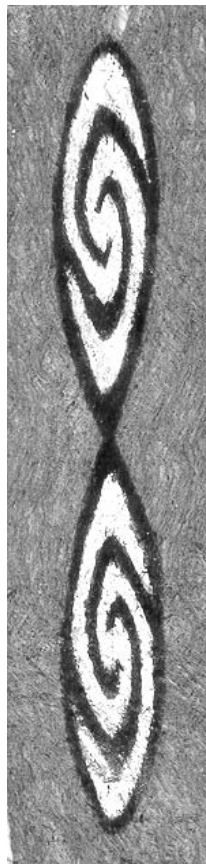
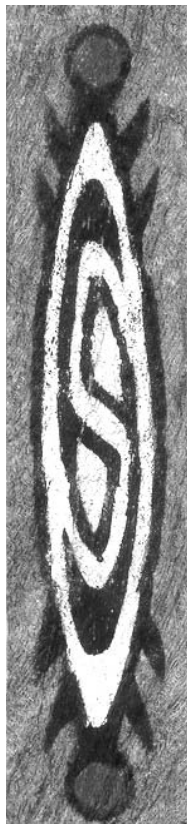


International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament

May 24 — 2005



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May 24: International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament

Women Peacemakers: A Legacy

2005 marks an important centenary in the history-or herstory-of women peacemakers. One hundred years ago the first woman was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. She was an impoverished aristocrat who only started working for peace in her 40s. Ironically, she was the one who persuaded the millionaire inventor Alfred Nobel to set up a Peace Prize in the first place.

Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914) was her name. Her anti-war novel *Lay Down Your Arms* captured the public imagination and created a fervor of debate. Her passionate calls for disarmament and her practical work to create organizations capable of defending and maintaining peace has left all peacemakers a lasting legacy.

This legacy includes co-founding the International Peace Bureau (IPB), where she also served as Vice-President. IPB and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation have produced a booklet with more information about Bertha's legacy. 2005 will see traveling exhibitions and symposiums throughout Europe on Bertha's life and work. See the websites www.ipb.org and www.berthavonsuttner2005.info for more information about these commemorative events.

Bertha's legacy is as relevant today as ever. Women peacemakers are building and expanding on the work she and other earlier peacemakers undertook. This year's May 24 pack looks in particular at the often ignored work of women peacemakers in the Pacific. Vicious conflicts, such as those in Aceh and West Papua, are taking place in the region. In Bougainville, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and elsewhere in the region, women risk their lives to build peace. Like Bertha's legacy, their work contains important lessons to be learned. This pack also examines a powerful tool for women peacemakers, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

May 24 International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament began in Europe in the early 1980s, when hundreds of thousands of women organized against nuclear weapons and the arms race. Since the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the International Peace Bureau have published this pack to raise awareness of and increase support for women's peace initiatives.

International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR)

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IFOR, founded in 1919, is a network of people who believe in the power of active nonviolence to change the world. Fundamental to IFOR's work is its spiritual basis. IFOR's members include Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Bahá'ís and Hindus, and members whose philosophical understanding leads them to a commitment to active nonviolence. IFOR has branches or contacts in over 40 countries.

International Peace Bureau (IPB)

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Web: www.ipb.org

IPB is the world's oldest and most comprehensive international peace network. With 19 international and 141 national/local member organizations (and 120 individuals) in over 40 countries, it brings together people working for peace in many different sectors: not only pacifists but also women, youth, labor, religious, political and professional bodies. IPB was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1910.

We welcome your feedback, comments and suggestions on this information pack.

Editor: Shelley Anderson, IFOR; proofreading: Amy Shifflette, Joyce Mumford; layout: Françoise Pottier. Copies of the information pack and brief follow-up reports from previous years are available from IPB and IFOR (see addresses above.)

The Pacific: Peaceful Paradise?

by Shelley Anderson

“Why all these conflicts? Why are all these things happening to us? If we are just moving with peace programmes we are only touching the surface. We need to address the root causes in order to ensure our peace programmes are truly effective. How long will it take us to implement peace strategies without weeding out the root causes?” The questions posed by Anne Saenemua of the Solomon Islands Christian Association were echoed by other participants at the Women Peacemakers Program’s (WPP) Pacific consultation.

The Pacific Consultation for Women Peacemakers, held January 24 to 1 February 2004 in Maubara, Timor-Leste (East Timor), brought together 20 women from Bougainville, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. The consultation, the fifth in a series of six regional consultations for women peacemakers, was co-organized by the Peace and Democracy Foundation (PDF) of Timor-Leste. PDF, founded by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Jose Ramos-Horta, works to promote a culture of peace in Timor-Leste. PDF’s then co-directors, Filomena Barros dos Reis and Jill Sternberg, joined Koila Costello-Olsson of Fiji’s Gender and Peace Program of the Ecumenical Centre for

Research, Education and Advocacy (ECEA) as the consultation’s skilful co-facilitators.

The Pacific: A Peaceful Paradise?

The Pacific region covers one-third of the earth’s total surface. Despite travel industry depictions of a peaceful paradise, armed conflict is a stark reality in the area. Fiji has suffered military coups; Australian military peacekeepers remained in the Solomon Islands during the consultation; some 1,000 people a year are killed in violence in Aceh, while a bitter struggle for independence is now being fought in West Papua.

Women in the region play a critical role in conflict resolution. The work of groups such as the Bougainville Inter-Church Women’s Forum and the Leitana Nehan Women’s Development Agency (LNWDA) has been critical in the peace process between Bougainville and Papua New Guinea and in reconstruction. “The people in our communities are the entry points—the women farmers, the sewing groups, the women’s clubs,” noted LNWDA founder Helen Hakena.

(left) Helen Hakena and Genevieve Pisi (right) shared about the influential role women have in peace building in Bougainville.
Photo: S. Anderson



Timor-Leste has itself has faced tremendous violence. A former Portuguese colony, the island was annexed by Indonesia in 1976. One-third of the population died as a result of the Indonesian military occupation. "For too long our reality was hidden from the rest of the world," Filomena Barros dos Reis explained. "Women were raped in front of their children. They couldn't tell anyone for fear of the family's safety. They had to protect their husbands who were fighting in the jungles."

"We chose freedom"

In 1999, under a United Nations-supervised referendum, 78% of the Timorese people voted for independence from Indonesia. "We chose independence despite the threats from the military that there would be blood shed. That was the price of choosing freedom. If we spilled our blood, at least our children and grandchildren will be free and will have justice," Filomena continued. Thousands were murdered before the Indonesian withdrawal, and 85 % of the country's infrastructure was deliberately destroyed.

The need for justice and for healing after violence were important issues for all participants. During a session on how Pacific women define justice and reconciliation, participants from Bougainville said justice "means finding the bodies of husbands and sons so that there can be a completion of the traditional ceremonies; unless these rituals are conducted, their spirits are still restless in the jungles."

"Reconciliation and healing will only happen by the acceptance of the violations that took place. The people who burnt our villages, who raped our women and daughters, have to apologise. Then the people who have been hurt must accept this apology. Acceptance cannot be forced by the government, or we will see the return to violence, nor can it be forced by giving money to the people," the women said.

Trauma counselling, in order to heal the wounds caused by the violence, was seen as an important part of peacebuilding by many participants. "Support groups are a very practical response to support families who are also facing a trauma," said Susana Evening, citing the support the Blue Ribbon Peace Vigil gave to families of those being held as political hostages during the May 2000 violence in Fiji.

Justice was seen as essential for healing by many Timorese women, as participants learned during two days of field visits to groups such as East Timorese Women Against Violence (ETWAVE), FOKUPERS, and the widows' cooperative Rate Laek ("No Graves"). These groups often combine lobbying for justice for women with practical income generation projects.



Vanessa Griffen (left) and co-facilitator Koila Costello-Olsson (right) of Fiji relax during the consultation. Photo: S.Anderson

"Women continue to suffer no matter who is wearing the uniform"

Participants were honoured by a reception at Timor-Leste's Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR-the Portuguese acronym). CAVR is officially mandated to investigate and report on human rights abuses that took place between 1974 to 1999. Two of CAVR's seven national commissioners are women, and CAVR is officially mandated to include women's participation in all its truth-seeking. In addition to its work in community reconciliation, CAVR has organized several public hearings, including one on the human rights abuses women suffered during the occupation.

Violence against women continues even with the end of occupation. Domestic violence is now the most frequent crime in Timor-Leste. Activists also point out that some United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) peacekeepers are sexually harassing women, and abandoning children they may have with Timorese women when their unit is reassigned. "The UN mission came, and women were still raped, but they cannot do anything against the international people. Women continue to suffer no matter who is wearing the uniform," said a Timorese participant. "We are still looking for justice. [The justice] that was set up by the Indonesians and the UN was theatre."

Women and Leadership

As part of sharing the challenges they face as women peacemakers, the participants explored issues such as leadership, fundraising and burn-out. “Obstacles for leadership include patriarchal attitudes which regard women as male property or even consider it taboo for us to speak in our community meetings,” said a Timorese participant. “Even though our rights are protected in our constitution, this is not enough to bring out greater women’s leadership. Our governments need to create affirmative action programmes for women’s political participation and decision making.”

Genevieve Pisi of the Bougainville People’s Congress shared an encouraging example. “The women of Bougainville have successfully secured three permanent seats for women [out of a total 54 seats] in the new

autonomous government (to be established by September 2004). We achieved this by more political awareness training at the grassroots level; by women being unified in this goal; and by creating alliances with our male counterparts, with the support of our traditional role. We are continuing to train women to also run for the elections—in fact we will nominate one woman for every possible seat.”

The consultation helped forge new connections among Pacific women peacemakers and strengthen them in their work. “As we hear of the struggle for peace and contributions women make for peace, we realise that the violence continues, despite independence. I ask our sisters to highlight and campaign for non-violence,” said a Timorese participant. “We need a mechanism that will address the violence. We will continue our struggle to seek the root causes of violence and therefore ensure conflict prevention.”

Pacific Resources for Peace and Nonviolence

A written report and a 20-minute video of the Pacific consultation ‘*Pacific Women Exploring Nonviolence*’ (USD 15 or euro 15) is available from the IFOR Women Peacemakers Program.

Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, PO Box 144, Dili, Timor-Leste. Email: info@easttimor-reconciliation.org; web: www.easttimor-reconciliation.org

Peace and Democracy Foundation has published its research on traditional conflict resolution methods in Timor-Leste, with recommendations on how these processes can become more inclusive of women and youth. PDF, PO Box 88, Dili, Timor-Leste, via Darwin, Australia. Tel. +670 331 7189.

Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECEA), founded in 1990, works for peace and justice through programs such as Economic and Social Justice; Social empowerment and education; Gender and Peace. ECREA’s *Creating a Culture of Peace: A Training Manual for Pacific Peace Builders* is an important tool for trainers. ECREA, GPO Box 15473, Suva, Fiji. Tel. +679 3307 588. Fax +679 331 1248. Email: gencom@ecrea.org.fj

FemLINK publishes regular broadsheets on issues such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325; and conducts media workshops for women. FemLINK, Media Initiatives for Women, PO Box 2439 Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji. Tel. +679 331 6290. Fax +679 3301 925. Email: femlinkpac@is.com.fj

Women Build Peace

Manikuke Moa Ingkong-aing

(Bougainville)

Babi e’ miaho harai taea

rana tsi ba namona

(Roro language of central Papua New Guinea)

Feto Hari Dame

(Timor Leste)

Ureung inong pseudoeng/

peugoet damai

(Aceh)

Mere Wakem Pis

(Solomon Islands)

Geni aintalao ana Fanualama La

(Solomon Islands)



Women and Peace in the Solomon Islands

by Ella Kauhue

Violence, exacerbated by poverty and ethnic tensions, erupted in the Solomon Islands a year ago. Since the arrival of the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) the country is now back to normalcy. Solomon Islanders can now work freely without fear of intimidation. Most of the criminal elements that were responsible for initiating the ethnic tension are now currently facing justice in prison.

Solomon Island women were very active in initiating peace at a time when the country was collapsing. Different women's groups living in Honiara were able to visit the military camps. They brought food for the militants and prayed with them. During the height of the conflict those areas which women visited were no-go zone areas. Those areas were controlled by the militants and often not allowed for police officers to enter. Women were recognized by the militants as people who do not take sides. Women were at that time seen as mediators whose main focus was peace.

An example of women being recognized during the ethnic tension was when two of our staff went to North Malaita, an area that was not safe to go to. Members of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force were not able to reach that particular area as a result of being attacked. The two women were the only ones permitted to go to that area. They experienced no hostility. The people in the area were able to communicate with them and identified them as individuals whose work was beyond the hurt and the fights that they were experiencing at that time.

Solomon Island women have recognized the strength they have in dealing with conflict and violent situations during the ethnic tension. Their focus was on peace and they were trying to get that message out with the limited resources they had. The only resources they had with them while visiting the rebel camps were food and prayer. Their belief in peace was their only protection when visiting the militias.

Women were able to cross boundaries and areas where men could not. In other words men looked for protection from women in this country for the very first time. At one time during the ethnic tension a group of women with their children were traditionally decorated as a sign of preparation to die as they crossed into the enemy's territory. As soon as the militants noticed who they were,

they were allowed to travel freely. Men who traveled with the women were at that time were safe.

Women from church groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are very active in the peace process. Back in 2002, women's groups and organizations were very active in the amnesty campaign for weapons disarmament in the country. This was celebrated together with the International Women's Day on 8 March 2002. It was overwhelming to see so many women participating in this event. Women were the main organizers. As a result of that campaign, thousands of weapons were destroyed. Most of the villages in the country now are weapon free.

Although women in this country were seen as peace builders they continue to be marginalized from the political and policy making structures to ensure conflict prevention, as well as the development for sustainable peace. Women community leaders and peace builders can no longer be excluded from peace process. There is greater need for training women peace builders in order to help women better negotiate for peace and nonviolence.

At this time, women are still lobbying for true and lasting peace. Women are enabling other women to speak out against violence especially in the family. The ethnic tension has brought women together. It enables them to recognize their potential for development in the country. They realize that true development for sustainability does not come from those who speak loudly but from those who work silently.

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Conflict in the Fiji Islands

by Sharon Bhagwan Rolls

On May 19, 2000, Fiji was again lurched into another crisis — the illegal overthrow of an elected government. The coup d'état took place only 13 years after two similar takeovers in 1987. The coups of 1987, however, were led by a military man, Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, while that of May 2000 was by a civilian - a failed businessman, George Speight, who held Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and 17 other hostages in the parliament complex for 56 days. Among the demands of Speight and his followers was that Fiji's constitution be replaced so that Indo-Fijians (descendants of indentured labourers taken to Fiji from India in the colonial period) would be excluded from the government. The takeover triggered rioting and looting in the streets of the capital Suva. As the hostage crisis progressed, the violence spread to rural settlements outside Suva, and the persecution and subsequent displacement of farmers from Dawasamu and Mauniweni.

Fiji is the largest group of islands in the central Pacific with a population of around 800,000. The coups in Fiji may seem to have a racial origin. It is not as simple as that. While ethnic tensions between Fijians and Indo-Fijians was certainly a part of the problem, the issues behind the conflict were far more complex. There is a power struggle among Fijian groups, elite business interests, economic policies accompanying globalisation causing growing poverty and inequality and a sense of powerlessness among ordinary people.

Indians were brought to Fiji between 1879 and 1914 as indentured labourers to work on the sugar cane farms. After their time of indenture was completed most Indians stayed on in Fiji in rural communities as small farmers. While some Indo-Fijians have become wealthy, many Indo-Fijian sugar cane-cutters are still among the poorest people in the country.

The separate development of Fijians and Indians encouraged by the colonial government placed a wedge between the two communities. Racial biases and stereotypes quickly developed. Indo-Fijians were seen by indigenous Fijians as selfish and greedy. Indigenous Fijians were seen by Indo-Fijians as lazy and unreliable. The fact that indigenous Fijians were Christians and Indo-Fijians were mostly Hindu or Muslim also caused religious friction.

Women and the Conflict

Women were victims of the May 2000 coup. There were allegations of orchestrated rape and other forms of sexual violence by civilian groups against non-indigenous women. There were riots, looting and organized violence in many parts of the country and a number of people were killed. Reports of gender- and ethnic- based violence were predominantly documented by Save the Children Fiji and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. These reports have not really been made public. The under reporting of such violence is understandable given the stigma attached. This is a challenge for women and peace/security research and documentation. The coup still influences peoples' lives. Currently there is an increase in religious fundamentalism. There is a promotion of a Christian state from certain Christian quarters which is giving rise to a further division between ethnic groups which are predominantly led by men. This means women have a harder struggle to re-create the environment of the progressive movement of pre-May 2000. As the Fiji NGO Shadow Report to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of



Sharon Bhagwan Rolls (front) and Susana Evening (back) at the WPP Pacific consultation. Photo: S.Anderson

Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) committee in 2001 explains: “The most significant point about the status of women in the Fiji Islands is that real progress for women has been severely curtailed as a result of the attempted coup d’etat in May 2000 and the ensuing political instability and loss of the rule of law.”

As a result of the coup, existing forms of direct and indirect discrimination against women have been exacerbated. All reform bills and other lobbying towards equality for women have been obstructed, judicial processes have become chaotic, poverty in general has increased, and democracy has been subverted, with obvious impacts on women.

Hope and Reconciliation

Women were instrumental in maintaining calm and instilling hope during the tense weeks of the 2000 coup. The National Council of Women Fiji issued our first media statement denouncing the coup the day after the overthrow, and mobilised the network of women’s groups in Suva to gather for a Peace and Prayer Vigil the following day.

From May 21 to July 24, a multiethnic group of women held a daily vigil throughout the 56-day hostage crisis. While we were not without our own tensions and fears, this was insignificant compared with the strength generated by the women’s coming together daily. The “Mothers in White” who gathered to pray for the hostages and the women who wrote letters of support multiplied hope upon hope.

The international media was invited to look behind the scenes of the peace vigil, and found a window to community women’s perspectives. Many in the local media saw the vigil as access to the hostages who, as they were released, joined the women in solidarity.

The Vigil had a profound effect on the women who participated in it, as these quotations from the fem’TALK 90-minute video Keeping Watch (on the Blue Ribbon Peace Vigil initiative, convened by the National Council of Women Fiji within days of the May 2000 coup) reveal:

Tupou Vere (former National Council of Women Fiji president): It gave me personally a chance to be with friends and colleagues and people from all walks of life to come and share prayerfully our hurt and also trying to find a way out of this crisis...The vigil was a place where also anyone could share their thoughts, poems, personal experience of how they were being affected. It was also a time where we could share what further actions we could do, so there was a lot of bonding at that time. The vigil was very helpful on a personal front and in terms of the kind of work women’s organizations are trying to do as their position and reaction to the situation.

Parul Deoki, Stri Sewa Sabha: There was a state of emergency in the country, people were not allowed to have gatherings outside any religious complexes, they were not allowed to have political meetings and the vigil played an important role in the sense that it brought different communities and different groups together to pray for peace and unity in the country. It also brought out the best in us women, in the sense that we displayed our desire for peace in the country so that women can then go on with their lives. Women prayed for a restoration of democracy and the reinstatement of the 1997 constitution at the vigils. Personally it was very, very satisfying to come to the vigils and at least it a very important weapon, that anyone can use.

Women and Conflict Prevention

Women must realize that women need to get involved in order to prevent further outbreaks of violence. In the latter part of 2003, women made two sets of submissions to the National Security Defence Review Committee. One submission was made by the National Council of Women Fiji and the other by the Fiji Women, Peace and Security Coordinating Committee.

The women’s media initiative fem’LINKpacific is helping to mobilize women for peace. Fem’LINKpacific was inspired by the Beijing Platform for Action’s recommendation on women and the media, and by UN Resolution 1325.

Our key community media initiatives are:

- femTALK 1325: A quarterly women and peace magazine subsidised by UNIFEM Pacific which provides a space for women and peace initiatives, focusing on the Melanesian countries
- femTALK 89.2FM “Women speaking to women”provides a space for women centered peace talks and development based discussion and dialogue. This is a mobile women’s community radio project, using a radio in a suitcase to travel to women in their communities
- femTALK Community videos concentrate on women and peace, unity and national reconciliation. Each production includes a viewer’s discussion guide with more information. A community media kit with each video is distributed to at least 50 women’s groups and civil society organisations. fem’LINKpacific also circulates kits to the local mainstream media to suggest women-centred “leads” they could expand on.
- femTALK ENews: our monthly electronic news bulletin also provides space for women and peace stories.

Since 2001, fem’LINKpacific has engaged partner NGOs in “best utilising the media,” including assisting Fiji Media Watch in May 2001 in their “Steering Fiji Back

to Democracy” workshops. These workshops assembled journalists, journalism students and NGOs in a weeklong consultation on the issue of covering a General Election, in particular the first General Election that followed the May 2000 crisis. The workshops provided an opportunity for dialogue between participants (and for many journalists, an opportunity to speak about their feelings on covering the crisis), while providing an NGO perspective on the country’s political situation. Some media executives ignored the activity while others questioned whether it was the media’s role to promote peace and democracy. (Workshop reports are available from Fiji Media Watch. Please contact Father Larry Hannan at fmwatch@is.com.fj.)

UN Security Council Resolution 1325

Women’s peace initiatives to the May 2000 coup are respected in an informal manner, but women themselves have yet to be drawn into the formal discussions on human security issues. When women are asked if they want to prevent further coups the answer is always “yes”. Yet many women do not take this concern beyond workshops and prayer meetings. How to find ways to draw women into policy debates, to help them feel confident about participating on provincial or district level security committees or to share any early warning signs of conflict?

UN Resolution 1325 has the potential to change the paradigm that peace and security issues are the sole and extremely patriarchal domain of male leaders and security professionals. For activists in the capital city UN Resolution 1325 provides an important platform in national development planning and an important advocacy tool for conflict prevention and transformation efforts. But we need to inform more women about 1325 and celebrate it more. We also need to see more commitment from the UN level to this resolution. Recently, for example, the United Nations Development Programme launched a Pacific Peace project—but at the briefing nothing was said about women’s achievements. What is the impact of 1325 within the UN system?

Being part of the establishment of the Fiji Women, Peace and Security project (established through UNIFEM’s Melanesia project) I have experienced the potential of working in partnership with the Ministry of Women, as a way to influence policy for women through our peacebuilding efforts, but also remained very aware of the limitations to government and NGO collaborations.

Women and Security Committees

In October 2001 UNIFEM Pacific convened a round-table meeting on the topic “Women, Peace and Security” in Melanesia. The participants were challenged to

deconstruct the myth that when men speak on this issue, it is more readily accepted, and to answer the questions: What does the myth mean for us as women?, and what does it say about our status in society? The meeting made clear that women need to be involved in peace making procedures, because the decisions affect our lives and our future.

With assistance from UNIFEM Pacific, women, peace and security (WPS) coordinating committees have been established in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea/Bougainville and Fiji. The Regional Programme Director of UNIFEM Pacific explains why:

- Women and Children constitute a disproportionate number of those adversely affected by conflict, that during the conflict women and their families have been at risk at all settings, whether at home, in flight, or in camps for displaced people. Women during these times have been at risk of malnutrition and poverty.
- Women and women’s groups have played key roles as peace makers in each conflict situation whilst at the same time holding together their families and communities.
- Yet women’s contribution has not been sufficiently recognized or supported, either politically or financially in the post conflict situation. Women have not been sufficiently included in peace processes.
- As a result women’s rights and concerns are rarely fully integrated into peace agreements or into the structures and mechanisms supporting post conflict resolution.

The project aims to increase and strengthen women’s participation in all matters relating to peace and security. The committee aims to address the assistance needed for women and families affected by conflicts and also support women’s role in conflict prevention, resolution and peace building.

At a May 2003 meeting, the Ministry for Women was designated to take a lead role on the project in Fiji. The WPS Committee in Fiji works to promote the recognition and contribution of women to detect early conflict warning via intervention, resolution strategies and post conflict progress. The committee recognises that peace needs to be long lasting. Sustainable development and peace building must encompass the rights of men, women, boys and girls and that there needs to be equal distribution of development benefits.

The Fiji committee realized that in order to really make a difference they had to listen to and learn from each; take into account the range of experiences through research and analysis; and create community-centered programs that will help build a culture of peace in Fiji, especially one where women are key decision makers. The WPS Fiji committee was also mindful that they could not just focus on creating activities; they needed to learn more in order to lobby policy makers.

Objectives of Women, Peace and Security Project (WPS): Fiji

The WPS Project in Fiji has four objectives:

- To improve availability of data and analysis on the root causes of conflicts, the impact on women and their role in conflict prevention, resolution and post conflict peace building in the four project countries.
- To strengthen the capacity of women and women's groups in the four programme countries to play a role in conflict prevention, resolution and post conflict peace building at the national and regional level.
- To promote a gender perspective in conflict resolution and peace building initiatives of governments, regional organisations and mainstream agencies.
- To promote peace, tolerance and reconciliation linking with economic security issues through advocacy in the community and with the general public.

How can women's peace groups outside Fiji support Fijian women peacemakers?

Support our needs as Pacific women working for peace. Our conflicts seem small in the international arena compared to Iraq, Afghanistan and Africa but they are just as important. As the International Symposium on Resources and Conflict in the Asia-Pacific Region stated, "Internal conflict has become increasingly widespread in the Asia-Pacific region, creating an 'arc of instability' stretching from Indonesia in the west, through East Timor, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and other parts of the Pacific, to Fiji in the east."

And last but not least, help us share our stories by supporting the role of women's community media as a vital tool for peacebuilding and women's empowerment, and also as a way for the rest of the world to understand the Pacific region. Assist us in resource and technical assistance mobilization especially to avoid the dilemma of donor-driven agendas.

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Reconciliation

by Filomena Reis

Here lies the wisdom
The wisdom of forgiveness
With bright colours of life
A gift to all humanity
Here lies the power
The power of love
With the soulful understanding
of necessity for change
Why all these compromises
When we know what to do
Let's take the spear
And put it right inside this evil monster
Learn to be free
And learn to be in harmony
With the rest of the world
Learn to be free
So we can learn to forgive
Because an eye for an eye
Will only lead our world to blindness.

Filomena Barros dos Reis (photo) is director of the Peace and Democracy Foundation, PO Box 88, Dili, Timor-Leste, via Darwin, Australia. Tel. +670-331-7189.



Girls in Fighting Forces: Making Visible the Invisible

by Professor Susan McKay

Since the 1990s, women's experiences of war have received increased international attention, including at the 1995 United Nations (UN) Beijing Conference on Women where women from throughout the world gave testimony. The consensus document of this meeting, The Platform for Action, included strategies to better address the effects of war upon women. The 1996 Graça Machel Study of The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children emphasized women's key roles in mediating war's effects upon children through peacebuilding initiatives. The Machel Study gave some limited attention to girls, particularly in discussing sexual exploitation and gender-based violence which were identified as weapons of war. In much of the document, girls were subsumed within the rubric of "children" and their participation as child soldiers understated.

However, at the time the Study was issued, relatively little was known about girls' distinct experiences nor the extent of their presence within fighting forces. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies, governmental and intergovernmental bodies had limited knowledge about girls, and girls remained largely invisible to the international community. With the 2002 publication of the UN report Women, Peace and Security, the effects of war and the marginalization of women and girls in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes were brought more fully to the forefront, and an agenda of actions were identified to promote girls' protection and well-being.

Today, despite existing knowledge that throughout the world, most predominately in Africa and Asia, girls and women are participants in government, paramilitaries, militias, and armed opposition groups, little is yet being done on their behalf. Official DDR processes target boys and men, as occurred recently in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Few girls and women are beneficiaries of DDR or other initiatives that could help them to recover and become productive members of their communities and countries. In some African civil wars, even more onerous is the situation of girls, called "girl mothers," who bring children when they return from a fighting force. Because the presence of their children and their unmarried status often flies in the face of cultural beliefs and traditions, these girl mothers and their children may be stigmatized, provoked, and face even more discrimination than girls returning without children.

Key areas for action are finding better ways to protect girls (and all children) from being enlisted as child soldiers and to assist their exit from these forces. Programs must be developed to enable girls and women to be demobilized and reintegrated using gender-sensitive approaches to psychosocial assistance and primary health care that take into account the reproductive and sexual abuse they experienced.

This article's focus is upon girls, defined internationally as females under 18 years of age, in fighting forces and their lives in the aftermath of armed conflict. Women, too, face many problems similar to girls. Females who "fit" the international definition of a girl may, instead, be considered women and not girls in their own cultures. Thus, a fine line exists in deciding who is a girl. Also, many women were girls when they entered fighting forces; some stayed many years so that they grew from girlhood to womanhood within forces. They then gave birth to children and may have been a "wife" to a soldier. Their children consequently may have no identifiable communities to which they can return because they have always lived with a fighting force, perhaps moving with force members across international borders in the search for safety. These "war babies" are a focus of increased research interest because we know very little about how they fare over time and when they integrate into mainstream society.

Girls in Fighting Forces in Africa

I will now discuss findings about girls that are drawn from a study conducted between 2001 and 2003 of girls in fighting forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique.¹ This study, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in partnership with Rights and Democracy, Montreal used a gender analytic framework to analyze the situations of girls within the context of three African armed conflicts: Mozambique (1976-1992), Northern Uganda (1986-present), and Sierra Leone (1991-2002). For the CIDA study, 164 girls were interviewed: 76 in

1. McKay, Susan & Mazurana, Dyan (2004). *Where are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique: Their Lives During and After War*. Montreal: Rights and Democracy. Available www.ichrdd.ca

Mozambique, 32 in Northern Uganda, and 56 in Sierra Leone. In addition, many officials and practitioners in UN, governmental, NGO and grassroots organizations were interviewed. In some cases, organizational records were analyzed in an effort to gain more accurate information about girls' participation and demobilization.

Other recent studies² have been conducted of girls in countries such as Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Colombia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. Research is revealing more fully the presence of girls, ways they enter fighting forces, roles they play, and how they fare when they leave a force and during the post-war. Importantly, we know that girls' situations differ by country, context, ages, and force among other variables. It is important to not generalize about what happens to girls in fighting forces. For example, a girl taken from her family home when she is seven or eight years and who remains in a force for a short time will differ from a girl who joins a force as a teenager and serves primarily as a combatant, who will also have different experiences than a girl who joins because she is desperate for food and shelter and has no other recourse. To underscore this point, one must therefore be cognizant of the complexities and distinct aspects of girls' experiences, even within the same forces.

It has been common to lump girls who are taken (usually abducted) into a fighting forces as "sex slaves" or "soldiers wives." Categorizing girls in this limited way has the advantage of drawing attention to the gender-specific violence experienced. The downside is that the complexity of girls' involvement in a fighting force is lost in the simplification of their experiences, and so is agency they may have displayed. Similarly, emphasizing that girls have power within a fighting force by focusing upon their roles as combatants can abridge the full range of their involvement because it singles out one role to the exclusion of others.

2. See for example, Myriam Denov & Richard Maclure. (In Press). Girls and armed conflict in Sierra Leone: Victimization, participation, and resistance. In V. Farr & A. Schnabel (Eds). *Gender perspectives on small arms and light weapons*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press; Erika Pérez. (2001, September). *Girls in the Colombian armed groups, a diagnosis: Briefing*. Germany: Terre de Hommes; Yvonne Keairns. (2002). *The voices of girl child soldiers*. New York, Geneva, and London: Quaker United Nations Office and Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers; Save the Children Denmark (2003, November). *A study of the views, perspectives and experiences of "social integration" among formerly abducted girls in Gulu, Northern Uganda*. Gulu, Northern Uganda: Author; Angela Veale (2003). *From child soldier to ex-fighter, a political journey: Female fighters, demobilization and reintegration in Ethiopia*. Monograph No. 85, Institute of Security Studies, South Africa.

How Girls Enter and Why They Participate in Fighting Forces

Girls are found in fighting forces throughout the world. During the years 1990 to 2003, girls were part of fighting forces in 55 countries. They were involved in armed conflicts in 38 of these countries: 13 countries in Africa, 7 in the Americas, 8 in Asia, 5 in Europe, and 5 in the Middle East. They entered forces in a variety of ways including through recruitment, joining, abduction, and compulsory service. Some were taken from orphanages, as has been reported in Sri Lanka, or were born into a force as occurred in the wars in Mozambique, Northern Uganda and Sierra Leone. Others joined because of abuse or problems at home, as has been reported in Colombia. Also, both boys and girls joined forces because they sought protection, food, education and career options, and because friends or family members also joined.

In the CIDA/ Rights & Democracy Study, interviews with girls shed light on the harsh realities of how they were taken from their homes, schools, and as they walked along the roads. Most immediately either witnessed or experienced almost unimaginable brutality such as seeing their friends or parents killed, being raped, or they were forced to commit atrocities or they would be killed.

What Do Girls Do in a Force?

The presence of girls and women in a force reproduces the similar gender roles that exist in sexist society. That is, girls and women are oppressed and serve both productive and reproductive roles that are keys to maintaining a force, particularly in rebel forces and armed opposition groups that cannot rely on state structures to maintain their forces. As such they perform a variety of jobs such as domestic work (cooking, washing clothes, farming, locating water, caring for children), carrying and looting goods, and providing health care. Some become spies and messengers. Many are used for sexual purposes: from 1990 and 2003, girls in fighting forces in nine countries were subject to forced sex.

Girls also are commonly trained for combat although training can sometimes condense to learning "cock and load" maneuvers so they know how to work a gun. Others girls are primarily fighters and hold leadership responsibilities. These female combatants may simultaneously also be "wives" of commanders when they carry on more traditional gender roles; their dual roles and the protection afforded by their rebel-captor "husbands" can provide them with more power within a force than other girls have.

Children in fighting forces often seek to escape the desperate conditions in which they find themselves. Some manage to escape, seek amnesty, or demobilize when the fighting ends. For girls, leaving a force (e.g., by

escaping and returning home) can be more difficult than for boys. Girls are usually watched more closely and their labor continues to be needed. They also have fewer opportunities because they are less apt to be in situations where they can escape. For both boys and girls, escape attempts can risk their lives. Yet, many display incredible courage, even at very young ages. In the CIDA/Rights & Democracy study, the majority of girls were found to return directly to their villages, if these still existed, when they escaped or the fighting ended. Boys, in contrast, were far more likely to go through official demobilization processes.

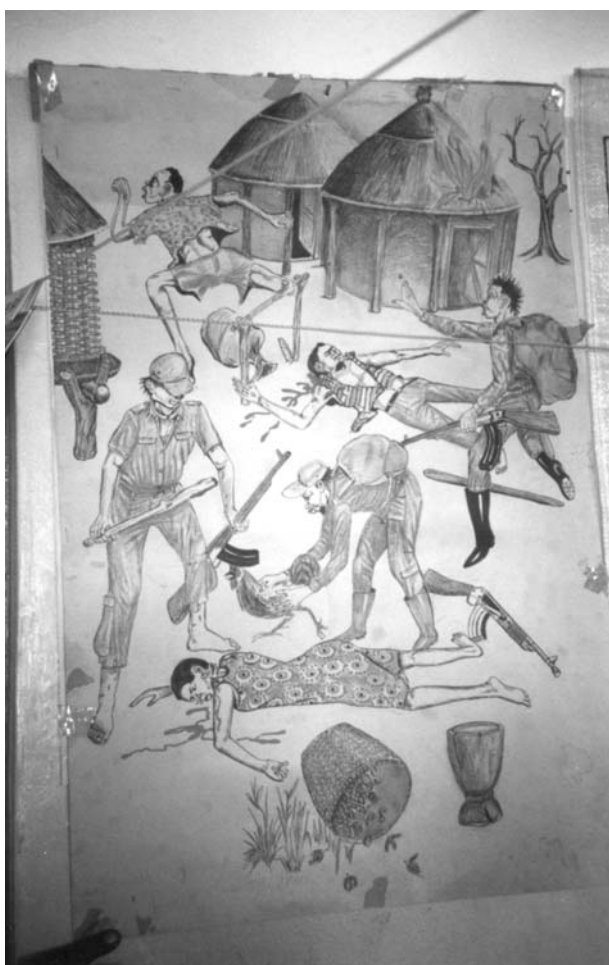
Findings of the CIDA/Rights and Democracy Study

The psycho-spiritual, physical and psychological health, and socio-cultural issues faced by girls were my research responsibilities for the study. Fuller explication of all findings can be found in *Where are the Girls?*³ The findings I discuss also reflect effects upon people and communities of armed conflicts. Communities face extraordinary challenges in coming to terms with what has happened and in developing a renewed sense of

present and future possibilities. Unfortunately, thinking about communities is not a priority for international funding agencies and policy makers, just as these same entities seldom think about girls. Therefore, the onus is usually on grassroots groups and nongovernmental organizations to work with communities to develop psychosocial programs to support healing and build upon communities' strengths and resiliency.

Since most girls return spontaneously (that is, they go straight home) few are beneficiaries of assistance such as obtaining health care, being supported to return to school or gain job skills, or accessing programs designed to address gender-specific violence. Girls return with severe health problems, including sexually-transmitted diseases, headaches, stomach aches, scabies and skin diseases, chest pain, pain from beatings, and severe genital, anal and bladder injuries because of sexual violence. Others have injuries from pregnancy and childbirth in the bush. Girls who are orphans, disabled, have HIV/AIDS (increasingly epidemic in wartorn countries) or are separated from their families face even more desperate circumstances. Girls talk about being fearful, worried and anxious and visualize bleak futures with little hope. They have "broken hearts" and ask "How can you mend your broken hearts?" Unfortunately, community-based programs which girls often depend upon for assistance usually are not sufficiently sensitive to their needs nor do they possess adequate resources to respond. When communities cannot facilitate girls' reintegration and girls cannot find opportunities to go to school or learn a trade, they may leave.

Abductees kidnapped by the Lord's Resistance Army during a counseling session drew a picture of a massacre against the Acholi people in Northern Uganda. Photo: Susan Mc Kay



Girls may display behaviors that hinder their reintegration and are unacceptable within their communities. These behaviors include using abusive language, aggression, smoking, drug use, and being quarrelsome. Also, girls are often viewed negatively because they have lost their virginity (even though they were forced) and may be thought of as willing commanders' 'wives'. Consequently, they are less marriageable and may not 'fit in.' Other girls choose to remain with their rebel-captor 'husbands' who may not be welcomed into the community. Yet girls may view this liaison as their best option; also, some are genuinely attached to their 'husbands' who may have protected them in the bush and with whom they have children.

Whether with 'husbands' or if they return alone and bring children, they frequently are provoked and stigmatized called 'rebels' or 'rebel wives,' and their children may be taunted as 'rebels of tomorrow.' Some girls who seemingly have no other choices, trade sex for money or other goods. Girls with children who have no family (orphans) or families who cannot help them are especially vulnerable to prostitution. When I was in Sierra

3. McKay & Mazurana, see footnote 1.

Leone in October 2003 to conduct a pilot study of girl mothers, these girls discussed that they engaged in prostitution for survival. Most had little or no education and lacked marketable skills, although they expressed eagerness to learn skills or continue their education. Some also went from house-to-house to beg for food for themselves and their children. Others received 'small small' compensation through plaiting hair, doing laundry, and petty trade.

Girls don't want to be singled out, especially if they return with children, and they tend to hide their own situations. They feel shame because of their participation in a fighting force, because of gender-based sexual violence, and due to violating cultural taboos such as being in 'marriages' with 'bush husbands' and returning with children whose father cannot be identified. Also, identifiable tattoos, scars and carvings amplify feelings of shame.

Communities are also war-affected and every person suffers from the effects of armed conflicts and lack of resources. Despite this lack, communities have tremendous capacity to help girls. Members benefit when they are prepared for the return of girls, especially when girls have been in a force for a long time and bring children. They respond to learning problem solving strategies including conflict resolution, dialogue and mediation processes which are best accomplished when NGOs work over time with communities and influential leaders. Communities require assistance because of the shame from not protecting girls from being taken. Therefore community-based rituals, when these are traditionally practiced, can help alleviate shame and support reintegration and healing for both girls and her communities. Rituals can also be used to impose normative behaviors for community members - such as forbidding calling girls' names. Some rituals are gender-specific and can help girls be cleansed and healed from the trauma of sexual violence. Elderly women and key community leaders are usually responsible for these rituals and also may help girls by talking with them and encouraging them.

Empowering Girls

To gain hope for the future, girls must have opportunities to better their situations. Initially when they return, they need primary health care and programs of psychosocial assistance, although they seldom receive either. Central to their recovery is developing a sense of agency, self confidence, and self esteem. Girls possess resiliency and agency that should be recognized and supported through skills training, schooling, and opportunities to engage in micro-credit schemes. School and training opportunities should be girl-friendly and include pregnant girls and girl mothers and their babies. Also, programs should provide a wide range of opportunities

for girls rather than restricting them to skills that have limited economic potential (e.g., soap making and hair braiding) but are deemed to be 'suitable' for girls. They also benefit from programs that health education, including mental and reproductive health, and provide supports for their self esteem. Indigenous expressive arts such as drama and music can provide culturally appropriate ways for girls to share their strengths and tell their stories in a setting that provides support from community members.

Importantly, girls must be SEEN! Their complex experiences, usually both as victims and perpetrators, are typically shrouded from attention at all levels - whether in communities where girls hide in private spaces or at national and international levels where they are usually rendered invisible. Holistic approaches should be used with girls to take into account the gendered physical, psychological, spiritual, and social aspects of healing and reintegration within the realities of the economic and political contexts in which girls live and seek to make their lives. Girl mothers must be prioritized for community-based programming assistance so that they and their children can envision positive futures. Such a holistic approach to girls and their children is best embarked upon together with the efforts of the men and women who make up communities and who can potentially positively influence girls and show them that they have a place and future in their communities.

Importantly, a country and region's indigenous leaders must be at the forefront of developing initiatives for girls, advocating for their inclusion in DDR processes, and shaping research agendas to shed light on the lives and needs of these girls. Towards this goal, the Rockefeller Foundation is sponsoring an invited conference in the spring of 2005 in Bellagio, Italy to address practice and research and strategize how to work with girl mothers in Southern and Western Africa who have been in fighting forces during their post-war reintegration. Such initiatives bring more fully to the forefront the challenges faced by girls and their communities in recovering their lives and approaches to working with them that are efficacious.

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1325: Use It or Lose It

by Shelley Anderson

In October 2000 the United Nations (UN) Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (for the full text of the resolution see www.peacewomen.org).

The Resolution was the result of intensive lobbying by a coalition of women's groups. In an attempt to address one of the most frequently heard complaints of women peacebuilders, the lack of access to decision making, the first paragraph of 1325 urges all UN member states to "ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict..."

1325 reaffirms the "important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, and [stresses] the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security..." It calls for gender sensitivity in UN peacekeeping missions, for women's equal participation in peace negotiations and for better protection of women and girls during armed conflict.

1325 is a powerful tool for women peacemakers. It gives women credibility and leverage with their governments and strengthens women's demands for representation in peace negotiations. Yet implementation of this critical

document is weak. More women peacemakers need to be aware that 1325 exists. It needs to be translated into more languages. Mechanisms need to be developed for implementation.

Getting Grassroots Activists Involved

Last year, at its annual international training for women nonviolence trainers, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation's Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) provided one example of how more women peacemakers can become aware of and utilize 1325. One session in its two-week long training, which brought 16 women peacemakers from Australia, East Timor, India, Japan, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Switzerland and Zimbabwe together, was on advocacy and lobbying.

About one-third of the participants had already heard about 1325. During this session, participants were given copies of a briefing on 1325's main points, and on how women peacemakers in different countries were using the resolution. The women were then divided into four small groups to identify ways they could promote 1325 in their countries.

Group 1 decided that their overall goal was to promote women's participation in peacebuilding. They would use UN Resolution 1325, plus the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action towards this goal. They wanted to target women's organizations, human rights organizations and their governments, in order to build a coalition of women's and human rights groups to push for implementation of Resolution 1325. Their long term goal was to determine clear and concrete guidelines on women's participation in peace processes. Follow up, both in terms of monitoring the actual involvement of women and paying visits to negotiating teams to see if women were included in peacebuilding, would be essential.

Group 2 decided to focus on awareness raising on Resolution 1325. For this they would use the media, especially radio and television, plus discussion programs, jingles, short plays, call-in programs, newspapers, and Internet for those with access. "We would also incorporate this into our own organizations, by summarizing the

Participants at a WPP international training for women nonviolence trainers explore using 1325. Photo: S.Anderson



Resolution and talking about it at our meetings, and with T-shirts, bumper stickers and posters,” said an activist from Sierra Leone. Their targets were women, youth, decision makers, parliamentarians, and the general public.

“We want a shift in society so that women’s roles are valued. Our short term goals include:

- Increase capacity building programs so women get the training and skills they need.
- Increase pressure on government to put pressure in the UN to implement the Resolution;
- Expect an increase in the participation of women in peace processes,” the activist said, adding that the group needed to think about how to monitor the plan.

“We asked ourselves, are lawmakers already aware of the resolution? It’s dangerous to assume parliamentarians know about it. So we would get a woman parliamentarian to make a motion about 1325. We also talked about civil society coming up with a report to put pressure on governments to implement 1325. Civil society can make a shadow report to the UN, and NGOs can get consultative status with the UN, in order to observe, or speak or submit papers. If you don’t have consultative status, you can ask an NGO that does, or join a coalition,” commented a group member.

A spokeswoman for Group 3 said, “We want this to be implemented in Nigeria, because Nigeria is member of the UN. Our group listed barriers and discussed ways to overcome these barriers to implementation. We would start with local NGOs, and then sensitize grassroots women and students (especially law students), then the media. Our strategy is to use the media, make a local awareness campaign, march with placards, and make appointments with decision-making bodies. Then we would start the lobbying process, with the end result that the Resolution is included into Nigeria’s constitution. Our follow-up would be to monitor this bill for inclusion until it is implemented.

An activist from Madagascar in Group 4 reported, “All of us need to think about how to implement this Resolution! Our targets are prison directors, the Minister of Justice, health ministers, and politicians. We will invite by letter people for a debate on television (this media will bring a lot of politicians). We will need a neutral facilitator, not a politician or someone from a women’s organization. Our short term result is the realization of a plan of action to present to them; in the long term we want to change the law with a memorandum or a plan of action. We must monitor so it is implemented properly.”

It was clear from this exercise that women peacemakers were eager to use the opportunities 1325 provided. The activists came up with creative and practical ways to implement the Resolution. The input of grassroots

Resources

The Inclusive Security Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action is a new and very comprehensive manual on ways to use 1325 and other essential UN documents. Developed by International Alert and Women Waging Peace, the manual is available in PDF format from websites: www.womenbuildingpeace.org or www.womenwagingpeace.net or by contacting *the Gender and Peacebuilding Programme, International Alert, 346 Clapham Road, London SW9 9AP, UK. Tel. +44 (0) 207 627 6800, or Women Waging Peace, 2040 S Street NW, Suite 2, Washington, DC 20009, USA. Tel. +1 202 403 2000.*

Translations of UN SCR 1325 can be found at the Peacewomen web site: www.peacewomen.org. This web site also includes a list of women and peace organizations and initiatives; updates on efforts to implement 1325; and a comprehensive annotated bibliography of books, articles and analyses on women’s peace theory and activities, as well as NGO position papers, reports, speeches, statements and tools for organization building. *Contact: PeaceWomen, WILPF, United Nations Office, 777 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA. Tel. +1 212 682 1265; fax: +1 212 286 8211; email: info@peacewomen.org*

women peacemakers is essential in discovering ways to implement this tool. It was also clear that what community-based women peace activists need is more information and resources to do so. One way donors could help this process is by specifically making funding available to women peacemakers for work in implementing 1325.

Shelley Anderson is Program Officer for the International Fellowship of Reconciliation’s Women Peacemakers Program. Funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs’s Women and Development department, the WPP builds women peacemakers’ capacity by providing nonviolence training, training materials and funding for women’s peace initiatives; documents and analyses women’s strategies for peace; and develops gender-sensitive nonviolence training. WPP, Spoorstraat 38, 1815 BK Alkmaar, the Netherlands.

Invisible and Ignored: Women and Girls as Combatants

by Shelley Anderson

Landmark events such as United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 have strengthened attempts to recognize the many roles women play in conflict. One role, however, remains invisible: women as combatants in armed conflict.

The fact that an increased number of women are combatants is clear. Women form over 10 percent of regular armed forces in Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand and the United States. Nepal announced in August that its first group of women soldiers had completed training, and that five percent of the Royal Nepalese Army in the future will be women. The recent ground breaking Canadian study *Where are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and After War*, by Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana, states that, between 1990 to 2003, girls (defined as females under 18 years of age) were part of fighting forces in 55 countries. Girls took part in armed conflicts in 38 of these countries.

Liberation or Further Oppression?

Is women's participation in armed forces a sign of liberation? Or is it an indication of the spread of a destructive militarism? The involvement of US women soldiers in abusing Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison has forced some US feminists to rethink previous support for a role for women in armed forces. While American women peace activists opposed military service for women or men, others in the women's movement had argued that military service provided much needed jobs and skills training for working class women.

It is an argument that is used in many parts of the world to support women's involvement in armed forces. Especially in countries where military leaders control the political process, women's entry into the military may be one way to gain access to decision-making processes. Such arguments ignore issues such as the long-term sustainability and the human costs of any economy or political system based on militarism.

A further argument by those who either support—or see as inevitable—women's increasing involvement in armed forces is that if women join armed forces in larger and larger numbers, militaries themselves will be forced to change.

Women: Kinder Killers?

Can women combatants make war less destructive or more humane? It was to explore this question and similar ones that two Swiss-based organizations, Geneva Call and Program for the Study of International Organizations, organized the conference "How Women Combatants Can contribute to the Promotion of Humanitarian Norms", held August 26 to 29, in Geneva, Switzerland.

Some 50 women combatants and researchers, from over 20 countries, met during the four on-going workshops to discuss the role of women and girls armed opposition groups. The themes discussed in the workshops included women and girls within armed groups: leadership, agency and the challenges of implementing a humanitarian agenda; women and girls experiences as victims, perpetrators and resisters of violence during conflict; invisibility and neglect: including women and girls in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process; and girl soldiers: protection, psycho-social effects and the challenges of reintegration.

Women and girls form up to 30 percent of some armed opposition groups' forces. While some armed groups have clear policies on women's equality (which attracts some women to join the group), others impose obligatory birth control and very limited leadership roles. DDR programs for pregnant women and girls, or mothers, are virtually nonexistent. Given the disruption of women's and girls' education that involvement in armed struggle often meant, and the stigmatization women ex-combatants face after taking on such non-traditional roles, support for their reintegration back into civilian society is especially critical.

When asked if women combatants may indeed be more open to observing human rights and the laws of war, such as the Geneva Conventions, many of the participants were noncommittal. A minority thought that women were "more cautious about taking life".

An Issue for Peace Movements

All the combatants felt they had no choice but to join an armed struggle, in the face of serious human rights violations against their ethnic or national group. Their

testimonies left many participating peace activists convinced that early warning mechanisms and earlier peace interventions were essential for conflict prevention.

While appreciative of the work of Geneva Call, which has concluded agreements with some 25 armed groups to prohibit the use of land mines, several combatants noted that more training in humanitarian law and in conflict resolution would be useful.

Such a call for training may raise dilemmas for peace movements, as it would mean cooperation with armed groups to some extent. While the ramifications of such potential cooperation remain to be defined, one thing is clear. Peace movements have ignored the militarization of women. Whether because women combatants raise uneasy questions about women's aggressiveness, or peace movements' own stereotypes of women and girls, activists concerned about challenging violence and militarism can no longer afford to ignore women combatants.

Resources

Geneva Call is an international humanitarian organization dedicated to engaging non-state actors to respect humanitarian norms, starting with the ban on antipersonnel mines. Geneva Call provides a mechanism for non-state actors, who do not participate in drafting treaties and so may not feel bound by treaty obligations, to adhere to the anti land mines treaty by signing a Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action. The report "Women in Armed Opposition Groups Speak on War, Protection and Obligations under International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law", by Dyan Mazurana, is available from Geneva Call, PO Box 334, 1211 Geneva 4, Switzerland. Tel/ fax +41 22 800 20 68. Email: info@genevacall.org. Web: www.genevacall.org

Getting it Right, Doing it Right: Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Building on UN Resolution 1325, this 50-page report looks at lessons learned from a desk study of DDR processes and from two case studies (Liberia and Bougainville). It includes UNIFEM's standard operating procedures for gender-aware DDR. UNIFEM, 304 East 45th Street, 15th floor, NY, NY 10017, USA. Tel. +1 212 906 6400; fax +1 212 906 6705. Web: www.unifem.org; www.womenwarpeace.org

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (CSC) documents and campaigns against the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Its annual Global Report

for 2003 looks at 17 countries between the period January to September 2003, and finds an increase in the use of child soldiers. The report includes a critique of existing DDR programs and cites the exclusion of girl ex-combatants in such programs as a serious lack. CSC, 2nd floor, 2-12 Pentonville Road, London N1 9HF, UK. Tel. +44 20 7713 2761; fax +44 20 7713 2794. Email: info@child-soldiers.org. Web: www.child-soldiers.org

The Roots of Behavior in War: Understanding and Preventing International Humanitarian Law Violations, by Daniel Muñoz-Rojas and Jean-Jacques Frésard, is an 18-page summary of research commissioned by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on key factors that influence the behavior of combatants. The summary deals exclusively with male combatants and concludes that factors such as group conformity, obedience to authority, and previous humiliation and trauma on perpetrators, are factors in violations of international humanitarian law. ICRC, 19 Avenue de la Paix, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland. Email: icrc.gva@icrc.org

Where are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and After War by Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana (Rights and Democracy, 2004, 146 pages) includes critical policy and program recommendations. Available in English or French. Rights and Democracy, 1001 de Maisonneuve Blvd. East, Suite 1100, Montreal, Quebec H2L 4P9, Canada. CAN \$ 15. Email: publications@ichrdd.ca Web: www.ichrdd.ca

SHAREHOLDING CAMPAIGN: LEGAL AND FUN!

by Charlotte

Serco is part of the consortium that runs Aldermaston, and it is the only company that has British shareholders and an annual general meeting (AGM) held in the United Kingdom (UK). Since the company began its involvement with the British nuclear weapons program, women from the Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp(aign) (AWPC) began organising a shareholder campaign.

This year will be our third as Serco Group plc shareholders, and we pride ourselves on taking an active part in the annual general meeting. Every shareholder is entitled to attend the AGM, and to ask questions about the Annual Review document. How nice it is to be on the right side of the law for a change! We attend the AGM with three main aims in mind:

- To inform the Board and the other attending shareholders about AWE Aldermaston, what goes on there and why nuclear weapons are illegal, immoral and unacceptable.
- To ensure that as long as Serco Group plc makes profits from making nuclear weapons there will not be "business as usual" at the annual general meeting.
- To ask genuine questions and make requests for information about what is happening at Aldermaston.

Making an impression

Before the April 2004 meeting we had attended three AGMs. It would be fair to say that we have made quite an impression. The first two annual meetings Aldermaston Women attended (2001 and 2002) were held the National Physical Laboratory on the outskirts of London. They consisted of a board of about ten people on the platform and an audience of about 20 people in a small conference room.

They had no idea what to do with us. Consequently, although there were only about five women from AWPC, we were able to hold the floor and talk about Aldermaston for about half an hour, get the meeting adjourned, interrupt it frequently, and end with a rousing poem and a colourful banner. Bemused directors who knew nothing about Aldermaston looked sheepish as they sipped their coffee and tried to answer our questions.

New tactics needed!

In 2003 the AGM was moved to a central London venue - the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre. This was both good and bad for campaigners. Good because we felt that Serco were on the run, and that our actions both inside and outside the AGM were now taking place in a much more visible location. Bad because the security at the Queen Elizabeth Centre, who have years of practice at "containing" other shareholder actions (for example, at Shell and BaeS AGMs), rudely interrupted our speeches and quickly removed us one by one.

However, we had a banner outside and some passers-by showed an interest. We also learnt that we need new tactics for how we approach the AGM and how we can develop the campaign as a whole for 2004.

Women-only action

This year we were hoping to build a large, visible, noisy, exciting presence outside the building: both men and women are needed to take an active part in this aspect of our protest, though only women may become shareholders in our campaign and participate in the AGM. This reflects our desire to create a women-only action inside the AGM.

Inside the AGM we anticipated opportunities for single speeches, joint interruptions and serious questions. Depending on what women chose to do, experience suggests that several will be "escorted" out of the building by security guards.

The Serco shareholder campaign is in its infancy and there are many avenues to explore and potential locations for applying pressure. As part of our resistance to Britain's nuclear weapons, Aldermaston Women will continue to investigate.

The AWPC campaign is focused around a regular monthly, women-only peace camp, which has been in existence since 1985. Women involved in the camp(aign) participate in shareholder actions, propaganda, nonviolent direct action and public awareness actions. AWPC, 157 Lyndhurst Road, Worthing, W Sussex BN11, Britain. Tel. +44 0845 4588 362; mobile +44 07969 739 812. Email: info@aldermaston.net. Web: www.aldermaston.net

EUROPEAN CENTRE ON PACIFIC ISSUES (ECSIEP)

The European Centre on Pacific Issues (ECSIEP) has been the secretariat of the Europe Pacific solidarity Network since 1992. ECSIEP serves as an information centre on developments in the Pacific and links Pacific civil society and European organizations and institutions.

The Europe Pacific Solidarity (EPS) network was established by European NGOs and church organizations working on peace, environmental and development issues in the Pacific. Indignation about French nuclear testing in Polynesia started off the Europe Pacific Solidarity network and remained a central issue. In 1995, a coalition of five organizations (EEPF and Hiti Tau in Tahiti), CDRPC (France), World Conference of Churches (Switzerland) and ECSIEP was established to develop and implement an independent survey on the health of former nuclear test-site workers. The survey resulted in the book *Morrow and us; Polynesians' experiences during thirty years of Nuclear Testing in the French Pacific*. Since 1989, the Europe Pacific Solidarity network organizes annual seminars where activists meet and discuss current Pacific developments.

ECSIEP maintains regular contact with Pacific churches and NGOs and supports their activities. ECSIEP works mainly on issues which clearly link Europe and the Pacific. These are issues like French nuclear testing; climate change; sustainable forestry; the ACP-European Union partnership agreements and the involvement of civil society; mining; sustainable development and conflicts.

ECSIEP's current challenges and priorities are:

Decreasing European interest in Pacific civil society

Because of the large physical distance and relative small population in the Pacific, European interest in the region has always been limited. While this limited interest was a stable factor in the past, ECSIEP is now experiencing a clear decrease of interest in the region. European organizations are limiting their geographical focus (focusing only on one or a few countries in the region) or are only supporting organizations in a specific work field. When pressing issues in the region come up, there is limited flexibility for direct support. Through dialogue with European organizations, information sharing and by serving as an entry point to Europe for Pacific Civil Society, ECSIEP works hard to keep the Pacific on the European agenda.



Poster by participant at IFOR Women Peacemakers Program's consultation in the Pacific. Photo: S. Anderson

European tuna fishery in the Pacific region

Europe is expanding its fishing operations into the Pacific. The first bilateral agreement between the European Union (EU) and Kiribati was signed in July 2002 and discussions between other Pacific countries and the European Union on fishing access are forthcoming. The EU is also becoming more influential in the recently established Commission for the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Pacific. This considerably increases the opportunities for the EU to engage in multilateral fisheries agreements with Pacific Island countries in the future.

Conflict and peace

Recently conflict has never been far away in the Pacific. Violence in Fiji and the Solomon Islands have eased, but underlying problems are not always adequately addressed. In various other Pacific areas there is a potential for conflict that makes the outbreak of violence possible, if not probable. Through its internet site, list servers, and meetings, ECSIEP maintains a high quality of knowledge about developments related to tensions, conflict- and potential conflict situations in the Pacific. ECSIEP brings together all initiatives from organizations working in this field in Europe, keeps in contact with the European Commission, and assists Pacific civil society representatives in meeting key people, organizations and institutions when traveling to Europe.

European Centre on Pacific Issues (ECSIEP), PO Box 151, 3700 AD Zeist, the Netherlands. Tel: +31 30 6927827; fax: +31 30 6925614. Email: ecsiep@antenna.nl Web: www.antenna.nl/ecsiep

Update on May 24 2004 Actions

May 24 International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament actions took place last year from Bangladesh to Switzerland. Some highlights of the Day are below. The Day began in Europe in the early 1980s, when hundreds of thousands of women organized against nuclear weapons and the arms race. Since the 1995 United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, IFOR and the International Peace Bureau have published an annual action pack to commemorate May 24.

In **Fiji** femLINKpacific, a women's media initiative, celebrated May 24 with the inaugural broadcast of their mobile women's community radio project, femTALK 89.FM. "Women speaking to Women on Peace" featured Fijian women leaders talking about a range of national and regional peace initiatives by women. Young people then gave their perspectives on the need to include women in peacebuilding.

In **South Korea** 51 women's organizations and eight newly elected women legislators took part in May 24 actions. The peace group Women Making Peace organized a press conference, explaining that "We are here in the name of women: Cut the vicious circle of violence, and come along with us to make the world for peace, justice and life." The joint effort called for a review of the deployment of South Korean troops in Iraq.

In **Malaysia** the group Cenpeace gathered at two main train stations in Kuala Lumpur to gather signatures for their campaign to empower women peacemakers. Members in Pahang also collected signatures. The celebrations continued on 31 May with a poetry reading in Cenpeace's office.

In Amersfoort, **the Netherlands**, women dressed in black as a sign of mourning walked through the streets inviting people to sign a banner which stated "Netherlands Out of Iraq". The banner was then sent to Prime Minister Balkenende, as part of a campaign to withdraw Dutch troops from Iraq. In Alkmaar, there was a street performance of Indian dancing and African drumming as activists gave red roses and postcards with information about May 24 to shoppers and passersby.

In **Switzerland** the organizers of the 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize campaign, together with Women for Peace, Amnesty International, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Women's Labor Union of Switzerland, organized an event at the Women's Watch in Bern, where projects on the struggle against violence against women were presented. And in Serbia the peace group Women in Black-Belgrade celebrated May 24 by organized the three-day conference "Everything for Peace, Health, Education- Nothing for Armaments" to demand a redistribution of international resources from war to servicing peoples needs.

The 2004 May 24 action pack, "Building Bridges, Not Walls: Women for Peace in the Middle East" includes profiles of women's peace groups in the Middle East and an attractive poster (in English, Arabic and Hebrew). Copies of the action pack in either English or Arabic are still available.

Indian dancer
Avanisha on May
24 in Alkmaar, the
Netherlands.
Photo: B. Hejazi



Suggestions for Action and Solidarity in 2005

Issue a statement, press release or letter to the media, and to the editor of your favorite newspaper or magazine, to mark May 24, International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament. Call for an end to military aid for Indonesia, which is responsible for human rights abuses in Aceh and West Papua.

Organize a special worship service for women peacemakers; take a collection and send it to a women's peace group in the Pacific.

Hold a gathering to write legislators on topics like ratifying the nuclear test ban treaty; or the transfer of military funds to meet human needs; or whatever is necessary for your community.

Invite local women's organizations together to speak on how women can contribute towards a culture of peace. Invite a speaker from the Pacific or from a Pacific Solidarity group, or organize a showing of videos like Keeping Watch on Fijian women's Blue Ribbon Peace Vigil (available from fem'LINKpacific), or IFOR's Women Peacemakers Program's 'Pacific Women Exploring Nonviolence'.

Organize a celebration for peace on May 24; invite speakers from the Pacific or from Pacific solidarity groups, such as Aceh Women in Crisis (AWIC) (email: awic_aca@hotmail.com) or the Acehnese Community of Australia (ACA) (email: achecomaustr@hotmail.com)

Educate women peacemakers on UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Distribute copies of the Resolution (which can be downloaded from www.peacewomen.org) during meetings and public events.

Issue a press release rating your legislators on their efforts to implement UN Resolution 1325.

Make a special effort to reach girls: talk with Girl Scouts/Guides or other girls' groups about how war and peace affect girls. Share an action with them like writing a letter to a government official or to women and girls in one of the groups listed in this pack. Sponsor an essay contest for girls to express their ideas about creating peace.

Hold a fundraiser to jointly benefit a local peace organization and a peace group in the Pacific.

Invite women veterans with a peace perspective to speak about their experiences at local schools.

Educate yourself and the groups you belong to about military recruitment of girls and boys. Order the leaflet Make Our Schools Military-Free Zones from American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Youth and Militarism Program, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102, USA.

Picket schools and hand out leaflets (such as Do You Know Enough to Enlist? from AFSC's Youth and Militarism Program at www.afsc.org/youthmil; email youthmil@afsc.org) when military recruiters visit. Insist that school officials always include a speaker on peace whenever military recruiters visit schools, so students can get an objective and fair perspective on the reality of military life.

Support groups such as Iraq Veterans against the War: www.veteransforpeace.org

Translate and reprint articles from this pack (please credit the pack and don't forget to send us a copy!) to educate others about the issues.

Encourage groups to include ending violence in their agendas and events, and to increase their support for women in that part of the world working for peace.

Inform your networks (your women's organization, place of worship, school, labor union or work place) about May 24 and possible solidarity actions for women peace activists.

Encourage your school and community libraries to display on May 24 books by and about women peacemakers (for example, set aside a table near the entrance), violence against women, or about women as decision makers.

Organize a public panel, demonstration, or film showing on May 24, to highlight women's work for peace. Invite women decision makers, and women leaders from different ethnic and religious groups in your community to speak about women's role in stopping violence.

Support the United Nations 'Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World' (2001-2010). Contact IFOR for more information.

Organize a discussion group on ways to support women working for peace in conflict situations. Invite women from all sides of a conflict in your community to come together on May 24 in order to explore ways to reduce tensions within the community or neighborhood.

Write letters of support to the groups profiled in this year's pack on May 24, to express your solidarity for their work. Twin your group or network with a women's peace group in another country.

Create a website about what women are doing for peace and justice in your community, or link your existing site to ones listed in this pack.

Create awareness in your community by holding marches and demonstrations for peace which call for public commitment to end violence. Carry posters, banners, etc. which contain clear messages and demands for the local government.

Invite members of your community to write and submit poems which reflect how violence against women during conflict has affected their lives as well as the lives of close friends and relatives. Ask your local newspaper to publish some of these poems and/or ask a local bookstore to hold a poetry reading which features these poems and their authors. Hold a silent candle light vigil at the end of the readings in memory of all women and girls who have lost their lives to war.

Sponsor an essay contest which focuses on the positive steps that governments have taken to ensure women's decision-making in security issues. Include recommendations for how your city, state or national government can further promote a culture of peace. Hold a festival with other groups or women business owners in your town to celebrate women and a culture of peace. Include music, dance and theater performances as well as information booths to create awareness of women's role in creating peace.

Contact your local radio or television station and see if they would be willing to donate time for a public service announcement on an issue related to women and peace and disarmament. *(For information about how to plan a radio campaign, contact the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (email: tachi@amarc.org.ec).*

Ask stores, libraries, city government buildings, local radio stations, etc., to declare themselves 'violence free spaces' on May 24. Activities for this space might include, giving women an opportunity to talk about solutions to tensions within the community, or about international security, which they might not normally have the opportunity to do.

Encourage your religious leaders to speak out in support of peace. Organize a workshop on women and peace issues at a seminary, rabbinical school, madrasa or other places where religious leaders are taught. Encourage their libraries to carry books and magazines on women and peace.

Ride public transportation on May 24 and distribute information to women about local peace groups. Include telephone numbers for peace organizations and organizations that work to empower women and girls.

Plan a photo exhibit or music festival with local artists that highlight the work of grassroots women peace activists.

Coordinate a city-wide essay contest for middle and high school students with a special focus on the work of women and girls for peace.

Work with the local or state media to acquire programming space where women peace activists can be highlighted.

Contact community organizations and ask them to feature a grassroots woman peacemaker in their newsletters.

Learn more about the work of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the International Peace Bureau: write to our offices for more information.

Peace and Rural Afghan Women

by Dyan Mazurana, Neamat Nojumi, and Elizabeth Stites

In 2003, a team of researchers from Tufts University, USA, conducted a study to document and analyze recent countrywide trends in the relationship between human security and livelihoods throughout rural Afghanistan from 2002-2003. We helped develop and used countrywide information from a 2003 Nationwide Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) survey, conducted in over 120 villages throughout the country. We also conducted work in six provinces throughout Afghanistan, in Badghis, Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar. All our work was conducted in rural areas among rural Afghans. The resulting findings depict a picture that is much worse than usually reported by those talking with urban populations or those studies that combine urban and rural populations.

Our report emphasizes the important links among four key aspects of human security—human rights and personal security, societal and community security, economic and resource security, and governance and political security—in the livelihoods of rural Afghans and the prospects for long-term peace and development in the country. We also examine and analyze the formal, traditional, and customary mechanisms that are in place to address injustice and mitigate security and livelihood threats for the rural Afghan population. Policy recommendations are made to the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, donor governments, and national and international organizations based on findings and analyses. The full report can be accessed in English or Dari at www.famine.tufts.edu and will be published as Dyan Mazurana, Neamat Nojumi and Elizabeth Stites, (In)Security and Livelihoods of Rural Afghans (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005). Here, we provide a summary of some of our key findings regarding rural Afghan women and girls.

Overall, we find that while men report the highest rates of threats to their physical security outside of the home, it is overwhelmingly Afghan women who report the highest rates of human insecurity. In nearly every thematic issue discussed in this report—from political participation, to health, to credit, to access to justice—the human security of rural Afghan women is much lower than that of rural Afghan men. Indeed, nearly half of the major findings presented throughout the report and summarized in the Executive Summary have gender inequality at their root. This gender inequality stems from the cultural, social, economic, and political discrimination against Afghan women and the widespread and systematic failure of nearly all forms of official and traditional government and governance systems to protect and uphold the rights of Afghan women and girls.

Afghanistan ranks at or near the bottom in the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index for nearly all key indicators of human development and women's health, well-being, and rights. These indicators include maternal mortality, infant mortality, under five years of age mortality, undernourishment, life expectancy, illiteracy, access to clean water, health care, schooling, rights to property and inheritance, and political participation.

By way of introduction, the role of women in Afghanistan has always been determined by a

combination of social norms and customs, familial and tribal traditions, and religion. The level of participation of women in society is susceptible to political involvement, manipulation, or restriction, and the appropriate role of women in public and private life has long been at the source of revenge killings, tribal conflicts, and the overthrow of regimes. The sensitivity of the position of women in Afghan society demonstrates that Afghan women are far from insignificant in the broader political landscape.

Traditional legal and societal codes underpin the position of women in Afghan society. The Koran establishes many of the basic guidelines for the position of women in traditional Islamic societies (such as status relative to men, rules of inheritance, and codes for marriage and divorce), but it is the influence of the Pashtun tribal code of Pashtunwali that lays out the importance of women's chastity and modesty in upholding family honor. The local customs and the negative impact of decades of war determine the position of women in modern Afghan society, ensuring, for the most part, that women remain secluded in the private sphere and have little to no involvement in public life. In addition, the expansion of rural customs to urban areas under the Taliban and today's rigid interpretation of Sharia by some leaders at the village, district, provincial, and national level help to perpetuate an ideology that limits the role and participation of women, particularly rural women, in public events.

Although many policy makers in the western world consider Sharia law to limit human rights and participation of women, it is important to point out that in Afghanistan Sharia often promotes more liberal interpretations of women's position and role than do traditional and tribal codes. For instance, under Sharia law, women have the right to own land and to inherit some property and wealth from male relatives. These tenets of Sharia are rarely upheld in Afghanistan, where the control of land by men (in most cases) and lack of inheritance for women help to maintain tribal relations and patriarchal systems.

According to local customs in Afghanistan, women are the symbol of a household's honor. It is the responsibility of men to protect this honor. Consequently, today among rural Afghans the practice of *purdah*, or seclusion of women from men, is widespread. According to research by Valentine Moghadam: The control over *purdah* lies largely with the eldest male household member. Strictly speaking, it is he who decides whether a woman can leave the compound or not. He is the one who decides whether the women in the family will attend school or will participate in training and employment. (Valentine M. Moghadam, *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, 2nd ed. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003: 232.) Importantly, in many households older women are in control of the affairs of younger women and their words often are influential on the personal conduct of men in relation with other younger female members of the family. Such practice is widely popular among non-Pashtun households.

Keeping women within the home is seen as a means of protection, especially when men are absent. In the course of the last 30 years of war, armed groups increasingly targeted women, and the rise in incidents of rape, abduction, and forced marriage to soldiers or militia members led males to become more restrictive of women's mobility. While these measures may have initially been imposed (at least in part) to protect women, such developments negatively affect the rights and human security of women now.

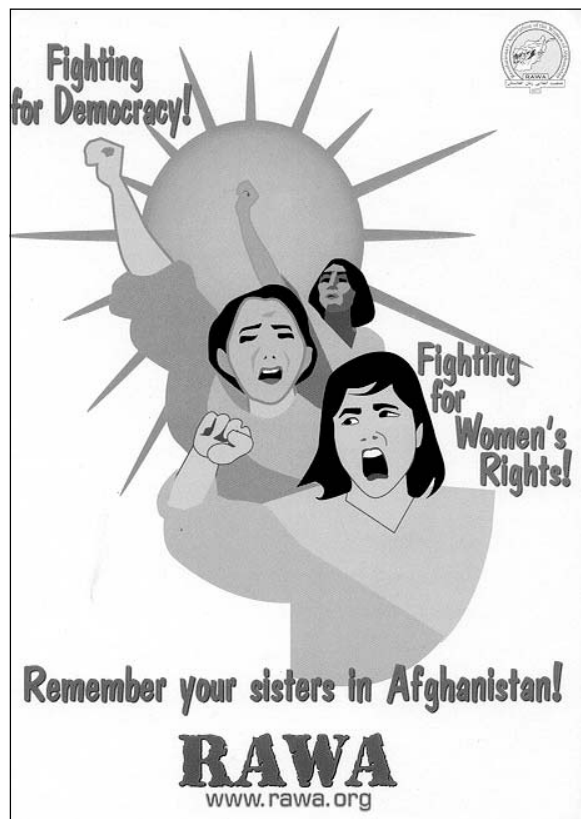
Today, as in the past, husbands or fathers usually make the decisions regarding women's movement, education, childbearing, and labor. Moghadam explains: In most parts of Afghanistan, the husband or father of a woman decides whether she can attend school or engage in paid work outside the home, and women do not have the right to keep their wages. The money is considered to be at the disposal of the husband or father.

Traditionally, women used their family network to influence the role of men in the household, including aspects of control over household resources, personal attitude, and social behavior toward women. The dislocation of local institutions and the increased strain on familial networks due to decades of war and the recent drought, made such interventions by male relatives on the behalf of women increasingly limited.

Culture and systems of governance (including the formal, traditional, and customary systems) have severely curtailed the human rights and livelihood options open to rural Afghan women and girls. It is important to recognize that these restrictions are not a recent development, but a long standing aspect of Afghan society. There was a great deal of publicity regarding the limits on women's economic participation under the Taliban regime, but these practices should be seen as the culmination of existing practice and belief systems, as opposed to a new or foreign order imposed upon the population. Numerous human rights reports written

during the Taliban era spoke of the imposition of harsh conditions for urban women. These reports, however, should not be taken to imply that rural women, in contrast to urban dwellers, had greater leniency or better conditions. Rather, these reports illustrate that many rural women were already living under conditions similar to those imposed by the Taliban, but in rural areas the codes were imposed by their husbands, families, and village leaders. Aspects of these local cultures themselves were also strongly militarized.

While the end of the Taliban regime may mean many things, it does not mean an end to the violations of women's human rights or to the gender discrimination experienced by most rural Afghan women. For example, in the interviews by the Tufts team with rural women



in Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar and Nangarhar provinces, many women reported that their lives had changed little since the fall of the Taliban in regard to freedom of movement, control over their own lives, access to health or education for themselves and their children, quality of life, and income opportunities. In some cases, women report that the situation has worsened. Today, mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human security for rural Afghan women are limited and, in many cases, practically nonexistent. The following summarize our main findings.

On political participation and the legal process:

Countrywide, the almost complete lack of participation of rural women in political and civil affairs is a direct obstacle to their human security and to their political rights, as well as to the nation-building process. Overwhelmingly, rural women country-wide have no role in selecting local leaders and are not represented by local officials. Recent participation of rural women in the 2004 presidential elections should be understood within the politics of male leaders identifying voting as a means to access power and instructing women not only to vote but who to vote for.

Formal and traditional justice systems play a direct role in undermining the human rights of women and girls. The formal justice system appears to be incapable of preventing forced marriages of young girls or protecting women from domestic abuses and other violence. Rural women in Badghis, Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces have little or no access to the formal, traditional, or customary justice systems (which are dominated by men) and therefore have practically no means of redress when faced with human rights abuses and threats to their human security.

The Pashtun custom of *Bad* or *badal*, which involves trading women and girls among families to solve major disputes and prevent revenge killings, continues in Afghanistan. Young women or girls given as part of *badal* have no voice in accepting or rejecting decisions for *badal*, which are made by village councils (*Jirgas* and *shuras*) composed of all men.

Rural Afghan women are largely denied a direct voice in the traditional or customary justice systems—the *shura* or *Jirga* systems—and thus have little to no access to justice within either traditional or customary systems. The judiciary is highly susceptible to military and political influences at both the urban and rural level. Formal courts, including family courts, are either non-existent or barely functional in most rural areas. There are few women lawyers and judges in the urban areas and none in the rural areas, and rural women have great difficulty accessing the formal court system.

On the rights of women within their homes and families:

Countrywide, the majority of rural women have little decision-making power within their households, even when they contribute to household income. They have little say in determining the sale of productive or non-productive household assets. Women have little to no say in the number or spacing of their children, or in the marriage partners of their children, in particular their daughters.

The majority of rural parents in Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces that had placed a daughter under the age of 14 into early marriage (i.e., child bride), said they did so due to economic need. Most of these child brides were given to men many years their senior as a second or third wife. Many widows and women running female-headed households were child brides themselves, and women who were child brides appear to be more likely to face early widowhood. In nearly all indicators, widows were the most vulnerable population in the Tufts study.

On access to education and health care:

There are almost no rural, school-age girls attending school in the south and south central regions of Afghanistan. The primary reasons that both boys and girls in rural areas are not in school countrywide is lack of school facilities and the distance of available facilities. Distance is gendered as schools built for both boys and are accessible to boys but may be considered too far a distance for girls to attend. Girls are also more likely to be withheld from school than boys in areas that are affected by insecurity.

Countrywide, in 38% of rural districts, the majority (>50%) of rural Afghans have no access to any form of health care. The majority (>50%) of rural Afghans in 62% of rural districts have access to only basic health care, including health posts, basic health care centers, and traditional healers. These basic facilities often lack well-trained personnel and adequate medical supplies or medicines.

Between 43-78% of rural Afghans in Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces have no access to reproductive health care. When they are able to access care, the majority (>50%) report that the care is of poor quality. The majority of rural women have no access to trained care during pregnancy and birth. Most rural Afghan women have no voice in family planning within their families, although many women wanted to learn more about options for birth control.

Access by rural Afghans to health care in Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces is unequal, with men having greater access than women and children, and children having greater access than women.

On livelihood strategies:

Many Afghans in rural areas countrywide are not engaged strictly in agriculture, but rely on diversified livelihood strategies to generate household income. The type of non-agricultural employment differs by region. Women make contributions to household income in nearly all provinces in Afghanistan, but usually perform income-generating work literally within their homes, rather than in their villages. Almost no rural women generate income outside their villages. Rural women are paid significantly less than rural men for performing the same work, and in many instances are paid less than children. Children also contribute to household income in most areas of the country, and many families in Badghis, Herat, Kabul, and Kandahar provinces reported increasing the amount of their children's labor since 2002 due to economic hardship.

Poppy production has increased among rural Afghan populations since 2002 and is now occurring in nearly all provinces. Poppy production is labor intensive, and households engaged in poppy often rely on the labor of women and children household members. Yet, women have little decision-making power as to whether or not their household engages in poppy production. Poppy remains one of the only industries in which rural Afghans can readily access credit. Drug rehabilitation centers are reporting cases of illness and death due to over-exposure of women and children during lancing, the initial phase in processing opium.

On access to markets and credit:

Most rural Afghan households can access markets, even in very remote areas. Countrywide, very few rural Afghan women, however, are able to directly access markets due to cultural and household constraints. Improved security and better transportation has increased market access for Afghan males since 2002 in some areas (such as Kabul), but men in other areas (such as Kandahar) continue to face poor road networks, insecurity, and illegal taxation and extortion.

In Badghis, Herat, and Kandahar, the majority (>50%) of rural men are unable to access formal or informal sources of credit or to provide loans to their relatives or neighbors. Nearly all (91%) rural men in Nangarhar and half of rural men in Kabul are able to access credit. Very few women in our study population could access credit, and women reported that shopkeepers and relatives did not provide credit to rural women. However, the majority of rural Afghans in Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces reported that they had increased their debt burdens since 2002.

Rural Afghan women clearly identify the constraints to achieving the livelihoods and lives they would prefer. Overwhelmingly, countrywide, women identified culture as the number one constraint, followed by lack of access to employment and lack of education. Likewise,

the majority of rural women interviewed by the Tufts team in Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar said that they were frustrated and unhappy with their current situation. These women often spoke of chafing under cultural constraints and the control imposed by husbands or village leaders. Based on this data, we are able to conclude that the cultural constraints, as defined by women themselves, are not accepted by the majority of the rural Afghan women with whom we worked.

It is a challenge to the current Afghan administration, the United Nations, the international donors, the aid community, and national organizations to act upon this information regarding rural Afghan women. If women throughout the country were to say that lack of roads and access to credit were serious constraints to their livelihoods, agencies would likely prioritize road construction or women's micro-credit programs. But this is not what rural women have said; instead, they offer a much greater challenge. Our report seeks to assist policy makers in responding to this challenge. Each thematic section provides additional details on the ways in which rural Afghan women view the constraints to not only their livelihoods, but also to their fundamental human rights and human security and provides information on how to move forward to a future in which rural Afghan women begin to realize human security.

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HOPE

by Filomena Barros dos Reis

In the beginning it was said "Let there be light"
In these times I say Let there be hope
Cause so many flickering in the state of uncertainty and suspense
Through atrocities, suffering and decay may prevail
When we start to hope change takes form
Though our born trust we leave sad memories behind us
Cause this is the time for hope
I don't know much, but I do know
That out of fear there is hope
I wish I could find better words to say
To bring it into the open
This hope is the obsession of life
But I do know that I can sing
In clouds of words to you
Perhaps you may still feel nothing
Out of your weakness
But one thing I have always hoped
Is for you to be with hope.