

# **African Women's Report 1998**

**Post-conflict Reconstruction in Africa:  
A Gender Perspective**



**United Nations  
Economic Commission for Africa**

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# PREFACE

**7**he African Women's Report 1998 has focused on "Post-Conflict Reconstruction" from a gender perspective. The intention is to examine post-conflict reconstruction with its differing gender roles and impact and derive best practices for fostering gender-balanced, sustainable development, on platforms that mobilize both men and women to play their parts. The full formal and informal participation of both sexes is very important to sustainable peace and to the efficient use of all available human resources for rebuilding a war-torn society. Despite the tragedy, trauma and waste of conflict, out of the ashes and debris and broken lives can emerge a positive opportunity to reconstruct a more functional, flexible and inclusive society with enhanced political, economic and social roles, values and structures changed for the better by the bitter experience.

The Report begins by introducing definitions and concepts of conflict, reconstruction and gender. It then examines the causes and nature of African conflicts, because an understanding of sources and origins is a vital precondition to finding solutions and relevant compromises that can build and maintain peace. It then examines the changing nature of gender roles in political, economic and social reconstruction, identifying effective strategies and practices that could be replicated as "innovative experiences". It concludes with

delineation of practical areas of focus for ensuring gender-balanced reconstruction.

By its nature, it could not cover each and every conflict on the continent in an in-depth way, nor was this desirable. References are made both to civil wars and to cross-border conflicts, with illustrative examples from selected countries, that women in post-conflict situations are not mere passive sufferers and aid-dependent beneficiaries specially vulnerable to abuse, but have been and should be very much part of the solution. They have shown themselves to be resilient, able to organize and mobilize and to negotiate and advocate for ways and means to peaceful reconciliation and reconstruction. In charge of household management as they are, women think immediately about the details of day-to-day survival needs, especially for their immediate and extended family and communities. Their approaches to reconciliation have been creative and courageous, and where given the chance in reconstruction programmes, prove themselves up to the task.

Reference is made to women's reconstruction strategies and initiatives in various countries, including long-standing conflict situations in Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan and Rwanda and more recent ones in Guinea-Bissau, Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, and Democratic Republic of the Congo.

# INTRODUCTION

**B**oth women and men face daunting structural and situational factors in post-conflict reconstruction, within the parameters of given resources and opportunities to meet their basic needs and concerns. However, post-war rehabilitation

Women's coping mechanisms during and after conflicts are resourceful and innovative, with necessity, not tradition, being the mother of invention. Their contribution is both different and complementary to the efforts of men.

and reconstruction can change and influence the nature of gender roles and the positioning of the sexes in the society. In the African context of relatively

rigid, traditional gender roles, the degree to which African women are being involved in largely male-dominated post-conflict reconstruction activities tells a great deal about the readiness and commitment of that society to maximize its use of resources in pursuing reconciliation, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. The framework of a successful post-conflict reconstruction programme has to be able to bring combatant sides and stakeholders together, build common ground and gradually heal the massive breaches and wounds in the society. Only then is it possible to pursue a new future in equality and justice. Gender balance and equality in the way forward is very much a crosscutting issue in all sectors of development and in the policies and institutions of good governance.

Women not only constitute the majority of pre- and especially post-conflict societies, but they are often the first to start calling for peace. They initiate informal survival and advocacy networks in their unstable and insecure communities, even in camps for the displaced. Although it may be mostly men on the battlefronts, women, children and the elderly are greatly affected by the destructiveness of war, even as innocent bystanders. Strong women's peace movements have evolved in most conflict-torn countries in Africa and they have not only advocated and lobbied for peace but have set up formal and informal systems to supply basic needs, generate income and manage households and communities. Their zeal for peace and development has influenced "warlords" in many situations and kept a form of economy alive and ticking.

Women experience conflict in various ways. Many women and children are drawn into direct participation in the fighting, in intelligence gathering and in supplying fighters with food and basic necessities. Some willingly join combatant forces and risk their lives alongside the men. Others fully participate in committing atrocities, as was the case during the genocide in Rwanda. In that situation, it was noted that women too drew up lists of people to be killed and sometimes encouraged their children to assist in the killing. In addition, many communities in wartime become military targets, especially when suspected of supporting or supplying rebel or government factions. In many situa-

tions, women and girls have been forcibly inducted into armies on the move, to carry supplies, cook, and provide sexual services. It has been reported in the media that the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda has abducted some 10,000 children for unknown purposes.

It is evident in many post-conflict societies such as Ethiopia, Liberia, South Africa and Uganda, that the aftermath of conflicts has helped to crystallize the political and economic agendas of both men and women.

Despite the ad hoc nature of their initial involvement, many women organizations and community-based initiatives have emerged to witness and

assist in gaining women's participation in the formal mainstream structures controlling politics and the economies of societies trying to rebuild and move on. At the level of civil society, many organizations have grown out of the conflicts and have been actively involved in reconstruction efforts. NGOs for peace activities have sprung up around the continent in response to the crises, at all levels.

Regardless of reasons or methods of participation, women's political consciousness of the uses and abuses of power, resources and of their own political and economic powerlessness and vulnerability, increase significantly as a result of surviving conflict. Experience of the brutality and inhumanity of war changes people irrevocably, some towards breaking point, most to greater resilience and resourcefulness. In either case, expectations of the State, society and the self change accordingly. Women's expectations and actions at this crucial time in a country's history have

proven ability to affect the post-war societal conceptions and structures.

The data in this Report suggest that some post-conflict societies are experiencing an enhanced and expanded role for women at all levels of society, from the formal structures of parliament and local government, to private sector and civil society initiatives and grassroots and informal networks. The determining factor therefore seems to be the extent to which there is social and political will to enhance the welfare of the nation and not only that of a particular interest or ethnic group. The costs of conflicts in Africa are staggering and daunting both for Africans and for the international community at large. However, once reconstruction gets a chance to set in, the emergent societies changed by violence and bloodshed, get a second chance to establish policies and institutions acceptable to all their citizens, despite differences of class and income, education, ethnicity, politics or religion.

African women are being increasingly recognized as development agents and as promoters of a culture of peace and good governance.

This period offers government, civil society and the private sector, a chance to institutionalize a gender-responsive policy that can actively tap the contribution of both men and women. Such a policy leads to the mainstreaming of gender-based planning and analysis, which in the African context, cannot avoid special action programmes to enhance women's involve-

ment This implies institutionalization of a larger role for women in various sectors of reconstruction and development.

The United Nations and the international aid community have been highly involved with peacekeeping and reconstruction efforts in many conflict-torn African

The consensus at the 1997 Addis Ababa Inter-Agency Workshop for Documenting Best Practices in Peace Building and Non-Violent Conflict Resolution was that, despite their efforts, women were still not adequately represented in the public mainstream policy and institutional frameworks and structures of peace building. It was recommended that information and communication media and linkages were needed to adequately promote women's good practices in peace resolution and reconstruction

countries. At this level, most actors tend to be gender-sensitized to the necessity of women's participation at all levels, and many aid policies actually "force" the inclusion of women and a gender perspective in programmes and projects requiring external financing. Governments too have become more aware in recent de-

cades of the need to include women in governance and other decision-making structures beyond mere tokenism. African countries are signatories to various international and African conventions and declarations that recognize gender-balanced development as the most just and sustainable approach in the long run.

On 25 September 1997, the United Nations Security Council held an open

meeting on African conflicts and asked Secretary-General Kofi Annan to develop a comprehensive response to the continent's conflicts and their aftermath. He was asked to focus on how to identify sources of conflict in Africa better, how to prevent or resolve them and how, once they are over, to lay the foundation for peace and economic growth. In his response to the Security Council, Mr. Annan acknowledged the consensus that the solution to Africa's problems rests 'with Africans themselves'. Nevertheless, he also challenged the international community "to think precisely how best we can accompany the Africans on their path to lasting peace, stability, justice and sustainable development." A comprehensive report on these issues has since been prepared and published as a report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council.

Several international agencies, in collaboration with national institutions, have initiated programmes that focus on the causes, prevention and management of post-conflict reconstruction. Among these programmes are the Continuum Project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the Oxford University 'Project on Social and Economic Costs of Conflict in Developing Countries'; the African Women in Crisis (AFWIC) umbrella programme initiated by the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM); the recently launched Action Programme on Skills and Entrepreneurship Development for Countries Emerging from Armed Conflict of the International Labour Organization (ILO); the War-Torn Societies Project of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and the Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies (UNRISD, PSIS). The latter project provides a number of very use-

ful entry points for gender analysis, including the importance of taking a more integrated approach to peace building, reconstruction and development. The UNRISD War-Torn Societies Project report usefully discusses integrated reconstruction from political, economic and social points of view.

Since the United Nations Women's Decade of 1975-1985 and the First World Conference on Women in 1975, there has emerged an avalanche of literature on women and development, which carry major underlying messages about the 'invisibility' of women in the development process. Given the growing demand of

The literature, projects and programmes on conflict and post-conflict societies have largely perpetuated a gender-neutral approach in their analysis, design and targeting of reconstruction activities. This situation is slowly changing, as the United Nations secretariat and specialized agencies and other international development organizations now have overt, explicit policies integrating gender as a crosscutting theme in sustainable, equitable human development.

women's groups to be part of the peace-making and peace-building process, failure of mainstream reconstruction programmes to reflect women's concerns and invite and promote their participation means the loss of an extremely important opportunity for meaningful change in the society's foundations and aspirations. This report speaks to this issue.

# I. CONFLICT, RECONSTRUCTION AND GENDER

**I**n recent decades, armed conflict and civil unrest in Africa have been increasing instead of decreasing. The intensity and duration of these conflicts have left, and continue to leave people's lives, economies and social structures devastated, even af-

The idea is not to polarize gender relationships between men, women and government, but to understand, identify and utilize all the available knowledge, skills and positioning for efficient, speedy advancement of the country.

ter the conflicts are resolved. Psychological trauma and inability to trust neighbours and social institutions become the order of the day. The unspeakable horrors and breathtaking speed of the

genocide in Rwanda, the continuing anarchy in Somalia, and the civil wars in Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone are but a few stark examples. In many other countries also, conflict and rebellion add to the image of Africa as a place of widespread, irreconcilable differences.

Gender in development literature refers to the societal relationships bound by the various traditional roles of men and women in a given household, workplace or community. Cultural and social patterns shape women's and men's involvement in production, reproduction and resource use and distribution. Con-

flict situations change some of these cultural and social constructs, but on the whole, women do not have the same access to, control of, or ability to move productive resources between differing sectors of economic activity as do men. In conflicts involving civilian populations, for example in Rwanda, it is said that many women were also involved in agitating for violence and that some actually participated in the genocidal slaughter. Although such examples rule out the noble, ideal image of all women as peace-loving in all situations, in the majority of cases, women do not have the decision-making powers nor the armaments and military skills and capacity to initiate and wage war and decide the outcomes. Anne-Marie Goetz emphasizes the importance of understanding "not just the role of public administrations in producing gendered outcomes, but the role of gender in structuring power and opportunity within administration, and the link between these two processes".<sup>1</sup>

Where there is an integrated nation, then gender principles apply also to a national level that promotes equal opportunity for women and girls. In this survey, gender analysis and planning are supported, to urge rational and just use of the differentiated but supportive and complementary roles of men and women, particularly in pro-change reconstruction situations.

<sup>1</sup> Anne-Marie Goetz, "Gender and administration" in IDS Bulletin, Vol. 23, No 4, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 1992.

## A. The nature of conflict in Africa

The term “conflict” is used in this context to cover forms of violent protest and rebellion. It applies particularly in countries that have experienced full-scale civil or cross-border wars. Conflicts differ in their scale, duration, reach and level of destruction. Since the era of African independence in the late 1950s, only a handful of the 53 countries has not experienced large-scale conflict, civil unrest or military coup d'états.

Currently, the literature classifies African conflicts into four categories:

- ◆ Conflicts that have been resolved and have been followed by a sustained period of relative peace;
- ◆ Fragile post-conflict situations where peace accords have only recently been concluded;
- ◆ Conflicts that are unresolved but circumscribed within one or a few regions of the country; and
- ◆ Conflicts that are still raging unabated.

The fragmented peace and persistent

violence in many post-conflict situations also make it difficult to distinguish clearly between conflict and post-conflict periods. In reality, the phases overlap and often truces, cease-fires and peace accords are mere lulls in a storm that keeps breaking out and deluging the country, as is currently the case in Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, to name a few from different subregions.

Post-conflict societies tend to be fragile even after disarmament exercises and attempts to hold elections. The economic, ethnic, class, religious, territorial or political differences that caused the conflict persist unless significant changes in governance and human welfare occur. Communities and neighbourhoods are usually deeply divided, although new survival networks, friendships and alliances may have also developed

Conflict is destructive and afflicts all citizens with losses. Reconstruction implies that what needs to be rebuilt existed once before, so reference to reconstruction implies regaining of achievement and status levels previously reached but now destroyed or damaged. These levels have to be sur-

Since 1970, more than 30 wars have been fought in Africa, most of them intra-state in origin. In 1996, 14 of the 53 African countries were experiencing armed conflicts that accounted for more than half of all war-related deaths globally. Increasingly, United Nations peacekeeping, originally aimed at inter-state conflict, is being asked to deal with intra-state warfare, the main objective of which is destruction not only of armies but also civilians and even specific ethnic groups.

Source: Report of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Security Council. The Causes of Conflict and Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, United Nations, New York, April 1998.

passed before new or additional development can take place. Given the gendered life roles of men and women, conflict affects them differently and so do solutions. When the men are killing each other, some

Rape and sexual torture are systematically used as weapons of war. Psychological trauma, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies and reproductive health problems are some of the consequences faced by the women victims of conflict-induced violence and genocide.

women die too, but many survive, as displaced, refugees, widows heading their households, destitutes, cripples, mental cases, and those traumatized psychologically by human and material losses, want and deprivation, rape and sexual abuses and mutilations.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is one of the agencies now applying a gender approach to health in post-conflict situations that does not focus only on women's health in isolation, but on analysis of the differences between men and women's health needs in such areas as differential exposure to risk and access to specialized health care. Men's roles and beliefs with regard to women's health concerns, and vice versa, are also examined. Health for everyone, throughout the stages of their lives, is now seen as a cumulative matter, with women particularly affected by familial, social, economic, cultural and environmental factors.<sup>2</sup> Of those highly involved in relief and reconstruction, the World Food Programme (WFP) is another agency that has made substantial progress within country programmes in directly in-

volving women as managers, administrators and beneficiaries, and in using gender analysis of needs, skills, and consequences in distribution of food aid and other resources.

Many women who have survived conflicts, often with their fathers, brothers and husbands dead or away fighting, imprisoned or exiled, take on larger roles in community and family leadership, in agriculture and marketing, in industry, in armies and militias. Relief operations often find that they must target women especially, because of their strong roles in the family and in the community networks of supply and demand. Relief aid distributed through women tends to have a large multiplier effect in a community, given the extended nature of women's networking.

Many women evolve new leadership roles and skills under reconstruction programmes, more from necessity than choice. Such tasks are additional to their usual activities and can fall heavily on women determined to survive but carrying strong feelings of guilt, sorrow, and loss. Some women emerge as activists dedicated to preventing such suffering from recurring. Others learn to drive tractors and other vehicles, and perform other tasks once controlled by men. Especially in cases where their men do not return from war or have fled, women in new modes of survival cannot easily relinquish their new independence and positioning in society, as has been the case in many communities in Somalia.

The gendered economic consequences of conflict in Africa are seen readily in the agricultural sector, both at

2 WHO. World Health Report 1998, pp. 96- 98.

micro and macro levels. In Africa, the rural, agriculture-based economy predominates. Agriculture contributes a much higher share of GDP than in other regions of the world and the great majority of men and women are economically active in this sector and its related activities. In most African countries, including those that have undergone major conflicts, women play significant roles in growing food and cash crops themselves and in providing agricultural labour for the cash crops grown by men farmers. They perform some 90 per cent of the work of food processing, 80 per cent of food storage tasks, 90 per cent of hoeing and weeding and 60 per cent of harvesting and marketing, besides load carrying and transport services.<sup>3</sup> The efficiency, hard work and vulnerability of African women farmers and farm managers have also been noted on the ground and in various studies, despite their unequal access to land, capital, extension services, improved seeds, tools and other inputs, and education and information.<sup>4</sup>

When this sector collapses in important parts of a country due to prolonged war and insecurity, women are both directly and indirectly affected and lose their major occupation and source of food and income. If fields cannot be planted and harvested in peace, without threat of attack, kidnapping and forced conscription or exploding landmines, the consequences for both married and unmarried women can become dire. Most cannot easily shift into other formal economic activity, and many end up displaced and landless for

long periods of time. Inability to perform their agricultural tasks freely, or even to stay on the land, crushes the whole social and economic fabric, besides adding to food shortages, food insecurity and decline in trading activities at local and national levels.

Conflicts in Africa affect even those stable countries that are not at war or experiencing civil disturbances. They may have to take sides in the conflict, or may get involved with mediation and peace-keeping efforts. They may also have to host hundreds of thousands of refugees, a situation that often causes problems of integration with local populations, environmental degradation and internal security. Fighting, and the consequent decline in preventative and curative health care, can give rise to various epidemics, even small-pox and bubonic plague, long considered eradicated globally. Diseases that get out of control know no borders. There are reports of an ebola-type disease breaking out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, said to have originated in a remote rebel-held area near the Uganda border. Angola is reported to be suffering from a polio epidemic and Mozambique is experiencing a virulent outbreak of malaria.

Table 1 lists the different conflicts in Africa and attempts to compare intensity. Table 2 estimates the number of war-dead in selected countries. However, comparative data in this area are practically nonexistent and where they do exist may not be totally accurate, given the difficulties in gathering information during conflicts.

3 FAO. *Women and developing agriculture*. Women in Agriculture Series, No. 4, Rome, 1985.

4 See P. Moock, "The efficiency of women as farm managers" in *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, Vol. 58, No. 5, pp. 831—835, 1976; K. Saito, D. Spurling and H. Mekonnen, Raising the productivity of women farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. Discussion Paper 230, World Bank, 1994; Lyn R. Brown and Joanna Kerr, eds. *The gender dimensions of economic reforms*. The North-South Institute, 1997.

**Table 1: Wars, low intensity and serious conflicts in Africa (1994-95)**

Estimated number of war victims during 1994-95	Low intensity conflicts	Serious conflicts
Rwanda 600,000 – 1,000,000	Angola (Cabinda)	Cameroon
Angola > 60,000	Cameroon	Djibouti
Sierra Leone > 3,000	Congo	Ethiopia (Ogaden)
Burundi > 3,000	Liberia	Ethiopia (Afar)
South Africa 1,600	Mali	Ethiopia (Harar)
Sudan >1,600	Nigeria (Yoruba/Ibo)	Gabon
Ethiopia 1,000	Uganda (North)	Guinea
Zaire >1,000	Somalia (Somaliland)	Kenya (Rift Valley)
Chad >1,000	Somalia (Interclan)	Mozambique
	Egypt	Niger
		Nigeria (Hausa-Fulani)
		Nigeria (Ogoni/Andoni)
		Nigeria (Tiv/Kukun)
		Senegal (Casamance)
		Somalia (East)
		Togo
		Algeria
		Morocco (Western Sahara)

Source: Luc Reyckler. "The Issues of Control and Prevention" in *Conflicts in Africa: Analysis of Crisis and Crisis Prevention Measures*, Report of the Commission on African Regions in Crisis, King Bandouin Foundation, Medecins Sans Frontiers, 1997.

**Table 2: Number of victims resulting from conflicts in Africa since 1980  
(Calculated up to the end of 1995)**

Country	Population in millions	Duration of war	Estimated number of victims
Sudan	28	1983	500,000-1,000,000
Ethiopia	54	1970-1991	450,000-1,000,000
Mozambique	15	1979-1992	450,000-1,000,000
Angola	10	1975-1991	300,000-500,000
		1992-1994	500,000
Uganda	20	1980-1987	100,000-500,000
Somalia	9	1982	400,000-500,000
Rwanda	7	1994	500,000-1,000,000
Burundi	6	1972	100,000-300,000
		1988	250,000
Liberia	3	1989	200,000
Sierra Leone	3	1991	50,000

Source: Bernard Adam, "Arms transfers to African countries, the "control" in conflicts in Africa: Analysis of crisis and crisis prevention measures". Report of the Commission on African Regions in Crisis. King Bandouin Foundation, Medecins Sans Frontiers, 1997.

There are still on-going conflicts in Africa as well as conflicts in the making if measures are not taken by responsible governments and by regional and international organizations with mediation mandates, such as the OAU and the UN Security Council, or special commissions of eminent persons. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is once more facing widespread civil war as a rebel movement started to challenge President Laurent Kabila's government so recently installed since the overthrow of President Mobutu with the help of Rwandese and Congolese Tutsis. Rebels control eastern and northwest parts of the country, supported by Rwanda and Uganda, and President Kabila has persuaded several other nations, including Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, to send troops to assist his government to retain control. A target for the rebels is the southern diamond area of Mbuji-Mayi. This particular conflict is destabilizing the whole region, despite the return of over a million refugees to Rwanda in 1996-1997 and an estimated 161,000 to Burundi.

In parts of the Sudan, Somalia and Uganda fighting continues. The year 1997-1998 also saw war in Guinea-Bissau and intervention in Lesotho by South Africa and

Botswana. In Sierra Leone the civil war has escalated and shows signs of brutal atrocities aimed at women and children of particular ethnic groups or who just get in the way. A fierce struggle for power has disrupted the country and caused an exodus of refugees and internally displaced. The Sierra Leone conflict, like that in the Congo, has involved other African nations, not only in peace-keeping commitments, but also as their territories are sometimes used by rebels as safe areas and as jump-off points for attacks.

Guinea, for example, is facing mounting pressure from rebels in Sierra Leone's conflict. The Nigerian-led West African ECOMOG force, itself suffering casualties, is involved in the United Nations regional peacekeeping efforts. It contains Guinean troops and Guinea shares a border and border towns with Sierra Leone. The situation is demanding heightened Guinean military presence, as rebels move to control much of Sierra Leone's western border district. Thousands of civilians have also fled into Guinean territory to escape the fighting. Ethno-political and land issues have also sparked recent disturbances in Kenya, and Zambia experienced an attempted overthrow of its elected government. Officially, South Africa, Liberia and

In the wake of the genocide in Rwanda, attempts are being made to restore a semblance of governance for all, although the seething problems of ethnicity, land and socioeconomic issues simmer still. Local elections are planned for March 1999 and how these proceed will demonstrate the level of democratic power-sharing and administrative growth and the durability of the peace. Accountability for socio-economic progress tends to be more expected of those legitimately voted into power, both by their electorate and by the international community.

Uganda have resolved their conflicts and are in reconstruction, but violence and crime still plague various parts of these countries.

Border fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea broke out in 1997 and is expected to continue unsettled until the two formerly friendly neighbours accept arbitration for clear border demarcation. Since Eritrea's independence, the two countries had mostly enjoyed good relations but conflict flared up over a number of issues including ownership of border lands and administration of Asseb Port. With Eritrean independence, Ethiopia became a land-locked country.

In Somalia, the situation remains unsettled. The country has been at war since clan leaders came together in 1991 to oust President Mohamed Siad Barre. They then started to fight among themselves, controlling parts of the country, but leaving it with no viable, central government and a divided capital city. Women now control most market places when the sporadic fighting allows.

An International Panel of Eminent Personalities has been formed to investigate the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. After the conflict subsided, Rwandese women found themselves to be the 70 per cent majority of the population. With the men dead, imprisoned, exiled or away fighting or working, the women have had to cope with all walks and sectors of life that were traditionally the men's spheres of influence. The situation with orphaned and unaccompanied children after the genocide compounded the problems of social reconstruction.

In Angola, when civil war re-ignited

in December 1998, the United Nations decided to withdraw its peacekeeping forces. WFP has been feeding hundreds of thousands of refugees. It has been airlifting maize, beans, cooking oil and other supplies into selected areas, due to impassability and insecurity of roads, and torrential rainfall. With the outbreak of fresh fighting, the population of Kuito, for example, a few hundred kilometres from Luanda, doubled to 400,000 as people fled the fighting between government and rebels for the countryside, putting great strain on local resources and further endangering food and personal security in the area.

The media in recent years has been noting the power politics with regard to use and development of the waters and basin of the River Nile, with Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan as the major potential riparian contenders. Existing agreements, many signed between the colonial powers that formerly controlled Egypt and Sudan, or between newly independent States, are said to give almost monopoly control to Egypt, a situation now being increasingly challenged by upstream countries, particularly Ethiopia, a major source of the Nile. Egypt, a country extremely dependent on Nile waters, does not want any upstream dams constructed that would reduce flow. The rumblings from the countries involved should be taken as an early warning of potential geopolitical conflict and efforts should be made to bring about a basin-wide agreement acceptable to upstream and downstream countries. At the Fifth Nile 2002 Conference in Addis Ababa in February 1997, the conclusion was that fair and equitable Nile water utilization was lacking and the status quo favouring Egypt needed to be changed for all basin coun-

tries to benefit. Fresh negotiations and agreements were called for, to promote peaceful and sustainable use of Nile waters for irrigation and other development needs of the riparian States. All ten Nile States want rights to make use of the waters of the Nile and its tributaries, within their borders. Regional cooperation and mediation is clearly needed.

## **B. The major causes of conflict in Africa**

The causes of armed conflict in Africa are as diverse as the continent itself. They have included wars of liberation and independence, border disputes, authoritarian, dictatorial rule, superpower Cold War inter-

When human development is suppressed or neglected and when human rights are persistently abused or ignored, armed conflict to induce change becomes strategic to specific interest groups.

ference in local conflicts, poverty and unemployment, uneven, poorly distributed development, ethno-political movements, religious intolerance, economic and financial crisis, land and environmental

stress and cultural self-assertion. These causes are all closely interrelated and conflicts rarely have one simple explanation. Since the 1970s, but even more so in the 1990s, while the causes of conflict are usually country-specific, the conflicts themselves take on a regional dimension. This was evident in Southern Africa during the struggle against white supremacy and apartheid, in the Horn of Africa in the 1980s, in the impact of the conflict in Liberia on the rest of West Africa and, even more dramatically, in the recent crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The April 1998 Report of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Security Council on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa has contributed greatly to understanding of the problems plaguing many African societies. It has also appropriately challenged development and aid organizations to do better by Africa. Sources of conflict are traced to historical legacies, internal and external factors, economic motives and particular situations.

### **1. The Cold War era and its aftermath**

During the era of the post-World War II period, from around 1950 to 1990, the global conflict called the "Cold War" between Western capitalist and Eastern communist superpowers destabilized many smaller countries. Many internal conflicts in Africa and in other developing countries were easily aggravated and used for external political and economic interests. Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, and the Sudan were some of the countries that fell victim to external intervention and became veritable battlefields. The whole non-aligned movement grew out of the need to evade the intolerable ideological pressure placed on developing nations to choose sides. The rewards for choosing sides usually included economic and military assistance, depending on how strategically necessary a particular African country was, or how much its vote was needed in various international forums. With the end of the Cold War, overt and covert external intervention diminished but also changed forms and methods, largely for economic and professional mercenary motives.

Some experts feel that with the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, communism as a superpower force is no longer seen by the Western industrialized nations as a major threat. In the current balance-of-power, the United States of America and its allies now exercise more of a unipolar hegemony. Yet, in recent years, there have been clashes between proponents of western finance capitalism and eastern fundamentalist religions. Some analysts blame religion for the conflict between Christian and Muslim groups in former Yugoslavia, but larger historical, economic, territorial and ethnicity issues were also at stake. Earlier conflict between the United States and Libya led to bombing of targets in Libya. An air embargo against flights to Libya was also instituted partly as a result of the Government's refusal to hand over suspects in the Lockerbie air disaster incident. In another example, as a result of the bombing of United States Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, the United States carried out retaliatory air

strikes against targets in the Sudan and in Afghanistan.

As with any of the other factors causing invasions, bombings, coups, war and conflict, it is rare to find religious and ideological differences the only factors. Political, cultural and/or territorial and economic dimensions or human rights abuses are usually intertwined with superpower and other external balance-of-power positioning.

In the competition for oil, diamonds and other precious resources in Africa, external interests continue to play a decisive role both in sustaining and suppressing conflicts. Neighbouring States within Africa have also used these conflicts for their own interests. African governments have supported and even instigated armed conflicts in neighbouring countries. International arms merchants and mercenary soldiers also fuel and profit from these wars. Economic interests are also internal to conflicts as seen in Liberia and in Angola. In

### **Conflict over resources and religion in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, people have been forced from their homes due to ethnic conflict over the past thirty years. The ethno-political conflicts go as far back as the Nigerian- Biafran War from 1967 to 1970, in which an estimated two million people died, with 10 million displaced. More recently, the conflicts centre around environmental pollution and poverty in oil-producing areas.

The strategy of rural transformation used by successive Nigerian Governments, emphasized large-scale, mechanized agriculture which caused land hunger among peasants and higher land prices. Land has become scarce and speculative land deals have become a lucrative source of income involving individually appropriated communal land. This has been the case in the southeastern states where population densities are high. In the north of the country, this type of land conflict has also caused the displacement of thousands of farmers and pastoralists.

The worsening social situation in Nigeria is also linked to religion. The north of the country is mostly Muslim. There have been major religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians in northern cities.

Source: Janie Hampton, ed. Internally Displaced Persons, Earthscan Publications, pp.49-52

Liberia, the warring factions battled for control and exploitation of diamonds, timber and other raw materials. Angola's diamond fields offer great motivation and in Sierra Leone also control of territory rich in natural resources was a prime factor. In fact, during the 1997 coup, the Central Bank's reserves were looted.<sup>5</sup>

## **2. Ethno-political conflicts and the failure of post-independence nation building**

Hundreds of years ago, European colonialists encountered a largely tribally organized Africa. Even where empires had formed, they tended to be dominated by a major tribe and culture, as is usually the case historically. The partitioning of Africa among European powers grabbing as much territory as they could, meant that "national" areas belonging to foreign metropolitan powers were forcibly carved out of tribal territories which had not yet built up identities as part of a multi-ethnic nation. The very systems of administration and infrastructure creation, law and education were foreign to most Africans. African political and economic elites formed, but popular participation remained limited. In other words, post-colonial nation building was heavily top-down, with little popular participation or preparation and little or no indigenous infrastructure and administration. Nation building historically, as seen for example in Europe, proceeded over many centuries, across changing borders, through numerous wars, and through many technological revolutions. With fewer resources and little technology, African countries have been expected to build nations in decades.

With African independence, this process of welding together disparate, multi-lingual, multi-religious, even traditionally hostile ethnic groups was continued, with varying degrees of success. With the advent of the liberation movements, the period of stability following independence, for example in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, was short-lived. Demands for more equitable sharing of power and national wealth had not been adequately handled, but these internal conflicts were worsened by the destabilizing effect of apartheid in South Africa. A major underlying cause of most ethno-political conflicts was the failure of the top-down nation-building plans and inability to fulfill the promises made by these young independent African governments. In addition to being top down, state power tended to be dominated by one major ethnic group, which led to a sense of discrimination and violent oppression among the minority groups. Lack of democratization, tribalism, favouritism, nepotism, and state partisanship towards its supporters on the basis of ethnicity tend to fuel such conflicts.

In Senegal, people have been fleeing conflict in the Casamance region while a considerable number of people fled from the northern region of Ghana in 1994 over ethnic land rights issues that ended with 2000 dead and many villages and a large area of cropland destroyed. In 1995, land rights again sparked off conflict in north-eastern Ghana. In Liberia and in Rwanda, the civil wars have officially ended but serious human rights issues have remained. A culture of violent ethnic tension and suspicion has developed in both countries, and this has to be replaced with opportunities to build inter-ethnic trust through dialogue and community development activities.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. The Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, New York, April 1998.

In Mali, ethnic unrest emerged in mid-1990 when the Tuaregs, claiming marginalization, clashed with the government. Fighting was sporadic and, flared up again in 1994, having by then grown to include interfactional clashes among different rebel groups. The Government has been using dialogue and appeasement to solve the situation, and are targeting agricultural development, employment and the environment in the conflict areas. Cultural assertion is sometimes offered as an explanation for the conflict in Algeria, seen as a multifaceted response to a series of structural changes and state-directed policies, not just the religious issues. There are usually additional and interconnected factors in conflicts caused by religious differences.

In many post-independent African countries, given that some tribal, ethnic, religious or economic group dominated political and public affairs, the policy environment soon led to the abandonment of political pluralism and resulted in single party or military rule. Quite frequently, authoritarian rule rested on a narrow ethnic base and systems of patronage and privilege, discrimination and inequality that excluded other ethnic and religious groups making up the society. The Tutsi/Hutu genocidal conflict, the conflict in Northern Ghana and the intensification of the Tuareg rebellion in Niger are also examples of such conflict. Akwetey stresses that violence breaks out as a result of failure to “develop an adequate institutional political framework for the peaceful management of conflicts”.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1990s, internally displaced persons and refugees emerged from a new

set of countries that had not had much displacement in the past, Djibouti, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo. Further, countries such as Burundi, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of the Congo that previously only reported refugees are now also producing internally displaced estimates.<sup>7</sup>

Authoritarian, dictatorial, non-inclusive rule does not fit well with modern ideas of good governance and is out of place in this global age of democratization, popular participation for development and encouragement of private and civil sector growth. Systems of patronage and privilege, discrimination and inequality that exclude other ethnic and religious groups making up a society breed conflict inevitably. Although political liberalization and economic globalization have triggered change in many societies, moving them towards more inclusive and democratic systems of governance, violent outbreaks of ethno-political conflicts have marred progress in many areas and revived hostilities. In many countries, one party or military rule led to a disproportionately large allocation of the GNP on military and security activities and a decrease in government expenditure on essential basic services, such as health and education. Even during the worst famines of the mid- 1980s, the level of military expenditure did not decrease.

### **3. Poverty, unemployment and economic crisis**

Even when per capita income rises and growth rates show increase, poverty is not only on the rise in Africa but the gap between African developing countries

6 O.E. Akwetey, 1996, p. 103.

7 Janie Hampton, ed., *Internally Displaced People: A Global IDP Survey*, Earthscan Publications, 1998.

## Chronology of a conflict: The case of Sierra Leone

The struggle for political control in Sierra Leone began in 1991 when rebels crossed the border from Liberia and took over control in the southern and eastern parts of the country. Support for the rebels grew, and a military coup overthrew the government of President Momoh in 1992. The successor government of Captain Valentine Strasser continued to fight the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in both the cities and rural provinces. but by 1994, RUF was operating throughout the country, and might have taken Freetown if the Government had not resorted to the use of foreign mercenaries. President Strasser was overthrown by his Deputy, Brigadier Bio and elections were held in 1996, in which Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) was victorious. Despite a cease fire and a peace agreement, the fighting continued and President Kabbah was overthrown in a coup led by Major Koroma and an Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). Since May 1997, hundreds have died in fighting between various factions. The eastern diamond towns such as Segbwema, Koidu and Tongofield. are considered strategic by both rebel and government forces.

The conflict has been extremely destructive, even at the village level. There have been extra-judicial killings, use of torture and other human rights abuses and large-scale migration of refugees and of internally displaced, some of whom were able to return to their homes during a lull in the fighting in 1996. Some 10,000 people have been killed, thousands more maimed and disfigured, and 2.1 million displaced, about 275,000 of whom are refugees. Women have undergone rape, sexual abuses and mutilations reminiscent of the gender-based sexual violence that was rampant in Rwanda. Children have suffered the most, comprising about half of the dead. At the height of the displacement, some 700,000 children were among the displaced, including 9,500 unaccompanied minors. By March 1998, an estimated 200,000 internally displaced required humanitarian assistance.

Source: Janie Hampton ed., *Internally Displaced People*, Earthscan Publications, 1998, pp. 53-55;

and wealthy industrialized nations is widening instead of diminishing. Evidently, governments, international development aid agencies and financial institutions, Africa's middle classes and private sectors, and civil society have not yet been able to come to grips with the causes of poverty in Africa.

More than one billion people in the world live in abject poverty, without even enough to eat. A large proportion, the majority of whom are women, have very limited access to income, resources, education, health care or adequate nutrition, particularly in Africa and the least devel-

oped countries. Recent studies on poverty in Africa show that poverty has increased over the recent past. Ravallion and Chen report results for a sample of 19 sub-Saharan African countries representing 65.9 per cent of the 1993 population of the region. An international poverty line of \$US1.00 a day per person was used and was kept constant at the relevant initial survey date. According to these results, between 1987 and 1993, poverty increased in sub-Saharan Africa for two poverty measures used. The head count ratio increased from 38.5 per cent in 1987 to 39.1 per cent in 1993, while the poverty-gap index

increased from 14.4 per cent in 1987 to 15.3 per cent in 1993.<sup>8</sup>

Intensified poverty, unemployment and social disintegration have helped to

**Uneven development and opportunity exacerbates poverty. Interest groups can react violently in the absence of social, political and economic opportunities for ensuring human security and human development.**

cause conflict. They also accompany conflicts and the rapid processes of change and adjustment. Threats to human well being, such as environmental risks, have

also been globalized. The insecurity that many vulnerable people face about the future is intensifying. Poverty, unemployment and social disintegration too often result in isolation, marginalization and violence. Within many societies, both in developed and developing countries, the gap between rich and poor has increased.

One of the profound challenges facing African countries today is the need to create sufficient employment opportunities for the increasing labour force. Most African countries report urban unemployment rates in the range of 20-30 per cent, underemployment rates in the 25-40 per cent range, youth unemployment rates in 25-40 per cent range, and women's unemployment range at twice the national average.

There are large areas of Africa devoid of any modern self-generating economic and social development. War-induced food insecurity and environmental distress such

as drought and famine compound the extreme poverty and deeply felt frustration that this generates. Many of the conflicts that occurred in the Sahel in the 1980s can be linked to such environmental distress and pre-existing poverty. Although religious intolerance was a factor, it was not a new phenomenon.

Control of national resources, through political and economic systems, is a high stake for ruling elites who often accept their wealth, power and influence as a right, and wish the status quo to continue. Conflicts have a way of proving to them that change is inevitable and that the new systems developed have to share the power and distribute the benefits from national resource use more equitably. Otherwise, frustrations and tensions build up and can spill over into coups, full-scale war, armed rebellion or civil unrest.

## **C. Consequences of African conflicts**

The immediate, short- and long-term consequences of conflict have been discussed extensively, both in the popular media and other publications. The situation implies lack of social stability and threat to human, economic and institutional development. Efforts to estimate the costs of conflict usually focus on human, political, material and economic, ecological, social, cultural, psychological and spiritual costs.

### **1. "Missing lives"**

The human cost refers to the number of dead and wounded, displaced and

<sup>8</sup> M. Ravallion and S. Chen, "What can new survey data tell us about recent changes in distribution and poverty?", *World Bank Economic Research*, Vol. II, No.2, 1997.

war-induced famine victims. There are codes of conduct governing military behaviour, the most widely respected of which should be the Geneva Conventions regarding the 'protection' of civilians and war prisoners'. At present, however, this is not the case. The vast majority of victims of conflicts in Africa, both those that have recently ended and those still raging are unarmed civilians, children, women and the elderly. For its part, the African Development Bank (ADB) arrived at an estimate of a higher magnitude after taking into account factors such as the "murderous phase of the Angolan War", the slow rehabilitation of health and drought relief in Mozambique, and famine-induced deaths in the Sudan and Ethiopia. For the period 1980-1993, the total death toll for the same set of countries is estimated at seven million by ADB, to which was added 1.5 million for Rwanda and Burundi alone, in 1994.<sup>9</sup> However unreliable the data may be, it is safe to say that the number of people who have died in Africa as a result of conflict has been devastating to the continent, to countries and subregions, to cities and to communities.

The overwhelming majority of casualties are presumed to be unarmed civilians, particularly infants and children under five years old and at least ten per cent of the elderly population (people over fifty years old.) These two groups are particularly vulnerable to the interaction of malnutrition, absence of basic medical care and to displacement. In addition to the collapse of health services, the major cause of death has been lack of capacity to import and transport food during droughts

and crises, as in the Sudan and Angola. Direct combatant casualties accounted for less than 5 per cent. In Rwanda and Burundi, 95 per cent of the victims who lost their lives were civilians.<sup>10</sup>

A new and contributing feature of this conflict is the easy availability and increasing use of light weapons, including anti-personnel mines. Even when the international community announces a ban on the sale of armaments to potential conflict areas, the flow of arms continues and many external companies and mercenary organizations reap profits. All States have the right and responsibility to defend themselves by force of arms if necessary, but should not become stooges in the global proliferation of arms, while profiteering, immoral individuals and companies reap financial benefit from Africa's suffering and destruction. It has been suggested that African countries, to reduce military expenditure and armed aggression in the region, should sign non-aggression pacts and security cooperation agreements, participate in joint military training exercises and patrols and harmonize policies against illegal trafficking of arms and munitions. Arms exporting countries also have a responsibility to monitor the exportation of arms to areas of conflict and tension.

In addition, the growth of paramilitary forces in Africa is not bound by a military code of conduct, and the conscription and forced abduction of children, both boys and girls, as fighters and sexual slaves is an affront to human dignity and human rights. In the war in Liberia, it is estimated that 70 per cent of former combatants were children of 15 years and under. Such fac-

<sup>9</sup> ADB, 1995, p. 36

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 37

tors and elements of conflicts wreak havoc during wars and perpetuate violence long after the peace process has begun. The large number of victims of anti-personnel mines in numerous countries, the growing incidence of rape, assault and other forms of violence against women and girls, and the overall alarming spiral of violence and criminality in post-conflict societies are but a few cases in point.

## **2. Anti-personnel landmines**

In many of these countries, one of the vestiges of war is hidden land mines. They maim or kill many people including girls and women and are designed to explode with the weight of a three-year old child. Mines were often laid with the intention of disrupting the social and economic life, including production, and were laid in paths used mainly by girls and women to fetch fuelwood and water and in land farmed by women. Angola is the most mined country in the world, after thirty years of conflict. With an estimated 6 million mines to worry about, mines continue to be laid as the civil war flares up again. It is estimated that more than 60 per cent of territory in a third of the country is mined and 30 per cent of the territory in at least three other provinces. In this context, pursuing agricultural production and fetching fuelwood and water are fraught with danger. There are an estimated 32,000 maimed and crippled survivors in the country. In Mozambique the problem is on a smaller scale but is nevertheless immense, with an estimated one million unexploded mines.<sup>11</sup> Expensive mine clearance projects have to be a

major part of reconstruction in these countries. Mining of roads has implied unnecessary detours, increased the cost of time and fuel and increased the price of goods. The cost of land mines is not only the war-induced environmental destruction and the maimed and the dead during the conflict, but even when the conflict has been resolved their presence remains as a terrible risk in peacetime, particularly to farmers, many of whom are women and girls.

Princess Diana of the United Kingdom visited Angola to publicize the landmine problem and raise funds to demine territory and to aid the maimed and crippled survivors. Pledges were made but government programmes and NGO activity to demine and assist victims are currently little funded, due to donor fatigue and to preferred investment in broader health and other social sector programmes. Her death in August 1997 was a blow to the international campaign to raise funds and to ban the use of landmines by all nations. The Ottawa Convention has since been signed by 127 nations but there is inertia to implement it. Domestic politics and squabbling among the NGOs meant to facilitate the work have also delayed action.

## **3. Displacement**

Conflicts have triggered massive displacement of populations throughout the African continent. It has been observed that "parallel to death though less permanently and irrevocably devastating, is displacement, internally and (secondarily) as international refugees".<sup>12</sup> More than 28 African countries are either pro-

<sup>11</sup> Newsweek, March 1999.

ducers or recipients of refugees and in most cases they are both. In 1995, more than half of the population of Liberia and more than one quarter of the population of Rwanda and Sierra Leone were either

internally displaced persons (IDPs) or were refugees in other countries. Table 3 provides a profile of the magnitude of displacement in some of the most affected countries.

**Table 3: Largest groups of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa, 1998 (unless otherwise indicated)**

Country	Refugees	Internally displaced persons
Angola	300,000*	1,500,000***
Burundi	515,800	586,100*
Eritrea	300,000	-
Liberia	486,700	166,000
Rwanda	255,000*	1,000,000***
Sierra Leone	328,300	670,000
Somalia	424,400*	200,000**
Sudan	351,300	1,700,000***

Source: UNHCR at a Glance, 1997, UNHCR by Numbers, 1998, UNHCR, Geneva.

\* As of November, 1997

\*\* North-Western Somalia

\*\*\*Source: Adjusted from Nafziger, 1996 (cited in UNCTAD, 1997: 137). Data is for 1995.

The Sudan is home to more internally displaced persons than any other country, with an estimated 4 million or one seventh of its total population.<sup>13</sup> Other African countries have large numbers of internally displaced populations with varying estimates.

They include the Democratic Republic of the Congo with 225 000, Kenya with 210,000, Ghana with 150,000 and Mali with 10,000.<sup>14</sup> The 1998 Global IDP Survey funded by the Norwegian Refugee Council provides estimates, shown in table 4.

**Table 4. Conflict-induced internal displacement in selected African countries 1997-1998**

Conflicts	Estimated no. of internally displaced
Angola	1.2 million
Burundi	551 000
Congo Brazzaville	240 000
Dem. Rep. of the Congo*	1 million
Ethiopia	15 000
Ghana	20 000
Kenya	100 000
Liberia	725 000
Mali	100 000 + 10 000 demobilized soldiers
Senegal	5 000
Sierra Leone	200 000
Somalia	250 000-350 000
South Africa	20 000
Sudan	4 million
Uganda	400 000

Source: Janie Hampton, ed. *Internally Displaced Persons*, Earthscan Publications.

\* Democratic Republic of the Congo. Formerly Zaire.

12 ADB, 1995, op.cit.

13 UNHCR. *Population Reports*, 1996, p.7

14 Ibid., p.7

Displacement creates huge problems of protection and assistance. Resources have to be mobilized, camps established and managed, information systems set up, field support, local support, technical co-operation projects, harmonization of national law with international humanitarian human rights standards, and strengthening civil society and NGO action. Although NGOs do a great deal to promote self-sufficiency and minimize aid dependency, since displacement is treated as a temporary phenomenon, there is little investment in the transient structures of camps for the displaced.

Human rights field officers play an integral role in the establishment of confidence necessary for voluntary return and act as a deterrent to human rights abuses. They have to be sufficiently deployed in areas with large concentrations of IDPs, to gather information on the IDP situation, analyze trends and broker available assistance. There are concerns that UN and aid agency staff need more training in human rights norms and IDP concerns to be able to raise protection issues and to better integrate protection concerns with the provision of relief. Camp administrative systems should involve the displaced in planning and administration and encourage refugee autonomy and self-sufficiency. Activities include registration of the population, recording births, deaths, new arrivals, maintenance and sanitation, dispute resolution, transport, medical crises and epidemics, health care, camp security and aid distribution, particularly food aid. There is need for non-intrusive programmes, educational assistance, and clothing. No permanent

expatriate presence is recommended. Camp committees are organized but the larger the camp the greater the social problems.

The experience of camps set up for Rwandese refugees in Zaire and Tanzania from 1994 to 1996 showed that international agencies were not very effective in identifying individuals for ensuring accountable distribution of aid. Some camps were "no-go" areas for international agencies beyond the distribution point for food delivery. They tended to function as zones in which those responsible for the Rwandan genocide were able to continue to intimidate camp populations and divert aid to military and paramilitary personnel.

Women and girls tend to do best in smaller camps, with access to adequate plots of land, but camps are usually large and located in barren areas of the host country.<sup>15</sup> The lamentable conditions in most camps force refugees to go to urban centres, where they are harassed by police and usually exploited by employers.

#### **4. Differential displacement impact on men and women**

It is estimated that African women and their children make up the majority of the refugees and displaced, with estimates ranging between 65 and 85 per cent.<sup>16</sup> In 1996, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) stated that women and their dependents, including children and the elderly comprised 80 per cent of refugee populations. A camp study done in Ghana reported that over 70 per cent of a total refugee population of 13,500 people were

<sup>15</sup> *Forced Migration Review*, August 1998.

<sup>16</sup> AFWIC and UNICEF 1994, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> UNFPA, 1996

women and children.<sup>17</sup> Since 1993, UNHCR has provided annual year-end estimates of the sex and age composition of the refugee population and these vary widely year by year, even in a single country.

In her study of post-conflict Mozambique, Baden notes that “no source was identified to establish overall sex ratios for the refugee and displaced population, although most accounts state, often without substantiation, that women and women and children were the majority in the refugee and displaced population”<sup>18</sup> Despite their majority, early planning for the displaced did not take women and gender into account. Another factor that has been frequently ignored in project development was the greater frequency of female-headed households in refugee populations.<sup>19</sup> One explanation offered was that women tended to stay in the camps while men sought work elsewhere. Official statistics on the displaced in 20 districts in Mozambique showed that there was a high-proportion of female-headed households among the displaced, due to male deaths, migration, and high levels of divorce and separation.

For most displaced women in Mozambique, their own survival strategies were developed before project assistance could be mobilized. No refugees were involved in any of the overall decision-making and management committees, thus rendering them, both men and women, powerless to shape policy or affect choice of activities. Where women were involved, their skills were not correctly evaluated. Traditional labour roles were accepted in an emergency situation that demanded far more innovative ways and means. Instead women and girls were limited to homecraft and cake-baking activities, with more of a social and recreational purpose than training or income-generation. Where men's incomes were marginal, those of women were barely measurable. It was found that women's participation and roles increased and expanded when both formal and informal activity and the household division of labour were taken into account. When valued only for domestic labour, such as time-consuming fetching of water and firewood, food preparation, and childcare, women had little time and received little encouragement for project commitments.

### **Impact of development-oriented NGO projects on Mozambican refugee survival in Malawi**

NGO management limitations have been unresponsive to local economic conditions and skills; inadequate methods of recruitment; production, unsustainable business planning and marketing constraints; limited refugee participation and the imposition of foreign management ideologies; gender inequalities and inadequate gender-related policies. Analysis of these shortcomings offers guidance to the mobilization of relief and development projects in large-scale refugee resettlement and repatriation.

Source: Community Development Journal, “Refugee Survival and NGO Project Assistance: Mozambican Refugees in Malawi”, Vol. 31, No. 3, July 1996, pp. 214-229.

<sup>18</sup> Baden, 1977, p 15-16.

<sup>19</sup> *Community Development Journal*. “Refugee Survival and NGO Project Assistance: Mozambican Refugees in Malawi”, Vol.31, No.3, July 1996, pp.214-229.

In spite of the shortcomings, UNHCR, the agency in charge of implementing refugee law, and some international NGOs, provide protection for those who are recognized as refugees, unlike the situation for the internally displaced. Progress has also been made in taking measures which address gender biases embedded in existing international instruments. The 1979 UNHCR *Handbook on Procedures* utilized gender-neutral language and failed to differentiate the needs of male and female refugees. As of 1985, however, the agency began to identify the 'special problems' of refugee women and girls particularly those related to issues of physical safety and sexual exploitation.

Recent war atrocities against women and girls in Rwanda and in Sierra Leone have underscored the need to address the specific problems faced by refugee women. Existing international and regional instruments appear not to recognize the nature of gender-based violation and persecution or the specific needs of women refugees. The main refugee instruments do not refer to women or sex at all. Moreover, neither the content of a 'well-founded fear of persecution' which is the basis on which a grant of refugee status is made, nor the five elements on which a claim for refugee status can be entertained (race, religion, political opinion, membership in a social group) include sex as grounds upon which refugee status may be determined. By utilizing such restricted criteria, the existing international instruments fail to accord equal importance to economic and social rights. Hence, women's 'persecution' and their need for 'protection' arise from the violation of these economic, social and cultural rights.<sup>20</sup>

20 Oloko-Onyango, 1995

21 Beyani, 1994, p. 8

The most pervasive and widespread abuse of women and girls during conflict situations are rape, sexual slavery, abuse, and extortion. In addition, they experienced physical insecurity during flight and in places of refuge. According to Beyani, "Women seeking refugee status in their own right and not in association with their husbands, fathers, brothers or uncles are often subject to sexual demands in return for refugee status. Women who breach refugee camp regulations in certain circumstances are often asked for sex by male camp officials, in lieu of punishment. The administrative regime of refugee camps is heavily male-oriented and excludes the participation of women in decision-making and in the areas of interest to them and their families, such as their physical security, and the mechanics of food distribution. In some cases, refugee women have had to submit to sexual extortion in order to obtain food to feed their families."<sup>21</sup>

The study concluded that, refugee assistance failed to improve women's ability to generate income significantly or to reduce women's work burden. It also noted that the programme failed to enhance women's role in decision-making structures and that food relief policy and structures for refugee representation reflected and frequently exacerbated existing gender inequalities. In spite of women's being responsible for the provision of food prior to displacement, in this and other refugee settings, women were rendered as passive recipients at distribution.

These findings are confirmed by another study on the plight of Mozambican women refugees in Zimbabwe. Although

women were the majority in the camps because the men moved more freely into the towns and local communities in search of work, women had little say in how food was administered and other camp decisions made. As for training programmes 'women were left out in the cold ... even in areas often considered female domains'. In one camp when pre-school teachers were being trained, out of 22 teachers trained since 1994, only three were female. And of the 18 literacy instructors trained only one was female.<sup>22</sup>

There are also considerations to do with the reduced abilities of women displaced to generate income and obtain economic assistance, care for the children and the elderly, and play their role in ensuring food security. They also have reduced opportunity for training, education and employment.

In response to the growing incidence and reported cases of sexual violence, and the use of rape as a political weapon in a large number of conflict situations particularly Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia, the UNHCR has issued its new *Guidelines on the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence Against Refugees* which contains elements with broad implications. These include an emphasis on the linkage between gender violence and domestic legislation on rape, physical attack, and sexual discrimination and its condemnation of persecution through sexual violence that it considered as a "gross violation of human rights". Another important measure is the inclusion of a broader definition of violence that includes practices such as female genital mutilation.

In another move in this area, the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) has added to international law and morality, by including rape as a war crime. The genocidal situation in Rwanda has forced the attention of the world community to the country's plight and the need to punish the crimes committed, and to deter repetition of what happened. ICTR is currently bringing charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity against scores of accused in the international court in Arusha, Tanzania. Not only the Rwandan Government but also countries which had peace-keeping soldiers killed in the struggle, and who support the development of an international system of justice, wanted the establishment of ICTR, or a chance to try specific suspects themselves. Belgium for example, has been seeking the arrest and conviction of those who killed Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana and the ten Belgian peace-keeping soldiers assigned to protect her.

With regard to refugees and internally displaced people, there is increasing opinion that camps are a poor solution for refugees. For social, economic, environmental and health reasons, putting refugees in camps have negative consequences, not only for the refugees but also for the national population and governments. However, host governments and the international aid organizations seem to prefer the camp mode for ease of administration. Camps have practical advantages from the point of view of service delivery, accountability, identification of individuals, physical access, cost-effectiveness of operations, efficiency and transparency of aid and delivery.

<sup>22</sup> Made, 1994, pp. 17-18.

"Camps" describe both small open settlements where a village atmosphere is more possible and the larger crowded camps where they are more dependent on assistance. Camps imply size, density, dependence on external aid and a high level of control over the inhabitants by national and international authorities.

### **Why do people flee to become homeless and displaced?**

People flee to escape death, mutilation, rape, terrorism, eviction from their homes, looting, forced labour, forced induction into the army, forced relocation and, largely, to get out of the way of advancing military offenses. Military operations all over the world tend to be associated with widespread abuse of civilians, including summary execution, torture, rape, looting and destruction of property. Whole villages may be destroyed and their inhabitants killed or forcibly relocated, to cut support for opposition groups.

Camps have their own internal power structures. In the former eastern Zaire, for example, they have been controlled by armed Interhamwe or Far and often humanitarian assistance including food was channeled through them, adding to their power and control over others – women in particular – who had to resort to sexual favours in

order to obtain necessities for survival. Quite frequently, official forces within camps have abused their power over others. In this way, camp populations can in effect be held hostage. Camps also tend to imply adverse consequences on human health and the human psyche. Even where the idea of "agricultural settlements" has been tried in order to reduce dependence and increase self-reliance, they tend to be just as constraining and overcrowded in relation to numbers ver-

sus land, water, food, shelter and other resources. Such settlements can be just as cut off from the "normal" life of local, surrounding population, with whom there is little mixing or integration.<sup>23</sup> A mentality of "encampment", temporary measures, short-term solutions becomes entrenched, and others wield the major decisions about life.

Camp life for women and girls, with their special social and hygiene needs, family nurturing responsibilities and daily household chores, can be very demanding and demeaning. Generally, refugees are separated from the locals, and are sometimes further marginalized by placement on poor quality land that is not easily accessible or cultivated. Some prefer spontaneous settlement outside camps, possible for the few with contacts and skills. Most prefer smaller camps with access to land for growing food or a chance for permanent resettlement. In some countries, refugees have been able to negotiate dispersed settlement with local authorities and by international organizations playing a supportive and facilitating role, from Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire to Senegal, Uganda, the Sudan and Malawi.

Despite all these factors, reports indicate that there can be an amazing spirit of solidarity among refugees and the internally displaced, despite the shock and trauma of having to abandon their homes and turn to others for help. For example, older camp members try to help the new arrivals with food and basics, remembering their own dismal arrivals.

No international legal norm exists explicitly protecting people against individual

23 Richard Black, 'Putting Refugees in camps', *Forced Migration Review*, August 1998.

or mass transfer from one region to another within their own country. The norm must be inferred from the right to freedom of residence and movement.

Humanitarian assistance organizations working on planning, implementation and evaluation of psychological programmes try to develop interactive teaching materials and exercises that are relevant to different cultural settings. The Andrew Mellon Foundation has started working on a psychological training module. Such assistance is sometimes, though not always, best initiated by trained individuals from outside the society, who have no ethnic or political involvement. The initiation of communication and dialogue between the Tutsis and the Hutus in Rwanda and in countries of refuge was a challenging example. As in Bosnia Herzegovina, reconstruction had to go on among those responsible for the genocide as well as among the victims.

## 5. Economic losses

Both the countries directly engaged in conflict and the regions in which they are located are affected. In Mozambique, between 1980 and 1994, GDP per capita fell by 50 per cent. It was estimated that by 1988 - in just four years, the civil war cost in excess of \$15 billion or four times GDP. During 1980-1988, the total cost of the Mozambican conflict to Southern African Development Community (SADC) member countries was estimated to be at least \$US60 billion.<sup>24</sup> For the period 1980-1993, the total GDP loss for the

Horn of Africa as a result of conflict in Ethiopia, Eritrea, the Sudan and Somalia was estimated at about \$25 million.<sup>25</sup>

In West Africa, in the short period between 1989 and 1993, the civil war in Liberia reduced the country's GDP by more than 75 per cent, while the GDP declined by half between 1991 and 1993.<sup>26</sup> The recent crisis in the Great Lakes Region has been equally devastating. The per capita GDP of Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire together declined by a cumulative 63 per cent from 1990 to 1996, that is an average annual rate of 9 per cent. In Burundi, the economy is estimated to have contracted by more than 20 per cent over the last four years.<sup>27</sup> These costs also have an international dimension. Excluding the cost of refugee resettlement, in 1987-1991, UNHCR spent \$126 million on refugee programmes while the United States spent \$97.6 million for humanitarian aid destined for Operational Lifeline Sudan during 1989-1993.<sup>28</sup> The loss of human and institutional resources, decline in production, the move from a formal to an informal economy, disruption of transport and marketing systems and widespread destruction of infrastructure all have very long-term consequences.

## 6. High social costs

In some countries, the crisis has triggered the collapse of essential social services, such as primary health care, schools and water schemes. In Mozambique, between 1983 and 1994 almost half of the

24 UNCTAD, 1998, p. 139.

25 ADB, 1996, 39

26 UNCTAD, 1997, p. 139

27 ADB, 1998, p.16

28 UNCTAD, 1998, op. cit.

schools were destroyed or closed. In Southern Sudan, production, social systems, health and educational services have collapsed and life expectancy at birth has fallen to 36 years. The end of conflict often does not translate into quick recovery, especially where the human, institutional and infrastructure losses have been substantial.

For women, war and the end of war, lack of employment and housing and the breakdown of social norms and family ties have led to a great increase in prostitution as well as the proliferation of other sexual survival strategies of various kinds, even among very young girls.<sup>29</sup> Dislocation has also led to a substantive increase in begging, street boys and girls, petty crime and illegal trade. Alarming too has been the rapid increase of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in refugee camps, areas occupied by the inter-

nally displaced, in host countries as well as in the countries and areas of origin to which many displaced persons return.

Until recently, humanitarian agencies have neglected the treatment of STDs in refugee situations. For example, in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa, only two out of eight refugee camps provided comprehensive treatment at separate STD clinics and even this limited service was provided mostly to men. Nor did they include treatment of partners, health education or follow up and counseling. In the case of women, STDs and HIV/AIDS were only identified during pregnancy and childbirth.

Extremely poor human development indicators prevail in war-torn countries in Africa. Tables 5 and 6 present education and health indicators respectively, in selected African countries that have experi-

**Table 5: Education indicators in selected sub-Saharan African countries**

Country	% Illiterate >15 years		Primary enrolment 1990-1996 (Gross)		% Last Year Primary		Secondary enrolment (Gross)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Angola*	44*	71*	95	87	34**	34**	-	-
Burundi	51	78	76	62	73	78	8	5
Congo, D.R.	13*	32*	86*	59*	86	44	31	14
Eritrea	-	-	52	41	-	-	17	13
Ethiopia	55	75	27	19	26	31	12	11
Liberia	46	78	51*	28*	-	-	10	5
Mozambique	42	77	69	52	47**	47**	9	6
Rwanda	30	48	78	76	50	50	11	9
Sierra Leone	55	82	60	42	-	-	22	12
Somalia	64*	86*	15*	8*	-	-	-	-
Sudan	42	65	59	45	94**	94**	24	19
Uganda	26	50	76	63	55**	55**	15*	9*

Source: UNFPA; *The State of World Population, 1997*, Government of Uganda: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 1995; *State of the World's Children 1999*, UNICEF

\*Source: *State of the World's Children 1999*, UNICEF. In the case of Angola, Liberia, Somalia, data refer to years or periods other than those specified in the column heading, differ from the standard definition, or refer to only part of the country.

\*\*Male and female combined (source: *State of the World's Children 1999*). Figure is for % of primary school entrants reaching grade 5. For secondary school enrollment, the figure is for 1990-1996.

29 Baden, 1997; Tadesse, 1994; UNIFEM and UNICEF, 1994).

enced conflict. In turn, such low indicators slow down the speed of post-conflict recovery. Lack of investment in health and education over time shows up starkly in the medium- to long term-development of these countries.

Women's health involves the entire range of issues that touch on sickness, disease, wellness, and well being as well as those activities of prevention, diagnosing, healing, caring and curing. Health in this sense is a way of total wellbeing which is not only determined by biological factors and reproduction, but also by the effects of workload, nutrition, stress, war and migration, among others.<sup>30</sup> Many people's pre-flight health condition is exacerbated by displacement, often characterized by social instability, extreme forms of deprivation, poor sanitation, overcrowded living conditions and powerlessness—especially among women and adolescents. Refugee camps and areas inhabited by internally displaced persons are constantly faced with major epidemics of communicable diseases such as cholera, measles, dysentery and meningitis. Malaria is also a constant threat. Along with malnutrition and disruptions of childcare practices these situations have been lethal for children. Consequently, child and maternal mortality and morbidity are excessively high in camps.

The specific health needs of women and girls in situations of war and conflict in Africa were the major concern of a joint UNIFEM and UNICEF publication covering case studies from Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Southern Sudan, Liberia and Kenya. The overall environment described by these studies is that of dislocation,

physical danger, minimal food, inadequate shelter and sanitation, heavy workload, cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and early marriage, frequent pregnancies and lack of access to basic health services. The resultant health problems include high rates of maternal morbidity and mortality, high-risk pregnancies, unsafe abortions, miscarriages, stillbirths and low-weight births, lack of information and protection against STDs and HIV/AIDS, psycho-social traumas resulting from rape, guilt, loss and death of spouses and children, and widespread wife battering. While all these gender-specific health problems also exist in developing countries not affected by complex humanitarian emergencies, the magnitude of the disabling health environment increases dramatically in conflicts, particularly in the situation of displacement.

## **7. Conflict-induced changes in women's gender roles**

Conflict, especially displacement and refugee experiences, change people's political views. One of the major results of the conflict in Rwanda was widowhood, requiring increased women participation in income-generating activities and community affairs. Another major result was the increase in the proportion of women in the population from just over half to about 70 per cent, higher in areas hardest hit by the massacres.

For both men and women, whether a conflict situation opens up disadvantage or opportunity in economic, educational or political activities depends on how distressed is their situation, their level of community organization, extent of assistance

<sup>30</sup> M. A. Koblinsky, et al.

Table 6: Health indicators in selected sub-Saharan African countries

Country	Total population (Mission) 1997	Life expectancy		Maternal Mortality Ratio	Total fertility rate (Period)	% Access Basic care*	% Births with trained attendant	Contraceptive prevalence	
		M	F					Any method	Modern method
Burundi	6.4	45.5	48.8	13000	6.28	80	24	9	1
Eritrea	3.4	49.1	52.1	1400	5.34	-	6	-	-
Ethiopia	60.1	48.4	51.6	1400	7.00	46	8	5	4
Mozambique	18.3	45.5	48.4	1500	6.06	39	30	4	3
Rwanda	5.9	40.8	43.4				26		
Somalia	10.2	47.4	43.4	1300	6.00	80	2	-	-
Uganda	20.8	40.4	42.3	1200	7.10	27	38	21	13
Angola	11.6	44.9	48.1	1500	6.6930	3	17	-	-
Zaire	48.0	51.3	54.5	870	6.24	26	-	8	2
Sudan	27.9	53.6	36.4	660	4.61	70	86	8	7
Liberia	2.5	50.0	53.0	560	6.33	39	58	6	5
Sierra Leone	4.4	36.0	39.1	1800	6.06	38	25	-	-

Source: UNFPA, The State of World Population 1997.

\*Access to basic care measures the proportion of the population that reach appropriate local health services by local means of transportation within one hour, as explained in the State of the World's Children 1996.

Power relations are reformulated through both the fight and the flight. Disruption of societal relations involves personal and societal losses but can function positively in the long run by dismantling the existing power and decision-making structures, leaving room and opportunity for reconstructing more functional ones.

from aid agencies, and the individual's own determination to succeed. The ways in

which women respond are largely a factor of their pre-war positioning in the society and the economy. The coping mechanisms of professional women without jobs differ from those of the rural women who intensify subsistence agriculture and livestock raising.

Many rural and urban women go into petty trading.

One of the most visible impacts of war has been women's heightened role

in the productive economy. In Angola, the war intensified a parallel economy in which women are said to have controlled nearly 80 per cent of the distribution. In Ethiopia, large numbers of women were employed in the construction industry as unskilled day labourers while others with more assets engaged in the growing import trade by bringing goods mostly from Middle Eastern and Asian countries. They used the country's strategic location to gain heightened mobility and international business experience. Many Ethiopian women went to live and work in the Middle East, Europe and the United States from where they sent regular remittances to their families in Ethiopia. In a society steeped in patriarchal clan structures, many Somali women have had to take on new roles, often as sole providers for their families. Some have been the beneficiaries of microcredit loans and, in many cases, women are the ones largely responsible for what reconstruction has been taking place in communities.

## Collapse of the State in Somalia

Somalia represents a special case due to the complete collapse of the State prior to the civil war. The country has been at war since clan leaders came together in 1991 to oust President Mohamed Siad Barre and then started to fight among themselves. Anarchy ensued. The clan leaders or "warlords" controlled only parts of the country, leaving it with no viable, central government, a divided capital city and an almost total breakdown of civil institutions, law and order and social services, with severe consequences for the health and education sectors. Removable public and private property was looted down to windows and doors in most cities, largely by young people. The capital Mogadishu has been devastated, becoming a place of daily gunbattles and merciless looting. The United Nations Mission in Somalia was not successful in its intervention to restore peace and had to be withdrawn. Some reports blamed unequal aid distribution and clan favouritism as underlying causes of the war, compounded by accusations of theft and corruption of public and aid resources by individuals before, during and after the conflict.

Muslim fundamentalists tried to fill the power void. The most fertile part of the country, which has only 2 per cent arable land, is in the south. The area became very unstable and violent, severely afflicting agricultural production and preventing food distribution. In the northwest, an independent state of Somaliland has been declared but is not yet recognized by the United Nations. A succession of self-appointed transitional administrations have not been able to build large enough constituencies to govern effectively, or even keep the peace. After the collapse of the socialist state economy, the private sector has been expanding and is run almost entirely by mothers, wives and daughters. In the cities and in the rural areas, the men are largely unemployed or serve in militias. Women run not just their homes but also the market places.

In the absence of a central government to lead the reconstruction effort and serve as a leader and partner for the international community, aid workers are achieving results by going directly to small communities on a regular basis. The needs of those villages that have absorbed hundreds and thousands of displaced people tended to get the most attention. Villages where clan structures were supportive of community development and where there were fewer guns, were more accessible to relief and development assistance.

Certain cities such as Bossaso on the Gulf of Aden have found their populations multiplied many times over by displaced people, many from Mogadishu. The homeless settled into empty banks and government buildings. With the port at Mogadishu closed, Bossaso has become a main point of entry for food and other imports. UNDP and the European Union have emphasized rehabilitation and development of this port city by working through the clan-based administration of the area.

Source: UNDP: "Somalia after the collapse" in *Choices*, October 1997

## II. PHASES OF RECONSTRUCTION

**7** Technically, reconstruction and rehabilitation activities should follow the signing of peace accords and granting of reformed constitutions, but the situation is not compartmentalized and is far more complicated. Simultaneous action is needed on all fronts with relief and rehabilitation and development interventions intertwined. The reconstruction period has to include both curative measures such as emergency assistance, and preventative activities for reducing recurrent violence and sustaining the peace. Integrated humanitarian and development approaches have to be proactive and creative and seek to reduce the gaps in priorities, planning and programming between the governments and agencies. Government tends to pick up the reins of governance slowly, and it takes time for agencies to get funding, organize and establish a presence in the most distressed areas. At the level of civil society, women's peace and development initiatives do not have reliable budgets and may be overshadowed by larger reconstruction efforts and institutional frameworks. However, with a clear mandate and supportive institutions behind them, their traditional values and mediating methods can make a significant contribution during the phases of reconstruction to halt the destruction, renew economic development options and rebuild a cohesive social fabric. Development initiatives can make the reconciliation and reconstruction process more sustainable. However the process is not linear. It is a long-term process with various entry points depending on political will,

domestic resources, including organizational management and capacity building, and external assistance.

### **A. Immediate post-conflict reconstruction**

In the immediate post-conflict reconstruction period, when the terror still seems too close, it is the local people who must start to clean up the debris and bury and mourn their dead, until a new government and local, regional and international organizations and agencies establish their presence. Local and foreign-based NGOs trickle in to tackle peace building, provide emergency relief assistance, especially supply of food and medicines. Local, national and international development initiatives may get off the ground more quickly in circumstances where an international peacekeeping force is successfully keeping the peace and helping to reorganize and reestablish legitimate authority. In such early phases of reconstruction, the government is in formation, armies and militias are being disarmed and disbanded, and unaccompanied children and orphans are being placed in orphanages or foster care, if reunification with extended family is not possible. The situation of children in the immediate post-conflict situation demands immediate attention in most cases, as too does the return of destitute refugees and internally displaced.

The role of the armed forces, security forces and militias is frequently questioned during this time, especially if international peacekeeping forces have been deployed.

It is said that women are some of the first citizens to call for disarmament and for the handing over of even small guns. They tend to dislike the sight of guns in their communities. In Liberia, for example, from early in reconstruction, suggestions were made about the need to cut the size of the army by more than half. Strong feelings tend to develop in post-conflict situations that military expenditure should greatly decrease and that the army should be trained to better understand the needs of the civilian population and to participate in peacetime infrastructure and community development projects.

Food and medicines are in demand, as is clean drinking water. Refugees and the displaced are gradually returning and basic infrastructure and services have to be restored as quickly as possible. The shattered economy has to pick itself up and start again, as too does agricultural activity to produce food and cash crops. In some cases, as in Angola and Mozambique, hidden, unexploded landmines may be continuing to take lives and to maim, discouraging agricultural activities over large areas. However, as peace sets in, planned reconstruction and development activities can begin to replace ad hoc, informal survival mechanisms.

Thus, the immediate post-conflict situation tends to focus on relief measures and on dealing with the immediate security consequences of war. Later phases of assistance focus more on development goals and initiatives. Some of the most creative and resourceful survivors in the post-conflict situation are women. Some who may have been small farmers in the pre-war formal sector will get involved in petty trading and bartering to generate even marginal income.

International organizational capacity-building efforts meet more success where the national pre-war structures can be revived and where government and civil society actions are clear and focused about reconciliation. Most local actors will be in need of domestic or external financing. However, although relief and development assistance is the mandated role of numerous international agencies, their interventions tend to be costly in administrative and personnel costs, and can be competitive with one another. Such agencies can be slow and inflexible in planning and implementing requirements, particularly regarding procurement and disbursement mechanisms. Their approach, especially as far as women are concerned, has not often been assessed and there is seldom a clear plan for moving from emergency operations to assistance with long-term development goals. It is frequently the case that projects are put in place, but not broad programmes. New areas of linkages and capacity-building needs should be identified. International organizations, in order to be effective, must draw on what women are doing in the peace process and as reconstruction efforts and find ways to support them, enhance their access to decision-making structures and to reconstruction resources, including credit.

In many post-conflict countries, the physical rehabilitation and reconstruction activities offer opportunities for employment in construction to both men and women. Since the 1980s, African women, many of whom have experience with building traditional homes, have been venturing into the modern construction industry, mostly as unskilled day labourers, digging, stone breaking, and head carrying sand, gravel, rocks and water. However, with a little training, they could be employed in

more skilled areas such as masonry, woodwork and metalwork, supplies management and so on. Undoubtedly, women in conflict and post-conflict situations show themselves willing to learn and apply new

skills, even in non-traditional areas, if there is strong market demand and potential to generate a living wage.

In Burkina Faso, some infrastructure programmes have taught women to make blocks, a job traditionally done by men. Women were also made to use wheelbarrows in lieu of head carrying. In North Kordofan province in the Sudan, although con-

struction work was formerly considered men's work, women eventually participated in the construction of schools and *bafir* (rainwater catchment basins). A district roads construction programme in Botswana encouraged women to enroll in training courses for supervisory and tech-

nical positions and hired them as gang leaders, senior gang leaders, and as technical officers and assistants.<sup>31</sup>

## B. Political reconstruction

Political reconstruction first requires leaders able to offer the people a credible political alternative to violent change, and the security and stability to pursue the rebuilding of their lives. Consensus is needed, both formal and informal, on how power is to be shared and resources used. The framework of a reconstruction political platform has to be based on reconciliation, reconstruction and development. This political platform has to be communicated to the people and the institutions of governance should be accountable for their performance. Social and economic advancement is also highly dependent on the political framework. It should not stifle popular participation, civil society and private enterprise but empower and enhance them.

The period of constitutional adjustments and other legal reform represents a valuable opportunity for women political activists, individually and in groups. In countries such as Liberia, South Africa, and Uganda, the concepts of gender equality and women's rights as human rights have been included in the new legal order, thus legitimizing women's political roles in local and national government and in public institutions and corporations. Granting of these rights has been followed up by vigorous campaigns to get women into political office through elections or through appointment and guaranteed quota systems.

Most reconstructing societies legitimize the new political order with a new or amended constitution and other legislation that defines rights, responsibilities and legal procedures in the society, without discrimination or bias. The legal order tends to become more inclusive to avoid the outbreak of fresh hostilities by groups that feel marginalized and neglected in the society. Political principles often raised refer to popular participation and the need for a democratic framework, free and fair elections, decentralization of government institutions and an enhanced role for women.

31 ILO. Public works programmes: A strategy for poverty alleviation. An Issues in Development Discussion Paper, Geneva, 1995.

Political reconstruction tends to fail unless the emergent post-conflict approach to governance supports the participation of all ethnic and other interest groups in the society, including women. Change towards greater equality benefits women's political agendas, even when the pre-war society might not have recognized or fa-

Although existing structures may inherently lack gender equality and fail to recognize, incorporate and replicate women's best practices, the period of transition after a conflict ends and reconstruction matures is an opportune period of time for advocacy and political advancement.

cilitated their participation in public affairs. Political space starts to become available to them, at local and national levels, more quickly if the combatant and liberation group involved had previously articulated women's equality and human

rights as a part of their wartime agenda.

The National Women's Coalition in South Africa started to draft a women's rights charter in 1992. In confronting the traditionally male-dominated politics in South Africa, women came together forcefully, across class and ethnic lines. By 1994, they made up 15 per cent of the Senate and 24 per cent of the National Assembly. In many instances women have influenced electoral outcomes by using their right to vote. In Sierra Leone, in 1995, knowing that most women would not vote, groups including Women Organized for a Morally Enlightened Nation (WOMEN) mobilized women to go to the polls, by carrying out an extensive information campaign, including going from door to door.

The decentralization process seen for example in Uganda opened up opportunities at the level of local government, and it is at this level that motivated women can first gain sustainable access. It is at this level that techniques for rebuilding trust, defusing hatreds and establishing community solidarity initiatives can first have impact. However, even at the national political level, there are more women in parliament and other policy organs of government now than there were in the pre-war society. Ruth Sando Perry was Head of the Council of State in Liberia that steered the country out of turmoil, and Specioza Kazibwe became Vice President of Uganda. Various women ministers have been appointed, although largely in women's affairs ministries.

Politically, African women in post-conflict societies have often made certain gains that need further consolidation and institutionalization. However, in some countries, the complexity of the power struggle (that might involve religious, military, ethnic and other allegiance), combined with a patriarchal social structure still largely dominates women's position. Survival, advocacy and income-generating groups begin to form during conflicts, but despite their evident interest in policies and events, women in most post-conflict situations tend to be relegated to the sidelines of the process. Despite their active participation at local and even national level, their voices go largely unheard in the renewal process of designing the framework of a viable, peaceful society. This is largely because of cultural factors that discourage women from participation in public life, but also a factor of lack of political training and formal experience with party structures and campaigning. Women are still poorly represented in Af-

Table 7: Women in Parliament

Country or area	Single or Lower House			Upper House or Senate		
	Election Date	No. of seats	% Women	Election Date	No. of seats	% Women
Algeria	05 1994	183	6.6	-	-	-
Angola	09 1992	220	9.5	-	-	-
Burundi	-	-	-	-	-	-
Congo	10 1993	125	1.6	10 1996	60	3.3
Dem. Rep. Congo	04 1994	738	5.0	-	-	-
Eritrea	02 1994	105	21.0	-	-	-
Ethiopia	05 1995	550	2.0	05 1995	117	-
Kenya	12 1992	202	3.0	-	-	-
Liberia	03 1994	35	5.7	-	-	-
Mali	03 1992	129	2.3	-	-	-
Mozambique	10 1994	250	25.2	-	-	-
Namibia	12 1994	72	18.1	12 1994	26	-
Rwanda	11 1994	70	17.1	-	-	-
Sierra Leone	02 1996	80	6.3	-	-	-
Somalia	-	-	-	-	-	-
South Africa	04 1994	400	25.0	04 1994	90	17.8
Sudan	03 1996	400	5.3	-	-	-
Togo	02 1994	81	1.2	-	-	-
Uganda	06 1996	276	18.1	-	-	-

*Source:* Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Men and Women in Politics; Democracy Still in the Making-A World Comparative Study* (Geneva, 1997).

frican parliaments and in other organs governing public life. Table 7 shows the number of women in parliament in selected African countries that have experienced conflict.

### C. Economic reconstruction

Economic reconstruction focuses on priority areas of growth and rehabilitation within the national development plan and framework. Pre-war infrastructure for agricultural and industrial production and marketing and distribution needs urgent attention; so do the commercial and financial sectors and the social services that support operations. Human resource pools have been depleted and staffing and qualified personnel, including managers, have to be recruited and trained. Structurally,

all sectors cannot reach pre-war capacity overnight. Help from external financial institutions is much needed at this time, in the form of new finance as well as through debt rescheduling and cancellations, and other forms of financial relief. Obtaining the international financing needed, for example from the World Bank, usually requires implementation of specific structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and exchange rate management strategies. Structural, political and economic liberalization impacts greatly on the social sector and should be guided by a gradualist rather than a shock approach that further traumatizes the people. For example, some economists have called the situation of Rwanda in 1994, an 'economic genocide', due to the drop in the price of coffee combined with the SAP, and has been blamed for provoking social unrest.

The speed of economic recovery in these situations is a function of level of pre-war production and infrastructural capacities, extent of war damages, and financial and economic management in the aftermath. A politically enabling environment is key to encouraging domestic and external investment. The private sector has to feel safe to invest again and need tax

In response to a precarious economy, women tended to group themselves to secure land, build houses and formed savings and credit clubs and schemes to finance their reestablishment. Such self-help groups soon abound in post-conflict situations, in areas where some trust and solidarity can still be tapped.

and developmental incentives. The informal sector, in which most women are found, needs appropriate incentives for the African context, including micro-credit, business premises and training.

As the main occupation of the majority of rural-based Africans, agriculture has to be revitalized as a matter of top priority. Food security has usually been destroyed or threatened by years of neglect during the fighting. Land tenure, especially in areas occupied by opposing forces for many years, may be difficult to reestablish and modify. Reform of land law, resettlement plans and land distribution programmes are sometimes preconditions for stimulating agricultural production and productivity. Lack of seeds and farm implements and inefficient administration and extension services to the sector are serious constraints even where land access is not a particular problem.

Women in the pre-war societies are likely to have been small- and subsistence

farmers, or involved with food processing, preservation and storage. Many would have been petty traders in various market places. During reconstruction, far more than return to the status quo is involved. Advocacy for equality with regard to land, property and inheritance rights becomes part of the women's economic and political platforms. Right to credit, production, extension and marketing systems are urged. With their previous economic networks largely shattered, women tend to find themselves without the cash or the family labour to cultivate their land. In Rwanda, for example, when the women were unable to cultivate, alternative sources of income such as petty trading emerged, as well as informal systems of credit and finance where possible. Unfortunately, it has been reported that many women, after the genocide, had to pawn, rent or sell their land. Many felt grateful for work as casual field labourers, although gender-based biases allowed them only the lowest remuneration, and no long-term assurances.

Self-help organizations are playing a major role in the economic reconstruction of such countries as Angola, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia and Sierra Leone. They mobilize resources and help to build a sense of community. Many women no longer rely on their husbands when pursuing business interests, relying more on their relatives and extended family and on credit schemes. This was clearly seen in Mozambique, Rwanda, and in Uganda. Women in petty trade multiply during a conflict and much of this activity begins to be formalized after the conflict.

Some reconstructional development policies favour men in land distribution, credit programmes, extension services and

grants and in introduction of new technology and techniques. However, African women in the pre-war society played an extremely important role in food production and processing. In many countries, they have been responsible for as much as 80 per cent of food production, with men tending more towards cash crop production.

The new trappings of governance are responsible for laying the common ground for unified efforts. They have to be used in the political process to define rights and obligations and protect the interests of all. Evidence suggests that in the visible, non-partisan programmes for social development, social groups learn to work and live together again.

In the post-conflict situation, with access to land, women quickly begin the process of agricultural recovery, with close ties to informal sector petty trading and the small- and micro-business sectors. Some female farmers prefer to remain in trade and business than return to the fields. Through necessity, many have attained economic and political au-

tonomy from their men, as a function of successful entrepreneurial activity in the grassroots war economy.<sup>32</sup>

In Somalia, nomadic women performed many of the traditional roles of men during the conflict, going to the markets, selling livestock and milk and buying consumer items. They discovered more mobility and freedom of movement than in the pre-conflict society, and tended to travel together in groups to other villages and encampments to buy and sell. However, what starts out as emergency,

transient coping strategies, develop long-term consequences for the traditional gender roles in the society. There is a distinct emergent pattern in most countries of women's role getting strengthened in non-traditional areas, during wartime, with the changes persisting, to some extent, into peacetime roles.

## **D. Social reconstruction**

Social reconstruction in post-conflict situations is faced with rehabilitation as well as the longer-term process of social integration. Rebuilding social services and institutions to get water, electricity, health care, education, transport, despite the heavy investment required, is actually somewhat easier than the more intangible aspects of rebuilding trust and solidarity in a sadly traumatized and bitter situation.

Government has to oversee the construction of new infrastructure, facilitate the return of refugees and the displaced and coordinate national and external assistance for maximized welfare. Policies and programmes at the national level can lay the foundation for a new social order, but it is societal interaction and civil society that best respond to the psychosocial illnesses and damaged inter-ethnic relations.

It is in the area of social reconstruction that women tend to have the most impact, in the early stages of reconstruction. They are very active in urging restoration of services, even where central government has collapsed. The movement for restoration tends to bring women together across ethnic, class, religious or

<sup>32</sup> UNRISD. Op. cit., p. 30

other dividing lines, for example in the matter of reopening and staffing schools and clinics. Reports from Mozambique and Uganda describe how women teachers especially, kept school in camps and even in private places of residence.

### **Women's role at the grassroots level**

From within grassroots organizations working for reconciliation and reconstruction, women challenge the authorities and the society with demands for peace, non-discrimination, accountability and recognition of human rights. Although positioned in most cases on the sidelines and margins of the formal processes, these organizations mobilize large numbers of women and translate grievances into legitimate social concerns and agendas. At the local level, women's efforts help to build a culture of peace through peace education, community-based reconciliation and social reconstruction activities.

Source: Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction, War-torn Societies Project, UNRISD, Occasional Paper No.3, 1998.

Women's grassroots organization have done a great deal to preserve education, despite shortages of books and even chalk and pencils in Algeria, Mozambique and in Uganda. Women value education and it becomes a prime reconstruction goal for them. They want their children to have the skills and employment opportunities that most of them lack in their own lives.

Formal and informal education and training is also an effective way to impart the new social and political guiding philosophy of governance, particularly in relation to peace education and the inter-cultural communication and collaboration it emphasizes. The latter function is particularly important in highly politicized and polarized societies, with high rates of violence.

Equally important is reestablishment

of a primary health care system, with reproductive health components. The prevention, treatment and control of many diseases from tuberculosis and malaria to HIV/AIDS have to be given high priority, to avoid disease outbreaks and epidemics in the country. As it is, deteriorated water supplies can cause cholera, typhoid and a range of stomach and intestinal infections. In Rwanda, some community-based women's health care centres have been providing trauma counseling, reproductive health services and prevention of communicable disease.

The goals and objectives of social development require continuous efforts to reduce and eliminate major sources of social distress and instability for the family and for society. Particular focus and priority attention should be given to the fight against the worldwide conditions that pose severe threats to the health, safety, peace, security and well being of populations. Among these conditions are chronic hunger; malnutrition; illicit drug problems organized crime; corruption; foreign occupation; armed conflicts; illicit arms trafficking, terrorism, intolerance and incitement to racial, ethnic, religious and other hatreds; xenophobia; and endemic, communicable and chronic diseases.

Women are not only the majority of any population, but have proved themselves to have the motivation and the will to organize for peace and for development. African men in post-conflict societies have also shown willingness, encouraged by development partner policies, to actively include women in peace-making and peace-building activities. Urged on by the demands for survival in life and death circumstances, and by the need for peace to pursue daily activities, women themselves

have come together and formed peace movements and networks and community-based organizations to seek protection and action. Individual peace activists as well as peace and development groups have made their mark in African societies.

### **E. Relief vs. development in gender-aware reconstruction**

In a paper jointly issued by Ms Sadako Ogata, High Commissioner of UNHCR and Mr. James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, at a recent round table discussion, reconstruction in the post-conflict context was seen as both humanitarian and development goals, with the former tending to predominate in the early days after a war has ended. Humanitarian agencies often take quick action in emergencies but frequently lack the mandate and the skills to link up with broader-based and longer-term development in a sustainable way. Operational linkages have to be set up as speedily as possible in the immediate post-conflict period of organizing for peace. Both types of assistance tend to implement their limited mandates in preferred areas, instead of cooperating with each other regarding comparative advantages in addressing the

needs of the affected population, and of institutional capacity building to cope with the chaos and destruction. As reconstruction progresses, emphasis slowly shifts from humanitarian to development. The main idea is that “development agencies will move upstream as the humanitarian agencies move downstream’.

The emerging consensus is that collective action has to be led by national actors and peace activists able to mobilize constituencies around reconciliation and reconstruction goals. The immediate post-war period is often characterized by low national capacity, which has to be built up gradually with international assistance. However, sustainable peace requires that the national government and civil society are the legitimate owners of the peace process. Brokering and anchoring of the peace is still needed. National and local government structures have to be reorganized and rebuilt, with special recognition that minority groups, victims, returnees and other vulnerable groups need protection and assistance to rebuild their lives in safety and security.

In the immediate post-conflict period, a transitional framework begins to operate

Women are often among the first to call for an end to conflict and to strive for order and reconstruction. In early post-war situations, in groups and individually, formally and informally, women probably contribute more than government authorities or international aid to reconciliation, reviving of local economic and rebuilding of social networks. However, they tend to fade into the background in most cases, when official peace negotiations begin and rebuilding becomes a formal planned exercise. But, gender roles and social values have changed a great deal by then and male-dominated institutions find that they cannot return to pre-war standards of social participation. Reconfiguration of gender roles and positions becomes an integral part of the interaction for the reconstruction programme, a fact that national and international policy makers and actors should understand and utilize.

Source: UNRISD, Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction. The War-torn Societies Project, 1998.

that may or may not lead to durable peace and stability. Whatever their shortcomings, international agencies and NGOs must work with national actors and within the institutional and financing arrangements if development is to reach and surpass prior levels. Traditionally, reconstruction supported by new governments and by the international community begins to restore infrastructure, under uncertain security circumstances. Peacekeeping forces may still be on duty and landmines being removed. Disarmament of the combatants and paramilitary forces is a first priority. In post-conflict societies, there tends to be easy availability of military weapons and small firearms. The fighters have to be demilitarized, redeployed or disbanded. Demobilization of children from the armies is necessary but often problematic since many are destitute without the army, have no family or have been separated from them. Most do not wish to be put in institutional care, preferring substitute care and

guardianship arrangements.

Women's peace initiatives should not be underestimated as is usually the case, but should be encouraged, assisted and financed by government and the international community. In fact, there is a theory gaining favour that points to women's ability to detect the early warning signs of conflict outbreaks. They are responsible for much natural resource management, and in their search for water and food take note of the tone and mood of the community. Many go to the market or to the fields and get early information from their social networks.

The basis of the way forward has to be the collective support of the people, both men and women. Women play a key role in preserving order and normalcy in times of chaos and destruction. They are also a driving force for peace and show ability to cope in practical ways with change and adversity.

### III. GENDER, GOVERNANCE AND THE LAW IN POLITICAL RECONSTRUCTION

#### A. Peace accords and disarmament

One of the first political steps supported by women movements is usually a neutral call for disarmament by all warring factions, so that round table discussions and negotiations can begin. In Liberia, the six-member council of state led by Ms. Ruth Sando Perry initially included the leaders of three major factions. The Revised Abuja Accord and Schedule of Implementation gave nine months for peace to be restored.<sup>33</sup> Until disarmament and reorganization of security forces take place, it is hard for other programmes to get started.

In most post-conflict countries, the initial phase of the peace process is focused on the peace accords, definition of power-sharing among warring factions and other emergent political parties, constitution making and elections. Women however, have not been encouraged to participate in the peace accords nor have gender issues associated with peace been directly addressed. Similarly, most independent peace movements have failed to address women's rights or interests, human rights abuses committed during the war, or issues related to female participation in the electoral process.<sup>34</sup> Despite this lack of encouragement, a strong women's peace movement has emerged in most of the post-conflict countries, a

movement which is actively influencing and participating in peace-making and peace-building activities.

#### B. Democratization and the law

Women have made considerable gains during the evolving process of democratization, especially in the areas of inclusion of equal constitutional rights for men and women, the growth and visibility of women's movements and an increased role for women in political decision-making through affirmative action. One of the first political measures in post-conflict societies has been drawing up new constitutions that are reflective of the new dispensation. For example, the Constitutions of Mozambique (1990), Ethiopia (1993), South Africa and Uganda (1995) all provide for equal rights for men and women. These countries have also ratified the Convention on Elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

In a large number of post-conflict countries, the provision of equal constitutional rights is contradicted by the concession to customary law, perpetuation of highly discriminatory civil and penal codes, religious laws, the absence of family law and other legal measures. For example, Article 34 of Ethiopia's Constitution provides for wide-ranging social, economic and political rights for women. However,

33 Report of the Inter-Agency Workshop on Best Practices in Peace-Building and Non-Violent conflict Resolution: Documented African Women's Peace Initiatives, Addis Ababa, 1997.

34 Baden, 1997 op. cit., p. 57).

## Women's land rights in Mozambique

Amid considerable controversy, and after two years of debate and revisions, a new land tenure law has been adopted by Mozambique's parliament. Among other things, the new law stresses the equality of men and women in obtaining land titles. Traditional land tenure practices, according to the Council of Ministers, discriminated against women's access, promoting an initial effort to remove references to the "customary" law. But opposition parliamentarians from the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO), the former rebel movement, objected to these clauses, as well as to the retention of state ownership of land, with individuals granted use and occupancy rights.

The two main farmer's associations strongly supported the law, while numerous civil organizations lobbied for various amendments. The final draft compromised by reinserting a clause on customary practices, but specified that these could not violate constitutional guarantees of gender equality. In addition, a new clause was added stating that inheritance of land must be "independent of sex". Ms. Janet Assulai, a lawyer for the rural organization for Mutual Assistance commented that "our society is in second place. We must shift the mentality. It is important to repeat gender equality in all new laws to accustom people to the new thinking".

Source: Africa Recovery, October 1997, United Nations

Article 34 (5) states that "This constitution shall not preclude the adjudication of disputes relating to personal and family laws in accordance with the religious and customary laws, with the consent of the parties to the disputes. Particulars shall be determined by law".<sup>35</sup>

The 1955 Civil Code of Ethiopia contains numerous discriminatory provisions regarding women, who are clearly considered subordinate to men. However, it had repudiated religious and customary rules governing matrimonial and family rights. Paradoxically, the new constitution reinstated customary and religious laws in spite of the apparent contradiction of this measure with provisions in CEDAW and other international human rights instrument, which is incorporated by the new constitution.

## C. Women in decision-making structures

In addition to the formal inclusion of equal constitutional rights for men and women, a relatively large number of war-torn societies have adopted affirmative action policies with respect to women in decision-making structures. In Mozambique and Uganda, governments or ruling parties have reserved 30 per cent of the seats in the national, regional, and local assemblies for women. In most cases, the formal electoral process has removed criteria that would prevent women from voting or standing for election. There are, however, a number of structural problems which inhibit African women's full political participation. These include such problems as high levels of illiteracy among

<sup>35</sup> FDRE, 1994

women, lack of self-confidence, societal attitudes towards women in leadership and lack of resources to seek office. These structural factors and the lack of explicit measures to promote women's participation in elections mean that very few women participate as members of national electoral commissions or voter registration teams. However, in all the post-conflict African countries, women constitute a sizeable and enthusiastic electorate.

Given the problems outlined above, the number of women candidates is not negligible. Significantly, in the 1992 election in Angola, Mrs. Analia de Victoria Periera was one of the thirteen candidates running for President. Moreover, her Liberal Democratic Party, which stated that it represented the youth and women of Angola, gained 2.3 per cent of the votes for the legislative elections, 3 seats in parliament and 29 per cent of the vote for the Presidency. Since then, women have been made Vice-President in Uganda and Speaker of the House in South Africa. In Liberia, Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is head of the opposition Unity Party.

A number of constraints still stand in the way of qualitative improvements in women's participation in decision-making. A major constraint facing potential female candidates has been a lack of information. Women's groups such as The Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) and the Ugandan Women's Network (UWONET) provided civic education prior to the elections. The government however did not disseminate a great deal of information to women regarding the new government structure or the reserved seats for women at either the district or sub-county level.

A second problem relates to the small gender-aware female vote and the prohibitive costs of campaigning, when many women candidates lack independent resources. Women voters are not sensitized about the manner in which they can influence local government decisions by voting for women and men who will remain accountable to them. This tends to force female candidates to rely on political patronage of a 'godfather type' as a campaign strategy, thereby compromising the ability of women candidates to be truly accountable to the women's vote.

A third problem includes women councilors, who may not be knowledgeable enough about gender issues or sensitive to the needs of women, particularly the need to challenge some of the traditional values that undermine the status and rights of women. Women councilors may well not have the skills to mainstream gender issues in development plans. While these concerns can be addressed through gender training, such training has not had high priority in post-conflict situations. Sometimes, women councillors gain some power at the local level but claim that they are left out at the county and district levels where strategic policy and budgetary decisions are made. Strategic political and gender training for women (and men) councillors can enable them to:

- ◆ Help women in local communities express their priorities for public expenditure;
- ◆ Translate these priorities into budget allocations;
- ◆ Oversee implementation of the allocations; and
- ◆ Hold local officials accountable on behalf of local women.

The moves towards decentralization in some countries have brought many women into mid-level and local government councils, but additional programmes and measures are needed to consolidate advances made. These include legislative reforms that abolish all laws that discriminate against women, incentives creation for their enhanced participation in the economy and in public life, legal education and consultation particularly before finalizing legal reforms, gender training for judges, magistrates and local government officials, and monitoring of the extent to which women benefit from national and

local government public expenditure and capacity building.<sup>36</sup>

In Uganda the Decentralization Secretariat training programme has not included gender and development skills training, nor is it oriented toward strengthening women's political participation at the local government level. Only a few women have been targeted for the training programme, as it tends to favour the participation of Council Chairpersons and local government technocrats, few of whom are women.

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36 Butegwa, 1997

## IV. GENDER AND ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION

**P**ost-conflict societies that have themselves seriously identified peace-building goals and targets and initiated transitional support structures and mechanisms, as was the case in Liberia, have more chance of internal reconciliation and regeneration and of mobilizing international support for relief and development activities. Given the great disruptions and losses experienced, post-conflict countries have special needs

Quick-impact micro-credit and micro-enterprise projects have proven effectiveness, especially when training and other capacity-building elements are in-built. Such assistance helps in the re-integration of ex-combatants, refugees and the internally displaced.

that bilateral and multilateral agencies should recognize and help to address. Post-conflict governments should aim at mobilizing and coordinating internal and external assistance for “peace-friendly” activities, such as rapid re-establishment of income-generating opportunities. A

gendered approach is vital, since so many of the needy and vulnerable are women. Their recognition and involvement is vital to stabilizing the peace at community level.

Countries that have been handicapped by conflict also need financing for larger rehabilitation and development projects. Special terms and conditionalities are

needed from “peace-friendly” lending institutions, including special components for women, or mechanisms ensuring shared access with male counterparts.

### A. Increasing women's productivity

Increasing women's productivity in Africa needs planned attention to the areas and the sectors in which the majority are most active. There are expanding numbers of formally educated women active in professions such as law, medicine, education and training, the civil service bureaucracy, and in formal businesses in production and services. However, the majority of economically active women in Africa are in agriculture and livestock raising, in household subsistence economies including handicraft production and food processing and storage, and in trading and commerce. The latter largely informal, and in post-conflict societies suddenly expanded. In light of women's pivotal role not only in production, but also in the reproductive economy, “gendered” rehabilitation and reconstruction should increase women's access to:

- ◆ Productive resources: land, input supplies, credit and markets;
- ◆ Basic services: education and training, extension, health, energy and legal services;
- ◆ Decision-making structures at household, community and state levels.

The initial phase of post-conflict re-

construction largely involves facilitating and rehabilitating the livelihoods of displaced persons and combatants. This is a critical phase both for articulating the principles of gender equality in public policy and as protecting women returnees from the type of violence to which they were subjected during flight. As most returnees come home with

In the larger picture of food insecurity in post-conflict societies particularly and in Africa generally, women's enhanced agricultural and marketing activities can help to turn the tide against hunger in many societies. To assist them in this goal, governments and development partners should increase their level of coordination and resource allocation to maximize women's productive and reproductive roles in both old and new areas of activity in which they excel.

few resources, this phase often entails food and seed distribution until the next harvest. To avoid the type of discrimination that existed in some refugee camps, it is critical for both men and women to be involved in the process of food distribution, according to need.

Old assumptions about women's productive role can be challenged during this initial post-conflict phase. There is now ample evidence to show that women in most African countries make up the majority of the agricultural labour force and are Africa's greatest producers of food. Ensuring that both male and female producers have equal access to seeds, tools, animals, small stock and productivity enhancing inputs is essential to set the stage for equitable and sustainable agricultural development and growth.

In tandem with ensuring access to these vital resources, it will be necessary to:

- ◆ Carry out gender-disaggregated agricultural surveys, free of gender bias in data collection and analysis and including time-use, labour productivity, returns to labour and contribution to household income;
- ◆ Ensure that agricultural research and extension are responsive to the needs of both male and female producers and pay equal attention to food crops and constraints related to post-harvest processing and storage;
- ◆ Increase the number of female extension agents and to train them without gender-typing of the presumed needs of female farmers, which could be done in conjunction with the overhauling required to bring extension service in line with new agricultural policies; and
- ◆ Engage in systematic gender training of staff of agricultural research institutes and of extension staff, as a boost to gender-sensitive agricultural development.

Most training to improve agricultural planning, design and implementation skills tends to exclude women. This often occurs inadvertently, because the planning of non-formal rural education and training fail to take into consideration the numerous constraints facing women. These constraints include time availability, lack of transportation and limited mobility as well as limited literacy training and basic education. The type of training offered to women has tended instead to focus on building a limited number of 'appropriate feminine' skills that, unfortunately, command only negligible income. Providing women with a range of technical skills has

the potential to increase women's on-farm productivity and off-farm income with positive outcome for household welfare.

Development partners are highly involved in financing public investment in Africa and can do a great deal in reinforcing gender equality in inputs and benefits from programmes and projects that build infrastructure and systems.

It is also important to plan the transition from short-term action to cope with food emergencies through handouts and "food for work" projects to long-term action for sustainable food security.

Project managers, both local and expatriate, should avoid gender-blind solutions and avoid gender-biased conditions that

effectively exclude the participation of women farmers.

National and sectoral development policies need early guidelines so that short-term activities can support and establish long-term goals.<sup>37</sup> Governance and its outreach and penetration into people's lives and economies are likely to be weak in the early years of post-conflict reconstruction in Africa. Traditional exchange and survival systems predominate, based on the internal solidarity within the social groups.

However, with political will and social commitment, remedies can be found in each society for establishing enabling, incentive-based, macroeconomic agricultural policies. "People-friendly" tax and regulatory and marketing frameworks are needed. Land reform and land distribu-

tion programmes are also needed to provide access to small producers including women. Physical infrastructure, targeted production and agro-processing goals, rural credit and extension schemes, competitive marketing, distribution and storage systems are crucial as are strong public and private sector partnerships, and fostered, gender-sensitive respect between men and women over their agricultural and trading skills.

Real food security means that households have access to nutritious food and safe drinking water locally, without a chronic need for food aid or constant fear of famine and drought. The availability of products at the market or of food from outside does not necessarily mean food security. The flow has to be sustainable, sufficiently nutritious, and acceptable to local diets and pockets. Urban consumers seem to have increasingly less purchasing power in many societies and black market prices in post-conflict societies for even basic supplies can soar amazingly high. Households, especially the women, need the confidence of knowing that they can buy or acquire enough food easily and affordably for the family, when they need to do so.

Even within food-rich areas there may be food-insecure households. Some success stories emerge through recent trends towards decentralization in many countries, where, community-based efforts can solve many local production and distribution obstacles. However, much depends on macro-level governance with regard to issues of policy and planning, pricing, structural deficits, administrative blockages, entry into global and regional mar-

37 *Le Club de Sahel Bulletin*, No .20, October 1998

kets, farm information, education and extension, farm entrepreneurship, and introduction of appropriate technical and economic innovations. Government's pragmatic support to the factors and the operators in food security needs to be seen and felt locally and nationally. It is a challenging turning point in post-conflict societies for the

The intensity of conflict can create intensity of purpose and in the period of legitimate change during reconstruction, beneficiaries grasp such opportunities for securing and stabilizing their positions.

State to move on from managing welfare food hand-outs to fostering the development of effective food production

and distribution circuits and systems.

Income generation programmes and projects need to involve women directly or use target groups which include women, such as the poorest, or those most vulnerable to risk. A regional programme for the promotion of Employment for Portuguese-Speaking African countries is under planning to benefit some 3000 persons in southern and northern Mozambique. The programme is to be managed by the National Institute for Employment and Professional Training and will be co-financed by the ILO and the Portuguese Government. The aim is to improve job opportunities and job placements and income-generating activities among the poorest population groups. Gender-sensitive management of such programmes is crucial.

A major problem constraining women's manufacturing and industrial capabilities all over Africa but especially in post-conflict situations, is their lack of ac-

cess to and control of land and capital, two critical productive resources in Africa, which in turn prevent them from accessing credit. Even when credit schemes such as the Rural Credit Scheme managed by the Commercial Bank of Uganda specifically targets women, they are unable to provide the resources to women directly. As a form of collateral, the programme requests the affirmation of the borrower's 'good character' by the local village officials. However, the village officials are usually male and insist on having the application either in the joint names of the husband and wife or a written consent from the husband.

Since 1996, the ILO Action Programme on Skills and Entrepreneurship Development for Countries Emerging from Armed Conflict has contributed to awareness of the particular need for a surge forward in skills and entrepreneurship development in affected countries. Other UN agencies and multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank should also acknowledge the specific, concentrated assistance needed in post-conflict societies.

## **B. Allocating resources**

A major challenge in reconstruction is to manage the resources of the economy and of the nation in a gender-sensitive way that maximizes the responsibilities and benefits for both men and women. Promising methods use planning guidelines for valuing women's "invisible contributions" in the national accounts and in the national budget. Others go further and demand a "women's budget" that ties women's empowerment to economic growth, resource allocation and human development. Traditionally, national budget-

ing is gender neutral, but gender-sensitized supporters point to women's unacknowledged and unvalued economic contributions in such areas as household and farm labour and management, informal sector income-generation, care for children and the elderly and community development activities. Women make contributions to the macroeconomy also by carrying out unpaid productive and reproductive work without which the paid economy could not function. Another consideration is the

Gender equity in national accounts and budgets is not necessarily in-built, even in Africa's wealthiest societies. It takes social awareness and political will. It is not enough to measure progress by the number of successful women candidates in elections or on lists of government appointments. More important is their alert positioning and ability to promote gender equality in the use of national and local resources for economic and social development.

impact of the parameters of aggregate production, savings, investments, imports and exports in the paid economy on different patterns of gender relations and distribution of resources.<sup>38</sup>

The type of framework known as the women's budget is being used creatively in South Africa. Its aim is to examine the gender

impact of the South African budget by reviewing the impact on women of each line item, a task carried out by the Women's Budget Committee.<sup>39</sup> Its members examine the decision-making structures and the policy-

making procedures in each sector of the economy and the resources allocated and also disaggregated the human resources of each sector by gender. They were then able to make concrete recommendations regarding necessary changes in budget priorities.

For women's activities to get a larger "piece of the cake", there has to be a cake to be divided. Conflict-prone countries need to be able to fund and carry out reconstruction in the face of financial constraints, heavy debt burdens, and the trickle of FDI that can be expected. Tourism also suffers, and multilateral financial institutions prove reluctant to invest in what could be a lost cause. Even humanitarian agencies develop "donor fatigue". For post-conflict reconstruction to take off, especially after the relief-type operations end, governments, civil society and the private sector should endeavour as much as possible to find their own financial resources nationally, regionally, from loyal development partners and from United Nations and international NGO programmes targeted at conflict-torn areas. Nationals abroad should also be mobilized to assist and invest. Domestic resources mobilization offers more long-term potential than does aid dependency.

### **C. Securing land rights for women**

The gender gap in the ownership and control of property is easily the single greatest contributor to the gender gap in economic wellbeing, social status, and empowerment.<sup>40</sup> In Africa, land is the most valuable form of property and livelihood-

38 Elson, 1996, p.2.

39 Budlender, ed. 1996 and 1997.

40 Agarwal, 1994.

sustaining asset. Although most working females are engaged in agriculture and work more hours than do their male counterparts, they have significantly less access to productive resources. All the available data indicate significant inequalities in women's and men's access to the productive resources in rural economies, that is, agricultural land and productive technology. In the majority of cases, women have had customary rights to land, mostly usufruct rights. However, since Independence, land shortages and various types of tenure reform, civil/religious inheritance and property laws have tended to privilege male farmers. At present, women's already limited access to land is exacerbated by the rapid growth of a land market.

Exclusion from land rights has also deprived women of other productive resources, such as access to credit and membership in cooperatives. Furthermore, women are excluded from the mainstream of agricultural delivery services. Extension curricula sometimes omit activities in which women farmers play a substantive role such as food crop production, harvesting, processing and storage. This form of inequity in service delivery is particularly limiting to female-headed households although it also affects women in male-headed households. Women farmers should be targetted specifically and speedily in reconstruction programmes and projects all at the level of macro-policy.

In Rwanda where there is an estimate of over 500,000 widows, the majority are said to have difficulty in retaining their property, since women cannot legally inherit land. In Mozambique, providing land rights to women is a highly contested ter-

rain. Evidently, while promulgating legal land rights for women is a necessary first step, it is not sufficient if enforcement is not pursued and without related support programmes. The level of commitment to gender equality in war-torn societies should be measured by:

- ◆ Efforts to make women beneficiaries of land distribution through egalitarian distribution of state lands;
- ◆ The introduction of changes in systems of inheritance and monitoring of the enforcement;
- ◆ Engendering institutions in charge of land distribution and structures of dispute settlement; and
- ◆ The extent to which women's capacity to claim and activate their land rights is enhanced.

## **D. Science and technology and energy policies**

African women are even more constrained by lack of a culture of science and technology and energy planning than are the men. This situation is compounded in post-conflict situations. The changes brought about during post-conflict reconstruction can help to remedy the situation, if gender analysis is used in plans for technology transfer, promotion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and in programmes for enhancing the enrollment of women and girls in technical and scientific courses of study and training. Sub-Saharan Africa's low manufacturing value added on its products has been a challenge for some time. It is also evident that African governments do not invest enough in science and technology, or in research to promote or improve application. This could be due partly to lack

of demand, as there are inadequate numbers of scientists, engineers, technicians and industrialists in most African countries and few are women.

Experts believe that energy infrastructure can help to propel African countries into the twenty-first century on a more competitive basis. Even though African women are chief suppliers, managers and primary users of household energy, women's needs and interests have been mostly disregarded in energy policy and planning. In reconstruction phases, both government and NGOs should pay attention to these areas, in order to establish an appropriate foundation for growth. The few pilot projects that exist have tended to concentrate on the provision of fuel stoves. The wider range of women's energy needs for agriculture, transport, income generation as well as women's own human energy input into a heavy workload are rarely addressed.

It is said that if South Africa is excluded, all of Africa with its 700 million people does not consume as much electricity as does New York City with 12 million. African countries, use of fuelwood including those under reconstruction under current environmental protection norms, may want to expand away from the fossil fuels, oil, gas and coal, and from which denudes landscapes and forests and degrades the environment, to alternative, innovative uses of solar, wind and geothermal energy. Attention should be made to lay the foundation in this area.

**Post-conflict reconstruction offers opportunities to plan investments that are either universal or which pay particular attention to the needs of women and girls.**

Reconstruction efforts cannot afford to ignore women's needs for affordable and reliable energy sources and for appropriate technology for household and income-generating activities. Even at the village level, women and girls cannot read and study at night without electricity in the home. Gender-sensitive science and technology and energy policies should address gender aspects of planning and programming with a view to productivity enhancement, reducing women's time and energy expenditure and promoting sustainable environment and human resource development.

## **E. Information and communication technologies (ICTs)**

Especially in post-conflict societies, but in most African countries, information and communication technology (ICT) policy-making is still at an elementary stage. Connectivity is still low in the whole region; yet, ICTs are very much part and parcel of the globalization trends that are revolutionizing the traditional rules of trade and information access. Women's training in this area is a fundamental issue, because ICT policies and systems provide effective linkages to widening networks of both urban and rural women. They should identify any gender-related problems that have an impact on the production, use and acquisition of ICTs.

Information channels such as telephone lines, fax machines and email and

Internet access, far from being luxuries, can become tools for development in all sectors. Information access and information sharing can open up and accelerate new markets and trading opportunities through electronic commerce. In addition, cross-border information access and exchange helps to lay the ground for regional cooperation and integration. In this respect, the lack of ICT infrastructure in Africa, especially in conflict-prone societies, offers opportunity to invest in the newest ICT technology for entering the new millennium, at decreasing costs.

Many of the political and connectivity problems in Africa are slowly being solved, especially as private investment in telecommunications expands, and as more Africans find out the global reach of electronic commerce on the Internet. According to an August 1998 survey by Media Matrix, Amazon.com, a virtual bookseller, is the most visited retail shopping site on the web. Since its birth in 1995, it has sold three million books, CDs and computer games in 160 countries. Such use of the Internet should be promoted in developing countries. Working from simple homes and offices, women can also join in the global economy because many of their products are suitable for sale over the Internet. Scanned photographs and product information on the Internet can promote such products as African garments, textiles, jewellery and other accessories, art, cosmetics, herbal remedies, handicrafts and processed food items including spices. Joint ventures are sometimes first begun through electronic contacts and Internet banking. Even small NGOs and cottage industries can sell products on the Internet if they have access.

## **F. Regional integration**

Women traders would greatly benefit from easier, simpler passport, and border controls. Encouraging signs of revived subregional groupings auger well for the future. There are moves afoot to revive the Arab Maghreb Union between Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Mauritania. There are also moves afoot to revive the East Africa Cooperation (EAC) between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, with talk of possible expansion to include Zambia and some Central African countries. The Southern Africa Development Cooperation (SADC) is one of the largest subregional economic groups, and could be one of the cornerstones of larger regional integration. An East African passport to be issued by 1999 is meant to facilitate free cross-border movement of people, goods and capital, with the full cooperation of customs and immigration authorities. This would be a boost to frequent travelers in and outside the region, many of who are women traders. Cross-border trade is not only an area in which African women excel against great odds, but regional integration tends to promote larger production bases and markets, joint investments, information and cultural exchanges, as well as recreational travel. Deliberate efforts need to be made to accelerate the process of subregional and eventually, regional, political and economic integration in Africa, according to the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. The full integration expected in the next millennium can be well supported by women's activities, and may play a role in defusing African conflicts.

## V. GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

**S**ocial development has to be based on human dignity, human rights, equality, respect, peace, democracy, mutual responsibility and cooperation, and full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of people. It was recognition of the significance of

The challenge in post-conflict situations is to establish a people-centred framework for social development to guide and build a culture of cooperation and partnership, and to respond to the immediate needs of those who are most distressed.

the social dimension in sustainable development globally that prompted the United Nations General Assembly to adopt resolution 47/92 of 16 December 1992. It called for the

convening of a World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) at the level of Heads of State and Government to tackle the critical problems of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration.

The Declaration and Programme of Action of the WSSD represented a new global consensus on the need to put people at the centre of the fight against poverty, unemployment and underemployment. It recommended poverty eradication target dates and urged an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that enables people to achieve social development. With social development producing the required human resources, political and economic

dimensions can become self-sustaining. The Social Summit urged governments to increase resources allocated to social development, in order to attain universal and equitable access to education and primary health care; and to ensure that structural adjustment programmes include social development goals. Since the issue of poverty is related to the lack of productive employment, the Social Summit has committed countries to implementation of policies and strategies for the expansion of productive employment and the reduction of unemployment. This is particularly vital in post-conflict societies.

### A. Popular participation

Popular participation in social, political and economic processes needs a basis of respect for the human rights of all peoples. It both accompanies and leads opening up of a society to its people. Democratization relies on popular participation, on the principles of government by the people and for the people, personal liberties and a free market. Where the electoral process is used, accountability for socio-economic progress is usually expected by the electorate of those voted into power, whether or not the process is fully mature and well established in the society. With more women in parliaments and other policy-making organs of government, women's concerns may get more focus, but much depends on their positioning to affect legal reforms, agricultural and business incentives and resource allocations.

In its effort to promote good governance based on popular participation in the region, the Economic Commission for Africa established the African Centre for Civil Society in 1997. Its objectives are to enhance cooperation between governments and civil society organizations (CSOs), strengthen the organizational, managerial and programming capacity of CSOs and build CSO capacity for developing innovative techniques for preventing conflicts and encouraging peaceful, pluralistic democracy. In launching the Centre, the ECA Executive Secretary stressed that “good governance is not a luxury; it is a vital necessity for development”.<sup>41</sup>

## **B. Promoting inter-agency collaboration**

In some cases, in the aftermath of conflict, when government is trying to get established and solve security problems, international aid and development agencies have also had problems with organizing and coordinating relief and rehabilitation efforts on the ground. There is frequently diversity in priorities and in approach among themselves and between agency and the government, with lack of planning and leadership all around. There is increasing awareness and criticism of this situation however, and institutional and attitudinal reforms among the United Nations and other international agencies have led to increased inter-agency collaboration and joint projects to meet targeted goals.

In the 1990s, there is a promising trend, for example, towards a comprehensive approach to women's wellbeing through deliberate, concerted inter-agency

collaboration in addressing critical health and gender issues. One outcome is evidenced by the joint statement against female genital mutilation that has been made by UNAIDS, WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA. Another example is the work of the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender. It is also encouraging to note that following the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, there has emerged a Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium and an Inter-agency Working Group on Reproductive Health. The latter is composed of representatives from UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, the Consortium and about 50 NGOs and academic institutions.

The Field Manual on Reproductive Health which has resulted from this joint effort is being field tested in the Great Lakes region focusing on the estimated 220,000 displaced women of reproductive age. The pilot project provides a comprehensive reproductive health service consisting of family planning (including contraception); assisted child birth; treatment of complications connected to unsafe abortion; sexual violence including rape; and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. The project also includes care and post-coital contraception for sexually violated women.

There is also planning afoot for a new cross-border AIDS initiative in the Great Lakes region. A broad-based regional response is needed in this battle and a similar initiative seems needed to tackle malaria. A regional effort is being promoted by UNAIDS, to involve Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, which together host some 4.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS, most between the ages

41 UNECA: Economic Report on Africa 1998, p. 14

of 15 and 49, the most productive years. The virus has cut a wide path through the region, in and around ports along trucking routes, and in conflict-prone areas. Economic hardship ensures the presence of women working as prostitutes, especially where political instability has led to mass movements of refugee populations in recent years. A system for joint resource mobilization and information exchange becomes possible with peaceful, cross-border collaboration, especially when led by an United Nations Agency.

### **C. Violence against women: a human rights abuse**

The Declaration on Violence against Women, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, defines violence as gender-based physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats, coercion, arbitrary arrest and detention, abduction, rape, sexual slavery, etc. Prostitution, and the circumstances which force women into it as an occupation, also constitute violence. Thus, violence against women is not restricted to just rape and assault or murder. Harassment and intimidation in the home, school or workplace also constitute violence against women and girls, as too are early marriages, nutritional taboos and mutilations including female genital mutilation. Attention to abuses against women in conflict-prone societies can do much to build women constituencies committed to peaceful change and progress.

From 25 November to 10 December 1998, the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender focused on public awareness of human rights abuses related to gender. This coincided with

the International Day to end Violence against Women on 6 November 1998 and the United Nations Human Rights Day on 10 December. Governments, urged by external partners and activist civil society groups, have been putting human rights abuses, especially against women and children, on their agendas. Most African governments have signed CEDAW and the convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). What now remains is alignment of national laws with international legal standards and their institutionalized acceptance and enforcement, especially as part of peace building.

### **D. Reintegration of displaced women**

The return and reintegration of displaced persons, both refugees and internally displaced, usually take place in successive waves in the early years of reconstruction efforts, through the varying efforts of host governments, home governments, relief agencies and the displaced groups themselves. A great deal depends on whether the peace at home is durable after return. Pre-war positioning and pre-existing inequalities affect reintegration. In some cases, new skills have been acquired that improve opportunity; in other cases, there is an increased level of disadvantage and disenfranchisement as seen in the land rights struggle of Rwandan widows. In many cases, homes and businesses have been destroyed or looted, or may be already occupied by others. Health and psychological problems tend to persist for a long time among returnees. Security and safety problems also tend to persist for some time.

Access to land, food, safe drinking water and housing become crucial, es-

pecially for mothers with young children, pregnant women, widows and the disabled. In some cases, hostels for women are a temporary solution. Resettlement villages have also sprung up in some cases. Low-income housing projects are sometimes hastily constructed with public and aid funds.

Income generation, from an entry point of destitution or aid dependency, after years of absence, is difficult to say the least. The situation at home is changed and social and economic networks and circuits have to be re-established. The returnees themselves have been changed by the experiences and new alignments with the emerging society are necessary.

### **E. Reintegration of child victims of conflict**

If a society does not cater for its children, the adults, parents and leaders of

Post-trauma counseling and rehabilitation programmes and centres are far from enough in African post-conflict societies, even though public and civil society efforts in this area would reap great social dividends in terms of individual and group mental health and reconciliation and productivity.

tomorrow, it may be a dysfunctional society in need of fundamental social and economic reform. The future generation is a national resource to be protected with an eye to the future, yet children are the most vulner-

able victims of conflict and displacement. They will carry their memories into the future. In many cases, they have also

been responsible for perpetuating violence and terror. There were tens of thousands of unaccompanied children in post-conflict Rwanda, for example, facing destitution and life on the streets or in the bush. Orphanages were set up, with the usual disadvantages of institutional care, not the best when children have endured and seen great atrocities, even against close family members, friends and neighbours. The preferred strategy has been to seek family reunification or family-based foster care. This approach was not straightforward in Rwanda as killing took place within extended families, and a child placed in the wrong family could be injured or exploited.

### **F. Extending education's reach**

In most war-torn societies, the educational system is near total collapse as a result of physical damages, insecurity, lack of teaching materials, demoralized staff and people's loss of interest in education. Table 5 shows a decline in enrolment overall but both the enrolment and the retention rates of girls are particularly low. It has now become apparent that increasing girls' enrolment, retention and performance in school requires a variety of measures, both within and outside the school itself. Measures to reduce female time burdens and to increase income are likely to have a beneficial impact on girls' education, as would change in parental attitudes regarding early marriage for their daughters. A number of innovative approaches are being used to increase girls' education all over the world. Short-course training with follow-up job placement components is sometimes used to increase women's wage employment in non-tra-

ditional and relatively well-paying jobs. Deliberate effort should also be made to encourage both on-the-job and other forms of training in supervisory and technical skills.

Just as gender-biased formal education has discouraged girls from entering scientific and technical fields, gender-biased vocational training and non-formal education programmes have discouraged women from acquiring non-traditional skills such as technical trades in industrial work, construction, transport and manufacturing, all pivotal areas in the process of reconstruction. The few female students who do participate in vocational training programmes tend to be concentrated in 'appropriately' feminine skills training classes which, in the rapidly changing labour market, command very low pay, either as low-skilled employees or self-employed workers. Concerted effort and allocation of resources are needed to encourage female trainees to take up non-traditional skills for which there is a strong market demand and greater potential to generate a living wage. In Liberia, the AFWIC-initiated skills training for women

focused on surveying and construction skills vital for rebuilding the country.

## **G. Peace and civil society**

In the recent past, there have been a growing number of initiatives to mobilize the talents and resources of civil society and NGOs in Africa toward management of internal conflict. There is growing understanding that a strong civil society functions in partnership with government to promote development. Increasingly, it is acknowledged that without peace there can be no good governance or sustainable development. Although governments are the national authorities that sign peace agreements, citizens are the ones who make the society function and who will supply the brains and the muscle to carry out the policies and implement the development programme. In peace building in Africa, NGOs, both local and international, have been carrying out very useful work in providing relief and development assistance to victims.

The need for special civil society institutions to deal with the trauma of the

### **Operational aspects of aid agency and NGO activity in post-conflict situations**

United Nations agencies, international agencies, including foreign-based NGOs and inter-governmental agencies had a massive presence and influence in post-genocide Rwanda. However, there was "often lack of coordination and cooperation". This seriously undermined the sustainability of measures taken and strained relations with the authorities, who often work with fewer resources than an international NGO or UN agency. Tension between the Rwandan authorities and NGOs was vividly illustrated by the Government's expulsion of 38 organizations in late 1995. The whole situation has been complicated by the role of donors, who sometimes insist on financing activities that do not relate to government policy or priorities, or to the expressed needs of the recipients.

Source: UNICEF. Starting from Zero: The Promotion and Protection of Children's Rights in Post-Genocide Rwanda, July 1994-December 1996.

conflict and with peace and civic education for changed attitudes and mentalities has become increasingly evident. Burundi, since 1993, has been witnessing massacres, high-level assassinations, destruction of social and economic infrastructure and displacement of large numbers of people. UNESCO and the Government, in 1994, set up the Centre for a Culture of Peace. The women were called on to play their traditional role of uniting neighbours and the community. Burundi's NGO umbrella organization. CAFOB, was urged to strengthen its umbrella role in peace and reconciliation. Women were mobilized to go out and ask and find out about the best methods to resolve the conflict, and to communicate and share these with friends and neighbours and local leaders.

Mali's Women's National Movement for Peacekeeping and National Unity was triggered by the 1990 Tuareg War, an internal conflict in Northern Mali. It sought to restore peace, help the displaced to return and support women's development initiatives. The Movement organized humanitarian aid to victims on a basis of neutrality, civilians as well as soldiers and other war-affected groups, and assisted with the return of the displaced. The organization became a target for violence but their platform of neutrality and their willing work gained them the respect of the people and the Government, as well as of the fighters. One strategy used was to encourage women to marry outside their community on the grounds that it was harder for relatives to fight with one another.

Through peace promotion centres and projects, women can impact on civic education and the gender-neutral way in which it is being carried out currently in schools and colleges across Africa, with no spe-

cific reference to women or women's rights. At the level of the classroom and the tea-room, much can be achieved in moulding new ideals and attitudes. Seminars, workshops, discussions on radio and TV and in print media, can all help to popularize peace and civil society norms.

In November 1993, at the initiative of Uganda's Ministry of Women in Development, Culture and Youth, a Regional Conference on Women and Peace was held in Kampala. This conference was part of the preparatory process of the Fifth Regional Conference in Dakar in 1994 and of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. At all these conferences and in their follow-up in the subregions, the African NGO and civil society sector made large showings and received consensus endorsement of their role in African development.

The Kampala Peace Conference emphasized the belief that peace is not just the absence of violent hostilities, but a situation in which all people have equal access to economic and social justice and to the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Having noted that the consequences of conflict affect all people in society but that women bear a disproportionate burden, the deliberations called attention to the fact that women are hardly involved in decisions that lead to war, or in matters of security and peace. However, a sustainable peace, it was argued, needs the empowerment of women which in itself is a prerequisite for development.

To give substance to the call for the political and economic empowerment of women, the Conference adopted an Action Plan which focused on the following four areas of action:

- ◆ Articulation by national governments of meaningful policies on women that ensure the full involvement of women in all issues of human development;
- ◆ Establishment of institutional mechanisms for enhancing and coordinating interventions and strategies for such policy implementation;
- ◆ Provision of legal protection and special assistance for women to ensure their participation;
- ◆ Affirmative action to ensure the representation of women at all levels of decision making.

Information has power. It can turn the tide of battle and is also a peacetime tool for change in attitudes and activities. Its presence can promote change and its absence can stifle change. Without equal access to information, there can be little equality of opportunity.

The Conference also recommended the strengthening of women's machineries and more particularly, the creation of an African Committee of Women Ministers/ Plenipotentiaries to:

- ◆ Network and articulate women's views on regional and global issues; and
- ◆ Address and formulate programmes and policies that will effectively deal with women's issues and concerns towards the betterment of the status of women in particular, and society in general.

Since then, the high-level, prestigious African Women's Committee for Peace and Development (AWCPD) was established. It can call on African First Ladies, women ministers of government and other eminent women leaders for

support, advocacy, influence and organizational skills. It was established with the support of OAU and ECA in a joint gesture of solidarity with the women's quest for peace and development. The AWCPD is headquartered in the African Centre for Women (ACW), at ECA. It recently issued a communiqué condemning the conflict in Sierra Leone and promoting a peaceful settlement.

A Workshop for Documenting Best Practices in Peacebuilding and Non-Violent Conflict Resolution was held in November 1997 in Addis Ababa, jointly organized by UNHCR, UNESCO, UNDP, UNIFEM, UNICEF, UNFPA, with the support of OAU and ECA. In addition to providing a forum for experience sharing on best practices, the inter-agency workshop produced a Plan of Action which delineated activities, sources of finance, executing body and a time frame for implementation.

## **H. Information and communication strategies**

To countries in transition from conflict, the use of information technology and networks can be strategic in inviting and shaping citizen participation in political and economic activities. Environmental issues can also become rallying points. Groups and individuals can use e-mail to lobby government ministries, present position papers on websites and generally mobilize support for causes. Information technology offers a chance to reshape communication and advocacy strategies for socio-political change and for commercial expansion. Organizations such as the Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) have been trying to use the information revolution to push democratic

principles, respect for human rights, and free-market philosophies.

Popular education techniques for peace and democracy have been identified as particularly needed in conflict prevention and reconstruction, as a means to rebuilding solidarity and partnership networks. Workshops that challenge prejudice and allow people to speak out about their grievances as well as hear the grievances of others, are means of introducing gender analysis and awareness of gender bias. Popular education frameworks create situations in which guided participatory techniques are used, to help participants "make sense of the world together. This happens from sharing their own experiences. Once they have new understandings, they can decide what actions they will take to challenge whatever is causing them problems".<sup>42</sup>

A major issue discussed at the ECA Fortieth Anniversary Conference in April 1997, on African Women and Economic Development: Investing in our Future", was the need to set up information centres for women, and telecentres even in rural areas, to which women's access can be promoted. Dialogue between women and between women and men, whether inter-personal or electronic can change perceptions. ICTs promote two-way information access, in reduced times and over great distances, at increasingly lower costs. Voice media techniques utilizing women's strong oral traditions have been found to be creatively user-friendly for women and girls. Special efforts to establish continuing dialogue between women parliamentarians and local councilors also have proven effectiveness. UNDP efforts in

recent years to target women parliamentarians and ministers for leadership training workshops have already established some precedence in this area.

Information and communication sectors are considered a matter of State security in many countries. Especially in conflict-prone countries subject to coups and frequent instances of civil unrest, information access and information dissemination can seem like a threat. However, given the global trends, it is increasingly understood that democratization includes freedom of speech and free access to information in the public domain. Information is needed for free-market functioning and enhances both public sector information systems, and private sector opportunities. Where connectivity is non-existent, translating data into local languages for dissemination by radio and/or television can be organized.

ICT systems and programmes can enable women to understand the consequences of globalization and regional integration, as well as reasons for local level disturbances and concerns, besides acquiring tips and know-how about agricultural and environmental techniques. ICTs hold the potential for expanding the markets to which women already have access and appropriate training would offer many opportunities, to share real-life experiences far beyond the part of world in which they live. In addition, ICTs provide young women with the means of access to non-traditional occupations.

Unfortunately, the telecommunications infrastructure is not well developed in Africa, and connectivity tends to be poor

42 Liz Mackensie. *On our feet: Taking steps to challenge women's oppression*. A handbook on gender and popular education workshops. Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape, South Africa, 1992.

or non-existent in conflict-prone areas. However, reconstruction efforts in these times, cannot afford to ignore the need for public and private investment in information and communications infrastructure. Africa presently has the lowest teledensity, and the smallest number of computers, technicians and users, of all the regions of the world.

Access to information technology is affected by several factors, among them the socio-political environment and the political will for arming the people with information instead of guns; the extent of Internet connectivity in the country and the level of computer skills among the populace. Needless to say, lack of political support and stability can make connectivity dangerous, because it soon becomes apparent that information access can bring challenges to the status quo.

Where access to the Internet does exist, users often face problems with servers, poor telephone lines, low bandwidth, unresponsive, even backward telecommunications monopolies and high user rates. Pioneering developing countries are using the Internet to influence governments, attack censorship, support freedom of speech, share research and best practices, and to reach the grassroots. Where governments are slow to catch on or political leaders do not have the computer skills, private individuals, professional groups, community-based organizations, local and international NGOs and development agencies can do a great deal to spread the information technology culture and set up

**The development of worldwide, national and provincial databases and information systems on conflicts and the damage they cause can help to prevent them and promote reconstruction.**

multimedia offices and centres. The Internet can also strengthen civil society's ability to share information, issue invitations to meetings, set up roundtable dialogues and discussions and construct home pages. Newsletters, bulletins, communiques, magazines and newspapers

can be put on-line, to extend the reach of print media. Where access to electronic mail and the Internet is not yet available, efforts should be made to keep in touch by telephone, fax, telex or post and to arrange roundtable and radio dialogues,

workshops and seminars, and even house-to-house visits.

Appropriate use of radio and television can also promote peace and development. News programmes, peace messages, talk shows and even paid advertisements are part of the strategy. Radio is an especially effective medium in Africa, for reaching the majority of both urban, rural and grassroots people. Radio can be widely used to foster reconciliation and get information to the people in various local dialects. Even within the same country and region various players for sustainable peace are often unaware of each other's existence and activities. Most combatant groups in conflicts, both government and opposition, tend to listen to the radio, and some even set up their own radio programmes of music and news bulletins. This habit can be built upon in reconstruction to spread desired information. Newspapers, magazines, newsletters, bulletins, posters, and flyers can also be used to reach people. In rural areas, simply staged

dramas are frequently quite effective, as are films, slides and overhead projectors, if the shows are timed conveniently for both men and women and promoted beforehand to ensure an audience.

ICTs promote communication and networking, even across great distances, and peace building and reconstruction need this type of information promotion. One such system aimed at enhanced aid targeting in crisis situations is the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN). It is an information unit within the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which tries to improve the nature and speediness of the response of the non-commercial, international emergency relief community to humanitarian crises. IRIN operates on the principle that when crisis or disaster hits a country, communications are often one of the first casualties. Reliable sources dry up, government agencies collapse and media and relief eyewitnesses often cannot sift and tell the whole story impartially. IRIN strives to provide an accurate picture of events on the ground from various sources, so that aid is not misdirected, with the wrong type of assistance going to the wrong people, in the wrong place.<sup>43</sup>

ICTs are still scarce and scattered in Africa but deliberate efforts could be made to ensure connectivity among those groups struggling to build peace. Individual women leaders may own computers. Groups may decide to invest in one or more. They could be located in peace centres and in multimedia centres in urban areas. Accurate information and databases can be developed for each country and programme, tracking progress with

programme activities, refugees and displaced, orphans and unaccompanied children, food security situations in parts of the country, among many other public and private uses.

ICTs are also at home in a classroom or seminar room and can be used in both formal and informal education and training. CD-ROM technology can also be used to develop modules for training and education in appropriate institutions, centres and programmes that are working for peace.

Where ICTs are not accessible, then information and communication techniques and activities have to evolve to fill the gap as possible. Especially in cities, but also in towns and villages with a strong peace and development movement, simpler, more affordable information and communication facilities and techniques can be used in a planned way. They can be used to persuade and influence interaction and dialogue between groups, customized to suit the target communities.

In Sierra Leone where strong women's peace movements have had impact, Creole was the main language used to ensure that information reached grassroots women. Choice of language indicated that the information was not only for the educated elite. Media reports were promoted especially via radio. Women journalists became very assertive with news coverage and actively pursued gender-sensitive reporting. Rallies were frequently organized by all groups in various parts of the country, but when women saw the reluctance of many to turn out, prayer meetings were used in many areas, so that be-

43 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). IRIN: Bridging the information gap, 1998.

lievers could pray together for peace and start to build partnership relations.

In Ethiopia, women have been associated with formulation of the new constitution. The Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association has mounted a campaign on a number of constitutional and Civil Code issues, using media reports, symposia, panel discussions, meetings and dramas. One drama depicted the plight of a twelve-year old girl sexually abused by her stepfather.

In the Republic of the Congo, Congolese women formed the National Women's Committee for Peace which called Brazzaville residents at the Baongo Stadium through radio and issued a declaration on alternative solutions to the conflict. President Lissouba signed the peace accord in September 1997, after meeting with women leaders. A woman minister of Culture and Human Rights was appointed in the move to appease the women and keep their political support. Two other women ministers and ten women have been appointed to the National Council on transition since the conflict ended.

The Malian women used traditional mediation techniques of impartiality and neutrality in their strategy, including oral narratives and music and stress on family ties. They visited war zones, prisoners and refugees in Mauritania and Burkina Faso and supplied humanitarian aid to victims, regardless of ethnicity or class. They held peace marches and prayer meetings and promoted disarmament and the burning of weapons - the Flame of Peace in March 1996. The plan in inter-ethnic encounters was to "listen compassionately" as

would a mother or a sister. Their influence spread among the women, and eventually touched the traditional chiefs and the politicians. In Burundi, CAFOB used letters to signal their opposition to the fighting and their desire to lift the economic embargo.

The Liberian Women's Initiative and Women United for Peace and Democracy (WOUPAD) sent letters to warlords advocating peace. Through a traditional play, "Bricks and Sticks", peace activists met with warlords. Women threatened to boycott all state and public functions. They organized peace rallies in the capital and when opposed threatened to march naked. When women wanted, markets closed.<sup>44</sup> Names of qualified women candidates for political office and office in public corporations were published and when women were denied access to the 1994 Accra Clarification on the grounds that they were not direct participants" six women forced their way in and got official observer status. WOUPAD delegates made it their business to observe elections all over the country. Large numbers of fighters were persuaded to voluntarily disarm and all armed factions were dissolved. WOUPAD was also instrumental in return of refugees and displaced persons. Elections were held in July 1997 which marked the end of the war and the beginning of reconstruction.

In Somalia, a peace movement for women began around Hargesia and spread throughout the country. The four main groups were DULMAR (DDAP) from Hargesia in northwest Somalia, the National Organization for Women and Children (NOW), Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC) and the Women's Devel-

44 Report on the Workshop on Documented Best Practices in Conflict Prevention and Non-Violent Conflict Resolution, Addis Ababa, 1997

opment Organization (WDA). The women used songs and dramas and poems to mobilize women with peace messages.

In Rwanda, the organization, Pro Femme/Hamwe Twese, took up a considerable amount of reconstruction work after the 1994 genocide. It comprised 32 women's groups whose objective was to work for peace and justice and rehabilitation. The women's focus was to address gender problems as political problems, a question of control of power and resources.

Pro Femme built "peace villages" for widows and orphans of all ethnic groups. They established micro-credit and production schemes so women could get food and some incomes. The women also expressed concern about the 1000 or so children imprisoned under charges of genocide. Pro Femme has been able to pull together women of various ethnic groups for peace-building activities. It won the UNESCO's Madanjeet Singh Prize in 1996 for promoting tolerance and non-violence.

## Reconstruction in Rwanda : A Case Study

Four years after the genocide and a year after massive repatriation of refugees, Rwanda is still trying to find a stable equilibrium. Reintegrating and resettling millions of refugees and internally displaced people was difficult. A rebel offensive from western Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, interrupted reconstruction in 1996. Since November 1996, 1.2 million Rwandese have returned home and since 1994, 118,322 children have been registered in and outside Rwanda as unaccompanied. By the end of November 1997, 51,047 had been reunited with their families or placed in foster care. Orphanages got crowded. Camps got empty.

There are over 127,000 genocide suspects detained in Rwandan prisons. Arrests increased after the repatriation took place. Some 240 accused have already appeared before the International Tribunal in Arusha. Suspects tend to be safer in custody, to prevent mobs from carrying out lynchings. The Government has not had the resources to rebuild its judicial system. It is also constrained by insufficient trained staff and statistical systems, uncertainty regarding means of payment and enormous needs for peace consolidation and reconstruction. The design of economic, fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies and institutions is still underway. Reconstruction and development needs money, and the Government is cash-strapped. Investment by government and private sector, and international aid organizations is also seriously constrained by doubts about the durability of peace. Efforts are being made to restore communications services, and where postal links have been reestablished, public morale and confidence in reconstruction increase.

Reconciliation and reconstruction is taking place at the grassroots, unevenly, with less progress in the north due to persistent security problems. The north has to be rehabilitated to solve the food crisis, because it is the country's bread basket. Heavy rains have also affected crops and there is a food deficit in 1998.

More is possible now that aid agencies are not so busy with displacement camps in and outside of Rwanda. There have been criticisms that housing projects are too impersonal, and built too close together. It has been recommended that there should be a shift in spending to use of aid funds to build infrastructure and social services in designated areas, and allowing the people some freedom to build their homes to their own style.

There is a clear lack of confidence-building programmes and creative projects for advancing national reconciliation, and the country is still not safe from further outbreaks of civil war. Women's self-help groups and NGOS have been most active in this area, though not on the national scale needed.

Sources; "Return to Rwanda" in Red Cross Crescent magazine, issue 1, 1998;  
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## VI. CONCLUSIONS

**A**frican women in conflict situations are not passive sufferers, but are some of the cornerstone forces that anchor the society. In conflict situations, women are often forced by necessity to carry out previously male-dominated activity, acquiring skills and experience that can be applied in the post-conflict society. Similarly, skills training for women must respond to market demand and provide women with the tools necessary to play their part in reconstruction; women on their part, can use their position-

Gender roles are not immutable and should not be confused with biological roles, although the two interrelate. Especially in conflict and post-conflict situations, divisions of labour need to be functional and flexible, not rigid and ritualistic.

ing for new opportunities to challenge gender stereotyping of 'appropriate work for women' which often turn out to be unremunerative and low status, with little chance of advancement..

Social stability is a necessary precondition for poverty alleviation and eradication. While tangible progress has been made in African social sectors, lack of political will and financial constraints have meant that the war on poverty is still not won especially in conflict-prone societies. Poverty is increasing in Africa rather than decreasing. Thus, the quality of life for the majority in most countries has not gener-

ally improved. The capacity of African countries to "take off" and support the social sector is not high. Public expenditure on the social sector, especially in war-affected countries, has been low, with few social safety nets. Governments and their development partners need to improve their macro-economic reform packages to ensure that they are country-specific and reflect social objectives. The rate of growth of African economies, external capital flows, and domestic resource mobilization and investment have not provided sufficient income-generation for impacting positively on the social sector.

True partnership strengthens, not weakens. It brings together all parties and facilitates planning and consensus building around such shared goals as civil society participation, capacity-building efforts and Africa-led policy leadership. A major partnership institution for the future may be the African Development Forum sponsored by OAU, ADB and ECA, to promote the partnership process.

For the people to increase their participation in development now and into the future, education and technical and vocational training efforts have to be intensified. Without the necessary human resources, development cannot take off. Governments should seek to provide universal access to education, with free and compulsory primary education a first step. Innovative approaches should be explored to facilitate greater access and reduced dropout rates, especially for girls. Special

recruitment and training programmes should be designed to fill the gaps in the job market in priority sectors and projects, especially for women.

Health care systems in post-conflict societies are usually in a state of near or total collapse. For various reasons, including the ab-

**Africa's development partners should support conflict prevention and peace processes and use their monitoring mechanisms to guard against corruption and theft of resources meant for the benefit of the people.**

sence of male soldiers and combatants from their mates, and high rates of prostitution among otherwise destitute women and girls, combined with poor health care or detection services, post-conflict societies show high

rates of HIV/AIDs and of venereal and sexually transmitted diseases. Rebuilding of health care systems with adequate rural outreach should be a top priority. Innovative financing mechanisms are needed, since basic infrastructure needs to be re-established and expanded. Priority must be given to any outbreaks of epidemic proportions, such as cholera, typhoid, malaria or tuberculosis and to the fight against HIV/AIDS and other diseases, but a primary health care system accessible to all is key to the effectiveness of the health sector. Reproductive health services for men and women are also crucial to the health system capacity, and should receive special attention and facilities in the reconstruction of a national health sector.

The role of the media is essential for disseminating information on development activities. Government, private sector and the NGO and civil society organizations

should provide regular development information to the media. Civil society should form partnerships with media houses to advocate for an immediate end to conflicts so as to redirect available resources to employment creation and construction of social and economic infrastructure.

Sound governance systems should be established which guarantee public and private sector conduct to minimize corruption and discrimination. Civil society organizations also need to develop self-regulating codes of conduct to increase their credibility, transparency and accountability. Partnerships among public, private sector, government and civil society stakeholders must be based on a relationship of equality, trust, accountability and mutual respect. All countries need to establish consultative mechanisms at all levels, especially in post-conflict societies. Such consultative and reconciliation forums should meet regularly at all levels.

Within the structural adjustment programmes, various African countries such as Uganda have seen improvement in macroeconomic policies, including liberalizing trade and investment regimes, reducing tariffs and subsidies, rationalizing exchange rates, modernizing regulatory regimes, and the gradual restructuring of public expenditures, with greater emphasis on social development. The private sector in Africa is now receiving greater attention as the engine of growth best able to make use of market forces. Public sector policies to develop Africa's private sector, which in the case of women is largely informal, have to be liberal and innovative, instead of stifling and repressive. Civil society participation in governance for development is also a spreading principle. These are the approaches that guarantee

any degree of success in rebuilding war-torn societies left with groups alienated from each other and watchful of how the spoils of war are being redistributed. All the interest groups watch to see how the beneficiaries and locations of post-conflict reconstruction programmes are chosen.

Africa's economic recovery, measured by sustained economic growth in the 1990s, has received much publicity. Sustained economic growth in a wide range of countries over the last four consecutive years is convincing evidence of improved economic performance. On average, countries in Africa grew by 4.5 per cent during 1995 to 1998, the highest growth rate of any region in the world and Africa's best economic performance since the late 1970s. More than 30 African countries have achieved real per capita growth for the last four years.<sup>45</sup> However, only a few countries met the essential conditions in 1998 to sustain growth consistent with the defined poverty reduction objective of 7 per cent per annum growth required to reduce poverty by half by the year 2015. Human development is one of the most important ways to reduce poverty and encourage peaceful, stable growth. Post-conflict societies would do well to remember this and apply inclusive, people-friendly structures of governance and public expenditure accordingly.

Inter-ministerial, inter-agency collaboration as well as collaboration between government and NGOs geared to initiate gender-balanced and sustainable development in an environment of scarce human, material and institutional resources is critical, in view of the magnitude of the challenge posed by post-conflict reconstruction.

Such forms of collaboration would provide an opportunity to depart from piece-meal approaches toward integrated and mutually reinforcing solutions to the problem of gender disparity and disadvantage.

In cases where, gender-aware policies have been financed, implemented and monitored, there has been very encouraging progress. The lesson of success is that while gender-sensitive policies are absolutely necessary, they are not sufficient. Some attempts to implement policies provoke new, unforeseen, difficulties, which must also be addressed. A good example of this has been the policy of putting women in decision-making structures without providing them with the necessary skills or resources for gender-sensitive planning, policy-making and implementation. While the principle of increasing the number of women in decision-making positions conforms to democratic electoral principles, ensuring that they are positioned to introduce much-needed new policies and impact on resource allocations from national and local budgets is more meaningful.

With increased education and training and with an enabling social, political and economic environment, African women can play even greater roles in reconstruction and development, at both local and national levels. True gender partnership between men and women in Africa, that seeks to maximize advantages and minimize disadvantages for all would further development in leaps and bounds. The foundations for such partnership can be laid to a great extent during post-conflict reconstruction.

45 UNECA: Economic Report on Africa, 1998

This Report has taken the view that out of trauma and tragedy can emerge opportunity for societal reorganization, new and amended political philosophies and avenues for socioeconomic growth and capacity building. The reconstruction period is a time when women and other disadvantaged groups in a society can mobilize for change, occupy new roles in the economy and in the community, pressure for legal and institutional reforms, and mount political campaigns at the national and local level for legitimate inclusion. The post-conflict period in the history of any society is therefore not only a time of confused mourning, but is potentially one of planned renaissance, when a conscious decision is made in the minds of people to reconcile and move forward. It can be a time of social and political innovation, in which governance takes on a more benign, transparent and accountable face. In fact, if the socio-political and economic formulae and structures evolved during the reconstruction period are ineffective from not having suitably addressed the root causes and consequences of the violent conflict, it is likely that peace will not be sustained on a meaningful scale and violent upheavals will again occur, destroying and delaying national progress.

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