Gender Dynamics and Women In Conflict Situations And Post Conflict Recovery: Experiences From Africa.

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to construct a framework for understanding the gender dimensions of post-conflict reconstruction in order to strengthen assessments, project design, and policy-formulation; all with the aim of achieving the overarching goals of sustainable peace, participation and prosperity. The paper advocates for gender sensitive policies, activities and programmes that may promote gender equality, and enhance returns on post conflict recovery and reconstruction investments. It is predicated on the conviction that building and maintaining peace and prosperity requires attention to gender roles and relations in the post-conflict arena. We propose ways to undertake social, economic and political development within a particularised context (that is post-conflict): recognising gender-related challenges, suggesting ways that a 'gender lense' may sharpen understanding, and capitalising on opportunities presented by new rules, institutions and resources.
Key words: Conflict, recovery, reconstruction, women, gender, sexual violence.

1. Introduction

Women's contributions to war and peace have long been underestimated. They often contribute to the outbreak of violence and hostilities. In many cases, they are instrumental in inciting men to defend group interests, honour, and collective livelihoods. Women also play a key role in preserving order and normalcy in the midst of chaos and destruction. In times of conflict, when men engage in war and are killed, disappear or take refuge outside their country's borders, it is women who are left with the burden of ensuring family livelihood. Women struggle to protect their families' health and safety, a task which rests on their ability to cope pragmatically with change and adversity. It is therefore not surprising that women are also a driving force for peace. They are often among the first to call for an end to conflict and to strive for order and rebuilding. In post-war situations, whether in groups or individually, formally or informally, women probably contribute more than government authorities or international aid to reconciliation, reviving local economies and rebuilding social networks. Yet, despite their active role in promoting peace, women tend to fade into the background when official peace negotiations begin and the consolidation of peace and rebuilding of the economy becomes a formal exercise.

2. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to construct a framework for understanding the gender dimensions of post-conflict reconstruction (PCR) in order to strengthen assessments, project design, and policy-formulation; all with the aim of achieving the overarching goals of sustainable peace, participation and prosperity. This paper advocates for gender sensitive policies, activities and programmes that may promote gender equality, and enhance returns on PCR investments. It is predicated on the conviction that building and maintaining peace and prosperity requires attention to gender roles and relations in the post-conflict arena. Literature is replete with papers on women in conflict and peace negotiations, peacekeeping and peacemaking – raising awareness and resulting in significant progress (Greenberg and Zuckerman, 2009). While this paper builds upon them, it shifts the focus from simply ending conflict to building anew. The paper rejects the simple idea of re-constructing (simply putting back what was there before the conflict). Instead, the paper calls for a renovation and renewal process that legitimizes the socio-economic, political and institutional structures. We propose ways to undertake social, economic and political development within a particularized context (that is post-conflict): recognising gender-related challenges, suggesting ways that a 'gender lense' may sharpen understanding, and capitalising on opportunities presented by new rules, institutions and resources.

3. Important Concepts

Conflict: According to Musingafi, *etal* (2011), whether at home with our families, at work with colleagues or in negotiations between governments, conflict pervades our relationships. Thus, conflict is an inevitable and necessary feature of domestic and international relations. The challenge facing governments is not the elimination of conflict, but rather, how to effectively address conflict when it arises. The paradox of conflict is that it is both the force that can tear relationships apart and the force that binds them together. But what exactly is conflict? Conflict is contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. It is present when parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or pursue their interests through actions that may damage the other parties. Thus conflict is inevitable, may escalate and lead to nonproductive results, or can be beneficially resolved and lead to quality final products.

Peace: Distinction is made between 'negative peace' and 'positive peace' (see Galtung 1996). Negative peace refers to the absence of violence. When, for example, a ceasefire is enacted, a negative peace will ensue. It is negative because something undesirable stopped happening. Positive peace is filled with positive content such as the restoration of relationships, the creation of social systems that serve the needs of the whole population and the constructive resolution of dysfunctional conflict. It is however important to note that peace does not mean the total absence of any conflict. It means the absence of violence in all its forms and the unfolding of conflict in a constructive way. Peace therefore exists where people are interacting non-violently and are managing their conflict positively – with respectful attention to the legitimate needs and interests of all concerned.

Gender analysis is a systematic way of looking at the different roles of women and men in development and at the different impacts of development on women and men. Gender analysis asks the 'who' question: who does what, has access to and control over what, benefits from what, for both sexes in different age groups, classes, religions, ethnic groups, races and castes? Gender analysis also means that in every major demographic, socio-economic and cultural group, data are separated by sex and analysed separately by sex. A gender focus - that is looking at males and females separately, is needed in every stage of the development process. One must always ask how a particular activity, decision or plan will affect men differently from women, and some women or men differently from other women and men.

Through gender analysis we can identify the differences between women and men regarding their specific activities, conditions, needs, access and control over resources, and access to development benefits and decision-making. Three key elements have been highlighted in identifying gender analysis:

- Division of labour: -Men: productive tasks
                                          -Women: reproductive tasks
- Division of resources: -Women often are not allowed to own capital assets
                              and have no access and control over resources
- Needs: -Practical and strategic needs differ greatly between
              men and women

It is therefore important to have a clear understanding of "who does what" within the society. Often women are relegated to reproductive tasks, but in conflict and emergency situations, they may also play an important role in productive activities. Moreover, a better understanding of women's needs is crucial in deciding how benefits and resources are distributed and accessed by men and women during a crisis. It is thus fundamental to support not only women's practical concerns, such as the need for fuel, wood, water, food and sustainable health, including reproductive health needs. It is also critical to support women's strategic needs, including leadership, decision-making and empowerment. By supporting these qualities and focusing on women's strengths rather than their weaknesses the entire community will be afforded better protection.

Gender analysis seeks to identify and address the impact of a policy, programme, action and initiative by men and women. This entitles collecting sexually desegregated data and gender-sensitive information about the population concerned. Gender analysis is the first step in gender sensitive planning and for promoting gender equality.

Gender policies: Gender analysis seeks to identify and address the impact of a policy, programme, action and initiative by men and women. This entitles collecting sexually desegregated data and gender-sensitive information about the population concerned. Gender analysis is the first step in gender sensitive planning and for promoting gender equality. The following gender policies have been classified by Kabeer (1994):

- **Gender-blind policies-**recognize no distinction between the sexes. Assumptions incorporate biases in favour of existing gender relations and so tend to exclude women;
- **Gender-aware policies-**recognize that within a society, actors are women as well as men, that they are constrained in different, and often unequal ways, and they may consequently have differing and sometimes conflicting needs, interests and priorities;
- **Gender neutral policy approaches-**use the knowledge of gender differences in a given context to overcome biases in delivery, to ensure that they target and benefit both genders effectively in terms of their practical gender needs, and that they work within the existing gender division of resources and responsibilities;
- **Gender specific policies-**use the knowledge of gender differences in a given context to respond to the practical gender needs of a specific gender, working with the existing division of resources and responsibilities; and
- **Gender redistribution policies-**are interventions that intend to transform existing distributions to create a more balanced relationship of gender. These policies may target both genders, or one gender specifically; touch on strategic gender interests; and may work with women's practical gender needs, but do so in ways which have transformatory potential to help build up the supportive conditions for women to empower themselves.

Violence against women: The term "sexual violence" often appears in the literature but its definition is broad and the term is used to describe rape by acquaintances or strangers, by authority figures (including husbands), incest, child sexual abuse, pornography, stalking, sexual harassment and homicide. At its most fundamental, sexual violence describes the deliberate use of sex as a weapon to demonstrate power over, and to inflict pain and humiliation upon, another human being. Thus, sexual violence does not have to include direct physical contact between perpetrator and victim: threats, humiliation and intimidation may all be considered as sexually violent when they are used with the above purposes.

While sexual violence appears to occur in most societies, it does so in quite different ways which in turn have significant implications for responses in terms of programming and policy. For example, the mass rape of women by soldiers during conflict situation is different from mass rape of men, and solitary acts of sexual violence in peace time may have quite different implications from rape committed by acquaintances or by spouses (still far from universally recognised as a criminal offense).

The UN (1999) reports that sexual and gender-based violence has acute physical, psychological and social consequences. Survivors often experience psychological trauma: depression, terror, guilt, shame, loss of self-esteem. They may be rejected by spouses and families, ostracised, subjected to further exploitation or to punishment. They may also suffer from unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV), sexual dysfunction, trauma to the reproductive tract, and chronic infections leading to pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility (UN, 1999).

4. Women and Armed Conflict
Conflict situations make girls and women especially vulnerable in multiple ways. Forced marriages, coerced sex and voluntary remarriage are all common in conflict situations where men and women have lost partners. Rape may be used by opposing forces as an instrument of terror or as a symbol of victory. The loss of homes, income, families and social support deprives women and girls of the capacity to generate income and they may be forced into transactional sex in order to secure their lives (or those of their husbands or children), escape to safety, or to gain access to shelter or services. In transit, refugees who are sexually active (through choice or necessity) will be exposed to different populations with differing levels of HIV infection.

It is reported that 250,000-400,000 women were raped during the 1972 war for independence in Bangladesh. More than 800 rapes were reported to have been committed by Indian security forces against women in Jammu and Kashmir. There is evidence that rape has been used as a tool of political repression during specific periods of dictatorship in Haiti. In pre-genocide Rwanda, HIV infection rates were estimated at 25% (and considerably more than 35% among the military). The conflict itself created large numbers of refugees, exposing women and girls to further risk, and contributing post-genocide to a sense of fatalism among surviving women. To provide some sense of the scale of rape committed during the genocide it is believed that every surviving female had been raped. Some survivors report that their persecutors told them that they had been allowed to live so that they might "die of sadness". A survey of 304 survivors reported that 35% had become pregnant following rape and it is estimated that between two and five thousand *enfants de mauvais souvenir* (children of bad memories) resulted from rapes committed during the genocide.

Within refugee camps many women will be less likely to have the 'benefit' of male protection and may be even more vulnerable to assault as a result. There is likely to be little recourse to justice, and those charged with responsibility for administering it may themselves be implicated in abuse. The design of refuge camps may inadvertently increase vulnerability. For example communal latrines, inadequate lighting, insensitivity to internal power dynamics among refugees, lack of protection for those who collect wood or water, may combine to render women and girls even more vulnerable to assault.

Women who have been raped suffer further marginalization. Many often become pregnant and bear children whom they have to feed and take care of. Already desperately poor, the need for increased resources exacerbates an already dire situation. Social stigma and scorn of rape victims is strong. Families and husbands often disown victims of rape, leaving them to fend for themselves at greater risk of further sexual violence and abuse.

5. Women in Post-conflict Situations

Traditionally, during conflict, as men are drawn into the fighting, women take on new roles as community leaders or non-traditional workers. However, once the conflict ends, stereotypical attitudes about women's capacities for leadership and decision-making often resurface. Research shows that "during and immediately after the conflict there is an expansion of women's roles in the public arena that is often followed by a decrease in women's opportunities and a retraction of women's space for public action in the post conflict stages of reconstruction" (Mutamba and Izabiliza, 2005: 9).

Traditionally, women are viewed as mere victims of conflict. The fact that they are effective local leaders remains largely undocumented. As a result, despite their vital contributions during the conflict and recovery periods, women are largely excluded from the negotiating tables and left out of the ensuing peacebuilding processes. For example, in Zimbabwe, women played a critical role during the liberation struggle that brought independence to the country, but they were totally absent from the Lancaster House peace process that ended the war of independence

Arguably, peace cannot be lasting unless both men and women can participate in peacebuilding, influence reconstruction and development efforts and equally enjoy their benefits. Gender-specific issues need to be addressed as part of the formal post-conflict decision-making process in order to affect policy and programming development. This principle is reflected in Security Council resolution 1889 (S/RES/1889 – 5 October 2009) which urges Member States, United Nations bodies, donors and civil society to ensure that "women's empowerment is taken into account during post-conflict needs assessments and planning, and factored into subsequent funding disbursements and programme activities". Hence, both men and women need to be participants, voicing their respective needs and priorities on an equal basis within a spirit of coexistence, nonviolence and inclusiveness.

Unfortunately, the exclusion of women from decision-making processes means that their needs and concerns may be neglected. "As a result, resources may be inaccurately targeted and the protection problems women and girls face regarding their security and their access to services may be exacerbated" (UNHCR, 2008). The absence of gender perspectives may significantly slow down reconstruction activities, jeopardize democratic inclusiveness and lasting peace, and further erode women's power within fragile and divided societies. This ultimately has negative effects on economic growth, prosperity, the recovery of human capital and overall development.

Therefore, special attention must be paid to engaging women in post-conflict reconstruction. This is a position that the United Nations advocated at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995. The Beijing Platform for Action stated that women should be assured of equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making, and that efforts should be made to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership. The Platform also highlighted the importance of gender balance in governmental bodies and in public administration. These provisions were reaffirmed in 2000 by United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, and by world leaders at the 2005 World Summit.

5.1 Reasons for women inclusion in post conflict recovery and reconstruction
Women must be involved in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction because they have important and necessary roles to play in all the phases of post conflict reconstruction. They are in a better position to talk to women who took part in the fighting in terms of demobilization and reintegration, because they are quite knowledgeable about fellow women and these ex-combatants will be willing to open up with fellow women and share their fears and concerns. In addition to these reasons scholars have identified other reasons that may not be strictly due to peace related reasons. Some of the reasons proffered are:

- **equal opportunity:** women should be allowed to contribute their quota to national reconstruction, be it before or after the conflict;
- **psychological emotional support:** like anyone else they suffer mental disturbances during conflict and thus full involvement in post-conflict reconstruction is mental therapy to relieve them of some of unpleasant conflict experiences;
- **conflict experiences:** we have already seen above that women are both victims and participants in conflict situations and thus they are directly affected by the conflict as victims of violence, as bereaved relatives and friends and as the people who have often had to cope with direct and indirect effects of conflict in families and communities;
- **gender lens analysis:** we have seen above that social constructions are different between sexes and therefore it is important to involve both sexes in planning any peace process to be representative and fair;
- **women are pro-peace:** a group of women activists crossed borders in WW1 to talk about how to end the conflict, about 1000 women from 12 warring and neutral countries convened the first International Congress of Women (ICW) in The Hague and sent 30 delegates on the first Women's Peace Mission to bring the plan of action to the heads of European states, WOZA in Zimbabwe, etc; and
- **UN Resolution 1325:** provides the mandate for women inclusion in peace building.

5.2 Challenges impeding women's participation in post-conflict reconstruction
Many post-conflict contexts are characterized by unequal power-sharing between men and women. Women often have the burden of ensuring the subsistence of their households. They are also the primary caregivers for elderly relatives and children, and often, as in Rwanda, for displaced people and orphans. This is a responsibility made more arduous by the injuries and disease commonly suffered during conflict. Because of the heavy demands on them, the majority of women have very limited opportunities to get involved in national or even local decision-making.

According to the Peacebuilding Initiative, even when "women's rights and priorities have been incorporated in peace agreements and post-conflict legislative and policy reform, these formal measures do not necessarily translate into better access for women to decision-making processes, nor to increased protection from violence at the community level" (www.peacebuildinginitiative.org). As acknowledged in United Nations Security Council resolution 1820, persistent violence, intimidation and discrimination are additional obstacles to women's participation and full involvement in post-conflict public life.

It must be noted that women are not a monolithic group and their needs are not homogeneous. In post-conflict societies in particular, women may be divided by competition for resources and by tensions over tribal affiliation, ethnic identity, religious affiliation or social status. Such divisions diminish trust among women, which weakens collective efforts to incorporate their needs and rights within new social structural, economic, political and social frameworks.

Lastly, women's participation in public administration is hampered by a lack of opportunities for women to network and develop formal leadership skills. In Rwanda, for example, women were traditionally not encouraged to attend political gatherings or speak in public. The society was highly patriarchal, and women were accustomed to expressing themselves indirectly through another person, preferably a man. In addition, they often lacked the education or information to feel confident publicly voicing their ideas (Mutamba and Izabiliza, 2005).

6. Strategies for engaging Women
A number of countries have made a concerted effort to empower women and widen opportunities for their participation in the post-conflict reconstruction process. For example, governments have instituted decentralization policies to make governance opportunities available at the local level. They have passed laws, adopted constitutional provisions and enacted electoral, judicial and military reforms aimed at ending gender discrimination and opening more doors for women.

Another effective strategy to bring women into public administration is to set quotas for their participation. Rwanda, for example, mandated that 30 per cent of the positions in government decision-making bodies be filled by female representatives. Uganda's 1995 Constitution states that women should make up one-third of the membership of each local government council. The introduction of quotas in Burundi resulted in women comprising 30 per cent of parliamentarians and seven of 20 ministers in 2006. For the first time, women were also elected as chiefs of communes (Klot 2007).

Quotas, whether voluntarily adopted by political parties or constitutionally or legislatively mandated, have certainly helped women gain access to leadership positions. However, greater female representation does not necessarily equate to higher empowerment. Gender quotas tend to reduce concerns about women's participation to a superficial, numerical approach. It is important to know whether a country is truly committed to involving women in governance or just filling its mandatory quotas. In Sudan, Congo and Uganda, for example, women activists criticized affirmative-action programmes they felt were implemented simply to draw donor funding and media coverage. The programmes, they argued, were vague, inappropriate, poorly monitored and not sustainable. According to a UNIFEM study on women, war and peace, "quotas must be seen as a temporary solution to increase gender balance … They are a first step on the path to gender equality, both a practical and a symbolic measure to support women's leadership".

Beyond the use of quotas, a crucial step is to enhance women's leadership capacity. In this regard, greater partnership with existing women's organizations can be an important strategy. Civil society women's groups provide avenues for advocacy, mobilization and social networking. They thus widen opportunities to advance gender mainstreaming, on the one hand, and offer opportunities for women to practise leadership, on the other. In addition, capacity-building can be done by government agencies that focus on improving women's lives. Some countries, for example, establish a Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Gender Equality or a State Secretary for Women. In certain circumstances, temporary units that oversee the immediate post-conflict needs of women can also contribute to developing women's leadership capacity.

Women themselves have to be conscientised and realise that freedom, or independence is not *mana* from Heaven served to all, but a struggle that must be made. And this struggle or fight must be fought strategically. The most effective fighting tool for women is education which goes beyond classroom education. In addition to education and training in governance and leadership skills, they need to learn mediation and conflict management skills, consultation and negotiation so that they can be better qualified for that leadership positions and decision making processes.

Finally, the application of information and communication technologies in public administration and governance can help women participate in decision-making. This is a particularly useful strategy when security concerns restrict physical mobility, as happens often in post-conflict situations. In such circumstances, "cyber centres" can provide women with access to Internet resources in a safe environment.

7. Women building Peace: Selected Cases

Story telling is a learning methodology which has been adopted by peace building, especially in appreciative inquiry model. It is a model that believes that stories should be told. When people tell their experiences, it makes it easy for people to identify with that situation. It humanises the story and we can place the face on the body, and the experience last longer. This part of the paper will deal with case studies and testimonies of people who have done something to make post conflict reconstruction sustainable.

7.1 Joining hands in collecting small arms: The Mali experience

The war in Mali started in 1990, taking a demoralisation tone, but since the end of the war, the National Women's Movement for the maintenance of Peace and National Unity (MNFPW) offered a non violent approach: "We try to humanise the conflict by bringing the victims into focus. Wives of combatants were taken to hospitals so that they can see first hand the effects of their husbands' work. We sent mission to opinion leaders in order to alert them to the destructive capacity of military action." (Maiga, 1999)

7.2 Political reconstruction of Rwanda

Rwanda became a household name in conflict because of the genocide of 1994. This was a conscious effort to annihilate an ethnic group because of long term hatred which led to the killing of the Rwandans by Rwandans. "In parliament we have set up our own forum to make women stronger and to make our voices heard. We wanted to give a positive image to politics and we wanted to ensure solidarity between women. We wanted women to become more involved in decision making bodies and to make sure there really would be affirmative action. We wanted to make sure women knew their rights and that they could teach their children their rights" (Makankomeje, 1999). Thus the post genocide of 1994 was not left only to men. Women of that country played significant role in restructuring the political structure of Rwanda. "We decide that we wanted to participate and build a lasting peace… Our experience has made us realise that when women work together they can achieve significant results" Mukankomeje, 1999).

7.3 Women building peace in Liberia

Liberian women have not only been victims of the country's civil war but have also played an active role to end it. In 1994 the Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI) was established as a pressure group to speak out against the war, they adopted the strategy of taking a unified stance on issues relating to the war, focusing on the need for disarmament before holding elections. They conducted meetings, organised demonstrations and presented a range of position statements to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the rebel leaders. They lead successful sit home strikes in protests at agreements they felt appeased the leaders of warring factions. They were present at the talks that led to the Accra Clarification of the Akosombo Agreement in 1996. They also protested against and rejected the roles of former USA president Jimmy Carter and UN Special Envoy Gordon-Somers who, they felt, were undermining the conference's relevance by encouraging the warring factions to meet separately. They formulated a plan for enhancing the incentives for disarmament, but complained that neither the UN nor ECOWAS had studied their plan or considered incorporating it into their own programme of actions. As the view points and actions of the LWI became more critical, members experienced increased antagonism from the warring factions. The women suffered harassment, looting and death threats, which forced all the prominent leaders to flee Monrovia before the violence erupted.

7.4 Women taking their place at the peace table: The inter-Congolese peace dialogue

According to Jobson (2005), war in any country has negative impact on women. There is thus need for developing a gender sensitive post conflict restructuring programme for sustainable peace. This formed the background for the inclusion of women perspectives in the peace process in the Congolese peace talk, called the inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD). Women of DRC demanded to be part of the peace process and reconstruction of their country. They identified themselves as "mothers of the nation", and as mediators in their respective families and custodians of the tradition and valves of the people. They declared that "This is our right, our duty and our responsibility" (Jobson, 2005). They identified the requirements for peace as immediate stop of all hostilities and withdrawal of all foreign troops from the country; reuniting the country and respecting its territorial integrity; adopting CEDAW as the basis for the elimination of discrimination against women; instituting affirmative action across the inter-Congolese dialogue process; including women's organizations in the implementation of all emergency humanitarian programmes; reintegrating and rehabilitating demobilized child soldiers; and prioritising the needs of women,

children and other vulnerable groups in the agenda of the inter-Congolese dialogue to avoid impunity for all criminal acts. With the agenda developed by women, the next stage was to mobilise women and the civil society organisations with the help of the Director of the Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa Dr. Jean- Jacques Purusi Sadiki. The Centre approached the Institute of Faith in Africa and All African Women for Peace to help in the organisation of the conference on armed conflict on the eve of the (ICD) conference. At the end of the conference, they jointly proposed the following to enhance the role of women in peace building in Africa:

- Provision of an opportunity for an assessment of women's present status in society and the main problems they face, given the reality that women in many African countries have no or few mechanisms for stating their views. An important aspect would be the determination of which issues affecting women, prevent peace in the DRC;
- To conduct participatory research with women in the DRC, in both urban and rural settings, to develop a gender critique of the institutions and mechanisms that existed for women's projection and the advancement of their status in society. This would require a review of national, regional and international mechanisms for the protection of women and the extent to which they had been implemented: Whether these mechanisms had been effective in meeting the needs of women and in ensuring justice for women, or whether conditions continued to provide for impunity; and
- To identify and evaluate programmes which are presently in place and how they have been affected by the levels of militarisation in the country.

7.5 Women's coalition of Zimbabwe

The women's coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) was formed by Zimbabwean women organizations to fight for peace and an end to violence, especially against women. Since its formation, it has not only fought for women rights and gender equality in Zimbabwe, but also for human rights and an end to authoritarianism in Zimbabwe. The organisation has been fighting for peace so that Zimbabwe gets back on the long lost development track. As inter-party negotiations for an election roadmap continue, WCoZ has also come up with its own which sets minimum conditions for free and fair elections, including greater female representation. Among the conditions set by WCoZ are a new constitution for the country, a gender sensitive national healing process, legal reforms, an end to politically motivated violence and intimidation and the promotion of intra-party democracy. A statement released by the coalition also calls for reforms in the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and the media, including the licensing of independent radio and television stations, and for the human rights and anti-corruption commissions to be fully functional. The coalition goes on to say: 'The state should ensure full security of women and girls during election periods and end impunity. Political parties must commit to non-violent campaigning and desist from hate speech in accordance with the Global Political Agreement (GPA); we demand that all stakeholders mainstream non-violence education in all awareness raising and voter education campaigns by all players (and) the state should guarantee and safeguard freedom of movement, expression and assembly for all citizens, especially women.' The coalition also wants local, regional and international election observers to be deployed six months before elections and maintain their presence for another three months thereafter.

8. Conclusion

Peace cannot be lasting unless both men and women participate in shaping post-conflict reconstruction and are able to equally enjoy its benefits. Barriers to women's participation include traditional notions about gender roles, women's caregiving burdens and their inexperience in leadership positions. Nonetheless, women's participation can be increased by enacting reforms to end gender discrimination, setting quotas for female representation in government and undertaking capacity development efforts to strengthen women's leadership skills. Thus, given the opportunity, women can do well in post conflict reconstruction for the benefit of everyone. The inclusion of women in post conflict reconstruction is a must if we are honest about achieving positive peace in the post violent conflict situation. Women can play and do play many helpful roles that must be harnessed for sustainable peace.

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