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# BEST PRACTICES: GENDER AND CONFLICT IN AFRICA

FINAL



**AUGUST 2005**

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Jackie Vavra, Management Systems International.

**PHOTO**

Participants at a conflict-prevention workshop in Conakry.

Photo by L. Lartigue

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# ACRONYMS

ACORD	Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development
AMODEG	Association of Demobilized Soldiers
AMETRAMO	Association of Traditional Healers of Mozambique
AU	African Union
AWA	Advocacy for Women in Africa
AWCPD	African Women's Committee for Peace and Development
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CRCM	Community Reconciliation and Conflict Management Component
COSYLI	Conseil National des Organisations Syndicales Libresau Rwanda
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
FAS	Femmes Africa Sokidarité
FAWE	Forum of African Women Educationalists
FFEFP	Federation of African Women's Peace Networks
GARDO	Gajaak Relief and Development Organization
IFOR	International Fellowship of Reconciliation
IRC	International Refugee Committee
ISIS-WICCE	Isis—Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange
LSTC	Luawa Skills Training Center
MIGEPROFE	Ministry of Gender and Women in Development
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Independence of Angola
NAWOCOL	National Women's Commission in Liberia
NURC	National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
OAU	Organization for Africa Unity
OMA	Organization of Angolan Women
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives

POP	People Oriented Planning
PROWA	Progressive Women's Association
PSTS	Post Stress Traumatic Syndrome Treatment Process
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SADC	South African Development Community
SSWC	Save Somali Women and Children
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WANEP	West African Network for Peace building
WAPI	West Africa Peace building Institute
WIPNET	Women in Peace building Network
WIT	Women in Transition
WPM	Women's Progressive Movement

# GENDER ISSUES IN REBUILDING CONFLICT-AFFECTED SOCIETIES

More than 50 percent of the world's active violent internal and regional conflicts are in Africa. These conflicts have directly or indirectly affected over 75 percent of the region's countries and populations, conscripted over 300,000 child soldiers, displaced over 30 million people from their homes, caused the deaths of over one million people, destroyed social and economic infrastructure, damaged the environment, weakened institutions of governance, and generally impeded equitable and sustainable development.<sup>1</sup>

When rebuilding conflict-affected societies, it is necessary to develop and support measures for strengthening the governance, security, justice, economic and social institutions and capacities of the population. This is a complex task in any society, but is particularly daunting in a post-conflict setting. It is essential to draw on the assets, experiences and dedication at the local level and among all sectors of society. One social category that is often overlooked is women. Yet in most post-conflict societies, **women are more than 50 percent of the population** and are **actively engaged in peace building** while addressing the basic survival needs of their families and communities. Moreover, many societies discriminate against women in ways which do not empower them to assume their full roles in society in peacetime and leave them unprepared when those burdens are thrust on them during conflicts. Women are more than just a vulnerable group during conflict—they constitute an important social force, which often plays a major role in the rebuilding of their communities.

War and conflict affect men, women, boys and girls. Yet, women suffer in ways specific to their group. Given women's involvement or lack thereof in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation, this paper will discuss the need to incorporate a gendered and inclusive approach to conflict-sensitive programming. It looks across various factors and sectors in order to identify the ways women are impacted by conflict and provides examples of **best practices** that can serve as resources for managers and practitioners who design and implement projects in conflict-affected societies.

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## WOMEN'S ROLES IN BUILDING PEACE

A Women's Peace building Network is being supported in West Africa by CRS through the West Africa Network for Peace (WANEP). WANEP has a program entitled, Women in Peace building Network (WIPNET). The Women in Peace building Program examines avenues through which West African **women can play more functional roles in peace building**. The program seeks to outline the roles of women at different stages of conflicts. The core objective of this program is to enable women to transform the negative image of 'helpless victim hood' that is often ascribed to them in violent conflict situations to a positive and more assertive image of stakeholders and active participants in the pursuit for just peace in their communities.

<sup>1</sup> Durban Declaration, Republic of South Africa, March 2001.

## GENDER VERSUS WOMEN

In most cultures, women shoulder the majority of the burden of raising children, managing households and caring for aging relatives. During intractable conflicts, women become more visible within the family and community and may become breadwinners and primary decision-makers as men are absent for long periods of time. In addition, women may fill other roles within the conflict including supporting pro-or anti-war movements, engaging in the conflict in more active ways, such as carrying out covert measures, engaging in actual combat, supporting rebel/guerrilla movements, providing humanitarian relief, and lobbying politicians and other key stakeholders to either escalate or de-escalate the conflict.

In recent years, African women have been singled out for special attention in the peace-building efforts of international agencies, national governments and local civil society organizations. The underlying assumption is that women constitute a category of person with common characteristics that lend themselves to being employed in the project of building peace. Rather than focusing on women as somehow naturally suited to the task of building peace, what is required is a gendered account, which talks of women and men, the relationships between them, and how they behave in gendered ways in relation to specific circumstances.

A **gendered approach** attempts to heighten awareness of the particular and changed circumstances that war and conflict create for the **construction and reconstruction of gendered roles** in a society. As such, a gendered perspective of post-war reconstruction needs to look at the political, economic and social arenas in order to understand how they are structured in gendered ways. While particular circumstances vary, pre-war experiences along with those of the war itself will affect the way in which gendered roles are reconfigured in the post-war period. Both women and men struggle to identify and consolidate new identities and roles in post-conflict settings, which often involve resources and power relations. The following organization in Angola was created mainly because women realized the need to participate more actively in the **changing of women and men's attitudes and behavior towards the country's reconstruction and development**.

- Even though the environment has not been conducive to a greater involvement of Angolan women into the peace process, a number of peace-building initiatives have been proposed by **grassroots organizations** led by women with the support of the Angolan government through the Ministry of Family and Women's Promotion and church leaders. The Women's Network-Angola is a result of some of these initiatives and it aims to create a communication network for exchange of information and experiences in gender and development; lobby and advocate in the government for gender related issues; empower women to face the challenges of gender inequality; and provide training to member organizations. As a result, the network is raising awareness

### PEOPLE-ORIENTED PLANNING

UNHCR develop the People Oriented Planning (POP) framework to use for **gender analysis** in refugee situations. A critical component of POP is 'activities analysis'. In a post-conflict environment, **activities analysis** involves asking questions about what people did before the conflict erupted, during the conflict, and what they are able to/must do in the post-conflict environment. This involves asking questions about their role in the production of goods and services. It also includes house-building and household production activities. Finally, it includes social, political and religious activities, such as traditional ceremonies and community meetings, which in some cultures take considerable time or resources.

about power relations, human rights and the roles that women can play in a society torn apart by war.

Once peace returns, in some cases, traditional gender divisions reassert themselves, especially in cases where women are removed from positions of responsibility assumed during times of war, excluded from positions of authority in the post-conflict social arena and are expected to resume traditional roles. The ability of the international community to understand complex post-war situations and to explore links between security, relief and development and formulate appropriate policy and activity responses is key. Since every case is unique, a special approach must be tailored to the requirements of post-conflict rebuilding, taking into account humanitarian, relief and military security challenges while addressing human rights issues. Relationship building, particularly attention to the redefinition and renegotiation of gender roles and relationships, and the restoration of dignity and trust must become explicit objectives.

In attempting to understand the gendered structuring of experience and relationships, however, it is important that social actors are not treated as passive bearers of structures but rather that **human agency is recognized as an important ingredient in creating, recreating, mediating and contesting gendered identities**. This point is particularly important in post-war contexts where social relations tend to be in enormous flux and where wartime conditions create a radically new set of experiences for many people, which can lead to new ways of viewing both themselves and their relationships with others. This in turn may create possibilities for change and/or conflict as some actors attempt to introduce new ways of being while others attempt to retain the status quo.

## **WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND PARTNERSHIP AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**

It is imperative to involve and partner with local women and organizations in the development and implementation of projects and activities. Women bring Indigenous Knowledge (IK), **local knowledge that is unique to every culture or society**, which is the basis for local-level decision-making and is embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals. Learning from indigenous knowledge, by investigating first what local communities know and have, can improve understanding of local conditions and provide a productive context for conflict sensitive activities designed to help communities.

The **inclusion of women**, both those receiving assistance and those responsible for providing it, in the assessment, implementation, and monitoring of programs is a tool to more appropriately define women's needs, and ensure their effective

### **WOMEN IN UGANDA ASSUME DIVERSE ROLES**

The conflict and, particularly, the population displacement in Northern Uganda have undermined many traditions of social support. The conditions have led to cultural fragmentation, abject poverty and vulnerability to preventable diseases, sexual abuse, mutilation and death. Women have learned that any form of war and violence is a gender-differentiated activity in which few women stand a chance to gain regardless of which side is dominant. Women from Acholiland have responded to this challenge by **assuming diverse roles**, becoming combatants, negotiators and, most frequently, community peace builders.

Women's groups in Northern Uganda are working with others to **revive cultural institutions** and to **prepare the community for reconciliation and re-integration**. Working through local cultural institutions with activities such as prayer meetings, peace education, as well as through songs, proverbs, poetry and story-telling, women's groups have helped to build community support and respect.

involvement in the peace-building process. Local women on all levels should be integrated into the process, and their voices heeded from the first day. It must be remembered that women are not a homogeneous group, but are individuals who may have varying needs and aspirations. Their insights and efforts into the design and implementation of conflict resolution and peace-building processes help to ensure that activities are appropriate for their given setting.

- The Community Reconciliation and Conflict Management Component (CRCM) of Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) component aims to integrate indigenous knowledge into its operations. While most IK integration efforts concentrate on herbal medicine, nutrition, agriculture or natural resource management, NUSAF aims to **utilize the skills and knowledge of communities, elders or traditional leaders to prevent or manage conflict**, to reconcile during post-conflicts and to heal disrupted societies.
- **Traditional practices of child-care for war orphans**—as a result of the thirty-year conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, a large number of children lost both parents or their surviving parent could no longer care for them. Traditionally, extended family, neighbors or close friends would immediately take in children without parents in Eritrean society. However, the tremendous number of these children was a heavy burden for the already disrupted society. Instead of allowing foreign adoptions, the social service agencies of Eritrea created two plans based on **indigenous traditions of child-care** in which the larger community cares for a child who needs special protection. The initial plan was to reunite orphans with their extended family by doing a nation-wide search and then to decide which family members were most capable of caring for an additional child. To enhance their economic capacity, family members that accepted a child received in-kind financial assistance. If extended family could not be found or was unable to care for a child, small group homes were built for twelve children to live together with one or two permanent surrogate housemothers. Siblings lived together and children were placed in group homes near their hometown or village so they could eventually be reintegrated into their own communities. The groups of children were deliberately selected to be of different ages so that over time they could form their own new extended family. The Eritrean social service agencies provided orphans with decent family environments by relying on slightly **modified traditional practices of childcare**.
- As is traditional with the West African Network for Peace building (WANEP), **consultative meetings** are organized when intervening in a country for the first time. This not only enables **collaboration in the design of strategies that are appropriate and context specific**, but also allows beneficiaries to take ownership of the initiative right from the beginning. In 2004, The Women in Peace building Network (WIPNET) organized consultative meetings in Mali to form a coalition of women’s groups working for peace and security. Key outcomes of the consultation were the

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#### **PROMOTING EDUCATION: GRIOTS ARE ENTERTAINERS, SOCIAL MEDIATORS, AND AGENTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE IN MALI**

Griots have been recognized as social psychologists, mediators, preservers of cultures, educators and entertainers throughout West Africa. Griots have consistently demonstrated their effectiveness as social catalysts, using the power of words to dramatically influence people’s behavior through their emotions. Griots use their charm to settle conflicts between neighbors and communities. They raise awareness and promote discussion about sensitive issues such as HIV/AIDS, using story telling and other forms of entertainment.

assessment of the basic needs of women and a commitment from WANEP to ensure that this coalition of women is capacitated with the requisite skills and knowledge that would enable their participation in formal peace building.

# GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

During armed conflict, the deterioration and collapse of the economy, infrastructure and legal systems, and the breakdown of social structures and protective mechanisms make gender-based violence even more likely, particularly sexual violence and sexual exploitation. The consequences of gender-based violence can be devastating and can lead to death, permanent injury, increase in rates of STDs including HIV/AIDS, forced pregnancies, increased trafficking for sexual or other types of slavery, and high maternal and infant mortality rate. Girls and women may also be ostracized by their communities due to the shame of being raped or becoming pregnant outside of wedlock. This decreases their chances of being married and can leave them vulnerable to being trafficked or entering the sex trade if they lack other alternatives.

Men, women, boys and girls suffer and face difficulties in these stressful environments. Poverty, coupled with the erosion of authority of traditional institutions, contributes to an increase in crime and delinquency in conflict and post-conflict settings. During the war, lawless behaviors like rape or other forms of violence against women, which formerly would have provoked strong reactions and sanctions from the community, remain unpunished and contribute to the loosening of local social control. Unemployed, demobilized young men, socialized to violence and brutality during war, are more likely than others to form gangs, particularly in urban areas, and can pose a constant threat to the security of women and children.

Domestic violence of men against women also increases in war-affected societies. The culture of violence, trauma of war, and difficult economic situation exacerbate family tension. In addition, social tensions that remain after the war ends can contribute to domestic violence. Economic circumstances, particularly changes that destroy men's traditional livelihoods, can result in men resorting to violence against women. The emancipation women acquired during the conflict can trigger domestic violence as well. This is especially true for husbands going through a self-confidence crisis and not accepting the new assertiveness of their wives and their leadership capacities.

Measures including physical security, access to food, water, education and livelihood options as well as medical assistance and access to reproductive healthcare and community-based support are preventative strategies that

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## USING TRADITIONAL CULTURAL APPROACHES TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In a conflict-affected country in Central Africa, the outbreak of armed conflict greatly increased the incidence of violence against women. By **working with the local community**, project staff learned about traditional cultural approaches to the issue of sexual violence. As part of a campaign against sexual violence, work was carried out in close collaboration with the local community to develop a stage performance demonstrating the **traditional ways of dealing with sexual violence**, of dispensing justice and of providing reparation to the victim. On stage, with a cast of local men and women, the traditional story of how the chief of the community listened to the account of the rape victim, reproached the aggressor, made reparation to the victim and attempted to initiate reconciliation, was presented. The performance served as a reminder to the community of their traditional cultural coping mechanisms and techniques for healing and reconciliation.

can benefit women and girls. Using **traditional cultural approaches** to address the issue of sexual violence can also be highly effective. There is also evidence that supporting **mediation and conflict resolution** projects can assist in addressing the social marginalization and stigma that girls face.

- In July 2004, in a coup for women’s and children’s rights on the continent, the African Union (AU) agreed to launch a campaign to ban the recruitment of child soldiers and war crimes against women. They also vowed to champion the cause against **trafficking women and girls for prostitution**, to **speak out against gender-based violence**, and to establish an African trust fund for rural women empowerment initiatives. The leaders also committed themselves to “actively promote the implementation of legislation to strengthen women’s land, property and inheritance rights.” African women will also be afforded a prominent role in conflict resolution by being appointed as AU special envoys and representatives to trouble spots on the continent.
- In Liberia, CRS supported an innovative project that focused on the effects of war and violence on women, such as rape, physical violence and widows as single heads of households. **Trauma healing workshops** that involved traditional midwives and local stories, songs and folktales helped women discuss the impact of violence and develop strategies to reduce future violence and rebuild trust in Liberia.
- In the Great Lakes region, ICRC initiated a program to closely involve local organizations in **supporting women who had suffered acts of sexual violence**. With the help of local women’s associations, sixty women practicing or willing to practice as traditional birth attendants (TBAs) were identified. Due to their status in the community, they were able to play a variety of roles, including prevention, through their contribution to sensitizing the community to the issue of violence against women, identifying victims of sexual violence, referring victims to appropriate medical structures and giving moral support to women victims of violence. The creation of their **community support network**, encouraging women to use hospital facilities, served to counter the tendency of victims of sexual violence to retreat into isolation. This program provided a way to tap into and strengthen existing means of health care, where no other method existed for reaching local women in need.
- In Mozambique, the Association of Demobilized Soldiers (AMODEG) suggested a civic education radio program to **sensitize people to and to increase public awareness of the need to reduce violence**. Families with

#### EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH THE COURTS

In South Africa, the Court Support Desk Project enlists volunteer court workers trained in counseling, mediation, and mobilization skills to assist abuse victims in 11 courts in impoverished neighborhoods surrounding Cape Town. Implemented by the USAID-funded Mosaic Training and Healing Centre for Women, which has assisted in the domestic violence sections of courts since 1997, the project has helped more than 66,000 victims **file protection orders, undergo psycho-social counseling, and receive education on abuse**. Court workers assist victims in the complex paperwork involved in filing a protection order, provide crisis intervention counseling, and educate victims about abuse. The women earn a stipend for full-time shifts in courts across various communities. Few of the women have completed secondary education and almost all were unemployed before being trained by this project. “These skills have given me something for life,” says one court worker. “I counseled others, but I was also counseling myself.” Many court workers gained the courage to leave abusive relationships as a result of assertiveness training provided by this project.

demobilized soldiers could send their questions and submit their problems. Questions were answered, providing an excellent forum for discussion.

#### YOUTH AND MEN AS STAKEHOLDERS IN PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Every weekend, Amadou Temeh creates a scene in a different village in central Liberia. He and his friends act, sing and dance, anything to draw people's attention to their cause—the **battle against sexual and gender-based violence**. At 14, the boyish Temeh seems an unlikely advocate of women's rights, but he is exactly the target group for UNHCR's latest salvo against sexual and gender-based violence—a project called "Saturday theatre".

"The drama I do with my friends helps to convey messages on gender violence to the people in a simple way, integrating it into their entertainment," said Temeh. "It is fun and interesting to perform using our own situation, language and music, incorporating human rights messages."

UNHCR's community services officer noted that all community members should own the process of social change, hence **the importance of involving youth and men as key stakeholders in preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence**.

The Saturday Theatre project combines education and entertainment for young returnees, former combatants and the general population. Performances, which are held in different parts of the county every week, are based on the culture and traditions of folklore, drama, dances and songs passed down from generation to generation.

The main actors are young people from community youth groups who, supported by a facilitator, address problems and find solutions to sexual and gender-based violence. They interact with the audience, drawing them into discussions and encouraging them to participate in the show. This dialogue raises the level of awareness and helps mobilize communities to take action and support the processes of social change.

In addition, the Saturday theatre gives people a platform to raise issues of abuse of women and children during the conflict. This can help the psychosocial process for survivors to take a step forward, and can even promote healing at the individual level and reconciliation at the community level. To support this process, health workers actively participate in the activities, distributing information on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.

# PROTECTION

There is a growing acknowledgment within the international community that material assistance alone often cannot ensure the well-being of vulnerable populations, particularly women and girls, and that they need protection as soon as possible after the onset of conflict. Working with local women's groups can enhance protection capabilities by more accurately assessing the situation and better protecting and assisting women in need.

Protection becomes an important issue in the absence or disintegration of traditional family structures and community networks resulting from the outbreak of conflict. In many communities, women travel long distances to search for food, water and traditional medicines, which may take them beyond the confines of their traditional environment.

**Security in IDP camps** is also an issue for women and girls. Women should play a key role in planning, management and decision-making in areas of protection and assistance, particularly in camps, to ensure gender issues are taken into account in all aspects, especially resource distribution, security and protection.

- Through discussions with women and girls in an IDP camp, ICRC staff learned that women and girls would not go the showers alone as the shower/toilet facilities were placed next to an open field and they were accessible from outside the camp, making them extremely unsafe. As a result of these conversations, the facilities were placed in a more secure location with well-lit areas and equipped with locks on the inside of the doors. Discussions were also held regarding initiating camp patrols, comprised of men and women, who could keep watch over the area of the sanitary facilities to ensure that users were safe.
- In Sudan, one of Mercy Corps' efforts in protection has been supporting the training of trainers to teach women how to build and utilize fuel-efficient cooking stoves in the Zalingei camps. This project aims to reduce the amount of time that women spend beyond the camp perimeter gathering cooking fuel, as women are routinely attacked and raped while gathering wood outside of the camps. The project teaches women how to make stoves from locally available materials. These stoves are around three times as efficient as traditional stoves, allowing users to cook for three weeks with the amount of fuel that a traditional stove would use in one week. This low input, high impact project addresses several of the key issues of the effects of the crisis in Darfur.

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# DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION, AND REINTEGRATION (DDR)

While children are impacted by war in a variety of ways, it is safe to say that the damage produced by war is widespread, deep, and lasting. There is not an exact figure on the number of children, particularly girls, associated with armed groups, but estimates are at 120,000 girls worldwide,<sup>2</sup> which is, 40 percent of all children involved with armed groups. Latest estimates suggest that there are up to 300,000 children actively involved in armed conflict worldwide,<sup>3</sup> of which one third are in Africa.<sup>4</sup> The problem is especially severe in many countries in Africa where children constitute nearly half the population and where children are often reared in a system that mixes war, poverty, violence, hunger, environmental degradation, and political instability. In African civil wars of the last twenty years, an increasing number of combatants are as young as eight or ten, with girl fighters increasingly common. Thousands of children have been orphaned by the conflicts, making them vulnerable for recruitment.

Children throughout the continent have willingly or unwillingly been involved with resistance and/or war. The overwhelming majority of child soldiers come from children separated from their families or with disrupted family backgrounds; economically and socially deprived children; other marginalized groups such as street children, minorities, refugees and IDPs; and children from conflict zones who have experienced alienation and discrimination.<sup>5</sup>

Militias often use brutish methods to weaken resistance to forcible recruitment including drugging recruits on crack cocaine, amphetamines, heroin, and other drugs; mutilating resisters—the Lord’s Resistance Army did this in Uganda by cutting their lips and ears with machetes in macabre rituals; and deliberately destroying bonds of trust between children and their community. In Mozambique recruiters from Renamo forced recruits to kill someone from their own village. A society that mobilizes and trains its youth for war weaves violence into the fabric of life. This increases the likelihood that violence and war will be part of society’s future as well.

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## DDR INITIATIVES BY WOMEN'S GROUPS

Belgium has initiated a joint project with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) whereby a women's non-governmental organization identifies detained children and negotiates their release from rebel soldiers. Belgium has also supported the use of women mediators in conflict situations and has developed an initiative for peace building between the women of two parties in conflict.

<sup>2</sup> Forgotten Casualties of War: Girls in armed conflict. Save the Children, UK. 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Banyan, Kingsley and Juliet Elu. 2004. "The Dilemma of Child Soldiering in Sub-Saharan Africa," In *Advances in Education in Diverse Communities: Research, Policy and Praxis*. Vol. 4, 179-208.

<sup>4</sup> *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, p31.

<sup>5</sup> Banyan and Elu.

International policymakers consider Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) **one of the most important steps in any peace process**. DDR is the most common way that the international community tries to ensure children are released from armed groups and reintegrated into communities. Although priority is usually placed on assisting them to become economically independent, it is often their difficulty in reintegrating into social networks, which proves most challenging to manage. Abducted girls have different needs than abducted boys, and counselors must be trained and informed about methods to deal with them.

DDR packages have generally not met girls' needs of reintegration into their communities. When they return home, girls are often marginalized and excluded from their communities and receive little or no support, particularly if they return pregnant or with children. Latent gender discrimination, poor program design and a lack of funding are some of the reasons girls are overlooked in DDR efforts.

#### REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS ASSIST WOMEN

The Luawa Skills Training Center (LSTC) in Kailahun, the Women's Progressive Movement (WPM) in Freetown, and Caritas-Makeni have been innovative in their efforts in the Makeni area. Founded by six women, LSTC now has 120 members. It serves as a **reintegration program** and assists women abductees, ex-combatants and victims in their efforts at independent living. The organization offers tailoring and garra tie-dyeing classes. Once women learn the skills and sell their products, they are required to give some of their earnings back to the organization.

It is essential to involve women and girls in the DDR process. First, despite their horrific experiences in war, **women and girls have shown tremendous agency and initiative**. Many have ambitions for education and independence and feel tremendous responsibility for their offspring and aspire to give them a better future. Second, women's exclusion from official programs will have significant consequences, including poverty, crime, prostitution and an increase in HIV/AIDS. Moreover, the exclusion of single mothers means the exclusion of their children—and thus another generation of unskilled, marginalized youth. Third, without support, these young mothers have little to lose from resorting to armed activity as a means of survival. Finally, local community efforts, informal networks, and organizations—primarily led by women—provide critical support for former combatants.<sup>6</sup>

The re-recruitment of women and girls can be avoided through long-term reintegration measures focusing on education, employment or other viable economic activity, and the re-establishment of relations with families.

Supporting the work of local women's groups is a cost-effective and essential ingredient for ensuring sustainable reintegration.

- The Women in Peace building program in Liberia currently serves as a partner of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in the DDR process. The Women in Peace building Network (WIPNET)-Liberia is charged with the dissemination of information and awareness raising on the DDR process in fifteen provinces.
- In Uganda, a strategy was set up to reach girls who had been abducted. An information campaign was initiated to tell them where to go and how to be

<sup>6</sup> Mazurana, Dyan and Khristopher Carlson. 2004. *From Combat to Community: Woman and Girls in Sierra Leone*. Cambridge and Washington: Women Waging Peace.

registered. Campaigns to advocate for abducted people build recognition and programming of this issue during peace talks.

- In Sierra Leone, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and USAID offer strong models for **working with local groups and reaching former combatants** excluded from national programs. UNICEF has an innovative program of providing resources to schools that accept former child combatants. In addition, UNICEF, with support from USAID, runs training centers that offer mothers childcare and food. A number of their programs combine vocational training with basic literacy and numeric skills. Non-traditional trades such as welding, carpentry, and house building are among those taught to women. Participants said such training, as well as education, are critical in facilitating their adjustment to civilian life.
- At the national level in Sierra Leone, the Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and the Progressive Women’s Association (PROWA) are two groups that are running skills training centers, which include basic literacy. FAWE offers a range of training programs to girl and women ex-combatants including tailoring, carpentry, tie dying and masonry. FAWE has rebuilt schools and community centers that were destroyed and in some areas, has constructed and opened schools for girls. Some of its programs cater to girl mothers and other vulnerable girl populations with the aim of increasing literacy and education. It is the only organization to accept pregnant girls into the classroom.

#### ENGAGING WOMEN VETERANS IN MOZAMBIQUE

In 1994, the veterans' organization, AMODEG, formed a women's branch in response to the fact that only men's issues were being addressed and started to **lobby for equal rights for female ex-combatants**. With relative success, it focused on issues such as women's entitlements to resettlement allowances, proper clothing for women, psychological support for both women and men, specific economic reintegration courses for women, and the idea that former combatants should be considered as a heterogeneous group including men, women, children and disabled combatants.

The **“Feeder Roads Program”** promoted the participation of female ex-combatants and ex-combatants' wives in labor-intensive programs, employing 4,500-5,000 people. These programs should sensitize staff to gender issues, coordinate with local women's organizations, ensure working conditions are gender favorable (provide childcare facilities, access to health facilities and food supplies), have educated women supervisors, and set quotas for women's participation in the work force.

# HEALTH

Health services are often in ruins following conflict. In Angola, for example, during the 1980's and 1990's, between seventy and eighty percent of health care facilities were destroyed. Women experience that destruction distinctly. Eighty percent of births in Angola occur in homes with no trained assistance. Angolan maternal and child mortality rates are the second highest in Africa, and women's life expectancy at birth is only 42 years, among the lowest in the world. Two years after the end of major fighting in Angola, few pregnant women have access to vital medical services, contributing to Angola's extremely high infant and maternal mortality rates. Unfortunately, this scenario is not uncommon in post-conflict settings.

Women are not only affected by the general violence and lack of health care that conflict creates, they also face issues specific to their biology and social status. There are gender aspects to most conflict situations, including environmental dangers and problems of malnutrition and stress-related conditions. Women must also cope with reproductive health problems, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and the physical and mental trauma of sexual violence. Because health services are often in shambles following conflict, women's organizations enter this area early on, establishing health clinics and providing reproductive care and vaccinations even in the most difficult circumstances. Many also develop psychosocial programs to provide support for women who have experienced trauma.

- In the DRC, when government and insurgent health personnel met together with NGOs, UN agencies and donors to map out a plan to reduce their nation's extraordinary rates of mortality, they developed a **unique minimum package of services**, designed for war conditions and aimed at immediately reducing avoidable deaths. The package set out 30 actions to be taken in health zones in crisis, directed at the seven leading causes of death and ill health: malaria, measles, diarrhea-related diseases, acute respiratory infections, malnutrition, pregnancy-related problems and HIV/tuberculosis. To be included, the actions had to show proven cost-effectiveness in saving lives and be practical under local conditions.

**Because health services are often in shambles following conflict, women's organizations enter this area early on, establishing health clinics, providing reproductive care and vaccinations and psychosocial programs for women who have experienced trauma.**

## PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES

The brutalities of war—separation from loved ones, forced migration, sexual abuse, starvation and extreme violence—all leave deep scars on women's, men's

and children's psyches. Special attention needs to be provided to women who have experienced trauma, torture, and sexual violence.

Experience has shown a number of factors need to be considered when designing and implementing psychosocial programs. First, programs should consider appropriate trauma and treatment methods for each local context. Second, interventions should be long-term rather than short-term to maintain/retain positive outcomes. Sensitization campaigns have also been effective and should target places where women are present—wells and pumps, markets, and health centers are good places to provide information. (Religious communities and schools have also been effective sensitization forces.) Sensitization campaigns should use actors trusted by women: elder women, teachers, community workers, traditional leaders and healers, and nurses.

- In March 2005, Mercy Corps began implementing a project with the goal of **improving the psychosocial well being of children, youth and vulnerable women** in two IDP camps. The project encourages women living in these camps to share their skills and crafts with vulnerable youth through one-on-one mentoring programs. Other major activities focus on building the capacity of community leaders to recognize and facilitate recreational and social activities, and provide each block of both camps with safe spaces to host activities and designate grounds for youth sports activities.
- In Sierra Leone, school age children have participated in singing, dancing, drama and writing projects to express and ease the pain of their memories.
- In Liberia, some traumatized youth have been trained to help care for younger children as **"junior facilitators."** They are able to establish rapport with their kind, and can also therapeutically share their own experiences of war.

**The brutalities of war—separation from loved ones, forced migration, sexual abuse, starvation and extreme violence—leave deep scars on both women's and men's psyches.**

## HIV/AIDS

Conflict in Africa has played a significant role in the rapid spread of HIV on the continent. Violent conflict and HIV/AIDS have mutually reinforced each other through a multiplicity of mechanisms including large-scale population dislocation, the destruction of the public health infrastructure and the weakening of governance and the economy. More than 75 percent of the world's HIV/AIDS cases are found in Africa. More than 11 million Africans have succumbed to AIDS over the past decade

### POST STRESS TRAUMATIC SYNDROME TREATMENT PROCESS IN POST-WAR MOZAMBIQUE THROUGH LOCAL HEALERS.

During the war in Mozambique, both sides inflicted brutality and horror on each other. Atrocities such as child soldiers being forced to kill their own families to ensure their loyalty to rebels were quite common. The war left a traumatic and shocking legacy among civilians and combatants alike. No practicing psychotherapists were in the country for a formal Post Stress Traumatic Syndrome Treatment Process (PSTS) of any kind. Instead, **traditional healers** were doing a great deal of PSTS treatment following the war. Child soldiers, cared for by foreign NGOs, were frequently brought to traditional healers for therapy. Although there are no statistics on the number of cases treated, the Association of Traditional Healers of Mozambique, (AMETRAMO), stated that healers' workload of what was referred to as "'mental cases due to the war'" increased dramatically after the peace agreement. The process for treatment of these cases involves complex and lengthy rituals that vary from one ethnic group to another. However, they all have some features in common. These features include recognizing and accepting the atrocities committed or suffered, asking forgiveness of the spirit of the victim or victims, as well as of their surviving family members, and compensating the victims or their families, usually with livestock or other goods.

and the social and economic consequences are profound. Gender roles are crucial role in both the evolution of the problem and in the way forward to solutions.

Women are disproportionately affected by the physical and psychological consequences of conflict and HIV. The risk to HIV infection is higher among women, not only because of the biological nature of their vulnerability as child bearers, but also because of the social injustice they suffer, which in turn is exacerbated by conflict. Disruption and displacement caused by conflict may lead to changes in sexual behavior, an increase in the rate of sexual abuse, and to decreased access to blood screening facilities. In Rwanda and Sierra Leone, sexual favors were often demanded in exchange for food, which led to an increase in the number of women's sexual partners. HIV infection is often considered to be primarily a medical issue that is often overlooked in conflict. Consequently, there is an even greater need to reach out to those affected.

In many cultures, abandonment and loss of a bread earner greatly increases the risk to HIV infection as women and children have to make desperate choices to cope. The sudden loss of cultural norms and values and protection from society resulting from conflict exacerbates the situation with the more vulnerable women and children affected most. Devastation of families is now evident as a result of the changing gender roles in a disrupted socio-economic environment.

As awareness of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases has grown, women's organizations now target these diseases.

- The National Women's Commission in Liberia (NAWOCOL), an NGO comprised of 78 women's groups, developed in the post-war period to address the numerous needs of women. It encourages grassroots groups to come together around income-generating activities—from garden projects to peer counseling—and has made progress in educating women about their rights, providing training for income-generating activities and enabling women to take control and move away from their stereotypical roles. One program focuses on **health education**, (family planning, nutrition, hygiene and sanitation) as well as **preventative education and counseling about HIV/AIDS**. HIV counselors have meetings with women's groups in schools and in churches; see 2000-3000 people per month; and distribute information and materials. They discuss taking care of the victim and the psychological affects of war on the family.
- The Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD) teamed up with the Association of Uganda Women Lawyers to develop a legal awareness-raising project as a means of empowering women to challenge patriarchal structures and traditions in their society and, to protect themselves against the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. A parallel process of challenging traditional power relations within the household, including the negotiation of safer sex, has also been implemented.
- In December 2004, Mercy Corps launched a new and **innovative livelihood security program** designed to benefit some of Zimbabwe's most vulnerable people, including child- and female-headed households. With over 1 in 4 adults in Zimbabwe now infected with HIV, a program was designed **to support AIDS-affected households** through the introduction of a household agriculture

**Violent conflict and HIV/AIDS have mutually reinforced each other through a multiplicity of mechanisms including large-scale population dislocation, the destruction of the public health infrastructure and the weakening of governance and the economy.**

model. This innovative program incorporates principles of conservation farming, agro-forestry, sweet potato propagation and the introduction of medicinal herbs to treat AIDS-related ailments.

- A **Community-to-Community knowledge exchange** in Tanzania uses indigenous resources to improve the quality of life for people living with HIV/AIDS. Care givers, traditional healers, and people living with HIV/AIDS contact potential partner groups, initiate dialogue, and hold community exchange seminars, where participants exchange ideas on plants and their uses, and techniques for preparing plant-based medicines. As a result, people are better informed about HIV/AIDS and treatment of opportunistic diseases. There is collaboration between doctors and traditional healers in counseling and treating patients, and people are able to care for their families more effectively, enjoy better quality of life and live up to five years longer.

#### LINKING MICRO ENTERPRISE INITIATIVES TO HIV PREVENTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

This initiative seeks to develop and evaluate an approach to the prevention of HIV/AIDS, which explicitly addresses key structural factors driving the epidemic, such as poverty, gender-based violence and broader gender inequalities. This program **integrates and mainstreams gender awareness and HIV education into an existing micro enterprise initiative**. It is a collaborative effort between the Small Enterprise Foundation and Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training – (ADAPT); the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the University of the Witwatersrand; and the South African National Department of Health.

# EDUCATION

Education reestablishes a sense of normalcy and structure in war and post-conflict settings. It can provide psychosocial recovery, rebuild self-esteem, provide hope for the future, and inculcate values and skills for building and maintaining a peaceful future. It saves lives by protecting against exploitation and harm, especially for girls and adolescents; meets the psychosocial needs of children and adolescents affected by trauma and displacement; and can be used to disseminate key survival messages such as land-mine safety and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

During and after conflicts, providing education is a protection measure, but only if children have access. For example, schools can create a structured environment for former child soldiers to re-start their lives—provided they are welcome to attend. Adolescent girls and female youth form probably the most vulnerable population in war-affected societies, and their involvement in schooling tends to be low. The diversity of skills and roles that girls can play, together with the low value that conflict-affected communities may give to educating girls and the potential danger that girls may confront simply by going to school, means that more concerted and collective attention needs to be paid to the issue of low girl enrollments in school (pre and post conflict).

Similar efforts need to be directed at adolescent boys and male youths. Although boys are not as vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation as girls, the towering threat created by their alienation remains. Leaving out-of-school at-risk boys and girls out of education programming dramatically increases the prospect for increased instability and violence in their lives and communities.

Many international agencies, including USAID, have been active in providing educational assistance in countries affected by conflict where the educational system is destabilized or destroyed. Education is a tool for conflict resolution and peace building, helping to reinforce democratization and political stability. It promotes reintegration and the conditions needed to achieve sustainable development, helping to expand diminished pools of human resources necessary for reconstruction. Lastly, rebuilding an education system is also an opportunity to promote education reform.

- In Somaliland, Care International is adjusting its support to primary school education program for returnees to promote **girl-child education**. The project seeks to promote an increase in the number of female teachers as a way of promoting girl-child education. Similarly, positive experiences with girl's education, such as separate classrooms for girl-students, are being explored and tested where possible.

**Education reestablishes a sense of normalcy and structure in war and post-conflict settings, providing psychosocial recovery, rebuilding self-esteem, providing hope for the future, and inculcating values and skills for building and maintaining a peaceful future.**

- In Eritrea, Mercy Corps has an Education Improvement Program that distributes locally produced high-energy biscuits to 90,000 students per day. They also provide training, support school improvement grants for projects implemented by local Parent-Teacher Associations, and work with community members to **improve girls' enrollment**. The program has supported over 400 projects and 130 communities to date.

## TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Training courses and educational activities increase women's knowledge and skills, build their capacity, and enable women to play more functional roles in peace building.

- This year, 21 participants (9 male and 12 female) enrolled for the **Women in Peace building course** at the West Africa Peace building Institute (WAPI). Topics covered included gender and peace building, women's participation in decision-making, women and religion, women and conflict, training needs of women in peace building, refugee women, and violence against women. The course also examined national and regional legal instruments on women, peace and security. With support from the Women's Peacemakers Program of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), WIPNET enabled the participation of two Liberian refugee women from the Buduburam refugee camp in Ghana. The participation of refugee women revealed the need for peace-building programs to integrate refugee and internally displaced women in activities.
- AHFAD, a research institution focusing on women in Sudan, offers **training courses on conflict resolution** and carries out research on the role of women in resolving conflicts, particularly on their traditional conflict resolution strategies. This institution also promotes a culture of peace by arranging for students to travel to the rural areas to familiarize themselves with various subjects and by mobilizing grassroots women to take part in the peace process.
- In Sudan, a community-based organization working in the Upper Nile region, Gajaak Relief and Development Organization (GARDO), carries out **capacity building** work including both formal and informal education to empower the community, especially women, with the knowledge to advocate for peace. It builds women's capacities to access health-care services, express their views freely in public, and participate to their fullest capacity in the community political arena.

### SCHOOLS FACILITATE COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION IN SIERRA LEONE

The International Refugee Committee's (IRC) project in Sierra Leone provides assistance with the **reconstruction and rehabilitation of schools** in 10 communities in war-affected regions of Kono and Kailahun, **involving women, youth and vulnerable groups in the planning workshops**. The program has been effective in restoring the access to formal education for children and youth in the ten communities, a key element in supporting the return and reintegration of displaced people back into their home communities. Community revitalization has progressed more quickly in these sites with operating schools than in other areas where schools are not as functional. Communities have a much greater capacity to support education needs, which includes **the ability to design community specific solutions to identified problems**. For example, some communities identified a lack of female teachers as a specific problem in their school and have built free housing and other such benefits to attract female teachers.

**Training courses and educational activities increase women's knowledge and skills, build their capacity, and enable women to play more functional roles in peace building.**

# LIVELIHOODS

In times of peace, most people at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder are women; a conflict environment places them in even more jeopardy. **Woman-headed households face new economic and social challenges during post-conflict transition.** Conflicts generate circumstances of crisis, which in turn evoke responses that may upset or radically alter traditional gender role definitions and patterns of behavior. Adult males often become economically inactive due to their participation in fighting during the war. In many post-conflict societies, a third or more of the working-age men have been killed, and women become the productive bases for restarting the economy. In these environments, gender analysis takes on an increased importance. Women generally assume greater economic responsibilities during and after conflict, and the division of labor between women and men is often transformed, with women assuming male roles, including feeding and supporting their families, dealing with community leaders and government officials, building and repairing homes, and fulfilling religious and social obligations. They are also among the first to develop and invest in small-scale informal economic activities and thus provide the backbone of survival economies in times of conflict.

There are many obstacles, however, in setting up and supporting economic reintegration programs. For example, in Eritrea, a project called “Barefoot Bankers” tried to set up a micro-credit program to reach the most vulnerable ex-combatants and support them with credit facilities. Gender was important, as more than 5,000 ex-combatants were women. At first, there were no female applicants—mainly because of a lack of information and unfamiliarity with money matters among the women. The implementing agency took several measures. They hired a female ex-combatant and trained her to reach other female ex-combatants. Then, the program was decentralized so that it could be implemented “door-to-door.” It provided business, management, and administration training because the female ex-combatants, lacking money management skills, had to learn to plan and invest for the long term. Local institutions were involved and encouraged to include female ex-combatants and ex-combatants’ wives. The project also encouraged the organization of groups to solve related problems such as the lack of childcare facilities. Finally, poor female ex-combatants and ex-combatants’ wives with no collateral were able to secure their loans with group liability.

- In northern Somalia, war led to some nomadic women taking over men’s traditional role in trade. They began to frequent markets, to sell livestock and milk and to buy other essential consumer items. While these activities were initially temporary

**Women generally assume greater economic responsibilities during and after conflict, and the division of labor between women and men is often transformed.**

## ENHANCING WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS RESTORES HOPE

A program in West Africa helped women restore their traditional economic activity and enhance their income generating capacity through **associative vegetable production and training in marketing skills**, which enabled them to sell their produce in the best possible way. Through weeklong interactive workshops, representatives of women's associations were trained in seed multiplication techniques, which strengthened solidarity among the women affected by the conflict, fostering a sense of community among people who would otherwise have been isolated from society. Furthermore, the program served to strengthen and support grassroots organizations and civil society. Women expressed satisfaction that they could also afford to keep their children in school, which gave them hope for the future.

coping strategies, they nevertheless had long-term consequences, as women learned new skills, which could be used in post-war times. Many men now prefer that women make these long trading journeys indicating that war time conditions can have **long-term effects on gender role definitions**.

**There is a close relationship between economic independence and social empowerment.** Income-generating activities of women's organizations save women beneficiaries from utter poverty and deprivation. They also help beneficiaries become economically self-reliant and perhaps socially less subservient. Women in Rwanda told stories of how their income both saved them from extreme poverty and gave them a new sense of identity and enhanced social status.

Small, grassroots women's organizations usually form to help women victims of conflict. These organizations emphasize helping the most vulnerable: the displaced, traumatized, sexually abused, destitute and widowed.

- In Rwanda, for example, thousands of women's groups have been working to **mobilize women for both economic and social development**. The most visible national women's organization working in micro credit is Duterimbere. It holds training programs for loan applicants, organizes workshops on managing small business endeavors, grants small loans, and guarantees some larger loans. Sekura, another NGO that provides micro credit to rural and urban women, has had good repayment success.
- The Women in Transition (WIT) project has become a model for participatory programs focused on women. USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) has provided 1,600 grants to 1,450 women's associations in 85 communes and 11 of the 12 prefectures in Rwanda. WIT grants are used for shelter, livestock, income generation, and other activities identified by association members, improving the lives of over 163,000 beneficiaries.
- Women for Women International is working with a group of 20 women in the Kudumu-Panzi group, one of the poorest areas in Bukavu, a city in Eastern DRC. The population has no stable or regular employment, and both women and men survive on small activities that enable them to barely make it from one day to the next. "Kudumu" is a Swahili word, which means "to have a long life; to prosper." The women chose this name believing that what they will gain from the program will lead to a prosperous and long life. Women in the Kudumu-Panzi group are currently participating in **rights awareness and leadership education** and **vocational and technical skills training** through the Renewing Women's Life Skills Program. The women have already taken part in several trainings including *Women's Role in Rebuilding Society*, *Women's Role During the War*, *Women Protesting War*, *Job Opportunities for Women*, *The Business Woman in Everyone*, and *Basic Business and Marketing Skills*.

#### VOCATIONAL TRAINING BUILDS WOMEN'S SKILLS

Many Rwandan organizations support **vocational training**. Réseau des Femmes, for example, has organized gender sensitization programs for government authorities in rural areas and **civic education programs** and workshops on how to run viable organizations for women at the grass-roots level. Umushumba Mwiza is an organization that operates a residential center in Kigali that provides yearlong vocational training and psychological support to women in distress. It boasts a 70 percent success rate in finding employment for its trainees.

# REBUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE

In conflict-affected societies, there is a great need to rebuild the physical infrastructure, particularly homes destroyed during conflict. **Construction projects that build shelters** may demand physical strength often exceeding the capacity of women and technical skills not taught to women. Furthermore, because of cultural constraints, women may be excluded from construction projects or food-for-work programs typically given to men. Such projects may also exclude women for reasons as simple as the lack of appropriate clothing to climb ladders. These constraints need to be taken into account in the provision of shelter and in the implementation of construction projects.

- Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe (women together for women) is an example of a successful and innovative Rwandan women's group. Their peace action campaign is designed to give women the resources to create a more peaceful society. Their efforts include constructing houses, creating local women's dialogue clubs and training and educating women.
- In West Africa, the impact of a decade long war resulted in considerable devastation caused by the intentional burning, destruction and looting of civilian properties and infrastructure. The predicament for female-headed households was particularly acute. The culture and community defined which type of work that men and women performed, and women were rarely directly involved with **shelter construction**, especially not carpentry or masonry. They traditionally did contribute to construction work by preparing local materials such as mud or bricks, thatch, bush sticks and assisting men. After the conflict, female-headed households were dependent upon men to help them construct their homes and often could not afford to purchase expensive roofing materials or pay for construction. The ICRC provided the most vulnerable female-headed households with roofing materials and had discussions with women who said they did not have the skills, physical strength or the means to pay someone to construct or repair their homes. Plans were drawn up to provide construction materials for these households under the assistance of skilled personnel.

**Because of cultural constraints, women may be excluded from construction projects or food-for-work programs typically given to men. Such projects may also exclude women for reasons as simple as the lack of appropriate clothing to climb ladders.**

# PROMOTING PEACE

Women in post-conflict societies play a pivotal role in promoting peace and dialogue. The emergence of women's organizations at different levels is a notable feature of post-conflict societies. Women's organizations at the local, national, and regional levels play instrumental roles both during and after conflict mobilizing, empowering, educating, and rebuilding societies. This work helps to strengthen civil society and build democratic processes and institutions. The influence of donors and the existence of a positive funding climate have stimulated the growth of such organizations and the roles women play in doing so.

- Throughout the war, rural and urban women in Sierra Leone from all classes and ethnic **groups mobilized to form active organizations, conduct marches and lead rallies for peace and justice.** During and after the war, many women's organizations participated in the peace process. They **educated civilians on electoral proceedings, recruited and trained observers, and pressured the military to respect the results of elections.** Their efforts were critical in shaping informal and formal peace processes, and in bringing about an eventual end to the conflict.
- Women of different ethnic and religious groups in Liberia worked together to break the cycle of violence by forming the Liberia Women Mass Action for Peace. At the height of the fighting, they held courageous protests, sit-ins, and marches that were instrumental in bringing about a ceasefire and negotiations that helped end the protracted civil war in 2004. A group from Everyday Ghandis went to Liberia in December 2004 to support and document the peace process. Accompanied by members of Women Mass Action for Peace, they traveled to Voinjama in the North, an area devastated by the war, where they focused their efforts on a **traditional mourning ceremony.** The community fabric was torn apart by civil war, and a group of elders from the various zones and ethnicities in the area felt a healing ceremony was the first necessary step to begin rebuilding the community. Many negotiations took place to accommodate the various customs practiced by participants of different religions and ethnicities. The ceremony involved the ritual sacrifice of livestock, accompanied by speeches, divinations, music and dancing. While acknowledging this is the beginning of a long reconciliation process, **this mourning ceremony provided a sign of hope** for other communities that expressed their enthusiasm by performing similar rituals.

**The influence of donors and the existence of a positive funding climate have stimulated the growth of women's organizations and the roles women play in promoting peace.**

## UGANDAN WOMEN PARTICIPATE IN NEGOTIATIONS

In addition to peace building at the community level, Acholi women in Northern Uganda have played a direct role in efforts to find a negotiated settlement to the conflict. Women representatives were among those involved in the 1994 delegation led by the government's Minister for the North, Betty Bigombe—herself an Acholi woman—to negotiate with the LRA. This initiative fostered a cessation of violence for almost six months before it collapsed.

- In 2002, around 90 women from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Kenya and Rwanda gathered in DRC's war-torn North Kivu Province to discuss and promote the role of women in conflict management. **The workshop was organized by both local and international organizations** to share experiences **to enhance women's roles in peace and rehabilitation processes** in their own social environments.
- The pressure group Save Somali Women and Children Peace Process (SSWC) **aims to maintain the involvement of women in the peace-building and conflict management process in Somalia**. They raised awareness of the futility of war by using slogans, plays and songs with a peace message. Poetry, drama and religious teachings were used on a regular basis to inspire people toward peace and stability and to lay the groundwork for reconciliation and dialogue. Through SSWC, Somali women edged their way into the peace talks. SSWC also manages a human rights, peace, and development center in Mogadishu and has sponsored a micro-credit program for women and facilitated a reconciliation meeting between factions by mobilizing women from different clans and sub-clans to diffuse tensions. In 2001, SSWC organized an umbrella meeting for 120 women organizations designed to strengthen grassroots organizations.
- International Alert's **Great Lakes Women's Peace Program in Burundi** aims to strengthen the contribution of women to the development of peace. Their strategy is to support local women's initiatives at NGO, grassroots and governmental levels in order to **develop a common platform for peace in the region**. The program works with women activists from different ethnic, social and political backgrounds who are engaged in peace building and focuses on training and capacity building, institutional development, support to peace initiatives, research and networking, and advocacy. The program seeks to encourage and enable dialogue and reconciliation between women from different ethnic and political groups; to focus political attention and policymaking on women's issues, particularly related to women's human rights; to strengthen the capacity of women to participate at all levels of decision making and peace negotiations; to encourage and support the development of local and regional networks; to initiate action research on practical experiences of women and peace building; and to raise the awareness of regional policymakers about issues of women and peace-building.
- The regional network Isis—Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE) organized a two-week workshop on **Women Building Peace and Neighborliness in the Great Lakes Region** aiming to enhance the skills for conflict resolution and networking among women's groups active in the peace movement

#### ANGOLAN WOMEN SUPPORT PEACE

In 1962, the Popular Movement for the Independence of Angola (MPLA) established a women's wing, called Organization of Angolan Women (OMA). Their activities include writing radio programs and publishing the OMA bulletin in Portuguese and English. From the beginning, the newsletter was distributed abroad and helped to inform the world about the Angolans' struggle for peace and also mobilize international humanitarian aid for people in liberated areas, particularly women and children. OMA has put up support centers that **provide legal advice for men and women, and has fought for women's legal status and economic rights to be incorporated in mainstream policies**. During the national liberation struggle, women worked as fighters, nurses and political activists. After the liberation, they have held constant negotiations with the political leadership in order for women's issues to be considered by the government and other policymakers. As recognition of their efforts, the government made gender equality a constitutional provision.

in countries torn by war and armed conflict. Twenty-six women from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda participated in the workshop.

# DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Women's organizations have been active in promoting democracy, governance and human rights and strengthening civil society. They work at the grassroots and national levels, often engaging in networking activities that broaden their support base and enable them to engage in complementary activities. Women's public roles expand during conflicts. Many women become active at the community level and organize formal and informal local groups to provide relief to vulnerable populations. Women also enter the public arena to support peace efforts. They raise funds, organize public meetings and marches, and mobilize public opinion. In many cases, **the expansion of women's public roles enhances their social and political positions.**

**Post-conflict societies offer openings for women's political participation.** Women are active in helping to organize post-conflict elections, influence peace agendas, promote reconciliation among former affected groups, and organize seminars, marches and meetings to promote mutual understanding and goodwill.

## ENGAGING IN PEACE PROCESSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

During conflicts some women acquire **leadership skills** as well as an awareness of their political rights and responsibilities that enable them to become active at the national level, making it possible for them to become involved in politics and influence peace processes. Women's organizations also undertake activities to fight sexual discrimination and to promote gender equality. They work to **increase women's participation in political affairs** by providing assistance to women candidates, developing women's platforms, and seeking the endorsement of their issues by political parties. **Women's organizations also lobby legislatures and governments for specific reforms** regarding gender equality.

However, initiatives to include women in greater numbers, which emerge from the national or central level, frequently do not reflect changes in attitudes in the broader society. In Somalia, for example, it is often pointed out that women were present early on in the Mogadishu peace deliberations.

However, when it was recommended that all regional representations to the Transitional National Council should include at least one woman, many clans would not accept being represented by a woman. Women are generally also excluded from the clan-based councils of elders, which in the present situation is a more important organ for political discussions.

**Women's organizations have been active in promoting democracy, governance and human rights and strengthening civil society.**

### TRADITIONAL MEDIATION IN MALI

In Mali, women organized peaceful marches, conducted prayers in mosques and prepared actively for the disarmament process. They used **traditional mediation techniques** involving oral narrative, music and family ties to influence the peace process. Their efforts were instrumental in **bridge building and stressing traditional methods of demonstrating compassion** that contributed to the return of peace.

The international community can influence political aspirations and behavior of women by liaising with women and advocating for their social, economic and political empowerment. Many multi-lateral and bi-lateral donors fund visits by women leaders to international meetings and conferences on gender issues. International NGOs establish branches in post-conflict societies or affiliate themselves with indigenous groups. These activities promote democracy and help struggling women's groups and organizations assume new political roles and responsibilities.

- After discussions with the National Women's Committee for Peace, President Lissouba from the Democratic Republic of Congo signed a ceasefire accord.
- In Liberia, a list was published that identified qualified Liberian women who could take up positions in government ministries and public corporations. Warring factions had been scrambling over these positions in total disregard of the Contonou Peace Accord. The list reflected ethnic, geographic and gender balance in the country.
- During the Burundi Peace Negotiations, UNIFEM partnered with the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation and UN agencies to organize the first **All-Party Burundi Women's Peace Conference**. As a result, more than 50 Burundian women presented a common vision for peace and reconciliation to former President Nelson Mandela, facilitator of the negotiations, and 19 of their recommendations were included in the final peace accord.
- In Sierra Leone, regular **peace messages, press releases, and open letters** promoting the women's ideas for conflict resolution to the elusive heads of the rebel movement were published nationally and internationally. Additionally, **debates** were encouraged between women's groups, academics, students, trade unions, and professional organizations on the affect of the war on the country and always emphasized **negotiated settlements** as the way forward.

### CREATING A WOMEN'S CAUCUS

To ensure that women's needs are taken into account during peace negotiations for the Democratic Republic of Congo, UNIFEM supported the **creation of a Women's Caucus** to advise the official delegates on gender issues. UNIFEM also organized a meeting in Kenya with Congolese women, which resulted in a unified Declaration and Plan of Action highlighting women's proposals for the peace process in the DRC.

## ENGAGING IN PEACE PROCESSES AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

- The African Union (AU) was established in 1999 with the goals of promoting unity and solidarity among African States; coordinating and intensifying cooperation for development; safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States and promoting international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations. In July 2003, the **AU adopted the Protocol on the Rights of Women** - a positive step towards promoting and ensuring respect for the rights of African women. The Protocol will complement the African Charter in ensuring the promotion and protection of the human rights of women in Africa. Its provisions include the right to life, integrity and security of person, right to participate in political and decision making processes, right to inheritance, right to food security and adequate housing, protection of women against harmful traditional practices and protection of women in armed conflict. Others include access of women to justice and equal protection before the law.

- A number of regional women’s peace networks have evolved in Africa responding to the critical nature of armed and violent conflict. These include peace networks such as Federation of African Women’s Peace Networks (FERFAP) and the African Women’s Committee for Peace and Development (AWCPD), as well as women’s-rights organizations that have incorporated strong peace components into their programs, such as ISIS/WICCE and Femmes Africa Sokidarité (FAS). FERFAP is comprised of 13 women’s peace organizations from war-affected countries across the region. As part of a regional peace advocacy platform, FERFAP members have **initiated dialogue with governments and inter-governmental organizations** that are promoting peace in a number of countries, such as Eritrea and Ethiopia. The federation is committed to advocating gender-sensitive approaches in the planning, implementation and evaluation of peace and reconstruction programs.
- The African region developed a **“First Ladies for Peace Initiative”** in early 1997, which has included conferences on peace and humanitarian issues, the resolutions of which have been presented to African heads of states and government. In addition, the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa launched the Women’s Committee on Peace and Development in 1999.

**By facilitating political participation through political education, voter registration drives and assistance to women candidates, women’s organizations contributed to political empowerment, helping women acquire leadership skills and experience.**

## ELECTIONS

By facilitating political participation through political education, voter registration drives and assistance to women candidates, women’s organizations contributed to political empowerment, helping women acquire leadership skills and experience. Other ways women contribute to the post-conflict peace process is by helping organize elections, by holding voter education programs and assisting in monitoring elections.

- WIPNET organized a quick impact project for **violence-free elections** in Guinea Bissau. The campaign was initiated as a response to violent riots and attacks in Bissau, the capital city. Over 300 women under the auspices of WIPNET participated in this campaign that aimed at preventing violent elections and ensuring a smooth democratic process. Activities organized by and for the women included peace rallies and peace marches through Bissau, peace talks and debates on local community radios and televisions, and the dissemination of stickers, handbills and posters inscribed with peace messages. This campaign raised the profile of the women in peace-building program in Guinea Bissau both nationally and internationally. WIPNET - Guinea Bissau is now considered a key player in national issues on peace and security.
- With USAID’s Rwanda mission, OTI assisted in the elections process for local citizens’ development councils and facilitated dissemination of information on the War Crimes Tribunal. These efforts, though discreet, proved effective in helping to increase Rwandans’ confidence in peace and democracy.

### HIGHLIGHTING WOMEN’S VOICES IN THE PEACE PROCESS

Talking Drum Studio-Liberia (TDS-L) has six programs that continue to make an impact. They are Common Ground News Features, WOMAN, Today Is Not Tomorrow, Golden Kids News, Situation Report, and One Step Beyond. WOMAN is a monthly production that highlights the **activities and voices of women in the unfolding peace process.**

## MEDIA

Women are increasingly learning to use the media to tell their own story, to document human rights violations and to report on peace building. Women are using media in creative ways to build peace, including comic books, call-in radio shows, street theater, videos and traditional story telling. Many activists are calling for community media to be considered as a vital part of post-conflict infrastructure alongside housing and water. In 2002, the Kampala Declaration from the Know How Conference in Uganda noted the importance of media, particularly early warning systems, so that women in conflict zones can reach out and get the support needed quickly.

- In Tanzania in May 1999, more than 300 women from 50 countries met at the first Pan-African Women's Conference for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence and called for a **pan-African radio program on gender and peace**. National and regional initiatives are now building towards this vision.
- In the Great Lakes region, Search for Common Ground uses radio to educate children about prejudice and conflict resolution. It has established Burundi's first independent radio station, which reaches an estimated 12 million people.
- In 2003, Women in Peace building Network (WIPNET) launched the first region-wide women's radio program, called 'Voices of Women'. The program is currently airing in Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Liberia and Senegal and will be launched in Nigeria in 2005. The **Voices of Women community radio** program has been key to reaching rural women who previously did not benefit from training programs. Since the launch of the program in these countries, there has been significant increase in women's participation in global discourse and debates on women, peace and security and on an increased awareness of grassroots women's peace-building efforts.
- An international NGO's **West Africa Program** held a **media training workshop** for rural women and youth working in the media or media-related field in south-east Liberia. The workshop was part of a project on **Peace building and Improving Group/Collective Rights through the Media and Traditional Communication Mechanisms**. Held in 2004, the training brought together 40 participants, including community radio journalists, regional correspondents of Monrovia-based media organizations, town criers, popular dramatists, public relations officers of government institutions, and teachers from the host and neighboring counties. Local and international media and conflict resolution experts took participants through topics such as Post-conflict Reporting, Media Law and Professional Ethics, The Media in Pre- and Post-Conflict Liberia, PUL Code of Conduct, Language Skills, and The Role and Responsibilities of the Media in Conflict Resolution.

### USING MEDIA FOR PEACE IN SOMALIA

After the warlords in Somalia signed the Mudug Region Peace Agreement, women from various clans mobilized to educate the local population about the adverse effects of the civil war by **broadcasting appropriate radio programs**. They also mobilized **traditional chiefs**. Traditional conflict resolution methods have been used to settle disputes between nomadic groups over access to water and grazing lands.

**Many systems of traditional customary law prohibit women from owning, renting or inheriting land, property, and housing in their own names.**

## LAND RIGHTS

Many systems of traditional customary law prohibit women from owning, renting or inheriting land, property, and housing in their own names. Therefore, women's access to land, property and housing commonly depends on having a male relative. Widows, wives of missing males, and unmarried daughters without fathers may be prevented by law from accessing their **land and property**, which passes to the closest male relative. Male heirs increasingly opt to sell the land for financial gain. Consequently, women may become destitute or forced into begging or prostitution to survive. As such, there is a need to increase women's knowledge about their rights and to lobby for legal reform.

- In the aftermath of the conflict in Rwanda, there was great concern about women's lack of property rights and the possibility of their being forced off farms or unable to return. Widows without sons faced the risk of losing their homes to the deceased husband's relatives since property traditionally passed through the male lineage. In response, women's organizations made efforts to ensure that **women were aware of their legal rights**. They took steps to ensure that women were able to seek legal advice and redress, and to obtain access to legal representation. Simultaneously, many organizations also lobbied for **legal reform** to enable women, especially war widows, to retain title to their land.
- **Traditional, local institutions ensure for peaceful land re-allocation process in post-conflict Mozambique** - Following the peace agreement in 1992, about one third of the population - approximately five million Mozambicans - returned to their villages over a two-year period. Many of them had been away from their villages for ten or fifteen years. In the meanwhile, other displaced people had occupied their dwellings and agricultural plots. To accommodate the returnees with productive land or housing without depriving the new settlers of their livelihoods required a large-scale re-distribution of land. Conservative estimates assume that 500,000 land transactions took place during a two-year period and were carried out at the local level by local and/or traditional authorities **using indigenous knowledge and local capacity**. No external assistance of any kind from government, donors or NGOs was involved. This massive and rapid land allocation process permitted the Mozambican smallholders to re-launch economic growth based on a dramatic increase of agricultural production. Two years after this unique land allocation program, there were no reports of land conflicts except in cases where government had allocated communal lands to outside business interests.

## LEGAL REFORM

The upheaval of armed conflict can create an opportunity at the national or regional level to establish more gender-sensitive post-conflict political and legal structures. In the process of rebuilding their societies, women in conflict situations may have the opportunity to reform laws and traditions that restricted their human rights even before the conflict began and may be able to put an end to patterns of discrimination that have gone on for centuries.

**In the process of rebuilding their societies, women in conflict situations may have the opportunity to reform laws and traditions that restricted their human rights even before the conflict began.**

- In Kampala, in 2000, a coalition of Sudanese and international human rights and women’s groups **created a shared vision for a future transitional government in the Sudan** which would cancel any laws and policies that are incompatible with the rights of women as enshrined in international human rights conventions. They also called on political parties to ensure adequate representation of women at all levels.
- Many groups in Rwanda have surfaced since the genocide to promote women’s rights. A group called Haguruka, which means “stand up”, seeks to **educate women and children about their rights** and help them plead for redress in the legal system. The organization was instrumental in forwarding the law allowing women to inherit land for the first time.
- In Rwanda, a Legal and Constitutional Commission is responsible for **reforming the old constitution**. Three of the twelve commissioners are women, and women make up more than 50 percent of the Commission’s employees. Both the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UNIFEM have provided support, including training that provided a focus for their efforts.

#### ESTABLISHMENT OF GENDER-SENSITIVE LEGAL STRUCTURES

The *gacaca* is a traditional, communal judicial system that was re-introduced in Rwanda to relieve the burden on national courts. Gender equality issues have featured prominently in the re-establishment of these village courts, which have traditionally been male-dominated. Although women were initially prevented from testifying in the traditional *gacaca*, they are now allowed to participate. They are also being encouraged to join as judges, with 27 percent of *gacaca* posts reserved for women. With assistance from the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) and support from UNIFEM, **women judges have received training**. Other donors, including Belgium and Canada, are also supporting increased efforts to involve women in the *gacaca* judicial process.

## ADVOCACY

Increasingly, women are raising public awareness and focusing on advocacy to promote gender issues in conflict-affected societies. Women’s organizations are lobbying for changes in policies and programming that will increase women’s rights and promote peace agendas.

- In Sierra Leone, the Women’s Commission has worked since 2001 with a local activist who identified several gaps in assistance efforts for women. Among her first discoveries, she found that women and girls involved in the war were being excluded from the DDR process because they were not ex-combatants. Instead they were sex slaves, porters, cooks, and the like. Ensuring that they received protection and assistance became the rallying point for joint advocacy—at the local and international levels. The partner’s work complemented the mandates of the UN, INGOs, and the government of Sierra Leone, all of whom were involved in the DDR program in different ways. As a local protection monitor, her approach cut across a multitude of actors, and resulted in more opportunities for these women and girls.

## ADVOCACY: CREATING A STRONG VOICE FOR WOMEN

Advocacy for Women in Africa (AWA) was founded and incorporated in 1996 in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, as a network for advocacy on women's issues on the African continent. The aim of AWA is to create a strong voice for women on development, peace and equality issues. AWA's main focus is on advocacy, including the following activities:

- ♦ To create a forum for women to raise African women's concerns and influence decisions within major decision-making bodies in Africa;
- ♦ To facilitate contacts, provide a link and bring together people who are committed to speak for and with women in Africa;
- ♦ To promote actions for development, peace and equality with a gender focus; and
- ♦ To interpret and analyze social, economic, and political trends in the continent and their impact on women's advancement and empowerment.

AWA's future plan is to develop international cooperation to gain support and promote a wider exchange of ideas, knowledge and experience. Its capacity to lobby and influence decisions depends on its ability to network, share and co-operate with other organizations for more effective advocacy activities.

- In Rwanda, **women's organizations have succeeded in putting gender issues on the national agenda**. Cooperation and collaboration between the government's Ministry of Gender and Women in Development (MIGEPROFE) and women's NGOs has created **unique opportunities for lobbying and advocacy work on gender issues**. These partnerships have achieved greater attention to gender in policies and programming in general, changes to property laws in order to recognize women's rights, the incorporation of gender into the decentralization process, and an increase in the number of women in public policy positions, proving that working in cooperation established the basis for a more sustainable, gender-equal reconstruction process in the aftermath of conflict.
- Following the violent eruptions in Cote d'Ivoire between the Government forces and the rebels in the Northern Ivorian city of Bouake, the women in peace-building program initiated a **peace advocacy campaign** that called on all parties to end the violence and respect the peace agreements signed. The two-pronged campaign brought together over 500 women from all social classes and sects, Muslims and Christians alike, to present a position statement to the warring factions in which they demanded the cessation of hostilities and an end to the sexual violence targeted at women. The campaign gave credence to the women in peace-building program in Cote d'Ivoire; providing women the opportunity to add their voices on issues that directly affect their lives and wellbeing.
- The **rights of women workers** are an important advocacy area as a single employee often supports an extended family. The Conseil National des Organisations Syndicales Libres au Rwanda (COSYLI), a trade union with both men and women members, includes women among its leading officers and has attempted to raise public awareness about the problems women workers face

**Increasingly, women are raising public awareness and focusing on advocacy to promote gender issues in conflict-affected societies.**

in the public and private sectors. Concerned about the economic repercussions against older women, COSYLI has pushed for public discussion about the criteria used in dismissing public service employees.

#### THE WOMEN'S PEACE CENTER IN BURUNDI: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO PEACE BUILDING

Search for Common Ground helped to establish the **Women's Peace Center in Burundi** in recognition of the fact that women must be included as key players in the process of ethnic reconciliation and must have access to the tools necessary to fulfill that role.

**Roundtable discussions** have been one of the Center's most critical activities, providing a much-needed forum for Hutu and Tutsi women to access information and collaborate with other women's groups. Roundtable discussions are currently being expanded into interior provinces through the antenna offices.

The Center has recently expanded its role of being a neutral site for meetings between Tutsi and Hutu women and has become a source of **training in conflict resolution, creation and management of transparent associations, and mediation services** for associations that request assistance in resolving internal differences. The Women's Peace Center has been working in conjunction with several local and international organizations in Burundi to develop a network of conflict resolution trainers whose services can be used throughout the country.

The Center placed a special emphasis on initiatives that would help **reconcile internally displaced women with their former neighbors** in the reintegration phase helping them rebuild their lives in their old communities. The Center initiated mutual visits between former neighbors and organized roundtables, discussion sessions and workshops.

The Center also organized one-day **seminars on Positive Solidarity** between women of different ethnic backgrounds to celebrate their positive points of commonality.

In conjunction with the Friends Peace Teams, the Women's Peace Center began working to alleviate social and personal problems associated with post-conflict trauma. The Center now offers information about and **training in trauma healing** as well as listening sessions for trauma victims to support the reintegration of victims and offenders back into society.

A series of training workshops is the core of the **Legal Code Project**. Trainings are held in Bujumbura and the provinces, bringing together women's groups around aspects of the legal code that affect all Burundian women. In helping generate dialogue and understanding around the family law, the Center pioneered the coordinated use of radio, television, theater, posters, training manuals and simplified booklets to bring Burundian women together around an issue that affects all of them.

A renowned Burundian journalist produces **radio programs** aimed at providing information on the women's associative movement to **strengthen the network between those associations**. The use of radio also ensures that at least some of the Center's impact outside Bujumbura can be maintained regardless of the security situation. The Center provides wind-up radios to as many people as possible to recipients where access to radios is severely limited.

# CONCLUSION

While women and men in Africa have been and continue to remain instrumental in building peace and rebuilding societies in conflict-affected settings, a continued focus on gender-sensitive conflict programming is essential to ensure that interventions address the gender dimensions of conflict. Reconstruction and peace building require specific strategies to support women so that women can be engaged in all phases of the re-transition to a peacetime economy. Rather than perpetuating unhelpful stereotypes, post-war social reconstruction must be sensitive to the redefinition and renegotiation of gender roles and relationships that are likely to characterize post-conflict societies in complex ways.

Conflict erodes traditional social bonds giving rise to new modes of conflict while at the same time destroying the social fund of goodwill, collective wisdom, shared norms and communication networks that provide the means for resolving conflict. The erosion, and in some cases the breakdown of public institutions, has affected the interrelations between kin, friends, and neighbors. Both women and men struggle to build and consolidate new identities and roles in post-conflict situations. As women and men set out to consolidate or reclaim different rights and positions, social institutions and categories such as community, family, household and workplace take on new meanings and roles. A gendered analysis of conflict-affected societies can address the social relationships between men and women in these settings.

This research documents that both contemporary and traditional methods are complimentary in efforts to build peace resolve or avert conflict and rebuild conflicted societies. USAID Africa Bureau, the World Bank and many other agencies seek to be at the forefront of such efforts and believe the research presented here provides a sound basis for such approaches.

**Conflict erodes traditional social bonds ... women and men struggle to identify and consolidate new identities and roles in post-conflict situations.**

**A gendered analysis of conflict-affected societies can address the social relationships between men and women in these settings.**

## BEST PRACTICES AT A GLANCE

COUNTRY/REGION	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
<b>Peace building</b>	
West Africa	Network initiative that aims to empower women to be assertive stakeholders during peace-building efforts. Particular focus on understanding and strengthening the functional roles of women during conflict and peace.
Angola	Women-led grassroots organizations have created a network that aims to lobby and advocate for government recognition of gender issues while providing training to other organizations.
Mali	Women's network has organized various meetings to promote accurate assessments of women's needs and participation during the peace-building process.
<b>Gender Analysis</b>	
Worldwide	Development of People Oriented Planning framework that incorporates gender analysis in the post-conflict environments.
<b>Institutional Strengthening</b>	
Uganda	Local women's responses to conflict have included myriad roles such as combatants, negotiators, and peace-builders. Women's groups have revived cultural institutions to prepare communities for re-integration and reconciliation.
<b>Conflict Management</b>	
Uganda	Attempts to integrate indigenous knowledge into organizational operations.
<b>Child Protection</b>	
Eritrea	Social service agencies have set up programs based on indigenous models of child care by providing in-kind economic support or creating surrogate family groups.
<b>Gender based violence</b>	
Central Africa	Local communities have used traditional approaches to deal with issues of sexual violence. Techniques have included stage performances and local justices and reparation practices.
African Union	Campaign against gender-based crimes and banning of recruitment of child soldiers.
Liberia	Creation of trauma healing workshops using local lore and healers to reduce future violence and rebuild trust.
South Africa	Uses volunteer court workers to assist with counseling, mediation, and mobilization of abuse victims.
Great Lakes	Support of local women's associations to assist women who have suffered sexual violence.
Mozambique	Works with families of demobilized soldiers to increase sensitivity and awareness regarding violence issues and reduction.
Liberia	Uses local theater performances and youth groups to promote human rights messages.
<b>Protection</b>	
Central Africa	Implementing an agricultural program that enabled women to use the land within an area secured by ICRC.
IDP Camps	Assessments to determine needs that resulted in toilet facilities being moved to a secure location that did not endanger women living in the camp.
Sudan	Introduction of fuel-efficient stoves that reduce amount of time women spend away from IDP camp.

COUNTRY/REGION	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
<b>Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration</b>	
Worldwide	Belgium has implemented project to used women's NGOs to negotiate the release of child soldiers.
Liberia	Implementation of reintegration programs that assists women, ex-combatants, and victims to regain the skills necessary for independent living.
Liberia	Awareness-raising and information programs regarding DDR throughout the country.
Uganda	Information campaign that targeted girls who have been abducted in addition to an advocacy campaign to raise awareness of abduction issues during peace talks.
Sierra Leone	Running of training centers and vocations programs through local groups not reached by national programs.
Sierra Leone	National training centers that focus on the needs of women and girl ex-combatants that teach vocational skills and aim to reduce vulnerability.
Mozambique	Introduction of women's branch to AMOGED that lobbies for equal rights for ex-combatants.
Sierra Leone	Offers skill training to ex-combatants in formerly conflict-riddled Kono District.
<b>Health</b>	
DRC	Development of minimum package of services designed for war conditions that were both practical and cost-effective.
Somaliland	Illiterate nomads trained in basic health care and hygiene. Those trained were women selected by their communities.
<b>Psychosocial</b>	
Sierra Leone	Children participate in singing, dancing, drama and writing projects to improve their well-being.
IDP camps	Implementation of capacity-building projects aimed at increasing social stability through activities of children, youth, and women.
Mozambique	Traditional healers used various local techniques to treat post-traumatic stress syndrome.
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	
Liberia	Networking between grassroots women's groups to provide appropriate health education regarding nutrition, hygiene, and HIV/AIDS among other issues.
South Africa	Mainstreaming of gender and HIV/AIDS awareness into micro enterprise programs.
Uganda	Programs that teach women how to protect themselves from HIV despite patriarchal structures and norms.
Zimbabwe	Livelihood security program designed to identify and ensure security for most vulnerable segments of the population (e.g. child and female-headed households)
<b>Education</b>	
Sierra Leone	Used planning workshops with women and youth to implement reconstruction and rehabilitation of schools.
Somaliland	Education promotion programs for returnees to promote girls-educations.
Eritrea	Distribution of high-energy biscuits to schools and works to improve girls' enrollment.
West Africa	Implemented a Women in Peace Building Course that examined national and regional issues.
Sudan	Offering of training courses on conflict resolution that focuses on the role of women and traditional conflict resolution strategies.
Mali	Griots raise awareness regarding various social issues through their traditional role of social catalysts, including managing conflict amongst neighbors and communities.

COUNTRY/REGION	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
<b>Livelihoods</b>	
West Africa	Programs that restore women's traditional economic activity through training of marketing skills and improved production.
Chad	Women established economic activities based on exposure to new ideas and relationships that were formed while they were displaced from their homes.
Rwanda	Mobilization of thousands of women's groups to promote micro-credit.
Rwanda	Uses grants to help women in transition through participatory programs throughout the country.
Rwanda	Promotion of vocational training and civic education programs to promote economic well-being of vulnerable populations.
DRC	20-woman group that promotes rights awareness, leadership education, and vocation/technical skills training.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	
Rwanda	Peace-action campaign that includes building houses and training/education women.
West Africa	Provision of resources to allow female-headed households ability to get their homes rebuilt.
<b>Promoting Peace</b>	
Sierra Leone	Various groups organized to educate civilians on electoral proceedings, recruited and trained observers, and worked with military to respect elections.
Burundi	Promote dialog between women of various backgrounds to allow them a voice in civil society.
Rwanda	Spontaneous organization of women after the genocide to promote reconstruction and rehabilitation.
Somalia	Protested war using plays and songs to promote reconciliation and dialogue. Manages a human rights, peace and development center. Sponsored a micro-credit program.
West Africa	Program aimed at strengthening the capacity of rural women to participate in peace building.
Central and East Africa	Meeting to share and generate ideas regarding the role of women in conflict managements.
Angola	Introduction of women's wing to MPLA that used the media to inform the world of Angola's struggle. Provided legal advice and advocated for women's legal status.
Burundi	Program attempts to develop a common base to promote peace in Burundi amongst women of diverse backgrounds.
Uganda	Women participated in negotiations to settle the conflict.
Liberia	Community engaged in a traditional mourning ceremony to begin the reconciliation process
Great Lakes Region	Two-week workshop to enhance skills for conflict resolution and networking among active women's groups.
<b>Democracy and Governance</b>	
Burundi	Peace conference for women to present a common vision of peace and reconciliation.
Somalia	Program maintains involvement of Somali women in the peace process and sponsors micro-credit projects. It also serves as an umbrella organization for 120 women's organizations.
Sierra Leone	Usage of media to promote women's ideas for peace to rebel movements in addition to encouraging debate. Women's participation ensure during the peace process
Mali	Women used various peaceful protests and traditional forms of expression to advocate for peace.
DRC	Creation of a Women's Congress to ensure women's needs were taken into account during peace negotiations.
Africa	Regional women's peace networks that advocate for dialog with governments and inter-governmental organization to promote peace.
Africa	Women leaders placing pressure on OAU for inclusion of a women's committee to mainstream women's involvement in conflict resolution processes.
Africa	Development of the "First Ladies Peace Initiative" that presented resolutions and ideas to heads of states, governments, and OAU.
Guinea-Bissau	Network that campaigns to prevent violence during elections. Actively included women in peace rallies and debates.

COUNTRY/REGION	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Rwanda	Program to facilitate election process for local citizens' councils.
<b>Media</b>	
Tanzania	Conference for gender and peace radio program attended by 300 women.
Great Lakes	Use of radio to educate children about conflict resolution.
Somalia	Women mobilized to educate locals about negative impact of war through radio. Resulted in Mudug Region Peace Agreement.
West Africa	Region wide women's radio program to increase women's participation in society.
West Africa	Media training workshop to train women and youth on how to use media to promote peace and prevent conflict.
<b>Land Rights</b>	
Rwanda	Organizations implemented programs to ensure women knew their rights while lobbying for legal reform.
Mozambique	Local institutions used to prevent violence during land re-allocation process.
<b>Legal Reform</b>	
Sudan	Coalition generated vision of transitional government for the country that would guarantee women's rights.
Rwanda	Groups that seek to educate women and children about their rights.
Rwanda	Re-introduction of gacaca judicial system to deal with overflow from the national courts, in which women were encouraged to participate.
Rwanda	Establishment of Ministry of Gender and Women in Development to ensure women's involvement in post-conflict reconstruction.
Rwanda	Revision of old constitution in which women were actively incorporated into the process.
<b>Advocacy</b>	
Sierra Leone	Identification of gaps in assistance to women in DDR programs.
Rwanda	Through lobbying and advocacy women's organizations have placed women's issues prominently on the national agenda.
Tanzania	Creation of advocacy forum to promote a strong voice for women in development, peace, and equality issues.
Burundi	Women's peace center uses an integrated approach to promote the inclusion of women into the peace process. Tools include media, training, discussions, and lobbying.
Cote d'Ivoire	Peace advocacy program that encouraged all parties to come together and present a position statement on sexual violence.
Rwanda	Trade union that promotes women in leadership and tries to raise public awareness of issues facing women.

SECTOR	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
<b>Worldwide</b>	
Gender Analysis	Development of People Oriented Planning framework that incorporates gender analysis in the post-conflict environments.
DDR	Belgium has implemented project to used women's NGOs to negotiate the release of child soldiers.
<b>Africa</b>	
Democracy and Governance	Regional women's peace networks that advocate for dialog with governments and inter-governmental organization to promote peace.
Democracy and Governance	Women leaders placing pressure on OAU for inclusion of a women's committee to mainstream women's involvement in conflict resolution processes.
Democracy and Governance	Development of the "First Ladies Peace Initiative" that presented resolutions and ideas to heads of states, governments, and OAU.
<b>African Union</b>	
Gender based violence	Campaign against gender-based crimes and banning of recruitment of child soldiers.
<b>Central Africa</b>	
Gender based violence	Local communities have used traditional approaches to deal with issues of sexual violence. Techniques have included stage performances and local justices and reparation practices.
Protection	Implementing an agricultural program that enabled women to use the land within an area secured by ICRC.
<b>Central and East Africa</b>	
Promoting Peace	Meeting to share and generate ideas regarding the role of women in conflict managements.
<b>Great Lakes Region</b>	
Gender based violence	Support of local women's associations to assist women who have suffered sexual violence.
Promoting Peace	Two-week workshop to enhance skills for conflict resolution and networking amongst active women's groups.
Media	Use of radio to educate children about conflict resolution.
<b>West Africa</b>	
Peace building	Network initiative that aims to empower women to be assertive stakeholders during peace-building efforts. Particular focus on understanding and strengthening the functional roles of women during conflict and peace.
Education	Implemented a Women in Peace Building Course that examined national and regional issues.
Livelihoods	Programs that restore women's traditional economic activity through training of marketing skills and improved production.
Infrastructure	Provision of resources to allow female-headed households ability to get their homes rebuilt.
Promoting Peace	Program aimed at strengthening the capacity of rural women to participate in peace building.
Media	Region wide women's radio program to increase women's participation in society.
Media	Media training workshop to train women and youth on how to use media to promote peace and prevent conflict.
<b>IDP Camps</b>	
Protection	Assessments to determine needs that resulted in toilet facilities being moved to a secure location that did not endanger women living in the camp.
Psychosocial	Implementation of capacity-building projects aimed at increasing social stability through activities of children, youth, and women.

<b>Angola</b>		
Peace building		Women-led grassroots organizations have created a network that aims to lobby and advocate for government recognition of gender issues while providing training to other organizations.
Promoting Peace		Introduction of women's wing to MPLA that used the media to inform the world of Angola's struggle. Provided legal advice and advocated for women's legal status.
<b>Burundi</b>		
Promoting Peace		Promote dialog between women of various backgrounds to allow them a voice in civil society.
Promoting Peace		Program attempts to develop a common base to promote peace in Burundi amongst women of diverse backgrounds.
Democracy and Governance		Peace conference for women to present a common vision of peace and reconciliation.
Advocacy		Women's peace center uses an integrated approach to promote the inclusion of women into the peace process. Tools include media, training, discussions, and lobbying.
<b>Chad</b>		
Livelihoods		Women established economic activities based on exposure to new ideas and relationships that were formed while they were displaced from their homes.
<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b>		
Advocacy		Peace advocacy program that encouraged all parties to come together and present a position statement on sexual violence.
<b>DRC</b>		
Health		Development of minimum package of services designed for war conditions that were both practical and cost-effective.
Livelihoods		20-woman group that promotes rights awareness, leadership education, and vocation/technical skills training.
Democracy and Governance		Creation of a Women's Congress to ensure women's needs were taken into account during peace negotiations.
<b>Eritrea</b>		
Child Protection		Social service agencies have set up programs based on indigenous models of child care by providing in-kind economic support or creating surrogate family groups.
Education		Distribution of high-energy biscuits to schools and works to improve girls' enrollment.
<b>Guinea-Bissau</b>		
Democracy and Governance		Network that campaigns to prevent violence during elections. Actively included women in peace rallies and debates.
<b>Liberia</b>		
Gender based violence		Creation of trauma healing workshops using local lore and healers to reduce future violence and rebuild trust.
Gender based violence		Uses local theater performances and youth groups to promote human rights messages.
DDR		Implementation of reintegration program that assists women, ex-combatants, and victims to regain the skills necessary for independent living.
DDR		Awareness-raising and information programs regarding DDR throughout the country.
HIV/AIDS		Networking between grassroots women's groups to provide appropriate health education regarding nutrition, hygiene, and HIV/AIDS among other issues.
Promoting Peace		Community engaged in a traditional mourning ceremony to begin the reconciliation process
<b>Mali</b>		
Peace building		Women's network has organized various meetings to promote accurate assessments of women's needs and participation during the peace-building process.
Education		Griots raise awareness regarding various social issues through their traditional role of social catalysts, including managing conflict amongst neighbors and communities.

Democracy and Governance	Women used various peaceful protests and traditional forms of expression to advocate for peace.
<b>Mozambique</b>	
Gender based violence	Works with families of demobilized soldiers to increase sensitivity and awareness regarding violence issues and reduction.
DDR	Introduction of women's branch to AMOGED that lobbies for equal rights for ex-combatants.
Psychosocial	Traditional healers used various local techniques to treat post-traumatic stress syndrome.
Land Rights	Local institutions used to prevent violence during land re-allocation process.
<b>Rwanda</b>	
Livelihoods	Mobilization of thousands of women's groups to promote micro-credit.
Livelihoods	Uses grants to help women in transition through participatory programs throughout the country.
Livelihoods	Promotion of vocational training and civic education programs to promote economic well-being of vulnerable populations.
Infrastructure	Peace-action campaign that includes building houses and training/education women.
Promoting Peace	Spontaneous organization of women after the genocide to promote reconstruction and rehabilitation.
Democracy and Governance	Program to facilitate election process for local citizens' councils.
Land Rights	Organizations implemented programs to ensure women knew their rights while lobbying for legal reform.
Legal Reform	Groups that seek to educate women and children about their rights.
Legal Reform	Re-introduction of gacaca judicial system to deal with overflow from the national courts, in which women were encouraged to participate.
Legal Reform	Establishment of Ministry of Gender and Women in Development to ensure women's involvement in post-conflict reconstruction.
Legal Reform	Revision of old constitution in which women were actively incorporated into the process.
Advocacy	Through lobbying and advocacy women's organizations have placed women's issues prominently on the national agenda.
Advocacy	Trade union that promotes women in leadership and tries to raise public awareness of issues facing women.
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	
DDR	Running of training centers and vocations programs through local groups not reached by national programs.
DDR	National training centers that focus on the needs of women and girl ex-combatants that teach vocational skills and aim to reduce vulnerability.
DDR	Offers skill training to ex-combatants in formerly conflict-riddled Kono District.
Psychosocial	Children participate in singing, dancing, drama and writing projects to improve their well-being.
Education	Used planning workshops with women and youth to implement reconstruction and rehabilitation of schools.
Promoting Peace	Various groups organized to educate civilians on electoral proceedings, recruited and trained observers, and worked with military to respect elections.
Democracy and Governance	Usage of media to promote women's ideas for peace to rebel movements in addition to encouraging debate. Women's participation ensure during the peace process
Advocacy	Identification of gaps in assistance to women in DDR programs.

<b>Somalia</b>		
Promoting Peace		Protested war using plays and songs to promote reconciliation and dialogue. Manages a human rights, peace and development center. Sponsored a micro-credit program.
Democracy and Governance		Program maintains involvement of Somali women in the peace process and sponsors micro-credit projects. It also serves as an umbrella organization for 120 women's organizations.
Media		Women mobilized to educate locals about negative impact of war through radio. Resulted in Mudug Region Peace Agreement.
<b>Somaliland</b>		
Health		Illiterate nomads trained in basic health care and hygiene. Those trained were women selected by their communities.
Education		Education promotion programs for returnees to promote girls-educations.
<b>South Africa</b>		
Gender based violence		Uses volunteer court workers to assist with counseling, mediation, and mobilization of abuse victims.
HIV/AIDS		Mainstreaming of gender and HIV/AIDS awareness into micro enterprise programs.
<b>Sudan</b>		
Protection		Introduction of fuel-efficient stoves that reduce amount of time women spend away from IDP camp.
Education		Offering of training courses on conflict resolution that focuses on the role of women and traditional conflict resolution strategies.
Legal Reform		Coalition generated vision of transitional government for the country that would guarantee women's rights.
<b>Tanzania</b>		
Media		Conference for gender and peace radio program attended by 300 women.
Advocacy		Creation of advocacy forum to promote a strong voice for women in development, peace, and equality issues.
<b>Uganda</b>		
Institutional Strengthening		Local women's responses to conflict have included myriad roles such as combatants, negotiators, and peace-builders. Women's groups have revived cultural institutions to prepare communities for re-integration and reconciliation.
Conflict Management		Attempts to integrate indigenous knowledge into organizational operations.
DDR		Information campaign that targeted girls who have been abducted in addition to an advocacy campaign to raise awareness of abduction issues during peace talks.
HIV/AIDS		Programs that teach women how to protect themselves from HIV despite patriarchal structures and norms.
Promoting Peace		Women participated in negotiations to settle the conflict.
<b>Zimbabwe</b>		
HIV/AIDS		Livelihood security program designed to identify and ensure security for most vulnerable segments of the population (e.g. child and female-headed households)

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