



**WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN  
PEACEBUILDING:  
A MISSING PIECE OF THE PUZZLE?**

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## Tables of Contents

<b><i>I. Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b><i>II. Literature Review, Part I: Theoretical Perspectives on Peace-Building</i></b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>1. Addressing Fear and Mistrust</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>2. Rebuilding Inclusive Political and Economic Institutions</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>3. Reconciliation</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>4. Fostering Civil Society</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b><i>III. Literature Review, Part II: A Causal Theory of Women as Peace-Builders</i></b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>1. Women and Peacebuilding:</b> .....	<b>30</b>
i. Addressing Fear and Mistrust .....	31
ii. Rebuilding Political and Economic Institutions.....	35
iii. Reconciliation .....	38
iv. Fostering Civil Society .....	40
<b><i>IV. Case Selection and Research Design</i></b> .....	<b>43</b>
<b>1. Methodology</b> .....	<b>43</b>
i. Women’s Participation .....	44
ii. Peace Outcomes .....	48
iii. Overall Comparison: Women’s Participation to Peace Outcomes.....	49
<b>2. Case Selection</b> .....	<b>51</b>
<b><i>V. Case Studies</i></b> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>1. Rwandan Civil War: 1990—1993</b> .....	<b>55</b>
i. Conflict Background .....	55
ii. Women’s Participation: Insubstantial .....	57
iii. Peace Outcome: Failure .....	64
<b>2. Rwandan Genocide: 1994</b> .....	<b>65</b>
i. Conflict Background.....	65
ii. Women’s Participation: Substantial.....	68
iii. Peace Outcome: Success.....	84
<b>3. Liberia’s First Civil War: 1989—1996</b> .....	<b>85</b>
i. Conflict Background.....	85
ii. Women’s Participation: Substantial.....	89
iii. Peace Outcome: Failure .....	103
<b>4. Liberia’s Second Civil War: 1999—2003</b> .....	<b>104</b>
i. Conflict Background.....	104
ii. Women’s Participation: Substantial.....	106
iii. Peace Outcome: Success.....	119
<b><i>VI. Discussion</i></b> .....	<b>120</b>
<b><i>VII. Conclusion</i></b> .....	<b>127</b>
<b><i>VIII. Acknowledgements</i></b> .....	<b>130</b>
<b><i>IX. Works Cited</i></b> .....	<b>131</b>

## *List of Tables*

Table 1: Classification of Women's Participation .....	48
Table 2: Women's Participation and Peace Outcomes .....	50
Table 3: Metrics of Women's Participation .....	54

## *List of Acronyms and Abbreviations*

AFELL	<i>Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia</i>
AVEGA	<i>Association of the Widows of Rwanda</i>
CPA	<i>Comprehensive Peace Agreement</i>
CWO	<i>Concerned Women's Organization</i>
DDR	<i>Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration</i>
DDRR	<i>Disarmament, Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration</i>
ECOWAS	<i>Economic Community of West African States</i>
ECOMOG	<i>Economic Community Monitoring Group</i>
FAR	<i>Rwandan Armed Forces</i>
GNU	<i>Government of National Unity</i>
GOL	<i>Government of Liberia</i>
ICTR	<i>International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda</i>
INPFL	<i>Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia</i>
LURD	<i>Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy</i>
LWI	<i>Liberian Women's Initiative</i>
MIGEFASO	<i>Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Affairs</i>
MIGEPFOD	<i>Ministry of Gender and Women in Development</i>
MODEL	<i>Movement for Democracy in Liberia</i>
MARWOPNET	<i>Mano River Women's Peace Network</i>

MP	<i>Member of Parliament</i>
MRND	<i>National Revolutionary Movement for Development</i>
NGO	<i>Non-Governmental Organization</i>
NPLF	<i>National Patriotic Front of Liberia</i>
RDRC	<i>Rwandan Demobilization and Reintegration Commission</i>
RPF	<i>Rwandan Patriotic Front</i>
RTL	<i>Radio Television Libre des Milles Collins</i>
TRC	<i>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</i>
SELF	<i>Special Emergency Life Food Programme</i>
ULIMO	<i>United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy</i>
WAFF	<i>Women Associated with Fighting Forces</i>
WIPNET	<i>Women in Peacebuilding Network</i>

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

*“We are tired of war. We are tired of running. We are tired of begging for food. We are tired of our children being raped. We are now taking this stand to secure the future of our children. Because we believe, as custodians of society tomorrow, our children will ask us, mama, what was your role during the crisis?”*

*— Leymah Gbowee,  
on behalf of Liberian women  
to Charles Taylor, President of Liberia*

## I. Introduction

The end of the Cold War ushered in a new era of international politics, characterized by a lack of dominant structure and a shifting system of world order. The number of intrastate conflicts has since increased dramatically, along with their duration and degree of complexity; as national systems of order break down, dormant antagonisms and repressed grievances reassert themselves. Especially within the Third World, these conflicts often threaten regional stability and are accompanied by high rates of civilian casualties and human rights violations.

The prevalence and virulence of intrastate conflict in recent decades has had serious implications for women, most notably in that there is no longer a clear distinction between “the battlefield” and “the home front.” This increase in inclusive violence has meant that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by the conflict. In particular, women often experience a level of violence—principally sexual violence—and mortality similar to that of male combatants throughout the course of the conflict. This is because, in many societies, women are especially vulnerable due to the preexisting gender imbalance in levels of political, economic and social power. Further, women are often associated with the “virtue” or identity of a group, making them appealing targets for the opposition who wish to undermine the ethnic or cultural foundations of a society by raping or shaming their women.

Because the traumatic effects of civil war are not unique to male combatants, it is important to recognize the consequent impact this violence has on women—and thus on durable peace and reconciliation. Often, women are not included in formal efforts to

resolve conflicts and build peace; however, the participation of women represents a potential opportunity to bridge seemingly insurmountable divides and also to incorporate actors from civil society and the family, rather than the battlefield, for the purposes of creating sustainable peace. Women are often key players in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), popular protests and other grassroots movements, empowering them in civil society and allowing them to inspire societal change and support sustainable peace. Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine the ways in which women are incorporated into, or excluded from, the process of building peace and whether the level of female involvement can impact the success and longevity of that peace.

While it must be acknowledged that this transition from civil war to stable peace is inherently complicated and challenging—and no one factor can determine its success—it is precisely because of the complex nature of peace-building that a stronger focus on the incorporation of women and their concerns into the process should be explored. This was acknowledged internationally on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2000 in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which codified the expansion of the role of women in U.N. field-based operations to better respond to the needs of women in post-conflict societies and also to provide a more solid foundation for peace. However, the role of local women in the decision-making process is still marginal, particularly in formal peace negotiations and also in many of the new political institutions that are created after civil war. This is despite women's unique strengths in forming coalitions across the divides created during civil war and the disproportionate amount of violence perpetrated against them in the course of conflict.

Although the effects of civil war on women and their role in post-conflict societies are the focus of this paper, the diversity of women's experiences must be acknowledged. The focus on women's issues and interests does not imply that women are a monolithic group; instead, the experiences and opinions of women are multi-dimensional, depending also on factors such as ethnicity, class and religion. However, the conditions of war and peace do affect women differently than men, and those differences are rarely taken into account during the peacebuilding process. Women are also universally disadvantaged in patriarchal societies, although in different ways and to different degrees, which contributes to a common pattern of experiences and concerns. Thus, women should be viewed as a diverse group of social actors with differentiated backgrounds and capacities that inform their own agendas, which often articulate the needs of society as a whole in addition to the specific interests of the female population. In this way, women are capable of substantive contributions to lasting peace in post-conflict societies, and should not be relegated to the mere victims or simply the targets of interventions.

A large body of literature exists that focuses on the effects of peacebuilding on women, particularly opportunities in post-conflict societies for shifting the gender paradigm and empowering women. However, little research exists regarding the impact of women's participation in the peacebuilding process on the success of peace efforts. To rectify this oversight, the main research question driving this paper is: *what is the impact of varied degrees of participation by women and women's organizations during peacebuilding on the outcome of that process?* An exploration of this question is particularly relevant because the current marginalization of women has led to an



expectation on the part of important post-conflict actors, both international and domestic, that proof of women's contributions must be provided before they should be equally incorporated into the peacebuilding process.

Before examining the research question proposed above, a review of the existing literature on peacebuilding will be presented, focusing on four particular functions of peacebuilding—addressing fear and mistrust, creating democratic political and economic institutions, supporting reconciliation and fostering civil society—and the mechanisms by which they contribute to sustained peace. A discussion of the extensive negative effects of civil war on women will follow. And finally, women's participation will be linked to each of the four functions of peacebuilding to demonstrate the plausible ways in which it can have a causal effect on such efforts, and thereby increase the likelihood that peace will persist.

To supplement these theoretical arguments, four cases studies from conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa—representing a range of women's involvement in peacebuilding—will be presented: the First Liberian Civil War (1989-1996), the Second Liberian Civil War (1999-2003), the Rwandan Civil War (1990-1993) and the Rwandan Genocide (1994). The Rwandan Civil War will present a case in which there was little to no participation of women and failed peace, while the Rwandan Genocide and Second Liberian Civil War will illustrate the peace successes following substantive participation by women and women's organizations. The First Liberian Civil War will define the parameters of the argument, as there existed a strong woman's movement but violence resumed despite peacebuilding efforts. Ultimately, this paper will demonstrate that although a substantial level of participation on the part of women cannot be seen as *the*

deciding factor in achieving lasting peace, significant women’s participation—particularly in both civil society and in the formal government—can have a positive impact on peacebuilding efforts.

## **II. Literature Review, Part I: Theoretical Perspectives on Peace-Building**

Prior to discussing the specific role of women in the peace-building process, the main factors preventing the attainment of long-term peace must be elucidated and the mechanisms for reducing those factors identified. First, peacebuilding must be defined and differentiated from peacemaking and peacekeeping. “Peacemaking” generally refers to the signing of agreements between policymakers, which results in a suspension of fighting. For the United Nation, peacemaking involves bringing hostile parties to agreement through diplomatic means, most commonly through negotiation.<sup>1</sup> However, this peace is often tenuous, and the formal signing of a peace agreement does not guarantee that violence will not resume. Thus, “peacekeeping” often occurs during these interludes: peacekeeping refers to the deployment of international personnel to maintain peace and security. Peacekeeping is generally a multilateral activity, and all of these missions involve military personnel, although many include substantial civilian components as well.<sup>2</sup> The functions of peacekeepers are broad and may encompass the

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, “The UN in Brief: What the UN Does for Peace: Peacemaking,” available at <<http://www.un.org/Overview/uninbrief/peacemaking.shtml>>.

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents’ Choices After Civil War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 5.

observation of a ceasefire, the establishment of a buffer zone and the organization of elections.<sup>3</sup>

While certainly peacemaking, and often peacekeeping, are integral to successful peacebuilding, they represent narrower and generally shorter commitments. In contrast, peacebuilding refers to a long-term commitment that includes post-conflict reconstruction, but also involves a wide array of processes and stages necessary to transform a conflict toward more sustainable peace.<sup>4</sup> To simplify, “*peacemaking*” aims to bring about a cessation in hostilities and allow the combatants to pursue nonviolent solutions; “*peacekeeping*” attempts to separate the disputing parties and maintain a state of non-violence; finally, “*peacebuilding*” is a process that establishes the conditions for a sustainable settlement.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the major purpose of peacebuilding, as defined by Bercovitch and Kadayifci (2002), is the prevention of a relapse into violent conflict. To achieve this, peacebuilding goes beyond diplomatic agreements to promote social and psychological change at the grassroots level.<sup>6</sup> Because enacting such change involves an inherently lengthy and complex process, peacebuilding can be seen as including three inter-related elements: the effective intervention by external actors to create the conditions conducive to peace; the relief and reconstruction of war-torn society; and the creation of political

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations, “The UN in Brief: What the UN Does for Peace: Peacekeeping,” available at <<http://www.un.org/Overview/uninbrief/peacemaking.shtml>>.

<sup>4</sup> John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), p. 17-18.

<sup>5</sup> Jacob Bercovitch and Ayse Kadayifci, “Exploring the Relevance and Contribution of Mediation to Peace-Building,” in *Peace and Conflict Studies* 9, no. 2: (2002), p. 21-22.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23.

and socio-economic institutions to build trust and to create a sense of security.<sup>7</sup> Further, for the purposes of this paper, “peacebuilders” will refer to any actors that are working to achieve these goals: including, but not limited to, formal interventions, state governments, local and international NGOs, civil society groups and individuals. This is an important classification because peacebuilding can take place at the group, community or state level.<sup>8</sup>

The process of peacebuilding may begin while the conflict is ongoing, and the transitional period of negative peace—or an absence of violence—may last for many years until positive peace—or a condition of enduring stability—is reached. Because successful peacebuilding engages with a broad set of challenges, ranging from ending the physical fighting and disarming the warring factions to establishing economic stability and building a sense of community, there exists a vast literature on the topic. However, this paper will focus on three main functions of peacebuilding and the associated issues that must be resolved to attain durable peace. These main functions are: (1) addressing fear and mistrust and preventing a return to aggression, (2) rebuilding political and economic institutions and remedying political exclusion, and (3) fostering social reconciliation and strengthening civil society.

While the specifics of these objectives will vary depending on the conflict and the capacity of the intervention—taken together, they attempt to institutionalize peace and prevent a return to violence. Although the scope of this paper allows for only a brief

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<sup>7</sup> James Bumsumtwi-Sam, “Development and Peacebuilding: Conceptual and Operational Deficits in International Assistance” in *Durable Peace: Challenges for Peacebuilding Africa*, eds. Taisier M. Ali and Robert O. Matthews, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 315.

<sup>8</sup> John Galtung, “Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding” in *Peace, War, and Defense—Essays in Peace Research, vol 2*, ed. John Galtung, (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers, 1975), p. 282-302.

discussion of the functions of peacebuilding, the following section will demonstrate why each function must necessarily be served in the aftermath of civil war and how that contributes to a stable foundation for peace and fosters cooperation and trust between previously warring factions.

### *1. Addressing Fear and Mistrust*

Following a cessation of violence, strong incentives for aggression still remain on both sides of the conflict. As Fortna (2008) notes, both factions know the other side has “at least partially aggressive motives” and so, without the ability to monitor their own agreements effectively, a deeply ingrained suspicion of the enemy persists.<sup>9</sup> These situations make spirals into the security dilemma extremely likely. Thus, successful peacebuilding necessitates preventing a return to violence in the short-term, facilitating the monitoring of agreements, and fostering trust between combatants. These issues are often addressed through initial peacekeeping interventions, which raise the costs of war or the benefits of peace—thereby reducing the likelihood of aggression—and which aid in monitoring and so disrupt the security dilemma by reducing belligerents’ uncertainty.<sup>10</sup> This aspect of peacebuilding also includes demobilizing and integrating forces and institutionalizing mechanisms for peaceful dispute resolution and political change.<sup>11</sup> By creating a secure environment, these activities are linked to peacebuilding’s main objectives: to prevent armed conflict and to manage peace in post-conflict societies.

In many cases of intrastate conflict, tenuous periods of peace are threatened by the presence of spoilers. Therefore, successful peacebuilding efforts must mitigate the

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<sup>9</sup> Fortna, p. 84.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>11</sup> Bumsumtwi-Sam, p. 328

harmful effects of these actors, whether groups or individuals, that seek to hinder, delay or undermine conflict settlement.<sup>12</sup> In his work on spoilers, Stedman (1997) identifies numerous strategies for peacebuilders, as international actors, to employ when managing spoilers—such as inducement, the addressing of grievances for those factions who obstruct peace, or socialization, which involves establishing a set of norms for acceptable behavior by internal parties that can then be used to judge the behavior of those parties.<sup>13</sup> This requires correctly identifying both the type of spoiler and their motives and effectively undertaking the appropriate strategy; regardless of these challenges, successful peacemaking—and thus peacebuilding—requires acknowledging and addressing spoilers to prevent a return to violence.

## *2. Rebuilding Inclusive Political and Economic Institutions*

As broadly discussed above, the processes of peacebuilding must necessarily address issues of fear and mistrust, particularly in the short term, to create a stable foundation for peace and to foster cooperation between previously warring factions. However, peacebuilding differs from peacemaking and peacekeeping in its long-term development goals, such as rebuilding or creating political and economic institutions. Following an intrastate conflict, there is often destruction of physical infrastructure as well as economic disruption and political instability. Therefore, peacebuilding must establish the foundations for the reconstruction of the state, encourage regime legitimacy and inclusive political arrangements, and restore the administrative and enforcement

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<sup>12</sup> Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond, “Introduction. Obstacles to Peace Processes: Understanding Spoiling,” in *Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers During Conflict Resolution*, eds. Newman and Richmond (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2006), p. 1

<sup>13</sup> Stephan J. Stedman, “Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes,” in *International Security* 22, no.2: (Fall 1997): p. 12 -13.

capacities of the state. By doing so, peacebuilding creates a more stable and responsive form of political and economic relations within the state—and so allows grievances to be dealt with directly and without a resort to violence in the future.

Ali and Matthews (2004) offer a list of political and economic redevelopment goals; politically, they suggest establishing the spatial and functional foundations for the reconstitution of state authority, foster regime legitimacy, and restore the administrative and enforcement capacities of the state. Economically, they advise establishing the foundations of a working economy, restoring a degree of macroeconomic stability, generating opportunities for employment and creating clear targets for reducing poverty and inequality.<sup>14</sup> These economic imperatives are necessary to address underlying inequality and high rates of unemployment, which can be exploited by either side to encourage a resumption of war. While not exhaustive, this list illustrates the long-term, multi-dimensional nature of peacebuilding. These goals are essential to establishing a stable peace and remedying the underlying cause of conflict—without political and economic opportunities, a relapse into violence is substantially more likely.

The creation of inclusive political and economic institutions is particularly pertinent as exclusion from these realms is often a driving force behind conflict; if these inequalities persist, then one or both sides will retain a strong motivation for the return to violence. Further, as Fortna (2008) notes, the governance structure must be one that both sides can tolerate, otherwise former combatants may return to war if they feel they are losing the peace politically. Peacebuilding can directly contribute to this by monitoring or running elections, reestablishing institutions of law and order, monitoring human rights

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<sup>14</sup> Bumsumtwi-Sam, p. 325-334.

and rebuilding state institutions among other functions.<sup>15</sup> In addition, military parties must be transformed through this process into political organizations that can participate in legitimate elections. All of these undertakings help to progress the conflict “from the battlefield to more peaceful institutions of dispute settlements” by allowing all members of society to participate fully in civil and economic life.<sup>16</sup>

To accomplish these goals, peacebuilding often works towards establishing stable and democratic institutions to mediate competing domestic interests in the long term. Because democratic societies are participatory and more transparent than other regime types, they facilitate the building of trust and cooperation in post-conflict societies. In their research on 124 civil wars and peacebuilding outcomes since 1994, Doyle and Sambanis (2006) found a positive correlation between United Nations peace operations and democratization after civil war, which contribute to continuing peace.<sup>17</sup> Research has also shown that democracies are more effective at defusing violent conflict than dictatorships, which experience a war every twelve years on average as compared to every twenty-one years for democracies.<sup>18</sup> These findings corroborate the democratic peace theory, which states that democracies are less likely to enter into conflict due to the moderating effect of democratic norms and the inherent checks and balances on domestic power, particularly constraining the powers of the executive. Further, democratic elections foster peaceful political competition and allow for bloodless power transitions within the state.

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<sup>15</sup> Fortna, p. 98-99

<sup>16</sup> Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis. *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 114.

<sup>18</sup> Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-being in the World, 1950-1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 36.



However, Mansfield and Snyder (1995) note that, while mature democracies are more stable and safer, states often go through a “rocky transition” to reach democracy and can become more aggressive and war-prone during that period.<sup>19</sup> This finding does not undermine the significance of creating inclusive, democratic institutions during post-conflict reconstruction; conversely, it demonstrates the need for skillful peacebuilding to ensure, for example, that elections are transparent or that economic opportunities are equally available to prevent the disintegration of democratic progress and a return to violence. By rebuilding political and economic institutions and reconstituting them to promote equality and democracy, peacebuilding thus remedies many of the root causes of conflict and contributes to a long-term peace.

### *3. Reconciliation*

Following conflict, the importance of reconciliation and healing is evident: most survivors of violence show symptomatic responses, and the impact of large-scale violence can create deep rifts within families and communities.<sup>20</sup> When issues of victimization and justice are not addressed, resentment can foster and previous antagonisms can easily be reignited. Further, reconciliation diminishes discrimination and conditions people to not normalize violent attacks on others. As such, many studies in post-conflict reconstruction regard reconciliation and restoring relations on the ground as

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<sup>19</sup> Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Democratization and War” in *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 3: (1995), p. 79-80.

<sup>20</sup> Brandon Hamber, *Transforming Societies After Political Violence: Truth, Reconciliation and Mental Health*, (New York: Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, 2009, p. 19.

vital to preventing future violence.<sup>21</sup> To remedy this, formal reconciliation may occur through International Criminal Courts or domestic trials and community-based courts, as in the case of Rwanda.

However, reconciliation may happen more informally, through fostering feelings of ownership in the process of institution-building—which creates a sense of identification with the greater whole.<sup>22</sup> The process of acknowledging the atrocities of war and creating a mutual narrative prevents either side from co-opting past violence to inspire new conflict, as citizens are less likely to respond to agendas of suspicion; further, the process of reconciliation addresses the psychological needs of the population and lays the foundation for a feeling of physical and mental security. This type of “social reconciliation” can be accomplished by establishing dialogue between victims and perpetrators, articulating the truth of the events that unfolded in the course of war, promoting understand and forgiveness and ultimately healing—all of which are integral parts of the peacebuilding agenda.<sup>23</sup> Further, peacebuilding can create a system of justice for crimes committed during war, encompassing trials, payment of compensation or the acknowledgement of responsibility by the perpetrator.<sup>24</sup> This encourages respect for the rule of law and can be psychologically necessary for communities ravaged by war. Ultimately, reconciliation represents an opportunity to engage with the past, enact significant changes in attitudes and build positive relationships for a stable, peaceful future—it is both constructive and transformative.

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<sup>21</sup> Elham Atashi, “Challenges to Conflict Transformation from the Streets” in *Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding: Moving from Violence to Sustainable Peace*, eds. Bruce Dayton and Louis Kriesberg, (London: Routledge, 2009), p 55.

<sup>22</sup> Jarat Chopra and Tanja Hohe, “Participatory Peacebuilding” in *Building Sustainable Peace*, eds. Tom Keating and W. Andy Knight, (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2004), p. 245-246.

<sup>23</sup> Timothy Murithi, *The Ethics of Peacebuilding*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p.138

<sup>24</sup> Hizkias Assefa, “Reconciliation” in *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*, eds. L. Reychler and T. Paffenholz, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), p. 336-342.

#### *4. Fostering Civil Society*

While the above factors are all necessary components of peacebuilding, such undertakings are generally instituted from above. However, sustainable peace requires top-down *and* bottom-up approaches to ensure investment from the entire society. Therefore, the rehabilitation and growth of civil society following a conflict is also an integral aspect of long-term peace and stability. While the definition of civil society is fluid, it generally refers to a “sphere of voluntary action that is distinct from the state, political, private and economic spheres, though civil society is oriented toward and interacts closely with them.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore, civil society should be regarded as extending beyond family or clan affiliations but separate from the state and the market. Within this sphere, voluntary organizations and associations undertake collective action and serve a variety of essential functions.

Civil society contributes significantly to each of the peacebuilding objectives described above, in addition to independently promoting sustainable peace. In the period directly following a ceasefire, local civic groups can monitor the conflict situation on the ground and provide information to decision-makers, reducing uncertainty regarding the other side’s intentions.<sup>26</sup> In relation to civil society fostering trust and reducing aggression, Varshney (2003) observed that varying levels of violence between Hindus and Muslims in similar settings could be explained by the strength of associational

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<sup>25</sup> Christoph Spurk, “Understanding Civil Society” in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Thania Paffenholz, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Thania Paffenholz and Christoph Spurk, “A Comprehensive Analytical Framework” in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Thania Paffenholz, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), p. 68.

networks and everyday forms of civic engagement.<sup>27</sup> Associational networks include business associations, professional organizations, trade unions, and festival organizations among others, while everyday engagement refers to routine interactions, such as families visiting each other or participating together in festivals.<sup>28</sup>

These interactions, in the realm of civil society, promote communication between members of different communities and allow for tensions to be regulated at the local level. Thus, by fostering interaction between previously hostile groups, the two communities can form organizations that serve their communal economic, social and cultural needs—increasing the incentives for continued peace and laying the foundation for the formation of temporary organizations in times of tension to manage rising conflict.<sup>29</sup> Varshney also noted that such civic networks constrain the behavior of local politicians and minimize their ability to use polarization for the sake of electoral advantage.<sup>30</sup> Overall, participation in social organizations helps to bridge social cleavages and to foster social cohesion.<sup>31</sup> By bringing together members of former conflict groups, including for business or development work, civil society provides a space in which peaceful behaviors and norms can be learned and creates beneficial cooperatives that alter each group's incentives for returning to violence.

In terms of the vibrancy of a country's democratic institutions, civil society is a vital source of social capital that enables participants to work together more effectively to

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<sup>27</sup> Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11-12.

<sup>31</sup> Spurk, p. 21.

pursue shared objectives.<sup>32</sup> As heterogeneous groups discover that bonds of trust and solidarity enable them to better achieve their goals, social peace and civility are thus promoted. Because of the voluntary nature of civil society, it functions as a free space in which “democratic attitudes are cultivated and democratic behavior is conditioned:” through involvement in civil society, citizens are able to learn about fundamental democratic values, such as participation and collective action.<sup>33</sup> In this way, civil society indirectly promotes democracy, while organizations within the sphere can also directly articulate a pro-democracy agenda and extend that idea throughout society—educating others about democracy and mobilizing others for the cause. Advocacy on the part of civil society, particularly for peace, creates public pressure to maintain diplomatic agreements. This advocacy also allows civil society groups to place values such as human rights and democratic values on the political agenda.<sup>34</sup>

Civic engagement, therefore, creates dense, overlapping networks that are autonomous from the political regime but can still exert a profound influence in the political sphere. Particularly in times of transition, civil society can balance the power of the state, as it is beyond the direct control of the government, and protect the interests of citizens. The strength of civic culture has also been shown as the best predictor of economic vitality, because the solidarity of such organizations allows them to respond to challenges more effectively—thus, civil society promotes both economic cooperation and

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Putman, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 163-171.

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Barber, “Clansmen, Consumers and Citizens: Three Takes on Civil Society” in *Civil Society, Democracy and Civic Renewal*, ed. Robert Fullinwider, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Thania Paffenholz, “Civil Society and Peacebuilding,” in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Thania Paffenholz, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), p. 59.

development.<sup>35</sup> By creating a forum for citizens to peacefully pursue a variety of shared interests, civil society contributes to the solidification and dissemination of democratic values, prevents abuses by the state, and enables economic vitality.

Additionally, civil society can promote post-conflict reconciliation through a variety of mechanisms. Because it functions separately from the state, civic groups can promote alternative ways of attaining justice even when the official policy emphasizes punishment—which may not be the most appropriate mechanism for achieving long-term healing.<sup>36</sup> Civil society can also create momentum for reconciliation at the grassroots level, both when formal reconciliation is not undertaken or when it is enacted in a top-down manner. In particular, prominent members of society can demonstrate the value of reconciliation through symbolic, public acts of forgiveness. Civic organizations are also able to facilitate the empowerment of marginalized groups, ensuring that their needs are addressed and that they are incorporated into the reconciliation process.<sup>37</sup> Finally, as previously discussed, the collaborative nature of civil society itself helps to foster positive relationships between polarized groups and to promote constructive dialogue. In this way, civil society becomes part of a “wider process of changing societal relations and injustices to prevent harm in the future.”<sup>38</sup>

Considering civil society’s contributions to these three functions of peacebuilding, numerous studies over the past decade have concluded that only the involvement of

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<sup>35</sup> Putnam, p. 87-91.

<sup>36</sup> Mathijs van Leeuwen, *Partners in Peace: Discourses and Practices of Civil-Society Peacebuilding*, (Netherlands: Radboud University Press, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> Francies Kofi Abiew and Tom Keating, “Defining a Role for Civil Society” in *Building Sustainable Peace*, ed. Tom Keating and W. Andy Knight, (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2004), p. 96.

<sup>38</sup> Hizkias Assefa, “Reconciliation: Challenges, Responses and the Role of Civil Society” in *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, ed. Paul van Tongeren, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005, p. 170.

multiple actors, including those in civil society, can lead to sustainable peace.<sup>39</sup> The cooperation of civic organization has many benefits for peacebuilders, as these groups have the comparative advantage of local knowledge and an intuitive grasp of both the barriers to and opportunities for peace at the local level when compared to international or top-down initiatives.<sup>40</sup> In addition, civil society is often perceived as a neutral force, which can de-politicize peacebuilding, adding to the legitimacy of such undertakings.<sup>41</sup> Grassroots organizations also enjoy a greater degree of flexibility than governments or formal interventions and can more easily promote local participation because they are embedded in the community. Thus, peacebuilding's direct support for civil society, such as through legislative initiatives or reforms to remove governmental obstacles to civic engagement, facilitates positive peace outcomes by creating a space for such associational networks. Further, peacebuilding initiatives often provide resources or new technology to civic organizations and create the necessary conditions of security and openness for civil society to flourish.<sup>42</sup> In this way, the synergistic effects of civil society can also support and amplify the other objectives of peacebuilding, all of which function as mechanisms for the promotion of sustainable peace.

Ultimately, peacebuilding is a dynamic process of resolving conflict and rebuilding society: it refers to a wide variety of activities and methods of intervention aimed at bring about sustainable peace. More so than peacemaking or peacekeeping, it strengthens the capacity of society to manage change non-violently and addresses the root

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<sup>39</sup> Thania Paffenholz, "Peacebuilding: A Comprehensive Learning Process" in *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*, eds. L. Reyhler and T. Paffenholz, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), p. 535-538.

<sup>40</sup> Van Leeuwen, p. 38.

<sup>41</sup> Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security*, (London, New York: Zed Books, 2001).

<sup>42</sup> Barber, p. 26.

cause of the conflict through long-term reconstruction and reconciliation. Further, while peacebuilding includes formal interventions, it also encompasses unofficial actors in the realm of civil society and local resolution efforts that provide grassroots support for official policies.

### **III. Literature Review, Part II: A Causal Theory of Women as Effective Peace-Builders**

Peacebuilding is a markedly complex undertaking, which involves a multitude of diverse actors—including women. While much of the existing literature on women’s involvement with attaining and maintaining peace discusses the possible roles of women in peacebuilding, such as grassroots organizing or involvement in reconciliation, it does not present an explicit causal explanation for how their participation keeps war from resuming in the long run. In the following section, this paper will attempt to link the functions of women in peacebuilding to a causal theory of how that participation fosters sustainable peace by addressing the general issues encountered by peace-builders outlined above. Because peacebuilding is a lengthy and complex process, only a limited claim can be made for the independent effect of women’s participation resulting in a successful peace outcome; however, there are several plausible ways in which the substantive participation of women might constructively contribute to the prospects for peace.



### *Women and Civil War:*

First, however, a brief discussion of the effects of civil war on women and the foundations of their marginalization during peacebuilding must be undertaken. There are numerous arguments within feminist literature regarding the reasons why women are so often marginalized in this process: these arguments frequently highlight the association of women with the domestic sphere and maternity, and thus the pressure exerted on them to return to the home and reinstate a degree of “normalcy” following a protracted conflict.

As Haleh Afshar (2003) argues, historical constructions of nationhood and nationalism often rest on masculine foundations—particularly in post-colonial societies—and so these ideologies are not necessarily altered during conflict but “are simply suspended.”<sup>43</sup> These salient norms, formed over the course of historical processes, help to explain why women are often excluded from the peace process despite the impact of the conflict on their well-being. Further, after conflict has decimated a population, women may be pressured to fulfill their role as mothers by helping to rebuild the nation through childbearing. Control over women in the domestic sphere can become regarded as necessary to “protect, revive and create the nation.”<sup>44</sup>

In addition, many feminist critiques have demonstrated that the international community is patriarchal in its approach to post-conflict transition and peacebuilding, in both the composition of international organizations, including the United Nations, and in the community’s approach to negotiations and DDR proceedings. The narrow legal categories constructed by the United Nations in relation to violations during intrastate conflict often do not incorporate violence against women—as such, these violations are

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<sup>43</sup> Haleh Afshar, “Women and Wars: Some Trajectories Towards a Feminist Peace” in *Development in Practice* 13, no. 2/3: (May 2003), p. 178-188.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 182.

excluded from the narrative of the conflict to the detriment of the country's women.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, although international actors may not be explicitly patriarchal, they can still perpetuate detrimental norms and contribute to the construction of a narrative of the conflict that may marginalize the role played by women both during and after.

To remedy this, the international community has undertaken a goal of gender mainstreaming, which is defined as:

*“... the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated”<sup>46</sup> (United Nations, 2002).*

Gender mainstreaming is particularly significant in its application to conflict transformation, as it is increasingly recognized at both the international and domestic level that women and men do not experience conflict in the same way and have different needs and priorities in the aftermath.<sup>47</sup> Most notably, women are often excluded from the initial decision to engage in conflict, but are then disproportionately affected by its consequences. In contemporary civil wars, civilians—particularly women—have increasingly become the victims of violence.

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<sup>45</sup> Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, “Women, Security, and the Patriarchy of Internationalized Transitional Justice” in *Human Rights Quarterly* 31, no. 4: (November 2009).

<sup>46</sup> Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), “*Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview*” (New York: United Nations, 2002).

<sup>47</sup> Linda Etchart and Rawwida Baksh, “Applying a Gender Lens to Armed Conflict, Violence and Conflict Transformation,” in *Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace*, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005).

Women are especially vulnerable to rape and sexual violence, which are used as strategic weapons to humiliate the other side and threaten the existence of ethnic groups.<sup>48</sup> It is difficult to gather data for all conflicts regarding the extent of sexual violence against women, but—for example—during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, between 250,000 and 500,000 women are thought to have been raped.<sup>49</sup> The Organization of Africa Unity’s International Panel of Experts (OAU/IPEP) found that “practically every female over the age of 12 who survived the genocide was raped” during the course of conflict.<sup>50</sup> Tutsi women were particularly vulnerable, because rape was used as a deliberate weapon to target women in their procreative role and to destroy the purity of their ethnic group. As abortion is illegal in Rwanda, the National Population Office estimates that between 2000 and 2500 unwanted pregnancies occurred from these rapes—leaving women with the lifelong responsibility of bearing and caring for their rapists’ children.<sup>51</sup> Not only did such widespread sexual violence result in profound physical and psychological trauma, but the HIV prevalence rate in Rwanda also dramatically increased from 1 percent prior to the conflict in 1994 to 11 percent by 1997, with higher rates still persisting among women (at 11.3 percent) rather than men (at 10.8 percent).<sup>52</sup>

Beyond undermining the cultural identity of the women and their ethnic groups, collective rape functions as an assertion of masculinity and can strengthen the sense of

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<sup>48</sup> Joyce P. Kaufman and Kristen P. Williams, *Women and War: Gender Identity and Activism in Times of Conflict*, (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2010), p. 38.

<sup>49</sup> Karen Brouneus, “Truth Telling as Talking Cure? Insecurity and Retraumatization in the Rwandan Gacaca Courts” in *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 1: (March 2008), p. 55-76.

<sup>50</sup> Chiseche Mibenge, “Gender and Ethnicity in Rwanda: On Legal Remedies for Victims of Wartime Sexual Violence” in *Gender Violent Conflict And Development*, ed. Dubravka Zarkov, (New Dehli: Zubaan, 2008), p. 144.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>52</sup> Helen Hudson, “Peace Building Through a Gender Lens” in *Gender and International Security: Feminist Perspectives*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 264.

loyalty within groups of male fighters.<sup>53</sup> Also, many women experience violence within the home during conflict, as incidences of domestic violence increase during civil war—with domination becoming the norm and displaced males compensating for feelings of impotence in the public sphere.<sup>54</sup> Women are also more likely than men during a civil war to be displaced, experience food insecurity and to lose traditional social networks.<sup>55</sup> For instance, in both the Rwandan and Liberian conflicts, half of each state's population was uprooted—and women and children generally account for 80 percent of the refugees in such African refugee populations.<sup>56</sup> Women are particularly vulnerable to rape during flight and in refugee camps, in which the special needs of women rarely receive attention. Further, such massive displacement has deep psychological effects, as it is a traumatic experience, with women feeling increasingly isolated while still shouldering the burden of providing for themselves and their dependants without the aid of former social networks.

While women are generally the victims during conflict, their condition should not be misconstrued as one of passivity. Because of the extreme circumstances in which they are placed, women often adopted proactive strategies to ensure their survival and to provide for their families. Further, women do not always retain their civilian status during these wars—they are increasingly likely to participate either as combatants or as women associated with fighting forces (WAFF), who provide logistical and economic support for the fighters. For example, it is estimated that between 25,000 and 30,000 women

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<sup>53</sup> Miranda Alison, "Wartime Sexual Violence: Women's Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity" in *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 1: (2007), p. 77.

<sup>54</sup> Jennifer Turpin, "Many Faces: Women Confronting War" in *The Women and War Reader*, eds. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 3-4.

<sup>55</sup> Hudson, p. 264.

<sup>56</sup> Meredith Turshen, "Women's War Stories" in *What Women Do in Wartime: Gender and Conflict in Africa*, eds. Meredith Turshen and Clotide Twagiramariya, (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1998), p. 15.

participated in the Liberian conflict in one of these capacities.<sup>57</sup> The motivations behind this participation: women and girls are sometimes abducted and forced to join in the conflict. In these cases, they are frequently responsible for finding food and water, preparing meals, cleaning the camp and other forms of logistical support.<sup>58</sup> Often, these women and girls become economically and socially dependent on the armed forces for their livelihood—making it important to consider their needs during the DDR process. Armed forces also abducted women and girls to serve as sexual slaves or to force them into “bush” marriages. However, some women voluntarily provide logistical support or aid groups by raising money and providing resources.

In addition, some women adopt an active role—serving on the front lines of the conflict. Their reasons for doing so often include “protecting themselves from sexual violence, avenging the death of family members, because of peer pressure, or for material gain and for survival.”<sup>59</sup> Frequently, women find the experience empowering, as they acquire skills such as basic literacy, organization, leadership, map reading and negotiations.<sup>60</sup> Thus, women are not inherently peaceful—they too have the potential for violence and are capable of participating alongside male combatants in brutal conflict. However, women are still more likely to use the skills and networks they developed during conflict to promote reintegration in the aftermath, pushing for peace from within their movements.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Abu Sherif, “Reintegration of Female War-Affected and Ex-Combatants in Liberia” in *African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes: Conflict Trends*, (2008), p. 28

<sup>58</sup> Isis-WICCE, *A Situational Analysis of the Women Survivors of the 1989-2003 Armed Conflict in Liberia*, (Uganda: Isis-WICCE, November 2008), p. 112-123.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p. 43.

<sup>60</sup> Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), p. 104.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. 103-105.

As has been briefly demonstrated, women are increasingly affected by civil wars; however, even with the official policy of gender mainstreaming, they are often not empowered to express their experiences or to voice their demands in the aftermath. This exclusion persists despite many women's strong commitment to ending violence and maintaining long-term peace, which makes them "highly motivated and able stakeholders for peacebuilding," who are nonetheless frequently marginalized during the process.<sup>62</sup>

### *1. Women and Peacebuilding:*

Having explored the effects of civil war on women and some of the reasons why women are often not meaningfully included in the peace process, this next section will present a causal theory of how women's participation in peacebuilding can contribute to sustainable peace. However, it must be quickly noted that, in addition to the potential for women to contribute to successful peace outcomes, their participation should also be encouraged on the basis of fairness and justice. In countries afflicted by civil war, women account for half the population and so should comprise half the decision-makers; further, women are greatly victimized during the conflict and thus deserve to be heard.<sup>63</sup>

Regardless, assessing the potential of women's participation to contribute to lasting peace is especially important due to the likelihood of a resumption of war despite peacebuilding efforts. For instance, Fortna (2008) examines 94 cease-fires in almost 60 civil wars in the post-Cold War period through 1999, finding that war resumes within a

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<sup>62</sup> Donna Pankhurst, "Women, Gender and Peacebuilding," Working Paper 5 for Centre for Conflict Resolution: Department of Peace Studies, (August 2000), 1.

<sup>63</sup> Swanee Hunt, "Moving Beyond Silence: Women Waging Peace" in *Listening to the Silences: Women and War*, eds. Helen Durham and Tracy Gurd (The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill BV, 2005), 251.

year in almost a third of the cases and within five years in over half.<sup>64</sup> Because peace is so fragile in the aftermath of civil war, any factors that can contribute to its sustainability should be identified and understood—although no one factor is independently responsible for a positive outcome. Currently, there exists a large body of literature on the relationship of women to civil war and post-war reconstruction; however, the majority of these studies focus on the functions of women in the aftermath or the effects that peacebuilding has on women, rather than linking women’s participation to a causal theory of how that participation works to prevent a relapse into conflict. This next section will attempt to address this dearth of causal arguments by suggesting a number of plausible ways in which women’s participation can contribute to the four functions of peacebuilding described above in a way that makes peace more likely to last.

*i. Addressing Fear and Mistrust*

Following protracted conflict, the warring factions retain incentives for aggression and a relapse into violence is possible when the other side’s intentions are unknown. Peacebuilding attempts to address this insecurity and prevent a return to violence through various avenues, as discussed above, and women can directly contribute to many of these efforts in a variety of ways. For instance, women’s groups often run workshops that require members of opposing parties to work together, creating a forum for cooperation.<sup>65</sup> Further, women’s organizations and individual women are more suited to meeting with the enemy without arousing suspicion, helping to foster trust—which can be sustained even when tension arises or peace talks stall. Because women are less implicated during

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<sup>64</sup> Fortna, p. 82.

<sup>65</sup> Anderlini, p. 57.

conflict, anecdotal evidence suggests that they are at least perceived to be more trustworthy in the aftermath by all parties.<sup>66</sup> Women are thought to undertake peace initiatives on behalf of their communities, rather than for personal gain; this perception of neutrality and their willingness to engage with both sides allow women the opportunity to monitor warring factions on the ground and to engage them in meaningful dialogue, helping to reduce fears and uncertainty.

While working towards a cessation in violence and even afterwards, the presence of women at negotiations may also facilitate more productive, less aggressive interactions. Unlike the competing sides, women have fewer reasons to view negotiations as a zero-sum game; their presence may therefore temper hostility and promote a focus on the opportunity to better society, rather than on amassing the maximum amount of power.<sup>67</sup> These observations are supported by psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen who has conducted years of empirical research on the differences in communication styles between males and females: he found that women are “more likely to express anger less directly and to propose compromises more often,” which can lead to less confrontational exchange.<sup>68</sup>

Another key aspect of peacebuilding is the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), which lowers the probability of a security dilemma by removing weapons from both sides and prevents a relapse to violence by integrating both forces back into society. Women play an integral role in this long-term process, as they often take on the task of “support, reintegrating and rehabilitating former

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>68</sup> Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference: The Truth About the Male and Female Brain*, (New York: Basic Books, 2003), p 47.



combatants,” because no other parties are able or interested.<sup>69</sup> Women do so by providing physical assistance and temporary housing, caring for child soldiers and offering counseling. Further, combatants are frequently more willing to surrender weapons to women—as a part of the informal community—rather than official organizations because they want to avoid accusations of hiding illegal weapons.<sup>70</sup> Women are generally cognizant that, if peace fails, they will be unarmed and again vulnerable to extreme violence—thus, they are invested in successful DDR implementation.

In addition, women also have unique leverage in their roles as wives and mothers for fostering trust and creating new norms of acceptance and peace. Often women have loyalties to different kin groups due to local marriage customs, as in the case of Tutsi women married to Hutu men and vice versa in Rwanda; in the aftermath of conflict, this can increase their bargaining power and place them in a position to put pressure on their husbands or sons to seek more peaceful solutions to conflict.<sup>71</sup> Such pressure may convince men to turn in their weapons or simply to engage with the other side in a less contentious manner. Many women’s organizations also promote peace education for women, to encourage awareness of the cultural values they convey to their children through everyday interactions—and how these “may contribute to discriminatory and violent behavior.”<sup>72</sup> Through this education, women can adopt alternative forms of socialization and so promote trust and non-violent ways of dealing with conflict.

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<sup>69</sup> Anderlini, p. 105.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p. 107.

<sup>71</sup> Laketch Dirasse “Gender Issues and Displaced Populations” in *A Commitment to the World’s Women: Perspectives on Development for Beijing and Beyond*, eds. N. Heyzer et al., (New York: UNIFEM, 1995), p. 214-224.

<sup>72</sup> Birgitte Sorensen, “Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Issues and Sources,” War-Torn Societies Project: Occasional Paper No. 3, (Geneva: UNRISD-PSIS, 1998), p. 7.

Finally, depending on the conflict, women are also vital as participants in DDR programs. For conflicts in which many women participated as fighters or provided community-based supports to the armed factions, their reintegration is equally important to ensuring peace. When these women are not incorporated into the program, they can continue to maintain groups by working at their camps, producing food and caring for the injured. Thus, without women and girls, the camps and fighters would not function effectively; their exclusion from the DDR process allows groups to remobilize more efficiently—keeping the potential security threat high.<sup>73</sup> Further, women themselves can act as spoilers: the commitment of women who voluntarily joined opposition movements cannot be underestimated.<sup>74</sup> Women can often be reluctant to surrender their weapons, particularly those coming from societies in which they are heavily discriminated against. For these women, a weapon can function as a “direct source of respect, empowerment and protection.”<sup>75</sup> Therefore, it is essential to ensure that their particular needs are addressed and that female combatants are also disarmed and reintegrated into the society—building trust on both sides.

Overall, individual women, as well as women’s organizations, adopt a variety of strategies for reducing fear and uncertainty following conflict and fostering an environment of trust and collaboration. While not exhaustive, the above discussion indicates that there are many avenues through which these efforts—or women’s inclusion in the DDR process—can bolster peacebuilding initiatives and so contribute to a positive peace outcome.

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, p. 101.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100-101.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100.

## *ii. Rebuilding Political and Economic Institutions*

Peacebuilding also necessarily involves rebuilding or reconstituting political and economic institutions in an inclusive manner and promoting democratization, through mechanisms such as fair elections and increased popular participation. These long-term undertakings help to develop a stable society that is able to deal with competing interests in a non-violent manner. In this realm, the participation of women is particularly vital—not in the least because women constitute half of every population, and so their full and fair participation is necessary for a functional democracy. In terms of political institutions, women play a multi-faceted role in both the formal and informal spheres. Informally, women’s organizations frequently influence the political agenda; however, these initiatives are often undertaken in the realm of civil society and so will be discussed in a subsequent section.

Formally, women who adopt positions of political leadership provide a direct alternative to traditional political actors, adding to the post-conflict impetus of change. As mentioned above, women are generally less responsible for atrocities committed during war and so both their political colleagues and the public at large may trust them more in leadership positions. Women candidates are also perceived as more honest, as they have been found less likely to engage in corruption or questionable activities that could tarnish their credibility—this restraint is often credited to the greater degree of scrutiny on women in political positions and the harsher repercussions they would face after having been perceived as symbols of trust.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Laura McGrew, Kate Frieson, and Sambath Chan, *Good Governance from the Ground Up: Women’s Role in Post-Conflict Cambodia*, (Washington DC: Hunt Alternatives Fund, 2004).

As political actors, women often use their gender identities and common social experiences to bridge divides, providing an example for other politicians to work across party lines. Particularly because women remain a minority in the political realm, they have greater incentives to work as a collective and also to reach out to male candidates regardless of affiliations.<sup>77</sup> Women's propensity towards inclusion can also be explained as a result of their own experiences of discrimination or exclusion, which often motivate female candidates to seek office. As such, they are more inclined to collaborate and work towards consensus or compromise—contributing to peacebuilding's paramount goal of eliminating political exclusion. The greater participation of women in politics also implicitly promotes moderation as it creates a political body more representative of the population, drawing in a previously marginalized group and broadening the agenda of issues to be discussed.<sup>78</sup> More so than men, women politicians tend to exhibit a greater sense of responsibility to their constituents and so lobby for issues ranging from access to land and education to gender discrimination and sexual violence.<sup>79</sup> Overall, women in the formal political sphere contribute to peace outcomes by promoting collaboration—and thus minimizing political exclusion as a motivation for returning to war—and by contributing to a more trustworthy, responsive government which bolsters the state's legitimacy among the populace and provides a foundation for democratization.

Women can also participate in rebuilding the economic institutions of a post-war state. In doing so, they contribute to economic stability and growth, and so raise incentives for both sides to continue peaceable relations. Although in many countries women are excluded from the formal sector of the economy, they contribute significantly

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<sup>77</sup> Anderlini, p. 139.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137-138.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

in terms of both agriculture and the informal sector. During conflict and afterwards, women often become responsible for men's traditional roles, allowing them to learn new entrepreneurial skills and also to assert themselves in new economic realms.<sup>80</sup> After violence has ceased, women still remain primarily responsible for providing for dependants, as frequently their male relatives have either been killed or imprisoned during the fighting. Thus, the revitalization of the economy—particularly as the local level—falls to women who must support themselves and their families.

To accomplish this, women have proven adept at establishing new networks based on kinship or locality to work collectively towards restoring their livelihoods.<sup>81</sup> By resuming agricultural production and contributing to informal sector activities, such as petty trade or work in small-scale businesses, women capitalize on income-generating opportunities that can lead to expansion in both these areas.<sup>82</sup> While often marginalized from employment in the formal sector due to a lack of education or domestic responsibility, women still constructively contribute to the reformation of the economy at the grassroots level. Further, by providing for their families and dependants—including former soldiers and returned refugees—women contribute the economic recovery of their families and the revitalization of the economy overall. These efforts increase post-war stability and decrease the likelihood that men will revert to life as a soldier due to an inability to support themselves economically.

Thus, women's participation in the political and economic realm can contribute to sustainable peace through multiple pathways, which often overlap and reinforce each

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<sup>80</sup> Sorensen, p. 20-21.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p. 28.

<sup>82</sup> Mark F. Chingono, "Women, War and Change: An Ambiguous Legacy" in *The State, Violence and Development: The Political Economy of War in Mozambique, 1975-1992*, ed. M.F. Chingono, (Aldershot: Avebury Press, 1996), p. 209-243.

other. Most noticeably, they increase the inclusivity of political institutions and also contribute to economic stability and growth—both of which alter the incentives for returning to war and provide a solid foundation for continued democratization.

### *iii. Reconciliation*

In post-war societies there exists a psychological and social need for reconciliation through addressing the needs of victims and creating avenues of accountability and healing. Peacebuilding involves both formal reconciliation, such as seeking justice in the courts, and informal mechanisms of increasing social cohesion and tolerance. In this realm, women are key actors—as wives and mothers, they are often the backbone of society, while as victims, their experiences must also be voiced to facilitate forgiveness. As Porter (2001) noted, women often exhibit the ability to “dialogue across differences”—which catalyzes reconciliation efforts and promotes the inclusion of all sides in these discussions.<sup>83</sup> In the aftermath of conflict, women are more likely to form inter-ethnic associations to deal with remaining difficulties; in doing so, they create a “shared space” for diverse women and also contribute to the healing process.<sup>84</sup> As so many women have experience traumatic sexual violence, they are particularly sensitive to such experiences—thus organizations and individual women often provide psycho-social counseling to victims in the aftermath. By listening to testimonies, women help to relieve victims of emotional burdens that would potential lead to sustained animosity.

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<sup>83</sup> Elizabeth Porter, “The Challenge of Dialogue Across Difference” in *Gender, Democracy and Inclusion in Northern Ireland*, eds. Carmel Roulston and Celia Davis (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>84</sup> Kimberly A. Maynard, “Rebuilding Community: Psycho-Social Healing, Reintegration and Reconciliation at the Grassroots Level” in *Rebuilding Societies after Civil War*, ed. K. Kumar, (London: Lynne Rienner, 1997), p. 203-26.

Women's organizations also frequently promote an awareness of human rights and address issues of justice by assisting victims with their compensation claims; these activities are vital to creating a sense of trust by providing closure for victims rather than lingering uncertainty.<sup>85</sup> As witnesses, women are crucial to a variety of cases because they were not directly involved in the fighting; thus, women—more so than male soldiers—are better able to provide information about crimes perpetrated against civilians or their own relevant experiences.<sup>86</sup> In this way, women can help to bring more perpetrators to justice, publicly demonstrating the costs of committing war crimes and so deterring similar actions in the future. Further, because women are “less afraid of breaking down, crying in public or showing strong emotion,” they contribute to a more conducive atmosphere for genuine sharing and forgiveness.<sup>87</sup> Women are more likely than men to engage in symbolic acts of forgiveness or to display empathy also towards those who perpetrated violence against them, which can inspire others to follow such an example toward meaningful reconciliation. Because widespread sexual violence is common, women's participation in prosecuting those who violated them is also vital to their own psychological healing and to deterring such acts in the future. Thus, through both their participation and facilitation, women and women's organizations contribute to mending the social fabric post-conflict and fostering trust between different groups. In turn, this healing prevents previous hatreds from being co-opted to motivate a return to violence and also provides a necessary mechanism for dealing with the atrocities of war

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<sup>85</sup> Bridget Byrne, *Gender, Conflict and Development, Vol I: Overview*: BRIDGE Report No. 34, (Sussex: Institute of Development Studies, 1996).

<sup>86</sup> Anderlini, p. 166.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

while working towards a more positive future—making peace increasingly more appealing than a repetition of the past.

#### *iv. Fostering Civil Society*

Long-term peace is achieved by incorporating a variety of actors and working from both the top-down and the bottom-up. As discussed in relation to peacebuilding, the realm of civil society is separate from the personal, economic and political spheres; however, it can influence and bolster the efforts of each of the three peacebuilding objectives above: reducing fear and mistrust, rebuilding political and economic institutions and promoting reconciliation. In civil society, women are often community leaders and central player in NGOs, and so are poised to significantly contribute to grassroots initiatives for sustaining peace. The discussions of women’s roles above have all included contributions from the realm of civil society, such as women’s organizations providing counseling services to victims of violence or networks of women working together to renew their economic livelihoods. Further, because of shared experiences during war and a common desire to eliminate violence, women are likely to form coalitions that address a variety of needs during the period of peacebuilding—particularly when the state is unable or unwilling to provide necessary social services. For example, women’s grassroots organizations address issues such as children and adult education, build up primary healthcare services, help to reintegrate refugees and former combatants, offer micro-loans and provide counseling for psychological distress.<sup>88</sup> In doing so, women directly contribute to improving their communities and to overall development

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<sup>88</sup> Sorensen, p. 32, 34, 42.



efforts; these initiatives promote peace by providing incentives for non-violence and by promoting cooperation across ethnic, religious and cultural lines.

While women may be formally incorporated into politics, as discussed above, women's organizations also work through civil society to positively influence the political agenda and pressure leaders to maintain peace. Informally, women's organizations can undertake strategies such as "corridor lobbying," by literally waiting in hallways to talk to negotiators as they enter or exit rooms during breaks; women's groups provide these actors with proposals and receive updates on progress of negotiations.<sup>89</sup> Women are then able to take this information back to their communities, contributing to a more collaborative process than would otherwise occur based on the exclusivity of those involved in the post-conflict decision-making process. This is particularly true as, in comparison to international or governmental organizations, women's groups can more effectively disseminate information that resonates with the populace and are better able to reach marginalized or illiterate groups due to their existing community-based structures.<sup>90</sup>

Women's groups also often lobby politicians during the process of constitution-making, ensuring that their rights are recognized and attempting to increase the scope of those rights.<sup>91</sup> In the case of Rwanda, for example, women's groups were successful in changing property laws so that women could inherit land from male relatives—this expansion of rights contributed to stability of society as well as the economic viability of many women and their families in the post-conflict period. Because women's organizations are generally local, they are able to anticipate and evaluate the effects of

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<sup>89</sup> Anderlini, p. 63.

<sup>90</sup> Ruth Jacobson, "Women's Political Participation: Mozambique's Democratic Transition" in *Gender and Development* 3, no. 2: (1995), p. 29-35.

<sup>91</sup> Sorensen, p. 36.

top-down policies on their communities, allowing them to better identify barriers to peace or opportunities for positive development. Women's associations can also significantly shape public opinion through grassroots movements and public demonstrations, such as mass mobilizations for peace whenever there is a threat of a return to violence.<sup>92</sup> Thus, even when not in office, women's commitment to peace manifest itself within civil society and raises the costs of going a return to war for politicians—particularly as women often form the majority of electorate in the post-war period due to high mortality levels among male soldiers. Further, in terms of candidates, women have been found to be more likely to support candidates who demonstrate a commitment to “peace, moderation and reform.” In this way, individual women also hold politicians accountable for maintaining peace and contribute to the creation of a more moderate political body.<sup>93</sup>

In general, women are the most prominent actors in civil society and contribute to its vibrancy and growth post-conflict through the proliferation of women's organizations committed to serving the needs of the population and promoting peace. By providing social and economic services, contributing to reconciliation efforts and pressuring political leaders to maintain peace and create a more responsive government, women in civil society combat the underlying causes of conflict and raise the costs of returning to war—reinforcing reconstruction efforts and the likelihood that peace will prevail.

In conclusion, individual women and women's organizations employ a variety of strategies to work towards peace and stability following conflict; however, as the above discussion has demonstrated, all of these pathways can increase the probability of

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<sup>92</sup> United Nations Economic and Security Council, *Peace: Women and the Peace Process*, Report of the Secretary-General, (E/CN.6/1993/4).

<sup>93</sup> Catalina Rojas, *In the Midst of War: Women's Contribution to Peace in Colombia* (Washington, DC: Hunt Alternate Fund, 2004).

sustainable peace through numerous, overlapping mechanisms. By initiating a dialogue between both sides and creating opportunities for collaboration—built on the exchange of information and growth of trust—women disrupt spirals of fear by reducing uncertainty about the other side’s actions and intentions. In promoting inclusive political and economic institutions, women help to address the root causes of conflict and so remove previous motivations for violence. Women’s organizations can further generate political pressure to raise the costs for leaders of returning to war. Women’s dedication to reconciliation also helps to build trust and demonstrate the future costs of war—such as retributive justice for war crimes or social pressure to maintain peace. Working within civil society, women and women’s organizations contribute to all of these initiatives while providing tangible benefits to their communities and incentives to move beyond a violent past towards a more peaceful future.

## **IV. Case Selection and Research Design**

### *1. Methodology*

As the potential causal mechanisms linking women’s participation to peace have been explored above, it is now necessary to address this phenomenon in practice—both to corroborate the theoretical arguments put forth and to illuminate particular areas or mechanisms by which women are effective in building peace. To accomplish this, four case studies of conflict within sub-Saharan Africa will be examined—the Rwandan Civil War (1990-1993), the Rwandan Genocide (1994), the First Liberian Civil War (1989-1996), and the Second Liberian Civil War (1999-2003). The logic underlying these case selections will be discussed below; first, however, the independent and dependent

variables—women’s participation and peace outcomes, respectively—must be qualified along different dimensions of analysis:

*i. Women’s Participation*

As the independent variable, women’s participation for each conflict must be quantified to a certain degree. This is complicated, because—as shown above—women’s participation is often multi-faceted and can occur in one or many realms of peacebuilding. Thus, women’s participation will be classified as either “high,” “moderate,” or “low” based the degree of participation measured for each of four peacebuilding functions described above. However, each of these includes an almost infinite myriad of potential activities and initiatives to achieve peace. Thus, women’s contributions to *one* dimension of each category of peacebuilding will be analyzed. The justification for this is two-fold: for one, certain aspects of peacebuilding are often beyond the scope of local women—such as enacting economic sanctions or providing an armed force to oversee a ceasefire. Thus, the analysis of women’s participation in all arenas is not equally productive. Secondly, by focusing on specific dimensions of peacebuilding, more accurate comparisons of participation can be made both across conflicts and across time. These dimensions will be identified and explained below, and will then be quantified on the high, medium and low scale for each of the four conflicts:

*a. Reducing Fear and Mistrust: Women and Reintegration*

In her analysis of peacekeeping, Fortna (2008) identifies a number of causal mechanisms through which peacekeeping forces can reduce fear and mistrust among

belligerents, preventing a relapse in violence due to the security dilemma. These mechanisms include a neutral monitoring force to observe a ceasefire—making a surprise attack more difficult, outside aid conditional on compliance with a peace agreement or the provision of reliable information to both sides.<sup>94</sup> It must be acknowledged that none of these undertakings necessarily require the involvement of women; however, the process of *disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)* is critical to ensuring peaceful relations—and, in this area, women can substantially contribute in two particular ways.

Following conflict, both sides have incentives to maintain their arms in the absence of credible information that the other side is also disarming. Warring factions may have limited communication with each other, making both parties wary of claims that are not substantiated by a third party. In this way, women can assist in the DDR process by communicating with both sides and directly aiding in the disarmament of belligerents. While individual women may contribute in this way, it is often an initiative undertaken by women's organizations and grassroots associations. Thus, this community-based reintegration facilitated by women will be considered under the realm of civil society.

However, women can also participate directly in the DDR process: although male combatants are by far more common—women are also perpetrators of violence during conflict—and so their participation in the DDR process is integral to full compliance by both sides. The tenacity of women who voluntarily join such movements should not be discounted; such women should be equally regarded as potential spoilers, alongside young male combatants. Further, women are often integral to the maintenance of armed

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<sup>94</sup> Fortna, p. 93.

movements—performing duties such as cooking, spying or producing food.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, the successful incorporation of women into the DDR process, as a means of reducing fear and mistrust, will be classified as high, moderate or low for each conflict, based the participation of female combatants and the extent to which these programs are responsive to the particular needs of women fighters. However, it should be noted that the calculation for including women in the DDR process and the relevancy of this participation vary based on the number of female combatants during the war. Specifically, because of the low number of female fighters, this dimension is not as relevant in the case of Rwanda's Civil War.

*b. Rebuilding Political and Economic Institutions: Women in Formal Politics*

Following prolonged conflict, it is necessary to create inclusive political and economic institutions to remedy the root causes of civil war and also to provide a foundation for non-violent means of dealing with disagreements. Rebuilding, or often building, these institutions is a long-term, complex process. It is further complicated by the need to appease all belligerents, who may resort to violence if they feel they are losing ground politically. As discussed above, women can contribute to both political and economic stability in the aftermath of conflict. However, this study will focus on the *formal political inclusion* of women, indicated by initiatives such as (1) the creation of governmental departments dedicated to gender, (2) constitutional amendments to empower women, or (3) the implementation of quotas to ensure women's representation in government.

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<sup>95</sup> Anderlini, p. 101.

c. *Reconciliation: Accountability for Crimes Against Women*

While reconciliation is necessary for all members of a post-conflict society—men and women, civilians and combatants—the prevalence of sexual violence against women and girls during conflict demands special attention. Because of the physical, psychological and social effects of this violence, the rehabilitation and reconciliation of women requires a high degree of accountability for such crimes. If these crimes are not acknowledged, and the perpetrators are not held socially or legally responsible, then women are denied necessary closure and remain vulnerable to future assaults. This hampers efforts for forgiveness and the ability of society as a whole to progress towards a more positive, less violent future. Therefore, although women can contribute to reconciliation through grassroots efforts and everyday interactions, instead women's participation will be determined by the degree *accountability for sexual violence* for each conflict.

d. *Civil Society: Involvement of Women's Organizations and Associations*

Finally, the importance of civil society for supporting peace efforts on the grassroots level has been demonstrated, along with the central role that women's organizations play in this sphere. These women's organizations can serve as an impetus for peace talks by placing pressure on key actors to attend or to maintain peace. During and after a civil war, they may serve a variety of purposes such as the provision of basic needs, psychological counseling or helping to reintegrate refugees and support widows or orphans. Thus, the final variable will be the degree of *engagement by women's organizations and associations (1) directly in the peace negotiations and (2) their involvement afterwards in promoting sustainable peace through diverse programs and*

*initiatives*. To access this engagement, both the existence of women’s organizations and their objectives and services will be analyzed, linking those objectives to the broader goals of fostering peace and progressing toward a more vibrant, participatory society. The resulting classification by conflict for each category can be seen in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Classification of Women's Participation**

	<b>Participation in DDR Process</b>	<b>Formal Political Inclusion</b>	<b>Accountability for Gender Crimes</b>	<b>Involvement of Women’s Organizations</b>
<i>Rwanda, 1990-1993</i>	LOW*	LOW	LOW	LOW
<i>Rwanda, 1994</i>	MODERATE	HIGH	MODERATE	HIGH
<i>Liberia, 1989-1996</i>	LOW	MODERATE	LOW	HIGH
<i>Liberia, 1999-2003</i>	HIGH	MODERATE	MODERATE	HIGH

\* While the accurate classification for women’s participation in the DDR process for this conflict is “low,” only a small number of women participated as members of fighting forces. Therefore, it is not as relevant as in the other three conflicts.

*ii. Peace Outcomes*

Having defined the dimensions along which women’s participation will be measured, the dependent variable—peace outcomes—must also be qualified. In this case, a “peace success” will be considered a sustained peace lasting *between five and ten years* past the cessation of violence. Because peacebuilding is a long-term process with enduring peace as the ultimate goal, this timeframe allows for a robust measure of the success of such peacebuilding initiatives. This is a particularly valid metric as almost half of conflicts resume within five years of a ceasefire. Conversely then, a “peace failure”



will be classified as a conflict that, having reached a ceasefire, relapses into civil war within five years of the cessation of violence. Of the four cases being considered, the Rwandan Genocide and Second Liberian Civil War represent “peace successes,” while the Rwandan Civil War and First Liberian Civil War represent “peace failures.”

*iii. Overall Comparison: Women’s Participation to Peace Outcomes*

Table 2 below demonstrates the classifications for each case study: comparing overall women’s participation against the ultimate peace outcome. While the preceding table allows for a more nuanced analysis of women’s participation—specifically the possibility of identifying which realms may be more influential—the following table looks at the combined effects of women’s participation in these dimensions on peace outcomes. Women’s participation occurs along a spectrum; therefore, the ratings for each of the dimensions discussed above must be considered holistically to determine whether a conflict experienced *substantial* women’s participation or *insubstantial* participation. Because there are currently no cases in which women’s participation in all of the four peacebuilding dimensions analyzed can be considered high, these ratings are necessarily relative—categorizations of “high” or “substantial” participation thus do not represent the *ideal* level of women’s participation in peacebuilding, but rather a realistic assessment of the extent to which women and their concerns were addressed post-conflict.

To categorize each conflict’s peacebuilding process as involving either substantial or insubstantial participation on the part of women, the dimensions displayed in Table 1 were considered in total. As is clear from the table, the Rwandan Civil War was a case of insubstantial women’s participation, receiving “low” ratings for each dimension. The

remaining three cases are considered examples of substantial women’s participation. However, they represent a range of that participation—with Liberia’s first civil war qualifying as substantial because it demonstrates a clear shift toward including women and because of the unprecedented vibrancy of women’s organizations and associations in civil society. In contrast, the second Liberian civil war and post-genocide Rwanda did not have low women’s participation for any dimension and so are more robust examples of substantial participation. These variations will be discussed in more detail in the following case studies.

**Table 2: Women's Participation and Peace Outcomes**

	<b>Peace Success</b>	<b>Peace Failure</b>
<b>Substantial Women’s Participation</b>	Liberia, 1999-2003 Rwanda, 1994	Liberia, 1989-1996*
<b>Insubstantial Women’s Participation</b>		Rwanda, 1990-1993

*\* Relative to prior peacebuilding efforts, this case clearly involves substantial participation on the part of women. When considered against the other cases, however, this would represent more “moderate” participation than in either Liberia (1999-2003) or Rwanda (1994).*

Because this paper acknowledges that peace can be, and often is, achieved without integrating women into the peace process, a case study of peace success following insubstantial women’s participation will not be undertaken. Such successes—for example, in the case of Mozambique—do not undermine the potential for women to facilitate peacebuilding, but it must be noted that the achievement of peace is a

complicated process that involves a multitude of variables, of which gender is just a single component.

## *2. Case Selection*

In terms of case selection, there are a number of justifications for analyzing two civil wars within two countries—Liberia and Rwanda. By holding the country constant for each of the two sets of conflicts, a diachronic comparison is possible—eliminating many of the confounding variables that occur when attempting a cross-country comparison. This is especially relevant in terms of the peace successes following the Rwandan Genocide and the Second Liberian Civil War, as the “root causes” of the conflicts carried over from the countries’ first civil wars—eliminating many mitigating factors—and making successful peacebuilding following the increased participation of women more significant.

As cross-country comparisons, both Liberia and Rwanda are sub-Saharan African states that experienced conflicts within relatively the same timeframe. Although the specifics of the conflicts vary, both states have a history of exclusionary rule by a minority and also of ethnic tensions exacerbated by poor economic conditions and repressive regimes. In all four of the conflicts, women were involved both as combatants and as victims. While attempting to achieve peace following the initial conflicts, both countries experienced spoiler problems and relapsed into violence. Thus, the conditions of the two countries exhibit significant similarities, validating such a comparison. Further, both Liberia and Rwanda embody the all-too-common occurrence of recurring

civil wars on the African continent: as such, the findings of this research may be applicable to future civil wars in this region.

However, no perfect comparison is possible with real world cases, and thus the differences between the two conflicts must be acknowledged. Historically, Rwanda has had a prolonged period of colonial occupation—first by Germany and then by Belgium—which entrenched ethnic divides. Europeans, on the other hand, never colonized Liberia; instead, freed African-American slaves settled the country in the early 1800's and created an exclusive oligarchy. Though their histories are divergent, both cases include a minority population ruling over the majority for a significant period of time, to the detriment of most citizens. Another difference involves conflict duration, as both Liberian civil wars were more protracted than those experienced in Rwanda (lasting from 1989 until 1996 and 1999 until 2003). In contrast, the Rwandan Civil War lasted only three years (1990—1993) and the Rwandan genocide in 1994 was particularly intense, lasting less than a year. While Rwanda relapsed into violence only a year after the ceasefire in 1993, peacebuilding efforts actually began in 1992 before the formal signing of the Arusha Accords. In Liberia, a relative peace prevailed for three years following the signing of the Abuja Accord in 1996. Finally, the Rwandan genocide was ended through a military victory, while Liberia's second civil war concluded due to a negotiated settlement. This distinction impacted women's opportunity for involvement in peace negotiations; however, women were still major participants in the peacebuilding process as a whole. Although differences clearly exist between the Rwandan Genocide and Liberia's second civil war, that women in both countries played an essential role in achieving peace and still contribute to sustaining that peace—despite the differences in

conflict type and duration—demonstrates that an element of high women’s participation can be integral to achieving peace even across varying conflicts.

As a counterpoint to the successes enjoyed with high women’s participation, the failed peace process in Rwanda in 1993 will be examined. In this case, women were not included in any decision-making processes and were marginalized both in society and politics. Because the causes of the conflict remained steady throughout, this provides a salient comparison to the gender mainstreaming undertaken following the genocide. While the brutal legacy and international attention resulting from the genocide altered some of the peace dynamics, the addition of women to the peace process can be seen as another key component in achieving lasting peace.

Finally, Liberia’s first civil war represents a case study in which substantial women’s participation still resulted in a peace failure. The analysis of this conflict contributes to the boundaries of this paper’s argument: despite numerous, active women’s organizations and a moderate degree of political inclusion, high women’s participation cannot necessarily overcome other forces detrimental to peace. While this peace failure appears to undermine the central argument, two variables in particular must be considered. First, while women’s groups participated in the negotiations and peacebuilding process during the first conflict, they were better able to organize collectively and utilize international resources during the second conflict—which involved Sierra Leone and Guinea, thus adding a regional dimension. And secondly, the effect of Charles Taylor as a powerful spoiler cannot be ignored. Thus, the argument that women’s participation contributes to lasting peace must be qualified and this case study

in particular will highlight both the effects of varying degrees of participation and the limitations of such participation.

Having briefly introduced the four case studies, the sections that follow will provide the background for each conflict and an analysis of each of the four dimensions of women’s participation as they correspond to the four functions of peacebuilding:

**Table 3: Metrics of Women's Participation**

<b>Peacebuilding Function</b>	<b>Women’s Dimension</b>
1. Reducing Fear and Mistrust	<i>Women’s Involvement in the DDR Process</i>
2. Rebuilding Institutions	<i>Women’s Formal Political Inclusion</i>
3. Reconciliation	<i>Accountability for Crimes Against Women</i>
4. Fostering Civil Society	<i>Participation of Women’s Organizations in the Peace Process and Afterwards</i>

The justification for each dimension’s rating will be elaborated on as well as the success or failure of the peace outcome. Taken together, these four case studies provide the qualitative data in support of the paper’s core argument.

## V. Case Studies

### 1. *Rwandan Civil War: 1990—1993*

#### i. *Conflict Background*

Like many African nations, the roots of the Rwandan Civil War can be traced back, at least in part, to its colonial legacy. Until Germany conquered and colonized the state in 1890's, Rwanda was a centralized kingdom. Throughout its history, Rwanda has had two principle ethnic groups—sharing a common history, language and culture. These are the Tutsi minority, which comprise 10 percent of the population, and the Hutu majority that makes up almost 90 percent.<sup>96</sup> Despite many similarities, the Tutsis tend to be tall and slim with straight noses, while the Hutus are regarded as shorter with broad noses. First under German and later Belgium rule, the Tutsis were privileged in the political and economic realms, subjecting the Hutus to an indirect rule. Beyond the institutionalization of Tutsi superiority, the Belgians contributed to ethnic tensions by printing identification cards that classified citizens as either Hutu or Tutsi—solidifying ethnic and class differences that had previously been more fluid.<sup>97</sup>

In 1959, the Hutu resentment regarding the Tutsi's rule led to a revolution and the overthrow of the Tutsi monarchy. During this time, thousands of Tutsis were driven into exile in Uganda. The Belgians, desiring to change Rwanda into a majority-rule

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<sup>96</sup> Erin K. Baines, "Les Femmes Aux Mille-Bras: Building Peace in Rwanda" in *Gender, Conflict and Peacekeeping*, eds. Dyan Mazurana, et. al, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), p 221.

<sup>97</sup> Judith Atiri, "The Role of Gender In Conflict Prevention: An Examination of Four Conflict-Ridden Countries: Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia and Sudan" in *Seeds of New Hope: Pan-African Peace Studies for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, eds. Matt Meyer and Elavie Ndura-Ouedraogo, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2009), p 285.

democracy, supported the Hutus' replacement of the Tutsis in local government. Soon afterwards, in 1962, Rwanda gained independence from Belgium and installed a republican regime; the violence involved in these political struggles displaced more Tutsi citizens into Uganda. Eventually, Major General Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, ascended to power through a coup d'état in 1973, consolidating his authoritarian control by systematically excluding Tutsis from political and economic institutions. Habyarimana established a one-party system, comprised of his own political party, known as the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND).

Around this time, the more than one hundred thousand Rwandan refugees in surrounding states began to demand democratic reforms and accommodations for their return home. Rwanda was simultaneously experiencing an economic crisis due a decline in coffee prices, making the Habyarimana's government even less eager to deal with an influx of Tutsi citizens. Frustrated by Habyarimana's inaction towards implementing democratic reforms or allowing them to repatriate, Tutsi refugees in Uganda formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). On October 1, 1990, RPF guerilla forces launched an attack on Rwanda—initiating the Rwandan civil war. Although the RPF made significant progress in the beginning, Habyarimana's Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) received support from France, Belgium and Zaire to combat the resistance.

Having been pushed back to the northeast, RPF forces regrouped and rebuilt leadership. Notably, Paul Kagame returned from the United States at this time to head the RPF forces and to begin a guerilla-style war in northern Rwanda. Over the next couple years, low-intensity fighting continued as the RPF carried out hit-and-run style guerilla warfare. Finally, on July 13, 1992, a ceasefire was signed in Arusha, Tanzania—this



included a fixed timetable for ending the fighting and initiating political talks. However, reports of Tutsi massacres prompted the RPF to launch a major offensive in February 1993, threatening the capital, Kigali. In response, French troops were sent in, undermining the rebels' progress. Ultimately, under international pressure, the Arusha Accords were signed in August 1993. This peace agreement called for an unconditional ceasefire, the repatriation of refugees and a transition to a power-sharing democracy, to be overseen by neutral peacekeeping forces. Due international indifference, the requirement of 5,500 international troops was never met; later that year, Habyarimana was sworn in as interim head of state for the transitional national government. Although the violence was arrested, political and ethnic tensions in Rwanda remained high.

*ii. Women's Participation: Insubstantial*

1. Women and the DDR Process: LOW

During Rwanda's civil war, both governmental and RPF forces perpetrated violence against civilians, caught in a vicious cycle of retribution. The Rwandan military would attack Tutsis in government-held areas, causing the RPF to retaliate by massacring Hutus while advancing on Kigali. Between 1990 and 1993, it is estimated that government forces killed almost 2,000 civilians; in addition, the RPF is responsible for approximately 150 civilian deaths.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of both sides was a necessary condition for peace—raising the costs of relapsing into violence. The Arusha Accords also called for integrating the armed forces to create a

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<sup>98</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Program: Rwanda, available at <  
[http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=133&regionSelect=2-Southern\\_Africa](http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=133&regionSelect=2-Southern_Africa)>.

nationally unified army, balancing the Hutu-based military with a Tutsi presence.<sup>99</sup> This process of integration and re-integration was to involve “assembling the ex-combatants in reorganization camps, and orienting them to national politics, and emphasizing national unity.”<sup>100</sup>

Even prior to the genocide, both Hutu and Tutsi women participated in violent activities. In particular, Hutu women served in the Rwandan army—with the number of female soldiers increasing towards the end of the civil war, leading up to the 1994 genocide.<sup>101</sup> The RPF also recruited women to serve as soldiers, often through plays, songs and dances.<sup>102</sup> Further, some women played vital supporting roles for both factions by preparing meals and providing shelter or resources—voluntarily or involuntarily. For example, one Amnesty International report on the conflict noted that women were integral in helping rebels to transport weapons.<sup>103</sup> While the exact number of female participants, direct or supporting, in the conflict is not known, it is clear that neither the Arusha Accords nor any discussion of the DDR process makes particular mention of women and their specific needs post-conflict. Instead, the majority of the negotiations in this realm focused on the ethnic breakdown of the unified military. Ultimately, the RPF was to compromise 40 percent of the Rwandan army, with 60 percent of the current Hutu

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<sup>99</sup> Joel Stettenheim, “The Arusha Accords and the Failure of International Intervention,” in *Words over War: Mediation and Arbitration to Prevent Deadly Conflict*, ed. Melanie Barton, et al., (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), p 229.

<sup>100</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report on Peace and Reconciliation Exchange Programme: Sudan and Rwanda*, (November 2005) ,p 11.

<sup>101</sup> Rangira Bea Gallimore, “Militarism, Ethnicity and Sexual Violence in the Rwandan Genocide” in *Feminist Africa* 10 (2008), p. 19.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19

<sup>103</sup> Amnesty International, “Rwanda: Persecution of Tutsi minority and repression of government critics 1990-1992,” report (AFR 47/002/1992), p 16.

soldiers remaining. Habyarimana's MRND was given control over the military, while RPF was to control the gendarmerie.<sup>104</sup>

Overall, women did participate both as soldiers and supporters during the Rwandan civil war—though on a small scale. Even so, the Arusha Accords neither acknowledged this role nor provided mechanisms by which women could be incorporated into the DDR process. However, it should be noted that the low number of female combatants makes this exclusion less relevant than in the following conflicts.

## 2. Women's Political Participation: LOW

Unlike the broad references made to integration and DDR processes, the peace negotiations and Arusha Accords included specific outlines for the new Rwandan constitution as well as the formation of both a transitional and a permanent power-sharing government. At the time of the 1993 ceasefire, women were not entirely absent from Rwandan politics; however, they were severely under-represented. Despite comprising half the population, women accounted for only 17% of the members of parliament (12 seats out of a total of 70). This bias penetrated to the local levels, as there were no female prefects (mayors), and only 1% of leaders at the sector level were women.<sup>105</sup> Regardless of this glaring imbalance, and the harmful effects of the civil war on women, no specific constitutional conditions or political arrangements were discussed to ensure greater participation of women in the formal political sphere.

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<sup>104</sup> Arusha Accord: "Protocol of Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front on the Integration of the Armed Forces of the Two Parties," signed by all parties on August 3, 1993 in Arusha, Tanzania.

<sup>105</sup> Nicole Hogg, "Women's Participation in the Rwandan Genocide: Mothers or Monsters?" in *International Review of the Red Cross* 92, no. 877: (2010), p. 74.

The Arusha Accords include seven agreements between the Rwandan Government and the Rwandanese Patriotic Front—two of these focus on legal and political institutions: the Agreement on the Rule of Law and the Agreement on Power-Sharing within the Framework of a Broad-Based Transitional Government. Within the first agreement, references are made to the “equality of all citizens before the law” and the “rejection of all exclusions and any form of discrimination based notably on ethnicity, region, sex and religion” which were to be given precedence over the statutes of the previous Rwandan Constitution.<sup>106</sup> Although these broad statements can be seen as endowing women with equal rights as men, they did not institutionalize any means of achieving this equality within the political realm, a necessary measure due to the substantial cultural and economic barriers faced by women in relation to men.

The second agreement stipulates the terms of power-sharing between the two warring factions. Within the transitional government, the former ruling party was given five posts; the RPF was also given five posts, including the position of Vice-Prime Minister. The major opposition party, the Mouvement Democratique Republicain, was given four posts—including the office of Prime Minister. Finally, RPF was granted participation in the national assembly. This transitional government was to function, with Habyarimana as President, until democratic elections could be undertaken within the next year.<sup>107</sup> Again, the focus was on appeasing the belligerents and no mention is made to incorporating women, or even non-combatants or elements of civil society in general,

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<sup>106</sup> Arusha Accords: Protocol of Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front on the Rule of Law, Art 1 and 3. Signed by all parties on August 18, 1992 in Arusha, Tanzania.

<sup>107</sup> Arusha Accords: Protocol of Agreement on Power-Sharing within the Framework of a Broad-Based Transitional Government between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front. Signed by all parties on October 30, 1992 in Arusha, Tanzania.

into the new government. Ultimately, neither the updates to the Rwandan Constitution nor the plans for rebuilding political institutions led to an increase of women in the political realm. Thus, formal political participation by women following the Rwandan Civil War must be considered low.

1. Accountability for Gender Crimes: LOW

Although brutal massacres and sexual violence were less prevalent during the civil war than the subsequent genocide, women were frequently still the victims of sexual violence. One Human Right Watch report found that “Rwandan soldiers frequently rape women, but because they are never punished for the crime, victims rarely report the attacks.”<sup>108</sup> The report details the abuses that women often faced after accusing soldiers of rape, occasionally resulting in death. The growing prevalence of AIDS also made rape a particularly heinous crime, with an estimated 40 percent of the population of Kigali HIV-positive at the time. Rwandan soldiers were not discriminating in their sexual violence, raping girls as young as 12 and 13, although attacks on Tutsi women were more frequent.<sup>109</sup> The RPF was also involved in raping Hutu women, killing at least 147 civilians and raping hundreds more over the course of the conflict.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, Rwandan women suffered significantly due to sexual violence during the course of the conflict—justifying a high level of accountability for such crimes. However, the identification and prosecution of perpetrators never materialized. Despite calls by Human Rights Watch, and other humanitarian organizations, to bring to trial all

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<sup>108</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Beyond the Rhetoric: Continuing Human Rights Abuses in Rwanda” in *Human Rights Watch* 5, no. 7 (1993), p. 11.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.

person who “have been accused of killings and other gross abuses of human rights,” including sexual violence, prosecution for sexual crimes was not included in the Arusha Peace Agreements nor given as a condition for either to side to participate in the transitional government.<sup>111</sup> Although rape is technically prosecutable under Rwandan criminal law, few inspectors—and few women themselves—are aware of this.<sup>112</sup> Further, the social stigma of rape prevents many women from coming forward without the assurance that their claims will be taken seriously and support will be provided.

In the post-conflict period, the focus was on creating a transitional government and appeasing the opposing parties—the effects on women, and ordinary Rwandans at large, were largely marginalized. As such, accountability for crimes against women was unequivocally low. However, it should be noted that this lack of accountability was not unique: a wide spectrum of crimes perpetrated during the war—against both genders—were not addressed and no formal program of reconciliation was implemented post-conflict.

## 2. Participation of Women’s Organizations: LOW

Finally, the participation of women’s organizations in the peace process and afterwards must be examined to determine the extent of their influence in civil society. A survey of Rwandan civil society organizations in 1986 found that of 1,457 organizations—143 of them were registered as women’s NGOs, around one-tenth of the

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, p. 27.

<sup>112</sup> Clotilde Twagiramariya and Meredith Turshen, “Favors to Give and Consenting Victims: The Sexual Politics of Survival in Rwanda” in *What Women Do in Wartime* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1998), p 113.

total number of organizations.<sup>113</sup> Prior to the war, these groups focused on bringing attention to the needs of women and also on the importance of incorporating women in the development process.<sup>114</sup>

While these grassroots organizations existed, they were largely marginalized during the peace process. In terms of formal negotiations, none of these groups—nor any prominent women—were represented; instead, the ceasefire and Arusha Accords were achieved through a combination of international pressure, regional mediation and compromise between the warring factions. As Mazurana (2005) noted, “the agreement made little reference to the gendered impact of conflict or the role of women in peacebuilding in general” due to the absence of Rwandan women in Arusha.<sup>115</sup> This marginalization reflected a broader trend within Rwandan society regarding the treatment of women: traditionally, women were dependant on their male relatives for access to resources and so their status derived from that of their fathers, brothers and husbands.<sup>116</sup> Such dependence made it difficult for women’s organizations to function prior to the influx of international funding following the genocide. Further, the lack of women’s political representation meant that their needs were often overlooked, and women’s organizations in the civil sphere were not given acknowledgement or support by the existing political structure.

These few women’s organizations—only around 150 in a country of 7.5 million—undoubtedly contributed to the provision of basic services and support to war widows or

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<sup>113</sup>Catharine Newbury and Hannah Baldwin. “Confronting the Aftermath of Conflict: Women’s Organizations in Postgenocide Rwanda” in *Women and Civil War*, ed. Krishna Kumar, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001) p. 99.

<sup>114</sup> UNICEF, *Children and Women of Rwanda: A Situational Analysis of Social Sectors*, (1998), p. 109.

<sup>115</sup> Dyan Mazurana, “Women in Armed Opposition Groups in Africa and the Promotion of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights,” report of a workshop organized by Geneva Call and the Program for the Study of International Organizations (November 2005).

<sup>116</sup> Newbury and Baldwin, p. 112.

other women at the community level following the civil war; however, these organizations lacked the visibility and leverage to afford them any measurable impact on the peace process or post-conflict activities at both the local and national level. Because of this, the participation of women's organizations in this time period must also be categorized as low.

### *iii. Peace Outcome: Failure*

Having determined that women's participation was low along all four dimensions of the peacebuilding process, the peace outcome of the Rwandan Civil War must now be analyzed. Although the Arusha Accords were initially regarded as one of the most promising peace agreements in the history of African civil wars, these conditions failed to prevent the unthinkable violence that unfolded during the subsequent Rwandan genocide in 1994. Because the scope of this brutality shocked the world, it is particularly important to compare this first civil war and its period of peacebuilding with the later efforts to determine whether certain alterations could have prevented the ensuing tragedy. The Arusha Accords also function as a baseline against which the following case studies can be measured—together they represent a standard, well-received peace agreement that nonetheless incorporated neither an acknowledgement of the specific burdens the civil war placed on women nor any mechanisms by which women could be incorporated into or contribute to the peacebuilding process. Further, an analysis of this case study serves to emphasize the significant paradigm shift that occurred only a year later, following the genocide, regarding women's role in society and in peacebuilding.



Thus, the first Rwandan civil war is an example of insubstantial women's participation followed by a peace failure. While a claim cannot be made that a lack of women's participation directly resulted in the resumption of violence—as the existence of a massive number of displaced refugees, rising ethnic tensions and an economic crisis all contributed to the instability of peace—the following case studies will illustrate potential ways in which women's participation may have facilitated a longer period of non-violence, and so provided more extensive time in which to ease ethnic tensions.

## *2. Rwandan Genocide: 1994*

### *i. Conflict Background*

As per the Arusha Accords, Habyarimana was sworn in as interim president of the Rwandan transitional national government on January 5, 1994. However, delays had plagued implementation of the Arusha requirements, including the integration of armed forces into a nationally unified military. In the meantime, government forces continued to sporadically kill Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Despite a formal end to the violence, the underlying causes of the civil war and escalating ethnic tensions led to a fragile peace. To address this, a summit was held in early April in Tanzania—the presidents of Tanzania, Burundi, Kenya and Uganda all pressured Habyarimana to implement the transition program in keeping with the agreed upon timetable.<sup>117</sup> While flying home to Rwanda, Habyarimana's plane was blown out of the sky on April 6, 1994 by undetermined assailants.

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<sup>117</sup> Baines, p. 220.

This incident catalyzed extremist Hutu militia groups, known as the *interahamwe*, to initiate a series of organized attacks on the Tutsi population and moderate Hutus. Within the hour, the *interahamwe* set up roadblocks across the country and began checking identity cards—killing Tutsis and human rights activists using machetes and iron bars.<sup>118</sup> The Hutu militia groups also used *Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines* (RTLM) and Radio Rwanda to spread messages of ethnic hatred and genocide, motivating ordinary Hutus to eliminate Tutsis across the country. Within one hundred days, around 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed, including women, children and the elderly. This slaughter was carried out with knives, clubs, machetes and iron bars. Grenades were thrown into churches and other areas where large groups of Tutsis had taken sheltered, hundreds of people were burned alive in pits lined with flaming tires, and the Hutu militia entered hospitals to systematically murder the sick and wounded.<sup>119</sup>

In response to these genocidal killings, RPF forces remobilized and began to advance towards Kigali—causing the Hutu government to flee west. To shield their retreat, the militia forced approximately of Hutu to flee with them into neighboring Tanzania and Zaire, destroying the state’s infrastructure along the way.<sup>120</sup> Thus, a civil war was waged concurrently with the genocide, as RPF forces engaged the militia in conventional warfare. Despite the minimal presence of Belgium peacekeepers, acting under the auspices of the United Nations, the situation was considered “too risky” to deploy more troops—and the Belgian peacekeepers not given permission to intervene.<sup>121</sup> The international community refused to acknowledge the mass killings as genocide; the

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<sup>118</sup> Atiri, p.287.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, p. 287-289.

<sup>120</sup> Baines, p. 223-224.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, p. 223.

United States, following the peacekeeping debacle in Somalia, was especially reluctant to become involved.<sup>122</sup> In July, the RPF achieved a military victory and control of Kigali. They then established a coalition government, called the “Government of National Unity,” and outlawed the Hutu-led MRND party.

The genocide lasted from the beginning of April 1994 until mid-July of that year; however, the disastrous effects continue to impact Rwandan society and have motivated claims on the part of the international community to “never again” allow such an atrocity to unfold. While exact numbers are not known, around 300,000 Tutsis are thought to have survived the genocide, representing only 30 percent of their original numbers.<sup>123</sup> And, as mentioned above, rape was the rule rather than exception for women during the genocide—with between 250,000 and 500,000 Rwandese women and girls falling victim to sexual violence. The widespread use of rape also contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS in Rwanda, with thousands of victims now HIV-positive. The conflict left nearly 400,000 children orphaned, with many of them forced to become heads of families.<sup>124</sup> War widows experienced a similar fate, as many Rwandan men were either killed or imprisoned as a result of the genocide, leaving women as the sole providers for their families. In addition, half of the country’s population of eight million was uprooted as a result of the conflict—with two million Rwandans fleeing to neighboring nations and another two million internally displaced.<sup>125</sup> This displacement as well as extremely high

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<sup>122</sup> Atiri, p. 288

<sup>123</sup> Twagirmariya and Turshen, p. 102.

<sup>124</sup> Atiri, p. 224.

<sup>125</sup> Twagirmariya and Turshen, p. 102.

mortality rates during the conflict led to a significant demographic shift, with women making 70 percent of the Rwandan population in the direct aftermath.<sup>126</sup>

These extreme conditions, coupled with extensive psychological trauma among the population, framed the post-genocide peacebuilding initiative in Rwanda. In particular, the new prominence of women and female-headed households necessitated a shift in underlying gender norms—a shift that is reflected in the substantial incorporation of women into the peacebuilding process in comparison to the previous Rwandan civil war, and—in fact—in comparison to the majority of peace initiatives previously undertaken on the African continent. The specifics of this participation will be discussed below.

## *ii. Women's Participation: Substantial*

### 1. Women and the DDR Process: MODERATE

While women were undeniably victimized throughout the genocide, they were also the perpetrators of violence and were occasionally “instrumental in organizing, promoting and authorizing genocidal killings.”<sup>127</sup> As of March 2010, almost two thousand women remain in Rwandan prisons, having been convicted of genocide-related offences.<sup>128</sup> Although women account for only 6% of the genocide-related detainees, Nicole Hogg’s (2010) research has demonstrated that these numbers probably underestimate the level of women’s involvement in the conflict. While ordinary women infrequently participated in direct killings, they contributed to the genocide principally by looting Tutsi property, revealing the hiding spots of Tutsis to the killers and supporting

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>127</sup> Scott Strauss, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power and War in Rwanda*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 134.

<sup>128</sup> Hogg, p. 70.

their men-folk in perpetrating violence.<sup>129</sup> Though indirect, women were still instrumental in informing killers of Tutsi hiding spots—and many simply did not consider the systematic elimination of their Tutsi neighbors as any of their business.

In addition, numerous women in leadership positions both supported and helped to organize the genocide. Currently, forty-seven women are on the list of 2,202 “Category 1” genocide suspects<sup>130</sup>—in other words, individuals suspected of planning or organizing the genocide, as well as those in leadership roles who committed or encouraged genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes.<sup>131</sup> In particular, extensive evidence exists that Agathe Kanziga—the widow of former Rwandan President Habyarimana—was instrumental in planning and executing the genocide, especially in the creation of the extremist radio station RTLM and establishing the training of the *interahamwe* militia.<sup>132</sup> Another infamous woman, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko—former Minister of Family Affairs and Women’s Development—is considered one of the principle genocide suspects. She has currently been charged with numerous crimes, including conspiracy to commit genocide. Most notably, she is the first woman to be accused of rape before an international tribunal, as she instructed such acts to be carried out by her subordinates.<sup>133</sup>

These women in leadership positions, while demonstrating that women are capable of violence on par with men, are held accountable within the formal legal system rather than participating in the DDR process. Instead, because women took part in the genocide as members of the military or the rebel force, their participation justified the implementation

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, p. 78.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, p. 90

<sup>131</sup> Phil Clark, *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice Without Lawyers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 73.

<sup>132</sup> Hogg, p. 90.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, p. 91

of a disarmament demobilization and reintegration program that acknowledges the role played by female combatants and also provides for their particular needs post-conflict, both materially and socially. Due in part to the prominence of women in government and the state's proclaimed commitment to gender mainstreaming in all areas, Rwanda has partially achieved this goal.

Since 1995, the country's DDR program has successfully demobilized and reintegrated almost 54,000 combatants.<sup>134</sup> This program has occurred in two phases: Phase I lasting from 1997 to 2001 and Phase II lasting from 2002 to 2007. Both of these phases involved the demobilization and reintegration of former RPF combatants and of soldiers in the Hutu-led Armed Forces of Rwanda (FAR);<sup>135</sup> in addition, rebels from other insurgent groups and Rwandans involved in the conflict in the Congo have participated, but this paper will focus on those combatants who were involved with the 1994 genocide. Although women account for less than 1% of all combatants in this conflict, making their marginalization a significant possibility, the Rwandan Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC) has promoted, at least rhetorically, the necessity of "paying particular attention to women" during this process.<sup>136</sup>

In reality, however, the 2004 RDRC report stated that "no special support" was provided for female soldiers who were demobilized during the first stage.<sup>137</sup> Over the course of Phase I, 18,692 soldiers demobilized—111 of which were women. However,

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<sup>134</sup> Lars Waldorf, *Transitional Justice and DDR in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009), p. 1.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>136</sup> Vanessa Farr, "Women Combatants and the Demobilization Disarmament and Reintegration Process in Rwanda," (Report prepared for UNIFEM: August 28, 2004): p. 3.

<sup>137</sup> Waldorf, p. 3.

these women were seen as key beneficiaries of the “Vulnerability Support Window,” which consists of a monetary grant intended to assist the most challenged ex-combatants. Of the 111 women demobilized during Phase I, two-thirds (or 73 women) accessed this fund.<sup>138</sup> Due to an influx of international money in support of DDR processes, Phase II enjoyed better funding, and so all demobilized combatants—including women—received reinsertion support packages. These packages consisted of a small monetary sum and basic household supplies.<sup>139</sup> In total, 260 female ex-combatants have benefited from this reinsertion support.<sup>140</sup> Ultimately, a total of 346 women have been demobilized and reintegrated over the course of both phases.

While the post-genocide DDR process has purposefully female ex-combatants, it is unlikely that the 346 demobilized women accurately reflect the real numbers of women associated with the armed groups.<sup>141</sup> Further, despite the additional monetary benefits given to female combatants, these women remain among the poorest in their communities.<sup>142</sup> This impoverishment is most likely due to lost income over the course of fighting and the social stigma surrounding active female participation in violence. Although the RDRC claims to facilitate reintegration for these women’s, often the program displays “no concern with gender issues within the communities the ex-combatants resettled.”<sup>143</sup> Considering all of these factors, women’s participation in the DDR process following the genocide can be classified as moderate. While some female combatants have participated, the RDRC has not actively recruited women or

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<sup>138</sup> Farr, p. 3.

<sup>139</sup> Waldorf, p. 2.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>141</sup> Farr, p. 3.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>143</sup> Waldorf, p. 2.

incorporated the full number of women associated with the two factions. In terms of incorporating women's needs, the demobilization process has included additional material support for women; however, integration is often hampered due to social stigma, an issue that has not been adequately addressed by the RDRC. The existence of the Ndabaga Association, a well-known NGO for former female combatants, demonstrates that the formal DDR program has not sufficiently incorporated women nor addressed their needs—although it has made notable progress in both these areas.<sup>144</sup>

## 2. Women's Political Participation: HIGH

Despite being traditionally marginalized, in both the domestic and public spheres, Rwandan women made significant gains in the formal political realm following the genocide. The genocide dramatically altered the environment in Rwanda; as described above, women were both disproportionately affected by the conflict and responsible for rebuilding in the aftermath with so many men missing or killed. After taking power in 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Front created a transition government, called the Government of National Unity (GNU), led by Paul Kagame. The GNU openly stated that it considered women's participation in peacebuilding and governance to be crucial for sustainable peace.<sup>145</sup> To ensure equal participation, the government undertook three main initiatives: (1) creating a Ministry of Gender, (2) organizing women's councils at all levels of governance, and (3) implementing gender quotas for the national parliament. These steps have resulted in a high level of women's political participation and representation within the formal government.

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<sup>144</sup> Farr, p. 4.

<sup>145</sup> Consuelo Remmert, "Rwanda Promotes Women Decision-makers" in *UN Chronicle*, no. 4 (2003): 25.



Following the 1994 genocide, the GNU transitional government was to remain in power for five years to ensure stability and a peaceful transition to democracy.<sup>146</sup> However, the RPF extended this period by another five years in 1998, citing security issues due to multi-party politics as one of the fundamental causes of the previous conflict.<sup>147</sup> Because of this, the political sphere was circumscribed until the first round of district-level elections were held in 2001. However, the GNU still took positive steps towards mainstreaming women politically and including them in positions of power. Starting in 1994, they appointed women to high-profile positions such as “ministries, secretaries of state, Supreme Court justices and parliamentarians.”<sup>148</sup> In addition, they quickly established the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Affairs (MIGEFASO) and implemented gender posts at all levels of government.<sup>149</sup> These gender posts were meant to ensure that all proposed policies are sensitive to the particular needs of women, a core component of successful gender mainstreaming. In 1999, this ministry was reorganized, becoming the Ministry of Gender and Women in Development (MIGEPROF), charged with “integrating gender analytical frameworks in all legislation, reinforcing knowledge of gender within all state structures, [...] and promoting gender equality.”<sup>150</sup> Thus, the ministry was dedicated not only to the advancement of women, but also to mainstreaming gender into all policies and to the acknowledgment that equal inclusion of both men and women was necessary for successful development and sustainable peace.

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<sup>146</sup> Jennie Burnet, “Gender Balance and the Meaning of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda” in *African Affairs*, (2008): p. 364.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, p. 364.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, p. 365.

<sup>149</sup> Remmert, p. 26.

<sup>150</sup> Burnet, p. 364.

In addition to MIGEPROF, the Rwandan government also created women's councils to ensure that women participated in all levels of government—from the community level up to the national. These councils function as a parallel system for women at each level of government, with representatives elected in women-only elections, that then consult with the general council at that corresponding level of government. In addition, the head of each women's council has a seat in the general council, to act as an official liaison.<sup>151</sup> The official purpose of these councils, aside from advising on and promoting women's interests, is to “teach women how to participate in politics.”<sup>152</sup> Because Rwandan women have historically been marginalized in the political sphere, and often have more restricted access to education, the opportunity for them to gain this experience—particularly for those women at the local level—is invaluable for empowering them personally and for overcoming entrenched cultural discrimination.

Finally, the GNU implemented significant constitutional and electoral reforms to guarantee that women representatives also served at the higher levels of government. Even before the creation the 2003 elections, the RPF had continued to appoint women to seats in Parliament—with women holding 25.7 percent of seats prior to the elections.<sup>153</sup> In terms of elections, the GNU instituted a triple-balloting system that required each citizen to cast three ballots at the district and sector level—general, women's and youth. This policy ensures that women received a set percentage of seats at both these levels; in addition, women are able to run on the gender ballot, although it is more competitive.<sup>154</sup> Finally, the new Rwandan Constitution, drafted in 2003, requires that 30 percent of seats

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<sup>151</sup> Remmert, p. 27.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>153</sup> Burnet, p. 365.

<sup>154</sup> Remmert, p. 27.

“in Parliament and all other decision-making bodies” be set aside for women.<sup>155</sup> This codification of Rwanda’s commitment to women’s role in government contrasts starkly with the extremely low rates of women’s participations prior to the genocide.

In addition, these initiatives—coupled with the increasing visibility and respect afforded women—have resulted in levels of participation beyond legislative requirements. For example, 48.8 percent of the members of parliament (MPs) in 2008 were women—the highest rate in the world<sup>156</sup> Following the 2008 elections, Rwanda became the first country in history in which women outnumber men in parliament, comprising 56 percent.<sup>157</sup> In addition, women currently make up one-third of all cabinet positions, the chief of the Supreme Court is a woman and Dr. Rose Mukantabana was voted the first female speaker of parliament in 2008.<sup>158</sup> The electoral success of women may be explained, at least in part, by the perception that women are less prone to corruption than men and more likely to provide services, an attitude espoused by both Rwandan men and women.<sup>159</sup> Female MPs have also taken the initiative to create a cross-party caucus, also a first in Rwandan history. This Forum of Women Parliamentarians reviews laws to ensure gender quality and conducts trainings for women’s groups regarding their legal rights.<sup>160</sup> Formed shortly after the genocide, this collaboration between women—regardless of ethnic group or background—was seen as symbolic

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<sup>155</sup> Burnet, p. 365.

<sup>156</sup> BBC News, “Women to Rule Rwanda Parliament,” (September 17, 2008). Available online at < <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7620816.stm>>.

<sup>157</sup> Andrea Friedman, “Looking to Rwanda for Lessons on Gender Equality” in *The Huffington Post*, (December 3rd, 2008).

<sup>158</sup> PBS, “Rwanda Elects World’s First Majority-Female Parliament, (October 28, 2008). Available online at < <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/uncategorized/rwanda-elects-worlds-first-majority-female-parliament/3481/>>.

<sup>159</sup> Elizabeth Powley. *Rwanda’s Transition*, (Washington, DC: Hunt Alternative Fund, 2004), p. 127.

<sup>160</sup> Anderlini, p. 140

reconciliation: it has since inspired Rwandan MPs to create two other cross-party caucuses on population issues and regional peace.<sup>161</sup>

Considered together, both the GNU's rhetorical commitment and the reality of Rwandan government demonstrate a high level of participation and representation of women. By involving women to an unprecedented degree, women's concerns have been more directly integrated into policy and legislation. Further, the visibility of women leaders throughout all levels of government can be seen as an inspiration to other Rwandan women, broadening their perception of what it is possible for women in society to achieve. However, despite the democratic participation of under-represented groups such as women and youth, it must be noted the Rwandan state currently maintains some authoritarian characteristics—including limits on freedom of speech and of press.<sup>162</sup> Further, gender quotas do not necessarily guarantee meaningful participation for women; however, that Rwandan women continued to be elected in numbers exceeding the constitutional requirement indicates that values of gender equality are becoming socially ingrained—providing hope that women's meaningful participation will move Rwanda towards a genuine democracy in the long-run.

### 3. Accountability for Gender Crimes: MODERATE

Throughout the genocide, sexual violence against women—predominantly directed against Tutsi women—occurred across Rwanda. This sexual violence was not confined to raping women in private: often women were raped on the street, held as sexual slaves for the purposes of rape, subjected to multiple gang rape, or raped to death using sharp

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, p. 140-141.

<sup>162</sup> Burnet, p. 361.

objects.<sup>163</sup> This systematic rape was not limited to mature Tutsi women, but also included elderly women and young girls.<sup>164</sup> While beyond the scope of any experienced before, physical and sexual violence against women was common prior to the genocide.<sup>165</sup> However, the targeting of Tutsi women and their subjection to extreme forms of sexual violence and humiliation were deliberate components of the genocidal agenda. The motivation for this stemmed from the period of Tutsi dominance, during which strong Hutu resentment regarding their ethnic inequality grew. Concurrently, however, a mythology regarding the beauty and desirability of Tutsi women was also created—they were perceived as “objects of desire” or as “trophies to be acquired,” either by rape or through marriage.<sup>166</sup> Despite discrimination against Tutsis, Hutus frequently married Tutsi women as a confirmation of their status; intermarriages based on romantic were also not considered outside the norm.<sup>167</sup> However, under Habyarimana’s regime, propaganda regarding the dangerous sexuality of Tutsi women proliferated—the *Hutu Ten Commandments*, a pre-genocide document published by Hutu extremists, went so far as to forbid Hutus from marrying Tutsi women to ensure the ethnic purity of children.<sup>168</sup> A rhetoric of punishment followed, with the Hutu extremist media proclaiming Tutsi women as deserving of rape as a means of revenge; further, many of the poor men recruited into the military used the genocide as an opportunity to rape Tutsi women, allowing them access to the previously unobtainable.

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<sup>163</sup> Binaifer Nowrojee, “Your Justice Is Too Slow: Will the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda Fail Rwanda’s Rape Victims?” in *Gendered Peace: Women’s Struggles for Post-War Justice and Reconciliation*, ed. Donna Pankhurt, (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 103.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, p. 108.

<sup>165</sup> Hogg, p. 73.

<sup>166</sup> Gallimore, p. 16

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*, p. 21.

Given the scope of the sexual violence perpetrated during the genocide, and the psychological trauma Rwandan women still endure, the need for accountability was paramount. Both the Rwandan government and the international community acknowledged this need: the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), set up in Arusha, Tanzania to prosecute the most serious violations of international humanitarian law committed during the genocide, includes rape as one of the crimes prosecutable under international law.<sup>169</sup> The ICTR expanded this definition during the prosecution of Jean-Paul Akayesu, widely considered to be “the most progressive judgment on gender ever pronounced by an international judicial body.”<sup>170</sup> Akayesu, a Hutu, was mayor of the Taba commune during the genocide. He was accused of having knowledge of, facilitating and encouraging the commission of sexual violence, along with beating and murders of Tutsis.<sup>171</sup> His trial included extensive testimony regarding rape and other forms of sexual violence: the Akayesu trial was the first to try and convict a defendant for the crime of genocide and the first to include sexual violence as an integral part of the genocide—Akayesu received 15 years for rape, a charge upheld on appeal.<sup>172</sup> This landmark conviction also established a precedent for rape to be defined as a crime against humanity.<sup>173</sup> This precedent, in addition to the focus on sexual violence at the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia, was used by international women’s rights advocates to influence the International Criminal Court during its construction—the ICC now officially recognizes “rape, sexual slavery and forced prostitution, pregnancy and

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<sup>169</sup> Nowrojee, p. 108.

<sup>170</sup> Kelly Askin, “Sexual Violence in Decisions and Indictments of the Yugoslav and Rwandan Tribunals: Current Status” in *American Journal of International Law* 93, no.1: (1999), p 100.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, p.106.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, p. 105-106.

<sup>173</sup> Kelly Askin, “Gender Crimes Jurisprudence in the ICTR” in *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, 3, no. 4 (2005): 1007-1018.

sterilization as well as other forms of sexual violence as crimes against humanity and war crimes.”<sup>174</sup>

Apart from this groundbreaking case, which has had implications for women worldwide, the ICTR’s record for accountability regarding sexual crimes is mixed. As of May 2004, the ICTR had adjudicated one-third of their caseload, for a total of 21 judgments—18 convictions and 3 acquittals. However, despite the Akayesu precedent, 90 percent of those judgments contained no rape convictions.<sup>175</sup> Of the 30 percent of cases that included rape charges, only 10 percent have resulted in convictions. Given the widespread sexual violence perpetrated during genocide, these numbers cannot accurately reflect the participation of these defendants; however, the large number of acquittals have been attributed to the prosecutor not “properly presenting the evidence beyond a reasonable doubt,” rather than the innocence of the accused.<sup>176</sup> Thus, the Prosecutor’s Office has not consistently incorporated crimes of sexual violence into their investigations—failing the thousands of women who were victimized. Still, approximately half the cases that will ultimately come before the ICTR will contain allegations of sexual violence.<sup>177</sup> And certain prosecutors—Louise Arbour, who served from 1996 until 1999—have demonstrated a strong commitment to delivering justices for crimes of sexual violence. For example, under Arbour, sexual violence amendments were added to many cases; further, by her final year, all new indictments contained charges of sexual violence.<sup>178</sup> Unfortunately, the momentum gained during her term has now been

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<sup>174</sup> Anderlini, p. 169.

<sup>175</sup> Nowrojee, p. 109.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114-116.

maintained by subsequent ICTR Prosecutors—as a result, the number of convictions for sexual violence has been inconsistent and infrequent.

In terms of accountability for crimes against women, Rwanda and the ICTR have demonstrated an unprecedented awareness of the gendered dimensions of conflict. Further, the Akayesu conviction acknowledged sexual crimes as paramount to crimes against humanity—deserving of an equally severe punishment. That sexual crimes were considered “Category I” offenses, too grave to domestic trial, also demonstrates a degree of accountability to women. However, the reality has not fully built on the Akayesu precedent, with too few cases containing charges of rape or resulting in convictions for sexual crimes. Considered in totality, accountability for gender crimes in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide can be categorized as moderate—while rhetoric of support exists, and some progress has been made, the reality does not yet match the justice that Rwandan women expect and rightfully deserve.

#### 4. Participation of Women’s Organizations: HIGH

In the aftermath of genocide, Rwanda experienced a proliferation in women’s organizations, which played a formative role in rebuilding the country—both socially and physically. As discussed in the context of the Rwandan Civil War, women’s associations did exist prior to the genocide; however, these were generally small organizations with limited impact. Following the genocide, the number of these organizations drastically increased—a 1997 study estimated that in each of Rwanda’s 154 communes, there were on average 100 women’s associations, for a total of more than 15,400 women’s groups.<sup>179</sup> This can be compared to the total of 143 women’s NGOs identified in a 1986

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<sup>179</sup> Newbury and Baldwin, p. 100.



countrywide survey. Further, women's organizations functioning prior to the genocide resumed their activities, often incorporating the maintenance of peace into their agendas.<sup>180</sup> Due in part to necessity and an influx of international support, this explosion in itself attests to the significant role of women's organizations during this crucial period. While the identification and analysis of each of these organizations is clearly outside the scope of this paper, the following section will address the main purposes of the organizations—making reference to relevant examples.

With such an abundance of groups, the scope and range of their activities is necessarily diverse. However, most of these groups formed—or expanded their activities—to meet the needs of the population when the state lacked the resources to do so. These organizations also directly addressed the need to maintain the stable peace attained following RPF's military victory. Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe, a collective of women's organizations at the national level, jointly created the post-genocide Campaign for Peace. Through promotion of the program, women's groups in Pro-Femmes directly contributed to discussions with the GNU, international actors and other Rwandan organizations on how to sustain peace and target relief efforts to women.<sup>181</sup> The four main goals of the Campaign for Peace were: encouragement of a culture of peace, combating gender discrimination, promoting socioeconomic reconstruction, and reinforcing the institutional capacity of the organization. Motivated by these concerns, the Campaign for Peace engaged in a spectrum of activities, ranging from aiding in mediation and negotiations to organizing trainings for women on issues such as legal

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<sup>180</sup> Baines, p. 225.

<sup>181</sup> Newbury and Baldwin, p. 104.

rights or income generation.<sup>182</sup> Implicitly, this interethnic collaboration also contributed to healing, as victims and perpetrators identified common problems and worked together towards solutions. As a result of Pro-Femmes contributions, the umbrella organization received the UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence in 1996.<sup>183</sup>

At the grassroots level, Burnet (2008) found that women's organizations "filled a social void," by helping to meet the basic needs of Rwandan women—and men—and creating new support systems to replace those destroyed during the genocide. An example of organizations providing support include the Association of the Widows of Rwanda (AVEGA), which was created in the aftermath of the conflict to provide financial and emotional support to genocide widows—one of the most vulnerable groups in the population.<sup>184</sup> AVEGA imbues these women with a greater degree of social power and allows for international aid to be efficiently channeled to their aid. Because the Rwandan economy was destroyed during the conflict, and many individuals had lost their livelihoods or the income-generating members of their families, economic support was particularly crucial during this timeframe. Numerous women's organizations realized this and thus formed organizations to facilitate micro-loans and grants to Rwandan citizens. For instance, Duteriembre, a female micro-lending cooperation, provided genocide widows with capital to start new businesses, while the Women in Transition program

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<sup>182</sup> Baines, p. 226.

<sup>183</sup> UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence: available at <[www.southasiafoundation.org/saf/about\\_saf/saf\\_relations](http://www.southasiafoundation.org/saf/about_saf/saf_relations)>.

<sup>184</sup> Burnet, 316.

made small grants to needy citizens, bolstered by \$3 million of USAID emergency assistance.<sup>185</sup>

Women's organizations at this time greatly contributed to the stability of Rwandan society through their provision of economic assistance and basic needs. Because the organizations functioned at both the local and national levels, they were particularly effective at identifying those in need and ensuring that their services reached them. Newbury and Baldwin (2001) conducted a thorough analysis of post-genocide women's organizations, cataloging the many activities they engaged in. A basic outline of their findings follows: Women's organizations addressing rural poverty, a root cause of tensions due to inequality, by building shelters and providing livestock. They engaged advocacy work, promoting women's—and human—rights and providing legal services to those in need. Women's associations also provided vocational training and civic education, helping to reintegrate former combatants and to impart useful skills to unemployed women. In addition, the public health system in Rwanda was almost nonexistent following the genocide, so numerous women's organizations have addressed health concerns through promoting policy changes and providing direct medical care—such as setting up clinics to serve the victims of sexual violence or opening pharmacies in rural areas.<sup>186</sup> All of these initiatives have been integral in providing support for a traumatized population and also in promoting stability and rebuilding infrastructure; in doing so, women's organizations can be seen as promoting peace at the ground level.

Because the Rwandan genocide, while intense, was brief and ended by means of a military victory, women's organizations were not actively involved in the peacemaking

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> Newbury and Baldwin, p. 105-110.

process. However, these organizations provided the majority of social services following the genocide, helping to address its root causes, and have undertaken campaigns to educate the population and prevent such a tragedy from ever reoccurring. Thus, the rapid proliferation and expansive scope of women's organizations discussed above demonstrate that their participation was undeniably high during the peacebuilding process of post-conflict Rwanda.

### *iii. Peace Outcome: Success*

Motivated by the brutality and widespread violence that occurred during the Rwandan genocide, the country has since demonstrated a clear commitment to peacebuilding. Although the government has been tangentially involved in the First and Second Congo War, Rwanda proper has exhibited a consistent level of stability. Over a decade since the conflict, Rwanda has maintained peace and continues to progress towards a more integrated, democratic society. Following the genocide, the country's flag, anthem and constitution were all replaced to promote unity and remove traces of ethnic discrimination. In addition, the country has joined both the East African Community and the Commonwealth of Nations to promote stability and growth within the region.

Though the government maintains vestiges of an authoritarian regime, Rwandans have been participating in elections at all levels since 2003—with female candidates experiencing unprecedented success even in the national parliament. Further, while the economy suffered during the civil war and genocide, it has experienced substantial growth in recent years, between 6 and 7 percent annually, and the Rwandan government

has made considerable progress towards rehabilitation.<sup>187</sup> Many Rwandans still live below the poverty line, but progress has also been made in the areas of education and life expectancy: 70 percent of the population is now literate, compared to 58 percent prior to the genocide, and life expectancy is now 52 years.<sup>188</sup> Most tellingly, Rwanda's Human Development Index—a statistic based on a country's life expectancy, education and per-capita GNI—rose by 3.3% during the past decade.<sup>189</sup> This represents the largest increase of any country in this time period. Ultimately, the effects of the genocide continue to linger—including ethnic tensions—but Rwanda has remained peaceable despite numerous potential spoilers. While the substantial participation of women, particularly in government and civil society, cannot be regarded as independently responsible for this successful outcome, the above sections demonstrate plausible avenues through which women have directly promoted and sustained this peace.

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### *3. Liberia's First Civil War: 1989—1996*

#### *i. Conflict Background*

Unique among African countries, Liberia is one of two African nations without a colonial history—making it the continent's oldest republic. Freed American slaves settled along the West African coast, founding the country in 1847; prior to their arrival, sixteen main ethnic groups, who still reside there today, inhabited the region. Despite comprising only five percent of the population, the Americo-Liberians created an oligarchy, ruling

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<sup>187</sup> CIA Factbook (2010): Rwanda.

<sup>188</sup> World Development Index (2010): Rwanda.

<sup>189</sup> CIA Factbook.

over the majority of the population for more than a century.<sup>190</sup> Although Liberia appeared prosperous and stable, this exclusionary rule created deep-seated resentment and instability within the population. In 1980, the military staged a coup d'état, replacing President Tolbert with Samuel Doe, the first Liberian President not of Americo-Liberian descent.<sup>191</sup> Instead of initiating democratization, Doe established a military regime, the People's Redemption Council, with the support of indigenous tribes who had long been excluded from political participation.<sup>192</sup> Elections were held in 1995; however, they were widely regarded as fraudulent and President Doe remained in power, continuing to preferentially favor the Krahn, his own ethnic group.

In response to Doe's brutal and inept rule, a failed coup-attempt was undertaken later that year—in retaliation, Doe ordered a crackdown in Nimba County, resulting in the indiscriminate killing of more than 3,000 Gios and Manos and the destruction of their homes.<sup>193</sup> As it was predominantly Gios and Manos that had orchestrated the coup, this rampage only increased ethnic tensions. Despite this resentment, Doe's regime prevailed—in part because of financial and political support from the United States, which feared Liberia might fall into the Soviet camp.<sup>194</sup> With the end of the Cold War in 1989, this support was quickly withdrawn, destabilizing the Liberian economy and creating a security vacuum.<sup>195</sup>

Charles Taylor, a former member of Doe's government, quickly capitalized on this opportunity. Taylor had relocated to the Ivory Coast and assembled a rebel group,

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<sup>190</sup> Adekeye Adebajo, *Liberia's Civil War: Nigeria, ECOMOG and Regional Security in West Africa*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), p.19.

<sup>191</sup> George Klay Kieh, Jr., *The First Liberian Civil War: The Crisis of Underdevelopment*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), p. 13.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14.

<sup>193</sup> Adebajo, p. 30.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34.

<sup>195</sup> Kieh, p. 22.

composed mainly of discontented Gios and Manos, which came to be known as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). On December 24, 1989, the NPFL crossed into Liberia to overthrow Doe's regime; the government's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) retaliated but were unable to contain the insurgency—beginning the First Liberian Civil War. Due to the Nimba massacre, the NPFL was easily able to recruit members and continued their march toward the capital, Monrovia.<sup>196</sup> In the course of this fighting, Doe's undisciplined army attacked citizens and burned villages within the territory of the Gios and Manos. A particularly brutal incident occurred in July 1990, when AFL soldiers murdered over 600 civilians, including Charles Taylor's father, who had taken shelter in a church.<sup>197</sup> Also during this time, Prince Johnson—a former NPFL rebel—formed his own guerilla force, comprised predominately of Gios, called the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL).<sup>198</sup>

In August 1990, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decided to deploy a military intervention force—the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)—to establish a ceasefire and prevent the conflict from spilling over into neighboring states.<sup>199</sup> The following month, the INPFL was able to capture President Doe—who was then tortured and killed.<sup>200</sup> Between 1990 and 1994, both Taylor and Johnson claimed power; thus, their forces continued to fight, despite signing more than ten peace agreements brokered by ECOWAS during the four-year interval. The conflict was further complicated by the formation of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) in June 1991, which was comprised of former supports of

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<sup>196</sup> Adebajo, p. 42.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>198</sup> Mark Huband, *The Liberian Civil War*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 61.

<sup>199</sup> Adebajo, p. 43-49.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

President Doe and former members of the Armed Forces of Liberia.<sup>201</sup> In the course of fighting, all of these rebels groups committed gross human rights violations, murdering and raping thousands of civilians.

Finally, in August of 1995, leaders of seven armed factions signed the Abuja Peace Agreement: the thirteenth peace agreement of the conflict, it established a power-sharing government comprised of a ruling six-member council that incorporated the leaders of the three largest factions. Under this agreement, Charles Taylor, Alhaji Kromah and Dr. George Boley would share power equally with civilian representatives holding the other three positions.<sup>202</sup> However, renewed fighting across the country began in the following months. The fighting was ended by the updated Abuja Accord, signed in Nigeria in 1996, which again incorporated the main warlords—providing them with both amnesty and power—and established a timetable for DDR and elections in the following year.<sup>203</sup> In July 1997, elections for the presidency and national assembly were held—Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Party enjoyed an overwhelming victory; Taylor received 75 percent of the vote while current Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf followed with less than 10 percent.<sup>204</sup> Although the country entered into a period of peace, the civil war had decimated country’s population, economy and infrastructure: at least 200,000 civilians, or one-tenth of Liberia’s population, had been killed—and almost one million Liberians had become refugees in neighboring countries with another one million displaced internally.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Huband, p. 43.

<sup>202</sup> Gabriel H. Williams, *Liberia: The Heart of Darkness: Accounts of Liberia’s Civil War and Its Destabilizing Effects in West Africa*, (New York: Trafford, 2002), p. 188.

<sup>203</sup> Adebajo, p. 76.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>205</sup> Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia, “Hundreds of Victims Silently Grieving” in *What Women Do in Wartime*, (London: Zed Books Ltds, 1998), p. 130.



*ii. Women's Participation: Substantial*

1. Women and the DDR Process: LOW

As a requirement for peace, the second Abuja Accord called for the disarmament and demobilization of all insurgent groups by 1997. Because of the number of these groups, the DDRR process undertaken (disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and reconciliation) was seen as particularly crucial to preventing a reoccurrence of armed conflict. The 1996 DDRR program involved three stages: during the first stage, fighters were disarmed, registered and counseled. In the second stage, these disarmed combatants were drawn into work and training programs to gain marketable skills. Finally, the ex-combatants were reintegrated, a long-term process that involved food rations and tools for work.<sup>206</sup> By February 1997, about 24,5000 of the estimated 33,000 fights (or 74 percent) had been disarmed and demobilized. This group included 4,306 child soldiers and only 250 adult female fights.<sup>207</sup> It is important to note that child soldiers were the primary fighters in the first phase of the conflict—accounting for 15,000 to 20,000 of the soldiers between the six major armed factions, of which girls significant proportion.<sup>208</sup> However, the DDRR program did not collect gender-disaggregated data, making it difficult to separately analyze the program experiences for female child fighters; regardless, Liberia's DDRR program managed to involve only a small percentage of child soldiers—both boys and girls—in the process.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Thomas Jaye, "DDR and Transitional Justice in Liberia: Research Brief," prepared for International Center for Transitional Justice (2010), p. 6

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7

<sup>208</sup> Adebajo, p. 83.

<sup>209</sup> Jaye, p. 8

Women were also involved with the fighting, participating as direct combatants and as women associated with fighting forces (WAFF), who voluntarily or involuntarily provided logistical support and resources to the rebel groups. This support included preparing food, cleaning camps, and fetching water; the women and girls were also frequently used as sexual slaves or forced into marriage.<sup>210</sup> Although the exact number of female combatants for the first conflict is not known, women and girls comprised 30-40% of all fighter forces, or approximately 25,000 to 30,000 participants, between 1989 and 2003. While more women voluntarily participated in the second conflict, the number that joined or that were forced to participate during the first conflict was still substantial.<sup>211</sup> For example, Charles Taylor's NPLF included a female artillery unit, and numerous women achieved the rank of "general" within all of the warring factions.<sup>212</sup> Thus, the demobilization of only 250 adult female fighters does approach the number of women that participated in the conflict. Additionally, less than one percent of female child soldiers were incorporated into the DDR program.<sup>213</sup>

These low numbers reflect the extent to which women and girl combatants were excluded from the program. This marginalization is further evidenced by the lack of specialized initiatives for women and or girl child soldiers, creating a system in which "their needs and particular circumstances were not adequately considered."<sup>214</sup> Because many of the women and girls experienced sexual violence during combat, an effective

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<sup>210</sup> Dyan Mazurana, "Girls in Fighting Forces and Groups: Their Recruitments, Participation, Demobilization and Reintegration" in *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 8, no. 2: (2002), p. 105

<sup>211</sup> Abu Sheriff, p. 28

<sup>212</sup> Annie Jones-Demen "Dynamics of Gender Relations in War-Time and Post-War Liberia: Implications for Public Policy," in *War to Peace Transition: Conflict Intervention and Peacebuilding in Liberia*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 2009) p. 108.

<sup>213</sup> Mazurana, p. 118.

<sup>214</sup> Jones-Demen, p. 108.

DDR program would have provided psychological counseling and also anticipated the social stigma they may have faced during the integration process. Further, a U.S. Institute of Peace report in 2008 found that women soldiers are especially disadvantaged economically post-conflict, making them twice as likely as men to rejoin insurgent groups to avoid poverty.<sup>215</sup> In the case of Liberia, the report found that almost 30 percent of over a thousand former female fighters would be willing to return to fighting “to feed their families and gain acceptance from their communities.”<sup>216</sup> These numbers reflect the importance of involving women and girl soldiers in the DDRR process—particularly because, immediately following conflict, females were more useful to the factions than men who could no longer fight. Women and girls continued to provide logistical support for these groups, allowing their perpetuation and making it easier to revert to violence.<sup>217</sup>

Ultimately, the 1996 DDRR program exhibited an explicit focus on “one man, one gun,” a rhetoric and strategy that resulted in the marginalization of a substantial—and fundamental—part of many of the fighting forces.<sup>218</sup> Women and children, particularly girl soldiers, were mostly excluded from the process; even when incorporated, they did not receive the extra support necessary to ensure their successful reintegration into civilian life. Thus, women’s participation in DDRR is categorized as low; this exclusion of women and children has been widely acknowledge as a major weakness of the first DDRR attempt—the failure of which was partially responsible for the Second Liberian Civil War.

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<sup>215</sup> Ruthie Ackerman, “Rebuilding Liberia: One Brick at a Time” in *World Policy Journal* 26, no. 2: (2009), p. 8.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>217</sup> Mazurana, p. 117.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, p. 116.

## 2. Women's Political Participation: MODERATE

Prior to the conflict, Liberian women were the primary labor force responsible for agricultural production, domestic work and child rearing; as a result of their gender, most women were relegated to the domestic sphere and were expected to defer to male authority.<sup>219</sup> Among many of the ethnic groups, both female genital mutilation and polygamy were common practice: male leaders would accumulate women and use them to form advantageous political or economic alliances.<sup>220</sup> Because of this male dominance, women's participation in the formal political sphere was uncommon; however, women could enjoy positions of power in local hierarchies and a degree of legal rights, due to the relatively progressive approach to women's rights taken by the Americo-Liberians. From the nineteenth century onward, Liberian women were legally able to buy and sell land, enter into contracts and initiate divorces—although these rights were often circumscribed in practice.<sup>221</sup> In 1946, Liberian women gained suffrage, and during President Tolbert's time in power—from 1971 until 1980—eight women served as government ministers.<sup>222</sup> Thus, in many ways, Liberian women had a stronger foundation than women in other African nations from which to increase their political participation.

This potential, however, was not fully realized: after the conflict, women shouldered a disproportionate amount of financial and social responsibility, which was not matched by an equal increase in their share of power. Because of the desperate situation, the main focus of ECOWAS and other peacekeeping forces was on enacting a ceasefire and preventing further death and destruction—this often meant catering to the priorities of the

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<sup>219</sup> Veronika Fuest, "This is the Time to Get in Front: Changing Roles and Opportunities for Women in Liberia" in *African Affairs* 107, no. 427: (2008), p. 206.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, p. 206.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*, p. 207.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid*, p. 211.

warlords. Nevertheless, women were not entirely excluded from formal political participation. During the fighting, the Abuja Accord in 1995 had established a ruling council of six members—three warlords and three civilians—led by civilian Wilton G.S. Sankawulo. After a resurgence of violence, the second Abuja Accord called for a new leader to be nominated and elected. In September 1996, Liberia became the first African nation to have a female leader, with the inauguration of Ruth Perry—a former Senator and activist in the women’s community— as the Head of the Council of State. As the leader of the transitional government, Perry would serve until the elections in July 1997 and was tasked with overseeing them.<sup>223</sup>

However, the difficulty of Perry’s nomination and the limits of her power demonstrate that this appointment was not a full victory for women. When Perry arrived in Abuja, Nigeria, she was originally told that she had been refused accreditation as a female candidate. Even after appealing to the Chief of Protocol, Perry was told “there was nothing he could do.”<sup>224</sup> Perry’s accreditation was granted only after considerable pressure was placed on these men; ECOWAS then designated her as chairperson, with the acceptance of all the faction leaders. Although Perry proved a proactive leader, touring the country and drawing attention to human rights abuses—her power was frequently undermined by the men on the Council. In a telling incident, Charles Taylor missed Perry’s inauguration to travel instead to Tripoli, where he celebrated the twenty-seventh anniversary of Muammar Qaddafi’s rise to power, publicly demonstrating a lack of respect for Perry’s leadership.<sup>225</sup> Later that year, Taylor also ordered that Perry make

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<sup>223</sup> Liberian Women Peacemakers, *Fighting for the Right to Be Seen, Heard and Counted*, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004), p. 30.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>225</sup> Adebajo, p. 202-203.

significant changes to her UN speech before he would approve funding for her trip to New York; Perry made the changes, raising questions about the true balance of power in the council.<sup>226</sup>

While Perry's appointment represented a substantial achievement for Liberian women, who had been marginalized from both their countries' politics and its peace process, her high profile position should not be conflated with full political participation for all women, or even for Perry herself. Because of the overwhelming authority of armed faction leaders, and the gender-bias in Liberia's male-dominated society, many regarded her appointment as a "cosmetic attempt" to dilute their power: despite her impressive commitment, it was "clear that the warlords called the shots."<sup>227, 228</sup> Still, Perry's role as interim leader established an important precedent in Liberia, and in Africa at large; her leadership also proved the most effective of any Head of Councils' during the transitional government—with successful Presidential and legislative elections held with her oversight.

In lower levels of government, the degree women's participation post-conflict was also mixed. When the three warlords had to resign from the Council of State to run for election in 1997, two of them—Taylor and Boley—chose female candidates to replace them; thus, three of the six members on Ruth Perry's Council were women.<sup>229</sup> In the July 1997 elections, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf—an educated woman, prominent in Liberian politics before her exile—became the first female contestant for presidential office in African history; unfortunately, Johnson-Sirleaf was soundly defeated by Charles Taylor

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<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>227</sup> William N. Massaquoi, *Women and Post-Conflict Development: A Case Study on Liberia*, (University of Liberia, 2007), p. 68.

<sup>228</sup> Adebajo, p.224.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

and would not become President until 2005. In addition, 15 women served as Ministers during the interim regime and Charles Taylor's time in office. Additionally, four women served as Deputy Ministers and two as Assistant Ministers.<sup>230</sup> The number of women appointed to the legislative branch in 1997 is not available; however, after the 2005 elections, women made up 12 percent of the House of Representatives and 17 percent of the Senate, the highest level of political representation by women in Liberia's history. Thus, the number of female representatives in 1997 was lower and certainly did not constitute a substantial proportion of the legislature. Taken together, these numbers reflect the marginal presence of women in Liberian politics, because—although their representation increased somewhat at the national level—male representatives and their interests considerably outweighed those of women.

Therefore, considered overall, women's political participation increased in the post-conflict period; however, their level of representation remained relatively low and even Ruth Perry—a woman appointed to the country's most powerful position—was limited in by the male warlords in her faculties as Head of Council. Thus, women's formal political participation in Liberia at this time can be categorized as moderate, as women made some progress but did not achieve substantial gains in the political realm.

### 3. Accountability for Gender Crimes: LOW

Although not on the scale witnessed during the Rwandan genocide, sexual violence against women and girls was also prevalent during the First Liberian Civil War. While the full extent of this violence is not known, a random sample of 205 women and girls found that 49 percent had experienced at least one act of physical or sexual violence by a

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<sup>230</sup> Fuest, p. 218.

fighter: the women reported being bound, strip-searched, beaten and raped.<sup>231</sup>

Particularly towards the end of the conflict, the majority of rape victims were between the ages of 40 and 65; because of the African tradition that older women view young men as their sons, this form of sexual violence was particularly shameful and stigmatizing.<sup>232</sup>

Young girls, co-opted into the fighting forces, were particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse due to their young age and small size—the majority of girl child soldiers were forced into sexual servitude.<sup>233</sup> The large number of female refugees also contributed to widespread sexual violence, as these women were also vulnerable when they left their communities and traveled to refugee camps—even in these camps, women were often not protected or were raped by the men meant to guard them.<sup>234</sup> Throughout the conflict, many of these rapes resulted in unwanted pregnancies, with the women being forced to bear and care for children fathered by their assailants. Forced sex also frequently resulted in women contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS—the rate of which rose significantly among women post-conflict, with Liberia now having the third highest rate of the disease in West Africa.<sup>235</sup>

The level of violence experienced by women, both sexual and in the course of the conflict, undoubtedly resulted in both physical and psychological trauma. However, despite the extent of sexual violence, little effort was made to hold the perpetrators accountable. Neither of the Abuja Accords referenced sexual violence or justice for the female victims; instead, all of the peace agreements were predicated on amnesty for the

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<sup>231</sup> Shana Swiss, “Violence Against Women During the Liberian Civil Conflict” in *Women’s Rights International* 279, no. 8: (1998).

<sup>232</sup> Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL), p. 15.

<sup>233</sup> Carol Thompson, “Beyond Civil Society: Child Soldiers as Citizens in Mozambique” in *Review of African Political Economy* 80: (1999), p. 191-206.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid*, p. 131-132.

<sup>235</sup> Isis-WICCE, p. 112-123.



warlords and appeasement through placing them in positions of power. The complicity of these men, particularly Charles Taylor, in promoting sexual crimes was undeniable: in 1993, a radio conversation between Taylor and his field commander was intercepted, during which Taylor gave explicit instructions regarding civilian women—“as for the women, rape them, to hell with them.”<sup>236</sup> Liberia’s domestic laws also prevented women from seeking justice: at that time, the Liberian penal code did not define rape as a crime—only gang rape was prosecutable under the law.<sup>237</sup> Because of the social stigma surrounding rape, women were also reluctant to seek medical or psychological assistance or to report the assault to the police.<sup>238</sup> Neither Liberia’s existing legal structure nor the transitional government made an effort to protect women from this sexual exploitation or to prosecute the perpetrators, whether leaders or fighters.

In summation, the existing penal code did not provide avenues for women to achieve justice after experiencing sexual violence. Further, the focus of negotiations was on achieving a ceasefire and conducting elections—leaving out many women’s issues, including acknowledgement of the violence they suffered or the creation of mechanisms through which these crimes could be adjudicated. Therefore, accountability for crimes against women following the war must be categorized as low.

#### 4. Participation of Women’s Organizations: HIGH

Unlike Rwanda, the Liberian conflict ended as a result of a lengthy negotiations process, which included numerous failed ceasefires and peace agreements. As such,

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<sup>236</sup> Emmanuel Kwesi Aning, “Women and Civil Conflict: Liberia and Sierra Leone” in *African Journal of International Affairs* 1, no. 2: (1998), p. 51

<sup>237</sup> IRIN, “Liberia: Rape in Liberia Still Goes Unpunished,” newspaper article (December 4, 2005), available at <<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=62311>>.

<sup>238</sup> Isis-WICCE, p. 114.

women's organizations were active both in the peace process and afterwards, in attempting to stabilize the country and maintain the fragile peace. Numerous organizations, at every level, were involved in these initiatives. Thus, this next section will examine the role of women both in the peace process and in the subsequent peacebuilding, making reference to relevant examples of the most influential organizations.

In the first years of the war, the number of women's organizations increased exponentially—they existed at all levels of society and their members included both educated, urban-based women and illiterate female farmers.<sup>239</sup> These groups coalesced in response to the chaos into which their country had descended: women began realized the extent to which they and their children were victimized for the power gains of selfish warlords and so they reacted. In this way, the war also forced many women to take on new roles, because the males they had previously depended on were killed or absent due to the conflict.<sup>240</sup> Women's organizations initially addressed the basic needs of the population—providing food, building shelters and offering psychological counseling. For example, women in SELF, the Special Emergency Life Food Programme, would befriend fighters—who viewed them as relatively harmless—in order to deliver emergency relief supplies to populations in occupied territories.<sup>241</sup> Groups such as the United Muslim Women's Education and Day Care Center provided education for children displaced by the conflict and homes for those who had been abandoned. The Feeding, Literacy and Recreation Project was also started by women; in 1992 alone, this organization provided

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<sup>239</sup> Mary Moran and Anne Pitcher, "The Basket Case and the Poster Child: Explaining the End of Civil Conflicts in Liberia and Mozambique" in *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 3: (2004), p. 503

<sup>240</sup> Liberian Women Peacemakers, p. 7.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

over 500 war-affected children with meals, trauma counseling and basic literacy programs.<sup>242</sup> Another incident in 1992 demonstrated women's unique role in providing support during conflict: ULIMO forces had blocked the main road from Gbarnga to Monrovia, causing acute food shortages and mass starvation in the capital. The Concerned Women's Organization (CWO) mobilized women traders in both cities, across faction lines, to gather food—then, risking their personal safety, they negotiated passage with both the NPLF and ULIMO forces. The women negotiated more than 50 checkpoints, but eventually arrived in Monrovia and provided food to the needy population.<sup>243</sup>

Women's organizations primary role in relief provision allowed them to develop contacts, and credibility, both regionally and internationally. Their success also prompted further efforts within civil society to support the Liberian population and push for peace. Women's groups began to organize sessions on conflict resolution and reconciliation. Starting in 1990 and continuing throughout the conflict, these sessions involved religious leaders and professions from different factions. One of the women involved with this initiative, Elizabeth Mulbah, recalls that on the first day the participants "did not want to speak to each other," but through the women's effective mediation, by the fifth day they were able to apologize, some even "were hugging and crying."<sup>244</sup> Efforts such as these facilitated the reconciliation process, even in the course of war, and began to build trust across previously divided communities. Women would also petition faction leaders directly, as female traders had extensive contact with these leaders and their combatants in the marketplace, to encourage them to enter into peace negotiations. Through this

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<sup>242</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

interaction, women's groups began to establish trust with faction leaders—which would allow them access to the warlords later in the movement.<sup>245</sup> Because these women's organizations acted voluntary, and generally with very limited resources, the women relied on their religious or professional affiliations, kinship ties and involvement in food distribution and marketing chains as leverage for their cause and to ensure that the needs of the population were met and the factions were aware of the impact the fighting was having on civilians.<sup>246</sup>

Aside from providing relief and facilitating reconciliation—efforts that extended and proliferated following the Abuja Accords—women's organizations were also involved in initiating the peace negotiations and petitioning for full disarmament. Because of their extensive involvement in this process, its full scope of participation cannot be covered, but a few of the women's organizations major contributions will be discussed as well as the general strategies they employed to pressure for peace. Starting in 1994, the Liberian Women's Initiative created a movement, rather than an organization, which strengthened the women's position: allowing them to collaborate with numerous sectors of the female population, gain credibility and focus their demands for disarmament and conflict resolution.<sup>247</sup> LWI employed various strategies, such as working with religious and civic groups to organize “stay-home” days during 1995 and 1996—these days paralyzed the capital, as market places, government offices and businesses were closed. In addition to demonstrating public support for negotiations, the success of these days also helped women to develop solidarity. Other tactics included picketing places such as the United State Embassy or the embassies of ECOWAS countries; the women used these protests,

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<sup>245</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>246</sup> Anderlini, p. 134-135.

<sup>247</sup> Liberian Women Peacemakers, p. 17.

in addition to letters and faxes, to voice their support for complete disarmament prior to creating a transitional government. However, their concerns were explicitly dismissed. After meeting with ECOWAS Chairman Jerry Rawlings, the President of Ghana, he told the women that immediate implementation of the transitional government was a necessary risk.<sup>248</sup>

In response, women's groups organized public demonstrations in March of 1994, when the transitional government was formally founded, and continued to protest throughout the year. These demonstrations and marches helped Liberian women to gain public support and legitimacy—the high turnout, across ethnic and religious lines, made it clear that the citizens of Liberia wanted peace and supported a full disarmament.<sup>249</sup> Together, women's organizations created the “Fund for Disarmament” to buy weapons from combatants and destroy them; however, ECOMOG opposed this program and halted its activity.<sup>250</sup> Despite their strong actions and valid concerns, complete disarmament was not achieved and the warlords were still placed in positions of power within the transitional government, rather than being punished. As Amos Sawyer, the first head of the interim government, reflected: “if disarmament had taken place back in 1994, as indeed it should have, we probably wouldn't have had April 6, 1996:” the day which war came to Monrovia, resulting in one of the most brutal episodes of the conflict.<sup>251</sup>

In terms of attending peace negotiations, individual women attended many of the first peace talks; however, this was a result of their personal access, such as political affiliations, and not so that they could lobby for peace on behalf of the civilian

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<sup>248</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>249</sup> Anderlini, 57.

<sup>250</sup> Liberian Women Peacemakers, p. 20.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20.

population. From 1991 until 1993, women’s organizations were not recognized by the United Nations or ECOWAS as participants or observers at the peace talks.<sup>252</sup> In 1994, women’s organizations first attempted to participate in official peace talks, employing the strategy of “corridor lobbying” by waiting in the hallways to talk to negotiators as they entered or exited the room on their breaks.<sup>253</sup> Although originally excluded from the conference, the women successfully attracted media attention to their cause—as a result, they received “official participant status” on the third day of negotiations.<sup>254</sup> For future meetings, the women began to create position statements regarding the conflict and its impact on women and their communities; however, the women’s organizations rarely had the funding to attend negotiations held outside Liberia.

As a result, only three women were sent to Abuja, Nigeria to participate in the 1995 talks. Although originally denied the opportunity to present their petition paper, President Rawlings eventually allowed the women to do so. This paper included details regarding the effects of the conflict and recommendations for creating an environment suitable for peace. The extensive news coverage of this presentation further solidified a precedent for women’s participation in peace negotiations. Despite this major achievement, women were still not invited to participate in a July 1995 meetings of leaders in Abuja.<sup>255</sup> Finally, in August 1996, women were extended a formal invitation to attend the Abuja talks—it was at this meeting that Ruth Perry was appointed interim head of the transitional government. Thus, women were active participants in achieving a working peace agreement at Abuja II and in ending the First Liberian Civil War. As shown through this

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<sup>252</sup> *Ibid*, p. 24.

<sup>253</sup> Anderlini, p. 63.

<sup>254</sup> *Liberian Women Peacemakers*, p. 24.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29.

discussion, the participation of women's organizations in both the peace process and in providing basic relief during and after the conflict was undoubtedly high. However, despite the achievements of this vibrant women's movement, the same advantages afforded to women by their gender—such as being perceived as neutral or less threatening—also caused them to be consistently marginalized in formal negotiations because of their femininity. Further, while women's extensive participation contributed to peace in the short-term, it was not enough to ensure that this peace would ultimately last.

### *iii. Peace Outcome: Failure*

Having explained the rankings for women's participation along the chosen four dimensions of the peacebuilding process, the peace outcome of Liberia's first civil war must now be analyzed. Although the Abuja Accords were signed and, to a degree, implemented—these conditions failed to prevent a relapse into violence. By holding elections prior to fully disarming and demobilizing the warring factions, the peace in Liberia proved particularly tenuous, despite the continued presence of ECOMOG to monitor the ceasefire and transition to a democratic state. In 1999, only two years after Charles Taylor was elected president, Liberia entered into a second civil war that would last until 2003.

Because women did participate in both the political and civil spheres, this peace failure is crucial for establishing the boundaries of their effect on sustainable peace. As mentioned previously, women's post-conflict participation was substantial relative to that both of women in Liberian history and of women in African peacebuilding operations more generally, so this case must be considered as a shift toward substantial participation.

However, women were clearly not incorporated to the fullest extent possible—demonstrated by the low rankings for the DDR process and accountability for sexual violence. Further, Charles Taylor proved a powerful spoiler in the conflict, indicating that women’s participation—including direct pressure on the spoiler—is not necessarily effective enough independently to maintain peace. The vibrancy of women’s organizations during this time did, however, provide a foundation for future women’s movements in civil society. Thus, this conflict is important both as the foundation for and a counterpoint to the later peace success, which was achieved with the help of many women’s groups existent at this time and despite Taylor’s continued presence as a spoiler.

#### *4. Liberia’s Second Civil War: 1999—2003*

##### *i. Conflict Background*

As per the Abuja Accords, elections were to be held in Liberia in 1997 to transition to a permanent government. However, this quick push toward elections—without full disarmament or stabilization of peace—essentially ensured that Charles Taylor would be the only viable candidate. Taylor’s advantages included his unlimited access to funds, amassed during the war, transportation and media; further, the majority of Liberian feared a return to violence if he lost.<sup>256</sup> Thus, in July 1997, Charles Taylor became president, having been elected with a mandate of over 70 percent. Based on this mandate, Taylor disregarded many of the conditions of the Abuja Accords and maintained his NPLF forces as part of the Liberian military. Further, in the aftermath of the conflict, Liberia’s

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<sup>256</sup> Moran and Pitcher, p. 506.



infrastructure was destroyed and millions were dead or displaced—creating conditions of instability that were not addressed by Taylor’s government.

Given the unstable conditions and dissatisfaction with Taylor’s presidency, a new rebel group—supported by the neighboring country of Guinea and composed mostly of Mandingo and Krahn fighters—formed with the express goal of forcing President Taylor out of office. This group, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), led by Sekou Conneh, began low-intensity attacks on the northwestern portion of Liberia in 1999. In response, the RUF—still loyal to Taylor—began to attack Guinea from Liberia and Sierra Leone. Thus, Liberia had become entangled in a three-way conflict with Sierra Leone and Guinea: both of these countries supported the LURD while Taylor supported opposition factions in both countries. Throughout 2002, LURD troops continued to advance through the country, engaging in “hit-and-run” raids and marching towards Monrovia. Soon after, a second rebel group—the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL)—emerged in the south, supported by the Ivorian government.

By the summer of 2003, the Liberian government controlled only a third of the country, with LURD controlling the northern third and continuing to threaten the capital, and MODEL controlling southern Liberia. The shelling of Monrovia and a resurgence of violence in March 2003 led to regional and international pressure for peace negotiations. In June 2003, ECOWAS convened a conference in Accra for ongoing peace talks. A month later, the United States established the Joint Task Force Liberia, positioning a navy amphibious group and marine unit aboard an American military ship off the coast of Liberia, applying further pressure to Taylor’s regime. Finally, in August 2003, President

Taylor resigned as part of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which negotiated an end to the war. Taylor was taken into exile in Nigeria, while his Vice-President Moses Blah replaced him. In response, the rebels lifted their siege of Monrovia and the nation began peacebuilding operations. To support demobilization efforts, the United Nations deployed the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNIMOL), composed of both military and civilian troops. On October 14, 2003, Moses Blah handed over power to the National Transition Government of Liberia, which functioned until the 2005 elections.

Despite a brief respite from the fighting, Liberians essentially endured fourteen years of prolonged conflict. Millions more were displaced in the second civil war, with thousands of civilians murdered or raped. The conflict also decimated Liberia's economy and infrastructure: in 2003, the country was ranked 174<sup>th</sup> out of 175 countries on the UN World Human Development Index, which measures health and living conditions— with 80 percent of Liberians living below the poverty line and unemployment rates over 90 percent.<sup>257</sup> Given these extreme conditions, women had an opportunity to play a prominent role in peacebuilding efforts across numerous dimensions. The specifics of this participation will be discussed below.

*ii. Women's Participation: Substantial*

**1. Women and the DDR Process: HIGH**

As previously mentioned, over the course of both Liberian conflicts, an estimated 25,000 to 30,000 women participated either as combatants or supporters of the armed

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<sup>257</sup> Adebajo, p. 236.

factions. However, few female participants were incorporated into the initial DDR process—and even more women took part in the second civil war. Thus, full disarmament and reintegration was considered paramount, particularly after the failure to do so in late 1990's, which included an emphasis on female combatants and supporters. Starting in 2003, Liberia undertook a comprehensive DDRR program—disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration—to ensure full compliance on the part of all parties and to provide necessary support to ex-combatants.

This DDRR program was jointly initiated and implemented: it included UNIMIL, the Government of Liberia (GOL), NGOs and other UN agencies. The first phase, disarmament and demobilization, ended in 2004 after 103,019 LURD, MODEL and GOL combatants had completed the program.<sup>258</sup> Following this success, the second phase—reinsertion and reintegration—was implemented and expanded to include the entire country. These initiatives included formal education, vocational training and social reintegration. In particular, social reintegration was facilitated by psycho-trauma counseling and human rights education. The entire DDRR program formally ended in October 2007, after the successful reintegration of 90,000 combatants.<sup>259</sup>

In comparison to the 250 adult female fighters involved in the initial DDR process (accounting for 3.2% of all participants), this program included 22,370 women who were disarmed and demobilized, account for 28% of all participants.<sup>260</sup> This percentage far more accurately reflects the number of females involved in the conflict; further, the majority of female combatants were incorporated into the process—a significant

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<sup>258</sup> Fodeba Daboh and Sahr Fatoma, “Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR): A Case Study of Liberia, Sierra Leone and South Sudan” in *New York Science Journal* 3, no. 6: (2010), p. 9.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

<sup>260</sup> Jaye, p. 7.

improvement brought about by “serious attempts to involve women in the process.”<sup>261</sup> Further, of the 10,972 children that were disarmed and demobilized, 2,740 of them were girls; again, these numbers indicate a substantial increase in participation on the part of girls and women in the DDRR program.<sup>262</sup> This increase was due in large part to the acknowledgement that many women and girls were involved with the fighting forces, either by compulsion or voluntarily—an acknowledgement that had been lacking during Liberia’s previous attempt at DDR. Following this realization, the DDRR program specifically altered its eligibility criteria to allow non-fighting groups that accompanied combatants—which were almost exclusively comprised of women and children—to participate and obtain the same DDR benefits as combatants.<sup>263</sup> As such, this Liberia disarmament process was one of the most inclusive ever undertaken.

Through their participation in the DDR program, thousands of women were given the opportunity to either gain a formal education, sponsored by the program, or to undergo skills training. During this second phase, women were also given a small monthly stipend and housed in training institutions, providing the support necessary for their transition back into the civilian population.<sup>264</sup> Although this program did incorporate a significant number of women, those who were excluded had difficulty self-demobilizing because of a lack of economic opportunities.<sup>265</sup> Also, a number of female combatants were manipulated by their commanders, being forced into sexual relationships in order to obtain access to the DDR program.<sup>266</sup> Overall, Liberia’s second DDRR program was not

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<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> Isis-WICCE, p. 43.

<sup>263</sup> Nelson Alusula, “Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) in Liberia: A Case Study” compiled for the Institute for Security Studies in South Africa, (2008), p. 23.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>265</sup> Isis-WICCE, p. 44.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43-44.

flawless—and did not fully consider the experiences of women both during the war and after; however, the large number of female combatants and the expansion of eligibility criteria specifically to include women and girls associated with fighting forces demonstrate that women’s participation in this dimension was high.

## 2. Women’s Political Participation: MODERATE

Despite entrenched norms regarding male superiority and indigenous practices that marginalized women’s positions in society, Liberia has paradoxically also placed women into highly visible positions of political power in the past decades. As discussed above, Ruth Perry was appointed as the interim head of the transitional government prior to the 1997 elections; further, women had served as senators, representatives and as government ministers—although in small numbers—for some time. Following the 2003 Accra Accords, women continued to make gains in the political sphere. Most notably, in 2005, Liberia made African history by electing the first female president on the continent. Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson was a Liberian political exile who had been a member of the Association for Constitutional Democracy in Liberia under Samuel Doe’s regime—she was jailed for a brief period time due to her participation in this activist organization.<sup>267</sup> After fleeing to the United States, Johnson-Sirleaf served as director of the UN Development Programme Regional Bureau for Africa. Although she was beaten by Taylor in the 1997 elections—being seen as out of touch with the Liberian population due to her time in the United States—Sirleaf-John was the most educated, qualified candidate to run in the 2003

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<sup>267</sup> Adebajo, p. 59.

elections, earning 59 percent of the vote.<sup>268</sup> Since taking office in January 2006, Sirleaf-Johnson has been committed to physical and emotionally rebuilding the country. In 2010, *Newsweek* listed her as one of the ten best leaders in the world and she has received several awards for her positive contributions to Liberia post-conflict.<sup>269</sup> Unlike Ruth Perry, President Sirleaf-Johnson has been able to exercise her executive powers without infringement; further, she has been influential in working towards peace across the African continent. Some of her most prominent achievements include lowering Liberia's external debt from 4.9 billion dollars in 2006 to 1.7 billion in 2010. Further, the state has increased school enrollment by 50 percent, begun to produce and export numerous resources and returned power and running water to its major urban centers.<sup>270</sup> Thus, the election of a woman to the country's highest position of power demonstrates significant progress for women in the political realm, building off the precedent set by Ruth Perry.

In addition to her other achievements, President Sirleaf-Johnson has professed a commitment to improving the situation for women and girls. During her time as president, she has nominated the first woman to serve as chief of the police force; additionally, she has appointed women to 22 percent of the positions of her Cabinet—including as ministers of Finance, Justice and Commerce.<sup>271</sup> Further, Liberia is one of nine countries worldwide to send a female ambassador to the United Nations. Despite these large gains, women are severely underrepresented in the legislature and at the local level of politics. In 2005, Liberia elected its highest number of women to the legislature—women currently hold 8 out of 64 seats in the House of Representatives

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<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>269</sup> Jason McLure, "The Rebuilder: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in *Newsweek* (August 16, 2010).

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> Fuest, p. 3.

(12.5%) and 5 out of 30 seats in the Senate.<sup>272</sup> While still demonstrating progress, these numbers more clearly reflect the difficulties women face in entering formal politics. As half the population, and prominent actors in civil society, Liberian women should have significantly more of a presence within the government. Within the past year, measures have been taken to address this oversight—in May 2010, a bill came before the Liberian legislature proposing a quota of at least thirty percent representation for women in national elected office and political parties. Further, the bill proposes the allocation of a special fund by the government to incentive parties to meet this requirement. Although clearly necessary, this bill, known as the Gender Equity in politics Act 2010, is still facing strong opposition from many male representatives, who claim it is “discriminatory and a violation of the Constitution.”<sup>273</sup>

Overall, women’s participation and representation in formal politics cannot be considered as high because of the lack of women in the legislature and in local politics. However, the special significance of having a woman serving in the country’s most powerful position must be acknowledged. Sirleaf-Johnson’s high visibility, along with her appointment of women to many crucial positions, represents true progress and offers hoping for increasing participation by women in this realm. Ultimately though, based on the mixed representation of women in different levels of politics, this case must be classified as moderate participation.

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<sup>272</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, “Liberia: The Legislature,” available online at <[http://www.ipu.org/parline/reports/2184\\_A.htm](http://www.ipu.org/parline/reports/2184_A.htm)>.

<sup>273</sup> Afrique Avenir, “Liberia’s Legislature Introduces Bill to Increase Women’s Political Participation,” (May 28, 2010). Available online at <<http://www.afriqueavenir.org/en/2010/05/28/liberia%E2%80%99s-legislature-introduces-bill-to-increase-women%E2%80%99s-participation-in-politics/>>.

### 3. Accountability for Gender Crimes: MODERATE

The extent of sexual violence against women as described during the first phase of the Liberian conflict continued into the second civil war—women were again frequently raped or abducted to serve as sexual slaves. The complete lack of accountability for these crimes allowed by the international community—in granting amnesty to the warlords—and by Liberia’s lack of legal redress for rape has been somewhat addressed in this second post-war period.

Unlike the Abuja negotiations, accountability for atrocities committed during the conflict was discussed extensively in Accra in 2003. Thus, the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement included the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Liberia’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission was launched in June 2006, with a mandate to investigate gross human rights violations—including sexual violations.<sup>274</sup> To ensure that gender-based violence was properly address, the Mandate of the TRC commission also included a requirement that four of the nine commissioners be women; it also makes reference to a policy of gender mainstreaming to ensure that women are “fully represented and staffed at all levels of the TRC” and that “special mechanisms are employed to handle women and children victims.”<sup>275</sup> Further, the Accra Accords included institutional reforms to ensure that perpetrators of the most serious crimes, including extensive sexual violence, would be excluded from participating in and benefiting from the DDR process.<sup>276</sup>

The TRC’s final report, issued in 2009, included a section dedicated to women and the conflict. This report cited the low socio-political status of women, with the cultural

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<sup>274</sup> Jaye, p. 7.

<sup>275</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia: Mandate, (2005).

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*



perception of male superiority as contributing to their vulnerability throughout the conflict.<sup>277</sup> As such, it made recommendations to address not only the violence women experienced during conflict, but also the root causes of that violence that continued in the aftermath. Recommendations included a commitment to education for girls, full economic development for women, and increased access to healthcare. Further, the TRC recommended that state provided reparations to the women who suffered sexual violence, including: receiving free medical services, trauma counseling, scholarships for the children of women whose husbands had been killed, and individual reparations on a case-by-case basis by all women who testified to the TRC.<sup>278</sup> Finally, the TRC called for the punishment of warlords and faction leaders who initiated, encouraged or participated in violence against women.<sup>279</sup> As the TRC released these recommendations less than two years ago, it remains to be seen whether they will be implemented and to what extent. However, it is significant that the particular burden suffered by women during, and after, the conflict was acknowledged and that the TRC called for justice and reparations for these women victims.

As the Liberian TRC lacked punitive powers, the state also modified its existing policy on rape: in 2005 the Liberian Rape Law was enacted. This law expanded the definition of rape beyond that of gang rape, raised the age of consent and imposed longer sentences for perpetrators.<sup>280</sup> In a monumental case later that year, the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL) successfully prosecuted the rapist of a 24-year-old teacher. This represented the first time in Liberian history that a woman had brought

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<sup>277</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "Final Report "Women and the Conflict," (2009), p. 81.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid*, p. 86.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid*, p. 91.

<sup>280</sup> Isis-WICCE, p. 115.

charges against her aggressor for rape and succeeded in prosecuting him.<sup>281</sup> Despite improvements in women's legal rights, incidences of rape continue at an alarming rate and many of the victims are under the age of eighteen.<sup>282</sup> As such, the Liberian Rape Law represents an important improvement but such legislation alone is not enough to hold accountable the perpetrators of this sexual violence either during the conflict or in current times.

Overall, Liberia has made significant strides towards accountability for sexual violence against women; however, despite the rhetoric and institutional reforms, the number of cases of sexual violence and of perpetrators brought to justice falls far short of the extent of this violence during the conflict. While the 2005 rape law allows women to bring charges under Liberian domestic law, few women are able to exercise this legal right due to existing social stigma or a lack of knowledge about their rights. The Liberian government has widely disseminated a simplified version of this law, but knowledge among women is still quite low.<sup>283</sup> In sum, while Liberia's capacity to respond to gender-based violence is slowly improving, these initiatives have not meaningfully increased female victims' abilities to seek justice within the judicial system. Therefore, the level of accountability for sexual violence against women can be categorized as moderate, representing an improvement from the past but not the fulfillment of the state's obligation to these women.

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<sup>281</sup> Liberian Women Peacemakers, p. 43.

<sup>282</sup> Isis-WICCE, p. 114.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

#### 4. Participation of Women's Organizations: HIGH

During the First Liberian Civil War, women's organizations gained significant experience in mobilizing for peace and in providing services to support those peace efforts. After the return to conflict in 1999, these women's organizations continued their movement for lasting stability; as before, these groups functioned at all levels of society with a variety of specific goals. Thus, the following section will provide an overview of women's activity in civil society, making reference to particularly relevant examples.

Following Charles Taylor's election, sporadic fighting occurred in 1997 and 1998, followed by sustained conflict between the government and the rebel factions in 1999. It should be noted that this continuation of violence was only possible because full disarmament had not been achieved, a condition Liberian women had demanded prior to installing a transitional government. Throughout this period, women's organizations continued to build on their momentum in civil society—working toward a sustainable peace. In addition to existing domestic efforts, Liberian women also began to form regional and international alliances, increasing both their resources and their leverage. For example, the Mano River Union Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET) was founded in May 2000: this organization included women from Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone committed to a culture of peace.<sup>284</sup> While MARWOPNET has undertaken a wide variety of activities—including holding peace talks with women refugees in camps through the three countries and advising ECOWAS concerning the effects of conflict on civilians—their most significant contribution to attaining peace was their success in convincing the leaders of their three countries to meet for regional peace talks. Having recognized that the conflict had crossed borders, Liberian women met with President

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<sup>284</sup> Liberian Women Peacemakers, p. 44.

Taylor to present their arguments for negotiations. Following this meeting, Charles Taylor agreed to recall the ambassadors of Sierra Leone and Guinea, whom he had expelled; further, the three leaders met in Morocco in March 2002—although those talks did not solving their continuing disagreements.<sup>285</sup>

In response to the Liberian government's failure to halt the fighting, women's organizations again began to publicly demonstrate for peace, gaining media attention and support for their cause. In particular, the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET)—created in 2002—was integral increasing public pressure on Taylor's government to enter into negotiations. Soon after its creation, WIPNET coordinated an alliance between the Liberian Muslim Women for Peace and the Christian Women's Peace Initiative, the two most active women's groups.<sup>286</sup> This alliance resulted in strong position statement condemning the war and demanding an immediate ceasefire; to present this statement to President Taylor, the women organized a rally on April 11, 2003.<sup>287</sup> Although the WIPNET women sent Taylor five different letters, the President did not attend the rally—in which over two thousand Liberian women participated. Because of this lack of response, the women began a non-violent sit-in protest in an unused airfield clear to the center of Monrovia, which President Taylor passed by each day; they pledged to remain there until Taylor agreed to their terms of peace.<sup>288</sup> A few days later, over 2,500 Liberian women organized themselves for a sit-in at the Liberian Parliament. This mass action on the part of women resulted in President Taylor's agreement to meet with the women at

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<sup>285</sup> *Ibid*, p. 45-46.

<sup>286</sup> Isis-WICCE, *Nurturers of Peace, Sustainers of Africa: African Women's Unique Peace Initiatives*, (Uganda: Isis-WICCE, 2005), p. 57.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58-59.

his Executive Mansion on April 23, 2003.<sup>289</sup> On that day, over four thousand Liberian women met with Taylor to describe the desperate situation of their fellow citizens and to demand his leadership in achieving peace. As a direct result, President Taylor agreed to meet with the rebel groups in exchange for the women moving off the airfield.<sup>290</sup>

For the peace talks in Accra, the women of WIPNET carried out lobbying activity to maintain pressure on the process—such as marching on the United States Embassy and the UN Offices to demand their intervention and contributing updates to the media.<sup>291</sup>

WIPNET women also continued to maintain a constant presence at the airfield. Inside the negotiation hall, the Liberian women of MARWOPNET formally participated in the peace talks, putting forth declarations and appealing to the international community to intervene with a peacekeeping force.<sup>292</sup> In part because of their appeals, international pressure was increased—particularly by the United States as it placed naval ships off the coast of Liberia—and President Taylor signed a ceasefire with LURD and MODEL in June 2003. Because of their critical role in the mediations that follow, MARWOPNET was included as one of the signatory witnesses to the final peace agreement on August 18<sup>th</sup>.<sup>293</sup> In addition, MARWOPNET received the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights both for their “initiatives to restore peace and to ensure that women’s voices are included at all levels of the decision-making process” and for their success in “bringing the heads of states of their countries to the negotiating table in 2001 and as a delegate, mediator and signatory to the Liberian peace talks.”<sup>294</sup> Thus, women’s

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<sup>289</sup> *Ibid*, p. 59

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid*, p. 60.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid*, p. 60.

<sup>292</sup> Liberian Women Peacemakers, p. 49.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

<sup>294</sup> Announcement of the awardees of the 2003 UN Prize in the Field of Human Rights, United Nations, NY, December 2, 2003.

organizations were critical to the initiation of the negotiations and in ultimately achieving a lasting peace agreement, due in large part to their ability to sustain mass action with diverse groups of women that transcended differences of religion, ethnicity and class.

Once peace had been achieved in 2003, women’s organizations continued to play a prominent role in reconciliation and reconstruction activities, both of which were necessary to ensure the success of this tenuous peace. For example, the LWI began a peace seminar, with women representatives traveling to various villages to speak with the people, especially women, about how to reconcile and work together.<sup>295</sup> Further, because the country’s economy had been destroyed, many women’s groups responded by incorporating communal economic development projects—such as building new schools or constructing a community drainage system—into their work.<sup>296</sup> In doing so, they provided the much-needed social services that the state was unable to offer, especially in rural areas. Women’s also organizations provided support to vulnerable sectors of the population—particularly victimized women and children—through means such as finding them living space or offering psychological counseling. Finally, under WIPNET’s oversight, Liberian women also began the “*Never Again*” campaign—a watchful movement dedicated to promoting good governance and eliminating corruption, which were major underlying causes of the conflict—that still continues in Liberia today.<sup>297</sup> Overall, these women’s groups significantly contributed to fostering reconciliation and rebuilding the country following the second civil war. Because of their strong involvement in both achieving a working peace agreement and in the resultant

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<sup>295</sup> Liberian Women Peacemakers, p. 42.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*, p. 42.

<sup>297</sup> Isis-WICCE (2005), p. 65.

peacebuilding activities, the participation of women's organizations for this case study is demonstrably high.

### *iii. Peace Outcome: Success*

Despite the terrible devastation brought on by two subsequent wars, Liberia has remained stable throughout the past decade and shows signs of significant progress. The persisting peace allowed for democratic elections—widely regarded as free and fair—to be held, which brought President Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson to power. Following the implementation of a democratically-elected government, many businesses that had fled the country returned to Liberia.<sup>298</sup> Although the country is still struggling economy, its GDP has increased between 6-8 percent annually over the past few years.<sup>299</sup> Also, while only 15 percent of the adult population is employed in the formal sector, the employment rates continues to drop—the government is currently working to increase jobs and revitalize the economy. Further, many Liberians have found work in either agriculture or the informal sector.<sup>300</sup> In 2010, Liberia achieved its Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative completion point; thus, over 5 billion dollars in international debt was permanently eliminated.<sup>301</sup>

Since 2003, Liberia has also risen eight ranks on the UNDP Human Development Index, currently ranked 162<sup>nd</sup> out of 175 countries.<sup>302</sup> Improvements in health have contributed to a rise in life expectancy, which is now 57 years, and the country continues

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<sup>298</sup> CIA Factbook (2010): Liberia.

<sup>299</sup> World Development Index (2010): Liberia.

<sup>300</sup> Isis-WICCE, p. 67.

<sup>301</sup> CIA Factbook.

<sup>302</sup> UNDP, Human Development Index: 2010 Rankings.

to rebuild infrastructure and its public health system. While progress has been gradual, the continuation of peace has allowed Liberia to make consistent progress and to better the lives of its citizens. In their 2010 annual report, Freedom House also noted that the media environment was considerably more open than under Charles Taylor and that the government does not restrict academic or religious freedom.<sup>303</sup> Within the next year, Liberia is expected to again hold successful democratic elections, demonstrating the country's ability to transfer power through non-violent means. Ultimately, Liberia still faces considerable challenges in rebuilding its physical and economic infrastructure, and overcoming the psychological trauma of fourteen years of conflict; however, it has remained peaceable despite instability in the region and the lingering presence of potential spoilers. Again, while the substantial participation of women—particularly in civil society—cannot be regarded as solely responsible for this successful outcome, the above discussion has demonstrated numerous direct contributions made by women in achieving and sustaining this peace. The following discussion will elaborate further on the findings of the case studies and the conclusions that can be reasonably drawn regarding women's participation in peacebuilding.

## **VI. Discussion**

Having presented the previous case studies, it is necessary to consider the extent to which women's participation can be said to contribute to a successful peace outcome. As shown in the case studies, women can and do participate along various dimensions both in reaching peace agreements and in maintaining the peace thereafter—and this

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<sup>303</sup> Freedom House 2010 Reports: Liberia.



involvement can increase the likelihood that peace will last through a variety of mechanisms. However, it is vital not to overstate women's contributions to peace or to misconstrue their involvement as making *the* difference. While it is difficult to quantify this contribution, women's role in achieving peace can be qualified and contextualized—identifying the areas in which they play a more substantial role and dimensions in which they need to be further incorporated.

Considering the previous case studies, it is clear that women often play a crucial role in civil society—due in part to their frequent marginalization from more formal spheres. In both cases of successful peace outcomes, the participation of women's organizations in civil society was high; however, women's groups also played a substantial role during the first Liberian conflict, which resulted in a peace failure. Taken together, this indicates that high women's participation is a necessary, not but sufficient, condition for their having a marked impact on the peace process. The participation of women in civil society is a general indicator that women see themselves as stakeholders in the conflict and have taken a proactive role—thus, creating grassroots initiatives and pressure for peace from the bottom-up. Further, participation in this realm provides women with organizing experience, networking opportunities and a sense of empowerment, all of which are necessary for achieving enough leverage to have a noticeable impact at the national level in peacebuilding. However, the first Liberian conflict demonstrates that the existence of numerous women's organizations committed to and mobilizing for peace is not enough in itself to ensure a successful peace outcome. This is due in part to the complexity of achieving peace, and the numerous actors necessarily involved; however, it also indicates that for women to have a significant

impact on the peace process, they may need high participation along many dimensions—a condition that was lacking in the first Liberia case. However, this participation was still vital as a foundation for later women’s movements in civil society, which capitalized on this momentum and also created wider networks—both domestically and regionally—to further their push for peace.

In both success cases, the synergy between high women’s participation in civil society and influential women in the formal government was also evident. Although both Liberia cases had moderate political representation for women, the second case was further along the spectrum of this representation—especially due to the number of highly visible women in positions of power, particularly President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. An involvement at such high levels of governments—or in such high numbers, as in the case of Rwanda’s majority-female parliament—ensures that women’s needs will be taken more into consideration, thus allowing the demands put forth by women in civil society to more frequently be incorporated. This was evident in the enactment of the Liberian Rape Law in 2005, which was due in large part to pressure from women in civil society and their work in making visible the widespread sexual violence faced by women. Another telling example was seen in post-genocide Rwanda: customary law prohibited women from inheriting land from their male relatives, contributing to a high degree of instability in the aftermath due to the large number of widowed women who were thus rendered homeless and without the economic means to support their family. Realizing this, several women’s organizations lobbied for a revision in this discriminatory law. Members of the women’s caucus heard and responded to these demands, working to revoke this law soon

after.<sup>304</sup> Efforts such as these demonstrate the reinforcing effects of having women active in all parts of society: women at the local level can realize the critical needs of the population and communicate these to women with the political power to enact change at the policy level. In this instance, the new inheritance law was crucial in Rwanda's long-term reconstruction as it provided the many female-headed households with a stable home and land on which to subsistence farm for their family.

This synergy can also work to increase the number of women in power; for example, Liberian women's groups contributed to President Sirleaf-Johnson's election through voter registration drives and encouraging women to participate in the election. Also, the current push from women in Liberian civil society for the implementation of a gender quota for the government clearly demonstrates the ways in which public pressure can potentially impact the representation of women in government. Further, the visibility of prominent women's groups—which give voice to the women and children victims of the conflict—can create a greater awareness of the need for gender mainstreaming at all levels, prompting governments to create ministries devoted to gender and women's issues, as seen in the Rwanda case. This inclusion allows for a more representative view of the needs of the society, particularly those of vulnerable groups, and so creates a more responsive, inclusive government—a key foundation for building democracy. Thus, based on the case studies, a strong argument can be made for the mutual importance of high levels of women's participation in civil society and in government—increasing the visibility of women's issues and reinforcing the impact of their efforts for peacebuilding.

Outside of women's participation in formal government and civil society, the importance of a high degree of accountability for crimes against women post-conflict is

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<sup>304</sup> Anderlini, p. 140.

more difficult to determine. In both success cases, there was a rhetoric of accountability as well as a limited number of efforts to achieve this. However, given the scope of violence, particularly sexual violence, against women during the conflict—neither of these cases demonstrated more than a moderate level of accountability in practice. Thus, post-conflict accountability to women does not appear to be a critical component of women’s substantial contribution to peace. While there are numerous plausible avenues by which this may contribute to peace outcomes, most notably by providing closure for the thousands of victimized women and contributing to the country’s psychological and social healing, this dimension does not measure a way in which women can *directly* impact either peace negotiations or the following reconstruction. Still, the greater attention paid to violence against women in the second Rwanda and Liberia indicate that an increase in awareness and efforts for justice may serve as a signifier of more widespread acknowledgement of the drastic effects of civil war on women and larger efforts to address these needs in the aftermath. Although this dimension may not be as critical to ensuring that women’s participation is substantial enough to impact the peace process, it is equally as important in terms of moral justice. The extent of violence, mostly sexual, against women perpetrated during civil wars requires an equally consequential response—providing female victims with the opportunity for justice, the necessary access to public health and psycho-social support for the traumas they have endured. Such steps towards accountability can also highlight harmful norms of male dominance within societies and represent a positive step toward eliminating the underlying patriarchal ideology used to rationalize and sustain widespread violence against women.

The four cases studies above also demonstrate that the necessity of high levels of women's participation along a certain dimension may vary depending on the conflict. This was shown most clearly in the involvement of women in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. In both Rwanda cases, the involvement of women in the formal fighting forces was low, although regular women did participate in or facilitate the genocidal killings that occurred. However, compared to the substantial number of female combatants and women associated with the fighting forces in each of the Liberian conflicts, both the low and the moderate levels of women's involvement in the Rwandan cases is less relevant to the overall contributions made by women. In the case of Liberia, the shift from moderate to high participation in the 2003 DDR programs is far more indicative of a changing attitude regarding women's participation in the conflict and the necessity of involving the significant number of female combatants to ensure that full disarmament occurred and a relapse into violence was thus difficult in comparison to the incomplete demobilization that occurred in 1996. Because the calculation to include women in such programs is inevitably correlated with the number of women participating in the conflict, high levels of involvement are not necessary for every conflict. However, the creation of a DDR program responsive to the needs of female ex-combatants—even when their levels of participation were low—can also signify a broader commitment to gender mainstreaming, as in the case of Rwanda following the genocide. Thus, the findings concerning this dimension demonstrate that high levels of women's participation may not be equally important across all aspects of the peacebuilding process, as was also found in terms of accountability for violence against women. Regardless, attentiveness to these areas can indicate a society in which

women's influence is substantial enough to ensure their needs are addressed at all levels, even when these could easily be disregarded.

A final element affecting all case studies must also be mentioned—the changing international norms surrounding women's participation in both civil war and in peace. These case studies have been presented in chronological order with regard to when a potential peace was first achieved—from 1990 in Rwanda's civil war to 2003 in Liberia's second conflict. During this time, significant international legislative frameworks were undertaken to assist women in their pursuit of equality. These include the UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000), discussed above, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), and the Southern African Development Community Declaration on Women and Development (1997).<sup>305</sup> All of these indicate an increasing commitment to gender mainstreaming within the international community and a wider recognition of the impact of conflict on women and children. Further, Resolution 1325 affirmed the positive role that women can play in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. Thus, there appears to be a positive trend in international ideology—as well as indicated in the case studies above—that women's multi-faceted roles as both the sufferers of conflict and as potential rebuilders is being acknowledged in rhetoric and, increasingly, in practice.

Overall, the four cases studies above measured women's participation across four dimensions of peacebuilding. However, in reality, this participation spans multiple dimensions that are likely mutually reinforcing. Therefore, women's potential contributions should not be reduced to those discussed above, although the case studies

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<sup>305</sup> Heidi Hudson, "Gender and Peacebuilding and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa" in *The State of Africa: Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development*, eds. Dirk Kotze and Hussein Solomon (South Africa: Africa Institution of South Africa, 2008), p. 23.

indicate that substantial participation on the part of women—particularly high levels of women’s involvement in both civil society and in formal government—contributes positively to peace efforts. It is important to not overstatement this claim: process of achieving sustainable peace is complex and context-dependant; further, it involves a variety of actors including important political and military leaders, elements of civil society and international actors. Thus, this paper does not argue that women’s participation should be considered as the crucial element in successful peacebuilding, but that to understate their contributions is also taking a position—one detrimental to the attainment of peace. Women are equally as capable of constructive participation in peace negotiations and in the following reconstruction process as men, and so their continued marginalization denies peacebuilders fifty percent of their potential resources for problem solving and for creating change at every level. Thus, without essentializing women’s participation as *the* deciding variable, this paper concludes that women’s participation does have a positive impact on achieving lasting peace, and that the more substantial the women’s participation—particularly in civil society groups and in the formal government—the greater the potential for their contributions.

## **VII. Conclusion**

The proliferation of intrastate conflict following the end of the Cold War has greatly altered the impacts of war on women—increasingly, it is civilian women who suffer the most both in terms of violence and loss of livelihood due to these conflicts. Further, although women are rarely the ones instigating such violence, they often shoulder a disproportionate amount of responsibility in the aftermath without a

concurrent increase in their power within society. There are a number of reasons why women continue to be under-represented in decision-making positions, including patriarchal practices, high levels of illiteracy and unequal work burdens. However, the case studies above have demonstrated that substantial participation on the part of women—along various dimensions of the peacebuilding process—can positively contribute to both achieving and sustaining peace. In addition, increased involvement on the part of women ensures a greater awareness and responsiveness to their particular needs post-conflict—a necessary condition for rebuilding a stable state, as women constitute half the population and are often responsible for the care of numerous family members.

The findings of this paper suggest that every attempt should be made to encourage women's participation in the peacebuilding process, particularly within civil society and the formal government. While this can be accomplished through a variety of means and requires a commitment to gender mainstreaming on all levels, it is particularly important to address the structural problems that exclude women from the negotiations realm. In particular, peace negotiators are generally political and military leaders, positions that women are unable to obtain. Thus, creating mechanisms to ensure women's political participation—such as instituting gender quotas—is a positive step toward equality both in government and at the negotiations table. Further, women frequently assert their peacebuilding power by creating structures outside of the political realm, such as NGOs, or by lobbying leaders for their voices to be heard. The international community should support such women's initiatives, both logistically and financially, to ensure that women are able to fully exercise their power within civil society. Finally, the international



community should also ensure that all peace agreements are attentive to the particular needs of women and that opportunities for their involvement continue throughout the peacebuilding process. Although not an extensive list, the implementation of these recommendations in future conflict situations would provide a solid foundation for guaranteeing women's equal participation.

Overall, this paper has demonstrated that substantial participation on the part of women, while hard to quantify, has a positive impact on the creation and sustainability of peace in post-conflict societies. In particular, the efforts of women in government and civil society can have a synergistic effect, amplifying their efforts and substantially increasing their effectiveness as peacebuilders. Ultimately, women's significant participation should not be seen as making the difference in achieving peace; however, this involvement does make a difference and every effort should be made to ensure that their significant capabilities are channeled toward peace and that the society created post-conflict is both equitable and accountable to women for the losses they have suffered in the course of war. The inclusion and empowerment of women, thus, should not be viewed as idealism but as a pragmatic and effective step toward increasing the probability of a successful peace outcome in the aftermath of violent conflict.

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