

# Women in War and Peace

Grassroots Peacebuilding

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## Summary

**W**hile much of the work of conflict resolution focuses on the government or public level, the resolution of contemporary conflict is very much a holistic process that is simultaneously conducted at the private, grassroots level. Many of the efforts under way to sustain peace in countries and regions beset by or emerging from violent conflict are undertaken by grassroots organizations formed by those whose lives are most directly and significantly affected by the conflict. A substantial proportion of these organizations are formed and staffed by women. These nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are playing an increasingly active role in dispute resolution and postconflict reconstruction and peacebuilding.

The United States Institute of Peace strives, through research, education, and training, to understand this role of nongovernmental entities in bringing about a stable peace in conflict-torn societies. Toward that end, on September 14, 1999, the Institute's Research and Studies Program convened a seminar entitled "Perspectives on Grassroots Peacebuilding: The Roles of Women in War and Peace," which drew together more than sixty representatives of the policy community, academia, and nongovernmental organizations. This report draws on presentations and comments made at the seminar and specifically examines the role of women in addressing the issues of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Chapter 1 introduces the theoretical debate and provides an overview of the major issues and schools of thought. It points out that, in analyses of war and peace, the crucial role of women, especially at the grassroots level, is often overlooked or dismissed in favor of "policy elites" and "high-policy" matters. While the conditions of war and peace affect women and men differently, these differences are not often taken into account in the construction of peace agreements, in postconflict reconstruction efforts, or even in the conduct of day-to-day governance. However, women *are* involved in efforts to end violent conflict and are often the glue that holds crumbling communities together under the stress of conflict. In times of conflict, ordinary women, far from solely being victims, sometimes emerge as leaders in the effort to restore peace and ameliorate the tragic consequences of war.

Chapter 2 examines the achievements of women working to end violent conflict in their communities. One of the important methods for doing so is through the creation of cross-community alliances or networks. For instance, in Somalia, women's groups made remarkable progress in improving the plight of internally displaced persons, educating youth caught in the twilight zone of war, and ensuring something as basic as potable water. It is interesting to note that the success of this women's alliance hinged in large measure on the ability of Somali women to overlook the clan affiliation of the other women with whom they were working.

In the seminar debate, however, it was also clear that the relevance of cross-community alliances is context dependent. Such alliances sometimes are ineffectual because they ignore asymmetrical power relationships, and they confront the same obstacles besetting any cross-community alliance.

Chapter 3 discusses implementation of and support for these women's peace movements. Progress has been made since the early 1990s, but it is only within the latter half of the decade that the international community has begun to recognize the substantial contributions of women to efforts of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. There are a number of actions to be taken by third party actors, whether nongovernmental organizations, the U.S. government, or the international community in general and the United Nations in particular, to support the peace and conflict resolution work of indigenous women's and grassroots organizations. Chief among these actions are financial support, advocacy and awareness raising, and skills training.

Chapter 4 deals with application, specifically the contribution of women to postconflict reconciliation and reconstruction efforts. In postconflict situations, the role of women can be quite important. The seminar highlighted the role that women have played around the world — from interpersonal reconciliation in South Africa, to the mobilization of mothers united by common losses in Latin America, to the peacemakers of Northern Ireland. In this last case, by demanding a place at the negotiating table, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition managed to contribute in no small way to the drafting of the path-breaking Good Friday Agreement by insisting upon the inclusion of measures that not only addressed the causes of the conflict but also its consequences, including those dealing with human rights, equality, and provisions for victims.

The emphasis placed here on women's grassroots movements and their roles in the mending process is not intended to elevate these groups above other movements. The goal is to draw attention to an important, yet often neglected, aspect of the conflict resolution process and to make sure that the crucial role of women in war-torn societies is not overlooked or dismissed. Women, with their fundamental concern for subsistence and survival issues, are essential actors and leaders in grassroots movements, especially in times of civil strife. Women's participation in the quest for peace aids capacity building in societies threatened by violent conflict. By thus preparing for peace and delegitimizing violence, societies become more resistant to armed conflict and resilient in the face of challenges.

## Introduction: Women in War and Peace

### Pitfalls of Conceptualizing Women and Peace

Any discussion seeking to examine the relationship of women to peace must take care to avoid the numerous pitfalls associated with such analyses. Chief among such pitfalls is the tendency to essentialize and universalize women, to assume that “women” may be treated and discussed as a unitary, homogeneous category and that overarching generalizations may be extended to apply to all women, everywhere.<sup>1</sup> Such essentializing assumes the experience of women everywhere to be similar, regardless of other factors such as race, class, or sexuality, whereas identity and experience are actually a complex combination of these and other factors. Indeed, roles and opportunities for women vary widely between and within the context of different societies and are at times more dependent upon other forms of difference, such as an individual’s race or class. Therefore, we may not assume that what holds true for one group of women will necessarily hold for another.

In the discussion of women and peace, a number of assumptions must be questioned. For instance, there is the danger of equating women with peace, assuming that women are necessarily pacifist. In actuality, women also assume roles in waging and supporting war, and are not always the victims. Therefore, we may question the idea that peace would necessarily result if men were replaced by women as leaders. It might even have the opposite effect, as women who aspire to positions of leadership often succeed by dissociating themselves from more “feminine” qualities and adopting more “masculine” attitudes.<sup>2</sup> War and peace are not male/female issues; rather, it is the underlying social and political rationalizing of violence as an acceptable tool that must be challenged and overcome. We must therefore not assume the victimization of women in general. Individuals to a large extent choose the roles they are willing to play — both men and women are victims in war, but it is the different roles they assume that must be brought into our analyses.

### Assessing the Truths and Myths of Women in War and Peace

Cheryl Benard, a scholar who has long thought about, researched, and written on the issues related to gender and conflict as director of research at an Austrian think tank and as a consultant to the Austrian government and various U.S.-based research organizations, provides the theoretical context for the ensuing discussion. Benard examines the state of the debate surrounding women and violent conflict and delineates the major issues of interest to both scholars and on-the-ground practitioners.

Academics and researchers have been debating the relative influence of gender on violence for decades, and a resulting set of propositions is reflected in the literature and in the public debate. Some assert that women are more peaceful and men are more violent: biologically, men tend toward hierarchy, competition, and risk taking; women tend toward egalitarianism, cooperation and nurturing, and risk aversion. Others insist that gender is a

socially constructed concept defining the acceptable roles and behavior of men and women; these roles and behaviors are reinforced through education and socialization. While it may be true that male/masculine and female/feminine characteristics are the result of both biological *and* social factors, the relative influence of biological determinism and socialization is a significant point of debate. Many participants in this debate assert that increased participation by women in the public realm would change the character of that realm; however, the nature of the change is itself a debated point.

The interpretations of and conclusions drawn from these assumptions are intricately linked to the political agenda of the proponents of each of the major perspectives on the issue. For example, Benard maintains that the assumption “women are more peaceful, men are more violent” leads liberals and feminists to conclude that women should therefore be given a greater role in the public sphere to increase the peace and stability of society. Conservatives and antifeminists, on the other hand, conclude from this assumption that women are necessarily better utilized in the home and in caregiver roles most suited to their peaceful nature. This debate revolves on the utility of war: if war is a problem, putting more pacific women in leadership roles would dampen the resort to war; if war is a solution, having more pacific women in leadership roles would hamper the successful conduct of war. The middle position is a more rational consideration of alternatives to war.

A subset of issues within this debate revolves around the relationship of women with war and peace. Benard highlights three key points:

- ▶ **The conditions of war and peace affect women differently than they do men.** More men than women die as a direct consequence of armed conflict; women tend to be victims of wartime rapes, become refugees, and suffer displacement and deprivation. Men are more involved than are women in the decision to go to war; however, women play a number of roles in war-torn societies, including roles that support and sustain the war effort.
- ▶ **Such differences are not generally taken into account in the construction of peace agreements, in postconflict reconstruction efforts, in the distribution of humanitarian aid, or even in the conduct of day-to-day governance.** In Benard’s example, humanitarian relief operations often fail to meet the needs of those who constitute the majority of refugees, namely, women and children. Relief organizations are reluctant to challenge the host society’s traditions, and therefore may wittingly or unwittingly reinforce structural inequalities that result in male refugees receiving disproportionate amounts of food, medical aid, and educational benefits provided by those organizations. Such disadvantages suffered by women may result from deliberate exclusion or the unconscious operation of structural violence, or may be the by-product of decision-makers’ ignorance of women’s particular needs and interests.
- ▶ **While women are associated with peace, the relationship of women with peace is not always a beneficial one.** What is “peace” for men may not necessarily constitute “peace” for women. The definition of peace as “not war” ignores the high levels of domestic and societal violence suffered by women even in times not characterized by violent political conflict or in the period immediately following a conflict. Conversely, women may benefit from conflict: while men are at the front or otherwise absent, women assume roles nor-



mally reserved for men, such as main provider, head of household, and other positions of leadership and authority. The return of peace often spells the end of such opportunities for women and the re-institution of a patriarchal, hierarchical repression. Finally, as J. Ann Tickner points out in a recent *International Studies Review* article, the association of women with peace has long been used to keep women out of the realm of international politics and national security, reinforcing the gender stereotype of women as passive not active, victims not agents, and emotional not rational.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, women, as members of a society, stand to lose as much as men from the resort to violence. However, women are not often at the center of the decision to go to war, nor are their perspectives and legitimate concerns often integrated at the official level. The question to be answered, then, is what difference will the inclusion of women and the incorporation of the feminine perspective make in the realm of conflict management; what is the value-added of women's participation?

### “Bringing Women In”

Because male thinking dominates society, we lack the necessary endurance for negotiations and too easily resort to force of arms. It is therefore necessary to include women proportionately to their share in the population in matters of international security.

—Austrian Minister for Federal Sciences Caspar Einem  
*Ein neuer Staat befreiter Buerger*

If we accept that the inclusion of women and the feminine perspective in the discussion and practice of international affairs is a beneficial change, how do we redress these inequalities and manage such incorporation? The debate here revolves around the question of whether it is sufficient merely to “add women and stir,” which entails simply including greater numbers of women in the decision-making process, or whether we must “change the recipe,” which would require the redefinition of what constitutes politics and the identification of alternative arenas and methods of conducting politics. However, as Benard stresses, some proponents maintain that the two approaches are intricately intertwined: success and true change depend upon both increased participation of women in the decision-making process and feminization, or the incorporation of what have been considered “feminine” principles such as compromise and cooperation.

Benard highlights three main areas related to conflict in which greater participation by women makes significant contributions:

- ▶ **Conflict prevention:** The tendency to focus on how women are affected by war ignores the role that women play in helping to prevent the outbreak of violent political conflict. If we accept the assumption that women are more peace-oriented and inclined toward greater communication and cooperation, increased participation of women in the political realm should have positive, peaceful effects. Concomitantly, as greater levels of peace are achieved, opportunities for women should expand.
- ▶ **Peace negotiations or conflict mediation:** Women's interests, rights, and specific priorities are rarely given even token attention during formal peace negotiations; the absence of

women at the negotiating table ensures that the status quo vis-à-vis women will continue. The only way to ensure that women's voices are heard by the men around the table is to give women their earned places at that table.

- **Postconflict reconstruction:** At issue here is the role of women in the postagreement phase, specifically in the areas of reconstruction and economic development. Women's contributions to the economy, as well as their roles in resource distribution and as economic and social agents, must be given due weight.

On the more theoretical side, there are definitional obstacles to the incorporation of women's thinking and perspectives on the issues of war, peace, and security. Defining security in militaristic terms serves to exclude women's perspectives and concerns. Recent changes in the role of the military to include postwarfare rebuilding and peacebuilding seem to argue that an expanded conception is gaining recognition.<sup>4</sup>

However, the traditional, narrow militaristic definition of security has implications for women on two levels. First, as war has often been justified as necessary to protect a nation's "women and children," women have been cast as the object of national security. According to Tickner, when "defined as those whom the state and its men are protecting, women have had little control over the conditions of their protection."<sup>5</sup> Second, this definition, while excluding women as political actors, simultaneously ignores a major source of insecurity for women, namely structural violence:<sup>6</sup> "the construction of security in military terms — understood as direct violence — often masks the systemic insecurity of indirect or *structural violence*. . . . Structural violence especially affects the lives of women and other subordinated groups. When we ignore this fact we ignore the security of the majority of the planet's occupants."<sup>7</sup>

Feminist alternatives to traditional definitions of security, on the other hand, would assume the interrelatedness of all forms of violence — structural violence, domestic violence, etc. Therefore, a more comprehensive definition of security — human security — must be considered and should include such threats to security as poverty, environmental degradation, and unequal access to sources of power, be they political, economic, or social.

Ultimately, it is argued that incorporating women and "feminine" characteristics or principles into the political process, as well as redefining what is political, will at least make politics more reflective of the society with which it deals and less biased toward the perspectives and behaviors of only one segment. The resulting benefit of women's empowerment is the potential reduction of violent conflict and the willingness to explore other, more peaceful means of conflict prevention, management, and settlement. As stated in the Beijing Declaration, "Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, it has been shown that where gender equality is valued and taken seriously, compromise as a means of resolving conflict also receives greater consideration.<sup>9</sup>

## Two

### Women in Conflict: Colombia, Israel and Palestine, and Somalia

The dominant image of women as victims of war and the rhetoric justifying war to protect the community's "women and children" each work to obscure the rich multitude of roles that women play in situations of armed conflict as well as to downplay the real damage war wreaks on women's everyday lives. Recognizing the complexity of women's experience in armed conflict and the numerous ways in which everyday women respond to the challenges of war, it is helpful to explore the achievements of women in the pursuit of peace, with emphasis on their roles in conflict situations. Specifically, we examine the ways in which women are particularly affected by and involved in the various facets of violent conflict and a society's response to that conflict, namely, the impact of violent conflict on the afflicted societies, in social, economic, and political terms; the effective responses to conflict undertaken by women within the society; the chief impediments that stand in the way of successful efforts to mitigate violence or its effects; and recommendations for third party contributions, such as by NGOs, the U.S. government, and the international community at large.

#### Societal Impact of Violent Conflict

Protracted conflict ravages society and its supportive systems. In modern warfare, civilians are caught in the crossfire and invariably suffer the majority of war's effects, mainly because in civil warfare situations, the entire society is the arena of armed conflict, and distinctions between combatant and noncombatant are blurred. And, in modern technological warfare, the societal infrastructure is itself a target.<sup>10</sup> Refugees and internally displaced persons are a common result of violent, protracted conflict. For example, Maria Cristina Caballero, a Colombian journalist, states that an average of two families is displaced every hour in Colombia. In 1998 alone, an estimated 350,000 Colombians fled their homes in a desperate attempt to escape the fighting. In this way, warfare systematically separates males from the family units while exerting a terrific toll on the household. In fact, 30 percent of Colombia's displaced households are led by women. Disabled and traumatized households find it particularly difficult to reestablish "normalcy." In the Palestinian case, refugee camps have become institutionalized, permanent settlements, instead of the temporary refuge they are meant to be. An entire generation of Palestinians has known only the refugee camps; in most cases they are true outsiders, lacking the benefits and rights of citizenship and often suffering the resentment and animosity of their reluctant hosts.

The instability, insecurity, and infrastructural damage resulting from prolonged conflict undermine the economy of afflicted countries. The Somali economy has been devastated by the protracted civil war raging there; famine and loss of homes are common. Colombia is locked in a vicious cycle of economic hardship and conflict. Lack of eco-

conomic opportunities, high inflation, and elevated levels of unemployment drive the poor to hire themselves out to the only groups hiring — the guerrillas and drug lords. Conflict, and an uncertain economic future, also scares away investors and prompts those with means and money to flee the country, resulting in the twin maladies of brain drain and capital flight, whose negative effects linger long after the end of active fighting. Conditions of greater economic stress further limit the extension and expansion of opportunities for women separated from the established infrastructure, creating a further split of women into the privileged and the ostracized. Such a cyclical situation exacerbates conflict between those who are plugged in to the system (the “in-group”) and those who are not (the “out-group”).

Perhaps even more significant is the development of a culture of violence and the breakdown or demoralization of civil society within populations suffering long-term and intense levels of conflict. According to Hibaq Osman, a Washington-based Somali researcher and activist, the citizenry becomes demoralized, lack of trust is pervasive, and ultimately violence becomes a way of life. The destruction of the national educational system and the disruption of stable familial structures leaves the next generation of leadership unprepared for their roles. Even more critical is the effect of sustained conflict on fragile democratic institutions and the threat of conflict spillover and regional destabilization. The effects of such spillover are most vividly demonstrated in the Balkans and sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Effective Responses: What Are Women Doing?**

Far from solely being the victims of the devastation wreaked by war, women in affected societies are assuming leadership roles and actively addressing the consequences and causes of protracted, violent conflict. They are developing mechanisms to alleviate the suffering of their families, their neighbors, and their societies. Women are working on all levels, from local to national, and in some cases even international, to increase political participation and address the needs of their conflict-torn communities. Women’s responses take numerous forms, including grassroots organizing, cross-community coalition building, and stepping forward as role models and intermediaries.

Given women’s relative lack of presence in the formal political realm of many conflict-torn nations, grassroots efforts are often one of the main outlets of women’s peace activism. It has been asserted that conflict can only be truly resolved through a grassroots, bottom-up approach. The people whose everyday lives are affected by conflict and the mutual animosity and conflicting goals that drive it must be the ones who decide “enough is enough” and resolve to put an end to the fighting. An ancillary belief is that peace cannot be imposed from above; it is the common people who bestow legitimacy on the authorities waging war, and it is the common people who must withdraw their support for continued violence. Official-level, “track one” peace talks often fail because they underestimate the nature of the conflict as well as the depth of the crisis. Simona Sharoni, a scholar of Israeli origin now living in the United States, has written extensively on gender and Middle East politics and contends that track one negotiations also assume symmetrical power relationships, which rarely exist in any real conflict situation; invariably one side is stronger or better resourced than the other(s), giving the “top dog” little incentive to compromise in formal talks. Formal peace negotiations are also insufficiently representative,

rarely including delegates representing the particular interests of women and other marginalized groups at the negotiating table.<sup>11</sup>

It is precisely those women who are excluded from formal efforts at conflict resolution who are at the forefront of grassroots-level organizations tackling the problems caused by prolonged violent conflict. As V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan state, “[b]oth women’s activism in nongovernmental organizations and their traditional roles in sustaining families and communities uniquely position them to mobilize people at the grass-roots level and to devise alternative networks for food, clothing, shelter, and health services.”<sup>12</sup>

- ▀ Osman tells us about a proliferation of women’s nongovernmental organizations in Somalia addressing the issues of migration and displacement, as well as creating avenues for peace. The brunt of that civil war has fallen on women who are left behind to deal with the consequences of war. Realizing that they are now the caregivers, women, energized and given strength through the recognition of their shared experience, have mobilized and taken the initiative to begin restoring destroyed schools, establishing clean water sources, and opening an interclan dialogue on peace. These women understand that to survive they must work together, that peace does not come unless everyone respects others. Toward that end, Somali women engaged in such grassroots efforts have met in various venues since 1993 to discuss a shared long-term vision for Somali society, including the issues of interclan communication and the establishment of a national constitution.
- ▀ Caballero gives examples from Colombia, where grassroots organizations led by women are protesting and organizing for a peaceful resolution to the country’s four-decade-long civil war. Indigenous women have come together to speak out against the violence that is taking such a toll in their communities, caught in the crossfire of battles between Marxist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitary death squads, drug traffickers, and the Colombian government. The Colombia Human Rights Network is hosting a tour of several U.S. cities under the title “Civilians under Fire in Colombia: The Crisis of Indigenous Communities,” featuring as speaker a prominent woman leader of the indigenous communities.
- ▀ In the Middle East, Sharoni speaks of women who have joined together in women’s cooperatives to provide services such as day care centers and women-run restaurants, as well as other critical social services that are often the first victims of the diversion of funding when social spending is cut and the national coffers are emptied to support the war effort. Immediately following the eruption of the Palestinian Intifada in December 1987, groups of mainly Jewish women in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and elsewhere in Israel began demonstrating against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Each Friday, these “Women in Black” stood on the busiest intersection of their respective cities at the height of the lunch-time rush hour, dressed in the black of mourning and carrying signs that read “Stop the Occupation,”<sup>13</sup> opposing the oppression of Palestinians, and drawing attention to the “concomitant moral corruption of Israeli society.”<sup>14</sup> There are also a number of women-led cross-community efforts under way to create opportunities for cultural exchange and grassroots-level conflict resolution: The Bridge: Jewish and Arab Women for Peace in the

Middle East; Nisan Young Women Leaders (developing leadership potential among Jewish and Arab Israeli young women); The Jerusalem Link (which connects two women's organizations, the Palestinian organization The Jerusalem Center for Women and the Israeli group Bat Shalom); and Denver-based Building Bridges for Peace (bringing together Jewish and Arab Israeli young women along with Denver-area high schoolers for training in leadership and conflict resolution).<sup>15</sup>

However, the fragile efforts under way in conflict-torn areas need support from other international and nongovernmental organizations to strengthen advocacy for human rights, women's rights, democracy, equitable economic development, conflict resolution and reconciliation, and postconflict reconstruction.

Another important way that women are organizing for peace is in the construction of cross-community alliances (for example, developing strategic partnerships and networks with women on the "other side" of the conflict divide). This grassroots approach to conflict resolution, often expressed by the popular image of "women building bridges," while crucial to the peace efforts in many conflict areas, has both strong supporters and vehement opponents. The relevance of cross-community alliances to resolving conflicts is often situation specific. For example, in Somalia, Osman contends that the success of women's groups in addressing issues such as internal displacement and migration, providing clean water, and educating the children depended in large measure on the ability of Somali women to overlook the clan affiliation of the other women with whom they were working. In recognition of the necessity of working together on a common cause, seventeen NGOs, constituted and led mainly by Somali women, formed an umbrella organization to coordinate their efforts at peacebuilding, to talk about the needs of their communities, to exchange information, and to establish a dialogue of peace. However, these cross-community alliances were not limited to women-to-women exchanges; the women realized that they must create strategic alliances with other sectors of society as well, such as religious leaders, the business community, and the military, to talk about and make progress in practical matters of everyday survival.

There are, however, problems associated with women's cross-community alliances that lead some to take a more cautious stance toward such efforts and to question their benefits. Sharoni criticizes women's cross-community alliances, concluding that advocates of such alliances tend to ignore asymmetrical power relationships, which are likely present in the conflict itself and thus reflected in most cross-community relations. The only way to sustain cross-community alliances is for both (or all) sides to have a clearly formulated political perspective and a shared vision for postconflict society, a rarity in any conflict-torn society.

Furthermore, the fact that many international aid packages for women's initiatives hinge on the requirement that the women be engaged in or develop cross-community alliances creates further complications. Some see the idea of cross-community alliances as a Western model. Sharoni maintains that women engaged in peace work within their communities are suspicious of outsiders telling them that they must create alliances because (a) many of them are already engaged in alliance-building; (b) it is dangerous for some women to admit that they are involved in such activity, which may be seen as "traitorous"; and (c) it may be premature to create alliances or do cross-community work, as such efforts require a great deal of groundwork to be successful.

However, it is not only within groups that women address the issues of war and peace. There are a number of examples of individual women, often from prominent families, who risk their personal safety to advance the cause of peace, whether acting as role models for other women activists or as intermediaries between conflicting parties. Perhaps some of the most striking instances of individual women taking public stands against violent conflict—of women in the forefront of peace movements—are found in civil war-torn Colombia. Caballero offers the following examples: Ana Teresa Bernal, head of Redepaz (The National Network Initiative Against the War and for Peace), an umbrella organization that coordinated the first national vote for peace, which brought 10 million Colombians to the polls, called on the forces in conflict to halt the cycle of revenge. Gloria Cuartas, as mayor of the city of Apartadó in one of the most conflict-torn regions of Colombia, was a very vocal critic of the Colombian government's handling of the conflict and accepted the challenge to act as a bridge between forces in conflict. She is now working for UNESCO, promoting an international association of women working toward peace called Cartography of Hope. Senator Piedad Córdoba, president of the Senate Human Rights Commission of Colombia, is working to improve the human rights situation between all factions and helping to win the release of kidnapped citizens. Her efforts and prominence resulted in her abduction on May 21, 1999, in Medellín by guerrilla leader Carlos Castaño, who wished to use her as courier for a message of peace.

### Impediments to Women's Organizing

Women's organizing is affected by a variety of factors, including cultural constraints, economic hardships, lack of educational opportunities, and on-the-ground political realities. The phrase "where you stand depends on where you sit" is appropriate in this case, as the opportunities for and constraints on women's organizing for peace vary widely from the context of the Western world to the so-called Third World. This section points to some of the more tangible obstacles faced by women organizing for peace.

Women's organizing in conflict areas is often complicated by a number of impediments. For many of these women, particularly in developing countries, lack of education, on both the formal and informal levels, prevents them from engaging in constructive development. An inability to speak English, the language of many international aid groups and NGOs, as well as a lack of experience and training, further handicaps the attempt to network and establish international contacts. A lack of resources limits women's ability to organize and network; they are often restricted from or are unable to travel outside their own country to advertise their cause. Infrastructural damage caused by the conflict, such as the destruction of transportation routes and communications systems, contributes to this inability as well. For some, as Hibaaq Osman points out, their region's lack of strategic importance for the West limits the availability of aid funds for postconflict reconstruction and development. In addition, despite the fact that women and children constitute the vast majority of refugees and noncombatants affected by the conflict, women continue to be excluded from the political process and from decision making about conflict resolution and reconstruction. Women remain marginalized, and some argue that the main donor countries do not see women's organizations as important priorities. Finally, indigenous organizations in many of the areas in conflict, while increasing in numbers, lack experience, sophistication, strength, and funding.

## Three

### Actions to Empower Women's Movements

**A**mbassador Nancy Rubin, the U.S. representative to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, speaks to the roles of various actors, and specifically the international community, in recognizing and empowering women's movements across the globe. Though much progress has been made in the 1990s by the U.S. government, NGOs, and the UN system, there are a number of suggested areas for improved responsiveness by concerned actors. Indeed, it is only within the latter half of this decade that the international community has begun to recognize the substantial contributions of women to efforts in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. As late as the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, the international community, bombarded daily with accounts of systematic rape and sexual torture used as tools of war in the civil war ravaging Yugoslavia, considered women solely as victims of armed conflict, as bystanders to and casualties of a men's drama.

However, the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, marked a shift in this thinking when the international community began to discuss the role of women in creating and sustaining a "culture of peace." While still recognizing the continued need to address sexual crimes and other violations of women's human rights, the Fourth World Conference on Women also put forward the idea that women's involvement is a necessity in the prevention and resolution of conflicts as well as the promotion of peace and security.

Today, Rubin notes, there is a proliferation of women's organizations, not only local grassroots movements, but also national and international organizations that are well organized and inclusive of a wide range of women's interests and needs. The global women's movement has made much progress in linking issues of development, the environment, and human rights with standards of participation, transparency, and accountability in decision making. However, its role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding is not as far advanced.

There is much that NGOs, the U.S. government, and the United Nations may do to encourage and assist women's movements and organizations in developing their role in conflict resolution and postconflict reconstruction and peacebuilding activities.

#### Nongovernmental Organizations Action

NGOs must:

- build partnerships and collaborate with other NGOs
- encourage sectoral expertise and funding
- recognize the need for high-tech skills and equipment
- lobby for political involvement



## U.S. Government Action

The U.S. government has contributed to recognizing and encouraging women's involvement through programs of the Agency for International Development and the U.S. Information Agency, such as supporting the Rwandan Women's Initiative and contributing to the Bosnian Women's Initiative (through funding contributions to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees), Rubin says. The key to these programs is the emphasis on integrating women into the political and economic lives of their communities, encouraging women to seek and hold rights they have never before enjoyed.

Individual women within the U.S. government have also been instrumental in promoting women's human rights and increased women's involvement in political and economic matters. First Lady Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and Theresa Loar, director of the President's Interagency Council on Women and the U.S. State Department's Special Coordinator for International Women's Issues, are examples. Together they have introduced Vital Voices for Democracy, a program that encourages women's participation in democratization, which had its origins in efforts initiated by Ambassador Swanee Hunt while serving as U.S. envoy to Austria. They have also fostered partnerships among government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to support the full participation of women in the economic, social, and political progress of their countries.

## United Nations Action

The United Nations has made considerable progress on women's rights and involvement. Rubin contends, however, that the United Nations must go further than simply encouraging nations to integrate women into decision making and peacemaking, and must itself act as an example by engaging women more fully in its own peacemaking efforts. Suggestions for actions by the Security Council to improve women's protection in armed conflict and ensure women's involvement in promoting peace, implementing peace agreements, and resolving conflicts include the following:

- Call on all parties to armed conflict to protect women and girls from sexual violence.
- Call for the establishment of reporting systems for sexual abuses; provide resources for monitoring and enforcing mechanisms.
- Urge peacekeeping operations to focus on gender-based violence and women's human rights.
- Strengthen the legal protection of women and girls; urge compliance with international humanitarian and human rights standards.
- Call upon member states to establish measures to address noncompliance.
- Strengthen early warning systems.
- Call for the inclusion of peacebuilding elements in the consolidation of peace agreements and in the mandates of peacekeeping operations.

However, it is important to note that progress and the successful implementation of all these suggestions requires political will and advocacy by women's grassroots organizations. The focus of attention must also include strategies to prevent social unraveling by addressing the root causes of conflict to militate against the outbreak of more violent conflict. Rubin maintains that nothing is more fundamental to peace than the full realization of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; war can be avoided only through the reaffirmation of fundamental human rights, the establishment of conditions for justice, and the promotion of social progress and sustainable development.

Though progress is slow, the international community is beginning to recognize the importance of women and grassroots organizations in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The United Nations is taking steps to guarantee the status of women and enforce women's human rights, through, for example, the efforts of the UN Special Rapporteurs on Violence Against Women, the incorporation of rape as a war crime by the International Criminal Tribunals, and the work of the World Food Program and UNICEF. The way forward is perhaps best highlighted by the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which in 1998 reached consensus on encouraging women to apply for judicial and prosecutorial positions on international bodies; recommending that more women be appointed as special representatives in conflict resolution; increasing the participation of women in peacekeeping operations; and training international peacekeeping forces on human rights and gender sensitivity.

### **Recommendations for Third Party Contributions**

As conflict progresses, a division develops between men and women within a community: men become preoccupied with military or strategic issues while women are often left to deal with the issues of subsistence and day-to-day survival. Peacebuilding requires a focus on subsistence issues, where women in conflict zones have, of necessity, acquired a particular expertise. Shifting resources from strategic to subsistence concerns shifts the focus from fighting the war to building the peace, where the contributions of women are particularly notable. Participants noted that women's indigenous peace efforts may be greatly enhanced by the support and assistance of third party actors.

It is important to acknowledge that every conflict situation presents a unique combination of problems and complicating factors. The involvement of third party actors, while often undertaken with the best of intentions and with the aim of helping to alleviate the consequences of conflict, may also serve to perpetuate or exacerbate the conflict. On the other hand, the success of many indigenous peace efforts may be substantially advanced by the informed interventions of outsiders. This support may take many forms, including advocacy, funding, or training. Panelists and participants put forward many examples of recommended third party contributions. For instance, as the reconstruction of civil society is crucial to any transformation from conflict to peace, Osman stresses that support for institution building, network development, leadership development, and increased involvement by women must be encouraged. Furthermore, the political, economic, and social roles of women must be recognized and encouraged through the provision of material support for women's initiatives.

### *Nongovernmental Organizations Support*

NGOs could step up their advocacy campaigns for women's peacebuilding enterprises. Osman added that they could help to establish dialogue among various women's groups, organize discussion forums for men and women to plan for a sustainable peace, and provide peace education for children and youth. Additionally, international NGOs could assist by providing training and guidance for indigenous organizations.

### *U.S. Government Support*

Activists suggest specific roles or contributions of the U.S. government, NGOs, and the international community that would help to promote and support women's activism in zones of conflict. For instance, some participants suggested that the U.S. government could continue to promote women's political activism and economic success through such programs as the Vital Voices of Democracy initiative. The U.S. government could also provide funding for women's initiatives through the Agency for International Development, particularly initiatives that support institution building and promote network formation.

### *International Community Support*

The international community could not only offer support for internal reforms, but also assist this process by creating workshops to share expertise on human rights, democracy, and the extension of credit to women. Panelists suggested that the international community could also provide guidance on advancing peace processes by sharing lessons learned from the successes or failures of previous peace processes. Through all of this, it is important to keep in mind that the goal is to enable women to build their own self-sufficiency and capacity for reconstruction, not just to provide handouts.

## Four

### Women in Peace: South Africa, Latin America, and Northern Ireland

**W**hile discussing the contributions of third party actors to the empowerment and protection of women in conflict zones, it is imperative that we keep in mind the fact that these women are themselves taking the initiative to rebuild their shattered societies and improve their own quality of life in the post-conflict period. They are taking the necessary steps to deal with the physical, psychological, and political consequences of protracted violent conflict.

Violent conflict devastates physical infrastructure, but protracted conflict also creates cultures of violence and leaves enduring legacies of hatred, animosity, and collective distrust. This culture of violence and distrust often poses a significant barrier to the resolution of the conflict, preventing constructive dialogue and the restoration of peace with justice. Formal negotiations for peace at the level of high politics often discount or even ignore these legacies, which are difficult to address and overcome, and focus instead on the restoration of political order and the imposition of a peace that is “not war.” The peace that is “not war,” however, does not redress the unequal power relationships that are often the cause of violent conflict, nor does it constitute a true peace for many marginalized groups that are subjected to domestic, social, or structural violence even in times of “not war.” True peace cannot be imposed from above, but must be built, nurtured, and sustained from the bottom up. Much of this difficult work of building peace is carried out at the community level by grassroots organizations and women’s organizations, organizations that represent those very sectors of society that are generally excluded from participation at the formal negotiating table.

The examples discussed here provide insights into three very different approaches to peacebuilding in communities that are emerging from long periods of protracted conflict. The story of South Africa explores the attempt to break the cycles of violence through the process of forgiveness and interpersonal reconciliation (that is, reconciliation achieved at the individual level). The example of Latin America examines the struggle of peace movements, such as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, to transition from human rights protesters to postconflict peacebuilders. Finally, the experience of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition offers a rare opportunity to evaluate the success of women in gaining a place at the formal negotiations, in finding an “official” voice in the reconstruction and reconciliation process.

#### South Africa: Interpersonal Reconciliation

South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established, with the assumption that full disclosure would help to restore peace and justice, to investigate atrocities committed by both sides of that country’s struggle over the racist policy of apartheid.

However, far from achieving the goal of “national healing,” Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela tells us, the disclosures that emerged served to widen the gulf between truth and reconciliation. Gobodo-Madikizela, a former member of the commission’s Human Rights Violations Committee and a researcher on issues of remorse and interpersonal reconciliation, offers insights into peacebuilding from her experience and interviews with both victims and perpetrators of apartheid-era atrocities. She relates that at the national and public level, reconciliation became more and more elusive as the truth about apartheid brutality became known. But at the individual level, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission served as a means to bring about a very different and very important achievement, namely, interpersonal reconciliation between individual victims and perpetrators. Such interpersonal encounters between victims and perpetrators offer important lessons on how to build peace in postconflict communities; they highlight the importance of genuine apology and the acknowledgment of wrongdoing in the process of forgiveness and achieving peace.

Despite an effort on behalf of the organizers of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to include adequate gender representation among commissioners,<sup>16</sup> women’s relationship with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has not been without complication. As stated in the Final Report of the Commission, the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) at the University of Witwatersrand convened a seminar entitled “Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” which resulted in a submission to the commission that “discussed ways in which the Commission might be missing some of the truth through a lack of sensitivity to gender issues.”<sup>17</sup> There was a general concern among critics that women were not coming forward to participate in the Truth and Reconciliation process. The commission subsequently agreed to a proposal calling for special women’s hearings, which were held in Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg. These women-only hearings were arranged not only to encourage women to come forward, but also to encourage them to tell their own stories, to speak about abuses they themselves had suffered. Prior to the convening of these special hearings, CALS had noted that “while the overwhelming majority of women spoke as relatives and dependents of those (mainly males) who had directly suffered human rights violations, most of the men spoke as direct victims.”<sup>18</sup> However, at the special hearings most of those who testified spoke as direct victims, relating not only the psychological, emotional, and financial pain of losing a loved one, but also facts about their own rape, torture, and severe ill treatment. These hearings brought to light the particularly gendered ways in which women experienced human rights violations and furthered the process by which the “commissioners distinguished less and less between what were originally perceived as ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ victims.”<sup>19</sup>

Given the often gender-biased nature of official peacebuilding bodies, whether negotiations or truth commissions, it is not surprising that women often search out unofficial mechanisms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. For instance, another significant contribution of the Truth and Reconciliation process occurred more along the margins of the formal amnesty proceedings and involved the face-to-face meetings of victims and perpetrators. Gobodo-Madikizela’s research has focused on the role of remorse and forgiveness in interpersonal reconciliation. Case studies of women who offered forgiveness to

perpetrators of serious atrocities through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process offer insights into the struggle of a nation to break the cycles of violent conflict and rebuild social cohesion while eschewing vengeance in the aftermath of prolonged conflict. According to Gobodo-Madikizela, at the core of this process of forgiveness and interpersonal reconciliation is the concept of *humanity*, the common bond that links victim and perpetrator. It is the ability to empathize with others that allows victims to forgive perpetrators. The perpetrator's offering of a genuine expression of remorse is a "rehumanization" of the perpetrator. Apology, showing genuine remorse and asking forgiveness, is a way of undoing the harm and represents the potential for bringing about healing. The remorseful perpetrator represents a turning of the tables: now the victim has the power, the power to forgive or not. Granting forgiveness places the victim at a higher moral level, allowing the victim to remain "different" from the perpetrator: by forgiving, the victim gives the perpetrator the "second chance" that the perpetrator never allowed the victim.

Both perpetrator and victim are changed by this process. The act of remorse and apology restores to the perpetrator an important part of being human and marks the perpetrator's "rehumanization." It allows the victim to unburden herself of the hatred and anger that she has carried for years, freeing her to start the process of forgiveness and healing. The victim, through this process, is also "rehumanized." The remorse and apology expressed by the perpetrator serves as a reaffirmation of the victim's humanity; it is the recognition of the victim as a human being and the restoration of the victim's dignity. Gobodo-Madikizela states:

Apology and remorse are part of the experience of personalizing acts of violence committed in the past, as opposed to rationalizing, justifying, and projecting them outwards. More importantly, remorse is recognizing the pain, and hence the humanity, of the other. Not recognizing the other's humanity is often at the center of atrocities. Holding on to the denial that harm was done on another is failure to affirm the other's humanity, and a critical impediment to peacebuilding.

### Latin America: Peace Protesters to Peacebuilders

The story of the women of Latin America demonstrates that forgiveness and reconciliation are often conditional on the experiences of the parties involved and that it is sometimes difficult to make a successful transition from being a *protester for peace* to a *builder of peace*. The women of Latin America who organized the groups of relatives of the "disappeared" were mobilized as mothers, united by their common experience of loss. As Jennifer Schirmer, a Harvard anthropologist who has been studying Latin America for over fifteen years, tells us, they were motivated not by some lofty or broad ideology, but by the desire to discover the fate of the child or husband who had "disappeared" during the rule of the repressive military *junta*. As a result, mothers' groups began to be organized in the various countries experiencing the highest rate of "disappearances"; there are now more than twenty-one such groups in eleven countries, which speaks to the transnational nature of the tactic of "disappearance."

The decision to organize as *mothers* was a strategic calculation, designed to exploit the dominant Catholic imagery of the "good mother," which the women subverted, politi-

cized, and turned against the repressive state. Utilizing the ideology of motherhood also provided the opportunity to create alliances that cut across class, ethnic, and religious lines. Additionally, protesting as mothers defending their families opened a political “space” for women to extend their traditional, private sphere roles into the political realm and initially offered them a measure of protection from state repression. In this way, the women utilized the cultural respect for mothers as a form of defense and their nonpolitical identity as a sort of camouflage for their activities.

The “motherist” movements were, in many cases, the first to challenge the repressive authoritarian regimes. The regimes themselves unwittingly enabled the mobilization of this powerful opposition through the use of repressive tactics that invaded and violated the sanctity of the family, the traditional territory of women, thus politicizing the private sphere and legitimizing women’s entry into the public arena. The women’s public defiance of the regimes and their demonstrations, chants, and hunger strikes also reversed the image of women as passive victims of war. Women responded to state violence and the “disappearance” of their children not with the expected passivity and meekness that their culture and their government demanded, but with outrage and a single-minded purpose that took the military regimes by surprise. They invaded the streets and plazas, representative of the political realm and a male preserve, thereby politicizing and publicizing their “private” grief. They openly challenged the regimes, converging on the most visible and symbolic public places, defying the ban on public gatherings and claiming a space for themselves and their demands for justice. These actions, openly taken and defiant, constituted a striking counterpoint to the silence, secrecy, and compliance demanded by the regimes.

The mothers eschewed violence and aggression in their methods, preferring to use civil disobedience, nonviolent protest, and appeals for full disclosure of the facts as their weapons. The mothers utilized symbols drawn from the celebrations of life, such as flowers, candles, and photographs of their children and husbands, in their protests as emblems of peace and justice and as reminders of the humanity of those who have “disappeared.” All of the mothers’ tactics and strategies are aimed at creating a space in the collective memory for their “disappeared” relatives; they refuse to allow them to be forgotten or to remain labeled as “subversives” or “terrorists.”

The movements’ effects reverberated through every level — individual, societal, and international — transforming the women’s perceptions of themselves as political agents, aiding the redemocratization process, and internationalizing the issue of human rights abuses in Latin America. Once they became politicized, however, these women also lost some of the protection afforded by their maternal status and became themselves the target for repression: members of mothers’ groups have been kidnapped, tortured, raped, “disappeared,” and assassinated. Their peaceful protests, met with such fury by the police and military, only served to highlight the brutality and violence of the regimes. The vicious repression aimed at the mothers is also a testimony to the power of their presence, their message, and their appeal. They turned their very “powerlessness” into a tool to demystify the powerful. When the regimes “crossed the line” (by attacking women and their supporters in the Church), they undermined their own power base and this contributed to their eventual collapse and the transition back to civilian rule (however flawed).

It is, however, an unfortunate commentary on the strength of tradition that the very groups that first defied the *juntas* and raised the banners of protest, thus opening the way for other forms of opposition, should be eclipsed by traditional politics once the military regimes have been replaced by civilian governments. The fact that these groups of women were instrumental in bringing about a change in the repressive system seems to be overlooked by the political parties that have now reinstalled themselves in the seats of power. The reconstituted political parties, interested in regaining their lost power and placating a still powerful military, offered blanket amnesties for military and police personnel, exonerating them for crimes against humanity committed during the military's reign of terror. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, like other groups, are still demanding to know the details of their loved ones' fate; they represent this continuing demand for peace *with* justice and their lack of satisfaction by the expression *Aparición Con Vida* or Bring Them Back Alive.

It is one of the ironies of the legacy of repression that the military should take women more seriously than does the civilian government. The space opened for women's human rights protest under oppressive military regimes, a period in which traditional political parties were outlawed or cowed into submission, has effectively been closed with the transition to democratic rule and the reestablished dominance of political parties and trade unions. Redemocratization has brought the political remarginalization of women and the re-institution of traditional gender roles. For the majority of these women, however, such marginalization does not constitute defeat, and they continue to protest for the vindication of the "disappeared" and the bringing to justice of the perpetrators of the violent repression that characterized their lives for so many years. For them, there can be no peace without justice.

### **Northern Ireland: Demanding a Place at the Table**

While the women of Latin America struggle to find a place in the political arena after the restoration of democracy, the women of Northern Ireland banded together to form an official political party and won two seats in elections for places at the negotiating table. The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) provides an all too rare opportunity to examine the role of women in formal negotiations for peace. As Kate Fearon, political adviser to the group, tells us, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition was born out of the desire to ensure that women's interests were remembered in the discussion of the future structure of Northern Irish society. NIWC was constituted by a group of women, mainly from the NGO sector, from women's groups working at the community level; they came together to serve at the public, elected level, determining who would be at the table for negotiations.

The process of forming such a coalition was not easy, however. As with any cross-community coalition, there was the problem of formulating a clearly articulated political perspective that would encompass the needs and interests of a very diverse group of women. The original founders of NIWC were very conscious of the differences among their number: differences of religion (Catholic and Protestant), class (middle-class and working-class), and ideology (conservative and liberal). They determined that the three core cross-cutting principles that their organization would embrace were the principles of hu-



man rights, equality, and inclusion; these organizing principles were referred to whenever disagreements needed to be settled, and they helped to steer the movement and sustain it in its political development.

For the women, the shift from working outside the political process to working within it posed difficulties that challenged their resourcefulness and resolve. Most of the women who joined NIWC had worked for a number of years at the community level, but many had difficulty adjusting to the life of formal politics. They discovered that there was a great deal of discrepancy in the amount of power they were able to wield within each realm. They also found that their constitution as a political party caused problems in their ability to garner funding: having given up their status as charity or community organizations, they had to explore alternate options for fund raising. However, the group's success in getting two of its members—Monica McWilliams and Pearl Sagar—elected to the peace talks helped to ease their financial woes, as the government was now obligated to assist in funding the delegates and, thus, their organization.

The women of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition realized, as many women politicians do, that to succeed in the realm of formal politics they had to become somewhat like the system, to adjust just a bit to fit the system. But, they insist, the system has also had to adjust in order to accommodate their participation. Among the aims of NIWC are to increase awareness of women's political participation and to change the culture of politics, to do politics in a different way. In the context of the Good Friday Agreement, doing things differently included proposing and supporting measures that addressed not only the causes of the conflict but also its consequences. That is what the group succeeded in inserting into the Good Friday Agreement: human rights, equality, provisions for victims, and the Civic Forum.

Some of the success of NIWC in getting its proposals inserted into the Good Friday Agreement hinged on one of its most important characteristics, a characteristic that is commonly associated with the "feminine" perspective: the ability and willingness to cooperate and compromise. NIWC did not enter into the talks defending one fixed position, but they tried instead to determine where commonalities existed among the factions and where compromises could be made. Its problem-solving approach differentiated it from the other parties that had vested interest in maintaining their original positions. Indeed, the parties are still struggling to implement the agreement, as the debate over the decommissioning issue illustrates the lack of trust felt by both sides.

Throughout the long process of negotiations leading up to the Good Friday Agreement, the parties to the conflict were supported in the endeavor by external agents, particularly the U.S. government, the Irish government, and the European Union. However, when the agreement was signed, many of the external actors withdrew a bit, making it difficult for the two sides to successfully implement the provisions of the agreement because the severe distrust characterizing the relationship remains. Fearon urges that support offered by outside parties to groups in conflict be continued in the post-agreement phase to ensure that the agreement's implementation is successfully completed. But such support must be provided in such a way as to encourage the parties' self-sufficiency and discourage the parties from becoming dependent on the outside agent. In the case of Northern Ireland, much implementation is occurring on the grassroots level, while very little

progress is being made at the level of high politics. Implementation is sporadic, and negotiations between the parties on various provisions continue.

As Fearon points out, a number of suggestions may be put forward to help improve the situation in Northern Ireland, especially as concerns the women of Northern Ireland. For instance, international trade delegations interested in doing business in Northern Ireland should include more women, human rights advisors, and community activists. Such delegations could also visit local community or women's groups in the area in which there is to be investment to solicit input and assess the impact of their proposed investments. NGOs could help to develop school curricula in the areas of human rights and peace education. NGOs could also be instrumental in developing seminars and exchanges of good practices, bringing pressure to bear on formal political groupings, and supporting local communities. Finally, traditions that reinforce unequal power relations need to be changed, yet this change must be managed in a way that does not alienate others or cut off the lines of communication. In other words, a critical dialogue must be established that will further the cause of peace in Northern Ireland.

## Five

### Conclusions

Violence and warfare establish, reinforce, and exacerbate divisions within communities. Once inflicted, such divisions cannot be undone without the active participation of all members of the community. The processes of healing, reconciliation, and reconstruction cannot be effectively implemented by a single group or sector of society acting alone. Deep divisions cannot be bridged solely by the victors, nor by the victims, nor by the survivors; nor will they disappear with the arrival of a new generation. The easing of contentious social divisions requires the conscious contributions and full commitment of all sectors of a society wishing to move forward to elevate its heritage.

The emphasis placed here on women's grassroots movements and their roles in the mending process is not intended to elevate these groups above other movements. The goal has been to draw attention to an important, yet often neglected, aspect of the conflict resolution process and to make sure that the crucial role of women in war-torn societies is not overlooked or dismissed. Women, with their fundamental concern for subsistence and survival issues, are essential actors and leaders in grassroots movements, especially in times of civil strife. Women's participation in the quest for peace aids capacity-building in societies threatened by violent conflict. By preparing for peace and delegitimizing violence, societies become more resistant to armed conflict and resilient in the face of challenges.

The work of nongovernmental organizations and grassroots movements is important work, but it is work that is often overlooked by policymakers and their advisors. The work of grassroots movements is not often glamorous; it is the everyday work of survival. This everyday work easily escapes the notice of governments overwhelmed by the immediate dramas of warfare because they consider it "common" and "ordinary." But common is the foundation of community, and ordinary is the root of extraordinary.

Thus, just as all parts of community must be involved in the process of healing divisions, so must all aspects of conflict resolution be given due weight. The importance of the "common" must be recognized: the pursuit of peace or the stabilization of a peace agreement is most successful when it reflects the diversity of the community. The role of the common and ordinary must be kept in sight when we discuss the future of community; the common deserves a presence and a voice in policy decisions.

## Notes

1. Georgina Waylen, *Gender in Third World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), pp. 7–8.
2. V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues*, 2nd edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), p. 96.
3. J. Ann Tickner, "Why Women Can't Run the World: International Politics According to Francis Fukuyama," *International Studies Review*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1999), pp. 3–11.
4. For an examination of these issues, see *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, edited by Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996), especially Part II on "Statecraft, Intervention, and International Order," pp. 173–376.
5. J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 28.
6. Structural violence was introduced as a concept by Johan Galtung in the 1969 article "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 3 (1969), pp. 167–191. As defined by Peterson and Runyan, "structural violence, which is differentiated from but related to direct physical violence, arises from social, economic, and political structures that increase the vulnerability of various groupings of people (women, minorities, children, the aged, the disabled, gays and lesbians, etc.) to many forms of harm (poverty, hunger, infant mortality, disease, isolation, etc.)." Peterson and Runyan, *Global Gender Issues*, p. 260.
7. Peterson and Runyan, *Global Gender Issues*, p. 56 (emphasis in the original).
8. Point 13 of the Beijing Declaration of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, September 15, 1995, A/CONF.177/20 (1995) and A/CONF.177/20/Add.1 (1995).
9. Tickner, "Why Women Can't Run the World." See also Monty G. Marshall and Donna Ramsey, "Gender Empowerment and the Willingness of States to Use Force," paper prepared for the 1999 International Studies Association conference in Washington, DC, February 19–22, 1999.
10. An example of this type of technological warfare in which societal infrastructure was specifically targeted is the U.S.-led NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, where bridges, power plants, and radio and television installations were destroyed.
11. There are notable exceptions, though, including the recent negotiations over Northern Ireland resulting in the Good Friday Agreement, discussed later in this book. For more detail on women's involvement in formal negotiations, see the new publication from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), *Women at the Peace Table: Making a Difference* ([www.unifem.undp.org](http://www.unifem.undp.org)).
12. Peterson and Runyan, *Global Gender Issues*, p. 50.
13. Juliet J. Pope, "The Emergence of a Joint Israeli-Palestinian Women's Peace Movement during the Intifada," in Haleh Afshar, ed., *Women in the Middle East: Perceptions, Realities and Struggles for Liberation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 172–184.

14. Sara Helman and Tamar Rapoport, "Women in Black: Challenging Israel's Gender and Socio-political Orders," *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 48, no. 4 (1997), p. 683.
15. Internet sites for these groups are as follows:
  - The Bridge: Jewish and Arab Women for Peace in the Middle East (<http://tx.technion.ac.il/~ada/the-bridge.html>);
  - The Jerusalem Link (<http://www.batshalom.org/JerusalemLink.htm>);
  - The Jerusalem Center for Women (<http://www.j-c-w.org>);
  - Bat Shalom (<http://www.batshalom.org>);
  - Building Bridges for Peace (<http://ajp.com/bbfp.html>).
  - The website for Nisan Young Women Leaders (<http://www.nisan.org>) appears to be defunct.
16. Seven of the original seventeen commissioners were women, though, as Graybill states, "Membership was later increased to provide further gender and ethnic balance and to be more broadly representative." Lyn S. Graybill, "Pursuit of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa," *Africa Today/Africa Rights Monitor*, vol. 45, no. 1 (Jan./Mar. 1998), p. 104.
17. *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report*, vol. 4, ch. 10, "Special Hearing: Women," p. 1. (<http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/commissions/1998/trc/4chap10.htm>)
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.

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