leaders of various women groups that have contributed to peace building in the world as well as Liberia. It shall also include interviews from a few resident Monrovia citizens and some United Nations field personnel. More of the primary data sources shall include citizens from other countries like Rwanda, Angola among others, countries that have experienced some level of civil war at one time or another.

Secondary data will be obtained from books, journals, reports, publications and the internet. This is especially in regards to the history of Liberia and already documented information on the role of women in peace building in different countries around the world.

## **Scope and Limitations**

This paper will only cover the first and second phases of the Liberian war, thus limiting it to the periods of 1989 to 1997 and 1999 to 2003 respectively. The paper will also cover the post conflict period up to and including 2010.



## **Chapter Two: The Liberian Civil War: Nature, Women Contributions (as Victims and as Combatants) and the UN Intervention**

This chapter will first give a general overview of Liberia as a country. It will then proceed to look at how the situation was during the war, how the ceasefire was achieved, especially focusing on the contributions of women and it will also give some highlights on how the current situation is based on the UN intervention of the concept of police women.

### **Liberia at a Glance**

Liberia is an independent republic which lies on the bulge of Africa between Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire and forms part of the West African Region. Its capital city and major port is Monrovia while other major towns are Nimba and Harbel and the ports of Greenville and Buchanan. The official language in Liberia is English but several local languages are more widely spoken. Owing to the continued state of political instability in the country it has been difficult to get reliable economic indicators. The local currency is the Liberian dollar (L\$) which is officially at par with the US\$ and US notes and coins are legal tender in Liberia.<sup>87</sup>

Liberia is Africa's oldest republic, but it became popular in the 1990s for its long-running, ruinous civil war and its role in a rebellion in neighboring Sierra Leone. Although founded by freed American and Caribbean slaves, Liberia is mostly made up of indigenous Africans, with the slaves' descendants comprising 5% of the population.<sup>88</sup>

Liberia is rich in timber, gold, diamonds, iron ore and has extensive rubber plantations. In the past, the economy flourished on the basis of these resources. During the civil war a corrupt and predatory economy developed, devastating Liberia's infrastructure and economy, and leaving the country with little in the way of a public administration or official records. There

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<sup>87</sup> <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Liberia.html> Liberia - Retrieved on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2009

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Liberia.html> Liberia - Retrieved on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2009

is a history of extremely poor financial management, both under Taylor and under the NTGL.<sup>89</sup>

The economy is now growing due to growth in exports (especially rubber) and donor funding. UN sanctions on timber were lifted in June 2006 and sanctions on the export of diamonds were lifted in April 2007. The iron ore works at Yekepa in northern Liberia, had closed down at the beginning of the civil war, but were recently restored.<sup>90</sup>

### **The Liberian Civil War**

This West African nation was relatively calm until 1980 when William Tolbert was overthrown by Sergeant Samuel Doe after food price riots. The coup marked the end of dominance by the minority Americo-Liberians, who had ruled since independence, but heralded a period of instability.<sup>91</sup>

By the late 1980s, arbitrary rule and economic collapse culminated in civil war when Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) militia overran much of the countryside, entering the capital in 1990. Mr. Doe was executed. Fighting intensified as the rebels splintered and battled each other, the Liberian army and West African peacekeepers. In 1995 a peace agreement was signed, leading to the election of Mr. Taylor as president. The respite was brief, with anti-government fighting breaking out in the north in 1999. Mr. Taylor accused Guinea of supporting the rebellion, while Ghana, Nigeria and others accused Mr. Taylor of backing rebels in Sierra Leone.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/sub-saharan-africa/liberia?profile=economy> Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/sub-saharan-africa/liberia?profile=economy>

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/sub-saharan-africa/liberia?profile=economy>

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/sub-saharan-africa/liberia?profile=economy>

Matters came to a head in 2003 when Mr. Taylor - under international pressure to quit and hemmed in by rebels - stepped down and went into exile in Nigeria. A transitional government steered the country towards elections in 2005.

Around 250,000 people were reportedly killed in Liberia's civil war and many thousands more fled the fighting.<sup>93</sup> The conflict left the country in economic ruin and overrun with weapons. The capital remains without mains electricity and running water. Corruption is rife and unemployment and illiteracy are endemic. The UN maintains some 15,000 soldiers in Liberia making it one of the organization's most expensive peacekeeping operations.<sup>94</sup>

Liberia experienced conflict between 1989 and 1997 and again between 1999 and 2003. In these periods of war, an estimated 40% of all Liberian women were raped.<sup>95</sup> It is estimated that women made up over 30% of the fighting forces, playing roles as commanders, spies, cooks and porters.<sup>96</sup> Women took up arms for many reasons, varying from avenging death and to protect themselves and their relatives.

Unaccompanied girls were often captured by combatants and civilian men and used either as forced laborers or as wives. Women suffered enormously; many as victims of sexual assaults and rape. Today, rape remains the most common crime in Liberia. Women are not only abused by Liberian men, they are also abused by U.N. peacekeeping troops, who have been found guilty of trading sex for food. When they managed to avoid the fighting, they still had to manage the tasks of raising and fending for children and the elderly under extremely difficult conditions.

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<sup>93</sup> Stephen E., *The Mask of Anarchy* (London: Hurst & Company, 2001), p.57, 67-68

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. Stephen E., *The Mask of Anarchy*, p. 68

<sup>95</sup> <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=3179392> Female Police in Liberia Hope to Empower Women – Retrieved on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009

<sup>96</sup> United Nations, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/eWPS.pdf> *Women, Peace and Security: Study submitted by the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325*(New York: UN, 2000), p. 56 – Retrieved on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009

The consequences of the violence and abuses committed against women during the conflict were devastating. Many continue to suffer physical and mental effects from their experiences, and often lack access to adequate medical care. Often widowed or abandoned, a number of women have found themselves having to shoulder considerable burdens with little support, few skills, and no job or education.

Following the conflict, the process of Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) began. The process was aimed at ensuring women's participation and in addition address their special needs. In reality, the programme failed to meet the needs of a large number of women and girls. Thousands of women and girls didn't participate in the process for reasons such as misinformation about the process, and manipulation by commanders.

Women and girls continue to be subject to human rights abuses and are at great risk of rape and other forms of sexual violence, such as exploitation and abuse in their schools, homes and communities.<sup>97</sup>

### **Women Contribution in Ending the War**

#### *Women in Peace Building Network (WIPNET)*

WIPNET was formed in 2002 to energize women in Liberia to come together for peace. WIPNET led the mass, non-violent protests in 2003 against the fighting that swept the country at that time.<sup>98</sup> The mass mobilization of women for peace was successful in urging Charles Taylor's government and the Liberians for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebels to cease fighting and start negotiations to bring peace back to Liberia for the

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<sup>97</sup> <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/video-and-audio/women-liberia-fighting-peace-20080723> Women of Liberia: Fighting for Peace – Retrieved 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009

<sup>98</sup> Ekiyor T., *The Female Combatant* (Monrovia: WANEP From the Field Publication, 2005), p. 40.

first time in nearly 20 years. The success of WIPNET showed that women could be powerful, credible proponents of peace in Liberia, and helped created awareness across West Africa and the world on the important roles that women could play in peace building and leadership.<sup>99</sup>

Though all women were committed to the campaign, the greatest sacrifice came from women who had lost loved ones, or had been displaced or separated from their families.<sup>100</sup> They said: "We have nothing to lose; we are ready to do what it takes to end this war".<sup>101</sup> Initially, no one took the Mass Action seriously, but the women became a constant presence on the streets of Monrovia. They carried placards and posters in Monrovia and Totota, and every day, come rain or shine, Muslim and Christian women dressed in white came together to pray at the airfield. Bishops and imams came to the airfield to show their solidarity. Slowly people started to take the women more seriously.

The protest quickly spread to key sites in Monrovia, support grew, and the women learned how to effectively use the media to reach the international community. They even succeeded in pressuring President Charles Taylor into meeting with them, where they spelled out a clear program calling for an immediate unconditional cease-fire, dialogue for a negotiated settlement, and an intervention force.<sup>102</sup>

## **Peace Building Initiatives by Women**

### *Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET)*

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<sup>99</sup> Ekiyor T., *The Female Combatant* (Monrovia: WANEP From the Field Publication, 2005), p. 40

<sup>100</sup> Pohlman-Doumbouya S. and Hill, F. Women and Peace in the United Nations, *New Routes: A Journal of Peace Research and Action* 6, no. 3, 2001.

<sup>101</sup> Schirch, L., Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peace builders, in *Women and Post-Conflict* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 2005).

<sup>102</sup> UNIFEM, *Women, War, and Peace: Executive Summary*

[http://www.unifem.org/materials/item\\_detaild89f.html?ProductID=17](http://www.unifem.org/materials/item_detaild89f.html?ProductID=17) The Independent Experts Assessment on the Effect of Armed Conflict on Women and the Role of Women in Peace building. Progress of the World Women, vol. 2, 2002.- Retrieved on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Following the end of the violence, and building upon their success and credibility, WIPNET continued their activities to promote peace and reconciliation in Liberia. WIPNET was instrumental in a massive election education mobilization in the lead-up to the 2005 elections which saw the election of Africa's first female president, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. WIPNET continues to train local people in peace building in order to spread the knowledge it has acquired across the country.

*West African Network for Peace Building (WANEP): The Mass Action for Peace*

Women served in many other roles as well: as combatants, peacemakers at all levels of society, providers of sanctuary, and as informal mediators. Yet women were largely absent from formal peace processes and peace building initiatives. Reacting to this marginalization, the West African Network for Peace building (WANEP) decided to establish a women-in-peace-building program in 2001.<sup>103</sup> WANEP was convinced that a better understanding of women's experiences and their contributions to peace was important for developing informed and sustainable peace building strategies.

WIPNET used the media in both Accra and Liberia to excellent effect, and recruited WIPNET members from northern Ghana to join them for a demonstration at the Akosombo conference center where the peace talks were to begin.<sup>104</sup> Heads of state and other dignitaries were greeted by the sight of women sitting on the lawn holding placards demanding peace.

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<sup>103</sup> UNIFEM, *Women, War, and Peace: Executive Summary*,

[http://www.unifem.org/materials/item\\_detaild89f.html?ProductID=17](http://www.unifem.org/materials/item_detaild89f.html?ProductID=17) The Independent Experts Assessment on the Effect of Armed Conflict on Women and the Role of Women in Peace building. Progress of the World Women, vol. 2, 2002.- Retrieved on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009

<sup>104</sup> Basu, S., *Building Constituencies of Peace: A Women's Initiative in Kashmir: Documenting the Process* (New Delhi: WISCOMP, Foundation for Universal Responsibility, 2004), p. 79.

Other women groups such as the Mano River Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET) and Liberian Women in the Diaspora were delegates at the talks.<sup>105</sup>

WIPNET, in collaboration with other women organizations, issued strongly worded statements expressing concern about civilian casualties in Liberia and appealed to the UN Security Council to deploy an intervention force.<sup>106</sup> The spirit of collaboration continued among the women groups for the duration of the peace talks. WIPNET was also meeting with all parties to the conflict, and with the mediators, including the chief mediator, Abdusalami Abubakar.<sup>107</sup>

Since the women were seen as speaking for ordinary Liberians, all sides, including the rebels, sought to forge alliances with them, which meant that they had extraordinary access. During the peace talks, the women also organized a Liberian Women Forum alongside the talks, where women could reflect on progress at the talks, while stressing the importance of continuing with the campaign and not being sidetracked by the politics that surrounded the talks.

The talks moved several times between Akosombo and Accra, and upon returning to Accra the women decided they needed to adopt harsher non-violent strategies.<sup>108</sup> When the talks reached a stalemate, they barricaded the entrance of the talks preventing the mediators, the warring parties, and other delegates from exiting the venue. The women insisted that the men could not leave the venue until they took the process seriously and committed themselves to reaching an agreement. The new approach was effective, and the women were invited to

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<sup>105</sup> Basu, S., *Building Constituencies of Peace: A Women's Initiative in Kashmir: Documenting the Process* (New Delhi: WISCOMP, Foundation for Universal Responsibility, 2004), p. 79.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. Basu, S., *Building Constituencies of Peace: A Women's Initiative in Kashmir: Documenting the Process*, p. 79

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. Basu, S., *Building Constituencies of Peace: A Women's Initiative in Kashmir: Documenting the Process*, p. 79

<sup>108</sup> Das Gupta, S., *Breaking the Silence: Women and Kashmir* (New Delhi: WISCOMP, Foundation for universal Responsibility, 2001), p. 67.

participate in several meetings exploring strategies for peace with both the rebels and the mediators. Two members of WIPNET represented the women at the political and security committee meetings, to the surprise and consternation of military officials.<sup>109</sup>

For WIPNET, attendance at these meetings, where the basic issues concerning the future of Liberia were discussed represented one of the great successes of the Mass Action for Peace campaign. It had shown that the women were stakeholders in the conflict and had a role to play in the peace process.

On 17 June 2004, a cease-fire agreement was signed, but fighting still raged as the parties worked to reach a comprehensive agreement.<sup>110</sup> The talks stalled on several occasions. It appeared as though the Liberians were being held hostage by the delegates, so the women decided to turn the tables on them. WIPNET mobilized women and barricaded the entrance to the room where the negotiations were going on. The chief mediator pleaded with the women to move but they refused, holding up placards that said, "Killers of our people", "no impunity this time", "Butchers and murderers of the Liberian people stop!" and "How many babies do you intend to slaughter?" The furor attracted the attention of the press and the standoff was televised.<sup>111</sup> Partly in response to the publicity, the talks resumed.

On 11 August in the same year, to the surprise of many, President Taylor agreed to resign. A week later, a comprehensive peace agreement was finally reached. Seventy-eight days of tumultuous peace talks had ended and Gyude Bryant, a businessman, was selected as the interim chairman. It seemed like normalcy might return to Liberia.<sup>112</sup>

### *West African Network for Peace Building (WANEP): Continuing the Work*

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid. Das Gupta, S., *Breaking the Silence: Women and Kashmir*, p. 68

<sup>110</sup> WISCOMP, *Stakeholders in Dialogue* (New Delhi: Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2004), p. 70.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. WISCOMP, *Stakeholders in Dialogue*, p. 70

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. WISCOMP, *Stakeholders in Dialogue*, p. 71



Following the peace talks, WIPNET remained active, organizing sensitization forums for women, raising their awareness on the content of the peace accord and the responsibilities of the parties to abide by it.<sup>113</sup> WIPNET also marched to the headquarters of the peacekeeping forces, both to thank them for bringing calm to Monrovia and to request for a larger force. They then continued on to the U.S. embassy to request the United States for more logistical support to the peacekeepers.<sup>114</sup>

Through its actions, WIPNET earned the appreciation of the Liberian people. Recognizing the contributions of the women, the transitional government appointed WIPNET members to posts with governmental agencies, the National Human Rights Commission of Liberia, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. One of its members was named deputy minister for foreign affairs.<sup>115</sup>

By accepting these appointments, WIPNET ensured that women remain involved in decision making. WIPNET has continued its Mass Action for Peace with occasional presence at the airfield serving as a reminder that the women were watching the peace and with a march through Monrovia to demand disarmament.<sup>116</sup>

The Mass Action also continued in four other regions focusing on monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement. To date, WIPNET remains one of the institutions partnering with the United Nations Mission in Liberia to promote disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and repatriation activities, and continues to consult with the

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<sup>113</sup> Anderlini, S., Manchanda, R., and Karmali, S., *Women, Violent Conflict, and Peace Building: Global Perspectives*. International Alert, 1999, p. 50.

<sup>114</sup> Cockburn, C., *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict* (New York: Zed Books, 1998), p. 120.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. Cockburn, C., *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict*

<sup>116</sup> El-Bushra J., *Women Building Peace* (New York: Sharing Publications, 2004), p. 45.

transitional leadership about Liberia's future. As WIPNET representatives enter communities, they are greeted by children chanting, 'we want peace. No more war'.

### **Success Stories in Women Contributions in Bringing Peace to Liberia**

#### *Awareness Creation by Advocacy Campaigns*

The advocacy campaigns spearheaded by women raised awareness of the Liberian conflict among the citizens of the country.<sup>117</sup>

It uniquely targeted women in the rural communities and sensitized them on the important roles they could play in bringing peace to Liberia. For many women, these advocacy campaigns through Mass Action was a training camp; it proved what women could do with their numbers, voices, and strength and it catapulted them from being behind-the-scenes victims to frontline soldiers of peace.

#### *Gave a Human Face to the Conflict*

Peace processes are normally attended by parties in conflict: government representatives and the rebel groups. The presence of women demonstrating at the talks removed the focus from the warring factions to the real people affected by the conflict. The mass actions reminded everyone at the talks and the world at large, that an entire population was waiting for the outcome and would not settle for anything less than peace.<sup>118</sup>

#### *Exerted Pressure on all Sides at the Peace Table*

The women advocacy was not a respecter of persons. They targeted all sides of the conflict, meeting with rebels, government representatives, mediators, and the media and ensuring that

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<sup>117</sup> Pankhurst, D., and Anderlini, S., *Mainstreaming Gender in Peacebuilding: A Framework for Action* (England: Women Building Peace Campaign, 2000), p. 67.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. Pankhurst, D., and Anderlini, S., *Mainstreaming Gender in Peacebuilding: A Framework for Action*

the right amount of pressure was placed on each target to guarantee a comprehensive and truthful peace agreement.<sup>119</sup>

### *Sustained Action Over an Extended Period of Time*

Women non-violent initiatives often lose steam due to lack of funding, poor morale among members, and frustrations that the desired impact is not being achieved. This did not happen in the Mass Action for Peace organized by the Liberian women.<sup>120</sup> Though there were daily challenges of poor morale, dwindling funds, and frustration, the women on this campaign were determined not to return to Liberia without a signed peace agreement. They kept referring to their families in Liberia who were suffering the ongoing bombardments between the rebels and government forces. This commitment sustained the campaign until the peace accord was signed.

### **The Women Police in Liberia**

#### *Female Police in Liberia - Hope to Empower Women*

Liberia's president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Africa's first elected female head of state, is one of many women trying to change the fortunes for the women of that African nation. A group of women police enforcers is undertaking a bold experiment in saving lives in Liberia, and giving hope where there has been so little. A company of tough, experienced Indian policewomen were sent to Liberia to help in achieving that goal. They were the first all-female police contingent ever deployed by the United Nations anywhere. According to their commander, their presence has given Liberian women the confidence to report assaults.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Schmeidl, S., and Piza-Lopez, E., *Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Framework for Action*. (London: Save the Children, 2002), p. 102.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. Schmeidl, S., and Piza-Lopez, E., *Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Framework for Action*. (London: Save the Children, 2002), p. 102.

<sup>121</sup> <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=3179392> Female Police in Liberia Hope to Empower Women – Retrieved 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009

Part of the policewomen's mission was to encourage Liberian women to join a national police force of their own. Their belief is that the sight of uniformed women in positions of authority could reduce the level of violence against all women and also restore confidence in the police force. This is because of the numerous atrocities committed during the war, many were by men, including the policemen. Johnson-Sirleaf wants 20 percent of the police and army in Liberia to be female. Right now about 5 percent of police force is female.<sup>122</sup>

### *UN Support of the Strategy*

As part of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), India sent Indian Female Formed Police Unit (FFPU) in 2007, whose role was to maintain law and order, and provide security to the president. The FFPU has become a highly-visible unit of UN's peacekeeping efforts.<sup>123</sup> The UN has even recorded that the presence of the Indian policewomen has led to a spurt in Liberian women applying to join their police force. "After a war in which so many women suffered, a female police unit shows women as sources of strength and security, not only as victims. Inspiring,"<sup>124</sup>

### **Chapter Overview**

It has been clear in this chapter that the Liberian war is among the longest wars that has been fought in Africa. Although there are a number of issues that contributed to the war, the bottom line is that it was war stemming from power struggles. Whatever the cause and the

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid. <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=3179392>

<sup>123</sup> [http://www.theindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/india-to-train-liberian-police-force\\_100251311.html](http://www.theindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/india-to-train-liberian-police-force_100251311.html) India to train Liberian police force – Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009

<sup>124</sup> Annan, K., Speech to the UN Security Council 28 October 2002, Press Release SG/SM/8461, SC/7551, WOM/1366. <http://www96.reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/secretary-generals-statement-security-council-women-peace-and> Secretary-General's statement to Security Council on women, peace and security - Retrieved 28<sup>th</sup> February 2009 p. 80.

intention, women and children were the major victims. Any peace building initiative needs to recognize this fact before engaging in the process so that genuine and sustainable peace is attained.

Either by default or design, there was a cease-fire after some mass action spearheaded by women. This shows how influential, yet non-violent, women can be. It is also clear that their efforts did not end there; they continued pushing for peace building initiatives and called for their full involvement. This needed to be recognized and embraced by Liberia and the global society as a whole.

Women in Liberia received one of the greatest boosts by producing the first elected woman president in the world. To boost their efforts further was the introduction of the Police Women concept to help restore the community's confidence in the police force thereby bringing sustainable peace. All these efforts point towards the importance of bringing women on board for the world to achieve sustainable peace. This needs to be done strategically.

### **Chapter 3: Strategic Approach to Peace Building: The Women Involvement**

Based on the picture that has come out of chapter two, there needs to be strategic mechanisms in place so that the inclusion of women bears the fruit that it should. This chapter will therefore give some highlights of how this can be achieved by critically bringing out some emerging issues in chapter two and linking them to how important it is, then, in bringing women on board.

#### **Women and Men Experience Conflict and Violence Differently**

From the information that has been well elaborated in chapter one, it is quite clear men and women experience violence differently. In most cases, majority of the combatants are men and they therefore experience conflict as such. Women, on the other hand, though they also engage in real fighting though often on a low magnitude; are normally the victims, bearing in mind that traditionally, they have been considered as the weaker sex and are mostly used by male combatants for their selfish ends, especially during armed conflict. This was the case in Liberia. A redefinition of peace and security that incorporates both male and female concerns is essential to designing peace building programs that brings a just peace to both women and men.

#### **Women are Essential in Creating Sustainable Peace**

Their emphasis on building civil-society alliances and engaging in multi-track processes across the lines of conflict, as clearly seen in chapter two, enables women to develop holistic understandings of peace and security. Women peace groups have transcended the boundaries of religion, ethnicity, social class, political persuasion, and socioeconomic backgrounds to facilitate cross-community and multi-track interaction in their work for peace, at times representing the only group of civil society doing so. Women peace-initiatives have a track

record of producing turnarounds in conflict negotiations by conceptualizing agreements that are more inclusive, community-based, and more likely to be successful in the long run.

### **The Strength of Women Networks**

In view of chapter 1, women networks in West Africa have worked tirelessly in a bid to bring about peace in Liberia, and to ensure that this dream was achieved. There is, therefore, the importance of strengthening and supporting partnerships among women working in specific regions and across all areas of peace building practices. Women networks have proven that women's cooperative efforts can make a tremendous impact on preventing violence. The collaborative approach gives evidence of women's ability to work non-hierarchically with each other.

### **Addressing Trauma is Central to Peace Building**

Many women groups have taken the lead in addressing one of the most significant yet rarely acknowledged consequences of violent conflict namely, deep-rooted trauma. In addition to providing psychosocial services, many of these groups are engaged in training and research in order to foreground the role that trauma plays in sustaining social conflict.

### **Emphasis on Gender Mainstreaming need to be in Place**

The presence of trained gender advisors for all peace building organizations and staff, in addition to training in and opportunities for gender analysis by other staff, can help institutionalize a shared responsibility for ongoing gender analysis of all programs. There is evidence that gender awareness training leads to changes in programming. Gender training programs among police in Cambodia, for example, resulted in new police initiatives to address domestic violence and sex trafficking.

## Women Peacekeepers in Liberia: A Success Story to Lasting Peace

One highly visible step to including women in peacekeeping operations has been the all-women police unit serving as part of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). 130 Indian policewomen currently make up the Female Formed Police Unit (FFPU) in Liberia, the third such unit to be installed post conflict.<sup>125</sup> The primary function of the group is to provide security within the city during public events with high profile leadership.

Since their arrival, the all-women police unit received much attention, mainly focused on the social impact the women are having in the country and the fact that their presence is slowly but surely improving gender equality in Liberia as well as helping to reduce the phobia that the community had on the police.<sup>126</sup>

Reports on the impact they are having on social dynamics and in particular local cultural gender norms, is not difficult to understand. Unlike their male counterparts, they devote their personal time and resources to interacting with the community and this has had an astonishing impact. The FFPU staff have not been shy when they notice changes in the community, approaching women and men they think might be having problems at home, should they become absent or withdrawn from normal activities.<sup>127</sup> Their community summer camp, which teaches school age Liberian girls self-defense, Indian dances and first

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<sup>125</sup> [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=21303&Cr=liberia&Cr1=Commander of Indian female UN police unit arrives in Liberia with advance team](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=21303&Cr=liberia&Cr1=Commander%20of%20Indian%20female%20UN%20police%20unit%20arrives%20in%20Liberia%20with%20advance%20team) – Retrieved 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009

<sup>126</sup> [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=21303&Cr=liberia&Cr1=Commander of Indian female UN police unit arrives in Liberia with advance team](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=21303&Cr=liberia&Cr1=Commander%20of%20Indian%20female%20UN%20police%20unit%20arrives%20in%20Liberia%20with%20advance%20team) – Retrieved 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009

<sup>127</sup> UNIFEM, *Women, War, and Peace: Executive Summary*.

[http://www.unifem.org/materials/item\\_detaild89f.html?ProductID=17](http://www.unifem.org/materials/item_detaild89f.html?ProductID=17) The Independent Experts Assessment on the Effect of Armed Conflict on Women and the Role of Women in Peace building. Progress of the World Women, vol. 2, 2002.- Retrieved on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009



aid is awe-inspiring. As one policewoman shared in her email "We try to provide the example of motivation to the girls at the orphanages and the schools."<sup>128</sup>

As one local resident stated "there have been many changes, since they [FFPU] came in".<sup>129</sup>

Rates of sexual abuse and exploitation in the community have dropped sharply. The number of girls enrolling in school has risen dramatically in the past three years with the ratio of girls to boys now at 70-30.<sup>130</sup> In a nation where very few girls finish primary school education, this results are staggering. In the Congo town suburb of Monrovia it means that less girls on are the streets or involved in sexual relationships with older men (the most prevalent reason most girls leave school.)<sup>131</sup> According to the principal of one of the elementary schools, "the girl students are getting tutored on how to take care of their bodies and forget about the other issues, about men; every day the FFPU are keeping them busy and the girls are excited by what the FFPU is doing".<sup>132</sup>

The FFPU regard their work of securing the community as their greatest achievement; as one officer stated "people say they feel more confident, safer and secure when they see us."<sup>133</sup>

They point to successful riot patrols at a recent international colloquium, the group night patrols and the installation of lighting systems which have reduced the number of crimes. In addition, monthly community clean up days has inspired community pride in the area, an effect which has been shown to dramatically decrease crime through stronger community participation and ownership.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Interview with one of the Indian women soldiers– Conducted on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009

<sup>129</sup> Interview with resident Liberians – Conducted on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2009

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. Interview with resident Liberians – Conducted on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. Interview with resident Liberians – Conducted on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009

<sup>132</sup> Interview with a Liberian school principal in Freetown – Conducted on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2009

<sup>133</sup> Interview with an FPU soldiers – 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. interview with an FPU soldiers – 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009

As a composite, improvements in security by the presence of the Indian women peacekeepers has been dramatic. They have inspired women and girls to take on non-traditional roles and led to a large increase in the number of women in the security sector in Liberia (including the police and defense forces). The need to draw more women into peacekeeping missions has both a demand and a dynamic, as stated by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in her remarks as chair of the UN Security Council.<sup>135</sup> The United Nations must work with member states to continue to build on groups similar to the FFPU in Liberia, enhancing the impact both of and on women and girls in the missions around the world.

Women continue to excel as UN police officers, and through active community outreach and the efforts of the Liberian government, women's participation in Liberia's security sector has increased over the past years. Women have played a role in the UN Mission in Liberia's peacekeeping efforts since 2003. Women joined the UN peace force from Ghana, Gambia, Nigeria, Malawi, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey and Zimbabwe. But gender mainstreaming was only brought to the forefront in 2007 when UNMIL created an all-Female Formed Police Unit (FFPU) from India.<sup>136</sup> The unit continues to yield positive results, as they ensure new groups come in on a rotational basis.

In 2000, the UN passed Security Council Resolution 1325. This resolution calls for a gendered perspective on the enormous impacts of conflict on women and calls for women to play an integral role in conflict resolution and peace-making. Yet more than ten years later women still play a much more minor role than men in peacekeeping, a fact women activists

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<sup>135</sup> <http://ifad-un.blogspot.com/2012/05/hillary-clinton-liberate-economic.html> Hillary Clinton: Liberate the economic potential of rural women to fight hunger and poverty – Retrieved on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. <http://ifad-un.blogspot.com/2012/05/hillary-clinton-liberate-economic.html>

from around the world highlighted during the Commission on the Status of Women session at the UN Secretariat in New York.

Women's participation in peacekeeping is not only important under the general blanket of the advancement of women and the struggle for gender equality. Yasmina Bouziane, spokesperson for UNMIL told Media Global that "The deployment of female peacekeepers has been recognized not simply as desirable, but also as an operational imperative. This is based on the presupposition that increasing the gender balance within a mission will increase the peace. Community members assert that the presence of female police officers and peacekeepers in UNMIL has led to enhanced physical safety and security."<sup>137</sup>

In countries with a history of widespread sexual violence such as Liberia, women police can play a vital role in securing the area. Survivors of sexual assault may be more comfortable approaching a female police officer for assistance, particularly given the history of male soldiers, police officers, and peacekeepers abusing their power and perpetrating acts of sexual violence. Bouziane continued by saying that, "It is especially important to highlight the effect of female police and peacekeepers on reducing the instances of sexual and gender-based violence in the community. The 'all-female' FPU has proven to be an important resource in the UN-coordinated response to sexual violence, cited by the community as a deterrent as well as a response mechanism."<sup>138</sup>

Given the vital role women play as police officers, and the success of UNMIL Female FPUs, it is heartening that Liberian women are following in the footsteps of the UNMIL women officers. In 2009, women made up 15 percent of Liberia's national police force, up from

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<sup>137</sup> <http://ifad-un.blogspot.com/2012/05/hillary-clinton-liberate-economic.html> Hillary Clinton: Liberate the economic potential of rural women to fight hunger and poverty – Retrieved on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009

<sup>138</sup> Schmeidl, S., and Piza-Lopez, E., *Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Framework for Action*. (London: Save the Children, 2002), p. 102.

12.86 percent in 2008, according to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.<sup>139</sup> This is due in part to Liberian government policies promoting women's participation, but the all-female Indian FPU has also played a role in empowering Liberian women to enter the security sector. They have visited high schools and colleges to speak to women and girls about their experience.

Bouziane also mentioned that during the celebration of International Women's Day "The President [of Liberia] mentioned that the Indian FPUs are serving as role models for female participation in the security sector in Liberia, stating that women could equally effectively perform roles traditionally reserved for men"

The success of female peacekeepers in Liberia serves as a model that can be replicated in other peacekeeping missions. The success of the mission has proven that given the opportunity, women can take an active role in a country's development and security. Particularly in countries recovering from conflicts fraught with sexual violence, such as Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti, female peacekeepers can play an ever-greater role in restoring peace, security, and a sense of normalcy to traumatized populations.<sup>140</sup>

## Chapter Overview

It is clear from this chapter that the involvement of women is indeed a strategic approach to sustainable peace building. To ensure that this is done, there are a number of issues that need to be noted; the fact that men and women experience violence differently, the key role played by women, the contributions and importance of women networks, the issue of trauma and the emphasis on gender mainstreaming.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid. Schmeidl, S., and Piza-Lopez, E., *Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Framework for Action*

<sup>140</sup> [http://www.theindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/india-to-train-liberian-police-force\\_100251311.html](http://www.theindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/india-to-train-liberian-police-force_100251311.html) India to train Liberian police force – Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009

The women peacekeeping approach has indeed been a great inspiration both to the peacekeeping initiative as a whole and also to the Liberian women and girls. This aspect becomes crucial considering that the major victims of armed conflict are women. This shows that the women approach in peace building need to be enhanced. Chapter four will give some recommendations on ensuring that this process succeeds.

## Chapter 4: Recommendations: Need for Reconciliation Spearheaded by Women

### The Need for Being Remorseful!

‘Saying you are sorry is the beginning of justice, the beginning of the healing process. So many grievances have never been addressed. Immediately the atmosphere changes when someone says: I am sorry.’<sup>141</sup> Maria Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, a Greek Cypriot, was speaking of her work to bridge the divide between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities in Cyprus.<sup>142</sup> Together with Turkish Cypriot activists like Sevgul Uludag, several thousand Cypriots have been trained in conflict resolution skills during the past few years. Though women’s involvement is already bearing much fruit, the development of empathy needs to be incorporated. Each person has a right to his/her story without any judgment.

Apology as a first step towards reconciliation was recognized, too, by Vesna Terselic of the Anti-War Campaign Croatia. ‘Saying you are sorry is recovering a sense of dignity, a sense of respect,’ she said.<sup>143</sup> ‘When I think of presenting a concept like justice publicly, maybe using the idea of dignity is important. Nationalists teach people that so-and-so hasn’t allowed us our dignity. What is at stake is not national identity, but dignity. The word peace is useless in my country, but people still react and listen when we use words like dignity, respect.’<sup>144</sup>

The women were speaking at the first International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) Women Peacemakers Program’s consultation for women in conflict situations. The European

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<sup>141</sup> Manchanda, R., ed. *Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood to Agency* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), p. 90.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. Manchanda, R., ed. *Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood to Agency*

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. Manchanda, R., ed. *Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood to Agency*

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. Manchanda, R., ed. *Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood to Agency*

consultation was the first in a series of three regional consultations, which would culminate in 2001 with a fourth intercontinental consultation.<sup>145</sup>

The programme receives core funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Though some IFOR branches and groups were already working for women, the Women Peacemakers Program is IFOR's first systematic attempt to increase the nonviolent empowerment of women. Spurred on by the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Platform for Action's very concrete recommendations regarding women in conflict situations, the Women Peacemakers Program is bringing an awareness of gender into all of IFOR's work. Several branches, including the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Zimbabwe, have now established their own Women Peacemakers Programs.<sup>146</sup>

The Women Peacemakers Program is an experiment in developing and integrating a gender perspective into peace and reconciliation work. The programme recognizes that women play multiple roles in conflict -as victims, occasionally as perpetrators- and most of all as leaders with innovative ideas about peace-building. The challenge became how IFOR could systematically support and encourage women in such work; how women's perspectives and experiences of war, of reconstruction and reconciliation, could be mobilized and utilized; how women's solutions and ideas could be disseminated to a wider audience.

### **Why Women?**

*Women are Community Leaders, with Formal and Informal Authority*

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<sup>145</sup> McAllister, Pam *This River of Courage: Generations of Women Resistance and Action* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1991), p. 45.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. McAllister, Pam *This River of Courage: Generations of Women Resistance and Action*

"After the genocide, women rolled up their sleeves and began making society work again."

- Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda<sup>147</sup>. Sustainable peace requires the full participation of women at all stages of the peace process—yet they have been largely excluded from formal efforts to develop and implement fresh, workable solutions to seemingly intractable struggles. Their involvement in these mechanisms, which prevent conflict, stop war, and stabilize regions damaged by warfare, is essential.<sup>148</sup> Because women frequently outnumber men after conflict, they will often drive the on-the-ground implementation of any peace agreement; and therefore have a responsibility to be an integral part of the peace process.<sup>149</sup>

#### *Women are Adept at Bridging Ethnic, Religious, Political, and Cultural Divides*

"For generations, women have served as peace educators, both in their families and in their societies. They have proved instrumental in building bridges rather than walls."

- Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations.<sup>150</sup> Social science research indicates that women generally are more collaborative than men and thus more inclined toward consensus and compromise. Women often use their role as mothers to cut across international borders and internal divides. Every effort to bridge divides- even if initially unsuccessful- teaches lessons and establishes connections to be built on later.<sup>151</sup>

In several instances during the peace talks that led to the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, male negotiators walked out of sessions, leaving a small number of women, like Monica McWilliams and other members of the Northern Ireland Women's

<sup>147</sup> [http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm) Why Women  
Women are a powerful force for peace. Here's why – Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009

<sup>148</sup> [http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm) Why Women  
Women are a powerful force for peace. Here's why – Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009

<sup>149</sup> [http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/india-to-train-liberian-police-force\\_100251311.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/india-to-train-liberian-police-force_100251311.html) India to  
train Liberian police force – Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. [http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/india-to-train-liberian-police-force\\_100251311.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/india-to-train-liberian-police-force_100251311.html)

<sup>151</sup> Das Gupta, S., *Breaking the Silence: Women and Kashmir* (New Delhi: WISCOMP, Foundation for universal  
Responsibility, 2001), p. 67.



Coalition, at the table. These women focused on mutual concerns and shared vision, enabling the dialogue to continue and trust to be rekindled.<sup>152</sup>

Luz Méndez, sole woman negotiator in talks to end the decades-long civil war in Guatemala, was able to build consensus among representatives of the warring factions, civil society, and the United Nations by creating individualized strategies to engage the different parties around bringing concerns of women into the peace process. The final treaties contained unprecedented commitments to gender equity.<sup>153</sup>

### *Women have their Fingers on the Pulse of the Community*

"The official political echelons seem to get bogged down in the old historical issues. The women in the community feel that their housing, education, and childcare are the important things." – Helen Jackson, Labour Member of Parliament for Sheffield, United Kingdom.<sup>154</sup>

Living and working close to the roots of conflict, women are well positioned to provide essential information about activities leading up to armed conflict and to record events during war, including gathering evidence at scenes of atrocities. Women can thus play a critical role in mobilizing their communities to begin the process of reconciliation and rebuilding once hostilities are over.<sup>155</sup>

An obstetrician in Iraq under the rule of Saddam Hussein, Raja Habib Khuzai saw firsthand the violence perpetrated against her country's citizens, especially the women and children. In a time when other doctors fled the country or went into hiding, Khuzai expanded her practice. Following Hussein's overthrow, she opened organizations to assist women and

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid. Das Gupta, S., *Breaking the Silence: Women and Kashmir*

<sup>153</sup> [http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm) Why Women  
Women are a powerful force for peace. Here's why – Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009

<sup>154</sup> Schirch, L., Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peace Builders, in *Women and Post-Conflict* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 2002), p. 56.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. Schirch, L., Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peace Builders, in *Women and Post-Conflict*

children in the community and was appointed a member of the Iraqi Governing Council, where she continues her important work.<sup>156</sup>

In Kosovo, a pediatrician, Vjosa Dobruna, collected evidence from victims at sites of massacres and other atrocities and for that reason became a target by Serb special police. She was to later become one of only three women appointed to the UN's Joint Interim Administrative Structure of Kosovo, as the Minister responsible for Democracy Building and Civil Society.<sup>157</sup>

### *Women have Access because they are Often Viewed as less Threatening*

"Women can reconcile more easily. We feel free to go anywhere, meet anyone—maybe because everyone knows we weren't carrying guns; we weren't in the death squads."  
— Alenka Savic, Manager for Mercy Corps.<sup>158</sup> Ironically, women's status as second-class citizens is a source of empowerment, having made women adept at finding innovative ways to cope with problems. Because women are not ensconced within the mainstream, those in power consider them less threatening, and allow them to work unimpeded and "below the radar screen."<sup>159</sup>

After riding deep into the jungles of Colombia to interview the leaders of that country's armed factions, journalist Maria Cristina Caballero took courageous action to end the violence. With support from the International Red Cross, the National Commission on Conciliation, and the news magazine *Cambio*, she published "Peace on the Table," a 60-page

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<sup>156</sup> [http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm) Why Women Women are a powerful force for peace. Here's why – Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009

<sup>157</sup> [http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm) Why Women Women are a powerful force for peace. Here's why – Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. [http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm)

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. [http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm)

document presenting the views of each party in this long-standing conflict—the government, civil society groups, and rebel factions—and highlighting the points of agreement.<sup>161</sup>

During the violence of the first Intifada in the Middle East, Israeli and Palestinian women like Naomi Chazan and Sumaya Farhat-Naser created Jerusalem Link, an umbrella group of women's centers on both sides of the conflict, to convey to the public a joint vision for a just peace. In a time when both communities forbade cross-community meetings, Jerusalem Link activities were permitted because "it's just a group of women talking."<sup>161</sup>

### *Women are Highly Invested in Preventing, Stopping, and Recovering from Conflict*

Women are motivated to protect their children and ensure security for their families. They watch as their sons and husbands are taken as combatants or prisoners of war: many do not return, leaving women to care for the remaining children and elders. When rape is used as a tactic of war to humiliate the enemy and terrorize the population, they become targets themselves. Despite- or because of- the harsh experiences of so many who survive violent conflict, women generally refuse to give up the pursuit of peace.<sup>162</sup>

At the Union of Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia, Ida Kuklina demanded a military reform based on the establishment of professional military service for soldiers rather than involuntary conscription. This powerful NGO defends soldiers' human rights, confronting judges, generals, and presidents with the deaths of 3,000-5,000 soldiers who perished not because of war, but because of abuse by their commanders and peers during peacetime.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid. [http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm)

<sup>161</sup> Schirch, L., Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peace Builders, in *Women and Post-Conflict* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 2002), p. 70.

<sup>162</sup> [http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm) Why Women Women are a powerful force for peace. Here's why – Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. [http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm)

Visaka Dharmadasa, co-founder of Parents of Servicemen Missing-in-Action, lobbied the government of Sri Lanka to reciprocate the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) releasing of soldiers and civilians, resulting in the liberation of 10 LTTE suspects. She created a support network for women from each side of the conflict to share their grievances, stories, and strategies.<sup>164</sup>

"If we'd had women around the table, there would have been no war; women think long and hard before they send their children out to kill other people's children." - Haris Silajdzic, former Prime Minister of Bosnia<sup>165</sup>

### **Lessons learned**

#### *Bridging a Divide Between the More Educated Elite and Women from Grassroots Communities*

Initially, the elite women in Monrovia did not want to be part of the Mass Action. It was viewed as a rural movement that would be a flash in the pan. This was frustrating for the leaders of the action who wanted all Liberian women to join forces in the campaign. Once the Mass Action gained recognition and began making impact locally and internationally, more elite women joined. This might not be the case only for the Liberian case but also countries as well.

#### *Adequate Funding*

At various points, the shortage of funds threatened the sustainability of the campaign. Funding the campaign was a major challenge; the violence erupted and people had to respond to it. Women in the Mass Action donated their market sales and savings to the

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<sup>164</sup> [http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm) Why Women Women are a powerful force for peace. Here's why – Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. [http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460\\_the\\_vital\\_role\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_peace\\_building.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm)

campaign. Once the campaign moved to Accra this was very difficult; WANEP provided some funds but as this was not a budgeted activity, the longer the talks went on the harder the strain was on one organization to foot the bill. Supporters of WIPNET like the African Women Development Fund and Urgent Action Fund met this challenge.

### *Peace Talks Should not be Structured to be an Entirely Male Domain*

Men at the Liberian peace talks were comfortable with the women demonstrating and crying, but uncomfortable when women insisted on playing a substantive role. WIPNET came to understand that it should insist that the peace table become the domain of all the people, and the peace process should be open to participants in the process regardless of their gender.

### *Building Alliances is Extremely Important*

WIPNET was strengthened in its resolve by the alliances it forged with women groups across Africa and across the globe, bolstered by local alliances with religious leaders, politicians, professors, and ordinary citizens. This need to replicated in other peace building initiatives spearheaded by women.

### *Preserving the Psychosocial Well-being of Women*

The women who left their families behind were under enormous stress. Many times, they questioned if anyone was listening. They kept themselves going through anecdotes and songs, and were particularly inspired by the words of African-American slave/freedom fighter Harriet Tubman: If you are tired keep going, if you are hungry keep going, if you are scared keep going, if you want a taste of freedom, keep going.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Schirch, L., Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peace Builders, in *Women and Post-Conflict* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 2002), p. 56.

## *Documentation is Important*

"If it is **not** in writing, it did not happen," a writer once said. The saying highlights the fact that **oral** conversations that have no documentation are easily denied or contested. This is also a **good** basis for learning for the group doing the documentation or the future generation. **Analyzing** an occurrence or event require digging through the historical documentation and **creating** a chain of facts and evidence from the raw source material. Information contained in **documents** is usually the lifeblood of future actions.

By **recording** the daily activities of the action, WIPNET made it possible for generations of **women** from Liberia and across the world to share in and learn from their experiences. Like **the** Aba women riot in the twentieth century, WIPNET Mass Action For Peace captured the **imagination** of West African women and has shown that women can influence change, **foster** peace, and contribute to building equitable societies.

## *The Link Between Democracy and Human Rights*

There is need to see the links between human rights education and the need to **build** more democratic governments, especially the need to educate women about their **human** rights; the connection between violence in private life and public acceptance of war; and the need to build a sound economic base for sustainable peace. Most of all the Women **with** support in the form of training, solidarity actions, and finances, women can lead the way to **peace**.

## **Strengthen Women Ability to Contribute to Peace Building**

### *Support Women Networks*

Women networks facilitate a cross-fertilization of ideas, best practices, and lessons learned from different regions of conflict. They also enhance knowledge about different approaches

to conflict prevention and peace building. Perhaps most significantly, networks provide a context for the generation of financial and human resources that women groups need to prevent and transform violent conflict.

The UN, regional, governmental and civil-society organizations should support women networks so that women can coordinate and consolidate their power and their ability to act with a united voice. Although women groups in Bougainville, Liberia, and Kashmir have identified trauma healing and reconciliation as important needs, those with political and economic power have failed to respond adequately to their demand for training and funds for psychosocial counseling centers.

### *Mainstream Gender*

Women contributions to peace building and their unique experiences of violence signal the need for mainstreaming gender in all conflict prevention and peace building efforts. Gender mainstreaming requires moving beyond an approach that simply includes women in existing peace building programs or creates special women projects set apart from other programming.

The UN, regional, governmental, and civil-society organizations should ensure that all their employees are trained in gender awareness, understand the relevance of gender equality to peace building, and value the inclusion of women in planning, implementing, and evaluating peace building programs.

### *Empower Women*

Many women are already empowered and are playing important roles as decision makers at the UN, regional, national, and local structures. Yet many are not yet able to contribute because they are refused the opportunity to participate and/or do not see themselves as able

to participate in peace building. Women empowerment comes through training, networking, and opportunities where women can participate fully in planning, implementing, and evaluating peace building programs. The UN, regional, governmental, and civil-society organizations can continue and expand training programs specifically for women to increase their sense of empowerment in and knowledge of peace building processes.

### *Promote Resolution 1325*

UNSC Resolution 1325 asserts the integration of women and women groups into conflict prevention and peace building programs. The tools provided in 1325 advocate for the collection of gender-disaggregated data and testimonies to provide greater accuracy and understanding of women needs in conflict zones. The UN, regional, governmental, and civil-society organizations can monitor and promote the national and international implementation of Resolution 1325.<sup>167</sup>

An important measure in this respect could be the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). States could bring in new legislation and policy to ensure the effective implementation of CEDAW. The low representation of women in decision making positions and the absence of their perspectives in policy and legislation remains one of the key failures of efforts to implement 1325. For example, even though women played a significant role in laying the groundwork for the peace settlement in Bougainville, they are underrepresented in the political structures established after the agreement. Out of the 106 members appointed to the Bougainville People's Congress, only six are women.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Poehlman-Doumbouya S., and Hill, F., Women and Peace in the United Nations, *New Routes: A Journal of Peace Research and Action* 6, no. 3, 2001.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. Poehlman-Doumbouya S., and Hill, F., Women and Peace in the United Nations.



## *Increasing the Number of Female Police Officers*

In August 2009, the United Nations launched a Global Effort to recruit more female police officers into national police services and into UN police operations around the world. The goal of the UN is to have 20% of its police female by 2014. Female police greatly increase the effectiveness of UN police components and help build trust with populations and inspire more women to become police officers in the countries where they serve.

The United Nations Police Division believes that police services should represent the societies they serve as they play an important role in their communities. This Global Effort, aimed at United Nations Member States, has been endorsed and promoted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Under-Secretary-Generals for peacekeeping and field support. As part of the Police Division's overall recruitment strategy finding qualified policewomen is a priority.

Since it was launched in 2009 the number of female officers has increased in many UN missions, most notably in Haiti, Liberia and Sudan. Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations stated that "this effort is on track – with the strong support of Member States<sup>169</sup>."

The Global Effort initiative calls on United Nations Member States to:

- Establish a policy that sets the percentage of their contribution of female police officers on a par with their national police gender ratio;
- Review their recruitment requirements and procedures for international deployment to ensure that female candidates are not restricted from applying; and;

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<sup>169</sup> <http://www.un.org/cn/peacekeeping/sites/police/magazine.shtml> UN July 2010 Police Magazine – Retrieved on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009

- Consider providing incentives for officers who serve in peacekeeping missions.
- The global message is empowerment. Women's participation in police peacekeeping empowers the communities in restoring peace and security and in reconstructing not only their police services, but also their societies.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

Most approaches to peace building have either ignored or marginalized issues of gender and women. Women consistently remain a minority in participation of peacebuilding projects; they receive less attention than men in peacebuilding policies; and gender analysis rarely informs peacebuilding strategies. This is despite the many United Nations and European Commission resolutions which, for more than a decade, have criticized such marginalization and called for gender issues and women's needs to be given more serious attention in all policies relating to conflict and peace.

This paper has charted a path for concrete, peacebuilding initiatives that can involve women. The paper has clearly shown that women have a strong commitment to the cessation of violence and the maintenance of long term peace, often constituting a highly motivated and able group of stakeholders in all aspects of the processes leading to sustainable peace. This was supported by the evidence provided in the paper on how they contributed to ending the war in Liberia and providing invaluable contribution to peacebuilding process.

This paper has established that first, there needs to be clarity of exactly what conflict is. Clarity in the definitions of conflict can also bring clarity about the requirements for peacebuilding, and the distinction between negative and positive peace. Furthermore, keeping the goals of positive peace in mind helps to reveal connections between the short and longer term goals and activities. It also points to the need for a much wider set of policies that expressly move in the direction of positive peace by addressing the major inequalities and social divisions in society. Gender analysis is an essential component of such a strategic view, and policies aimed at increasing gender equality and reducing gender

tensions, are highly significant, although in practice often marginalized or completely neglected.

Secondly, the understanding of what part women play in conflict is crucial. Women take on many different roles in wartime and have diverse experiences. Their experiences tend to be distinct from men's, yet also share a set of common vulnerabilities. They are often exposed to a high risk of rape and associated violence during and immediately after conflict as the paper clearly established. Their health and other basic needs are often neglected in peace processes and they tend to bear the main burden for the care of survivors, which include both adults and children. There is therefore a need for peacebuilding to incorporate policies that address women's specific health and economic needs. Moreover, measures that help women working together who have very different experiences could potentially strengthen peacebuilding enormously, but they are rarely given any attention or priority.

Thirdly, it has come out clearly that there are many examples where women have courageously intervened in battles to force peace, for instance, in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. Women have also taken up opportunities for peacemaking between groups of warring men. As it was shown in the case of Liberia, many women activists expressed their values, behavior and codes explicitly as a factor of their gender. This is clearly in line with what one of the female peace activist in the Philippines writes: Both men and women have the potential for peacemaking and the responsibility to build and keep peace. The women, however, seem more creative and effective in waging peace. It is the women's emotional strength to transcend pain and suffering, and their predisposition to peace that provide them with greater potentials for peacemaking.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Garcia, E. (ed.), *Pilgrim Voices. Citizens as Peacemakers*, International Alert, 1994: 45

Fourthly, women need to be supported in their activity. The most obvious way to support women's activity in peacebuilding is often identified as supporting women's organizations. As it emerged from the paper, there are many different types of women's organizations that have overlapping and changing agendas and which have contributed, or have the potential to contribute to peacebuilding. They have tended to take different forms in different countries and at different times—differences which are not necessarily transferable through time and space. Nonetheless, there are those with common potentials and problems. Some women's organizations have developed the capacity to work openly to promote peace. This is especially the case in many Liberia.

Other women's organizations have extended the work they took on during conflict to ensure that the social fabric did not collapse, through various forms of community organization and welfare provision. Finally there are those women's organizations that explicitly attempt to challenge women's oppression and gender inequality in post-conflict situations. Many of these organizations also attempt to build bridges between groups of women with very different experiences of conflict, who might otherwise be separated by their ethnic, regional or political identities.

Fifth, all the women peacebuilding organizations, though with different approaches can be of fundamental importance in addressing common weaknesses in existing peacebuilding strategies: the lack of attention to women's needs; the marginalization of gender analyses; and the absence of efforts to challenge particularly 'unpeaceful' forms of masculinity in institutions and in society more widely. Furthermore, women's organizations have the potential to achieve many of the goals of peacebuilding. These include increasing women's (and thereby household) income, increasing women's abilities to participate in public,

political processes and civil society more generally, increasing the number of women who become leaders and representatives and reinforcing efforts to challenge masculine cultures in institutions and society more widely.

At present this does not happen on a large scale, as many of these organizations face great difficulties in their continued survival, let alone in achieving all of their objectives. There is considerable need for extended external support. Such problems include chronic underfunding, which is commonly a more extreme problem even than for other types of community organization. They also often require further training in the areas of management, leadership, and lobbying skills. In practice, new women's organizations often have to deal with not only marginalization and stigmatization by powerful government and non-government organizations, but also direct physical harassment from local men and security forces, which is especially likely in post-conflict situations where gender tensions are usually already running high. Outside support could also increase the chances of success of those organizations that have the potential to play a highly significant, if not central, role in peacebuilding.

In a nutshell, though there are different ways through which women contribute to conflict, to a great extent they are the major victims. This was not the case in Liberia alone (as shown by the paper) but the world all over, as it came out in the literature review. As such, they are good instruments of everlasting peace and if they are well utilized they can greatly contribute to attaining global peace.

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