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Women in Peacebuilding: A Criticism of Gendered Solutions in Postconflict Situations

KEMAL ERZURUM

Turkish Partnership for Peace Training Centre, Ankara, Turkey

BERNA EREN

Department of Health Management, Istanbul Medipol University, Istanbul, Turkey

Women are the most suffering part of populations in conflicts. They are required to fulfill different responsibilities during and after conflicts. Considering this fact, participation of women at peacebuilding efforts in postconflict areas has been considered as sine qua non requirement. However, active participation of women at these efforts, particularly decision-making activities, has been hampered due to diverse reasons. The barriers that block women involved in peacebuilding processes as decision-makers should be reexamined and eliminated by eradicating inequalities. In this article, gender-based violence, underestimated plight of women in conflicts, gendered approach of peacebuilding efforts, and the barriers in front of women's active participation in decision-making processes are examined.

KEYWORDS Women, peace, peacebuilding, conflict, gender, decision making

INTRODUCTION

Latest experiences in postconflict zones show that building peace after conflicts seriously requires keeping some critical components in mind. One of these critical components is the inadequate participation of women in peacebuilding and decision-making processes, which, we believe, is derived from stereotypical perceptions related to the roles of men and women in societies. Gender issues go across all sectors of society, no matter what the political, economic, or social context is, and this is no different for situations of

Address correspondence to Kemal Erzurum, PhD (C), Turkish Partnership for Peace Training Centre, Kirazlidere Caddesi, Bakanliklar, Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: kemal_erzurum @hotmail.com

political violence and armed conflict. Unfortunately, the efforts exerted by both governmental and nongovernmental institutions in peacebuilding activities around the world could not produce effective and sustainable peace due to the lack of gendered thinking. Within this respect, a comprehensive approach which also includes enhancing women's peacebuilding efforts and their participation in decision making is needed for achieving an authentic peace.

There are four specific themes that require attention in order to understand the impact of armed conflict on women. First, women are affected by conflict differently than men. Second, women are generally imposed combatant roles besides their supportive roles during conflict. Third, women have contradictory interests and priorities depending on country, region, culture, and social circumstances. And fourth, there is a confusion and misunderstanding of if a gender analysis is the same as a focus on women ("Women, Peace and Security," 2002). These themes explicitly display the need for involvement of women in decision-making process to understand and develop fruitful strategies for the restoration of diverse postconflict conditions. However, women are generally thought to be lacking in capacities to function in political processes and institutions. This tendency, to some extent, keeps women out of peacebuilding activities, such as formal peace negotiations, mediation, and diplomacy, which are considered to be highly political (El Jack, 2003).

A CLOSE LOOK AT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: "NEGATIVE PEACE VERSUS POSITIVE PEACE"

Understanding gender-based violence against women requires understanding the gender roles dictated on women in different cultures. The main difference between gender and sex is that sex refers to the biological characteristics gained by birth while gender is acquired through the socialization process. The roles imposed on genders are shaped in diverse contexts which include social, cultural, and even physiological traits affected by social norms. However, to be content with making such a basic distinction between sex and gender is not enough to comprehend the gender-based violence against women.

Historically, women are *treated* as subordinates while men are *conceived* as authority in most societies. The relations between men and women were culturally forged depending on division of labor on sex (comparing a variety of hunting and gathering groups), not inherited predisposition (Friedl, 1978). However, this understanding is still pervasive in contemporary societies despite the fact that the relations between men and women are not as sharply separated as in primitive societies. In other words, the roles which are imposed by societies dominated by men in the past still survive while the historical gap between the functions of men and women is closed.

What is the meaning of the term "peace"? Is it a temporary period between wars that one should seek to achieve? Or, is it the conditions that do not include social and structural violence? From the international relations point of view, the former is the answer. However, from the sociological aspect, peace cannot be provided and sustained on the table. It is not something that is determined by political decisions. Political decision-making processes are only the tools to initiate such real peacebuilding efforts in which the women should also be equally represented.

The distinction between negative and positive peace enables us to conceive the authentic peace. Negative peace takes place when direct violence such as armed conflict ceases. On the other hand, positive peace requires absence of indirect and structural violence such as gender inequality (Christie, Wagner, & Dunann Winter, 2001). Negative peace may include social and structural violence against women and this form is the one generally accepted by governments and international agencies (Pankhurst, 2000a). Thus, peacebuilding efforts that are exerted by governmental and nongovernmental agencies in postconflict areas focus on a stunted peace which does not cover fighting with inequalities between men and women.

Structural violence is a very controversial issue that varies from one culture to the next. An action or behavior which is thought to be violent in one social context can be perceived as a normal or moderate action in another. It derives from disparities which are socially constructed by institutions. Removing structural violence, or at least minimizing, can only be achieved by a collaborative approach. This approach necessitates active engagement of both local and international agencies. According to an issue paper, structural violence is the "architecture" of relationships where other types of secondary violence occur (Schirch & Sewak, 2005). One of these types is community destruction which includes interpersonal and domestic violence. As pointed out in the paper, peacebuilding requires including an agenda to work on violence against women, both in times of national and international destruction such as war, and during times where there may be "peace" at the national levelbut unrest in communities that turn the violence inward.

Obviously, the negative peace which is the primary focus of formal postconflict actors should be replaced by positive peace which embraces removing structural violence. Unless this focus does not change in line with the ideals of positive peace that addresses inequalities and oppression on women, peacebuilding activities cannot provide long-term solutions for locals.

WOMEN AND CONFLICT

The impact of conflicts might be both disempowering and empowering for women. Many women in peace times often experience violence in a range

of areas including domestic violence within the privacy of their homes, working places, and religious institutions because of the discrimination that stems from their sex and gender roles imposed by societies (Schirch, 2004). However, both men and women suffer in conflict times following a war in different ways.

The common perception is that men, in peace times, have the responsibility to support and protect their families as the breadwinners and women have the responsibility of mothering, nursing, and being a wife. In conflict times, men are fighters or aggressors who suffer most or are killed during conflicts and women are the ones who wait for their spouses and perpetuate domestic works at home. However, the conflict situations alter these traditional roles as well as strengthening the gender differences in a drastic way. When men go to war, women remain unprotected due to their physical weaknesses and assume men's responsibilities as breadwinners. In most of the conflict times, they cannot reach scarce resources which are already delivered disproportionately between men and women. The reality, in contrast to the common perception, is that women are the most damaged actors of both conflict and postconflict periods. This reality, in many ways, is directly related to the culturally determined gender relations which eclipse the whole range of women's different experiences in conflict.

In conflict times, depending on contexts, women are demanded to fulfill different roles. On one hand, they are called upon to take part in nationalist struggles in their capacity as the members of a national collective. Because their support, labor, and services are needed and critical in armed conflicts, women are often mobilized by societies and governments. On the other hand, they are also expected to perpetuate their culturally determined responsibilities as *mothers* and *guardians of the culture* (Stasiulis, 1999). This role of women as the guardians of culture makes them vulnerable to sexual violence that affects both women and men in different ways. In many cultures, women are perceived as the honor and symbolize a nation's racial purity and culture. In many cases, raping and abusing women and girls were used as a weapon of war to demoralize men. In other words, women are considered to be a *tool* to demoralize men who are considered to be the *target*. This way of violence is used to convey a message to men that they failed in their role as protectors (El Jack, 2003).

In many patriarchal societies, raped or sexually abused women and girls are not treated accordingly. They cannot even receive necessary care and aid to recover the physical and psychological damages of the crime. The social norms that shape the attitudes against victims play an important role in these cases. In some societies, victims of rape and sexual abuse cannot proclaim crime due to the fear of *stigma* that would further deteriorate their social status and relations. In some societies, male relatives are forced to kill

the victim in order to clean the family honor, which is named honor killing. In some societies, husbands abandon the victims and in all cases, women suffer more.

During the conflict times, the absence of social order worsens the context for women who are raped or sexually abused. They are not taken into consideration seriously because of the priorities of local authorities and law enforcers due to war conditions. Despite the decision of the International Criminal Court that renders rape, enforced prostitution, and other forms of sexual violence as war crimes, such crimes that are used as a weapon or tactic of war have a tendency to increase (Schirch, 2004). The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is an example of sexual violence being used as a weapon of war. During the armed conflict since 1998, all parties commonly committed sexual violence. Survivors of sexual violence have either been abandoned by their families or had their families killed. Gender-based violence, prostitution, and transactional sex also increased in the civil area as well due to normalization of sexual violence, the increased presence of international staff, and women trading their bodies for food and/or security (Carlman, 2012).

Rape and sexual torture are considered to be domestic concerns when committed after a ceasefire—often by the very same perpetrators—and receive less attention than ordinary crimes. Even the security institutions responsible for women's protection sometimes become the perpetrators of violence against them. And yet, women's security is handled as a "human rights" or "women's issue" rather than a security concern (Klot, 2007). In Iraq, around one million women have been widowed since the war with Iran in the 1980s. There are also almost 1.8 million internally displaced people, the majority of whom are single women, children, or elderly people. These women—either widows or divorced—lack male relatives and face problems of poverty, shelter, lack of health care, and unemployment resulting in them being easy prey for forced labor, trafficking, and sexual exploitation (Carlman, 2012).

During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) between 1992 and 1995, women, as civilians, were killed, tortured, and raped. These women experienced unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and post-traumatic disorders as well as the stigmatization in their societies. With the advancement of traditional patriarchal values after the end of the war, nearly 50% of all acts of violence became domestic violence cases with only 5% officially reported because the victims often stayed with their abusers due to their economic dependency (Carlman, 2012). Although decisions for war are usually taken by men and armed conflict and political violence are generally viewed as "male domains," there are cases where women are associated with the fighting forces and seen as perpetrators; they even become fierce commanders in rebel movements. Women in the DRC have been in the

national army since 1966, but during the conflicts in the late 1990s they were abducted by armed forces and kept under slave-like conditions, and some also became combatants (Carlman, 2012).

Conflicts may also serve as an incentive to unify and mobilize women's groups at the local level. These groups then become actively involved in developing alternative strategies to transform the violent structures and practices at all levels. They intend to improve gender relations within their societies, including women's access to decision making and political participation. If the reversal of roles during times of conflict is not accompanied with ideological or institutional changes that guarantee a decision-making power to women, then ideas of masculine superiority will persist and women will be regarded as subordinates of men.

In some situations, once peace is restored, women are pushed back to their traditional roles without savoring the newly found freedoms. Judy El-Bushra, project manager of Great Lakes Programme of International Alert, argues that the outcome of the tension between the underlying gender relations and the new relations that the conflict makes necessary have a spiral affect which, in turn, creates a wider social crisis. While men return home with violence, fear, and domination, women are less likely to accept their subordination after they have experienced relative autonomy and respect, and this leads to increased violence against women during peace times (Alaga, 2010). In Liberia, where women and girls were especially targeted and as many as 75% were subjected to some sort of sexual and gender-based violence during the war, inequalities deeply rooted within the patriarchal cultural traditions continue with an increased level of violence and harmful practices such as trial by ordeal, witchcraft, and female genital mutilation (Carlman, 2012).

In postconflict situations, women also experience extreme problems regarding poverty as well as the increasing epidemic of HIV/AIDS. Their increased burdens are largely ignored and women are deprived of their basic needs, fundamental rights, protection, or access to services, justice, economic security, or citizenship. Although Spiegel and colleagues (2007), through an analysis of HIV prevalence data from seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa, stated that due to isolation of many rural communities and reduced mobility of populations HIV prevalence rates did not tend to increase during times of conflict (Mossallanejad, 2011), there is an observed age-sex differential in HIV prevalence in present-day Liberia and Sierra Leone which points to exploitative cross-generational sex (i.e., risky transactional, concurrent sexual relationships that older and usually better-resourced men have with several much younger and usually poorer women) as a factor in young women's higher HIV prevalence relative to young men. Evidence from across Africa indicates that women in these kinds of relationships are at least twice as likely to be HIV positive (Ahonsi, 2010).

WOMEN AND PEACEBUILDING

Defining Peacebuilding

In order to understand peacebuilding, we should first be familiar with the more traditional strategies of peacekeeping and peacemaking, although there is no one single definition for these three terms. Peacekeeping usually refers to the third-party interventions to stop or contain hostilities by keeping the fighting parties apart—with their consent—through the use of some kind of barrier, be it neutral soldiers, peacekeepers from the United Nations (UN), or a group of neutral nations. Peacemaking, on the other hand, is the process of diplomatic efforts through nonviolent dialogue, usually done through third-party mediators who may be official diplomats or citizens, to reach a peace agreement between the conflicting parties. However, it has been witnessed in many conflict situations that peacemaking is not the final step in the peace process. A peace agreement is only the beginning but should be followed by long-term peacebuilding which is a process of normalizing relations and reconciling differences between the opposing parties (Maiese, 2003; "Peacemaking," 2005).

Some 30 years ago, Johan Galtung, the father of peace studies, was the first to mention the term "peacebuilding" in his essay "Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding," where he claimed that there should be peacebuilding structures to promote sustainable peace by addressing the "root causes" of violent conflict and supporting indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution (Galtung, 1976). Following the end of the Cold War, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali defined peacebuilding in his 1992 report, "An Agenda for Peace," as an "action to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (p. 6), a tool subsequent to preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, and peacemaking (Galtung, 1976). In this sense, peacebuilding is recognized as initiatives that aim to prevent the reoccurrence of armed conflict through a long-term process of capacity-building, reconciliation, and societal transformation. It relies on the commitment and efforts of local/national actors after the termination of armed hostilities where peace can be sustained with the financial and technical support of international actors (Maiese, 2003; "Operationalizing Peacebuilding," 2007). However, nongovernmental organizations interpret peacebuilding as an umbrella concept not limited to long-term transformative efforts but rather as also covering peacekeeping and peacemaking; therefore, their definition includes early warning and response efforts, violence prevention, advocacy work, civilian and military peacekeeping, military intervention, humanitarian assistance, ceasefire agreements, and the establishment of peace zones (Jeong, 2005, Maiese, 2003).

In his 1998 article, Henning Haugerudbraaten identified two basic but different concepts of peacebuilding: "short-term involvement of the international community … characterised by centralism and political measures … primarily undertaken by external agents, even though attention is paid to the consent and support [of] the indigenous players" (Haugerudbraaten, 1998, pp. 23–24) and "long-term efforts by mainly indigenous actors to promote political and economic development, and a sustainable solution to the root causes of conflict" (Haugerudbraaten, 1998, p. 24). Peacebuilding, as defined in the first concept, is most likely to be "top-down, elitist and interventionist" and unwilling to address the structural factors that pursue national and social peacebuilding schemes (Bendaña, 2003, p. 5). However, peacebuilding is generally considered to undertake the task of creating a positive and sustainable peace characterized by the restoration of relationships, absence of physical and structural violence, elimination of discrimination, and creation of social systems that serve the needs of the whole population (Maiese, 2003).

Peacebuilding covers a series of activities that go across many sectors and aim to prevent violent conflicts through democratic institution-building, prejudice reduction, power-sharing arrangements, reduction of social and economic inequalities, the promotion of the rule of law, security sector reform, and education. However, the fundamental agents of peacebuilding are the people themselves who are not objects or victims but individuals whose lives are affected by decisions taken elsewhere. Therefore, peacebuilding initiatives need to fix the underlying problems of the conflict, change the patterns of interaction between the relevant parties, and move a given population from a condition of extreme vulnerability and dependency to one of self-sufficiency and well-being (Maiese, 2003; "Operationalizing Peacebuilding," 2007).

Women Building Peace

What is common between the three approaches of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding is that they all indicate a male dominance. They tend to stereotype men as "doers," being the politicians, diplomats, and soldiers who do the fighting and talking, whereas women are regarded as passive or innocent victims suffering and struggling in the background. Berewa Jommo, a feminist in Kenya, compares the peacebuilding institutions to fraternities that keep women out of decision-making processes (Alaga, 2010). From a human rights perspective, women's participation in peacebuilding activities is a question of justice as they make up half the world's population and they should be able to participate in decisions which affect their lives.

As already discussed above, the experiences, perspectives, and priorities of women regarding conflict and its outcome contrast with those of men.

When women are involved in peace and recovery processes, they contribute a vital perspective to the analysis of conflict and provide effective strategies for peacebuilding. Their participation also enables their specific needs to be identified. Moreover, it has been shown that the text of agreements shows greater gender sensitivity when women and women's civil society groups are involved in peace processes (Smee, 2011). Researchers like Pearce state that "peace starts with families, the way men and women relate to each other, and how children are educated" (Cardona, Justino, Mitchell, & Müller, 2012, p. 6). Women are identified as the mediators and decision-makers in their homes; they mediate conflict in the domestic domain and build up trust and dialogue in their families and communities. These vital roles that women play as peacebuilders at the local level can be seen as an indicator that the meaningful participation of women in political structures will have significant positive consequences for peace and stability at a wider level (Cardona et al., 2012).

Women's participation at the local, regional, and national governments encourages a political stability and governance that is more representative and responsive. It has a cohesive effect so that when women have access to productive assets and social services, they build up the fabric of their society for the better. It also has an impact on economy and development: "Over the past fifty years, several of the fastest growing economies have been postconflict societies and their development has been, in part, due to the increased role of women in trade, production and as entrepreneurs" (Smee, 2011, p.1). Over the last decades, women have been advocated to carry a full and active role in peacebuilding and decision making and several resolutions and protocols have been passed to give women the voice. Up till now, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has consequently adopted four resolutions on women, peace, and security. Each resolution was crucial in addressing women's role in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. However, Resolution 1325 (SCR 1325) adopted unanimously in 2000 was the first UN Security Council resolution (SCR) to link women to the peace and security agenda.

> SCR 1325 calls for . . . the participation of women at all levels of decision making, including: in national, regional and international institutions; in mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict; in peace negotiations; in peace operations, as soldiers, police and civilians; and as Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General. (Smee, 2011, p. 2)

The UN at the 2005 World Summit has taken a step forward to affirm the significant role that women should play in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding. It is stated in Article 116 of the Resolution as:

We stress the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding. . . . We also underline the importance of integrating a gender perspective and of women having the opportunity for equal participation and full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security, as well as the need to increase their role in decision making at all levels. We strongly condemn all violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed conflict and the use of sexual exploitation, violence and abuse, and we commit ourselves to elaborating and implementing strategies to report on, prevent and punish gender-based violence. ("2005 World Summit Outcome," 2005, p. 27)

The assumption was that when women's role is defined in the resolution it would guarantee their involvement in postconflict processes, efforts of local women would be encouraged and supported, and legislations and policies to promote women's rights would be passed without question.

However, the reality today is very different from the aspirations of many global and regional commitments. As qualitative data is hard to collect—though very valuable—we will use the quantitative data to demonstrate what the current situation is. The review by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) of a sample of 24 major peace processes (for which some data were available) since 1992 shows that women represent a strikingly low number of negotiators: only 2.5% of signatories, 3.2% of mediators, 5.5% of witnesses, and 7.6% of negotiators were women. Women's participation in negotiating delegations averaged less than 8% in the 14 cases for which such information was available (Diaz, 2010, 2012). There have been no female chief mediators in UN-brokered peace talks ("Women, Peace and Security," 2012). Also, as of 2010 only 16% of peace agreements address women's rights and needs specifically ("Gender, War & Peacebuilding," n.d., p. 4, para. 2). Even the establishment of an intergovernmental advisory body, the Peacebuilding Commission, by the UN following the resolution in 2005 did not help despite the fact that its only thematic mandate was to "ensure systematic attention and resources for advancing gender equality within transitional recovery, reintegration and reconstruction efforts." The assessment of the United Nations Development Programme's work in crisis prevention and recovery revealed that the integration of a gender perspective into the UN system's approach failed (Klot, 2007).

In Afghanistan, the constitution includes a gender equality clause and guarantees a 25% quota of women—one of the highest in the world—in the lower house of Parliament; therefore, women make up 27% of members of Parliament, which is higher than in some developed countries. But of the 70 member High Peace Council charged with negotiating peace, only nine are women (Allen, 2013; Cortright & Wall, 2012). Female members have to deal with travel bans and their work is limited to social outreach activities while being kept away from the negotiation process (Safi, 2012).

In BiH during the war, women's organizations were very active, taking care of the women, children, and the elderly. They were also leading the peace work by initiating meetings with people from "the other side" so that common grounds and ways to stop the violence would be found. However, they were not welcome in the peace process: There were no women from BiH present around the negotiating table and only one woman was among the signatories. The outcome was a gender-neutral peace agreement followed by a gender-neutral constitution (Carlman, 2012; "The Third Alternative Report," 2013).

In DRC, where the number of women's organizations is one of the highest in Africa, women were active in conflict prevention and conflict resolution during the armed conflict in the late 1990s. The women delegates, coordinated in the network Caucus des Femmes, participated in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in 2001 in order to draw up an official declaration and create a plan of action that would contribute to implementing UNSC Resolution 1325 (Godin & Chideka, 2010). This dialogue then led on to the Pretoria Accords in 2002 where formulations on violence against women got into the agreement. However, at the peace negotiations in 2008 only a handful of the participants were women (Carlman, 2012). Women were excluded from decision making on all levels in society. During the presidential and legislative elections held in 2011, zero out of 11 presidential candidates were female and females securing lower or single House Seats dropped to 8.9% from a 10.4% in 2006 ("DRC Presidential & Parliamentary Elections," 2011). What is more tragic is that following the elections and the reelection of the former president, armed groups who were not pleased with the results accused women, as they thought a candidate could only be reelected by the women's vote that represents more than 50% of the Congolese population. So it is observed that since November 2011 more and more women and girls have started being raped systematically—from nine to 12 new cases on a monthly average to an average of 45 and 50 cases per month (Binwa, 2012).

In Iraq, peace negotiations included all parties but women. The agenda completely overlooked the needs and perspectives of women but instead contained hard security matters. The demands of women about criminalization of violence against women and the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 were ignored by the civil administration in Iraq. Of the 55 members of the committee working with Iraq's new constitution, eight were women. And only one of them did not belong to a religious party. Secular women were marginalized during the whole process (Carlman, 2012).

Nevertheless, there are also some success stories to be acknowledged. Research done in five countries, namely Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sierra Leone, in 2012 revealed qualitative evidence on the roles of women in local peacebuilding processes in these countries (Cardona et al., 2012). This research shows that the postconflict periods might give women the opportunity to unite and to declare their power in decision

making. Women in these countries formed networks so that they can be heard in a collective action to address unjust treatment, promote women's involvement in decision making, propose initiatives for community development, and seek justice for female survivors of violence and sexual abuse.

Following the war in Liberia between 1989 and 2003, the peace agreement was signed after the collective demonstration by the Liberian women's organizations, representatives of which adopted the Golden Tulip Declaration outlining the women's demands for their inclusion into all structures and institutions both during the transition and as a part of postconflict society (Carlman, 2012). Consequently, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became Africa's first democratically elected female president and in 2011 she was also awarded the Nobel Peace Prize along with the Liberian activist, Leymah Gbowee, and the Yemeni journalist, Tawakkol Karman, for "their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peacebuilding work" ("Nobel Peace Prize," 2011, p. 1). The Nobel committee acknowledged their efforts with the citation: "We cannot achieve democracy and lasting peace in the world unless women obtain the same opportunities as men to influence developments at all levels of society" (as cited in Cowell, Kasinof, & Nossiter, 2011, para. 4).

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, author of the book, *Women Building Peace*, wrote about people's perceptions regarding women's participation in peace processes as:

> I had meetings with various people who said, You know, the women were there but they were a bit useless. Yes, the women were there at the peace table, but they were the wives of the brothers. They were the sisters. They really had nothing to say. So trying to gauge how people perceived the role of women in the whole peace and security context was important. (Anderlini, 2005, p. 3)

THE BARRIERS

There are many barriers that women confront when getting involved in peacebuilding. The lack of status of women within society and the stereotyped perception of women as victims are the two main obstacles for their systematical exclusion from decision-making opportunities. During times of chaos and disturbance, women are falsely labeled as being weak and vulnerable. There are many humanitarian reports and documents that identify women—along with children—as innocent victims who have to be protected, particularly regarding sexual abuse and forced abduction ("Women in Situations," n.d., para. 1; Haeri & Puechguirbal, 2010). These reports neglect to include women in humanitarian decision-making processes which results in women's needs being overlooked. Moser and Clark (2001) have challenged

these stereotypes and argued that this perception of women denies them the social role of shaping their environment and events and that it leads to the visible absence of women from decision-making bodies both during and after the conflict.

Women face inequalities accessing education, which makes them less literate, and this leads to their being considered to be insufficiently trained to participate in peacebuilding. Social norms and attitudes support restrictive gender roles that traditionally complicate women's participation. There is violence against women in almost all societies and it intensifies during times of conflict and access to justice is a significant challenge for survivors of violence. This results in women feeling intimidated and threatened when they attempt to take active roles in their communities. Due to poverty and economic inequality women lack control over their household income, therefore, they undertake a double burden regarding their domestic roles and income-generation activities and this hinders women's involvement in peacebuilding activities. National governments, the international community, and even the women themselves regard the skills of women as irrelevant, and they focus more on state institutions and local leaders. Organizations that support women are also challenged with problems such as limited funding, lack of national infrastructure, and lack of access to remote communities.

There is also the fact regarding peacebuilding activities that there exists a gap between national and local communities. Central government and associated politicians/political parties do not contribute to local level peace where women usually play an important role. On the other hand, women also do not see the links between their own peacebuilding activities at the community level and peace and decision-making processes at the central level. It is widely accepted that women who suffer discrimination and human rights abuses during peacetime become actively involved in postconflict situations and adopt active roles in changing the situations. However, they are rarely given a seat at peace negotiation tables and are excluded from formal decision-making processes despite the fact that they have valuable perspectives during the conflict as well as subsequent conflict resolution and reconstruction phases. As evidenced by the fact, peace talks have been overwhelmingly male-dominated based on the assumption that the male fighters who started the war are the only ones to stop it.

Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, the international coordinator of Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (a coalition of women's groups and other civil society organizations from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, South Asia, West Asia, Latin America, Eastern, and Western Europe), states that UN Secretary-General's 2012 *Report on Women, Peace and Security* has already highlighted that words and resolutions have not been translated into actions. She states that sexual and gender-based violence is both the root cause and consequence of women's lack of representation in decision making: "This scourge will only continue if women are not part of the decision making. Women will

always be vulnerable if their strength and leadership is not acknowledged and valued" (as cited in Deen, 2012, p. 1).

Cora Weiss, president of the Hague Appeal for Peace and UN representative of the International Peace Bureau, said UNSC Resolution 1325 has gotten much attention and more lip service than most other resolutions. "Everyone talks about women. But where are we?" she asked (as cited in Deen, 2012, p. 1).

> I hope the talk is not a trend, but will lead to a permanent condition where it will be taken for granted that women are equal to men, and are equally represented in all decision making. To reach that goal much more needs to happen. (as cited in Deen, 2012, p. 1)

Weiss also called on the Secretary-General to appoint a woman to a permanent office on women's participation in peace processes (as cited in Deen, 2012, p. 1).

When it comes to women's participation at the peace tables, it is up to "political forces" that are usually comprised of men; and even the members of UNSC are unwilling to deal with the situation saying they cannot dictate to a sovereign state what to do (Deen, 2012). A great example of this hypocrisy is from the 1990s when women were told they could not come to the Irish Peace table during the peace talks between UK and Ireland because it was only set for political parties. Hereupon, the women formed a political party, namely the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, and the two women at the table made history and institutionalized human rights into the Good Friday Agreement (Fearon, 2002). It can easily be generalized what Judy El Bushra noted for Africa that:

> Challenges to women's peace activism arise at different levels—from the international community, the national political milieu, and the patriarchal nature of society. Other impediments are generated by women's lack of confidence, skills and resources. At another level, while there has been an upsurge in the number of policy instruments on women, peace and security at both continental and subregional levels . . . there is still the challenge of translating policy into real and efficient tools to support women's peace work. (Alaga, 2010, p. 2)

RECOMMENDATIONS

What can be more natural than declaring that men and women are both able to make, keep, and build peace because they are all affected with the course and consequences of conflict situations? However, as authors like Garcia identified, women have an emotional strength for going beyond the pain and suffering, and they bring creative and effective perspectives to building the

peace (Garcia, 1994). So far, we have discussed that women have hardly and insufficiently participated in political negotiations to end their conflicts and they are not even included in many UN-sponsored mediations. This builds a deep concern that women's issues are left out from peace settlements which undoubtedly impedes postconflict "reconstruction and reconciliation processes." It has been stated in the Beijing Platform for Action that "[n]o state may refer to national customs as an excuse for not guaranteeing all individuals human rights and fundamental freedoms" *(*Wallström, 2010, p. 3). Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, emphasized this statement by saying:

> We can no longer afford to minimize or ignore the contributions of women and girls to all stages of conflict resolution, peacemaking, peace-building, peacekeeping and reconstruction processes. Sustainable peace will not be achieved without the full and equal participation of women and men. ("Gender and UN Peacekeeping," 2005, p. 1).

We believe there are some modest measures that can be taken in order to ensure inclusive peace processes with significant and fair participation of women.

Setting up of Gender-Responsive Policies

Gender-responsive peacebuilding is where gender equality and roles that women play within their families and communities as peacebuilders is distinguished and their skills, experiences, and priorities are brought to the national and international levels for sustainable peace. On the other hand, there is also the gendered peace that considers the needs of women less effectively than those of men and it ends with worsening of women's situations. Therefore, the principle of gender equality should be integrated into national policies and policies that avoid a gender-insensitive peace. These policies should meet women's needs, such as provision of specialist services for women to recover from traumas of the conflict, provision of security measures to protect women from all forms of sexual and domestic violence as well as special legal and social support for reporting and prosecuting of perpetrators of war crimes and human rights abuses, implementation of national policies, and infrastructure to ensure women's rights and participation. They should also make sure that an environment that facilitates women's peacebuilding activities is built.

Empowerment of Women

TRAINING AND RAISING AWARENESS OF WOMEN

Most of the time, women have skills in conflict resolution and peacebuilding that do not necessarily require high levels of education. However, poor

participation of women in these processes is mostly argued to be due to their lack of skills and know-how. As stated by an activist:

> In terms of the technical capability to discuss the issues, women are much less prepared because we have not had the luxury of all the education and study that men have had when they go out and take long years to discuss these issues ... we are going to bring the women in and we are going to have to provide support to bring them in. It is not going to happen automatically. (Pankhurst, 2000b, p. 12)

Although no one can claim that the men taking part are better educated, the educational level of women and girls needs to be raised to address this false perception. Considering that most women in conflict zones—especially at the local level—are illiterate, this intervention could as well be a wide literacy campaign including components on political and civic education.

The specialized training programs for women in peacebuilding should be tailored specifically so that they use simplified methodologies instead of highly technical language and sophisticated models, and their contents should address women's concerns as well as making them aware of their rights. Some key areas for these trainings were identified by Afghan and Iraqi women as political empowerment, negotiation, advocacy, leadership, and technical and vocational training (Kuehnast, Manal, Steiner, & Sultan, 2012). The customized nature of these trainings will make it much more affordable and available to women. Training and education of women is expected to empower them for leadership to develop and promote methods of institutional reform and for decision-making positions including government bureaucracies and justice structures.

STRENGTHENING WOMEN AT LOCAL LEVEL

We know that women play significant roles as peacebuilders within their communities, and this is usually considered an indicator of how their participation in political structures could have constructive consequences for peace and stability at the national and even international levels. Participants in the research by Cardona and colleagues (2012, p. 8) emphasized the "bottom-up approach to peacebuilding with peace built from the individual, to the household, and to the community level before it can be achieved nationally." They also state, "NGOs, and in particular networks, are seen as the key connector between local level peace processes and priorities and the national level" (Cardona et al., 2012, p. 8). Women need to be empowered as peacebuilders and change agents at the local level to challenge the engrained behavior of violence and aggression within patriarchal societies. Local initiatives should be supported and appropriate strategies should be designed to increase the number of women in governance and decision making. However, despite

the tendency to treat all women as one, women are not a homogeneous group. Therefore, their diverse needs, priorities, and experiences should be recognized to effectively support their participation in peacebuilding at the local level.

SUPPORTING WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

Women's organizations are mechanisms to organize women in collective action, and supporting them is considered to be the key approach to support women's activity in peacebuilding. Although they vary in different countries and times in terms of their forms and/or agendas, what local nongovernmental organizations and women's rights organizations do is recognized and valued by people in communities, revealed the study by Cardona and colleagues (2012). Organizations with an inclusive participation of women and a defined vision about gender relations, and that work with left-out women and promote public debate and cultural change, should be supported and their input into key peace conferences and other decision-making bodies should be considered.

ENSURING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES

Participation of women's organizations in all relevant peacebuilding processes, national steering committees, and other relevant regional and international processes is crucial; however, it should be automatic, not ad hoc, and should organize women's participation from the start. Women's organizations need to be devoted to becoming the most effective participants rather than waiting to be included. Women participants are expected to give their input by mainstreaming gender across issues and in areas of importance for women into the peace negotiations. Supporting women as individuals rather than in organizations is also a very effective strategy to promote peacebuilding. Leaders of women's organizations tend to participate at peace settlements with little grassroots participation which leads to women's poor representation at the leadership level. However, it should be noted that women in postconflict situations are not a homogenous group, but a group of widows, ex-combatants, survivors of sexual violence, displaced women, and women living with HIV/AIDS or disabilities with unique challenges; therefore, different approaches will be needed to enable their participation in peacebuilding.

Long-Term Support and Funding

Women's participation in peacebuilding should be supported and funded on a long-term basis because women's economic empowerment enables their participation in peacebuilding processes. Women's access to income

is always more restricted than that of men and finance is always an issue when women are responsible for survivors. Furthermore, if women are to participate in peace processes, they need to travel, lodge, and require physical protection, all of which cost money. Also, women's organizations need to be adequately and sustainably funded to reach their potential for an innovative peacebuilding work. Therefore, allocation mechanisms that ensure adequate funding for gender-sensitive programming should be established. A possible way of ensuring women's participation in peacebuilding is to make the funding for peace negotiations conditional on the inclusion or greater representation of women in negotiating teams.

Final Words

Peacebuilding efforts will fail unless women are supported to achieve political and economic empowerment and are represented equally in all levels of decision making, including peace negotiations. Considering that more than 50% of peace agreements fail within the first five years of signature, it is evident that something needs to be changed in formal peace negotiations. There are consequences to leaving women out. When women are underrepresented or excluded in formal peace negotiations, it will have long-term negative effects on the society because the specific problems that women are confronted with in conflict situations are being disregarded and overlooked. It is mostly the patriarchal societies where the wealth of experiences that women have with conflict mitigation, peacebuilding, and social, economic, and democratic reconstruction are underutilized at the expense of the people. The exclusion of women from the peace talks serves to reinforce the status quo.

A Bosnian woman peace activist stated, "We have to achieve gender equality in society. We will then acquire power, which will give us the means to achieve sustainable peace" (Equal power—lasting peace, 2012, p. 132). As this quote illustrates, there are intimate connections between gender, power, and peace. Leymah R. Gbowee, Executive Director of WIPSEN-Africa, says "It is now time that we move beyond the rhetoric of women's participation" (Gbowee, n.d., slide 15). Moreover, further delays in the implementation of full and effective integration of women in peacebuilding will result in failure to effectively address issues such as sexual and gender-based violence, women's rights, and postconflict accountability.

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