

Women, Political Decision-Making, and Peace-Building

ELISABETH PORTER*

(Southern Cross University)

Women generally are excluded from political decision-making processes. This article describes UN attempts to establish more inclusive practices through the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). As shown by the Beijing + 5 Review, progress for women is limited. Cultural stereotypes justify women's exclusion from negotiating tables. Thus the groundbreaking UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on 'Women, Peace and Security' is highly significant. Despite the fact that limitations to its implementation remain, women outside the UN play dynamic roles in peace-building in civil society. Consequently, they expand the parameters of peace-building unconventionally to include all processes that foster peace.

Impact of the Beijing Platform for Action

Women generally have been excluded from political decision-making processes. The need to address this exclusion was a critical concern of the Fourth Women's World Conference in Beijing (1995). The Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) that emerged from this conference was adopted by representatives from 181 member nations, but with 40 countries announcing reservations.¹ The Platform identifies 12 'critical areas of concern' considered to represent the major obstacles to women's advancement—poverty, education and training, health, violence, the economy, human resources, media, the environment, the girl-child, institutional mechanisms, armed conflict, and power and decision-making. The PFA also identifies strategic objectives to be taken at national, international, NGO, and private sector levels in order to remove obstacles to women's advancement. My focus in this article is on the PFA Strategic Objectives that aim to increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels.² The PFA represents a strong statement of international commit-

* Elisabeth Porter, School of Social Sciences, Southern Cross University, PO Box 157, Lismore, New South Wales 2480, Australia. Fax: + 61-2-662-24171. Email: <eporter@scu.edu.au>. A research grant from Southern Cross University made this research possible. I am extremely grateful for the thorough and thoughtful research assistance of Phil Clark who played a crucial role in collecting some of the information and offering useful reflective suggestions. I also appreciate the detailed comments of the two anonymous referees, who provided many helpful suggestions.

1 Susan McKay and Deborah Winter, 'The United Nations' Platform for Action: Critique and Implications', *Peace and Conflict*, 4,2 (1998), p. 167. For an exploration of conflicting discourses on gender see Sally Baden and Anne Marie Goetz, 'Who Needs [Sex] When You Can Have [Gender]? Conflicting Discourse at Beijing', *Feminist Review*, 56 (1997), pp. 3–25. Laura Reanda places the Beijing Conference into the broader agenda of gender mainstreaming in 'Engendering the United Nations. The Changing International Agenda', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 6 (1999), pp. 49–68. For a general overview of the Beijing PFA see Barbara Roberts, 'The Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women', *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 21,2 (1996), pp. 237–244.

2 This includes the PFA Strategic Objective E.3, to 'promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution', and Objective E.4, to 'promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace'. I also examine Strategic Objective G.1, to 'take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making', and Objective G.2, to 'increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership'. See UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), 'FWCW Platform for Action, Women

ment to the goals of gender equality, development and peace, and the full realization of rights and freedom for women. I intend to assess the strength of this commitment.

First, it is useful to clarify some key terms I use in this article. The United Nations understands gender equality as 'a goal to ensure equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, and girls and boys'.³ The strategy to achieve gender equality is gender mainstreaming, which entails 'bringing the perceptions, experiences, knowledge and interests of women and men to bear on policy-making, planning and decision-making'.⁴ This paper is not a gender analysis of peace processes, but a demonstration of women's active role in peace-building and an argument for the inclusion of women in all stages of peace processes. I intend to illustrate how peace-building is a process that needs to be built at pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict stages. Peace processes consist of both informal and formal activities. Women are conspicuous in informal peace protests, inter-group dialogue, the promotion of intercultural tolerance, and the empowerment of citizens. However, they are overwhelmingly absent in formal peace processes as defined by the United Nations to include 'early warning, preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace-building and global disarmament' involving activities like 'conflict resolution, peace negotiations, reconciliation, reconstruction of infrastructure and the provision of humanitarian aid'.⁵ My argument is that women who are already involved in informal peace processes need to be included in formal peace processes in order to establish meaningful gender equality and peace. My argument also is that many women's understandings of peace-building are far broader and more holistic than UN or conventional usages.

Undoubtedly, the impact of the PFA was significant in prompting positive responses to the goal of improving gender equality. A 'Questionnaire on the Implementation of the Beijing PFA' (A/52/231) asked member nations for examples of successful policies and projects in the critical areas of concern, obstacles encountered, lessons learnt, and commitment to further action.⁶ A more than 80 per cent response rate seems to indicate at least a recognition of the need for a global commitment to gender equality. However, rhetoric by no means ensures commitment or implementation. National Action Plans indicate affirmative proposals in decision-making, gender mainstreaming, and capacity-building training that, if activated, would increase women's political involvement. A close examination of the replies from Croatia, Cyprus, Liberia, and Nigeria indicates that some countries have constructive responses to addressing both the impact of armed conflict on women and increasing the political participation of women. However, formal replies often have no basis

Footnote Continued

- and Armed Conflict' and 'FWCW Platform for Action, Women in Power and Decision-Making' (2000), < www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/armed.htm > and < www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm >, accessed on 14 August 2000. For a review of the PFA with regard to women and armed conflict, see Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, 'Women, Peace and Security. A Preliminary Audit. From Beijing PFA to Security Council Resolution 1325 and Beyond. Achievements and Emerging Challenges', *International Alert* (2000), < www.international-alert.org/pdf/backgrnd.pdf >, accessed on 1 February 2001.
- 3 United Nations, *Women, Peace and Security. Study Submitted by the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1325* (New York: United Nations, 2002), p. 4.
 - 4 United Nations, *Women, Peace and Security*, p. 4.
 - 5 United Nations, *Women, Peace and Security*, p. 53.
 - 6 See DAW, 'Implementation of the Beijing PFA and Compliance with International Legal Instruments' (2000), < www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/country/ >, accessed on 24 January 2001. As of 19 December 2000, there were 150 replies to the questionnaires and 120 National Action Plans submitted. An Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, chaired by a Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and supported by DAW, coordinated the implementation. See DAW, 'Replies to Questionnaire on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (A/52/231)' (2001), < www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/countrylist.htm >, accessed on 8 February 2001. Countries' responses to the PFA repeatedly refer to the impossibility of considering gender matters during war when governments do not view it as a priority because other issues seem more pressing.

in reality. Other replies from countries such as Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, and Tanzania are vague about armed conflict but positive in their intention to increase women's political participation. Some countries ignore the issue of armed conflict (Mali, Palestine, Russian Federation, South Africa, Uganda) while others have made practical suggestions to improve women's chances of participating in political decision-making (Mali, South Africa, Uganda). Some replies are very comprehensive (Croatia, Cyprus, South Africa); others are very brief (India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Russian Federation). Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, and Yugoslavia did not submit replies.

No tidy summaries can be offered. Moreover, by virtue of the reports being by governments, responses given probably are not a true indication of action taken. Few conclusions can be drawn except that the absence of women in public decision-making is overwhelming.⁷ This article describes UN attempts to establish more inclusive practices through the PFA, the Beijing + 5 Review, and Security Council Resolution 1325 and delineates limitations of these measures. Later in the article, I posit a contrasting case provided by the dynamic role played by women as peace-builders in civil society. Further recognition of these roles by the UN, NGOs, and governments could assist the passage of women's inclusion in decision-making in conflict regions. It might also influence a change in understandings of peace-building to encompass all processes that build peace. My argument is not to make peace-building so nebulous that it is impossible to define, but rather to demonstrate how it encompasses formal and informal processes at pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict stages.

Beijing + 5 Review

Did the Beijing + 5 Review held in 2000 give reason to be hopeful about progress? The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) submitted an 'Outcomes Document' with 188 countries as signatories.⁸ The document is a review of agreements, further actions, and initiatives needed. The CSW's appraisal acknowledges the growth in civil war, armed conflict, and terrorism, with a concomitant abuse of the human rights of women and girls by state and non-state actors. The changing nature of conflict means that most wars are fought internally, often rooted in unresolved historical bitterness relating to ethnic conflict or disputes over diamonds, drugs, or minerals. The protagonists are not necessarily soldiers, but 'political ideologues, warlords, drug dealers, state actors, disenfranchised youth and young children. Mercenaries and private armies fight alongside or against rebel units, militias and often badly equipped national armies.'⁹

Given the nature of armed conflict, the 'Outcomes Document' also recognizes major obstacles in the relative absence of women from decision-making positions at all stages of peace processes—the pre-conflict stage, during hostilities, and in peacekeeping, peace-

7 Admittedly, NGO shadow reports that come out after government reports presented to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) give a more realistic picture. I have not referred to them in depth.

8 The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was mandated to monitor the implementation of the PFA and to advise the Economic and Social Council on its findings. See CSW, 'Agreed Conclusions on the Critical Areas of Concern of the PFA, 1996–1999', (New York: United Nations, 2000). Also, see UN General Assembly, 'Report of the CSW acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly Entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the C21: Proposed Outcomes Document". A/S-23/2/Add.2 Parts I–IV 2 June 2000 for the summary of the implementation of the PFA.

9 Anderlini, 'Women, Peace and Security', p. 8.

building, reconciliation, and reconstruction.¹⁰ It also notes that there are few women ministers of defence or foreign affairs or heading delegations to the Security Council. Significant barriers to women's inclusion are stereotypical attitudes, men's reluctance to share power, competing work and family responsibilities, and inadequate education and training. Consequently, 'the actual participation of women at the highest levels of national and international decision-making has not significantly changed' since 1995.¹¹ The gross under-representation of women hinders the inclusion of a meaningful gender perspective into peace and security decisions, for reasons elaborated in the next section. The lack of implementation of the PFA reflects both weak international machineries to promote implementation and the lack of political will.

Non-governmental organization caucuses highlight unaddressed concerns like the vetoing of peacekeepers and civilians in peace support operations, the need for tolerance education and training in conflict resolution, and the lack of progress on arms reduction or an explicit commitment to protect internally displaced people. Non-governmental organizations were disappointed that the 'Outcomes Document' fails to include concrete numerical goals, concrete benchmarks, or a specific timeframe for implementing goals and that even the target date of 2005 for the elimination of all discriminatory laws was contested.¹² A significant weakening in the Beijing + 5 Review is that commitments relating to women and armed conflict are largely under 'actions to be taken at the International level'.¹³ Consequently, governments' accountability diminishes. The paucity of political commitment is disturbing because it leaves a heavy responsibility on women's civil organizations, which, while buoyant, often lack the access to power to make key decisions and are desperately under-resourced.

Women's Absence from Negotiating Tables

As I elaborate shortly, women are active in community peace-building. However, they are almost completely absent from political negotiating tables. The exclusions from peace tables are notable.¹⁴ There were no Bosnian women in the negotiating teams in Dayton in 1995 despite the international community being aware of the extent of trauma suffered by women and the responsibilities they would shoulder during reconstruction.¹⁵ In 1996 the Sierra Leone peace accord addressed power sharing but overlooked the rights and interests of women. The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition gained sufficient votes in 1996 to have two women elected to multi-party peace negotiations on the future of Northern Ireland. In 1999 there was only one Kosova woman at the Rambouillet negotiations. In Tajikistan there was one woman on a 26-person National Reconciliation Commission. This is despite the fact that the war there left 25,000 widows to raise families and reconstruct communities. At the Arusha peace talks on Burundi, Concilie Nibigiri was the only woman present. The women's collective, comprising thirty organizations, negotiated the presence of six women

10 Later, I give evidence that women are present in peace processes, particularly as peace-builders, understood more broadly than the UN parameters that position peace-building as part of formal peace processes. See UN, *Women, Peace and Security*, pp. 58–66.

11 CSW, 'Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing PFA', ECOSOC, E/CN.6/2000/PC/2 (2000), < www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/ecn6-2000-pc2.pdf >, accessed on 1 February 2001.

12 See Anderlini, 'Women, Peace and Security', p. 34.

13 Anderlini, 'Women, Peace and Security', p. 34.

14 Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, *Women at the Peace Table. Making a Difference* (New York: UNIFEM, 2000), pp. 9, 29. See also Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, Rita Manchanda, and Shereen Karmali, *Women, Violent Conflict and Peace-Building: Global Perspectives. International Conference, London, May 1999* (London: International Alert, 2000), p. 12, and Anderlini, 'Women, Peace and Security', p. 13.

15 There was one woman represented in the signatories. See Kvinna till Kvinna, *Engendering the Peace Process: A Gender Approach to Dayton—and Beyond* (Stockholm: Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, 2000), p. 20.

with observer status at the next round. The Liberian Women's Initiative attended regional peace talks, and, while not official participants at the peace table, were influential monitors. In Colombia, the single woman in the government delegation was removed from the talks after unfavourable media reports. The Consultative Council of Timorese Resistance had two women representatives out of 15. In December 2001, there were three Afghani women out of 36 delegates to the Bonn negotiations.

Does it really matter if women are not present at negotiating tables? In order to answer this question, I make three points. First, women are affected by conflict and thus by the consequences of a peace agreement. Second, and related to the first point, women's inclusion in all stages of peace processes is crucial for inclusive social justice. Third, the presence of women makes a difference to the sorts of issues generally brought to formal peace processes. Obviously during conflict and immediately after, resources need to be prioritized. Concern about women's inclusion in political negotiations is viewed as irrelevant to the more immediate goal of security. Against this view, I am arguing that the inclusion of women in political decision-making is not a luxury to be postponed until post-conflict reconstruction. Rather, inclusion of all social groups fosters the pluralism that is necessary to develop an inclusive, stable democratic polity. Without a voice, women's concerns are neither prioritized nor resourced.¹⁶ 'Women's concerns' do not indicate feminine essentialism, but that, as prime caretakers, women tend to prioritize education, health, nutrition, childcare, and human welfare needs. I will explain now the above three points.

First, inhibitive constraints upon women's involvement in decision-making are enormous in all regions but are particularly acute in conflict areas. While entire communities suffer disastrous consequences of armed conflict, women and girls are affected specifically because of their subordinate position.¹⁷ Women's sexual integrity is undermined when rape is used as a weapon of war. Men's patriarchal ownership of women's bodies positions women as 'property to be attacked',¹⁸ with a further violation occurring due to shame. Moreover, given that the battlefield is likely to be villages and cities, women assume primary responsibility in coping with the pain and loss of killed or maimed loved ones, care for the wounded, and nurture of ill or old dependents and traumatized, fearful children. Many are left as female heads of households to deal with crises, especially inadequate food and income. Prolonged conflict affects development infrastructure and available funding for women's training in political capacity-building. It also heightens the psychological effects of horror, trauma, and hopelessness in victims. Women are affected by armed conflict in unique ways that require specific attention. The consequence of a peace agreement that does not address these needs is that women's subordination is exacerbated.

A peace settlement is not merely about ending a war, but also about establishing the conditions for a new just polity. My second point is that women's absence from negotiating tables minimizes the possibility of inclusive just politics arising in post-conflict times.¹⁹ The symbolic idea of coming to the 'peace table' involves far more than the mere signing of an agreement. What precedes the peace table are processes that begin in times of conflict, involving active involvement in conflict resolution. Many women participate in these processes. Those desiring a presence at the negotiating table, or to have their views

16 Elisabeth Porter, 'Political Representation of Women in Northern Ireland', *Politics*, 18,1 (1998), p. 25.

17 For accounts of war's effects on women see Donna Pankhurst, *Mainstreaming Gender in Peacebuilding: A Framework for Action. From the Village Council to the Negotiating Table* (London: International Alert, 1999).

Also, Anderlini et al., *Women, Violent Conflict and Peace-building*. Also, UN, *Women, Peace and Security*.

18 Asma Abdel, 'Attack with a Friendly Face', in Meredith Turshen and Clotilde Twagiramariya (eds), *What Women Do in Wartime: Gender and Conflict in Africa* (London and New York: Zed Books, 1998), p. 91.

19 A similar argument could be made for significant ethnic, religious, or otherwise differentiated groups.

represented, seek to contribute to the formulation of new legislation, structures of governance, and social institutions. Coming to the peace table signals not merely a negotiation of the end of conflict, but also an opportunity to contribute to the foundations of a reconstructed society based on justice, rights, and equality. Central issues of concern to women like 'their participation in post-conflict political, social, civil, economic and judicial structures' do not always reach the negotiating table.²⁰

Third, women's relative absence from negotiating tables is significant because when they are present, or participate in less formal negotiations, they tend to introduce different issues and frequently women adopt different approaches to conflict resolution. Women call attention to specific issues related to family needs of food, water, shelter, education, and health. For example, the participation of women in the Guatemalan process resulted in specific commitments to women on housing, credit and land, health, attempts to locate children and orphans, penalizing sexual harassment, and the creation of the national Women's Forum. In South Africa, women across all parties agreed that each party should have a one-third female representation in each negotiating team for the constitution process. Accordingly, the South African Constitution includes a comprehensive Bill of Rights with relevant gains for women on matters of reproduction, property rights, healthcare, education, and culture. In addition to issues of particular importance to women and girls, women 'raise issues that affect society as a whole, such as land reforms, access to loans and capacity-building'.²¹ Nonetheless, it is important to note that the presence of women alone does not guarantee that gender issues will be on the peace agenda. In El Salvador, about one-third of the negotiators were women, but the eventual agreement included discriminatory bars to women's involvement in the reconstruction programme.²²

The justification given for women's exclusion is that they are not military leaders, political decision-makers, strong negotiators, or combatants. There are two main kinds of reasons for this justification. On the one hand there are practical reasons—generally women lack experience in political leadership and in diplomatic settings, they are not culturally accepted authority figures able to represent constituents, and they lack funding to travel to meetings. On the other hand, there are powerful voices setting the agendas of peace processes and deciding who to include—the agendas may be convened by foreign nationals, headed by foreign negotiators, funded by multilateral organizations like the United Nations or World Bank, and held outside the warring country.²³ The belief is strong that those who take up arms must stop the conflict by sitting at the peace table. This approach might help to end violent hostilities, but it does not necessarily provide the best framework for reconstructing society.

Swanee Hunt and Christina Posa write that 'allowing men who plan wars to plan peace is a bad habit'.²⁴ They suggest that while men come to the negotiating table directly from the war room or battlefield, women generally come from family care and civil activism. Women have a huge stake in community stability and know the community because of their daily caretaking roles; thus they can assess the viability of peace agreements with regard to these everyday concerns. Undoubtedly peace that 'is supported and consolidated at the grassroots level' is more likely to be sustainable than one negotiated among elites.²⁵ If the

20 UN, *Women, Peace and Security*, p. 61.

21 UN, *Women, Peace and Security*, pp. 61, 64 (the Guatemalan example), 62 (South Africa).

22 E. Naslund, 'Looking at Peace through Women's Eyes: Gender-Based Discrimination in the Salvadoran Peace Process', *Journal of Public and International Affairs*, 10 (1999), p. 30.

23 I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for useful reminders of reasons justifying exclusions.

24 Swanee Hunt and Christina Posa, 'Women Waging Peace', *Foreign Policy Magazine* (May–June 2001), < www.foreignpolicy.com/issue_mayjune_2001/huntprint.html >, accessed on 6 September 2001.

25 Azza Karam, 'Women in War and Peace-Building. The Roads Traversed, the Challenges Ahead', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 3,1 (2001), p. 12.

aim of coming to the negotiating table is not merely to end war but to create sustainable peace, inclusive security must incorporate not merely women's vulnerability as victims, but also their agency as potential contributors to all collaborative measures to achieve peace. Women's inclusion in post-conflict negotiations enhances the democratic legitimacy of the process by making it more responsive to the priorities of all affected citizens. Cultural barriers to women's inclusion remain, particularly the confidence to take on leadership roles.

Culture, Rights, and Equality

Cultural stereotypes remain, in my view, the major obstacle to gender equality and thus to women's inclusion in decision-making. 'Anna', a Liberian president of a Women's Development Association, reports how 'the fighters had a common saying, "What is a woman? A woman is nothing. We can step on women."' ²⁶ It is difficult to envisage women's equality given such demeaning views. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) defines discrimination but not the meaning of equality, given the presence of manifold cultural and religious differences. ²⁷ The challenge to the universality of equality arose at Beijing, where it was agreed that human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women must be realized. Yet the PFA tries to respect all national, religious, and ethical values, hoping this will 'contribute to the full enjoyment by women of their human rights'. ²⁸ While trying to be inclusive, it fosters claims of cultural relativity and of incommensurable contexts and thus detracts from formulating clear notions of equality. Christine Chinkin shows how the PFA assumes that equal participation of women in all aspects of decision-making would empower women and enhance substantive equality. She properly cautions against this assumption, arguing that while increasing women's participation appears fairer, there can be no automatic assurance of gender awareness or good governance. This criticism does not lead to discarding rights discourse, for a right provides a powerful challenge to political wrongs such as blocking women's access to formal peace processes, and thus is 'a yardstick against which to assess government performance'. ²⁹ This yardstick is also 'a framework for challenging situations in which the rights of women are compromised for the benefit of cultural traditions which institutionalize and reproduce patriarchal hegemony'. ³⁰ Without culturally sanctioned gender equality and rights, the obstacles to women's participation in political decision-making remain powerful.

Undoubtedly, the PFA and the Beijing + 5 Review spurred legal reforms in support of rights. However, failure to satisfy commitments carries no sanctions or censure. Countries tend to implement prime obligations, like the removal of blatantly discriminatory laws, and some undertake affirmative actions to facilitate *de facto* equality. Yet the biggest difficulty lies in breaking down the cultural prejudices about women that underlie discriminatory practices, such as their exclusion from political decision-making. My contention is that it is culturally accepted views held by women as well as men that contribute to these

26 In Olivia Bennett, Jo Bexley, and Kittay Warnock (eds), *Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect: Women Speak out about Conflict* (London: Panos, 1995), p. 47. Admittedly, the fighters may have been mercenaries or foreign fighters, not Liberian.

27 See Christine Chinkin, 'Gender Inequality and International Human Rights Law', in Andrew Hurrell and Ngaire Woods (eds), *Inequality, Globalisation, and World Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 95–121, for examples of how countries with reservations to CEDAW adopt very fluid notions of equality.

28 DAW, 'FWCW PFA, Women and Armed Conflict', p. 114.

29 Chinkin, 'Gender Inequality and International Human Rights Law', pp. 120, 114 (a discussion on equality).

30 L. Amede Obiora, 'Feminism, Globalisation, and Culture: After Beijing', *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, 4,2 (1997), pp. 381, 388–389 (discussion on equality and cultural relativity).

demeaning practices. Breaking down such attitudes requires education and the realization that change is slow. Certainly, attention to cultural specificity is necessary in order to respect cultural traditions, but it cannot be at the expense of universal human rights. When there is a conflict between universal rights to equality and culturally specific subjection of women, rights to equality should take normative priority. This prioritizing need not disregard difference, but there are disjunctures between Western feminist valuations of difference and how difference is articulated in conflict zones like Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland, the former Yugoslavia, or India 'where difference has mattered "too much"'.³¹ Where the politicization of ethnic, racial, and religious difference results in violence as in Uganda, Sudan, Rwanda, or South Africa, the challenge is to find commonalities among women which minimize differences. Peace-builders who cross the boundaries of ethnic divides seek common goals that build trust. Curiously, the common experience most typically used is an empowering claim of 'their moral authority as mothers, wives or daughters'³² or the culturally prescribed respect for older women. I maintain that there is a need to affirm *universal rights* of dignity, respect, and equality that hold true across all *cultural differences*. Gender equality must mean equal rights to respect for all women and men, and the opportunities to realize one's capacities.

Gender equality can embrace cultural difference but not cultural subjection. Such embrace needs what Upendra Baxi calls an 'engaged human rights discourse' that incorporates an understanding of suffering 'to give language to pain'.³³ Drawing on Hegelian concepts, she distinguishes three moments: the 'abstract universality' of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, available to all; the 'abstract particularity' of women's rights as human rights that differentiate the abstract; and 'concrete universality', that is, 'where rights come home, as it were, in lived and embodied circumstances of being human in time and place'.³⁴ This situatedness is embodied in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which shifts the focus from Western individualist rights to one where 'the duties of individuals toward their families, the community, the state, and the international community are also stipulated'.³⁵

The realization of universal rights is fundamental in order to counter debilitating culturally gendered stereotypes. Further, such rights can be situated within culturally specific claims for justice. For example, in South Africa the women's coalition lobbied for specific rights like the right to land to enable female-headed households to have sustainable livelihoods. The coalition of women in the Federation of African Women's Peace Networks face different challenges and thus use different strategies, but hearing stories of the similarities in their work is 'an important milestone in consolidating indigenous African women's peace movements'.³⁶ Coalitions develop around the concern of meeting family needs. Where conflict divides groups, common ground is hard to find, hence women's groups turn to the shared nature of community ties and meeting needs, consciously adopting unifying strategies around such ties. Where divisions prevail, looking for *common purposes*

31 Alil Mari Tripp, 'Rethinking Difference: Comparative Perspectives from Africa', *Signs*, 25,3 (2000), p. 649.

32 UN, *Women, Peace and Security*, p. 55.

33 Upendra Baxi, 'Voices of Suffering, Fragmented Universality, and the Future of Human Rights', in Burns Weston and Stephen Marks (eds), *The Future of International Human Rights* (New York: Transnational Publishers, 1999), p. 126.

34 Baxi, 'Voice of Suffering', p. 128.

35 Adetoun O. Ilumoka, 'African Women's Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights—Toward a Relevant Theory and Practice', in Rebecca J. Cook (ed.), *Human Rights of Women: National and International Perspectives* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p. 313. Obiora, 'Feminism, Globalization and Culture' points out how the African Charter also enjoins ratifying states 'to ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women' while also preserving 'traditional values', p. 389.

36 Anna Snyder, 'Peace Profile: Federations of African Women's Peace Networks', *Peace Review*, 12,1 (2000), p. 148.

permits alliances that otherwise might not form. While traditional patriarchal family values that discriminate against women should be eliminated, the practice of nurturance is constitutive of good societies and often provides the common ground for coalitions. Gender equality and the realization of rights can coexist with cultural differences, but not with cultural subordination.

Security Council Resolution 1325

In this article, I have pointed out some clear limitations of the PFA and the Beijing + 5 Review and given instances of the relative absence of women from negotiating tables. I have also maintained that because of this absence, many issues pertinent to women and girls are ignored in peace accords and the cultural acceptance of gender inequality is perpetuated. Thus, the Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1325 on 31 October 2000 on 'Women, Peace and Security' is crucial.³⁷ The Resolution is historic in that the Security Council had never before discussed women in their own right in relation to peace and security. It is also the first time that the Security Council officially endorsed civil society groups, especially women in peace processes. Further, the Resolution acknowledges that 'peace is inextricably linked with equality between men and women' and that 'the equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security'. It acknowledges the impact of armed conflict on women and children, reaffirms the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and recognizes the need to mainstream gender perspectives into peacekeeping operations.³⁸ The Resolution calls on the Security Council, the Secretary-General, member nations, and non-state actors to act in four inter-related areas: increasing the participation of women in decision-making and peace processes; adopting gender perspectives and training in peacekeeping; protecting women; and gender mainstreaming in UN reporting and implementation mechanisms (S/RES/1325). Thus the Resolution is a crucial step in furthering women's participation in politics and peace-building, but what difference is it making?

My concern in this article relates to the first focus of the Resolution, namely, the participation of women in decision-making and peace processes, where there are four recommendations. First, paragraph 1 urges member states to increase the representation of women at all decision-making levels to prevent, manage, and resolve conflict. Paragraphs 2 to 4 encourage the Secretary-General to call for more women in conflict resolution and peace processes, to appoint women as special representatives and envoys, and to expand the contribution of women in UN field-based operations as military observers, civilian police, and human rights and humanitarian personnel.

In terms of UN positions, in 1999 two women Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General were sent to regions of conflict, Elizabeth Rehn in Bosnia-Herzegovina

37 The NGO Working Group that lobbied extensively and took forward a focused campaign to develop a resolution includes Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Hague Appeal for Peace, International Alert, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Women's Caucus for Gender Justice, and the International Women's Tribune Centre. See UN Security Council, 'Press Release: Stronger Decision-Making Role for Women in Peace Processes is Called for in Day-Long Security Council Debate', SEC/6937 (24 October 2000) < www.un.org/News/press/docs/2000 >, accessed on 24 January 2001. See also Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, 'UN Security Council Resolution 1325. "Women, Peace and Security, October 31 2000. Summary, Implications and Actions to Be Taken', < www.international-alert.org >, accessed 8 February 2001, for an outline of omissions from this historic resolution that must be addressed.

38 See Louse Olsson, 'Mainstreaming Gender in Multidimensional Peacekeeping: A Field Perspective', *International Peacekeeping*, 7,3 (2000), pp. 1–16. Military and police components remain mainly male, but in human rights and humanitarian assistance it is vital to consider the different needs of women and men.

and Dame Ann Hercus in Cyprus. In March 2000, however, of the 34 UN Special Envoys appointed to regions of conflict, none was a woman. While this article focuses on peace-building it is pertinent to include a brief discussion of peacekeeping. In the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, women make up on average 12.6 per cent of professional, field, local, and military staff.³⁹ 'Peacekeeping operations with more civilians and less militaries, and those with strong human rights monitoring mandates, have tended to have more women personnel (35–37 per cent) and also to have been the most successful.'⁴⁰ Dyan Mazurana carefully explains what constitutes 'success', namely, the meeting of a mission's mandate, peaceful resolution of disputes, promotion of rights education, provision of assistance in enabling civil society to develop, and empowering local communities 'in ways that help them reconstruct their lives and society'.⁴¹ While technically peacekeeping activities, many of these include activities that grassroots activists understand as peace-building because they address root causes of and consequences of conflict that women's groups work on during pre-conflict and conflict times, not just in the post-conflict stage. Angela King currently is Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women. In 1992 she led the mission in South Africa and notes how 'having a woman chief and a number of women leaders creates an attitudinal shift, even among women themselves'.⁴² A critical mass of women in peacekeeping forces has an impact on local women by providing positive role models. Many of these women come to see their peace-building activities as complementary to peacekeeping missions. Also, the UN itself acknowledges that if the United Nations led 'by example in terms of representation of women, local women would have a better chance of being included in formal peace processes'.⁴³

Since the passing of the Resolution, opportunities that might have made a lasting impact on women affected by war have been lost. For example, peace negotiations in the Middle East, in Burundi, and in Sudan either did not include women or did not ensure that women were represented at high levels. As of July 2002, there was one woman Special Representative of the Secretary-General heading the Observer Mission in Georgia.⁴⁴ In October 2002, among the 15 countries with UN peacekeeping operations there were no women in peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cambodia, the Golan Heights, Liberia, or Tajikistan.⁴⁵ Gender units were established in multidimensional peacekeeping missions in Kosovo and East Timor, then replaced by gender advisers, who exist also in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Afghanistan. In the Democratic Republic of Congo a gender adviser began in 2002 and in Sierra Leone a gender specialist works in the human rights section of the mission.⁴⁶ The Gender Affairs Bureau in East Timor worked in close collaboration with local women activists to mainstream gender and to promote women's rights through

39 Anderlini, *Women at the Peace Table*, p. 51.

40 Dyan Mazurana, 'International Peacekeeping Operations: To Neglect Gender Is to Risk Peacekeeping Failure', in Cynthia Cockburn and Dubravka Zarkov (eds), *The Postwar Moment: Militarities, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2002), p. 43.

41 Mazurana, 'International Peacekeeping Operations', p. 43.

42 Anderlini, *Women at the Peace Table*, p. 51. For an illuminating account of how processes of demilitarization and peacekeeping are structured by ideas of gender see Cockburn and Zarkov (eds), *The Postwar Moment*.

43 UN, *Women, Peace and Security*, p. 68.

44 See UN, *Women, Peace and Security*, p. 78. See also Dyan Mazurana and Eugenia Piza-Lopez, *Gender Mainstreaming in Peace Support Operations: Moving Beyond Rhetoric to Practice* (London: International Alert, 2002) for explanations of why women are or are not involved in the various components of peacekeeping.

45 See 'Security Council Resolution 1325—One Year On', < www.international-alert.org/women/oneyron.PDF >, accessed on 6 September 2002. Also, Anne Walker, 'Women and Armed Conflict Fact Sheet', International Women's Tribune Centre, Women's Globalnet #212, 23 (October 2002). See also Kofi Annan's report two years on, 'Report of the Secretary General on Women, Peace and Security', S/2002/1154.

46 See UN, *Women, Peace and Security*, pp. 81–2, for an outline of gender advisers and units.

political workshops. It 'has pioneered from scratch the first effectively functioning gender office in the history of peacekeeping. As such, it could serve as a model for other operations.'⁴⁷ It demonstrates the strength of drawing on women peace-builders to further the political capacities of local women. However, this is only one success story.

While the rhetoric of the United Nations affirms women's potential contribution to political decision-making in peace processes, it needs to implement its goals. What United Nations recommendations still miss is that many women are already involved in community groups. Their political skills are not recognized, thus are not harnessed in more formal political arenas. Enhanced dialogue and consultation between UN field operations and NGOs working with women's groups would provide local women with more opportunities to find entry points for a direct contribution to UN peace efforts.⁴⁸ The UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) appointed two independent experts, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Elisabeth Rehn, to conduct a global, field-based assessment of the impact of armed conflict on women and women's role in peace-building. Among their findings are that in peace processes 'formal negotiations that exclude half the population from the political process have little hope of popular support' and that 'regional organisations play an important role in protecting women and supporting their participation in peace-building'.⁴⁹ How the Resolution's recommendations will be implemented was left undeveloped. To address this deficiency, an Interagency Taskforce on Women, Peace and Security was established, headed by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Angela King. The Taskforce contributed to a large study that was undertaken to flesh out the Resolution and provide specific recommendations on implementation. The Secretary-General submitted a report to the Security Council highlighting the key findings.⁵⁰

Women's Contribution as Peace-Builders

In this section, I argue that women in communities who are already engaged in peace-building processes possess skills that can be further cultivated. I believe that it is women's contribution as peace-builders that provides some hope that parts of Resolution 1325 may be efficacious. I ask four questions. What is peace-building as the United Nations understands it? Do UN definitions exclude women's roles? Why do women peace-builders situate their roles broadly in the area of social justice? How do grassroots women's groups develop leadership through times of conflict?

First, what is peace-building? John Cocknell notes that 'peace-building' is 'the least examined term in the peace studies lexicon'.⁵¹ The United Nations distinguishes between peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peace-building. United Nations peacemaking includes mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and negotiation to bring hostile parties to agreement. Peacekeeping involves keeping parties from fighting or harming each other, by means of multinational forces of armed soldiers and police, authorized to use weapons only in self-defence, and includes civilians on observer missions. Peace-building includes constructing the conditions of society to foster peace through development and aid, human rights education, reconciliation, and the restoration of community life. Within the UN,

47 Mazurana, 'International Peacekeeping Operations', p. 47.

48 See Angela King, Assistant Secretary-General Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women in 'Security Council Resolution 1325—One Year On'.

49 Noeleen Heyzer, 'Security Council Debates Women and War', Pambazuka Newsletter (22 August 2002), < www.pambazuka.org/newsletter.php?id=9726 >, accessed on 6 September 2002.

50 UN, *Women, Peace and Security*. UN Security Council, 'Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security', S/2002/1154 (16 October 2002).

51 John Cocknell, 'Conceptualising Peacebuilding: Human Security and Sustainable Peace', in Michael Pugh (ed.), *Regeneration of War-Torn Societies* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 16.

'peace-building' typically is used to refer to formal approaches used in post-conflict reconstruction. The 2002 UN study referred to in the above section, 'Women, Peace and Security', accepts the Security Council definition of 'peace-building' as 'a means of preventing the outbreak, recurrence or continuation of armed conflict [which] therefore encompasses a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights mechanisms'.⁵² It accepts that peace-building should be local, focused on social transformation and rebuilding trust. The processes should address immediate security needs as well as root causes of strife. However, the United Nations positions peace-building and negotiations as part of formal peace processes. Yet this renders invisible the many women who are involved in informal practices that they believe are integral to building peace. Their understanding of the continual need for these practices differs from that of the UN Department of Political Affairs, which sees peace-building strategies as small, temporary facilitating mechanisms that cover political responsibilities involving the 'protection of nascent democratic institutions; crisis management; political mediation; and provision of good offices'.⁵³ Processes like mediation, dialogue, advocacy, conflict management, and reconciliation are, I maintain, peace-building practices that many women are involved in informally.

In answer to the second question, these definitions do exclude women's roles. While peace-building measures by the UN, states, and most NGOs focus on peacekeeping, post-war reconstruction, and humanitarian aid, 'the role of local women in peace-building and the specific ways they build peace is largely neglected'.⁵⁴ For example, Lakhdar Brahimi, in reporting to the General Assembly and Security Council on peace support operations, includes the following as peace-building activities: reintegrating former combatants into civilian society, strengthening law, improving respect for human rights through monitoring and investigating past and existing abuses, and through education providing assistance for democratic development by promoting conflict resolution and reconciliation techniques. Brahimi writes, 'while the peace-builders may not be able to function without the peacekeepers' support, the peacekeepers have no exit without the peace-builders' work'.⁵⁵ While he advocates multidimensional engagement with local parties, he gives no acknowledgment to women's roles. Despite this exclusion, many women in conflict zones convincingly bypass formal electoral politics or formal representation in peace processes and make their voices heard through community events, but in tasks not formally recognized as 'peace-building'.

Third, through community activities, women redefine the parameters of peace-building to include *all* processes that build peace. This is not inconsistent with the UN's understanding of peace-building, which encompasses a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian, and human rights mechanisms. However, as I have already indicated, the United Nations positions peace-building as part of formal peace processes, along with early warning and preventive diplomacy, sanctions, and peace negotiations.⁵⁶ Agencies working with women, feminist researchers, and local grassroots women's peace groups understand peace-building to encompass *both* formal and informal processes. Dyan Mazurana and

52 UN, *Women, Peace and Security*, p. 65.

53 UN, *Women, Peace and Security*, p. 66.

54 Dyan Mazurana and Susan McKay, *Women and Peacebuilding* (Montreal: International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, 1999), p. 1.

55 Lakhdar Brahimi, *Brahimi Report on Peace Support Operations*. UN General Assembly and Security Council, A/55/305. S/2000/809 (2000), < www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations >, accessed on 21 August 2001, paragraphs 13, 28. For a feminist critique of Brahimi's report, see Mazurana and Piza-Lopez, *Gender Mainstreaming in Peace Support Operations*.

56 UN, *Women, Peace and Security*, p. 65. See also Susanne Schmeidl, *Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Framework for Action* (London: International Alert, 2002).

Susan McKay also use a broad definition of peace-building because this is how women in many different cultures understand their activities. These researchers have ‘found notions of peacebuilding intertwined with issues of gender justice, demilitarization, the promotion of non-violence, reconciliation, the rebuilding of relationships, gender equality, women’s human rights, the building of and participation in democratic institutions, and sustaining the environment’.⁵⁷ They concede that none of these issues on their own constitutes peace-building, but each issue is linked to women’s strategies and the conditions through which peace is meaningful. They acknowledge too that ‘these actions by women to build peace expand the narrower definitions of peacebuilding used by the UN, various governments, and scholars’.⁵⁸

It is unsurprising that many women have this expanded notion of peace-building, which is integral to their view of social justice. There are three main explanations for this. Sustainable peace requires, first, fulfilling needs, second, democratic just institutions, and, third, ongoing peace processes. For increasing numbers of women in conflict zones, ‘the intricate tapestry of what constitutes real peace and security ... [includes] social justice, domestic reform, women’s rights, co-existence, tolerance, participatory democracy, transparency and non-violent dialogue as necessary ingredients for addressing social differences and building sustainable peace’.⁵⁹ Peace for these women is not an abstract goal, but is grounded in the immediacy of fulfilling human needs. Repeatedly, their stress is that for peace to be meaningful, it must be a way of living, a way of figuring out how to meet material, social, and spiritual needs. Many women become peace-builders in everyday contexts, struggling to meet the urgency of ordinary daily needs. Demelza Stubbings, an Amnesty International worker, confirms that it is the local NGOs, church groups, labour activists, and social rights campaigners who are at the forefront of protection and provision, and concedes that in cases of successful cooperation between NGOs and the United Nations there is mutual goodwill.⁶⁰ Yet governments’ commitment to strengthening an enabling environment for women’s empowerment appears to be conditional on the liveliness of civil society. Certainly in Northern Ireland women’s civil rights activism spurred their call to full inclusion in the formal peace process. Also, Louise Vincent, writing about southern Africa, maintains that despite the inattention of governments, ‘the impetus for correcting wrongs in women’s lives must undoubtedly come from women themselves’ even if efforts are ‘somewhat disparate, localized and spasmodic’.⁶¹ Grassroots activism is highly politicized in drawing on local, national, and state funding, development consulting agencies, and legal advisers in order to fulfil needs.⁶²

In addition to fulfilling needs, sustainable peace requires just institutions. Donna Pankhurst suggests that in order to promote a peace that meets everyday needs—social, political, and economic structures as well as relationships need transformation, the process of peace-building encompassing democratic principles of participation, rights, social justice, and equality.⁶³ The concept of peace broadens thus from a minimalist ‘negative peace’, as

57 Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana, *Raising Women’s Voices for Peacebuilding: Vision, Impact, and Limitations of Media Technologies* (London: International Alert, 2002), p. 75.

58 McKay and Mazurana, *Raising Women’s Voices for Peacebuilding*, p. 75 and also Mazurana and McKay, *Women and Peacebuilding*.

59 Anderlini et al., *Women, Violent Conflict and Peace-Building*, p. 16.

60 Demelza Stubbings, ‘The Challenge of Protection and Monitoring: and NGO Perspective’, in Robert Patman (ed.), *Universal Human Rights?* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 215.

61 Louise Vincent, ‘Women, Security and Human Rights in Southern Africa’, *Accord–Conflict Trends Online* (December 1999), < www.accord.org/za/publications/ct5/women.htm >, accessed on 23 February 2001, p. 7.

62 Deborah Mindry, ‘Nongovernmental Organisations, “Grassroots”, and the Politics of Virtue’, *Signs*, 26,4 (2001), pp. 1187–1211.

63 Pankhurst, *Mainstreaming Gender in Peacebuilding*, p. 4.

merely the absence of direct violence, to an alternative vision of 'positive peace' that is explicitly idealist in striving towards 'peace as the absence of exploitation and the presence of social justice'.⁶⁴ Positive, sustainable peace requires the resolution of the root causes of conflicts in order to remove violent manifestations. Such root causes include political, social, economic, and gender injustice, inequality and oppression, hence the need for comprehensive ongoing peace-building. Without inclusive democratic participation, distinctive voices of all marginalized groups are suppressed and democratic purposes are undermined. Inclusiveness is crucial because it is discrimination, exclusion, inequity, and social cleavage that often trigger violence. Thus peace and justice are connected. The conditions that guarantee human security are those that will free people from poverty, exclusion, injustice, and oppression. Pankhurst rightly points out that the details of such a vision often remain implicit, yet women peace-builders are working explicitly towards an egalitarian civil society with inclusive democratic structures, and open, accountable government.⁶⁵ These objectives broaden the parameters of peace-building to include all processes needed to gain equal citizenship in a non-violent context.

Sustaining peace is an ongoing task. Peace-builders are involved in informal and (to a lesser degree) formal processes likely to promote cooperative relationships and facilitate dialogue between groups in conflict. At the grassroots level, peace-building is understood as all the processes that build positive relationships, heal wounds, reconcile differences, restore esteem, respect rights, meet basic needs, enhance equality, and are democratic, inclusive, and just. In the aftermath of violence, good relationships are important; there is a particular need to be treated with dignity and compassion.⁶⁶ There are two crucial dimensions to these processes: they take time and they rely on the gradual building of relationships through trust, storytelling, sharing common experiences, networking, and working together on common goals. Building peace is a process; it is contextual, grounded, and shaped by the particular conflict and all the historical, religious, economic, political, cultural, and regional factors that have contributed to hostilities and the need to build peace. Peace-building is multi-layered. Sometimes it may involve a brief comment, an email, a note passed; other times it may involve cooperative strategies to cope with trauma and grief or to start a village craft workshop or other communal economic endeavour; and it also involves the laying down of weapons, the demilitarization of society, a signed peace accord, and a willingness for all citizens to take new directions.

To answer the fourth question of this section, it is during these peace-building processes that many women have developed leadership skills. Strong women's civil society organizations are critical for cultivating leadership skills that should, but rarely do, facilitate opportunities for women to gain entry to formal peace processes where political decisions are made. Ironically, through experiences of war, many women discover new skills, capabilities, and self-confidence from having to make economic provision for families, deal with officials, reconstruct homes, care for the wounded, and make community decisions in the absence of men. Shoba Gautam, a women's rights activist in Nepal writes, 'in most affected areas, there are no men we can see in the villages ... women have to do most of

64 Carolyn Stephenson, 'Peacekeeping and Peacemaking', in Michael Snarr and D. Neil Snarr (eds), *Introducing Global Issues* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998), p. 64.

65 Pankhurst, *Mainstreaming Gender in Peacebuilding*, p. 5. While many women do not define their work as peace-building, the work they are doing is directed toward democratic goals.

66 See McKay and Mazurana, *Raising Women's Voices for Peacebuilding*, for an analysis of the importance of media technologies and the internet in keeping NGOs and feminist researchers informed of sexual violence, abuse, and the need for healing and practical assistance.

the work'.⁶⁷ Consolidating such gains of leadership through building capacities is crucial to the goal of increasing women's participation in political decision-making.⁶⁸ Consolidation is more likely to happen when there is the inclusion of senior gender advisers on all peace missions and delegations, and when these delegations seek out, consult with, and guarantee the participation of women's organizations in peace processes.⁶⁹ Local women peace-builders possess skills that can be and should be harnessed politically. Just as peace-building is a process, so too empowerment is a parallel process that encourages capacity-building, leadership, and the awareness of new possibilities. Each new possibility requires different solutions. Effective peace-building recognizes that local approaches must be valued and promoted. Culturally sensitive projects are more likely to be successful for women when participants and facilitators 'acknowledge the unique ways people build peace in their own cultures and understand that women may have different issues, different priorities, and work to build peace in both similar and distinct ways from men'.⁷⁰

Funds and encouragement are needed to strengthen women's leadership capacities and political education, teach practical computer skills, provide trauma counselling, and assist the ability to travel to network and to attend conferences and political meetings.⁷¹ For example, Branka Rajner, referring to Bosnia, argues that women who work in the NGO sector, 'having gained experience in cooperation, communication, and democratic participation', can introduce these experiences into practical politics.⁷² Clearly, there is a great need for further training that fosters confidence and develops skills in presentation, negotiation, mediation, advocacy, lobbying, and policy analysis. For many women, these skills are best learned in safe women's organizations to enhance capacities for transference to public participation. 'All women have political capacities; realizing these through political agency leads to empowerment.'⁷³ Women engaged in peace-building activities outside male-dominated institutional politics contribute to political spaces that extend beyond conventional public politics. Peace-building for many women begins in women's groups in civil society and develops transferable political skills that should be used more productively in peace negotiations. However, if more women were given opportunities to participate in Track II negotiations, their confidence to participate in formal peace talks, or to lobby for the right to be present, would be enhanced.

Building Peace across Divisions

Women are undoubtedly victims of war, but coalitions forged in grassroots peace-building are remarkable.⁷⁴ Although building broad-based gender alliances across ethnic, cultural, and political divides is daunting, it is imperative to building sustainable reconciliation.

67 Pankhurst, *Mainstreaming Gender in Peacebuilding*, pp. 11–12. See also Bennett et al., *Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect*, p. 10, and Karam, 'Women in War and Peace-Building', p. 8.

68 See Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development. The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) for a detailed articulation of developing women's 'capabilities'.

69 See Mazurana, 'International Peacekeeping Operations'.

70 McKay and Mazurana, *Raising Women's Voices for Peacebuilding*, p. 13.

71 Anderlini, 'Women, Peace and Security', p. 13. In terms of recommended future policy directions for peace-building that ensures gender-sensitive justice, see Pankhurst, *Mainstreaming Gender in Peacebuilding*, Section 5, and Anderlini et al., *Women, Violent Conflict and Peace-Building*, pp. 6–7.

72 Anderlini et al., *Women, Violent Conflict and Peace-Building*, p. 14.

73 Elisabeth Porter, 'Participatory Democracy and the Challenge of Dialogue across Difference', in Carmel Roulston and Celia Davies (eds), *Gender, Democracy and Inclusion in Northern Ireland* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2000), p. 144.

74 Instances of women moving from passive victims to social actors in peace-building in Peru are given by Isabel Cordero, 'Social Organisation: From Victims to Actors in Peace Building', in Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark

Where conflict creates deep divisions, the first step is to (re)build relationships by creating trust. Often this occurs when opportunities are created for women to share everyday, ordinary experiences about families, material needs, grief, and the desire for change. The realization of similarities rather than differences broadens horizons. Establishing initial processes of dialogue between conflictive parties is never easy. 'The risks range from experiencing new vulnerabilities in exploring long-held myths, hatred and bitterness to being: ostracized; intimidated; forced into exile; or a potential target for violence.'⁷⁵ Within such alliances, re-negotiations are continuous, tiring, risky, and yet necessary. The crux of risky alliances is 'a creative structuring of a relational space between collectivities marked by problematic differences'.⁷⁶ Examples of these alliances demonstrate political skills and different ways of resolving conflict.

Women belonging to different political parties and walks of life form coalitions. The examples are numerous. After 14 failed peace agreements in Liberia, the Liberian Women's Initiative brought popular pressure to bear on politicians and warlords for disarmament before elections. Women working together in Sudan organized the Wunlit Tribal Summit in 1999 to end bloody hostilities between the Dinka and Nuer people with a resulting agreement to share rights to water, fish, and grazing, key points of previous disagreement. The Federation of African Women's Peace Networks encourages women's participation in the prevention of armed conflict in Africa and rejects all forms of ethnic, tribal, clan, religious, or cultural bigotry. Eritrean women, empowered by their role in the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, play a significant conflict resolution role and join with Ethiopian women to resolve the border conflict. Burundian women create associations for peace and reconciliation bringing Hutu and Tutsi women together and negotiated observer status in the 1998 peace negotiations held in Arusha. On Mandela's encouragement, women agreed to adopt 'a boycott of care giving' as non-violent resistance.⁷⁷ Somalian women also negotiated observer status in peace and reconciliation talks. While these examples are significant for highlighting instances where women's contribution as peace-builders has furthered peace processes, many of these processes have since collapsed. We should not conclude that contributions made by women were meaningless. Rather, what we can learn is that peace-building is a process that keeps picking up the threads of hope despite post-conflict situations collapsing and reverting to conflict. Also, the examples bequeath an inspiring legacy that may bear fruit again.

Outside parties are important to peace processes. The Life and Peace Institute helped women's peace groups to gain access to the Somalian peace and reconciliation talks as observers and in Burundi UNIFEM and international agencies supported the cross-community coalition.⁷⁸ In Northern Ireland and in South Africa women's coalitions infuse the values of inclusivity and participation into the political dialogue. In Nicaragua, 'women, whether Sandínista or Contra, have led the reconciliation process in the community and at

Footnote Continued

(eds), *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2001), pp. 151–163.

75 Elisabeth Porter, 'Risks and Responsibilities: Creating Dialogical Spaces in Northern Ireland', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2,2 (2000), p. 167.

76 Cynthia Cockburn, *The Space between Us. Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict* (London and New York: Zed Books, 1998), p. 211.

77 Snyder, 'Peace Profile', p. 149.

78 For Liberian examples, see Onadipe in International Alert, 'Online Working Group on Women and Armed Conflict: "Good Practices, Lessons Learnt, Challenges and Emerging Issues" for Implementing the Beijing PFA' (1999), < www.international-alert.org/women/idmakers/WomenwatchReport.pdf >, accessed on 1 February 2001, p. 9. For the Sudanese example see Hunt and Poser, 'Women Waging Peace'. For more analysis of the Federation of African Women's Peace networks see Snyder, 'Peace Profile' and Tripp, 'Rethinking Difference', pp. 649–675. For the role of outside parties, see Pankhurst, *Mainstreaming Gender in Peacebuilding*, p. 21.

home'.⁷⁹ In Cyprus, the Middle East, the Balkans, and Southeast Asia, women's networks bridge conflict divides in their struggle for peace. Jerusalem Link is a coalition of Israeli and Palestinian women advocating on all aspects of the peace process. The Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum brings together women from all walks of life. Women's peace activism can also be creative. In the Philippines, women formed peace zones in villages to protect children from recruitment by militias and the state army; in the Balkans and Caucasus, they hid husbands and sons to avoid military recruitment; and in Colombia women walked to the most violent regions as part of the Peaceful Road of Women campaign.⁸⁰ Networking among different ethnic, racial, and class groups is a crucial strategy for alliance builders.

These examples do not assume women's natural peacefulness—to the contrary some women are combatants, terrorists, and aggressive participants in military or liberation struggles.⁸¹ Particularly where the conflict concerns national, ethnic, religious, or racial identity, women take sides, as occurred in the Rwandan massacres. Also, many women socialize children into attitudes and practices of hatred, bitterness, distrust, fear, and intense 'othering' of the 'assumed enemy', who often live in the next street or across the road, as remains the case in the Balkans and Northern Ireland. Given that the majority of wars are fought within national boundaries, 'people at war today are fighting former friends, neighbours, co-workers, co-worshippers, and sometimes even family members'.⁸² Often 'women are those who hate the most since it is their children and their dependents whom they have seen hurt or killed'.⁸³ Such anger frequently is passed onto the next generation. Despite some women's peace activism, many other women continue to live divisive, antagonistic, sectarian lives. Further, all women with power do not have an interest in promoting gender equality. Additionally, many men fully endorse the need for gender equality and work cooperatively with women in peace-building.

However, women's peace-building across political and ethnic divisions is unique. In a similar fashion to those women who are present at negotiating tables, the uniqueness lies in the general tendency for different priorities to emerge and for different approaches to be taken to resolve conflict. As prime caretakers, women have a deep concern about survival issues of how to feed, clothe, and shelter children and aging dependents. These needs are more likely to be met when there are stable social bonds to rely on, like sharing and friendships in communities. Also, many women exhibit strengths in consensus building, by being inclusive, attentive, and moderate in times of conflict. Hanan Ashrawi, a Palestinian negotiator, writes about the struggle to find common ground across the Palestinian-Israeli divide, where initially 'women's issues' did not act as an area of convergence because of the strength of factional hostilities. She talks of the collective power of the women's demonstrations: 'it was as if they came face to face with issues of life and death—for ourselves, for our children, for our daughters'.⁸⁴ Similarly, activists in Northern Ireland, although deeply divided politically, come together over bread-and-butter issues of housing, childcare, education, and job skills. It is suggested that women's special strengths include 'increased empathy for the "enemy" having often faced discrimination themselves': Sevgl

79 Bennett et al., *Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect*, p. 206.

80 Anderlini, *Women at the Peace Table*, p. 12.

81 Bennett et al., *Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect*, pp. 4–7 and Turshen and Twagiramariya, (eds), *What Women Do in Wartime* provide numerous examples of women's roles in wars. Karam, 'Women in War and Peace-Building' overviews women's roles in war, and activities in peace-building. See Mazurana and McKay, *Women and Peacebuilding* for examples of women's perpetuation of violence.

82 Mary Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—or War* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1999), p. 11.

83 Anderlini, *Women at the Peace Table*, p. 32.

84 Anderlini, *Women at the Peace Table*, p. 23.

Uludag, from Cyprus, tells how women were attacked in the media ‘for being willing to meet the “enemy”’.⁸⁵ The importance of sharing stories about pain and fear is a crucial starting point to building trust between adversaries as ‘both sides’ come to realize that there is common ground in the shared nature of pain and suffering and the desire for reconciliation.⁸⁶ Through struggling together to understand our differences, opportunities open and we learn how many interests actually converge, allowing informed, workable coalitions. When dealing with diversity, all grounds for even partial common understandings are important.

In conclusion, peace-building breaks down structures of violence and hostile attitudes and creates conditions for ongoing peace. Peace-building is a *process* that needs to flow through the pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict stages. Many peace-builders, particularly women, operate at all of these stages, yet are excluded from the decision-making aspects of formal peace processes. Peace-building encompasses the gamut of peace processes because, in holistic visions of peace, the conditions of non-violence include equality, justice, and human rights for all people within democratic institutions and within a sustainable environment. Hence the absence of women from decision-making is a grave omission, a sign of ongoing gender inequality and injustice. Graça Machel, a Mozambican advocate for rights, affirms gender equality and inclusion as fundamental to democratic peace-building: ‘women must be central to and participants in any peace process ... But in the end, women’s representation at the negotiating table is the *sine qua non* of gender equality and inclusion.’⁸⁷

85 International Alert, ‘Online Working Group on Women and Armed Conflict’, p. 14.

86 See Norman Porter, *The Elusive Quest. Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2003).

87 Graça Machel, ‘The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: Report from International Conference on War-Affected Children (September 2000) Winnipeg, Canada’, <www.unifem.undp.org/machelrep.pdf>, accessed 28 January 2001, p. 45.