

Reflecting on Peace Practice Program
Understanding Cumulative Impacts of Peacebuilding

Issue Paper:
**Women, Gender and Peacebuilding:
Do Contributions Add Up?**

We are seeking your feedback & reflections!

This Issue Paper is a working DRAFT.

*As part of our collaborative process,
CDA's Reflecting on Peace Practice Program
welcomes your feedback,
based on your own experience and insights.*

*Please e-mail your thoughts or questions regarding this Issue Paper
by or before **October 1, 2012**
to Chloe Berwind-Dart at cberwind@cdainc.com.*

*Thank you in advance
for your observations and suggestions.*

This document was developed as part of a collaborative learning project directed by CDA. It is part of a collection of documents that should be considered initial and partial findings of the project. These documents are written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across a range of situations. Each Issue Paper represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people at the time when it was written.

These documents do not represent a final product of the project. While these documents may be cited, they remain working documents of a collaborative learning effort. Broad generalizations about the project's findings cannot be made from a single case or Issue Paper.

CDA would like to acknowledge the generosity of the individuals and agencies involved in donating their time, experience and insights for these reports, and for their willingness to share their experiences.

For background information on the collaborative learning process and cumulative impacts, please refer to the *Understanding Cumulative Impacts of Peacebuilding* document on the CDA website by directing your browser to the following pathway:

http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/other/rpp_understandingcumulativeimpactsofpeaceefforts_background_Pdf.pdf

Issue Paper:

WOMEN, GENDER AND PEACEBUILDING: DO CONTRIBUTIONS ADD UP?

Introduction:

Over the last two decades, significant attention has been paid to the different dimensions of women and peacebuilding. Beginning with Security Council Resolution 1325, the first formal international document that acknowledged women's roles in the maintenance of national and international security, women's diverse experiences during conflict and reconstruction (and the impact of armed conflict on women) have been increasingly documented. Women's roles can range from perpetuating violence through support for or engagement in combat, to mobilizing and leading peacebuilding efforts, representing a departure from the typical portrayal of all women as passive victims of war. Despite this paradigm shift from women as victims to women as exercising different kinds of agency, women continue to be especially vulnerable in modern armed conflict contexts, and sexual and gender-based violence has been officially acknowledged by the United Nations as a weapon of war. Gender analysis can shed light on how women and men experience conflict and peace differently, as well as the effects of conflict on gender dynamics and roles.

Though women are seldom represented in official peace negotiations, their work as peacebuilders in their families, communities and societies is significant. Just recently the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to three women for both grassroots and senior level peace work in Liberia and Yemen. Despite increasing attention to women as agents of peaceful change, this work often operates at the grassroots, peace-writ-little level, far from Track I efforts.

Often the argument for greater inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes comes from a social justice or human rights perspective: women have the right to participate and have equal representation at the table because they are fifty percent of the population. While compelling, this argument can fall upon deaf ears. With this issue in mind, researchers have shifted the questions to become, "How do we make a compelling case for the inclusion of women and gender perspectives in a broad range of peace processes? What were the specific themes that women were talking about in negotiations? If we look at governance [and post conflict reconstruction strategies] from a gender perspective, does it make a difference?"¹

The Reflecting on Peace Practice cumulative case process is focused on exploring when and how peace efforts "add up" to progress towards peace. Within this context, case writers were asked to

¹ Anderlini, Sanam Naraghi "Women's Contributions to Peace Processes: What the Research Tells Us" 2005
http://www.genderandsecurity.umb.edu/Sanam%20Anderlini%202-9-05%20_2_.pdf

inquire about the work of women and women's organizations in relation to peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Is there evidence of women's contributions to consolidating peace, and do women's initiatives, pre- and post- conflict, contribute to the "adding up" process? Do women play key or catalyzing roles in perpetuating, preventing, or transforming conflict? Out of RPP's sixteen cumulative case studies, only five mentioned significant contributions of women to the "adding up" process. This being so, it also seems pertinent to ask, what does this *lack* of evidence indicate? This issue paper will first briefly discuss assumptions about the issue of women, gender and peacebuilding, then examine the evidence of women's contributions as found in the case studies, and then discuss why there was a lack of evidence in the remaining case studies.

Brief Discussion on the Discourse on Women, Gender and Peacebuilding

As one point of reference for this discussion, we turn to several false assumptions identified by CDA's Do No Harm project with regard to women and violence: One assumption that was identified is that women are less prone to violence than men, and are therefore "connectors." Many people assume that since women bear children and are their primary caregivers, they are predisposed to be peaceful and reject violence. In reality, neither sex nor gender roles are predictors of peacefulness. Additionally, "women" are often treated as a concrete group with a set of common interests, when the role of "woman" is only one of multiple identities that an individual might hold. "Women" must always be further disaggregated as a category.²

The women and peacebuilding conversation has helped shift the frame from the assumption that women are first and foremost victims of war. It is true that women are among the most vulnerable during times of war and are also differently affected by conflict than other populations. Sanam Anderlini writes, "...even though they're victimized, they are not passive victims. Despite the fact that they've been raped, they've been displaced, they're sitting in a refugee camp, they are doing things. They're going out and getting wood, they're getting water, they are looking after the kids, and they are looking after the elderly. They are still doing so much, which is about survival, about keeping their lives going and keeping a sense of normality going – the kind of element that makes peace possible. So, they're not passive at all. And we need to recognize that, and build on it, because it is this what carries the potential for positive change."³

Additionally, the use of "gender" in this paper does not refer only to women. Masculinity and femininity are social roles that are learned and played out daily in society. These roles come

² Guidance Note, "Do No Harm and Gender"

³ Anderlini, Sanam Naraghi "Women's Contributions to Peace Processes: What the Research Tells Us" 2005 http://www.genderandsecurity.umb.edu/Sanam%20Anderlini%20202-9-05%20_2_.pdf

along with strong social pressure to act in certain ways, based on the traditional or cultural definitions of what it means to be “man” and “woman” in different places.⁴

Advocacy on behalf of women is also based on the argument that women are able to bridge ethnic, religious, political and cultural divides more easily and willingly than men. “Social science research indicates that women generally are more collaborative than men and are thus more inclined towards consensus and compromise.”⁵ Additionally, women are said to be invested in stopping conflict because “women are motivated to protect their children and ensure the security of their families... despite, or because of, the harsh experiences of so many who survive violent conflict, women generally refuse to give up the pursuit of peace.”⁶ Though women often serve as combatants or supporters of certain war efforts, their role as mothers is often pointed to with regards to their preference for peace. In terms of the incorporation of women’s rights (and other rights discussions) in the peacebuilding agenda, it is argued that, “Because sexism, racism, classism, ethnic and religious discrimination originate from the same set of beliefs that some people are inherently “better” than others, women’s empowerment should be seen as inherent to the process of building peace.”⁷

RPP Case Evidence

The case evidence suggests a number of themes relating to women’s roles during and after conflict and how their contributions can have an effect on Peace Writ Large. The following section will discuss the themes of:

1. Communication and bridging
2. Advocacy and participation before and during formal negotiations
3. Post-conflict influence in political space and consolidation of gains
4. Contributions of women to civil society’s cumulative impacts
5. Symbolic statements by women that send powerful cultural messages

1. ***Communication and bridging:*** In places where women’s contributions to peace consolidation were most notable, women came together by bridging differences in religion, ethnicity, class and urban and rural divides for the larger cause of peace. Working across divides proved to have powerful effects in a number of cases, allowing more robust organizations and networks to emerge, as well as preparing the ground for peace within the larger population. In most of these

⁴ Schirch, Lisa and Manjrika Sewak, “The Role of Women in Peacebuilding,” GPPAC Issue Paper, 2005. P 5

⁵ “The Vital Role of Women in Peacebuilding”

http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cf (accessed April 11, 2012)

⁶ “The Vital Role of Women in Peacebuilding”

http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cf (Accessed April 11, 2012)

⁷ Schirch, Lisa and Manjrika Sewak, “The Role of Women in Peacebuilding,” GPPAC Issue Paper, 2005. P 6

cases, these kinds of collaborations built on historic traditions of women's organizing and mobilization and/or women stepping out of traditionally defined gender roles. In Liberia, Christian and Muslim women organized together to put pressure on Charles Taylor to go to the negotiating table. These relationships were built on historic women's networks throughout Liberia that were established across social, ethnic, and class divides, mainly by religious organizations. Many Christian organizations in small towns and regional centers beyond the capital provided an important site for cross-class contact and collaboration between educated and illiterate women. With Liberia's long history of 19th century missionary work and settlement, these organizations forged multi-generational ties among women who have experience working together and respecting each other's abilities and, despite social upheaval, memories of these alliances remain a resource and made collaboration possible.

In some cases, bridging work by women's organizations was done to address key issues in the adding up process. In Burundi, after the peace agreement was signed, there was an urgent need for mechanisms that addressed community divisions. As part of the larger effort to promote dialogue, women's organizations created radio programs aimed at connecting women's efforts at the elite and grassroots levels, offered training courses on conflict resolution, facilitated the creation of mutual aid and conflict resolution networks, as well as female-run production cooperatives. These groups made it possible to build bridges between different categories of women, notably by creating exchanges between internally displaced Tutsi women and Hutu women who had remained in their homes.

In the Solomon Islands, women came together within their spheres of influence—churches, the home, markets—often at great personal risk, to encourage an end to the violence. The national body, Women for Peace, brokered peace between the women from Malaita who were corralled in Honiara and the women from the Guadalcanal Plains who were unable to access Honiara due to checkpoints. The women exchanged food and set up a market whereby those in Honiara could exchange goods for fresh foods from the plains. The market ran for many years and provided a meeting point for women to share stories and ideas and maintain connections. Their activities were supplemented in 2001 by the establishment of the media organization focused on women and peace, The Women's Voice, whose objective was to influence public opinion about women and peace issues, and to provide timely and relevant information that would enable women to make informed choices which broadcast stories of women's contributions to peacebuilding.

2. *Advocacy and participation before and during formal negotiations:* In some cases, women organized to put pressure on leaders concerning peace negotiations. These efforts, in the form of nonviolent, organized protests and more direct advocacy, proved to ripen the issue of peace and seem to have had significant cumulative effects on the behavior of the parties in power. In Burundi, networks of women's organizations played active roles in the peace process, with a focus on advocacy to the mediators of the Regional Peace Initiative. A women's delegation

traveled to Kampala to meet with Ugandan President Museveni who was presiding over the regional initiative. Women's peace lobbying groups organized themselves into the Women's Association Collective (CAFOB) that later represented women's organizations at the official talks in Arusha, seeking greater women's participation in the country's political institutions.

In Liberia and the Solomon Islands, women's groups were barred from participating in official peace talks, despite their significant role in bringing them about. In Liberia, a number of women's groups were active throughout the conflict, most notably for organizing mass demonstrations for peace in Monrovia to impress upon the government and the international community that most Liberians wanted the fighting to end. Although several of those interviewed for the case study believe that the influence of the Liberian women's peace movement in bringing about the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) has been overemphasized, they did confirm that women's groups were among the more outspoken civil society actors during the war and added a genuine popular voice to the international pressure for peace and had an influence on the peace negotiations in Accra and on some of the clauses of the CPA.

During the early phases of the conflict in the Solomon Islands, national women's bodies with substantial influence at the local and national level were formed, aimed at brokering peace and disseminating information. For instance, Women for Peace worked to build trust and confidence between the two militant groups, through sharing perspectives, exchanging information and raising women's issues, as well as by letting the militants know the extent of the suffering caused to women and children as a result of the violence. Despite testimony from militants about women's important role in persuading them to agree to the initial ceasefire provisions, these women's organizations were not invited into the Townsville Peace Agreement process, or processes at the government and regional assistance level. "However, in many ways, the disruption of the status quo and the arrival of a regional assistance mission generated space for women's organization to advocate for women's issues and to reframe issues using a gender lens."⁸

3. *Post-Conflict Influence in Political Space and Consolidation of Gains:* Post-conflict contexts represent windows of opportunity to consolidate and institutionalize the gains of women. There is evidence, in some cases, that space opened up for increased women's participation in decision-making bodies due to new quota systems. Additionally, government bodies and legislation have also been established to represent the interests of women and put gender issues on the agenda more broadly. Most notably in Liberia, the involvement of women's networks throughout the conflict and post-conflict period contributed not only to the accession to power of the first elected female African head of state, but also promoted increased mobilization of women, greater visibility of women in the public realm and, after the elections, the expansion

⁸ RPP Solomon Islands case study.

of women's rights, including the passing of the country's first anti-rape law in 2006. The Ministry of Gender is active in organizing urban and rural women to ensure that their voices are heard in local decision making. Similarly, in the Solomon Islands, the creation of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs has made women's issues more visible in government policy debates. Recently a domestic violence policy has been adopted, and the Ministry lobbies for a quota for women's representatives in parliament.

In Mozambique, women's participation in government has increased since the conflict: the prime minister is a woman, several women hold cabinet positions, including the Minister of Justice, and ninety women are parliamentarians (35.8%). Though the trend is not consistent throughout the country, within CSOs and at the grassroots level, it was reported that men and women are increasingly working together and the leadership of women is increasingly recognized. Also, the Christian Council of Mozambique notes increasing numbers of women ministers leading congregations, signaling shifts in cultural norms. In Burundi, women's organizations sought to obtain greater women's participation in the country's political institutions. As a result of their efforts, the Arusha Accords and the subsequent national constitution stipulated that no less than 30% of governmental posts and parliamentary offices be occupied by women. During the electoral campaign, this network of women's groups campaigned to encourage women to vote and run for elected office. The extent to which this increase in participation contributes to women's empowerment generally is unclear and discussed later in this issue paper.

4. *Contributions of Women to Civil Society's Cumulative Impacts:* In some cases in which the role of civil society was critical in preparing the ground for and consolidating peace, women's organizations were robust and guiding members of these movements. There is evidence of women working to address key drivers of conflict and issues identified as critical to the adding up process. In South Africa, it has been acknowledged that without the peace infrastructure created by civil society action, negotiated settlements would not have been reached as peacefully or quickly. Organizations like the Black Sash represented the robust women's movement against apartheid and served an important linking function between the grassroots and Track I processes. Founded by predominantly white women, the Black Sash used peaceful protests, silent vigils and petitions to oppose apartheid, as well as providing trainings and development assistance to increase the capacity of local organizations. By communicating the events of Track I processes to communities, they created community ownership of these processes and laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In Liberia, women's groups and networks are among the more active and capable civil society actors. As noted above, the Ministry of Gender is actively involving urban and rural women in local decision making, and many internationally sponsored peacebuilding projects at least nominally require the involvement of women in local peace committees. There is a risk that the efforts of women's advocacy groups will get categorized as focusing largely on what are

perceived as typical women's issues. However, the more prominent women's networks remain engaged in advocacy on issues such as public accountability and transparency, notably with respect to the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, as well as some of the civil society advocacy and civic education activities around the TRC final report. Women's NGOs are holding the government accountable to the promises made in the Poverty Reduction Strategy document, which defines the post-war reconstruction and development framework for Liberia.

5. *Women make symbolic statements that send powerful cultural messages:* One interviewee noted that, "when women take a dramatic stance, there is a shift."⁹ There are examples of women making symbolic statements that send powerful cultural messages as a way to leverage what little power they might have. In the Niger Delta women's groups took a stand against violence by collectively taking off their clothes, which sent a powerful shaming message to Nigerian men. In Liberia women withheld sex during their protests, and when negotiations became stalled, a few activists began to strip outside of the site of the negotiations.

Additional Discussion

What does the lack of evidence say? In several of the RPP case studies, women's roles were not mentioned as having a cumulative or catalytic impact. However, even in these cases women were involved in peace efforts, and may even have made significant contributions. One Northern Ireland case writer commented that while of course there were women involved in peacebuilding—particularly at the middle and grassroots levels—when asked what initiatives contributed to cumulative impacts, no interviewees mentioned women's initiatives, so they were not included in the case. Discussions with case writers revealed a similar dynamic in relation to other RPP cases that either did not mention or nominally mentioned women with respect to cumulative impacts. While interviewees might not have characterized women's initiatives alone as being responsible for adding up, in most cases there was evidence of women doing peacebuilding work. The Haiti case writer commented that interviewees might not have mentioned women's contributions to cumulative impacts because gender was not on people's minds or central to peacebuilding or development strategies there, so it did not emerge in these conversations.

A follow-up conversation identified a further example of women playing a significant (though perhaps not catalytic) role in Northern Ireland. The Women's Commission had an important role in the development and early implementation of the Belfast Agreement. They got two candidates elected to the first Assembly elections and decided not to run under the usual party labels—which was significant because politics in Northern Ireland are sectarian (divided into Protestant/Unionist and Catholic/Nationalist parties). In addition, they decided to focus on changing the political process, making it less sectarian, more pragmatic, more responsive and

⁹ South Africa case study interviewee, personal communication, January 2012.

accountable. While they had an impact at that point in time, they eventually lost their influence like all the middle parties.

Similarly, in the case of Cyprus, though there was no significant mention of women in relation to adding up, there was significant work done by women, including a women's NGO called Hands Across the Divide which was noted as doing bi-communal, environmental, historical and cultural preservation and bridging work on both sides. Additionally, women's initiatives were highly visible during the collective Turkish movement to approve the Annan Plan, including a human chain activity on both sides of the Ledra Palace in support of a solution, as well as demonstrations during the Clerides-Denktaş dinners where Turkish Cypriot women gathered in the streets chanting, "it is enough, reach an agreement, and let's join the EU together."¹⁰

Conversely, a Mindanao case writer commented that women's NGOs and civil society organizations like the Mindanao Commission on Women, currently serve essential functions as connectors between different peacebuilding tracks. Rural women's voices are also increasingly heard because of the Culture of Peace trainings that have become ubiquitous in Mindanao. Women have strong spheres of influence in the Philippines, particularly in the peacebuilding field, despite the strong patriarchal culture of the country.

Gender Analysis and Adding Up. Beyond the roles that women play specifically, gender plays a major role in armed conflict. One case writer noted that, "the division of roles and the stereotyping of people by gender is a mainstay of an armed conflict of this sort, and marginalizes women almost completely."¹¹ The needs of women and other low power and traditionally marginalized groups are often subordinated in post-conflict reconstruction strategies. The RPP cases have evidence of the potential for doing harm that can result from a lack of a gendered analysis. In Aceh, the GAM DDR process did not include women, and, as a result, there were no formal channels for women fighters to reintegrate into society, even though it is openly acknowledged that they participated as combatants. No women were included in the list of 3,000 names the GAM provided the government for reintegration assistance. LINA-Liga Inong Aceh was an organization started by the only female negotiator in the Helsinki process to train and mobilize women ex-combatants and give women a voice in the peace process. LINA provided assistance to over 2,000 women ex combatants with the support of international agencies.

Are Women's Agendas More Inclusive? There is evidence that, when given the opportunity, women are responsible for shifting the conversation and putting neglected issues that could be key to the adding up process on the agenda (and keeping them on the agenda in post-conflict reconstruction). A few cases surfaced the assumption that women in positions of power and women who participate in peace talks will be more likely to prioritize and surface "softer" issues.

¹⁰ RPP Cyprus case

¹¹ Case writer, personal communication, January, 2012.

Feedback workshop participants said that, in their experiences, women often shift conversations to include a wider range of issues that include the concerns of children, women and minorities. “We hear more community issues when women speak, rather than power issues. Humanitarian needs also come up. We need to ensure that all views are taken into consideration, including women’s voices.”¹² “In a recent discussion between Pakistani and Indian religious leaders... men quickly move to political positions but women are more likely to discuss common history and values as well as common interests... Women emphasize common values.”¹³

From a rights perspective, and since women are differently affected by conflict, they should be included at the table in negotiations and reconstruction planning, because they will ensure that peace agreements are more inclusive. In Northern Ireland there was an alliance of working-class women's groups chaired by Joyce McCartan, who kept bringing issues such as employment, housing, and education back onto the agenda, when mainstream political parties talked only of borders and sectarian divisions. Similarly, in Burundi, the Solomon Islands and Liberia, to the extent that they could, women expanded the agenda to be more inclusive.

Is the increased participation of women in positions of power indicative of positive, long-term change? In some countries women have achieved significantly increased roles at all levels of post-conflict society (in government, civil society, business etc). Despite these gains, there has not been a fundamental shift regarding cultural perceptions of the role of women, or in the systems of power that perpetuated the structural causes of conflict and marginalization. Though Liberia has been heralded for the extent to which women’s contributions to peacebuilding have become consolidated post-conflict, most interviewees observed a lack of fundamental change in the political and economic power structures in the country.

In places like Liberia and Rwanda, where women’s participation at elite levels has increased significantly, feedback workshop participants and case writers questioned this as “real progress” or an indication of adding up, suggesting that women leaders are seen not as women, but as “honorary males.” Is their elevated status just a reflection of their privilege as members of an elite aristocracy? How can linkages be made between elite women in positions of power and the women at the grassroots and community levels? One feedback workshop participant noted, “Women’s gains are basically tokenism in Uganda, there is a domestic relations bill that would give women equality with men in marriage and in all other arenas, but the way society is constructed and the way people are socialized, you can’t change these things because a few elite women manipulated equal rights into a piece of paper. You can’t turn around and tell women in villages that this applies to your life.”¹⁴

¹² Nairobi Feedback workshop participant

¹³ Oslo Feedback Workshop Participant

¹⁴ Nairobi Feedback Workshop participant

Since women's efforts are often at the grassroots, what does this tell us about the adding up process? Evidence shows that it is hard to know the full extent of women's true contribution to peacebuilding, since most women's efforts occur at the grassroots level, resulting in under-reporting. RPP cases also suggest that there is a general lack of knowledge and acknowledgement of this work at a societal level. In Mozambique, it is not known outside of the ex-combatant community that women ex-fighters are revered leaders within that group. In Liberia, though there is little documentation of any efforts outside of Monrovia (women's or otherwise), robust women's efforts in urban areas and Liberia's history of women's movements suggest it is likely that women were heavily involved in local peace and reconciliation efforts in rural areas. This lack of reporting, exposure and acknowledgement of women's contributions to peacebuilding could also help explain the lack of evidence of the specific dimensions of whether their efforts contribute to Peace Writ Large. At the same time, even if women are making strong contributions at a community level, this work does not always translate into significant changes at higher levels.

In RPP Feedback Workshops, many participants who worked at the grassroots and middle levels of the peacebuilding field had examples of women's influence changing men's calculations about the use of violence. In Somalia women regularly march to protest the use of violence by warlords, and in the Philippines women's nonviolent efforts in relation to the Bantay Ceasefire contributed significantly to increasing community resilience to withstand violence.

In most contexts, there are examples of the diverse roles that women take on in the peacebuilding arena. RPP is interested in exploring what relationship, if any, these roles have to adding up to cumulative impacts? To what extent are theories of change about the benefits of having women involved in peace processes born out in practice? RPP found that though women have roles in many areas of peacebuilding work, only in specific cases are these lynchpin roles that have catalyzing effects. In most cases in which women did have key roles in adding up, these were locally born initiatives in places with a history of women networking and activism across traditional divides.

Additional Questions:

1. Peacebuilding and gender equality goals are often conflated, assuming that attaining peace will lead to greater gender equality, or that the establishment of gender equality will help bring peace.¹⁵ Is there evidence linking increased gender equality to Peace Writ Large?
2. In places where women did contribute to cumulative impacts, did their contribution correlate with a history in their countries of a women's movement? What creates the conditions for women to emerge and take on roles in peacebuilding?

¹⁵ "Women, Gender and Peacebuilding Processes" Peace Building Initiative. P 2

3. While there has been some notable progress regarding women's issues, there is also anecdotal evidence that quota systems are acts of tokenism and lip service, and that real systemic change as it relates to women's rights has been minimal. Have these gains contributed to women's empowerment more generally? Should they? Does this relate to adding up?
4. Have women made a significant difference in the speed with which peace agreements are reached or the quality of peace agreements?
5. The gender or "women's" agenda is often imposed by outsiders. How has this affected the "adding up" process?