

Nicklas Svensson (ed.)

The Role of Women in Promoting Peace and Development

Proceedings of the 10th Annual Conference
on the Horn of Africa
Lund, Sweden, September 23– 24 2011

SOMALIA INTERNATIONAL
REHABILITATION CENTRE (SIRC)
AND
LUND HORN OF AFRICA FORUM (LUHAF)

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC HISTORY,
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Introduction

Gillian Nilsson & Nicklas Svensson

The 10th annual SIRC/LuHAF conference on the Horn of Africa focused on the role of women in promoting peace and development, and set out to

- Raise awareness of women's needs and situation in the Horn of Africa.
- Raise awareness of Horn of African governments' social service expenditures.
- Raise awareness of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 in a Horn of African context.
- Promote the inclusion of Horn of African women in the decision-making positions in their respective governments, as well as in regional and international organizations.
- Promote women's (memberships) positions in governmental decision-making institutions.
- Promote the participation of Horn of African women in conflict prevention and resolution processes.
- Promote networking between Horn of African women's peace organizations, and other stakeholders.
- Promote maintenance and protection of the due process of law and constitutionalism in the Horn of Africa.

With a purpose to draw attention to the role of women in political and peace processes at national and local levels in the Horn of Africa, the conference aimed to tackle issues often overlooked in the current context of conflicts in the Horn of Africa. SIRC organised for the first time in the past ten years a conference that solely focused on women's role in peace and development in the Horn of Africa. It turned out to be one of the most appreciated conferences at many different levels by the participants. More than 190 participants took actively part in the discussions in and outside of the conference facilities during three days. Representatives from parliaments, ministries and government agencies, as well as from the United Nations, academia, civil society organisations, think tanks and journalists spanning across many countries in Africa, Europe and North America visited the conference.

The participants engaged in many different ways throughout the conference. They provided statements, presented research articles and debated in workshops and panel discussions. The conference engaged many leading global and local women organisations and leaders. They were critically important to the success of the conference. Women ministers from the Horn of Africa and other prominent women leaders raised the level of professionalism and commitment to meet some of the objectives of the conference.

The discussions elucidated the need for awareness raising about the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 amongst women at the local level in the Horn of Africa. There is a general need to reach out to women to inform and educate them about the resolutions, and enable them to play active roles in local and national political and peace processes. It especially concerns women in Somalia to see them as formative change agents in setting a peacebuilding agenda in Somalia, as women were in the Djibouti peace process. Consequently, the resolutions have been translated into Somali language.

The representative for UNPOS, Mr Christian Manahl, considered that despite the drought and the continuing violence, Somalia has at the present moment the best chance for 20 years of achieving peace. The major challenge now was to support the TFG, which is working closely with the UN office in Mogadishu. It is important that the EU continues to give economic support, despite the economic crisis in Europe.

The Minister of Labour and Family Affairs in Somaliland, Ms Ilhan Mohamed Jama, told the conference that in Somaliland women are starting to take places in government at regional and national levels.

The question of Reserved Seats and Quotas for women was taken up by several speakers. Speakers also bore witness to how Somali women, despite years of conflict and now drought, have seized new space, are taking many initiatives and showing a new resourcefulness and resilience.

An important question that speakers returned to several times was the necessity of making a gender awareness analysis, leading to changes of attitudes and a new socialisation of men and women. Oppression and crimes against women occur not only in times of war, but are deeply embedded in traditional Somali society and simply intensified in conflict situations.

Dr Markus Böckenförde of the German Development Institute gave very concrete advice on points to be considered when writing a new constitution based on gender equality. The question of the new Somali constitution was also taken up by Ms Linda Nzioki from the Independent Somali Federal Constitutional Commission and Ms Mariam Yassin Hagi Yusuf from IIDA, the Women's Development Organization. The question of the role of religion in forming the constitution was taken up here and later in the conference led to a heated exchange between delegates.

The workshops of the conference focussed on the following themes:

1. Women's needs in armed and violent conflicts in the Horn of Africa
2. The proliferation of small arms and sexual violence in the Horn of Africa (UNSCR 1820)
3. Women's role in peace building & political processes, security and decision-making in the Horn of Africa.

The session following the workshops returned to the question of the implementation of the United Nations Security Resolution 1325 in the Horn of Africa, or lack thereof, and its translation and how it best can be disseminated among Somali women.

An important aspect of the work is the situation of the Somali minorities and what Somali women's rights defenders can do to help them.

The conference concluded by Dr Redié Barakateab summarising the three workshops' recommendations. The recommendations were:

Legal issues

The conference recommends that national legal systems in the Horn of Africa be combined with international legal systems when dealing with transitional justice systems. The international community should provide protection and empowerment for the women of the Horn of Africa and guarantee accountability for crimes committed against women.

The citizenship rights of IDPs should be protected.

Political issues

The conference recommends that gender sensitive security sector policies be created that both protect and promote women's participation in decision making and reconciliation processes as stated in the United Nations Resolutions. The necessary resources and recognitions from both local and international communities must be provided. Regional approaches should also be designed to implement the UNSCR 1325 such as the creation of coordinating mechanisms and organs. Security training should include human rights issues.

Aid issues

The conference recommends that logistically there should be a balance between men and women when both delivering and receiving assistance. Both local and international aid organizations should be made accountable and aid should be linked to development on the ground so that it cannot be used by dictators.

Education and economic issues

The conference recommends that the women of the Horn of Africa are given better access to education, which would have positive consequences both internally and externally. To emphasise women's competence and capacity, sustainable financial support for their own activities needs to be provided and secured. Special attention should be given to women getting into business, giving support so that they can be self-employed and get involved in the business sector.

Achievement of objectives

The immediate objectives of raising awareness of women's needs and situation in the Horn of Africa; of raising awareness of Horn of African governments' social service expenditures; and raising awareness of UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 in a Horn of African context were all achieved in full measure.

The subjects were presented forcefully and knowledgeably both in plenum and in the workshops and the engagement and commitment of the participants was made very clear in the discussions. The objective of promoting networking between Horn of African women's peace organizations, and other stakeholders could also be seen to being achieved continuously during the conference as visiting cards and e-mail addresses were exchanged.

Only time can measure the success in achieving the more long-term objectives of ensuring that Horn of Africa women are included in conflict prevention and resolution, in peace-making processes and given decision-making positions in their respective governments, in regional and international organizations. But the fact that so many influential people and organizations not only participated in the conference, but participated with commitment and a clearly expressed will to help bring about change in the Horn of Africa bodes well for the future.

Opening remarks

Yakoub Abdi Aden

Background

The Horn of Africa is a region more often defined through its conflicts and violence than through its level of co-operation. It is perhaps one of the most afflicted regions in Africa. Man-made disasters have created a gloomy image of the region making the Horn of Africa synonymous with strife and wars that cause a wide scale of destruction. These conditions have paralyzed peace, justice, equality, observation of basic human rights, democracy, stability and progressive development in most the of the Horn of Africa countries.

In this context, the Somali International Rehabilitation Centre (SIRC) was created in 2000 in Lund to help Somalia. The Somalia International Rehabilitation Centre (SIRC) and local Horn of Africa partners act as a neutral academic setting in a place distant from the scene of conflicts and with an interest in the region carried by a strong wish to contribute to a peaceful and prosperous future for all involved. SIRC provides a platform with good possibilities of proving attractive as an organisation for respectful dialogue in a spirit contributing to mutual understanding and peace building. SIRC offers a place for all regional parties in conflict to refer to and to receive support and information in order to embark on peaceful dialogue and conflict settlement.

SIRC offers a number of Swedish and other neutral actors now engaged to be more regularly attached to and involved in the work for peace in the Horn of Africa at the same time as further actors could be attracted to participate. In a wider scope, seeming highly realistic and interesting, national and international agencies are often engaged, supporting the Horn of Africa peace project in various ways.

SIRC works in the interest of peaceful solutions. It provides a much needed continuity in the Horn of Africa conferences year by year, thereby further improving their value for peace in the Horn of Africa. SIRC also provides a centre for documentation and a source of information for scholars, politicians, international institutions, Horn of Africa governments and media.

In 2001 SIRC convened its first conference on Somalia in the Department of Political Science at Lund University. The outcome of that conference showed that Somalia's problem is not an isolated one but an integral part of the Horn of Africa issue. After a positive response from other Diaspora associations in Lund the idea arose to hold a conference on the Horn of Africa.

The first Horn of Africa conference was launched on May 11-12, 2002 with the theme “*Co-operation Instead of Wars and Destruction on the Horn of Africa*” which marked the birth of the Horn of Africa conferences. This first conference successfully brought together 150 participants from ten different countries (where all countries from the Horn were represented). Three important areas were identified and agreed to be key areas to any peace building and called for international support. These were: role of the civil society, education and demilitarisation.

The Horn of Africa conference has now become an established forum and a meeting place for people seeking peace in the Horn of Africa. Every year scholars, civics, practitioners, politicians and other stakeholders from within and outside the region come and have a dialogue in mutual understanding and try to break the barriers of hatred, war and destruction and transform it to one of peace and reconciliation and learning from each other.

Today we inaugurate the 10th Anniversary of the first conference on the Horn of Africa and it is a great privilege and honour for me to sum up past achievements and shed light into the future.

Past experiences

The Horn of Africa conferences organized in Lund provide a unique platform for peaceful, enlightened and progressive discussions among parties representing the countries, regions and interest groups of the region. The academic setting, the high number of scholars from the Horn of Africa as well as from the Nordic and other countries, the many returning participants, the frequent attendance of regional Horn of Africa representatives and the excellent arrangements in a neutral ambience have made the conferences an invaluable institution for the exchange of ideas and an increased mutual understanding between parties otherwise without regular contacts, thereby fostering a peaceful exchange of opinions and ideas. Without any doubt, the Horn of Africa conferences in Lund have been established as an invaluable peace promoter.

The themes of the conferences have been

1. Co-operation Instead of Wars & Destruction (2002)
2. No Development Without Peace (2003)
3. Transforming a Culture of War Into a Culture of Peace (2004)
4. Good Governance & the Rule of Law: Key to Peace & Development (2005)
5. The Role of Diasporas in Peace, Democratization & Development in the Horn of Africa (2006)
6. Post-Conflict Peace-Building in the Horn of Africa (2007)

7. Faith, Citizenship, Democracy & Peace in the Horn of Africa (October 2008)
8. Horn of Africa Peace: The Role of Environment (2009)
9. Horn of Africa conference – focus on Somalia: The Role of Democratic Governance vs Sectarian politics in Somalia (June 2010)
10. Horn of Africa conference: The Role of Women in Promoting Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa (September 2011).

The number of participants in the first conference of 2002 was 150. Since then the number of participants has increased and varied between 300 and 450 individuals which prove the dire need for this forum to continue.

The participants in these conferences have included Ministers, higher politicians, Ambassadors, civil society organizations and journalists from the Horn of Africa region. All major stakeholders have also been represented in those conferences. To mention but a few: representatives from the AU, EU, IGAD, UN, AMISON as well representatives from individual countries from Africa such as Kenya and South Africa.

Main achievements

- Recommendations on how stakeholders on both local, national and international level can contribute to peace-building, democratic governance & rule of law, protection of human rights and political stability in the Horn of Africa.
- A compilation of papers on post-conflict peace-building in the Horn of Africa bringing up key issues and also ways forward. The compilation is presented as a conference report and disseminated to selected local and international stakeholders. *Reports are available SIRC's website and on Lund University's database.*
- Raising awareness of contentious issues for long-term post-conflict peace building and development.
- Creation of an exchange of contacts among civics, scholars, practitioners, diplomats, institutions, politicians, and university students, which enables them to communicate with each other both during and after the conference.
- Encouraged and facilitated dialogue between:
 - (a) Ethiopia – Eritrean ambassadors – via panel debate
 - (b) Sudanese government and Darfur Opposition Movement – via panel discussion
 - (c) Somali TFG government and Somali ARS opposition movement – direct meeting
- Horn of Africa discussions participated in (Ethiopian Ambassador, Sudanese Ambassador, Eritrean ambassador, Kenyan Ambassador, South Africa Ambassador,

Somali Interim Government representatives, Somali Transitional Federal Government representatives, IGAD, as well international community representatives – United Nations and European Commission) to stimulate community-driven solutions for current Horn of Africa issues such as the Darfur issue, South Sudan, the Somali conflict, the Ethiopia-Eritrea border issue, the protection of basic human rights and the practice of democratic principles in the region.

- The Somalia International Rehabilitation Centre and its partners (Sudanese association in Lund, Eritrean Association in Lund, Ethiopian Association in Lund, and Djibouti association in Lund) have gained further experience and knowledge of post-conflict peace-building processes in the Horn of Africa, and will be able to provide expertise to other NGOs.
- SIRC is pleased that it did achieve its objectives and implemented all conferences successfully according to the plan with great impact.

Present situation

Despite many successes, the situation in the Horn of Africa is still precarious. The Horn of Africa is hosting the largest number of refugees both internally and externally displaced. People are experiencing the worst drought and millions are on the move with nowhere to go.

Again our TVs are being filled with images of emaciated children, old men and women. Mothers are forced to choose between their children: who is to live and who is to die. Somalia is the epicentre of this famine but according to UNICEF millions of children across the Horn of Africa are at risk of death, disease and malnutrition due to a combination of drought, rising food prices and conflict. Politically the region is either a failed state or a fragile one. Human rights are violated more than ever, women are raped, and young men are recruited by force to join warring factions. In Somalia there is still no strong government in sight which can take care of its people and land. The TFG is doing its best, but is paralysed by internal conflicts and the threat from militant groups. The country is breaking down further into small fiefdoms and nobody knows where it will end up.

The deteriorating situation in the Horn of Africa makes it more important than ever that the people in the Horn of Africa come together and unite for asserted action to save their region. Each country needs the others, and the disaster of one affects all the others.

Future

There is no alternative to long-term commitment to the path to peace and development. The people in the Horn of Africa are capable people and with peace they can change their difficulties into paradise within a short time. The Horn of Africa conference needs more than ever to continue to be a platform where scholars and academicians from the Horn of Africa can meet and exchange ideas and build common ground to make their region a peaceful and prosperous one. It is my hope that future conferences will give a platform for the leaders of tomorrow, our youth. It is time to empower the youth so that they will be able to make correct decisions and not become a prey for the warlords and extremists.

Mother Teresa was quoted as saying, “We sometimes feel that what we do is just a drop in the ocean, but the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.” How true that saying is. By meeting here and having constructive dialogue, we are taking small steps forward to make our Horn a better place.

Dear ladies and gentlemen, we must nevertheless bear in mind one important motto, “no change can come from the outside, but only by supporting those within”.

Today and tomorrow, we are gathered here again in Lund at the 10th Horn of Africa Conference Focus on the Role of Women in Promoting Peace and Development. Women are the backbone of our societies and they deserve to have their own conference and I feel privileged to take part. As in the previous conferences I hope you will find opportunities to build relationships and make old ones stronger, and let us nurture the road we have embarked on to reach our goal of a peaceful and prosperous Horn of Africa, a borderless region where the rights of children, women and minorities are respected, where law and order prevails over ignorance and clanism.

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We thank all sponsors of the conferences: guest speakers from around the world who have contributed to the conferences, the City of Lund, Lund University, the Swedish Foreign Ministry, Folke Bernadotte Academy, Forum Syd/Sida, ABF, Folkuniversitet, UN Association in Lund, and now UNDP, moderators of panel debates and workshops, and to all those who have attended the conferences.

And finally I cannot finish without mentioning the delicious food we have enjoyed over the years thanks to our Somali, Ethiopian, Eritrean and Sudanese sisters.

Opening Statement

Annika Annerby Jansson

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed delegates, dear friends,

I am very happy to welcome you to this, the 10th Horn of Africa Conference in Lund – one of the oldest, but at the same time most modern cities in Scandinavia.

Our city prides itself on its rich cultural and historical heritage, state-of-the-art scientific research & development and a bustling business climate.

In our city, academia, business, culture and nature thrive within walking or bicycle distance of each other.

Lund is the birthplace of Tetra Pak paper packaging, Ericsson's modern mobile telephony, the Gambro artificial kidney, Bluetooth, Ultrasound diagnostics, the Inkjet printer, Axis network cameras and many more things that have changed peoples' lives for the better.

Today we anticipate an even more positive development through the establishment in Lund of two very large advanced research facilities. One is ESS – the European Spallation source which is a neutron based research project – conducted in cooperation with a large number of European countries.

The other is the MAX IV – a synchrotron light research facility, which will be built within the coming years.

These new facilities will push the boundaries of scientific research even further and create vast possibilities in the fields of research on materials, the environment and medicine. We expect them not only to create growth and new jobs here, but also positive solutions for all of humanity.

We are also right now in the process of launching the Ideon Medicon Village – a dedicated life sciences hub, gathering research, innovation and commercial enterprise under the same roof.

This facility will comprise around 80 000 m², of which around 30 000 m² are laboratories. Once the facility is fully established, there will be a total of 1 000 people working at Ideon Medicon Village. This investment in medicine and health means that the already globally recognized science park Ideon will double in size to become one of Europe's largest parks of its kind. An amazing development for our small city!

Here I might add that Lund is also a very international city, amongst our 110 000 inhabitants we host approximately 130 -150 nationalities and amongst them as many as 340 people from the Horn of Africa alone who live, study and work here – making our city an even more appropriate choice for this conference.

Now, turning to the Horn of Africa, we have all observed that this past year since the last Horn of Africa Conference here in Lund has brought many changes.

South Sudan became an independent state on the 9th of July 2011 and a United Nations member state on the 14th of July 2011.

A new interim Government was installed in Somalia – and in Sweden we have noted with pride that the new Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry, Mr. Abdiwahab Hussein Khalif, comes from our neighbouring city of Malmö, just 20 kilometres from here.

And we have all witnessed the deeply disturbing news about the extreme drought in and around the Mandera-triangle and the resulting food shortages in the Horn of Africa.

As troubling as the famine is - and it is indeed - it gives me at least some consolation that the civic society in Sweden has responded to the plight of the people of the Horn of Africa. Many schools and youth organisations are deeply engaged – in Lund as well as in the rest of the country – and have raised money through school fundraisers and class room projects to alleviate the famine.

The dedication of our youth – who think globally and act locally - gives me hope for the future, not only for the Horn of Africa, but for us all.

Ladies and gentlemen, the theme of this years' Horn of Africa Conference is "The Role of Women in Promoting Peace and Development".

I have studied your – very impressive – programme, and noted that you will be listening to scholars, experts and policymakers about interesting and pressing issues like, for instance, the connection between gender, development, violence and peace, the on-going work with the UN Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820 and Women's empowerment.

And I must applaud the organizers of the conference for having chosen The Role of Women in Promoting Peace and Development to be highlighted at this conference. It is an area of studies that has been overlooked far too long.

The complex relationships and connections between factors like nature, resources, gender and development must be studied further– and be acted upon.

A forerunner in this field is, to my mind, Professor Wangari Maathai from Kenya. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize of 2004 for her holistic approach to sustainable development that embraces democracy, human rights and women's rights in particular. She recognized the strong causal chain that links deforestation, desertification, and lack of resources, insufficient education, women's rights and family planning with the emergence of corruption, oppression and war.

In this perspective, the simple act of planting a tree is a vital piece in a jigsaw-puzzle that will build the sustainable, democratic and prosperous Africa of tomorrow. Through her organization "The Green Belt Movement", 45 million trees have been planted in Kenya since 1977.

Let me quote Professor Maathai:

“It’s the little things citizens do. That’s what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees.”

Ladies and Gentlemen, let us all use these two days in Lund to find our own little things to do to make a difference – for the Horn of Africa, and for the world!

Still – women’s rights is but one of many aspects of democracy in a modern society. Without gender equality no society can reach its full potential. But without freedom of speech and fundamental human rights every society is hampered in its overall development. With our historic experiences in mind, the City of Lund is especially proud to be the home of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. The Institute is a unique and valuable instrument for the promotion of the universal respect for human rights and humanitarian law by means of research, academic education, dissemination and institutional development.

I hope and believe that the institute is one of many valuable players in the struggle for democracy based on human rights in the Horn of Africa and elsewhere in the world.

I want to finish by emphasising some aspects of the Swedish constitution.

The Swedish constitution is famous for its statutes on transparency in public governance. All decisions and acts in Swedish public life irrespective of level are open to each and every citizen – a constitutional rule that might not be able to prevent misgovernment and corruption but make it more difficult.

Our tradition of free speech was effectively established in “the law on the freedom of printing” of 1766, making it one of the earliest freedom-of-speech legislations in the world.

As a consequence, censorship of all forms was abolished. This means that no government can stop a journalist or punish a writer and that also criticism of political and religious matters is allowed. To keep a journalist imprisoned for his views is of course not possible and is in Sweden regarded as a crime against democracy.

And this system has served us well! No dictator, authorities or citizens can rule over what opinions or ideas are good or bad.

During the last 250 years, it has been proven over and over again that good ideas and opinions have prevailed over bad ideas and opinions.

And it is this freedom that enables us to gather here today and express our opinions freely – and to find the ideas that will help us re-establish peace and prosperity in the Horn of Africa.

With these words, I wish you a very fruitful and successful conference and a nice stay in Lund.

Thank you.

PART I

The implementation of
UNSCRs 1325 and 1820
in the Horn of Africa

EC's Perspective on the Role of Women in Peace building and Development in Africa

Jeremy Lester

Dear friends,

I feel humbled to speak after Her Excellency, Minister Jama.

The EU does a lot, and I have copies available for you of a note on what the EU is doing in Somalia.

By way of examples of what the EU does:

On behalf of the European Community Humanitarian Office, Commissioner Georgieva went to the Ethiopia border areas, to Dadaab camp, with 70 million Euros for supplies with ICRC, and for NGOs which operate in South-Central Somalia.

Atalanta, the naval operation to protect WPF from pirates.

AMISOM – the EU will continue to support this effort, at least till August 2012, but others need to back the AU too.

And we do give support in all the Somali regions - including Somaliland.

But I don't want to talk particularly about what the EU does, though I'm happy to answer questions if there are any on this issue.

Let me begin my intervention with a reflection as a human being, as well as an official of the European Union.

I feel security and joy in being here with you. I feel a sense of coming home. Not because Lund is my home. It is not. But because I am here with you. It's a bit like finding ones' family.

And I feel very privileged for I am here, and I can think of three groups who are not.

I think of the hundreds and thousands of those who have left home in Somalia, in Eritrea, in Sudan and Ethiopia to make their way to a better life, only to be caught up in war in Libya. Unable to go forward, fearful to go back, they are trapped. So I feel privileged to be here.

I think then of the hundreds and thousands of those who, drought stricken, have left homes in Somalia, seeking refuge from famine, in Kenya, in Ethiopia and further afield. Losing livestock, losing roots, losing that sense of being home that I now feel.

I think of the women who suffer gender violence, violence of war, violence through inane interpretation of the Sharia, isolation for fear of leaving home without "abaya" clothing, sometimes beyond their means. While I feel at home here with you.

So, I've spoken, I've got that "off my chest".

We are here to reflect on the role of women in the Horn of Africa in peace-building and in development. I must say, I think it would be a good thing, that they would be good things! For where are they?

Where is the peace building in the Horn?

Where is the development in the Horn?

Where is the role of women in these processes?

Forgive me if I will sound pessimistic, if I see the negative and not the positive.

Let me say a word on the situation of women in Somalia. – What role?

Somalia has not signed the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women.

Somalia has not ratified the African Charter on Human and People Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

The mixture of customary law, of Sharia law and of the pre-1991 Penal Code is poorly respected.

Poverty afflicts most Somalis, and hits women harder than men. Most rural women live lives where male dominated institutions interpret the rules.

- How many women MPs? 31/500
- How many ministers? 2/30 in the last TFG.
- How many members in Benadir administration? 3/59

In Somaliland, 2/350 local councillors.

And yet I know, I know from my personal experience, what a waste these figures represent.

For women have so much to give. Somali women are strong. Somali women can mobilise. Somali women can organise. Society which does not profit from this is as effective as a two legged stool!

Peace-building – What peace-building?

In the last year, Ethiopia-Eritrea relations have, if anything, worsened.

In Sudan, the great hopes at Juba independence celebrations are giving way to despair at the fighting in Blue Nile and Kordofan. At the senseless cattle rustling insecurity in the South, at the continued suffering in Darfur.

In Ethiopia, opposition detentions narrow further the democratic space.

In Somalia, the military advances of the TFG and AMISOM dominate evolution more than peace-building and reconciliation.

One has to go to the grass-roots level to see the small shoots of peace-building and reconciliation.

Minister Jama has told us of some examples.

Development – what development?

Sure, Ethiopia has experienced GDP Growth. But overall, welfare of citizens of the Horn region continues to founder. Founder in the waste of war, founder in the impact of drought.

That is one reason why the European Union, as it prepares to adopt a new Horn of Africa framework strategy, makes a development based on initiatives as a key

strand - Horn Countries must come to see development as their primary interest rather than driving conflicts with one another.

The European Union stands ready to help the Horn of Africa – for enhancing the role of women, for peace building and conflict reduction for development.

Poor Horn of Africa – it's not surprising that the scores on women's participation on peace building and on development are each low.

For how can one or two progress without all three progressing?

Political processes, including peace building, must be inclusive to be successful. If it is done "by one group" for another, it just won't work. Political processes must involve everyone who's affected – and that means including women in the process.

Exclusion, be it through language,
through gender
through education,
through wealth, marginalises the excluded.

It is a crime, one we commit, one we commit so often we don't even notice when we do it.

I was invited to speak because I come from the European Union institutions, from Brussels.

We in Brussels haven't got everything right.

Yet we do have some things right. Our legislation is pretty gender sensitive. We've contributed to the freedom from conflict in Europe, and we've helped Europe develop.

I hope we've learned not to give lessons but to listen and learn together. At least we're trying, and we better, for we don't have all the answers. And nor do I.

So now I address the men present in this room.

Don't do like me and talk. Do like I intend to do in the next two days – listen.

And women – speak out. I reckon that’s going to be the main lesson from these two days.

Men – stop just talking, start listening

Women – stop accepting, start asserting

And with that, I'll follow my own injunction – I'll stop talking and listen to the women.

Somali TFG's Statement on the Role of Women in Peacebuilding and Development in Africa

Mariam Aweis Jama

Bismillaahi Rahmani Rahim

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon and Asalamu Aleikum Warhamatullahi Wabarakatu

It is a great honor for me to participate in this important conference on behalf of the people and the government of Somalia. I would like to take this opportunity to present the great role of Somali women in promoting peace.

Since the central government collapsed, Somalia has been rightly pronounced as a failed state. The country has experienced massive movements of refugees and internally displaced people, which has generated complex humanitarian grievances, a sharp economic decline that spurs famine, drought and an ongoing deterioration of public services.

According to Islam, peace promotion is an act of goodness and people are encouraged to resolve their differences. African traditional societies assigned to women the role of educator, such education of the type that started from the cradle and was achieved by means of a variety of activities in which the children participated. The most general implication is the understanding that peace is not born but made through responsible upbringing and socialization, undertaken and supervised by mothers. Indeed the central message here is that the mother is the first and most valuable school in life and peace.

In Somalia, civil society organizations led by women have achieved much in the past two decades. They ensured civil society representation, which is essential to any peace and reconciliation process, they strongly disempowered the warlords, they also reduced the significance of clan affiliation.

Somali women are effective in influencing elders and others to intervene in conflicts and have mobilized resources to finance peace meetings and support demobilization, while men typically focus on achieving a political settlement. Somali women have also led the way in mobilizing the society for engagement in peace work, although only some of their initiatives for peace have been documented.

But generally Somali women still face constraints in breaking through gender-based inequalities, cultural and practical barriers to equal political participation. The collapse of the state meant that they also lost the legal status and equal rights that

had been afforded them. While women have actively engaged in peace building, the gendered nature of clan-based politics means that women are typically excluded from full participation in peace talks.

Women and girls seeking refuge at displacement camps must walk for days along the long and dangerous routes to the Somalia border. They arrive in North-eastern Kenya traumatized not only by famine and displacement but also from being raped along the way. Women and girls are especially vulnerable when they venture out in search of firewood for cooking which is putting them at greater risk of rape.

It is a pleasure for me to inform you with great certainty that for the first time in two decades the residents of the Somali capital are now enjoying a measure of relative peace and stability. This success has created an opportunity to reach the most vulnerable people and to extend government services to them.

The TFG has started implementing a new roadmap for a new constitution and subsequent elections by August 2012. This was a historic moment for Somalis as the consultative process ended in unity and harmony. The government is committed to implementing this with a view to making a difference for the Somali people.

I appeal to all Somalis to take part in this process. We are embarking on a new era of making a difference to our people. I urge our key partners and friends in the international community to provide timely resources to help us achieve our ambitious targets.

We need to consolidate recent progress on security, reconciliation and political out reach. This is the best time to implement the roadmap and at the same time to bring peace and stability to Somalia.

In order to brief you I would also like to inform you that there is on-going severe drought and famine which unfortunately affects more than half of the Somali population in the southern part of Somalia. Children are dying at the rate of 10 every minute and after them women and elderly people are the most affected. Families are still leaving their homes and villages for the capital city in order to survive. Animals are dying because of the shortage of water.

Concerning this situation, allow me to appeal to the international community and well-wishers to stand strong to help the Somali people in order to overcome this tragedy.

My requests to the Swedish Government:

(1) Sweden is one of the governments that most supported Somalia in becoming independent and getting a democratic Somali government through peace and reconciliation conferences. Swedish-Somali organizations are among the leaders in organizing the building of hospitals, schools and other development centers. I request on behalf of the government of Somalia, that the Swedish Government continues supporting Somalia and recognizes the passport issued by the Somali Government.

(2). Support the process of the draft constitution so that women can get their quota for political seats.

And finally I hope this conference will unite the entire Somali nation and will encourage it to overcome its differences and maintain peace.

Inshaallaah

May God bless Somalia and all of us!

Status and Review of Progress of Lack Thereof the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in the Horn of Africa

Fatima Ahmed

Introduction

Adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (hereafter UNSCR 1325) in October 2000 marked the first time that gender issues, and more specifically women's concerns, were placed on the peace and security agenda of the United Nations. This was the culmination of years of collaborative work between civil society and select policy actors. It was an important first step in addressing the multi-dimensional challenges that confront women in different contexts particularly in conflict-affected situations. The Resolution's focus on conflict and peace building was a valuable entry point given the magnitude of the problems posed for girls and women by conflict and insecurity globally. The particular attention of UNSCR 1325 to a number of inter-related issues was considered path breaking in many quarters not least amongst women's groups, worldwide. Four of these issues are worth highlighting in any assessment of African women's agenda in the field of peace and security. The first is that of women's representation at the highest decision-making levels in the systems and structures that deal with conflict resolution and management at national, regional and international levels. In this regard, the decision that the UN Secretary-General should appoint more women as Special Envoys and Representatives was a valuable step toward ensuring that the organization embeds this principle in practice. Second and related to this is the provision for the expansion of women's role in field-based operations. Third is the demand for the inclusion of measures to support local women's peace initiatives and home-grown processes of conflict resolution in the agenda of actors responsible for negotiating and implementing peace agreements. Fourth and last is the treatment of women in situations of armed conflict including protection from gender-based violence by armed groups and ensuring that gender considerations are core to Disarmament

Demobilization and Reintegration programs. UNSCR 1325 does not explicitly address structural change but the results that it seeks require a fundamental shift in the prevailing systems. Recognizing this in the application of 1325 would go a long way in ensuring its relevance across various contexts. At first glance a focus on these sets of issues appears to limit implementation of this resolution to only a narrow range of situations – those affected by armed conflict – which also serve as potential areas of least resistance for international intervention. Upon closer examination however, these issues have application far beyond conflict and war-affected settings. In Africa, the potential relevance of UNSCR 1325 is manifested in several ways. It sets standards for addressing immediate symptoms or consequences of conflict; it also opens up a path for dealing with the structural issues, which created the symptoms in the first instance. Any effort, for example, to ensure women's representation at the highest decision-making levels within mechanisms designed for conflict resolution, must effectively engage the factors or systems that prevent women from advancing to these levels. Similarly, efforts to ensure that armed groups guarantee the protection of women and girls from sexual violence must assume a fair measure of transformation. In the euphoria that surrounded the adoption of the UNSCR 1325, little attention was paid to whether and how its implementation might be ensured across national and regional boundaries, particularly in regions such as Africa, where its application is most critical. This Resolution has since been strengthened by other UN Security Council Resolutions – 1820, 1888 and 1889. While UNSCR 1820, which was adopted in June 2008, reaffirms 1325, it more directly places the issue of sexual violence on the agenda of the UN Security Council. Adopted in September 2009, UNSCR 1888 follows up on the issue of sexual violence and makes specific requests in this regard including the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General to coordinate UN efforts to address sexual violence. On 5 October 2009, UNSCR 1889 was adopted. It shifted attention back to the central role of UNSCR 1325 by requesting better reporting and resources to support gender equality; and the development of a set of indicators to track the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The extent to which these additional Resolutions can potentially impact the application of UNSCR 1325 negatively or positively has been the subject of much debate. It is important to indicate that UNSCR 1889 is a potentially enabling tool for UNSCR 1325. The tenth year anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325 offers an opportunity to critically examine what impact, if any UNSCR has had on Africa and what progress has been recorded for African women as a result of this resolution.

The Challenge of Application in Africa

Seeking to assess the relevance of UNSCR 1325 to Africa, it is important to understand the African context in which this resolution is to be implemented. That environment is characterized by a number of factors, which are directly related to the

structural gaps that UNSCR 1325 was designed to address, implicitly. These factors prevail in both situations of armed conflict and those not directly affected by armed conflict. Across Africa as in other regions, the issues at the core of UNSCR 1325 are embedded in structural factors, which exist in peacetime and merely become magnified during periods of armed conflict. The foundations of the exclusion of women from high level decision-making and key institutional mechanisms and processes for human advancement; sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) in wartime; and gender blind approaches to peace building in post-war settings are laid during peacetime and are located within social interactions. The treatment of women in peace or war, including violence against women, has its basis in the prescribed norms about what it means to be a man or woman, which is underpinned by power inequality between men and women. A society's belief systems, cultural norms and socialization processes, ultimately inform the type of power hierarchies that guide social interactions, particularly gender relations. The four issues extracted from UNSCR 1325 are invariably an expression of these power hierarchies. It is not surprising therefore that in many societies this places women in positions of disadvantage in addition to the suffering they endure in times of war and relative peace. In these largely patriarchal societies, it is commonplace to find some if not all of a whole range of discriminatory practices against women. These might include, for example, dowry-related death, sexual abuse of female children, marital rape, female genital mutilation (FGM) and other harmful traditional practices – all of which occur as acts of gender based violence in communities in normal peacetime. This is in addition to physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within communities. Also included are rape of women, sexual abuse, harassment and intimidation at work and trafficking in women and forced prostitution, as well as violence perpetrated or condoned by the state or its agents. While these practices are not the preserve of African societies, the continent has a healthy share of these issues. They are part of the normal order of society. Armed conflict magnifies these problems. After all, it is to be expected that those who see girls and women as inferior to boys and men and accord them low priority in society during “normal” times would not suddenly elevate them to a higher status in times of war. Rather, in a climate of armed conflict in which the rules of war have been abandoned and anything goes, this inferior sex is fair game and experience has shown how they have been easily preyed upon in situations of armed conflict from Bosnia to Congo.

Highlights on the Status of UNSCR 1325 after 10 Years – Horn of Africa

2010 marks 15 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), 10 years since the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals

(2000), 10 years since the UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), 5 years since the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and 5 years since the AU Protocol on the rights of women in Africa came into force, also the decision by African Union Heads of States declaring 2010-2020 the African Women's Decade and 2010 the Year of Peace and Security in Africa.

The sub-region still suffers from the loss of life, the impacts of conflict upon the welfares and development of individuals and communities, the impact of conflict on poverty eradication efforts and sustainable development, the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war, gender based violence as a cross-border issue, forced marriage, and other forms of GBV that are exacerbated during times of conflict.

For women's political participation, too few women are participating in peace building, conflict resolution and reconstruction processes.

Highlights on the UN Open Day on Women Peace & Security on the 10 Year Anniversary of the Resolution

On the 10th anniversary of resolution 1325, the UN organized Open Days on Women, Peace and Security in conflict-affected areas. The Global Open Day held at UN Headquarters on 21 October 2010 showcased the recommendations that emerged from country-specific Open Days that were held in post-conflict countries from June to September 2010. Women peace advocates presented the report. Women Count for Peace:

These Open Days on Women, Peace and Security signal the UN's commitment to engage women in building peace and security in the tenth anniversary year of the landmark United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The Open Days were part of significant efforts within the UN to accelerate achievement of the goals of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions.

One element of these efforts is the production of a set of indicators on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The set of 26 indicators is for use at a global level. It is used to track the outcome of efforts that helped in engaging women in peace making, security building, promoting securing justice and recovery. These indicators can also be adapted for use by national or regional institutions. Indicators are signposts of change, a means for determining the status quo and the progress towards the intended goal. They indicate trends and allow for tracking of progress towards intended results. Indicators are critical for effective monitoring and evaluation.

Another element of the UN's efforts to improve implementation is the revision of its System-Wide Action Plan on 1325 (2000), as well as an effort via the peace building reform process to address women's rights in the recovery and long-term peace building phases. Women from civil society and senior UN leaders in conflict-affected

countries participated in 25 dialogues on conflict resolution and peace building in June, July and August 2010. These meetings were designed to enable direct dialogue between women's peace building organizations and women community leaders, and senior UN representation at the country level. They are also intended to seek women's views on means of improving implementation of resolution 1325.

The Open Days provided an opportunity to acknowledge the progress that has been achieved over the last ten years. Generally the Open Day reflected on some achievements that were indicated by the increase in the number of women in government positions in many post-conflict countries. Also, quotas have been set and implemented, and women have used their public decision-making roles to advance women's rights.

There is an increased awareness of gender differences in the way conflict affects civilians, and this is reflected in post-conflict needs assessments and planning frameworks. Within the United Nations itself the Secretary-General since 2007 has appointed 10 women SRSGs, four Deputy Special Representatives (DSRSGs) and two Special Envoys. The number of women deployed in peacekeeping missions has increased.

While there has been an increase in the extent to which peace agreements address gender issues, only 16 per cent of peace agreements contain specific provisions on women's rights and needs. While gender analysis is found in post-conflict needs assessments, less than 8 per cent of proposed recovery budgets identify spending priorities addressing women's needs. It is estimated that only 5 per cent of actual budgetary outlays of multi-donor trust funds in post-conflict countries is directed to finance gender equality or women's empowerment projects.

Employment generation projects that aim to revitalize post-conflict economies still tend to prioritize employment for men, and there is inadequate investment in women's property rights and livelihood prospects. Sexual and gender-based violence often continues after peace deals are settled due to insufficient investment in protection and prevention strategies and destroyed or weak justice and security institutions. Important messages presented to the UNSG on the Open Day:

Open Day participants came from disparate parts of the globe, show engagement at all levels of decision-making, speak different languages, and have vast cultural differences. These conversations resulted in common messages that acknowledge women core priorities for peace and security.

Women's core priorities for peace and security could be achieved by the followings:

1. Increased political participation, increased engagement at decision making levels, and empowerment for women.
2. Availability of real, efficient, credible justice and security environments for women during and after conflicts.
3. Allocation of greater and more-sustainable financial resources to support women in recovery process.

Highlights on Sudan Open Day on the 10 Year Anniversary of the Resolution

Outcome of the Sudan Open Day:

Women of Sudan representing various women organizations and peace groups from different parts of the country have developed consensus on key issues central to the concerns for peace and security. These recommendations have evolved out of a series of consultations at state, regional (Greater Khartoum, Darfur, South Sudan, East Sudan and Transitional areas) and at national level.

Participation:

Meaningful and effective support for women representation and participation of at least 30% at all levels of decision-making, particularly in the area of negotiations, mediation, DDR Commissions, peacekeeping and law enforcement.

Effective and meaningful inclusion of women concerns and needs into peace agendas:

The UN to assist civil society to advocate for women to be part of the monitoring of Peace Agreements (especially in Darfur). Each peace agreement should contain a provision that establishes a Gender Commission, as well as engendering all other commissions related to the implementation and monitoring of peace agreements. Support for local peace initiatives to include women in the native administration and traditional conflict mechanisms is also vital.

Effective participation of women in the popular consultations in South Kordofan, Blue Nile states and the participation of women in the South Sudan referendum are highly encouraged and supported. The UN has to encourage the government of Sudan to include women in peace committees, referendum commission, and popular consultations committee.

Protection:

The UN should support women in establishing and participating effectively in early warning committees. There is an urgent need for National Security Sector reform. The reform should focus on the needs of women, addressing GBV and increasing the number of women recruited in the security sector.

There is a need to increase support for an effective DDR process, taking into account a gender perspective. It should encourage government to undertake peaceful disarmament, taking into account the proven positive contribution of women in peace building and activity.

Emphasize the need for women to be an effective part of the solution in their community, including involvement of women in de-mining mapping. The de-mining planning should take into account women needs such as water and pastoral routes commonly used by women.

Protection of civilians should be a priority with a special focus on women and children in cross-border conflict areas (e.g. Chad opposition and the LRA) and intra conflicts. A trust fund for economic empowerment of women should be established. The UN should establish peacekeeping team sites in all conflict areas, especially armed movement-controlled areas for the protection of women.

The UN could support alternative fuel initiatives to reduce women's exposure to rape and other crimes. The UN has to urge the government to improve women's basic and critical needs (health, education, water, etc) as fundamental human rights. The UN should encourage the government to apply gender responsive development planning, budgeting and funding mechanism. The UN should support the establishment of protection mechanisms for women rights defenders.

Promotion:

The UN should encourage the government to develop a national action plan for the implementation of SCR 1325, including monitoring and accountability mechanisms. The UN should also support civil society advocacy and involvement in the implementation of SCR 1325. The UN should facilitate the development of national, regional and international taskforces for the implementation and monitoring of SCR 1325.

The Role of Puntland Women in Peace

Asha Gelle Dirie

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Salam to you all

I am honored and feel privileged to be with you, I have crossed oceans to be with you to represent my women community in Somalia, particularly in Puntland State. My name is Asha Gelle Diriyee; I am the Minister of Women Development and Family Affairs, Puntland, Somalia. I have been a Minister for the last seven years, since inception. I am one of the founders of the Puntland Government and served as Member of Parliament for some years. Before my political life, I served my community as a change agent through civil society. I am a co-founder of some networks and NGOs that stand tall and effective as of today.

Coming back to my subject, Women participation in Peace and Politics, this subject has been the center of dialogue in many conferences and continues to be. I am glad that a good number of experienced Somali women are here to share their knowledge and experience with us.

Today I would like to share with you some great strides made by women, which do not generally attract the culturally biased attention of the media. Invariably successes women make in peace building in Somalia are achieved with limited or no support from international communities or governments of Somalia. Since the collapse of the central government in Somalia in 1991, civil wars and violence have erupted and spread over the country.

First, some impediments need to be recognized in relation to women's status in Somalia. In times of war, women are the principal victims. They suffer multiple abuses and harassments besides being required to perform their social obligations like caring for the children under extremely difficult circumstances.

The role women play in peace building is extremely crucial – as mothers who educate their children, wives who advise their husbands, and their vital link/networking role between families and their communities are used for peace building and peace-making purposes. Since time immemorial, women have been active contributors to peace making, but the recognition and leadership remained in the hands of men.

In Puntland State of Somalia there are extraordinary examples of women functioning as forerunners in rebuilding inter-clan communication which prepared the way for clan conferences which later led to local and regional peace agreements.

Puntland women strived and effectively discharged their responsibility in their diverse roles. Somali women do not like to be merely looked on as victims of war but have relentlessly fought for their rightful position as active agents of peace. They are bridge builders and remain the glue that holds families together, creating communities across clan-lines.

I cannot share with you all the remarkable and important success stories from the last twenty years of my experience and involvement in peace making concerning the role of Puntland women, but the following are in particular a few success stories that inevitably touched me:

The role women and mothers in Puntland and their institutions played in peace building

The first great contribution of Puntland women in restoring peace to their communities is the Galkaio Peace Accord of 1993, which ended the fighting between two rival resident clans within Galkaio of Mudug Region. The fighting broke out between militias from these two rival clans and had left more than 1,000 people dead in one night, while hundreds of residents had been displaced, carrying their injured militias and family members on their backs with nowhere to go, and no safe health services to access. Realizing that exclusivity could not help attain sustainable peace, women embarked on peace campaigns aimed at defusing tensions and bringing the warring communities together. Women from both North and South Galkaio organized processions demanding peace and cessation of hostilities, defying the green line that had been drawn by opposing militias from the two rival groups, dividing the town. The fruition of the campaigns was peace talks that led to the signing of the Peace Accord between Col. Abdullahi Yussuf and the late Gen. Mohamed Farah, including their Clan Elders and militia officers signing the Peace Accord with them. The result has been the relative peace enjoyed in Galkaio to date.

The Hufan Initiative of 1994 was yet another demonstration of women's ability in bringing about peace. There was a split in the SSDF militia group leading to an upsurge in cases of robbery and other crimes in the port city of Bossaso, then the capital of the North East of Somalia region. This period of lawlessness precipitated unprecedented violations against women and the unarmed groups who in large numbers escaped from Mogadishu and other places in Somalia. The poorest and unarmed groups were tired of frequent harassment, rape and looting of business women as a result of the deteriorated security situation. So the Women movement led by Lady Hufan Artan organized and united women's groups and individuals to confront the male leadership of Bossaso, in particular those manning and managing the port, collecting taxes. Hufan and other women lay flat on their faces, deliberately placed their bodies on the ground, one next to the other, carpeting themselves on the ground where the docking and other port activities were going on. They lay there for one working day refusing to free the port till there was negotiation and security funds were released from the funds reaped from the port. The women also raised more money to boost their security. The Women group first recruited youth groups

composed of men and women who helped the women who did not want to carry and use guns, unless necessary. The women led the patrolling teams while the youth groups supported. They made rounds in the city streets at night disarming gunmen of their guns and other lethal weapons. They later worked with men to establish a police unit – of which the women movement was a part – to patrol the town during nights. This was the first sign of Governance in Puntland and it was founded by women. The police unit later took full control of Bossaso town before it was handed over to a trusted commission. Finally, the Women group managed to persuade the rival SSDF factions to negotiate and started some kind of relative governance in Bossaso and surrounding areas.

The formation of Puntland Police with thousands of trained individuals initiated by the Hufan Movement, later on became one of the unrecognized founders of Puntland State and the stability it enjoys. Regrettably women still remain vulnerable and are not significantly given space in police recruitments. The Hufan Movement has suffered from a lack of support and remains effective but weak, as an institution.

The Puntland Peace Mission and Constitutional Crisis

In July 2001, the Puntland State plunged into political uncertainty following the expiry of the term of the interim administration. When it was formed in 1998, the interim administration had been charged with the responsibility of conducting a population census, drafting a constitution, conducting a referendum on the draft constitution, setting up a constitutional court and producing law for holding elections. But at the expiry of its term, the administration had not realized any of the objectives, occasioning a constitutional crisis. The resulting political developments and tensions degenerated into a military confrontation between forces allied to the Interim President Abdullahi Yusuf and opposition leader General Adde Muse, who later became the second term president of Puntland during the subsequent nine months of conflicts and political instability. Puntland Women from all the regions united to be at the forefront of peace negotiations between the two opposing groups.

Women activists organized a series of activities to popularize the holding of the “Isimada Peace Conference”, during all the three phases of the Puntland Peace Mission. They organized peace forums for the women, youth and professionals in various parts of Puntland, where they emphasised the need to support dialogue as the only means out of the constitutional crisis.

In another attempt Puntland women activists led by Hawa Aden, organized a series of forums and processions, including the famous Night Vigils and Peace Forums at the Galkacio Education Center for Peace and Development, Main Center in Galkacio. The activities culminated in the drafting of an appeal that was circulated for the collection of signatures in support of the Isimada Conference. A total of 11,400 signatures were appended to the appeal. The women’s efforts together with those of supportive men later on compelled rebels, led by Adde Muse, to a ceasefire, leading to the agreement of a power sharing arrangement that finally ended the war.

A general conference was called in Garowe after the Isimadda Peace Conference to discuss and come up with a practicable solution to the crisis. Delegates had been chosen on the basis of their clans by the clan leaders. As usual, none of the clans nominated women to be part of their delegations, the result being that women were left out. The only 3 who had been nominated were assigned peripheral roles as cheer leaders and composers of poems about peace and not participants in the deliberations. But although they were denied representation at the conference, women did not let their right to participate in the peace making process go unchallenged.

The Burtinle peace initiative of 2007 was another demonstration of efforts by the Puntland women to sanitize and restore peace in their community. Fighting between the two rival native clans of Puntland had claimed many casualties on both sides. The fighting continued unabated with efforts by elders, chieftains, Islamic scholars and Puntland ministers failed miserably to get the two sides to the negotiation table. The intervention of the Puntland Women Affairs Ministry played a crucial role in complementing other efforts to get leaders of the warring clans into an earnest search for peace. The Ministry dispatched a delegation of 38 women to the war fields in clash torn areas, amid threats and warnings not to go. The delegates reached out to the elders and leaders of the warring clans under very difficult circumstances to implore the need for dialogue. Even when warned not to go, members of the women delegation risked their lives for the sake of peace. They only fed on dates and water and had to shield their bodies behind trees against the bullets from the rival factions; however women continued conflict resolution by tracing and leading strayed animals back to the owners, building trust. After 48 days of intense lobbying and persuasion, the women's delegation together with some men managed to amalgamate the masses into pressuring their leaders to dialogue with their rivals and reach a peaceful and permanent settlement.

Badhan District of Sanag Region and sub-clan wars in 1997

The violence that followed the murder of a popular peace activist and an Elder turned Badhan district into a battle ground between two sub-clans. Maryama Mohammed Isse, the wife of the chief/peace activist lives in Badhan district; she was yet another plus to women's efforts to bring peace to her area. She organized women, helping to bring together the warring clans by making them realize that a retaliatory attack would not bring back the lost soul but would only claim more innocent souls. The Puntland women organized the school children and youth to support their peace advocacy. She instead led the peace initiative that convinced the community of Badhan to build and keep their peace which after many years remained fragile, despite the fact that her husband was killed. However, this peace initiative has instilled peace in Badhan that still can be seen today.

The Puntland elections of 2008 threatened to degenerate into a violent confrontation. Candidates showed disrespect for the rule of law and adopted war mongering attitudes; thus the administration was on the verge of collapse. But awareness cam-

paigns led by Asha Gelle, the Minister of Women and Family Affairs of Puntland pushed leaders to act with sobriety, which averted the impending conflict.

The Minister and the Women Elders in the Ministry joined forces and created awareness that turned to an awesome awakening for the Puntland community. The Puntland community united with women and the Ministry of Women led the peace initiative and succeeded in making it last so far.

Women leadership and their participation in the unstable and changing dynamics of the present political process in Somalia

Women leadership and their participation in the unstable and changing dynamics of the present political process in Somalia, remains uninviting and unrewarding, when compared to women achievements that are unconditional and always proactive in peace building. After General Adde Muse lost the war, power sharing activities eliminated and disregarded the women, who were the heroines of peace. The men went in behind closed doors and never looked back till today. Only the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs kept their heroic records and recognized them nationally with Awards and passed their information to the Ministry of Education to effectively include the women's heroism into the history curriculums of schools. Let us hope this happens.

Some of these women heroines are now old and uncared for by the Puntland Authorities. However, my Ministry remains closely in touch and supportive of them. But we are not able to alleviate the dire needs of old age and poverty that they suffer from.

Government and international support for women empowerment and advancement in political power sharing

These achievements are only a few of the success stories registered by Puntland women in bringing peace. Somali women were present and remained present throughout the peace processes. When needed by men leaders, women are called in to sing for them. Women are given verbal recognition by some men leaders on a few occasions when needed. Women are denied sharing leadership roles and responsibilities at all times and by all men, including internationals such as the UN Political Office and UN families, by IGAD, the African Union and other institutions, who have designed and continued contributing their inputs to the making of Transitional Governance of Somalia for the last twenty years and more years to come.

The few women, who, against all odds, have made it to the negotiation table, face strong resistance from two major groups: Somali men wanting the personal space of Somali women in politics and power and the international community facilitation and support to the process, who do not acknowledge women's rights during political discussions. The majority of women are discouraged by limited resources, overwhelming family responsibilities and a lack of support and encouragement together with constant violence from males in their families, clans and associates.

Though women participants never make it to the negotiation table due to marginalization, a few women maintain their influence and sometimes direct the processes, preventing attempts to scuttle the negotiations and refusals to make concessions for the sake of peace. This attitude coming from some women, at times compels men to respect the will of the people and take decisive actions to restore peace. Indeed without such pressure, peace may not have been realized at all. Their efforts ought to be acknowledged and honored but unfortunately they are forgotten in the final stages of the peace processes. Their signatures never make it to the final accords and they are segregated and alienated in the power sharing arrangements that result thereof.

Puntland local governance and current women's political participation

The Puntland Government has been relatively peaceful since 1991 and with successful state administration since 1988. In 1985, a special Ministry for Women and Family Affairs was established. The Ministry leadership, knowing the challenges ahead and the minimal women's participation in social, economical and political matters took up the challenge. Excessive lobby and advocacy work throughout the government was carried out to allow women to have a 20-30% quota at all levels. Thanks to the Puntland leadership, the parliament approved the government Bill. The Ministry put all their efforts together to realize the implementation of the women's quota in decision making circles and positions. Thanks to God, today the women's participation in Puntland is topped up from 5% - 17.4%. The Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs, which has limited human resources and funds, utilized Women Champions/Ambassadors, who relentlessly lobbied and trained local district women to negotiate with their Clan Chiefs ahead of time and early enough, and successfully secured a few seats before the power of the project (Local Governance) was understood. The Women Champions were a few steps ahead of the Chiefs. Badhan District has been very successful in their early activism; ten women out of twenty eight councillors are women, which uplifts the women participation in local governance to 33%; one third of the Permanent Working committee are also women, as well as the vice- chairperson being a woman, Thus, another great success has been achieved by the Puntland women.

Supports, Encouragements and the Empowerments women need to perform for their common Vision and Agenda for Success

Government and international support for women empowerment and advancement in political power sharing is non-existent. Therefore, women's participation and decision making in peace agenda is drastically compromised.

Support and encouragement of Women empowerment is a must and without the role of women in political decision sharing being seriously addressed, peace in Somalia will never take root.

Peace is strongly connected to power; fair representation of all sectors including the powerless majority, women in relation to men; political disagreements usually stem from personal issues, financial gains and power over others. However women

could positively counterbalance and commit to peace and stability, which can be only obtained and maintained through fairness. Somalia? I ask you all, let us seriously look within and try to honestly commit time, energy and resources to nurture this concept.

To empower women institutions, try this concept:

- Support women-run institutions and businesses
- Support peace activities/initiatives that are women-centered
- International conferences on peace and governance must have great participation of women in quality and in number, identified and selected by women institutions
- Women heroines in difficult situation must be encouraged and supported

Economic and educational uplifting of Somali women to be invested in World community must add their voices to ours and with Somali women assess the present aid paradigm that facilitates negative outcomes and perpetuates violence by powerful men, who are given space and tolerated by the international community.

Women must take a pro-active role in building peace and reconciliation in the society and should not sit back and only react when things go wrong. They should not wait for what they deserve to be given to them but should go for it. However, without resources, mobilization, trainings and forums for consensus building cannot be achieved.

Status of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820 in the Horn of Africa

Addei Sidi Nur

This paper is based on the documentation and information collected in open sources on resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and reports of the Secretary-General as well as conclusions of working groups on the issue women, peace and security.

“Crimes against humanity affect humanity as a whole”, no matter if we are talking about Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea or Djibouti.

“Dismantling sexual violence is a joint task for men and women that requires each country’s effort and a zero tolerance policy.”

This paper presents my own views and my deepest hope is peace rehabilitation in the Horn of Africa and in the world.

Abstract

There is no doubt that sexual violence is a crime against humanity. The Security Council Resolution 1820 notes that “rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity.” Crimes against humanity, as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court Explanatory Memorandum, “are particularly odious offences in that they constitute a serious attack on human dignity or grave humiliation or a degradation of one or more human beings.”

The Security Council Resolution 1820 notes that sexual violence “when used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order deliberately to target civilians or as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security.” Therefore, “effective steps to prevent and respond to such acts can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.” (Paragraph 1)

This short paper includes three parts. The first part attempts to examine the Security Council Resolution 1820, its background, follow-up and contribution to

sustainable peace. The second part tries to enlighten how women have always been particularly vulnerable victims during armed conflicts, but also discriminated on several grounds. An intersectional approach reminds us that women face a multiple variety of discrimination and multiple disadvantages and that it is not enough to identify what is the situation for women, but it is also necessary to make visible full equality and advancement based on global principles of international human rights law. The concluding part explores how the issue related to sexual violence can be examined from several viewpoints such as public health, social change or law and criminal justice. Prevention and efforts to reduce injury include interventions such as psychotherapy or counseling treatments as well as community-wide interventions with rape crisis hotlines and health care interventions. To decrease rape supportive attitudes a changing of societal norms resulting in equal treatment and equal power distribution is primary. Sexual violence is seen as a violation of human rights, and, here is my main point, justice and accountability is essential to reaching sustainable peace. Ending impunity is a matter of dignity healing, community reconciliation and peace restoration.

Resolution 1820

Background and follow-up

Resolution 1820 was unanimously adopted on June 19, 2008. Its preamble reaffirms the commitment of the members of the Security Council to “the continuing and full implementation of Resolution 1325 (2000), 1612 (2005) and 1674 (2006)” and to the related Statements of the President.

It restates also the determination “to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including by ending impunity and by ensuring the protection of civilians, in particular women and girls, during and after conflicts, in accordance with the obligations States have undertaken under international humanitarian law and international humanitarian rights law”.

The following resolutions are primary to the issue:

- Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security acknowledges the essential role of women in conflict management, conflict resolution and sustainable peace. In the changing nature of warfare, in which civilians are increasingly targeted, women continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes. The unique impact of conflict on women, the importance of women’s participation in peace-building and conflict prevention is here recognized.
- Resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict strives to end violations against children in armed conflicts and to guarantee their rights.

- Resolution 1674 (2006) on protection of civilians in armed conflict is the first to recognise a set of criteria to form a basis for humanitarian intervention in situations of armed conflict.

Eight years after, in order to face the challenges associated with Resolution 1325, four follow-ups providing significant guide principles in preventing abuses against civilians and obligations for more women protection have been approved by the Security Council.

- Resolution 1820 (2008) is the first follow-up, which substantiates and builds on the key requirements of Resolution 1325 and states that gender-based violence against women and girls is to be taken into consideration in UN Security Council decisions to establish or renew state-specific sanctions against regimes. It recognizes that conflict-related sexual violence is a tactic of warfare, and calls for the training of troops in preventing and responding to sexual violence, deployment of more women to peace operations, and enforcement of zero-tolerance policies for peacekeepers with regards to acts of sexual exploitation or abuse. Fighting impunity for such acts and the protection of the rights of women and girls is the highlight of this resolution.
- Resolution 1888 (2009) strengthens the implementation of Resolution 1820 by calling for leadership to address conflict-related sexual violence, deployment of teams (military and gender experts) to critical conflict areas, and improved monitoring and reporting on conflict trends and perpetrators. This resolution has led to the appointment of the first Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the issue of sexual violence in conflict. It also provides for the creation of “rapid response teams” that can be dispatched at short notice to conflict zones where systematic sexual violence is alleged to be taking place.
- Resolution 1889 (2009) deals with obstacles to women’s participation in peace processes and calls for development of global indicators to trail the implementation of Resolution 1325, and improvement of international and national responses to the needs of women in conflict and post-conflict situations.
- Resolution 1960 (2010) calls for an end to sexual violence in armed conflict, particularly against women and girls. It provides measures aimed at ending impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence. It makes available reporting measures, yearly publication of a list of armed groups that target women for sexual abuse, monitoring and analysis of sexual violence in conflict and better cooperation among UN actors for a system-wide response to sexual violence.

The five resolutions (1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960) are interlinked and mutually reinforcing and are regarded as the pillars for strategic action plans, transparent implementation and progress monitoring in the issue related to women, peace and security. The responsible key actors for their implementation include the Security Council; Member States, UN entities, the Secretary-General and parties to conflict.

Key issues and provisions of Resolution 1820 (2008)

The adoption of Resolution 1820 marked a significant step. After years of advocacy and debate held on women, peace and security related to progress made, gaps and challenges encountered and actions needed for future implementation, the Security Council recognised that sexual violence in conflict is a matter of international peace and security. Where there is continued sexual violence it is impossible to build sustainable peace. As the Security Council bears responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the key issues and provisions of the resolution are therefore expressed:

- “Stresses the need for the exclusion of sexual violence crimes from amnesty provisions in the context of conflict resolution processes” (Paragraph 4).
- Explicitly requests that the Secretary-General include information and recommendations on the protection of women and girls in his or her country-specific reports to the Security Council (Paragraph 9).
- Emphasizes the importance of women’s participation and reaffirms the importance of their role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in post-conflict peace-building and recognizes the importance of women’s full participation in peace and security matters (Paragraph 12).
- Requests that the Secretary-General provide an extensive report on the implementation of Resolution 1820, information on the use of sexual violence (including prevalence and trends), strategies to prevent such violence, and benchmarks for measuring progress toward these goals (Paragraph 15).

Vulnerability of women during armed conflicts

Women have always been particularly vulnerable victims during armed conflicts, but also discriminated on several grounds.

Women are left out of most organizational processes in their communities, either in the form of community councils, departmental assemblies, and other such models and they are subject to cultural stereotypes based on gender or ethnicity. The aggressions by the armed actors are an attack against their identity.

Vulnerability of displaced women may be even more intensified by the change in role and family structure. The change they experience because of displacement is very significant compared to their movements in the past, which closely corresponded to the movements of their father or husband. Generally, their social setting was limited to household activities and production in the same area, as well as their relations with organizations and other outsiders through their men. Migrant and refugee women are exposed to complex cultural, affective, material and spatial losses, particularly

when they attempt to reaffirm their maternal role, which they have always played in their own culture, caring, generating life and preserving family stability.

This situation is aggravated by the low levels of education and poverty of the displaced women, which challenges their adequate access to work and to different forms of economic subsistence. The armed conflict has turned localities into scenarios of war and death, where women and girls and children face misery and are adversely affected by continued civil insecurity, displacement and food insecurity that jeopardize the most vulnerable. Sexual violence is perpetrated by civilians and armed actors who exploit the chaos of conflict to attack women. In addition to the acts of violence raped women suffer also from shame.

Addressing the issues related to such violence requires a robust and comprehensive set of actions, including an effective security and legal response, as well as strategies aimed at breaking the silence on sexual violence, ensuring proper health services and psychosocial support to victims and including women at all levels of decision-making. It also requires a great deal of political will and resources to counter the culture of impunity. Silence about, or denial of past events, in fact, can further traumatize victims, whereas the public acknowledgement provided by the act of that prosecution can contribute to healing and eventually to reconciliation.

Law and criminal justice

The situation in Somalia

The losses and damage from wars are dramatic with the displacement of thousands of people both internally and as refugees. In a situation characterized by deep insecurity, the conflict in Somalia has witnessed atrocious crimes such as targeting civilians particularly women and girls, militia and gang rape and recruitment of child soldiers. Since rape is not discussed openly, for some cultural or traditional reasons, silence about sexual violence traumatizes the victims further. Women feel shame and fear rejection from husbands, families, or societies. Sexual violence is committed often with the intention of shaming entire communities. Moreover, fear of reporting is a significant barrier to justice.

Despite this, on the basis of the Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia (2011), there were significant reports of sexual violence in Somaliland (Hargeisa) and Puntland (Garowe). Some 140 criminal acts of which 99 were rape cases were reported the first couple of months of the year. About 53 cases of rape and sexual violence against children were also reported, mostly in Somaliland where monitoring and capacity access are much greater. In Southern-central Somalia (Mogadishu) where peacekeeping operations respond currently to a “light footprint” approach, the escalation of conflict led to terrible violations of humanitarian law and women witnessed unspeakable crimes.

According to Human Rights Watch, the customary law system deals with the rape cases through arrangements. They note that settlements reached out of court may possibly result in either marriage with the offender or the survivor's removal from the community. The customary system contributes to ensuring peace between clans; but would not ensure proper redress for victims. Clanship is a central form of political organization and identification for Somali people.

The creation of an international tribunal to try perpetrators of sexual violence would achieve justice for women and would also disclose the retributive values held among the broader international community. Trials and tribunals are also said to enable truth-telling and contribute to a society's healing. Dealing with the past is for victims of fundamental importance to recovery process.

Acknowledging and broadcasting the facts surrounding a significant crime like sexual violence has an essential role in determining how future generations perceive the conflict and how and who will bear the responsibility for such events, as well as how to ensure that they are not repeated in the future.

Therefore, the political landscape in Somalia presents an urgent need to establish a list of non-exhaustive objectives that have to be considered as priority. It includes a national action plan focusing on establishing an anti-corruption task force, delivering public services and improving public safety, health services, schools and more. Besides, effective judicial capacity, army, police, intelligence as well as security organs are a prerequisite for safety to assure reconciliation and guarantee the completion of transitional tasks particularly the constitution-making process.

Conclusions

In situations of ethnic conflict, rape is used as a tool for ethnic cleansing and genocide and psychological stigma. Rape must stop.

Since 2000, the call on parties to armed conflict to protect women from sexual violence urges countries to bring perpetrators to justice. Impunity must be ended for sexual violence and a survivor-centric approach must be adopted for all programming.

Resolution 1820 declared the legal status of sexual violence as a war crime, crime against humanity and component of genocide that cannot be amnestied and notes "that civilians account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict; that women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instill fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group; and that sexual violence perpetrated in this manner may in some instances persist after the cessation of hostilities" (Memorandum). As described in Resolution 1820, parties to armed conflict must implement their responsibilities, in particular by immediately and

completely ceasing all acts of sexual violence and in taking appropriate measures to protect women and girls from all forms of sexual violence.

Progress has been made and must continue. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that the Horn of Africa faces levels of insecurity that would “shake even stable countries.”

References

- Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)
- Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005)
- Security Council Resolution 1674 (2006)
- Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008)
- Security Council Resolution 1888 (2009)
- Security Council Resolution 1889 (2009)
- Security Council Resolution 1960 (2010)
- Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia S/2010/675 (2010)
- Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia S/2011/277 (2011)
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court Explanatory Memorandum

PART II

Gender equality:
Women's rights and
participation in decision
making

The Role of Women in Post-Conflict Transformation in the Horn of Africa: A Case Study of Eritrea♣

Daniel R. Mekonnen and Mirjam van Reisen***

I. Introduction

Poverty, vulnerability and virulent conflicts have been the hallmark of the Horn of Africa for several decades. Eritrea, ‘the troubled and turbulent country,’¹ is one of the five countries constituting the volatile region of Horn of Africa. This region is described by some experts as ‘the most conflicted region of the world since the end of the Second World War.’² And of late, Eritrea has become a major destabilising actor in the region, necessitating a stringent UN Security Council Resolution in December 2009 (Resolution 1907). Historically however, Eritrea is notably known for the exceptional role played by its female freedom fighters in the armed struggle for liberation. Eritrean Government sources indicate that throughout the struggle for self-determination female freedom fighters constituted one-third of the liberation forces in active combat.³ The high level of mobilisation of female freedom fighters in the armed struggle has created a significant measure of equality between men and women, marking the beginning of awareness about gender disparity and the prioritisation of women’s issues.

1 Tricia Redeker Hepner & Daivid O’Kane, ‘Introduction,’ in David O’Kane & Tricia Redeker Hepner (eds), *Biopolitics, Militarism and Development: Eritrea in the Twenty-First Century* (2009), ix.

2 David H Shinn, ‘Challenges to Peace and Stability in the Horn of Africa,’ paper presented at the World Affairs Council of Northern California, 12 March 2010.

3 *Statement of Ms. Luul Gebreab, Head of the Eritrean Government Delegation to the 34th Session of the CEDAW Committee*, 24 January 2006, available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw34/statements/intstatements/eri.pdf> (accessed 6 June 2007).

* A paper submitted to the 10th Annual International Horn of Africa Conference on “The Role of Women in Promoting Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa,” 23–25 September 2011, Lund, Sweden.

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sation of gender equality. For example, for the first time in the history of Eritrea, men and women freedom fighters were able to choose their marriage partners, contrary to the Eritrean tradition and culture of arranged marriages. The social mobilisation towards emancipation of women heralded by the liberation struggle era should have served as a springboard for further achievements in the post-independence era. However, as will be seen later, the opportunity has not been captured effectively and Eritrea has now become one of the major spots of gender-based violations in the world.

This article examines how the relationship between gender and traditional and modern conceptions or expressions of gender identities developed during the war and will explain the subsequent regression to submissive gender roles for women in the period of independence. The changes in gender roles were generated within the context of a military liberation structure, with an administrative structure of governance that has not fundamentally changed since the end of military liberation struggle. The Eritrean state is based on a one party – one command system under martial rule, justified by the authorities in terms of the ongoing threats perceived of an invasion from neighbouring country and former coloniser Ethiopia. While military structures tend to emphasise stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, it can allow for new directives of gender-roles. However, if changes in gender-roles are not matched by supporting conceptions of masculinity and femininity, this may evolve to a conflicting and confusing social definition of gender-relations in the post-conflict era, and contribute to further conflict. In a ground-breaking article, R W Connell comments on the relationship between violence and masculinity:

The connection between violence and masculinity is a key contemporary issue. Recent research shows both institutional bases and situational triggers of gendered violence, which are important in understanding contemporary global conflict and developing strategies for peace.⁴

This paper identifies the relationship between the institutional military administration and gender-relations. The paper examines the factors that have led to a disheartening regression in the post-independence era, one of which is the abusive National Military Service Programme (NMSP) which has virtually kept the nation on a constant war-footing, at least since the outbreak of a new border conflict with Ethiopia in 1998. In this context Eritrean women are bearing the brunt of the crisis disproportionately, as they are particularly subject to (sexual) violence and vulnerability, and take care of children, sick, disabled and elderly people. However, the restrictive prescription of gender-roles victimises the society at large and the negative consequences are lived by victims as well as those resorting to violence and aggression. Women are also active agents in society's definition.⁵ Women can play traditional auxiliary roles in provoking violence and expressing gender identities related to a situation of violence, cheering on their men, and therefore attribution of responsibility should not be implied without further detailed consideration.

4 Raewyn W Connell, 'Masculinities, Change and Conflict in Global Society: Thinking about the Future of Men's Studies', *The Journal of Men's Studies* 11(3) (2003): 249.

5 For example, on the participation of women in the killings in Rwanda, see generally Mahmood Mamdani *When Victims become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda*. (2001).

The paper therefore specifically analyses the role of Eritrean women in providing leadership and their contribution in decision-making positions in the post-independence era and in conflict prevention and resolution processes during the 1998–2000 Eritrea-Ethiopia border conflict. In addition, the paper discusses efforts made or not made by the Eritrean government and the international community in terms of empowerment of women as peace builders, particularly as envisaged by Resolutions 1325 and 1820 of the UN Security Council and identifies recommendations that need to be taken into account by the international community to allow women to play leadership roles in conflict resolution in the region.

II. The role of women during the liberation struggle

A discussion of the role of Eritrean women in post-conflict transformation would be incomplete without interrogating the remarkable achievement of Eritrean women in the making of an independent Eritrean state. The contribution of female freedom fighters in the success of the liberation struggle is a major component of the Eritrean discourse on gender equality. In a previous contribution, one of the current authors writes about this as follows:

The Eritrean struggle for gender equality is as old as the underlying ideological transformations of the two major liberation fronts – the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). As in all other cases, the pioneering liberation front in the empowerment of women is the ELF. What has been achieved by the EPLF can only be seen as a continuation of what the ELF has initially pioneered. The EPLF, by continuing the struggle for self-determination and empowerment of women, assumed a notable role when it liberated the country in 1991.⁶

As Tanja Müller notes, the Eritrean revolution has created a dynamic process of modernization for the Eritrean society in general and for women in particular. This transformative process has 'fostered an environment in which women are regarded as equal and are encouraged to occupy positions of leadership.'⁷ It is also part of the reality of Eritrea coming into being 'as the outcome of a national liberation struggle combined with a social revolution.'⁸ Throughout the struggle for self-determination, women have played a very distinctive role. As noted before, official records of the Eritrean Government reveal that from the tens of thousands of EPLF combatants, female freedom fighters constituted one third of the liberation forces in active combat.⁹

6 Daniel R Mekonnen, 'The Abolition of Female Circumcision in Eritrea: Inadequacies of New Legislation,' *African Human Rights Law Journal* 7(2) (2007), 396.

7 See generally Tanja R Müller, *The Making of Elite Women: Revolution and Nation Building in Eritrea* (2005).

8 Müller, note **above, 1.

9 *Statement of Ms. Luul Gebreab*, note ** above.

According to Rachel Odede and Eden Asghedom, the mobilization of women in the armed struggle has created an attitude of equality between men and women, marking the beginning of awareness about gender disparity.¹⁰ This was a breakthrough in the history of gender justice in Eritrea and it was one of the greatest achievements of the Eritrean revolution. A very important example discussed by Odede and Asghedom is the transformation of marriage among EPLF fighters as a paradigm shift resulting from a revolutionary approach. For the first time in the history of Eritrea, assert the authors, 'men and women fighters were able to choose their marriage partners, contrary to the Eritrean tradition and culture of arranged marriages.'¹¹ During the armed struggle, the EPLF has for the first time forbidden the practice of female genital cutting (FGM) by its members.¹²

An important question is the process through which these changes were achieved. While East Bloc official doctrine during the Cold War expanded into ideas on gender equality as part of the reconstruction of society, in ex-post assessments two major problems were identified. Firstly, changes on gender-relations were imposed and were not the result of demands for change or concerns identified by people themselves, which is also known as 'directive emancipation.'¹³ Secondly, women remained excluded from decision-making and were not integrated as leaders in the process of re-arranging social relations. Emancipation lacked institutional reform to include women in administrative structures. In East Bloc countries, given the superficial 'cosmetic' or directed nature of social change, the underlying conceptions associated with masculinity and femininity did not change, leading to a failure of real women's emancipation. This has been well studied and examined in relation to the former East Bloc countries.¹⁴ As many liberation movement leaders were trained in former East Bloc countries, their struggle reflected similar shortcomings, and deep patriarchal roots remain intact, even if the particular results varied from those in East Bloc countries, due to the contextual, cultural and historical differences.

In the Eritrean case, the social mobilization towards emancipation of women heralded by the liberation struggle era should have indeed served as a springboard for further planning and implementation after the liberation of the country in 1991. However, as will be seen in the following section, the opportunity was not captured momentarily in the post-independence era. Dishearteningly, the achievements of Eritrean female freedom fighters have been betrayed by the post-independence political elite of Eritrea. During the recent wave of internal repression prominent women freedom fighters have become the victims of the prevailing political system described

10 Rachel Odede and Eden Asghedom, 'The Continuum of Violence against Women in Eritrea,' *Development* 43 (2001), 69-70.

11 Odede & Asghedom, note ** above, 69-70; Lyda Favali, 'What is Missing? Female Genital Surgeries: Infibulations, Excision, Clitoridectomy in Eritrea' *Global Jurist Frontiers* 1(2) (2001), 78-79.

12 See generally Mekonnen, note ** above.

13 See generally Cheris Kramarae & Dale Spender, *Routledge International Encyclopaedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge* (2000).

14 See generally Richard E Marland & Kathleen A Montgomery, *Women's Access to Political Power in Post-Communist Europe* (2003).

by social scientists and analysts as an exceptional example of a failed revolutionary experience.

III. The role of women in post-conflict transformation

Many would agree with the statement that the emergence of Eritrea as an independent state in the last decade of the twentieth century has placed the nation in an extraordinary position in terms of learning from the successes and failures of other African countries in transforming themselves into democratic systems. Eritrea did not learn its lessons properly. One major cause of this problem is the hegemonic-monolithic political culture of the Eritrean Government which traces its roots to the early years of its formation as a liberation movement. Tekle Weldemikael laments that this type of perverted political culture has finally led to the fetishism of the nation (including the ruling party and its senior leaders) at the expense of all types of individual freedoms.¹⁵

Müller notes that the hegemonic ideology of the revolution does not envisage women opting out of its version of modernity, thus new avenues open up only for those subscribing to the revolution's narrative of progress.¹⁶ While the Eritrean revolution played a decisive role in opening up possibilities for women's emancipation, in the post-independence era, there has been a stark deficit in terms of implementing democratic structures of governance and this failure has seriously compromised the revolution's landmark achievements in gender equality. The challenge has now become part of the overall struggle for personal liberation in individual lives. To understand the challenge correctly, it is important to critically examine the post-independence policies of the Eritrean Government as related to the empowerment of women.

Since Eritrea's independence in 1991, the government has in principle and in broader terms demonstrated commitment to gender equality via several pronouncements and official documents of a binding and non-binding nature, such as the 1993 Interim Constitution,¹⁷ the 1994 Macro Policy, the 1994 EPLF/PFDJ (People's Front for Democracy and Justice) Charter and the 1997 Eritrean Constitution. As noted previously in another contribution by one of the current authors,¹⁸ the 1997 Eritrean Constitution has little practical significance in terms of gender equality and human rights protection in Eritrea. This is so because in spite of its ratification in 1997 the

15 Tekle M Weldemikael, 'Pitfalls of Nationalism in Eritrea' in O'Kane & Hepner (eds), note ** above, 15.

16 Müller, note ** above, 219–220.

17 *Proclamation to Provide for the Establishment, Powers and Functions of the Government of Eritrea* (hereinafter 'Interim Constitution'). This Proclamation together with Proclamations No. 23/1992 and No. 57/1994 constitute the Interim Constitution of Eritrea.

18 Daniel R Mekonnen, 'The Reply of the Eritrean Government to ACHPR's Landmark Ruling on Eritrea: A Critical Appraisal,' *Journal for Juridical Science* 31(2) (2006), 49–50.

Constitution has never been implemented and its provisions are not enforceable by courts. In principle, the 1997 Constitution (in articles 7(2) and 14) guarantees the equal rights of men and women and prohibits discrimination based on gender. Furthermore, noting the historical role of women in the struggle for independence, the Preamble of the 1997 Constitution commits the nation to basic equality and mutual respect between men and women. However, because of the exceptional deficit of constitutional law in Eritrea, none of these provisions are enforceable in a court of law.¹⁹ As aptly noted by Tesfatsion Medhanie, Eritrea is therefore the only country in the world without a working constitution.²⁰

For a limited period of time Eritrea had a transitional parliament called the National Assembly of Eritrea. The transitional parliament was first established by Proclamation No. 23/1992, as amended by Proclamation No. 37/1993. By Proclamation No. 86/1996 (*Local Government Proclamation*)²¹ the Eritrean Government reserved a certain quota for women in regional assembly seats. This law does not specifically address the issue of seats for women in the transitional parliament or national assembly. But in practice, the law has been understood to be applicable also to the quota of seats reserved for women in the transitional parliament. Accordingly, it can be argued that article 10 of Proclamation No. 86/1996 enjoins both regional and national assemblies to ensure equal participation of citizens in elections, including by providing for affirmative action for women. In this sense, regional and national assemblies are obliged to reserve thirty per cent of all their seats for women. In addition to this, women are entitled to equal access to the remaining seventy per cent of the seats. According to article 2(3) of Proclamation No. 52/1994, the total number of seats in the transitional national assembly is 175. The thirty per cent quota reserved for women would therefore translate to mean a minimum of 52 seats in the national assembly. In letter and spirit, the quota system looks very progressive but in practice and relevance the reality is different as expounded in the following paragraphs.

In the case of regional assemblies, assembly members, including women, have no meaningful powers in terms of making any difference in the lives of ordinary people. This is true especially after 2001 when the country has fallen under the rule of a military junta whose accountability is only to the State President. Overriding the six regional civilian administrative structures envisaged by article 4 of Proclamation No. 86/1996, Eritrea is now divided into five military operational commands which are headed by five high-ranking army generals all of whom are males. The former six civilian regional governors and their structures are now subsumed under the five military operational commands which report directly to the State President and are also accountable only to the same person. The government maintained the six civilian regional governors and the six regional assemblies merely for purposes of lip service.

19 For further on this, see Simon M Weldehaimanot, 'The Status and Fate of the Eritrean Constitution,' *African Human Rights Law Journal* 8(1) (2008), 108–137.

20 Tesfatsion Medhanie, 'Constitution-Making, Legitimacy and Regional Integration: An Approach to Eritrea's Predicament and Relations with Ethiopia,' DIIPER Working Paper No. 9 (2008).

21 This law was amended by Proclamation No. 140/2004, *Proclamation to Provide for the Election of Regional Assemblies*, but the quota allocated to women remains the same.

At the level of the national assembly or the transitional parliament, the picture is much grimmer. In theory, of the main state institutions in Eritrea, the transitional parliament was the only state organ which had a considerable amount of women. As noted above, from a membership of 175 parliamentarians, the law requires a minimum representation of 52 women. This means that at the time when the national assembly was operational it might have, relatively speaking, a considerable number of women who could have been actively involved in important national deliberations such as matters of peace and war as well as post-conflict transformation. The problem however is that during and after the 1998–2000 border conflict with Ethiopia, the national assembly remained either inactive or hibernating. In reality, the parliament had no role to play in matters of peace building and conflict resolution even during those years when Eritrea was at war with Ethiopia. Clearly, the role of women parliamentarians was severely constrained. In general democratic culture and participatory processes are severely lacking in Eritrea. Women cannot play any meaningful role in a situation which has a stark deficit of democratic governance. Even during its brief existence from 1993 up to 2002, the Eritrean National Assembly was one which ‘does not even have the luxury of “rubberstamping.”’²² Contrary to the requirements of article 4(3) of Proclamation No. 37/1993 that it be convened every six months, the Eritrean National Assembly has never convened and has remained in hibernation since February 2002. Thus, Eritrea has become perhaps the only country in the world without a functioning parliament. It is widely believed that the parliament has been unilaterally disbanded by the State President and replaced by a tripartite body, comprising army generals, regional administrators and ministers whose accountability is only to the State President.²³ As a result, Eritrea now lacks rudimentary principles of the rule of law and legitimate political institutions. It is a state governed by personal rule as opposed to the rule of the law.²⁴

In general it can be argued that post-independence Eritrea has not nurtured a favourable atmosphere in terms of empowering women meaningfully and enabling them to play a role both in the political life of the nation and in post-conflict transformation. This can be gauged by assessing the distribution of political power in high and midlevel government offices across gender streams. Although every aspect of distribution of political power in relevant government organs cannot be adequately explored in a limited study such as this one, the following four examples offer insightful guidance for the issue at hand. Information in this regard is readily available from the official website of the Eritrean Government, www.shabait.com, which contains a database of high and midlevel government officials in the country.²⁵ The case studies discuss the distribution of actual political power across gender streams in seventeen

22 Yohannes Gebremedhin, *The Challenges of a Society in Transition: Legal Development in Eritrea* (2004), 136. See also generally Simon M Weldehaimanot & Daniel R Mekonnen, ‘The Nebulous Law-making Process in Eritrea,’ *Journal of African Law* 53(2) (2009), 171–193.

23 Weldehaimanot & Mekonnen, note ** above, 191.

24 See generally Petros B Ogbazghi, ‘Personal Rule in Africa: The Case of Eritrea,’ *African Studies Quarterly* 12(2) (2011): 1–25.

25 The information is available on the following webpage: <http://www.shabait.com/contacts/government-contact> (accessed 29 July 2011). Given that no official permits are allowed for independent and critical research in Eritrea, the authors have not been able to obtain an optimal

government ministries, six regional administrations, thirty-nine diplomatic missions and in the central executive committee of the ruling party.

In seventeen government ministries there are a total of 159 top and midlevel officials according to the website (excluding low level government employees in these ministries). These are some of the most important government positions with far-reaching implications for the lives of ordinary people. From this number, there are only fourteen positions assumed by women, representing only 8.8 per cent of the total figure. In the structures local government (provincial administrations), the database contains the names of twenty-eight high and midlevel officials, of whom only three are women. In terms of percentage women constitute ten per cent of the total number. In thirty-nine diplomatic missions around the world, the Eritrean Government has twenty-nine embassies and ten consulate offices. In these missions, the government has a total of fifty-four top and midlevel diplomats whose names are displayed on the official website of the government. In the entire list there is only female by the name Tegisty Nerayo, who is the Head of Finance and Administration at the Eritrean Embassy in France. In terms of percentage this translates into a very insignificant number, which is 1.85 per cent of the total number. Remarkably, one section of the website contains the names of seven individuals who are apparently the de facto executive committee members of the ruling party. None of them is female.²⁶ The following table shows the overall representation of women in terms of actual distribution of political power in the four government sectors analyzed in this study.

Table I: Actual Distribution of Political Power and Gender Breakdown in Four Government Sectors

| Government Sector | Total No. of Officials | Males | Females | % of Males | % of Females |
|---------------------|------------------------|-------|---------|------------|--------------|
| Ministries | 159 | 145 | 14 | 91.2 | 8.8 |
| Local Government | 28 | 26 | 3 | 90 | 10 |
| Diplomatic Missions | 54 | 53 | 1 | 98.25 | 1.85 |
| PFDJ Ex. Co. | 7 | 7 | 0 | 100 | 0 |
| Total | 248 | 241 | 18 | 92.8 | 7.2 |

As can be seen from the table above, the overall representation of women in the distribution of actual political power is a little more than seven per cent of the total number of positions analyzed in this study. From a total of 248 high and midlevel government positions, only eighteen are assumed by women. A brief contrastive analysis needs to be drawn here between what the Eritrean Government has formally committed itself to do and what it is doing in actual terms. In Proclamation No. 86/1996 the government has committed itself to ensuring the representation of women in the national parliament by a minimum of thirty per cent. Taking this as an acceptable benchmark, the prevailing practice of distribution of political power,

amount of empirical data in this regard. It follows that some of the conclusions drawn in this study may be taken only as indicative assertions that could be improved with further research.

26 The seven names are: Alamin Mohammed Said, Secretary of the PFDJ; Yemane Ghebreab, Head of the Department of Political Affairs; Abdella Jaber, Head of the Department of Organizational Affairs; Hagos Ghebrehiwet, Head of the Department Economic Affairs; Zemhret Yohannes, Head of the Department of Research and Documentation; Haile Tewoldebrhan Head of the Department of Administration; and Yussuf Saik, Chairman of the PFDJ Central Region.

which shows only 7.2 per cent gender representation, is unpromising, to say the least. This shows that there has been a disheartening regression in the post-independence era in terms of empowerment of women and enhancing their role in national decision-making processes and post-conflict transformation. The sad part is that there has also been a growing trend of gender-based violations in the post-independence era as will be discussed in the following section.

IV. Gender-based violence in Eritrea

In spite of the role-models provided by female ex-freedom fighters in translating the ideals of women's rights into attainable goals, women have been the major victims of human rights violations during the post-independence era. There are two notorious government policies which have caused immense suffering to a large number of Eritrean women. The policies were drafted in a typical disdainful manner discrediting the historic achievement of Eritrean women. These are the hasty demobilisation programme of thousands of ex-freedom fighters and the unfeasible implementation of the same plan in the mid-1990s; and the implementation and continuance of an indiscriminate national military service programme (NMSP) since the early 1990's.

a) The demobilisation of ex-freedom fighters

A few years after the country's independence, the Eritrean Government demobilised 51 000 ex-freedom fighters from a total of 100 000, 12 000 of whom were women.²⁷ Each received a small amount of money, a little less than US\$ 2000, in the form of severance pay to help them reintegrate into civilian life. The amount of money was not sufficient to support the demobilised combatants in their reintegration efforts. There was no comprehensive feasibility study on the implementation of the programme or other alternative plans. The dilemma was insurmountable to women.

As discussed earlier, female combatants constituted between one third and a quarter of the EPLF liberation army.²⁸ Many of them had left their villages and towns as teenagers and spent several years in the struggle for independence. One of the challenges they faced during the post-independence era was transitioning themselves from freedom fighters to wives and working mothers. Chris Kutschera recounts that 'settling back into a life of domesticity was more problematic' for many ex-freedom fighters.²⁹ Accordingly, more than half of the demobilised women freedom fighters are reported to have divorced. This was a systematic abuse due to strong remnants

27 Chris Kutschera, 'What Happened to the Eritrean Female Freedom-Fighters?', available at <http://www.chris-kutschera.com/A/Eritrean%20Women.htm> (accessed 16 June 2007).

28 *Statement of Ms. Luul Gebreab*, note ** above, and Kutschera, note ** above.

29 Kutschera, note ** above.

of traditional gender identities. The implications for the well-being and human rights of women are repercussive. Reflecting on this experience, Kutschera cites Ruth Simon as having lamented:

[Male freedom fighters] have changed, they have become traditional again. In fact, this traditional male thinking has deep roots that go back many generations. When they went to the front, men were forced to accept EPLF policy of equality between the sexes. When they came back to the cities after liberation, the government had other priorities, it did not concern itself with the emancipation of women and men fell back into the old way of thinking ... The former male fighters are worse than the civilians ... At least, the civilians respect us. Today, not one [freedom] fighter wants to marry a woman [freedom] fighter. We are too strong.³⁰

Ruth Simon is referring here to military instructions on behaviour of the combatants in which the idea of gender equality was imposed upon the military community to rid itself of traditionalism, but generating the same strong traditional military concepts of masculinity and femininity, and these subsequently define the household relations between combatants once they are demobilised. The real conceptualisation of what constitutes men and women also inform the institutions, once they are freed from the military ideology after the period of active war.

b) The National Military Service Programme (NMSP)

The second unjust government policy with far-fetching implications for women's rights is the NMSP. Eritrean national service laws are typical examples of the draconian rule of PFDJ. Every adult member of the society is by law required to complete an 18-month national service programme which includes a harsh military training of six months in the notorious Sawa Military Training Camp. Initially, the law³¹ exempted certain categories of women, such as newly married women and mothers, from the requirement. For no clear reason, the exemption was withdrawn in 1995 by an amending law.³² Another law, Proclamation No. 82/1995,³³ extended the initial age limit of 40 years to include people as old as 50 years of age. Women are accordingly indiscriminately obliged to fulfil the requirements of the NMSP. Some reports indicate that government authorities are at times lenient towards women who have approaching the age of 30 years but in practice the law has remained unchanged.³⁴

30 Kutschera, note ** above. On the issue of demobilization see generally, Amanuel Mehreteab, *Wake Up, Hanna! Reintegration and Reconstruction Challenges For Post-War Eritrea* (2004).

31 Article 5(4)–5(9) of Proclamation No. 11/1991 (the 'First' National Service Proclamation).

32 Article 2 of Proclamation No. 71/1995 (*Proclamation to Amend the 'First' National Service Proclamation*).

33 Articles 3 and 6 of the 'Second' National Service Proclamation. See also article 13(2) on the duration of the national service programme. This law repeals the two previous proclamations.

34 See, for example, Hepner and O'Kane, note **, xxviii, footnote 10.

Up to the time of writing, the government has implemented twenty-four rounds of the NMSP.³⁵ Every round recruited tens of thousands of participants. The programme was intensified after the 1998–2000 border conflict with Ethiopia. The border conflict came to an official end in June 2000. Eleven years after that and irrespective of the 18 months limit stipulated by law, the programme continues effectively with no end on the grossly abusive practices involved therein. Hundreds of thousands, including women, have been conscripted for years, some of them now for more than ten years without a formal salary and pay. Many have fled to neighbouring countries in unprecedented numbers. In their escape, many continue to face violations including death and in the case of women rape and sexual violence. The injustices associated with this programme are beyond imagination.³⁶

An eyewitness account³⁷ narrated to one of the current authors, by a surgeon who worked at the biggest military hospital, indicates that appalling stories of torture and crimes against humanity³⁸ remain untold among several national service conscripts. Army commanders have full discretion to implement whatever type of punishment, including extra-judicial execution, against national service conscripts. According to the eyewitness account, brutal methods of punishment which led to amputation of arms and other forms of permanent bodily injury are common among conscripts. Degrading and inhuman punishment is utilised indiscriminately against all conscripts who demonstrate the slightest sign of defiance against the draconian rules of PFDJ. A report by the Human Rights Watch, for example, indicates that Eritreans fleeing conscription are granted asylum elsewhere 'on the grounds that national service is used as a measure of political repression and that anyone forcibly returned to Eritrea is likely to be tortured'.³⁹

Virtually, all foot soldiers of the regular army are national service conscripts. The total number of Eritrean soldiers is invariably estimated. In October 2001, a senior official of the National Commission for Demobilisation and Reintegration indicated that 'by mid-2000, Eritrea [had] 300,000 army personnel, more than any other time in the history of liberation struggle'.⁴⁰ In an aggregated form, women constituted

35 Shabait.com, 'Participants Of 24th Round National Service Graduate in Sawa,' available at <http://www.shabait.com/news/local-news/6367-participants-of-24th-round-national-service-graduate-in-sawa> (accessed on 16 July 2011)

36 See generally Gaim Kibreab, 'Forced Labour in Eritrea,' *Journal of Modern African Studies* 47(1) (2009), 41–72.

37 Daniel R Mekonnen, 'Piercing the Veil of Impunity: An Account of an Eyewitness,' available at <http://zete9.asmarino.com/?itemid=855> (accessed 15 March 2007). The narrator is Dr. Yosief Fessehaye, who served as a national service conscript at the Gilas Military Hospital between 2001 and 2003.

38 Mekonnen 2007b, note ** above. Dr. Fessehaye mentions a person by the name Habtom [last name unknown] whose arms were amputated at Gilas Military Hospital as a result of torturous punishment. The victim was treated by the same doctor.

39 See Human Rights Watch, '2006 World Report: Eritrea,' available at <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/01/18/eritre12307.htm> (accessed 18 January 2006). See also the court cases cited in the same report: the United States (*Nuru v. Gonzales*, 404 F.3d 1207 (9th Cir.)), the European Court of Human Rights (*Said v. the Netherlands*, Application no. 2345/02) and the United Kingdom Immigration Appeal Tribunal (Appeal No. Eritrea CG [2005] UKIAT 00106).

40 Amanuel Mehreteab, 'Renewed Demobilization in Eritrea,' *Bonn International Centre for Conversion Bulletin* 21 (2001).

45.27% of the total number serving in army, including those in the ‘civilian’ police force. The percentage, as indicated by the report⁴¹ of the Eritrean Government to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), is close to half of the total number of the national army.⁴² The vulnerability of women members of the army is proportional to their numbers. There are reports that women have been sexually abused, raped and tortured by army commanders in the infamous Sawa Military Training Camp and elsewhere. Sara Rich Dorman, for example, quotes two foreign newspapers, which have interviewed women who claim to have been raped in the military training camp.⁴³ In a society where patriarchal conservatism is so pervasive, women do not go public and report sexual violence and rape. Problems of underreported gender-based violence in the army are very common. As indicated by the Director of Human Rights Concern–Eritrean (HRC–E): ‘There are so many female victims of torture and rape, but ... they are not willing to share their experiences due to fear, insecurity and culture.’⁴⁴

Although in a different context, the Eritrean Government has also stated in its report⁴⁵ to the Committee on the Rights of the Child that Eritrean women normally do not report incidents of rape and sexual violence due to cultural reasons. This was reported in the context of the atrocities perpetrated by the occupying forces of Ethiopia during the 1998–2000 war. The challenge is insurmountable in the case of atrocities committed by Eritrean army commanders.

c) Other forms of violations

In addition to the two pervasive government policies discussed above, there are also a number of individual case studies which portray serious violations against Eritrean women. Because of the high profile of some of the victims and the nature of the injustices, the following seven case studies of ex-freedom fighters have been selected as fairly representative examples of gender-based violations of the post-independence era.

41 See also *Combined Initial, Second and Third Periodic Report of the Eritrean Government to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*, UN Doc CEDAW/C/ERI/1-3/2004 (hereinafter ‘*Report to the CEDAW Committee*’), 16.

42 The disaggregated data provided by the *Report to the CEDAW Committee* is as follows: 3.09% in the ground-force; 3.30% in the naval force; 8.92% in the air force; 10.36% administration/support staff within the Ministry of Defence; and 19.6% in the police force.

43 The two newspapers cited by Dorman are *Sette Corriere della Sera*, ‘Eritrea, Giovine e Arruolata,’ 26 September 2002; and *The Age*, ‘When Rape is a Requirement of Military Service,’ 5 December 2002. See Sara Rich Dorman, ‘Past the Kalashnikov: Youth and the State in Eritrea,’ in Jon Abbink and Ineke van Kessel (eds) *Vanguard or Vandals? Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa*, 2004. See also Saba and Giday from Asmara, ‘Rape, Torture and Cover-up of Innocent Girls in Sawa,’ available at http://news.asmarino.com/Information/2002/05/SabaGiday_5_5.asp (accessed on 19 May 2004).

44 Elisabeth Chyrum, e-mail message to one of the authors, 8 June 2007.

45 *Initial Report of the Eritrean Government to the Committee on the Rights of the Child*, UN Doc CRC/C/41/Add.12/2002, para 450.

i) Ruth Simon: The first journalist victim

The case of Ruth Simon, the first imprisoned journalist in independent Eritrea, is one of the earliest violations received with amplified international attention.⁴⁶ This is so not only because of the popularity of the victim but also because of the severity of the matter she has divulged in her capacity as a correspondent for the Agence France-Presse (AFP). According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the order for her arrest was personally given by President Isaias Afwerki after she reported that the President had told a closed meeting of ruling party cadres that Eritrean soldiers were fighting alongside rebels in neighbouring Sudan in the mid-1990s. The statement was denied by the President and Simon was detained arbitrarily. Arrested on 25 April 1997 and kept in prison without a court order, she was released in December 1998. She served a 20-month detention without trial, leaving her two children behind. The younger child was only 6 months old at the time of her arrest.

Simon was finally prosecuted at the notorious Special Court of the country which tries suspects without the right to defence and counsel. Initially, the government claimed that she was arrested for publishing false information. Astoundingly, none of the five major counts included an indictment on falsified publication. Simon was acquitted of all but one indictment. The only conviction was on account of possession of equipment imported without import duty. The alleged equipment was a transmission radio she received from AFP for purposes of journalistic correspondence.⁴⁷ On this count, Simon was fined with Nakfa 5000.00, roughly equivalent to US\$ 600 at that time. In sentencing, the court did not even take into consideration the detention without trial she served before conviction. The other indictments, on which no conviction was secured, included abuse of power,⁴⁸ breach of official duty⁴⁹ and embezzlement of public funds.⁵⁰

In what seemed a sustained resoluteness in the defence of one's own right, Simon fought another fierce legal battle with Bana Share Company, an enterprise she chaired before her arbitrary arrest. The litigation was of a purely civil matter. As the sole judge who presided over the case in a court of first instance,⁵¹ one of the current authors clearly remembers how the matter was politicised by unwarranted government interference associated with other allegations against Simon. Eventually, however, the case was decided in favour of Simon up to the level of the appellate division in the High Court.⁵²

46 CPJ 'Ruth Simon, Agence France-Presse Correspondent, Imprisoned Journalist,' available at http://www.cpj.org/awards98/1998/simon_bio.html (accessed 14 June 2007).

47 See judgment of the Special Court of Eritrea in *Public Prosecutor v Ruth Simon*, Case No. 159/2001, judgment rendered on 6 May 2002 (on file with authors). The only conviction was based on article 363 of the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (hereinafter 'Penal Code').

48 Article 414(1)(a) of the Penal Code.

49 Article 412 of the Penal Code. See also *Public Prosecutor v Ruth Simon*, note ** above, para 1–4.

50 No Penal Code provision was cited by the court, and nor perhaps by the public prosecutor, for this particular indictment.

51 See judgment of the Zoba Maekel Provincial Court in *Ruth Simon v Bana Share Company*, Civil Case No. 1564/2001, judgment rendered on 2 July 2001 (on file with authors).

52 See judgment of the High Court of Eritrea, Appellate Division, in *Bana Share Company v Ruth Simon*, Civil Case No. 363/2001, judgment rendered on 29 May 2002 (on file with authors).

In spite of the formal closure of the allegations with regard to her controversial report, Simon continued to live a difficult life under routine security surveillance; and for some time she was not allowed to leave the capital city, Asmara. A winner of CPJ's 1998 International Press Freedom Award,⁵³ Simon is a prominent ex-freedom fighter and journalist whose own siblings have passed away in the liberation struggle. Her husband is a senior diplomat with a maintained official status. It seems that he had no role to play in alleviating the injustices against his own wife. Information to indicate any disingenuous character on the part of the husband is however hardly available. Yet, the story denotes the intensity of the Eritrean repression which is unconquerable even by familial bonds.⁵⁴

ii) Saedia Ammed of EriTV

Saedia Ahmed, a 24-year old reporter of the state television, is one of the most notable victims of detention without trial. According to Amnesty International, she was detained in February 2002 with two other reporters as a result of her questioning the subordinate status of the Arabic language in Eritrea.⁵⁵ Since then, she remains in detention without trial. Eritrea is broadly described as evenly divided between Christian and Muslim communities. The issue of the Arabic language and its official status is most contentious.

iii) Aster Fessehatsion: The liberator⁵⁶

Aster Fessehatsion is one of the most senior and prominent freedom fighters of EPLF/PFDJ. She joined the liberation army in 1974 and served as a political and military training commissioner. In 1994, she was popularly elected as a member of the Central Committee of PFDJ. For several years, she has been a victim of the notorious punishment - *mdskal* (freezing), an Eritrean term for suspension from official position with no active duty but with pay. The method is a typical psychologically torturous punishment used by the State President against senior government officials believed to be 'disobedient' to his draconian rule.

Fessehatsion, estimated to be in her 50s, is one of the signatories of the acclaimed document, the Open Letter,⁵⁷ which criticised the State President's undemocratic rule. In consequence thereof, she was arbitrarily detained in September 2001. She

53 See CPJ 'Country Report 1998: Eritrea,' available at <http://www.cpj.org/attacks98/1998/Africa/Eritrea.html> (accessed 14 June 2007).

54 Another typical example in this regard is the Minister of Information, Mr. Ali Abdu, who could do nothing regarding the arbitrary arrest of his own father upon the order of the State President.

55 Amnesty International, *Appeal for the Release of Six Women Prisoners of Conscience on the Occasion of Eritrean Independence Day* (AI Index: AFR 64/007/2005, 25 May 2005).

56 The story of the four women in the following paragraphs relies heavily on Human Rights Concern – Eritrea (HRC-E), 'Their Voice is Ours ... Their Suffering Too,' available at <http://cs.asmarino.com/hrce.php?itemid=258> (accessed on 14 June 2007) and Amnesty International, note ** above.

57 An Open Letter to all Members of PFDJ: A Call for Peaceful and Democratic Dialogue [English version], available at http://news.asmarino.com/PFDJ_Membership/Introduction.asp (accessed 14 June 2006) (hereinafter 'the Open Letter'). The letter was authored in May 2001 by a group of fifteen senior government officials, who are known as the Group of 15 (the G-15) or the reformers.

has never been visited by anyone, including her only son whose father, Mr. Mahmud Ahmed Sheriffo, was also arrested for the same reason. At the time of arrest, Sheriffo was just frozen from his official duty as the Minister of Local Government and Vice-President. Fessehatsion and Sheriffo have allegedly died while in prison on 6 and 13 June 2003, respectively, possibly as a result of illness or ill treatment.⁵⁸

iv) Aster Yohannes: The caring mother

The case of Aster Yohannes is somewhat different from others in that she was imprisoned, according to Amnesty International,⁵⁹ for her husband's political dissent. Petros Solomon, the husband, is one of the authors of the Open Letter and at the time of his arrest in September 2001, he was just frozen from his ministerial position. An association established for her cause, Friends of Aster,⁶⁰ indicates that at the time of detention she was aged 46. Before the arrest, she was at the University of Phoenix for a postgraduate study. She decided to return to Eritrea on 13 December 2003 '[w]hen the Government of Eritrea refused to allow [her] to bring her [four] children to the US.'

Amnesty International reports that Yohannes was given 'assurances of safety on her return to Eritrea but was arrested on arrival at the airport in Asmara.'⁶¹ Security forces abducted her before she could even greet her children, whom she had not seen for nearly four years and who were eagerly waiting for her arrival at the airport. The authorities have given no reason for the arrest of Aster Yohannes, who suffers from a heart condition and asthma.⁶² This is true with all other political prisoners in Eritrea. In a very sweeping manner, the Eritrean Government claims that some prisoners, for example the authors of the Open Letter, are 'traitors' who have collaborated with the Ethiopian Government during the 1998–2000 border conflict. None of such claims has, however, been proven by a court of law.

v) Miriam Hagos: The indomitable woman

When Miriam Hagos decided to join the Eritrean liberation struggle in the summer of 1977, her dream was not only to liberate the land but also the people of Eritrea. Undoubtedly, the eradication of violence against women, inequality and oppression were top of the reasons for the radical decision she took then. Before she joined EPLF, Hagos was a prominent member of the Association of Eritrean Students in North America. Her earliest travels to Sweden and USA were meant to be doors of opportunities for a better life. However, she was determined to see a liberated Eritrea. The prominent human rights activist, Elisabeth Chyrum, describes Hagos as a 'person who speaks her mind.' Hagos persistently challenged the secretive culture of

58 Awate Team, 'The Obscure and Tragic End of the G-15,' available at <http://www.awate.com/portal/content/view/4336/9/> (accessed 31 August 2006).

59 Amnesty International, 'Detained for Husband's Opinions,' available at <http://web.amnesty.org/appeals/index/eri-010705-wwa-eng> (accessed 14 June 2007).

60 Friends of Aster, <http://www.friendsofaster.org/>.

61 Amnesty International, note ** above.

62 Friends of Aster, note ** above.

EPLF during the liberation struggle. As a result, she has been accused of 'harbouring petty bourgeois tendencies' and was imprisoned repeatedly.⁶³ In this regard, Chyrum writes:

Between the years 1979 and 1981, she was put in prison for two years. She suffered kidney problems and had difficulties with her eye-sight. Having served her sentence, she was asked (by one of the superiors) how she found her *revolutionary training*. She replied ... by saying that she was in prison and not, as he intended her to feel, in training. He said that she has not learned a lesson yet, and he [sent her back] to prison for some more months. When she was released and asked the same old question, she replied ... by saying, 'I was in training.'⁶⁴

This tragedy was not limited to the pre-independence era. The spill over is pervasive in post-independence Eritrea with a resultant effect of the brute iron grip of PFDJ and its draconian decrees and military edicts. In post-independence Eritrea, prisoners or their family members cannot even ask as to why and where people are arrested, thus prompting Amnesty International to entitle one of its reports on Eritrea: 'You Have No Right to Ask.'⁶⁵ Hagos was again arrested by the same party-turned liberation front in October 2001. Aged in her 50s, she was allegedly detained on account of her support to the cause of the authors of the Open Letter. According to the Director of HRC-E, Hagos' own husband, who had a personal grudge and axe to grind, was sadly instrumental in the arrest.⁶⁶

vi) Senait Debesai: The popular artist

Senait Debesai is one of the most recognized musicians in Eritrea. At the time of arrest, she was in her 40s. She is best known by her popular song *kuluntenay nAki* (my everything). The role of arts and culture in the liberation struggle was so popular that many Eritreans believe that half of the credit of the liberation struggle is attributable to Eritrean artists. Debesai's role in this regard is noted. Her fate is extraordinarily unique. There is no clear political motive for her detention, except a matrimonial dispute with her husband. Reportedly, she has suffered for a long time from an abusive husband, who at last orchestrated the detention through his circles of influence. It is submitted that Debessai was arrested on 15 November 2003, five days before a decisive court hearing in which she could have won the custody of their three children over her husband.⁶⁷ Her brother, ex-freedom fighter and a long time personal friend of President Isaias Afwerki, has also been detained without trial for several years.

63 HRC-E, note ** above; Amnesty International, note ** above.

64 HRC-E, note ** above (emphasis added).

65 See, for example, Amnesty International, *You Have No Right to Ask: Government Resists Scrutiny on Human Rights* (AI Index: AFR 64/003/2004, 19 May 2004).

66 HRC-E, note ** above; Amnesty International, note ** above.

67 HRC-E, note ** above; Amnesty International, note ** above.

vii) *Letedawit of Hagaz: Eta nay jebha*

Weletedawit Abraha Medhin is a former freedom fighter of ELF, the forerunner to EPLF. Woldeyesus Ammar refers to her as Letedawit of Hagaz.⁶⁸ Former ELF freedom fighters are always regarded with suspicion by the government even after voluntary repatriation to Eritrea. As reported by Ammar, Letedawit of Hagaz was allegedly killed by a government security officer with whose girlfriend the victim had a fight on purely personal grounds. The victim was commonly referred to as *eta nay jebha* (that of ELF) by her adversary. Taken to prison immediately after the fight, she was allegedly killed the next day or the same night. Authorities claimed that she had committed suicide. However, according to Ammar, autopsy results revealed that she 'died because of beatings, and that her neck bones were broken severely.' Ammar also reports that individuals who asked for further investigation were detained and intimidated so that they should not take the matter any further. In particular, family members of the victim were forced to sign a document admitting that the victim had committed suicide and that no investigation should continue on the matter.

Most of the violations discussed in the preceding paragraphs are recognised as such by leading human rights groups. These cases are only those which are widely known to the general public and on which information is readily available. Based on that, they have been selected as fairly representative examples of individual gender-based violations. It is evident that there are many horrendous stories which can only be told after the demise of the brutal dictatorship in Eritrea. Generally, the number of political prisoners and victims of human rights violations of the post-independence era is estimated at tens of thousands.⁶⁹ In this context, it is difficult to imagine a proactive role of women in terms of either democratic political process or post-conflict transformation in Eritrea.

V Concluding remarks

Eritrea is notably known for the exceptional role played by its female freedom fighters in the armed struggle for liberation. Throughout the struggle for self-determination, female freedom fighters constituted between one-third and one-fourth of the liberation forces in active combat and many of them were encouraged to assume senior and midlevel military leadership positions. The high level of mobilisation of female freedom fighters in the armed struggle has created a measure of equality between men and women, marking the beginning of awareness about gender disparity and the prioritisation of gender equality and challenging of old practices such as FGM. However the heavy ideological and dogmatic imposition of new behavioural rules for

68 Woldeyesus Ammar, 'The Tragic Death of Letedawit of Hagaz,' available at http://www.awate.com/artman/publish/article_3323.shtml (accessed 18 May 2004).

69 Human Rights Watch, *Service for Life: State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea* (2009), 9, citing Christian Solidarity Worldwide.

gender roles in the context of a military hierarchy has created obstacles and set-backs for gender equality as concepts of masculinity and femininity have not changed, or have been stereotyped around conservative traditional concepts set in a context of war and violence. The administrative institutionalisation of the subordination of women is demonstrated by the limited number of women in leadership positions.

Like most nationalist movements, the Eritrean Government values military life above all potential ways of contributing to the nation, thus creating one of the most militarised states in the world.⁷⁰ This has resulted in a stark deficit of democratic structures of governance and high levels of human rights violations, including gender-based violence. In terms of actual distribution of political power, the prevailing gender breakdown in high and midlevel government positions is disheartening. From a total of 248 high and midlevel government positions analyzed in this study, only eighteen are assumed by women. This gives only 7.2 per cent of gender representation, which does not reflect in any way the participation of female freedom fighters in the liberation war. The Eritrean Government has formally committed itself to ensuring representation of women in the political process by a minimum of a thirty per cent quota. Seen against this official commitment, the prevailing practice is again disheartening.

Eritrea's legacy of armed struggle is replete with an authoritarian tendency of leadership, which manifested in its worst form in the aftermath of the 1998–2000 border conflict with Ethiopia. In terms of empowerment of women, the post-independence era has seen disheartening regression. Some case studies discussed in this paper show how women are victimised in relation to their husbands' or friends' husbands' grudges (Miriam Hagos, Senait Debesai and Letedawit of Hagaz) or their husbands' political engagement (Aster Yohannes). The case studies are illustrative of women's vulnerability, with their life and security being in the hands of relatives, with the family unit being part of a political system over which they have no influence. The examples set by the authorities in these prominent cases provide strong narratives in which violence against women can be orchestrated or committed with impunity and in which definitions of masculinity and femininity are created around the notion of the all powerful male and a submissive female. The narrative permits the severe and violent punishment of a non-submissive wife in cases where the husband is dissatisfied with her behaviour. By setting these examples, the state provides the narrative as well as the promise of impunity.

Other women detained for their political views were thus barred from leadership positions and imprisoned (Ruth Simon, Aster Fessehatsion, Saedia Ammed, Miriam Hagos, Senait Debesai). With these cases the state authorities send a strong message that any dissenting views publicly expressed are punished by imprisonment. Described by Hepner and O'Kane as 'far from a terra incognita,' an unexplored field of knowledge, the legacies of the armed struggle have continued to haunt Eritrean society by inculcating one of the most repressive systems of governance Eritreans

70 Hepner & O'Kane, note ** above, xxviii.

have ever known in their history. Building on the concept of biopolitics,⁷¹ Hepner and O'Kane exemplify the post-independence political-economic and human rights crisis in Eritrea as an outcome of 'the pursuit of modernisation by an elite leadership [which] has often produced perversions of governance and power.'⁷²

UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 seek to promote the involvement of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. A regional approach that demilitarizes the region and the state authorities requires a revisiting of gender-related concepts defining masculinity and femininity on the basis of a non-violent pursuit of the organization of society and its institutions. The agents of such definitions need to come from and be appropriated by the people themselves, while role models and leadership can contribute to this process. As the liberation war itself was much advanced by culture, poems and songs, this tradition provides possibilities for change from within the Eritrean communities.

71 Based on the work of Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), Hepner & O'Kane offer similar but a number of versions of the concept of biopolitics elsewhere in their work. For the purposes of this study, we prefer the following descriptions of biopolitics: the violent penetration of state power into the most intimate spaces of human life and consciousness in the name of development, national security and sovereignty; or a state-led deployment of disciplinary technologies on individuals and population groups. Hepner & O'Kane, note ** above, ix and cover page.

72 Hepner & O'Kane, note ** above, ix–x. The authors' observation is based on the work of James Scott *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (1998).

Gender, Violent Conflict, Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa

Gaim Kibreab

Introduction

It is quite true that there are no limits to masculine egotism in ordinary life. In order to change the conditions of life we must learn to see them through the eyes of women. Leon Trotsky (1924)

The theoretical approach underlying this paper is that in the Horn of Africa, gender equality, development and peace are inextricably linked. Peace is inconceivable in the absence of development and lasting peace is a function of sustainable development. The latter and peace are also unachievable without gender equality and full participation and commitment of women. It is important, therefore, to redefine the concepts of conflict, peace and development in gendered terms because, among other things, women and men are affected differently by war and its consequences. Such an approach is *sine qua* none for the recognition of women's political agency which has been missing from the dominant discourse on conflict, development and peace-making in the region.

Masculinities and Femininities

There is a tendency both in common parlance, scholarly analysis and policy-making to mistake gender for sex and sometimes, the two concepts are used interchangeably. Sex refers to the biological differences between male and female. Gender is a social construction which has little or nothing to do with physiological features. Sheila Ruth (1980: 17) states, "Femininity and masculinity, the terms that denote one's gender, refer to a complex set of characteristics and behaviours prescribed for a particular sex by society and learned through the socialisation experience." Gender refers to both masculinity and femininity. The conceptions of gender roles and the

meanings and values given to such roles are determined by gendered conceptions of masculinity and femininity. The particular features attributed to femininity and masculinity are culture, race, class and age-specific ((Elshtain 1987; Tickner 1992; Kaufman and Williams 2007; Peterson and Runyan 1999). Not only do the meanings of masculinity and femininity vary between social classes, races, ethnicities and age, but even within these particular categories, as Peterson and Runyan (1999: 29-30) point out, "...different types of masculinity may be more or less valued in particular contexts (aggressive masculinity may be good for fighting but less desirable as a management style and inappropriate in conflict resolution." They further note:

Because (dominant) masculine activities are more highly valued or privileged than feminine activities in most of the world, the identities and activities associated with men and women are typically unequal. Thus, the social construction of gender is actually a system of power that not only divides men and women as masculine and feminine but typically also places men and masculinity above women and femininity (Peterson and Runyan 1999:30-31).

This is regardless of the significance of the contributions women and men make to economic and social wellbeing of their communities and households. For example, even though it is clear that no society can thrive or even survive without women's reproductive activities, the meaning and value given to this role is often undervalued and unrecognised. This is not due to the fact that reproductive activities are trivial, but it is rather because they are defined by the relevant gender ideology as being a feminine activity. Thus, the meaning and value societies give to the different roles played by men and women in accordance with the gender-based division of labour are not the result of objective analyses of the relative importance of the contributions women and men make to their communities and households, but rather are the result of the fact that masculine activities are valued higher than feminine activities. That is why it is important to appreciate that gender is socially rather than physiologically constructed. By denying that gender is socially constructed, Arthur Brittan argues, "masculinism justifies and naturalises male domination because it takes for granted that there is a fundamental difference between men and women...it accepts without question the sexual division of labour, and it sanctions the political and dominant role of men in the public sphere" (1989: 4).

Gender and Violence

The debate on the relationship between on the one hand, men and violence and on the other, women and violence has been one of the most enduring controversies among academics, feminist activists and policy analysts. There are two discernible opposing perspectives. One perspective asserts that women are more peaceful and men are more violent and this is due to their biological differences. Francis Fukuyama, among many others, states, "To some degree, biology is destiny. The feminist school

of international relations has a point: a truly matriarchal world would be less prone to conflict and more cooperative than the one we now inhabit" (1998). He argues that men have a natural instinct of aggressiveness and he even goes to the extent of comparing them with the behaviour of the male chimpanzees in Bombe National Park of Tanzania. However, there is no feminist school that attributes men's proclivity for aggression to biology. In fact, Fukuyama criticises what he calls the 'feminist view' for attributing the differential behaviour between men and women to "patriarchal culture" when in his view, "they are rooted in biology" (1998: 27). He argues that because men's violent, aggressive, warlike and competitive behaviour is rooted in biology, "...these attitudes [are] harder in men and consequently in societies" (p. 27).

The other perspective asserts that gender is a socially constructed concept which defines what constitutes an appropriate behaviour for men and women. Both men and women develop gendered behavioural traits through the educational system and the process of socialisation. For example, Barbara Ehrenreich *et al* (1999) among many others scathingly states, "Francis Fukuyama has it all wrong. War comes not from any genetic male tendency toward violence – there is none – but from social and cultural pressures. It certainly has nothing to do with chimp behaviour. Besides, who says women are not as competitive as men? A world run by women would not be as different as Fukuyama thinks."¹

Some feminists profusely reject the notion that women are morally and ethically superior to men. In fact, many of them justifiably argue that the unwarranted association of women with peace and men with violence has historically been used as a means of reinforcing gender inequality, keeping women out of power, justifying women's absence in policy and decision-making, including in peace processes. J. Ann Tickner traces this back to the debates on the merits of female suffrage in the early part of the 20th century. She states,

The association of women with peace can play into unfortunate gender stereotypes that characterize men as active, women as passive; men as agents, women as victims; men as rational, women as emotional. Not only are these stereotypes damaging to women, particularly to their credibility as actors in matters of international politics and national security, but they are also damaging to peace". (1999: 4)

Fukuyama's postulation that women are peaceful and men are aggressive and warlike some feminists argue is deployed as a defence of the status quo (Pollitt 1999). Tickner also argues that not only may such an argument lead to a backlash against women but more importantly it diverts our attention from important issues, such as the absence of women from international, regional and national bodies of decision-making and from the realities of oppression that face women in their everyday lives.

Although it is important to guard against the 'essentialist' or genetic explanation of war, in the large majority of human societies, including in the Horn, war is inextricably linked to masculinity whilst victimhood and dependence are associated with femininity. But this has little or nothing to do with men's and women's physiological

1 Fukuyama's Follies: So What if Women Ruled the World? Barbara Ehrenreich, Katha Pollitt, et al. January/February 1999

nature. Notwithstanding this, in most cases men have been socialised to become the historic authors of organised violence and destruction (Encloe 1983, 1989). There are analysts who argue that although the meanings of war and gender and the manner in which wars are fought vary across cultures, “In every known case, past and present, cultures have met this challenge [war] in a gender-based way, by assembling groups of fighters who were primarily, and *usually exclusively male*” (Goldstein 2001: 4) (emphasis added). Goldstein further states that the only areas in which gender roles tend to be “most constant across societies...are those most closely connected with war” (p. 7). The masculine and feminine roles played in war are manifested rigidly.

However, it is necessary to guard against construing this to imply that men are innately aggressive and prone to killing. In fact, Goldstein and many other analysts argue that notwithstanding that the potential for war has been universal in all human societies, ‘killing in war does not come naturally for either men or women...’ The universality of war necessitates for most societies to prepare for the eventuality of war and that is why nearly all countries have standing armies. Boys are socialised and later trained to overcome the innate reluctance to kill. This clearly contradicts the myth of ‘male instinct to kill.’ In order to overcome the reluctance of men and women to fight, societies develop gender roles that equate ‘manhood’ with toughness and resilience in hardship. “Across cultures and through time, the selection of men as potential combatants (and of women for feminine war support roles) has helped shape the war system. In turn, the pervasiveness of war in history has influenced gender profoundly...” (Goldstein 2001: 9).

In line with this argument, Barbara Ehrenreich, Katha Pollitt, et al. (1999) state, “In fact, the male appetite for battle has always been far less voracious than either biologically inclined theorists of war or army commanders might like.” To underscore the point they state, “In traditional societies, warriors often had to be taunted, intoxicated, or ritually “transformed” into animal form before battle. Throughout Western history, individual men have gone to near-suicidal lengths to avoid participating in wars -- cutting off limbs or fingers or risking execution by deserting.” There is ample evidence to show that in the violent intra-state conflicts in countries such as Sierra Leone, Angola and elsewhere, men and boys were intoxicated with drugs before they were sent to frontline combat. The former psychology Professor and Army Ranger, Lt. Col. Dave **Grossman** in his book – *On Killing: the Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War* – concludes, “...the majority of soldiers in war do not ever fire their weapons and that this is due to an innate resistance to killing. Based on Marshall’s studies the military instituted training measures to break down this resistance and successfully raised soldiers’ firing rates to over ninety per cent during the war in Vietnam” (2005). He further states, “...despite an unbroken tradition of violence and war, man is not by nature a killer” (Ibid. p. xvi).

This is to a large extent also true in the Horn of Africa. Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia, for example, in November 1888 decreed: “The man who handles a lance and does not come to this expedition is a woman and no more a man. He shall be called by the name of his wife, and have no share in their common wealth. She may

take everything” (cited in Adugna from Tekle Tsadiq 2001: 3). In Ethiopia and this is basically true throughout the region, a coward is said to compromise the honour of his family and relatives and the shame such individuals brought to their families were recounted in popular songs. The following is one of such songs that insult a coward and his mother:

A coward renders service to his mother
When she bakes bread he gives her the cover of the stove
Unless a male is brave
His birth is no better than abortion.
To a son who could not act like his father
Give him wad of cotton to spine it like his mother.
The mother of a coward is identifiable
For she stands at the back and persuades her son to retreat
(in Adugna 2001: 3).

Had it not been for men’s reluctance to fight and kill, there would have been no need for such imperial decrees and popular songs shaming those who did not want to kill.

As seen in the preceding part of the paper, the binary conceptualisation and understanding of men as perpetrators of violence and women as passive victims, nurturers and homemakers has been contested by feminist and other analysts since the 1980s. It cannot be denied that men are more likely to kill, murder, fight, pillage and rape women and children, but it is important to guard against ‘essentialising’ or naturalising these behaviours. It is the way societies construct masculinity to face the potential risk of war or to conquer their enemies that account for the differential behaviours and experiences, as well as roles men and women play in war.

Whoever took part in the Eritrean war of liberation or saw the female fighters in combat, would tell you that they were equally ferocious and tenacious as male fighters. In fact, according to an Ethiopian officer who had just returned from the frontline in Sahel, not only were the women fighters indistinguishable from the male fighters in terms of their looks, attire and physical fitness, but they were more ruthless.² Contrary to the myth that women do not fight wars, as Gwynne Dyer (cited in Grossman 2005: xiv) states: “Women have almost always fought side by side with men in guerrilla or revolutionary wars, and there isn’t any evidence they are significantly worse at killing people – which may or may not be comforting, depending on whether you see war as a male problem or a human problem.” The notion that women are drivers of peace and harmony is a sexist cultural construct which has nothing or little to do with their biology.

In an attempt to overcome the disinclination of both men and women to fight, societies construct gender roles that equate ‘manhood’ with toughness, and the ability to withstand physical and psychological hardship. Across cultures and through time, men have been mobilised to fight as warriors and women to play feminine support roles. In the Horn of Africa as in many other societies, masculinity is equated with courage, strength, toughness, tenacity, and control over one’s passion and emotion whilst femininity is perceived as synonymous with vulnerability, fragility, homemak-

2 The officer was a commander in Gibe Bereha when I was a detainee 1973 and we met again in Asmara in November 1975 coincidentally.

ing, nurturing, caring, powerlessness, victimhood and dependency. It is important not to mistake these socially-constructed perceptions with the reality of the sexes. The danger of this assumption is that when the shooting stops women are excluded from the process of peace-building, peace-making and post-conflict reconstruction. That is one of the reasons why the debate on warlike men and peaceful women besides being wrong is irrelevant and a distraction.

War Crimes against Women and Girls

Rape and sexual violence have since the Roman times been used as weapons of war to conquer and more importantly to humiliate and inflict shame and indignity on one's enemy. The harmful effects of such experiences are more far-reaching in traditional societies, such as in the Horn of Africa where the communities, instead of providing compassionate support and sympathy tend to blame, and in the worst case scenario, stigmatise the victims and their relatives. For example, Fawzia Musse's documentation of the harrowing sexual violence experienced by Somali women in Kenyan refugee camps and before their departure from Somalia shows that their communities instead of providing empathy and support stigmatised the victims and their families. Based on extensive interviews with 192 survivors of rape or attempted rape she wrote:

Within the camps, women who have survived rape attacks generally withdrew from the social and economic activities of the community. They refrained from collecting food firewood or water. Many petty traders allowed their businesses to collapse. Women reported that their main reason for withdrawing from such activities was the ostracism they faced in public places. The children of these women also faced similar discrimination and harassment as a result of their mothers' misfortune. Many children were left severely traumatised by witnessing their mother's rape and refrained from regular social interaction with other children (2004: 80).

Although rape and sexual violence are phenomena that are as old as war itself, it was only after the genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda, which were accompanied by macabre violence perpetrated against women and girls that the UN Security Council officially placed rape on its security agenda. In the aftermath of the genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda, the UNSC defined rape perpetrated by warring parties as constituting crime against humanity and consequently it fell under the jurisdiction of the international war crimes tribunal.

The extent of women's and girls' exposure to gruesome violence in conflict situations worldwide is *eloquently* captured by Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2002: xi) in which they stated, *inter alia*, "In retrospect, we realise how little prepared we were for the enormity of it all: the staggering numbers of women in war who survived the brutality of rape, sexual exploitation, mutilation, torture and displacement; the unconscionable acts of depravity...". They further stated that even though they were well-informed about the fact that women's bodies have always been

used as “battleground over which opposing forces struggle,” nothing could prepare them for the horrific experiences recounted by the victims they interviewed. They documented the horrors experienced by the women and girls they interviewed as follows:

Wombs punctured with guns. Women raped and tortured in front of their husbands and children. Rifles forced into vaginas. Pregnant women beaten to induce miscarriages. Foetuses ripped from wombs. Women kidnapped, blindfolded and beaten on their way to work or school. We saw the scars, the pain and the humiliation. We heard accounts of gang rapes, rape camps and mutilation. Of murder and sexual slavery. We saw the scars of brutality so extreme that survival seemed for some a worse fate than death (2002: 11-12).

Although the horrors Bosnian and Rwandan women and girls were subjected to drew the attention of the world, culminating in the labelling of rape as a crime against humanity, in countries such as Somalia, Southern Sudan and Uganda where the heinous crimes committed against women and girls were comparable, those who suffered the indignity of being raped and sexually violated, including in the presence of their families, were more often than not left without outside support. Fawzia Musse in her harrowing documentation based on extensive interviews with Somali women refugees in the refugee camps in North Eastern Kenya states:

Women say their attackers were usually people they knew, that they were well armed, and they attacked in groups. Some women were forced to submit when militiamen threatened to destroy their homes with their children locked inside. Some were raped inside their own home in front of their husbands who were forced to watch at gunpoint. Many victims were raped in front of their children and relatives. Sixteen rape survivors whose cases were documented by UNHCR reported that they had been raped over the body of their dead husband, child, sibling or other relative. ..

Sometimes as many ten men took part in a gang rape. They would be armed with rifles, grenades, daggers, bayonets, clubs and walking sticks. ...They used physical force against their victims, including hitting with rifle butts on the upper body and the legs; unrelenting fist blows to the head; striking the woman violently when she was lying on the ground; using razor blades, daggers or bayonets to remove the ‘external virginity’ or infibulations of women and girls who had never had sexual relations, often inflicting severe injuries (2004: 71-2).

The Somali women and girls who were subjected to rape between 1991 and 1995, such as in ‘Mogadishu Rape Houses’ and en route to Kenya and in the Kenyan refugee camps were left on their own because the world was ignorant of their plight (Gardner and El Bushra 2004: 69). In some parts of Somalia, the violation of women’s dignity and rights continue to be violated with impunity. For example, in Somalia, states the United Nations:

Despite rampant abuse of women’s and girls’ human rights, minimal efforts are being made to redress and end impunity for perpetrators and war criminals in Somalia. Young men and boys are forcefully recruited into militia, while young women are forcefully married or coerced into sexual activity and in some cases into non-armed service of militias. Further, constriction of women’s mobility in south central Somalia curtails their ability to earn income and feed their families. Traversing both short and long distances can expose women to attack, limit access to livelihoods and to income-generating activities, including restrictions on women’s participation in cash-based response aimed at alleviating the impact of the emergency on food supply, and access to social service delivery (2010).

There is also a catalogue of evidence to show that women and girls in Southern Sudan and Darfur also suffered gruesome sexual violence. For example, in its 2001 report on Sudan, Amnesty International stated:

Violence against women by combatants on all sides...intensified during the year [2000]. There were widespread reports of sexual abuse, including sexual slavery, rape and forced pregnancies. Rape was used as a tactic of war by both government and opposition forces to dehumanise and humiliate civilians in the conflict zone. However, because of the taboos and stigma attached to rape, reports were rare and impunity for the rapist was the rule (2001).

Based on testimonies elicited from Darfuri refugee women warehoused in the Chadian refugee camps of Goz Amer, Kounoungo and Mile, Amnesty International in its 2004 report, aptly titled 'Sudan: Darfur Rape as a Weapon of War Sexual Violence and its Consequences' reported:

The organisation was able to collect the names of 250 women who have been raped in the context of the conflict in Darfur and to collect information concerning an estimated further 250 rapes. This information was collected from testimonies of individuals who represent only a fragment of those displaced by the conflict. Other human rights violations which have significantly targeted women and girls are: abductions, sexual slavery, torture and forced displacement (2004).

In the Horn of Africa, victims of rape are stigmatised and this tends to discourage most victims from revealing their harrowing experiences even to the agencies that may be able to help them. The fact that some women have come forward without being constrained by the taboos and stigma associated with rape may indicate that the crime is so widespread that some victims cannot hide their humiliating experiences.

Although the perpetration of rape and sexual violence in conflict situations was nothing new in the region, in the particular case of Somalia and this is basically true in all the countries in the region, the scale of physical violence and the intensity of the enduring psychological pain inflicted on women and girls have been exacerbated by the collapse or weakening of the traditional informal institutional rules that previously regulated the behaviours of conquerors towards the vanquished and their possessions. "Traditionally, in Somali pastoral society feuding and conflict were bounded by codes and social conventions" (Brandbury 1998).³ In the majority of cases, women and girls together with the elderly and the sick were not targeted and if they suffered such harm, "...there were rules about retribution and compensation. In the inter-clan warfare from 1991 onwards, these customary laws have played little or no part, and women as well as children and other non-fighters were attacked by warring factions with impunity" (Gardner and El Bushra: 2004: 69).

It is important to guard against romanticising the position of women in the pre-war reality of the region. To some extent, the horrors experienced by women in war time are a dramatized continuation of the pre-existing historical, social and cultural realities of the region. Although war invariably tends to embellish pre-existing practices of abuse against women and girls, the gruesome flurry of violence they suffer

3 See Brandbury, M. (1998) 'Rights, Responsibilities and the Somali Conflict' In Human Rights in Somaliland: Awareness and Action (London: Amnesty International and CIIR/ICD)

in a state of war is nothing but the ‘unfolding of what was already there.’ More often than not, war instead of creating a totally new reality from without, unleashes deeply-entrenched relations of inequality and violence that permeate women’s lives in pre-conflict period. In short, the violence suffered by women and girls in the region is basically structural. Drawing on Johan Galtung’s definition (1969), Peterson and Runyan (1999: 260) state:

...structural violence, which is differentiated from but related to direct physical violence, arises from social, economic, and political structures that increase the vulnerability of various groupings of people (women, minorities, children, the aged, the disabled, gays and lesbians, etc.) to many forms of harm (poverty, hunger, infant mortality, disease, isolation, etc).

Rehn and Sirleaf ‘hit the nail on the head’ when they perceptively note: “*The extreme violence that women suffer during conflict does not arise solely out of the conditions of war; it is directly related to the violence that exists in women’s lives during peacetime*” (2002: 13) (emphasis in original).

In the Horn of Africa, the discrimination of women begins at birth. In Eritrea, when a boy is born, women ululate seven times. The corresponding number of ululation for a baby girl is three. Among Christians, a boy is christened 40 days after birth and a girl 80 days after. The rationale is a 40-day old boy is old enough to receive the Kingdom of God but a girl has to wait another 40 days. The following poem authored by an anonymous Somali woman clearly shows the structural nature of the oppression and discrimination faced by women.

Why were you born?
Why did you arrive at dusk?
In your place a boy
Would have been welcome
Sweet dates would have
Been my reward.
The clan would be rejoicing
A lamb would have been slaughtered
For the occasion,
And I would have
Been glorified
(cited in Gardner and El Bushra 2004: 1).

If women who give birth to boys were glorified, by the same token those women who give birth to girls must have been vilified.

War, Gender and Development

War is destructive. It is costly not only in terms of human life but also in monetary terms. The countries in the region have been afflicted by incessant intra and inter-state wars for many decades. As a result, scarce resources with very high opportunity

costs have been squandered to buy armaments and maintain huge armed forces. Although it is difficult to quantify the amount of resources that have been wasted to finance the purchase of weapons and wars in the region, there is no doubt that the availability of resources that should have been invested in building economic, social and physical infrastructures have been spectacularly diminished. The consequence of this is that the economies' capacities of absorption have collapsed. This has dramatically reduced the opportunity cost of joining armed gangs or warlords. The dearth of development and consequently income-generating opportunities has also meant that there are hundreds of thousands if not millions of young men and women without a stake in their societies. Groups without a stake in the societies they belong to do not mind if they are destroyed or join the forces that destroy them.

The persistent violent conflicts that have been raging in the region have destroyed the rudimentary industries, social and physical infrastructures, such as roads, port facilities, schools, hospitals, clinics, irrigation infrastructures, farms, pasture lands, livestock, crops, water wells, etc. These wars have also diminished dramatically or in the worst case scenario eliminated local and inter-communal and cross-border exchanges of goods and services. Owing to the arid and semi-arid nature of the environment in the region, livelihood systems have always been dependent on multiplicity of economic activities and diversities of income sources. These have either disappeared completely or have shrunk due to insecurity. Because of the incessant violent conflicts that have been afflicting the region, the Horn of Africa has distinguished itself as being one of the major sources of IDPs and refugees. Most of the latter flee to the neighbouring countries, which are unable to meet even the basic needs of their own citizens.

These damaging effects are universal regardless of the nature of the war in question. It does not matter whether it is intra-state or inter-state war. The violent conflicts, especially the identity-based intrastate wars have been sowing divisive seeds of disharmony, social disintegration and mutual animosity and have consequently turned different faith and ethnic groups against each other. These divisive tensions and violent conflicts by engendering bonding rather than bridging social capital have destroyed the common purpose that previously held the different groups together. This does not however mean that lack of survival opportunity or poverty is the cause of violent conflict in the region. Nothing can be more wrong than such a claim. In the Horn of Africa, poverty or lack of income-generating opportunities instead of causing violent conflict provide the conditions that allow the emergence and entrenchment of ethnic and religious entrepreneurs who use ethnicity and faith as a rallying cry to mobilise followers in pursuit of self rather than collective ethnic or faith groups' interests. In the Horn of Africa, the single most important drivers of violent conflict and destruction have been ethnic and religious entrepreneurs who cajole and hoodwink the disenfranchised youth to join them. Ironically, the only country in the whole continent that is supposed to be homogenous in terms of ethnicity, religion and language – Somalia – is the case in point. The violent intra-state civil war instigated and fuelled by the boundless greed and ruthlessness of the clan and faith-based

entrepreneurs has torn apart the values and norms that held Somali society together in the past.

It is important to understand, however, that the social and political effects of wars in the region have not been identical. For example, the Thirty Years' War of national liberation struggle in Eritrea fought against a common enemy stimulated the development of bridging social capital interconnecting Eritreans across the social cleavages of religion, ethnicity, class and sex (Kibreab 2008, 2009). The war fought against a common external enemy produced the glue that held Eritrean society together by producing a set of values and a sense of common purpose which constituted the necessary conditions for solidarity and unity. The interesting question is: what happens when the enemy is defeated? Do those who previously set aside their differences to confront a common external enemy turn against each other or continue to set aside their differences to re-build their economies? This depends on how power and resources are shared among the different groups and on the extent to which the sanctity of the rule of law, human life and principles of human rights are promoted, respected and protected. In the absence of this, there is no guarantee against the former allies and comrade in-arms turning against each other.

In the Horn of Africa, violent conflict has stifled every development effort and the negative effect of this on men's ability to provide for their families by playing their bread-winner role and on women's wellbeing has been dramatic. According to the dominant gender ideology in the region, manhood is inextricably linked to the ability of men to play the socially constructed bread-winner role by providing for their families as well as protecting them against any harm perpetrated by third parties. The ability to provide the means of survival and physical protection of one's family is the most significant factor that defines what constitutes **manhood** in the region. In the Horn of Africa, a man without the ability to provide for and protect his family is an emasculated man and in the cultural context of the Horn such a man is as good as a dead man. It is also important to emphasise that manhood only exists in contrast to womanhood and what distinguishes the two is the ability of the man to provide for and protect his family. According to the dominant perception in the region, once men are unable to play the breadwinning and protecting role, the distinction between manhood and womanhood disappears and metaphorically speaking men become women.

In the Horn, men react differently to the danger of being emasculated. Some flee their homes and join IDP camps, others flee across borders and join refugee camps in neighbouring countries and a minority join armed gangs and warlords to commit heinous crimes against women and girls as a means of counteracting the risk of being emasculated. The perpetration of atrocious crimes against women and girls besides providing an easy access to women, food and loot is also a means of asserting manhood. In a situation where the opportunities to engage in traditional or modern economic activities are wiped out by violent conflict, looting becomes the only means of providing perpetrators the opportunities to provide for their families regardless of the immorality of the means by which it is obtained. Participation in armed gangs or war lords' militias also enables the perpetrators to protect their families at the cost of

others. In such circumstances what was in the previous cultural context considered taboo and abnormal becomes a norm. I am told that looters, especially pirates are the most desirable single men in some parts of Somalia in the eyes of single women and their parents. Such people would have been shunned and ostracised as untouchables in pre-civil war Somalia where there existed informal customary laws that regulated individual, inter and intra-group social behaviour.

The Horn's Women in Peace and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in the Light of UNSC resolutions 1325 and 1820

One of the reasons the Horn of Africa's track records in the critical areas, namely protection of women and girls against rape and other forms of sexual violence during and after violent conflicts, gender inequality, lack of peace and development have been bleak is, *inter alia*, that those who are responsible for leading their communities into violent conflicts and destruction are considered as the main actors in development and peace agreement. The men and women who are at the receiving end of the heinous crimes are often excluded from the negotiating table. This is because women are perceived either as victims or passive bystanders and therefore are not only excluded physically but more importantly, their perspectives, concerns, aspirations and experiences are rarely incorporated in the peace and development processes.

If as seen earlier, women and girls are subjected to rape and other monstrous forms of sexual violence before, during and in the aftermath of violent conflicts and if one of the main aims of peace negotiations and processes is to seek lasting solutions as is often purported by those who initiate and lead these processes, the question that springs to mind is: how can long-lasting solutions be found and implemented without on the one hand, the participation of organised women's representatives and on the other, without underpinning the discussions and peace negotiations with their experiences, aspirations and perspectives?

In the Horn of Africa where civilians in general and women and girls in particular bear the brunt of the suffering, any peace negotiations and agreements that do not take their experiences and perspectives as points of departure and consequently incorporate them into final agreements are a sham and consequently not worth the paper they are written on. One of the reasons the region has become the graveyard of failed peace negotiations and agreements is because those who are supposed to be in the driver's seat – women – are kept on the backburner. That may be one of the reasons why the plethora of peace agreements in the region get bloodied before the ink they are written in dries.

The same is true of post-conflict development and reconstruction processes. Other things being equal, destruction can provide rare opportunities for a fresh new look

and construction of new economies and societies. In the region, the common trend has been that instead of seizing the opportunity to create new societies where previous injustices, horizontal and vertical inequalities, power relations and exploitation of the weak by the powerful are relegated to the dustbin of history, the international community in collaboration with governments in such countries have been left to try to piece together, often without success, the shattered constituent elements of the old social and economic structures.

Not surprisingly, the old problems, grievances, injustices, gender and other forms of inequalities and oppressions instead of fading re-emerge with greater rigour and revitalization to haunt once again the societies before they have had respite to recover from the trauma and suffering of the recent past. Reconstruction is the last thing war-torn societies need. What they desperately need is the creation and construction of new social and economic orders on the ruins of the past. Building rather than rebuilding and construction afresh rather than reconstruction of the conflict-ridden past is what our war-affected societies need badly.

Any action should be preceded by careful and innovative re-conceptualisation and questioning of the key concepts and terminologies that are widely used in policy analysis and policy-making. Such concepts include 'post-conflict societies', 'reconstruction', 'war-torn', etc. The ultimate causes of the conflicts in the region have never been resolved in a lasting way in any one of the countries in the region. None of them has hitherto ever been in a post-conflict situation. The region has been ridden by different forms of violent conflicts since the 1950s if not earlier. Therefore the use of the concept 'post-conflict' is a misnomer at best and deceptive at worst. There has never been a lasting post-conflict situation in the region. As mentioned earlier, 'reconstruction' amounts to reacting the hazardous past without considering the potential danger of inadvertently providing nutrients to the dormant seeds of violent past to germinate and haunt the present and the future.

Another uncritically embraced and widely used concept in the conflict-ridden region of the Horn is 'war-torn'. There is a tendency to consider war as a phenomenon that inevitably tears communities apart. This is not necessarily always the case. Some wars instead of turning social groups and political organisations against each can provide an impetus for unity and solidarity. Depending on its nature and on how its aftermath is dealt with, war can have a cementing or disintegrating effect on society. War's gluing effect on society is well-documented in the relevant literature (see Carr 1942; James 1943 [1910]). War fought against a common external enemy functions as a glue that holds communities or societies together. This is because a common enemy has a tendency to engender a set of values and a sense of common purpose among citizens and consequently produces the necessary conditions for solidarity and unity of present and future generations. War provides a sense of meaning and purpose which are absent in modern societies and as a result is a powerful weapon of social change, solidarity and cohesion (Carr 1942: 115). Such creative and innovative approaches can provide rare opportunities for turning the misfortunes into fortune.

The single most important factor that validates men's absolute supremacy within intra-household relations is the socially constructed breadwinner role they are expected to play by their communities regardless of whether they fulfil that role or not. The property rights arrangements in the communities are organised and enforced to enable male household heads to provide for their families by playing their bread winner role. At least at the micro-level, the perceived or actual bread winner status of male heads of households lies at the heart of gender inequality reflected in unequal distribution of power of decision-making regarding allocation of family labour, resources, children's education, etc. It is immaterial whether men actually play these roles. It is enough that they are assigned to play this role by the dominant gender ideology which defines the main tenets of gender-based division of labour in the countries in the region.

One of the most evident consequences of war as noted in the first part of the paper is the erosion of the male household head's socially-constructed bread winner role. The loss of bread winner role automatically delegitimizes the power and authority of men in intra-household relations. Not only does this bring to an end men's unaccountable exercise of power in intra-household relations, but also the edifice of the foundation on which the household rests changes and becomes reconfigured both physically and socially. Roles that were previously considered as exclusively masculine are assumed by women. Women suddenly become dominant actors in areas previously considered beyond their reach. This reconfiguration of power relations and divisions of labour undoubtedly increases women's workloads but also empowers and liberates women from dependence on men and from being limited to reproductive household chores. More importantly, these positive externalities (side-effects) of war contribute to the development and consolidation of women's agency.

The dominant conventional models of peace negotiations and agreements, instead of building on these unexpected positive externalities or war dividends to reinforce and further develop and consolidate women's newly acquired bread-winner status and power of decision-making, invariably tend to undermine these achievements inadvertently by helping men to regain their lost bread-winner and household headship roles. As a result, peace negotiations and agreements end up reconstructing the old power relations which were at the heart of the violence perpetrated against women and girls.

Women's agency is not recognised in violent conflicts and consequently, they are perceived as being irrelevant to peace processes and development. They are rather perceived as victims and consequently as objects of humanitarian assistance. This male-centric perspective perceives men as the sole actors in violent conflict and consequently, when the shooting stops and the need for peace, rehabilitation and construction begins, only men are called to the negotiating table. As a result, the authors of violence become the sole actors with the power to shape or influence the future of their societies. This approach, rather than addressing the ultimate and proximate causes of gender-based and other forms of violence, has invariably led the societies in the Horn into a blind alley reflected in incessant violent conflicts, massive displacement, bloodshed and abject poverty. Only a paradigm shift that builds on the

positive externalities of war reflected in the reconfiguration of intra-household power relations and gender roles, as well as re-conceptualising masculinity and femininity, will bring about recognition of women's agency in the peace process and development.

Not only do conventional peace processes disregard the positive externalities of war mentioned earlier in the peace negotiations and agreements, but they are also premised on fundamentally misconceived assumptions, including perceiving women as being compassionate, peaceful, nurturing and caring. The latter are nothing but a reflection of sexist gendered values. As seen before, women are capable and often do participate in violent conflicts. When women fight for peace and peaceful conflict resolution, it is not because they are innately endowed with peaceful genetic traits, but rather because they have chosen to do so.

The exclusion and marginalisation of women in peace processes and peace agreements, as well as the recurrence of violent conflicts and atrocities, disproportionately affecting civilians, especially women and girls in spite of the plethora of marathon peace negotiations and agreements, have been alarming the international community, with the United Nations at the forefront. It was in response to this appalling situation that the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on 31 October 2000. Member States were urged:

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 (para. 1).

In para. 2, it is further stated that the UNSC:

Encourages the Secretary-General to implement his strategic plan of action (A/49/587) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes.

In para. 10, the Security Council:

Calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict;

In para. 11 the SC urged Member States to:

prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls, and in this regard *stresses* the need to exclude these crimes, where feasible from amnesty provisions;

In para. 12.

Calls upon all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, and to take into account the par-

ticular needs of women and girls, including in their design, and recalls its resolutions 1208 (1998) of 19 November 1998 and 1296 (2000) of 19 April 2000;

None of this was heeded and women and girls continued to be raped and sexually violated with impunity in spite of UNSC Res. 1325 (see Rehn and Sirleaf 2002; Musse 2004). In response to the ever worsening situation, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1820 on 19 June 2008 in which the SC:

Demands the immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians with immediate effect;

Demands that all parties to armed conflict immediately take appropriate measures to protect civilians, including women and girls, from all forms of sexual violence.

Have these UN Security Council resolutions led to the cessation of sexual violence against women and girls? Not according to the latest comprehensive UNIFEM's evaluation report in 2010. These meticulously documented and skilfully analysed evaluation reports paint a bleak picture of the situation. The report scathingly concludes:

A full decade after United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) was unanimously adopted, the striking absence of women from formal peace negotiations reveals a troubling gap between the aspirations of countless global and regional commitments and the reality of peace processes (2010) (emphasis in the original).

The report further states:

It has been 31 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW), 28 years since the UN General Assembly's Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation, 15 years since the UN convened the Fourth World Conference on Women and participating governments issued the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and 10 years since resolution 1325 (2000) made women's participation in all aspects of peacekeeping, peace-making and peace-building part of the remit of the Security Council. This imperative has been reiterated in subsequent resolutions, including 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009), and in several reports of the Secretary-General on mediation and on women, peace and security.

In spite of these well-meant consecutive resolutions, the legitimate call for greater women's participation in peace processes remains unfulfilled. UNIFEM reviewed a sample of 24 major peace processes since 1992 and the results show that the number of women negotiators has not increased since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). Women's participation as negotiators was 8% in 14 cases and only 3% were signatories were 8 in negotiation, averaged 8% in 14 peace processes.

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Statement on the role of Women in promoting Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa

Bodil Ceballos

I was raised in a family where my mother told me: never believe that you are less than any other person, and especially not if it is a man. I suppose her words made a great impact on my life and the truth is that I have never felt either discriminated or less than anybody else.

I believe my mother was not the only one to teach her daughters to be free and independent women who believe in themselves. I suppose many mothers and women in the world have said the same words to their daughters as my mother – even in the Horn of Africa.

Some years ago I had the honor of meeting Asha Hagi Elmi from Somalia when she was awarded the Right Livelihood award in the Swedish Parliament. The motivation for her election as one of the awarded was:

“Asha Hagi has dedicated her life to gaining a better and more peaceful future for her war-torn country, Somalia. At great personal risk, she has fought for women to have a voice in the decisions that affect them. She has mobilized women in the cause of peace across clan and political divides and continues to play a vital role in mediating across warring clans in the on-going peace process. Women in Somalia are in a much stronger position today because of her courage, persistence and compassion.”

The world of today is ruled by men and mostly for men. I suppose we can all agree on that even if we do not agree that this should be the case. We can just look at the photos from high level meetings between world leaders and we see it is obvious.

In Sweden the generation of my mother (and my grandmother) challenged the system and as her daughter I have felt free to develop in whatever way I wanted to, with no father or brother or old traditions as obstacles on my way. Change does not occur in a day – it takes time – but just as Sweden has changed in about a generation, other countries can to.

The idea of Asha Hagi Elmi to found, together with other women, the Sixth Clan, the clan of women, to complement the traditional five Somali Clans which are all male-dominated was very good. For the first time women were represented in a peace process in Somalia. She played a similar role in the Mbagathi Conference in

Nairobi (2002-2004), which gave birth to the Transitional Federal Government and the Transitional Federal Parliament, of which Hagi became a member.

In both cases the participation of women in these conferences played a crucial role in their success: The women represented a broader interest of the Somali citizens. They were also able to do 'shuttle diplomacy' between the antagonistic factions of the traditional five clans.

When I met her in the Parliament the events in Somalia had taken a dramatic turn for the worse and as she was on the side which advocated peace dialogue instead of military Ethiopian intervention, she had finally been forced to leave the country and was living in Kenya. For me as a Green, who strongly believes in prevention and non-violence as better methods than military means to solve conflicts, it is very sad to know that the women's clan lost the battle in that case – but it will not be forever.

And that leads me to my other role as the chairperson of Forum Syd. One of the main objectives of Forum Syd together with our members is to strengthen women in the world. We work with a rights-based approach: that means human rights – not men's rights as in French. *Droits de l'homme*. But sometimes it seems that it is not only in French speaking countries men's rights appear to be more important than women's rights. That's why the work is so important.

Forum Syd is a cooperation body for Swedish organizations working with development cooperation and the shaping of public opinion. We work with the civil society and our aim is to strengthen and evolve the development cooperation of Swedish organizations. The objective is that those projects and programmes undertaken by the organizations together with partners in the Global South and East will effectively contribute to reducing poverty and achieving lasting development - in many contexts.

On our website you can find a handbook that shows methods to help our member organizations and others how to work with gender in different circumstances. It's called *Doing Gender* – a question of power. As organizations we work a lot with attitudes. To save time I will only focus on how to work with gender in conflict or post-conflict areas here.

NGO cooperation in a conflict area has to heed how latent, current and open conflicts or post-conflicts in a society affect the chances of development. A gender-aware conflict analysis looks at how a conflict affects the lives of and relations between women and men in the specific area. Gender analysis helps us understand that the vulnerability of women in war is largely due to how their situation in peace appears. Prevailing norms in the country, the view of women and men, and the degree of empowerment that women in the various classes possess, influences how women become possible victims of war. Gender is important for understanding conflicts, their causes and possible solutions.

Many of the conflict analyses and conflict prevention instruments used in development cooperation are gender blind in the sense that they fail to problematize how the identities of women and men are changed and changing. At the same time as they ignore the significance of gender, they are carriers of a certain view of masculinity and femininity, and in the worst case they can be part of reinforcement and

resumption of stereotype roles in post-conflict areas. Cooperation in projects and programmes has to challenge stereotype understanding of women's and men's positions, roles and interests in conflicts and be open to more multidimensional analysis of the prospect of various actors taking part in peaceful development.

War can also mean women advancing their positions, developing and conquering new fields. Women are active to a significant degree during conflicts: sometimes by necessity as their men take part in the military conflict and are therefore absent.

Making use of women's experiences and participation in peace negotiations is central to lasting peace and a just development of society. Positive peace (as opposed to negative peace where a conflict is stopped but the reasons for war remain) can only be achieved if underlying structures as, for example, inequality is changed.

A big problem we meet is the gender-based violence that takes place in war and that is related to peacetime gender discrimination. The norms of society as to how "true men" should act and what they are expected to do for their nation affects what is considered masculine behaviour in an armed conflict.

In a similar way, notions possessed by disputing parties of women as bearers of culture and national symbols, lead to civilian women being particularly exposed to acts of vengeance.

Women are often expected to make up a defence against what is believed to ruin the country's cultural inheritance, traditional customs and systems of norms by "bearing" the culture in their attributes and ways of being. Such expectations often lead to major limitations in women's rights and opportunities instead of making men think about their role and if it should change in some way.

I believe that here we have to start talking about the role of men. It is changing too and it is not easy for you. I suppose all of you who come from another country and have lived in Sweden for a while have changed. To fulfill the expectations of your parents, relatives etc. can be difficult.

My partner came to Sweden 40 years ago from the southern part of Spain, the Canary Islands, Spaniards of his age in Spain are not known for helping their wives in the household. They drive the car and carry heavy bags. Fair enough but when my partner's father visited him a couple of years after he came to Sweden and found him in the kitchen cooking every day, using the vacuum cleaner, looking after the children etc he went back telling his friends that his son had become a woman.

Today it is normal behaviour in Spain too. In our case I drive the car and he is the boss in the kitchen. Times are changing for both women and men and we both have to take the fight against the generations before us to reach true equality. If we succeed it will lead to a more peaceful world for both women and men.

And finally we have all as mothers a responsibility to raise our sons to respect their wives and to be equal partners to them.

Domesticating UN Resolution 1325 and 1820 to Promote Gender Equality in War-torn Somalia

Shukria Dini and Khadija Osoble

Introduction

The collapse of the Somali state in early 1990s led to a deadly and prolonged conflict which severely affected the security of all Somalis, but women and children especially have borne a heavier brunt of them to date. In many UN conferences, women from conflict zones, particularly those affected by the militarized violence in Somalia, have testified and shared their own experiences of how the conflict disproportionately impacted them due to their gender. In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325, which for the first time specifically highlighted how women have been affected by armed conflict and their essential role in preventing and resolving militarized conflict. The UN Resolution 1325 called upon both national and international actors to protect the rights of women and girls during and after conflict, and promote their continuous participation in decision-making and peace-building. This Resolution recognized that during armed conflict, women and girls experience gender-based violence perpetuated by both state and non-state actors. It also highlighted the importance of and called for mainstreaming of gender issues in all UN programs and systems and the integration of gender perspectives and training in peacekeeping operations. In addition, CEDAW, the Beijing Plan of Action and the African Union's Declaration on Gender (declaration, article 31) also acknowledged the pivotal role that women play in peace-building and post-conflict recovery in conflict zones. The UN Resolutions (1325 and 1820) create gender awareness and sensitivity / inclusion and seek to address the specific needs of women and girls living in conflict and post-conflict environments. These UN Resolutions acknowledge that peace, human security and sustainable post-conflict transformation are directly linked to gender equality, and that gender inequality impedes sustainable peace, recovery and development. Both UN Resolutions call for women's participation in decision-making processes, their protection and their full inclusion in all stages of post-conflict reconstruction. These Resolutions also make

a number of important recommendations that propose essential plans of action and policies at both national and international levels to promote gender equality in the post-conflict stage in a war-torn society.

While these Resolutions have resulted in enormous awareness and sensitization and their recommendations are being carried out in a number of countries including those that were impacted by armed conflicts, work done in Somalia so far is still unsatisfactory. Discussion with various Transitional Government Ministries, Parliamentarians, government staff, members of the civil society, and NGOs, especially those led by women, have shown a lack of awareness of the UN Resolutions. There is no evidence of any fora held to address Resolution 1325 and 1820 and therefore no national initiative to implement recommendations by these Resolutions in Somalia. We recommend immediate action to raise awareness of the UN Resolutions among government institutions, Parliament, and the civil society in Somalia. This will ensure that these groups realize the impact of armed conflict, their role in peace building, agency and activism, and how they can be included in all stages of the decision-making process. We believe the domestication and implementation of the UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820 will offer an opportunity to promote gender sensitivity and provide policy makers with the tools to advance and promote gender equality in Somalia. To this end, it is important to define our understanding of gender, gender sensitivity, gender inclusivity, and gender equality.

Gender refers to both men and women and the opportunities available to them in any given society. For instance, being a man or woman determines what society expects, provides, allows and values. In other words, gender is about power relations and the privileges one gender has over the other. In the Somali context, women have remained marginalized from the decision-making arena, regardless of their population. It is worth noting that the protracted militarized conflict has claimed more men's lives and this has slightly altered the demography of Somalia – making Somali women at least 60 percent of the current population.¹ The violence has also drastically altered the previous traditional gender roles and relations that existed prior to the conflict, cracking up socially and culturally defined practices and behaviour. These shifts in gender roles and relations offer us opportunities to re-structure systems that have marginalized and denied women their right to exercise political, social and economic privileges and create more inclusive and democratic institutions that will nurture gender equality in the post-conflict period and beyond. With the emergence of new gender roles and relations, women in war-torn Somalia find their rights and responsibilities restricted by the militarized violence and that there are social, economic and political barriers that favor men. Gender sensitivity is about making efforts to understand the different experiences men and women have about conflict, or their own social positioning. Gender sensitivity enables us to be aware of the power-relations both genders hold and the effects of certain programs and policies based on gender. Gender inclusiveness is the effort made to include both genders

1 There are no statistics to verify this but the 20 years of militarized violence have destroyed so many men's lives. Men and boys have physically participated in the violence by choice or by force.

in decision-making and ensure that they both benefit from policies and programs intended to create gender equality. Gender equality is a state where both genders are valued and equally provided with opportunities.

Removing barriers such as gender-based violence, overcoming gender stereotypes, and providing equal opportunities and access to both genders will benefit both genders and enable them to equally contribute to post-conflict transformation processes. Gender equality has been recognized not only as a human right but also as a prerequisite for social, economic and political progress in any society (United Nations Charter in 1945, CEDAW 1979², The World Conference of Human Rights 1993 and the Millennium Development Goals 2000).³ Without emphasizing and promoting gender equality in war-torn Somalia, we argue that post-conflict reconstruction efforts will inevitably marginalize Somali women and ignore their contributions, thus denying them the opportunity of contributing to the rebuilding process.

War-ravaged Somalia is both a traditional and a patriarchal society. The two decades of militarized violence have produced different gendered outcomes for men and women. In addition, Somali women are not a homogenous group but diverse in age, class, clan, education, geographic location (urban / rural), access to resources and power, and do not have common experiences of the social upheaval and the political disintegration. In both the pre-conflict and conflict periods, Somalia has never signed and acceded to important international conventions that form the bedrock of granting and protecting the rights of women. The last Military government that ruled Somalia for over two decades and eventually collapsed in the 1990s, implemented local Acts such as the Family Act to empower Somali women, but there were no concrete national policies that have addressed the root causes of gender inequality in Somalia. Thus, social, economic and political barriers have remained intact and continue to deny Somali women opportunities to gain access to formal decision-making processes. The last two decades have seen violence against women and girls increase as women in Somalia have nowhere to seek protection and justice. Gender stereotypes depict and portray more than half of Somalia's population as lesser subjects of the other gender, incapable of exercising and holding leadership positions. As a result, stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices continue to deny Somali women the space to exercise leadership in the public sector. Discussion with activists and refugee women at the grassroots in Somalia and Nairobi, Kenya show that the rights and responsibilities of men and women in the Somali society are not equally valued and accommodated. Gender equality is a prerequisite for sustainable peace and development. Gender equality in war-torn Somalia needs to be promoted in order to rebuild and transform just and inclusive social, economic and political institutions. No country can afford to leave more than half of its population un-tapped and marginalized. Similarly, if Somalia is to rise above the ashes and stand on its feet, there must be political will and commitment to promote gender equality. In Somalia, the transitional government's efforts to re-constitute a state and state institutions must

2 Somalia is not a signatory to the CEDAW convention.

3 Somalia was experiencing militarized violence and statelessness when these conferences took place.

be gender inclusive in order to rebuild democratic state institutions that embrace gender equality. However, the processes of state rebuilding have not been gender sensitive and inclusive. The emerging Transitional state institutions which operate in a restricted and materially deprived environment face additional challenges like lack of human resources, insecurity, and gender bias, issues that threaten their ability to become fully functional bodies. Furthermore, there are no past lessons and experiences to draw from, hence posing a number of challenges for the new leadership of the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs), Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP) and the newly formed security institutions (the national army, police, correctional corps, and the intelligence) to embark on inclusive gender policies and actions that support and promote gender equality in post-conflict Somalia. Domestication, sensitization and implementation of recommendations of UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820 are a positive starting point towards achieving gender equality in Somalia. The new leaders of the TFIs and other stakeholders like the civil society and women's groups may gain insight and the tools to implement the recommendations and draft national policies that will bring positive changes in gender relations and equality in post-conflict Somalia. To build a just nation that embraces gender equality, it is essential to accommodate value and recognize specific protection needs, aspirations, new gender relations, and capacities of Somali men and women, equally.

The first section of the paper attempts to present ways in which Somali women have exercised their leadership and agency, particularly in building peace and delivering essential social services. To illustrate the resourcefulness and resilience within the context of statelessness, lawlessness, lack of state protection, lack of essential social services compounded with violence, women in Somalia have ended up shouldering new responsibilities while caring for their families and have adopted various coping mechanisms to survive in a restricted and violence-ridden environment. The social and political upheavals, worsened by the militarized violence have challenged Somali women to exercise their agency and leadership and they have indeed responded to the violence affecting their communities whenever necessary. We argue that despite the negative ramifications, the disintegration of the Somali state followed by the civil war created space for some Somali women to establish their own associations and organizations to meet the urgent needs affecting their families and communities at large, and thus effectively contribute to their recovery. However, this is not enough for Somali women, who have gained new responsibilities and are more visible in the public sphere because no changes have taken place in the formal decision-making arena. Women are resourceful actors who cannot continue to be wasted by marginalization; therefore they must be recognized as important actors by being empowered to participate in the processes of state-building.

The second part of the paper highlights some of the factors that have led to the political marginalization of Somali women in the transitional political decision-making arena. Despite their resourcefulness and contribution to peace-building and recovery, Somali women have remained socially, economically and politically marginalized. This section will discuss factors that have led to the marginalization of women from politics. We hold the view that as long as the conflict in Somalia persists, the

agency and coping mechanisms of Somali women will remain pivotal to the survival of their families and communities, and to peace and eventual recovery. Barriers that deny women their entitlements must be removed so that they can fully contribute to the social, economic, and political rebuilding of their nation.

The third section of the paper delves into the importance of domesticating United Nations Resolutions 1325 and 1820 to promote gender equality and sustain the new gender roles of Somali women i.e. their new identity, status, leadership, and enhance their participation in the current transitional political reconstruction and beyond. Domesticating in this context refers to efforts to make various stakeholders in Somalia become informed about the above-mentioned Resolutions and play active roles in the implementation of the recommendations while advocating for gender equality. We believe that such domestication and sensitization can be done through workshops, public forums, plays, skits, poetry, and sessions with the local media that cover the UN Resolutions 1325, 1820, and their recommendations. The following section sheds light on Somali women's contribution to resolving and averting violence in their communities.

Invisible Leaders: The Case of Somali Women

The devastating collapsed state and protracted militarized violence in Somalia affected the well-being and security of men, women, and children but the situation also transformed them positively. For instance, one of the outcomes of the political disintegration and militarized violence in Somalia is the emergence of a high percentage of female-headed households. The death of many men who were the primary breadwinners forced widows to become the new and primary breadwinners for their families. With time, the old traditional gender roles could not be strictly followed in times of conflict and scarcities. This phenomenon is testimony that the militarized violence in Somalia has produced new gender roles and relations which forced Somali women to adopt responsibilities previously shouldered by men. In addition, the social upheaval increased Somali women's consciousness to activism and agency in peace-building and community development initiatives that have brought security to their communities. Through various creative interventions, Somali women have gained space to maneuver their way in a male-dominated decision making arena.

Feminist scholars have highlighted multiple ways in which women in conflict zones contribute to peace-building and post-conflict recovery⁴ and have called for recognition of their contributions. In Somalia, women have used different effective strategies to avert violence and build peace. For example, in times of conflict, women

⁴ See *Anderson, 2000; Boulding, 2001; Baines, 2005; Byrne, 1996; Bryden and Steiner, 1998; De la Rey, 2000; Eade and Afshar, 2003; El Bushra and Jacobson, 2000; Fung, 2005; Giles et Al., 2003; Helms, 2003; Jordan, 2003; Lentin, 1997; Marshall, 2000; Moser and Clark, 2001a; Skjelsbaek, 1997.*

make direct contact with their traditional and clan leaders and demand immediate cessation of the hostility among various groups living inside their community. Through informal contacts, women have pressurized such groups to cede violence. They would also appeal to their clansmen and other opposing clans involved in conflict to stop the violence. Older women are at times forced to threaten their sons, younger brothers and other male relatives with a curse if they do nothing to stop the clan warfare. Younger women on the other hand implore their husbands not to participate in such violence. Discussion with women who participated in peace-building and conflict resolution at a local level revealed that women have played an instrumental behind-the-scene role to avert violence.

In addition, women organized peace rallies which they used as platforms to bring all members of their communities to support and rally for peace. Secondly, peace prayers known as '*Alla-Bari Nabadeed*', peace meal-sharing known as '*cunto wadaag nabad lagu raadinayo*', and fundraising⁵ have been used to assist war-affected groups to build bridges among warring groups and communities. Thirdly, in times of conflict, Somali women use their marginalization in the clan system to build alliances with other women and men from diverse clans, to promote, build and sustain peace. They have also used their marginalization to mobilize individuals and groups across clans to weaken the war-mongering agenda of warring groups and support peace and reconciliation initiatives in their respective communities. Being at the margin, women are able to facilitate dialogue between belligerent groups including their own clans, visit and assist individuals and groups who are affected by the violence, and provide immediate relief to a war-affected population. Fourthly, pressurizing both their male relatives and warring groups to reconcile and avert further blood-shed is another effective strategy which women in Somalia use to avert escalation of violence in their communities. Fifth, Somali women use their powerful *buraanbur* – poetry to educate their family members, clans and overall their community about the effects of violence on their community and the importance of building and maintaining peace. Women's poetry remains a very effective tool for rallying for peace all over Somalia. Through poetry, Somali women emphasize the importance of unity, solidarity and establishing security for community members regardless of their clan affiliation. In summary, Somali women's unique experiences of the prolonged militarized violence and the new roles and responsibilities which they now shoulder have enabled them understand the root causes of the conflict and make unique contributions to peace-building in their respective communities. These kinds of positive interventions by Somali women is testimony that they are not passive, weak and vulnerable but are important actors who can effectively contribute to peace and recovery in various unique ways.⁶ This, they can only do successfully, if they are included in all stages of state-building.

5 Fundraising for victims of conflict is intended to financially compensate losses experienced by victims. Such gestures signal that members of the community oppose the violence and are in solidarity with those attacked by perpetrators.

6 See: Bouta et al., 2005; El Bushra, 2000; Kumar, 2001; Moser and Clark, 2001b; Tickner, 2001, 1992; Hunt and Posa, 2001; Pankhurst, 2000; Sorensen, 1998.

The disintegration of the Somali nation, state institutions and changes in the traditional gender roles and relations has offered Somali women an opportunity to enter a once inaccessible public space, particularly in the non-governmental (NGO) sector. This has enabled them to participate in delivery of social services as well as to meet the basic needs of their families and community. In war-torn Somalia, women have been active agents of peace but despite their active and successful contributions to peace and recovery in their community, Somali women are not recognized as important actors in the Transitional political structure. They have been denied recognition for the heroic roles they have played in building peace in their communities. The important roles that Somali women have played at community and national levels are yet to be recognized and rewarded by being incorporated in the Transitional government institutions. Somali women's peace-building efforts need to be nurtured and supported so that they can fully participate in the transitional political institutions. By continuing to marginalize the most productive, resourceful, and resilient populace, Somalia stands to lose a lot. The next section examines some of the barriers that have led to gender inequality in Somalia.

Gender Inequality in Somalia: Understanding the Causes

Some of the factors that have perpetuated gender inequality in Somalia include:

First is the failure to adhere to the recommendations of the Transitional Federal Charter. According to Article 29 of the Transitional Federal Charter, at least 12 per cent of Parliamentarians must be women. However, Somali women are poorly represented in the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs). For instance, the current size of the Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP) is 550 members. Out of 550, only 36 (4%) are women. Again, the few women in Parliament lack the education, skills and experience to advance the interests of women and push for gender equality. Secondly, the use of the 4.5 clan formula as a formula for distributing political positions among clans denies women opportunities in representation as equal players in political offices. We argue that this formula is male-biased and further disadvantages women who occupy subordinate positions in the clan system. For example, if the President is hailing from a particular clan, then women from his clan have no chance of being appointed to Ministerial positions because the President is assumed to represent the entire clan; the same applies for the Office of the Prime Minister. Through the 4.5 clan formula, most men aspiring for political positions will not allow women in their clan to be appointed as Ministers and because of this, all political offices i.e. President, Prime Minister and Members of the Cabinet have been occupied by men, with the exception of the Ministry of Gender and Family Affairs, whose office holders have been women from minority clans. In Somalia, Ministries such as Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Justice are considered male bastions. The existence and use of the 4.5 formula jeopardizes efforts to promote gender equality and political repre-

sentation. We argue that the 4.5 clan formula is a sexist, racist, and elitist formula that privileges men hailing from Somalia's major clans. Thirdly, the current political structure⁷, culture⁸ and lack of political commitment to promote gender equality⁹ within the Transitional institutions, compounded with insecurity in Somalia, poses challenges for Somali women's bid to participate in political representation and promote gender equality in post-conflict Somalia. There has been no National Gender Policy in Somalia and concrete efforts to promote gender equality and sensitivity are yet to be made. Discussion with parliamentarians and staff of various government ministries and the security sector points out the lack of gender awareness and sensitivity. In addition, the Executive – President and the Prime Minister – lacks the political will to promote gender equality in Somalia. The State and State institutions continue to use male dominated approaches and mechanisms in rebuilding Somalia. Meaningful recovery must adopt approaches that promote equal participation of men and women in post-conflict politics.

Fourthly, social and cultural practices, particularly those that do not value women's contribution to politics are a threat to gender equality in Somalia. Restricted social and cultural practices support the superiority of men over women and children, and only designate certain tasks considered feminine, to women. In such social and cultural settings, women are not considered full clan members and are therefore locked out of political leadership. Women in other African countries such as Rwanda, Liberia and Uganda, which have experienced conflict have gained a lot from political transformation and now enjoy more political representation compared to their counterparts in Somalia.

Why is the domestication of UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820 in Somalia significant? We argue that domestication of these Resolutions will heighten the awareness of gender issues among individuals and groups who hold powerful positions within the transitional government institutions and in turn increase gender inclusiveness and equality, thereby addressing the current marginalization of women from decision-making processes in Somalia. The implementation of UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820 requires a national plan of action that will bolster and sustain peace-building efforts, agency, and activism by Somali women. To this end, it is paramount to have institutions and policies that support gender inclusiveness in Somalia.

These Resolutions are considered landmark decisions for Somali women who have been the most affected by conflict and political insecurity and like other women

7 The political structure in Somalia is hierarchal and has been dominated by warlords and religious men who serve as heads of opposition groups, for example the Islamic Union Courts (IUC), Ahlu Sunna WalJama (ASWJ) among others. This political culture rewards and only recognizes men as the legitimate actors who can be rewarded with offices in government. This structure relies on power-sharing through the 4.5 clan formula and is not merit based thus inevitably marginalizing women.

8 While there are positive aspects of the Somali culture, there are certain cultural prescriptions that despise women, hence leadership by women is neither nurtured nor accommodated.

9 Gender equality is yet to be perceived as pertinent to development and recovery in Somalia. Formal decision-making is considered a male forte. The current and past transitional leaders are oblivious of the essence of gender equality and do not appreciate women who make up a larger percentage of the population.

living in conflict zones, Somali women demand the implementation of recommendations by these Resolutions. If implemented, this will be a stepping stone towards achieving gender equality and inclusiveness in Somalia. The following section examines the importance of domesticating UN Resolution 1325 and 1820 within the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) which include the office of the President, the office of the Prime Minister, Parliament, all state ministries, and the security sector.

Domesticating UN Resolutions (1325 and 1820) in the Transitional Federal Institutions of Somalia

It is the responsibility of the state to protect the rights of women and girls and promote gender equality. However, in the Somali context, for over two decades, the state has either been absent or weak in fulfilling this duty towards its citizens. For the past 20 years, efforts to rebuild state and institutions have not taken gender issues, particularly the protection of women and girls against violence, into account. Gender mainstreaming has not been a priority as gender blind approaches continue to be used. For over twenty years, the Transitional Federal Government did not draft and pass any legislation examining gender issues in Somalia, thus fortifying gender insensitivity in state-building processes. The protracted conflict¹⁰, lack of human and other resources, and of course patriarchy, have also hindered efforts to prioritize and accommodate gender issues in the state-formation processes.

Discussion with staff of various ministries and Members of Parliament in 2010 and early 2011, show no awareness of these Resolutions. We asked TFI officers, including Parliamentarians and Security leaders whether they know about Resolutions 1325 and 1820 and the response was a resounding no. This indicates that no efforts have been made to create awareness of these Resolutions among TFI officers, thus creating awareness will help formulate policies that will support gender mainstreaming and promote the protecting of women and girls. We hold the view that all actors within governing bodies in Somalia must be sensitized about these Resolutions and the importance of gender mainstreaming in order to rebuild an inclusive post-conflict society. Both Resolutions have been translated into the Somali language and are available online¹¹, thereby removing any language barriers that may affect compre-

10 The protracted conflict has contributed to gender blindness and marginalization of women. For example, the TFG has been at war with armed opposition groups. Security of the Military is often prioritized and gender equality pushed to the back burner. The focus has been to win the war against armed opposition groups and not to adapt the security sector towards more inclusive hiring policies that afford women opportunities in this sector. Most of the existing limited resources are being channelled towards enabling the security sector to establish security and the rule of law. Although this is a positive attribute, failure to incorporate gender equality has left women extremely under-represented in the security sector.

11 Dini, Shukria and Adirahman Dini Osoble. (2003). Co-translators, UN Resolution 1325 into Somali. See <http://www.peacewomen.org/1325inTranslation/1325Somali.pdf>

hension of the recommendations. The authors of this article have co-translated UN Resolution 1820, making it accessible to Somali stakeholders.¹² The availability of these Resolutions in the local language coupled with their sensitization and domestication can enable various government actors, particularly those involved in peace-building, human rights and gender issues to not only champion gender equality, gender sensitivity and gender inclusiveness but also push for gender mainstreaming in the post-conflict stage. To raise awareness at the highest level of the Transitional Federal Institutions, we propose that training workshops should be conducted for the staff of the Office of the President, the Prime Minister, Ministry of Justice, Defense, other Ministries, Parliament and the security sector in order to increase their awareness of these Resolutions, their recommendations and overall gender issues. In conflict and post-conflict periods, women, despite their agency and activism, have been poorly represented and remain invisible. We argue that the domestication and the implementation of the recommendations of these UN Resolutions among various state institutions in Somalia can create an opportunity where government actors prioritize gender issues and reverse the marginalization of women through educating individuals and groups who hold power to appreciate the transformation of gender relations in the post-conflict social, economic and political institutions and provide equal opportunities to both men and women in the Somali society.

We hold the view that if the recommendations of the UN Resolutions (1325 and 1820) are properly implemented at the national level, Somali women will enjoy inclusion in the reconciliation, peace-building, state-building and post-conflict transformation processes. Domestication and sensitizations of these Resolutions can be made through the delivery of special workshops, and interactive public debates that target Members of Parliament, the national police, prison corps and the army. Such fora can enhance the TFI officers' capacity to address gender issues, promote gender equality, raise awareness of the Resolutions and spell out responsibilities of the various government institutions in ensuring the protection and rights of women by promoting their participation in the decision-making realm.

In addition, the Transitional Federal Parliament must also be exposed to the recommendations by these Resolutions through various forums because Parliament can support implementation by drafting legislation that promotes gender mainstreaming in all government institutions and support UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820 through a National Action Plan.¹³ It is worth noting that the current Parliamentarians lack the capacity, expertise and knowledge in dealing with gender issues, thus rendering them incapable of formulating policies that promote gender inclusiveness. Although female Parliamentarians are a minority,¹⁴ they can play an essential role in the domestication and sensitization of the resolutions among their colleagues and

12 Dini, Shukria and Khadija Ali. (2010). Co-translators, UN Resolution 1820 into Somali language. See <http://www.peacwomen.org/1820inTranslation/1325Somali.pdf>

13 We are proposing the formulation of a National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Recommendations of the UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820. This will give the Transitional Federal government a road map for the implementation of the UN Resolutions' recommendations.

14 Despite under-representation of female parliamentarians, The Somali Women Parliamentary Association (SWPA) is a suitable vehicle for female legislators to champion the rights of women and children and the implementation of the UN Resolutions.

various government actors. They need the support of their male counterparts and all Parliamentary Committees to ensure adoption of a National Plan vis-à-vis the Resolutions.

Raising Awareness of the UN Resolution 1325 and 1820 among Members of Civil Society

The civil society emerged soon after the collapse of the Somali State and Somali women, being part of this growing sector, have made unique contributions in the delivery of relief and social services. The civil society has tremendously contributed to the survival of Somalia's vulnerable population by building peace and contributing to recovery efforts among various communities. Arguably, their role in social assistance can promote gender equality even with the understanding that the civil society in Somalia is not united on the issue of gender equality. A section of the civil society has not prioritized gender equality while another section lacks the resources to push for this cause. We hope that through sensitization and domestication of these Resolutions, the civil society in Somalia will speak on gender and equality issues with one voice, particularly on issues relating to gender-based violence and discrimination. However, there is little awareness of the existence of the Resolutions among members of the civil society and this situation inevitably acts against those groups that would otherwise push for gender inclusiveness and equality. On the other hand, awareness of the UN Resolutions and understanding of their recommendations will equip the civil society to sensitize various actors through structured trainings. There are different ways through which UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820 can be domesticated within the civil society. First, through designing and delivering special workshops, targeting members of the local civil society, NGOs and grassroots organizations. Secondly, identifying and mobilizing credible NGOs, CBOs and women's groups that are interested and assisting them to form a National Working Group that will sensitize the public and other actors on UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820. Thirdly, the National Working Group can organize free workshops and public forums to discuss implementation of UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820. With this, members of the civil society in Somalia will be in a better position to not only advocate for but also advise the transitional government on implementation of the recommendations of these Resolutions in Somalia. After domestication and sensitization efforts are completed, we hope that members of the Somali civil society, women's groups and grassroots associations will use these UN Resolutions as tools to advocate for the full inclusion of both genders in decision-making processes and peace-building initiatives in their communities.

If the Somali civil society is to effectively influence implementation of the Resolutions by the government, then it must engage the Executive and Parliament,

adopt a civic agenda towards gender equality, and take positions on gender issues by proposing action plans that will transform Somalia into a just and equal society. It is important for the civil society to establish a national campaign that advocates for the implementation of the recommendations of the resolutions and gender inclusiveness in the political transition era. Collective action will enable civil society groups, which are in fact strategically positioned, to mobilize men and women to support and champion for gender equality. For example, due to their positioning (between state and the people), they can provide the right information and advice TFIs on how to promote gender equality and draft policies that will support gender inclusiveness and sensitivity in all governmental institutions. Transforming war-torn Somalia requires the transformation of state actors, civil society, social, political and economic institutions and in so doing, the resulting transformation will directly support rebuilding of a new society that embraces gender equality. In conclusion, without gender equality, awareness, sensitivity and inclusiveness, it will be impossible to obtain sustainable security, development and recovery from the protracted militarized violence in Somalia.

Conclusion

The collapse of the Somali state and the militarized violence has changed the roles of Somali women. They have become heads of their households, community leaders and leaders of their organizations. Somali women continue to exercise their civic responsibilities by organizing, mobilizing and bearing new responsibilities while responding to the tragedies affecting their families and communities. Through these new roles and responsibilities, Somali women have discarded the perception that they cannot exercise effective leadership in times of crises. They want more equitable gender relations. It is through these abrupt changes in gender roles and relations, and their new identities that Somali women want equal opportunities in all stages of nation rebuilding. Their new gender roles and responsibilities, leadership, agency and activism must be recognized and accommodated in the post-conflict stage. It is also important to recognize Somali women's contribution in securing the basic survival of their families and their overall contribution to peace-building in their respective communities, which in reality is their contribution to state-building and post-conflict.

The two UN Resolutions (1325 and 1820) emphasize the importance of seeing women as actors and not purely helpless victims and understanding the different ways in which women and men are affected by conflict. It is essential that all levels of the local authority comprehend the need to accommodate Somali women's participation in peace-building and post-conflict stages. We hope that such awareness will enable all transitional government institutions to prioritize and promote gender inclusiveness and equality in all stages of post-conflict reconstruction. The domestica-

tion of these resolutions offers opportunities to the TFIs, TFP, TFG and members of civil society to be aware of the gendered outcomes of the conflict and the importance of seizing the opportunity to address the root causes of gender inequality in Somalia. TFIs, TFP, TFG and the Somali civil society have important roles to play by ensuring that the previous gender relations that caused gender inequalities are not embraced in the post-conflict stage. The experiences of Somali women must be accommodated in all stages of rebuilding.

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The Somali minorities and what Somali Women Rights Defenders can do

Martin Hill

1. Tribute to Somali women human rights defenders

I start by paying tribute, appropriate for this conference, to the courageous and important work of Somali women human rights defenders and their organizations. Their dynamic civil society activism for women's rights of many kinds developed after the overthrow of the 21-year Siad Barre dictatorship despite the risks in Mogadishu and the south caused by state collapse, civil war, humanitarian crisis, the UN intervention, warlords, the Ethiopian military intervention, and the current Al-Shabaab insurgency. Somaliland in the northwest, which is de facto independent but not internationally recognised, has provided a more peaceful and "normal" environment for women's NGO activism.

Three prominent NGO coalitions of women's rights activists emerged: the Coalition of Grassroots Women Organizations (COGWO) in Mogadishu, Nagaad women's rights coalition in Somaliland, and We Are Women Activists (WAWA) coalition in Puntland. Some minority rights organizations were also created: Voice of Somaliland Minority Women Organization (VOSOMWO), and Puntland Minority Women Development Organization (PMWDO). Women defenders have also been active in mainstream human rights defenders NGOs, such as the Dr Ismail Jumaale Human Rights Organization (DIJHRO) in Mogadishu.

2. Minority Rights Group (MRG) report: "No redress: Somalia's forgotten minorities"

MRG, the leading international NGO which campaigns for the rights of minorities throughout the world, published this path-breaking report in 2010¹. It presents field

1 www.minorityrights.org/10370/reports/no-redress-somalias-forgotten-minorities.html.

research carried out in 2009-2010 by two Somali researchers (female and male), documentary historical and cultural material, and recommendations based on international minority rights standards – the UN Declaration on Minorities². This conference paper is based on the MRG report, authored by myself and launched at an MRG conference for Somali minorities held in November 2010 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The report describes how Somali society, contrary to false common perceptions, is not a homogenous society founded exclusively on nomadic pastoralism. The majority pastoralist clans have been historically dominant and their camel-based economy and culture have persisted through to modern times. Yet Somali society also has large and significant agricultural, urban and craft sectors of diverse and under-privileged non-pastoralist minorities. All Somalis have suffered gross human rights violations since the state collapsed into armed conflict and humanitarian disaster in 1991 but the minorities have also had their rights as minorities severely abused with impunity. The minorities are usually “invisible” and “forgotten” by the international community, aid donors and NGOs, and scholars who have focused solely on pastoralist Somali society. This isolation has worsened their marginalization, where they find no redress through either Somali customary law (*xeer*) or deficient modern justice systems. A common Somali saying about the minorities is “no-one will weep for you” (*looma-ooyaan*), meaning “no one will avenge your death”.

3. Who are the Somali majorities and minorities?

The **majorities** are the three pastoralist clan-families (Darod, Hawiye, Dir³, each divided into numerous sub-clans and local lineages). They are known as “noble” (in Somali, *bilis* in the south and *aji* in the north) and are traditionally armed and own camels. The majorities also include a fourth clan-family which is agro-pastoralist (Rahanweyn or Digil-Mirifle) – farmers along the Shebelle and Juba rivers in the south who also own livestock⁴. The majorities, particularly the pastoralist clans, have been the dominant groups in Somali society and politics up to the present time.

The **minorities** are an integral but subordinate part of Somali society. They have different historical origins and non-pastoralist economic functions, such as, variously, urban trade, agriculture, fishing, various crafts and art work, building and other artisanal tasks, and traditional ritual practices. They have correspondingly different cultural heritages within the overall Somali culture and society. They are unarmed groups, severely discriminated against by the majorities but essential to the exist-

2 UN Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992), <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/minorities.htm>.

3 In the south, Dir include the Issaq clan but in the north Issaq are considered a separate clan-family.

4 Rahanweyn were in the past customarily considered inferior to the pastoralist clans but have achieved recognised equality with them in the new transitional federal system after forming an armed group to protect themselves. Their language Af-Maymay is distinct from the dominant Af-Maha official Somali language of the pastoralist clans.

ence of pastoralist livelihood and both pre-colonial and modern Somali society. They number up to one-third of the population of Somalia and Somaliland, concentrated in southern Somalia⁵.

The minorities are:

- **Bantu** (or *Jareer*, meaning hard or curly hair indicating their African descent and appearance, distinct from the more Arab-looking pastoralists): they are the largest minority, mainly found in the south, descendants of indigenous farmers and also enslaved Africans transported to Somalia from central and southern Africa in the 19th century Zanzibar-based Arab slave trade. Some (particularly “Gosha” forest-dwellers) retain some of their former African cultural and linguistic heritage. Many were dependant on local clan groups and both exploited and partly protected by them. They customarily perform agricultural work, building and construction, domestic work, craftwork, mechanical and engineering work for the majorities, as well as often their own farm-work. They are customarily barred from inter-marrying with clans, and are commonly abused and ill-treated. They suffered heavily in the 1990s civil wars from mass killings, ethnic cleansing and land looting by clan-based warlord militias.
- **Occupational groups** (often described as “castes”): they perform craftwork and service tasks for the majorities, formerly living in scattered small groups linked to local clans and customarily protected by them but forbidden to inter-marry with them. They are commonly despised and ill-treated⁶. The three main occupational groups were historically: Midgan (leatherworkers, hunters and other craft specialists including hairdressing, woodcarving and pottery) – now called Madhiban (meaning harmless or peaceful) or Gaboye, which are preferred non-insulting terms; Tumul (ironworkers and blacksmiths who made weapons, household utensils and tools); and Yibro (ritual specialists). They are not ethnically distinct from clans.
- **Benadiri**: they are distinct coastal communities living in originally stone-walled cities along the southern Benadir coast, notably in the capital Mogadishu, where they are known as Rer Hamar, while others live in Brava (known as Barawani) and another former capital Merca. They also include Bajuni fishing people living around the southern port of Kismayu. They are mainly traders and merchants of migrant origin from the Arabian Gulf and further east over the past 1,500 years. They include craftworkers in gold and silver. Benadiri were a key influence in the spread of Islam in Somalia. Most were formerly wealthy and highly educated. They look physically different from pastoralist clans and possess a distinct cultural heritage and languages related to Kiswahili. They suffered severe abuses from clan-based warlord militias looting properties and raping females in the 1990s civil wars. Most fled the country.
- **Religious minorities** – Ashraf and Shekhal, respected Muslim communities famed for religious devotion and peace-making between rival clan groups, who

5 The full 36-page MRG report contains further details of the complexities of Somali society, which is still under-researched, and bibliographic references.

6 They are roughly the equivalent of Dalits in the Indian caste-system.

nevertheless became conflict victims; and also some small Christian convert communities.

- **Hunters** – remnants in the south of indigenous aboriginal hunter-gatherer communities (Boni or Aweer), and small groups of forest-living Eyle game hunters – the most despised and poorest groups.

4. Treatment of minorities

As described above, each minority is historically different in status, wealth or poverty, power and its relations with the majorities. Their main common characteristic has been social exclusion and marginalisation, particularly through the customary prohibition of inter-marriage which has kept communities separate by descent, work and power relations. Colonialism brought sweeping changes, notably the abolition of slavery, as well as political changes, modern education, urban development, new non-pastoralist economic roles and markets, and political nationalism which achieved independence in 1960. Increasingly fewer pastoralist clan members lived a pastoralist life.

After a military coup in 1969, the “scientific socialism” of the Siad Barre era (1969-1991), which was marked by increasingly brutal political repression and widespread human rights violations, nevertheless opened up new opportunities for minorities through laws banning “clanism” (favouritism and nepotism based on clan membership, which nevertheless persisted) and “tribalism” (discrimination and hate speech against Bantu and caste minorities). The Bantu and caste minorities gained their first access to modern education up to university level and some were recruited into the army, security services, public services and the sole ruling party. In the sub-clan-based civil wars following the military overthrow of President Mohamed Siad Barre’s regime in 1991, minorities lost many of these advances in early revenge attacks by the victorious forces and later in massive looting and pillage by clan-based warlord militias in the south. Minorities probably suffered proportionally worse among the massive number of Somalis of all groups who were killed or fled abroad as refugees or were internally displaced within Somalia.

Minorities were given some recognition in the internationally-mediated peace and reconciliation talks, culminating in 2000 in obtaining reserved seats in the transitional parliament and later in the Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP) in Mogadishu, and also in the Parliament in the self-declared Somaliland Republic, separate since 1991. The TFP in south-central Somalia adopted a 4.5 formula of representation, with minorities gaining the 0.5 proportion of seats (31) while each of the 4 majority clans had equal 1.0 representation – a rough political compromise in the absence of reliable population statistics. Women were allocated 11% of seats divided proportionally according to their clan or minority origin. Some of the legacy of the past in social attitudes of discrimination against minorities, however, contin-

ued in employment, education, access to justice, access to drought and famine relief, and inter-marriage.

Minority concerns, expressed by their new political groups and emerging minority rights NGO activists, focus on the following issues:

- Equality and human dignity – entrenching minority rights in constitutions and laws, and implementing them through public recognition and action plans by the authorities, including stopping hate speech
- Personal and community security – genuine access to justice for abuses against minorities and violence against minority women especially, and public respect and social integration, where the ban on inter-marriage is considered a community insult
- Refugee and IDP protection, and famine relief

Legal and constitutional protections for equal rights had in theory existed before 1991 but were systematically flouted in both public and private spheres. MRG's researchers uncovered patterns of serious abuses against minorities in testimonies gathered from each of the following four main zones: (1) the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) controlled area existing in parts of Mogadishu alone; (2) the separate and largely peaceful Somaliland Republic in the northwest; (3) the semi-autonomous and largely peaceful Puntland Regional State in the northeast; (4) the drought-affected south-central regions of Somalia controlled by the Al-Shabaab radical Islamist insurgents, suspected to be affiliated to Al-Qaeda and fighting the internationally-supported but almost powerless TFG and the small African Union peace-support force (AMISOM) protecting it.

(1) In the embattled small TFG zone, minorities are represented in the parliament, where the deputy Speaker is a Bantu professor, but it rarely meets, remaining mostly in Nairobi for security reasons. There was an issue of TFG recruiting Bantu as adult and child soldiers in 2009 but after a local NGO and a US journalist exposed this, it was stopped. Public services have been mostly broken down since 1991 and there is constant flight of civilians to safer areas and neighbouring countries as well as deaths of civilians caught up in the conflict with Al-Shabaab. A new draft Constitution makes no mention of reserved seats for minorities (or women) or continuation of the 4.5 formula. Political parties are due to be formed for elections in 2012 when the extended transitional period is due to end.

(2) In Somaliland, there is growing governmental and social acceptance of minority rights, and support from the network of human rights defender NGOs, who include minority organizations based on traditional structures or modern NGO forms. Reserved seats in the parliament have however been removed.

(3) In Puntland, there has been no recognition of minorities in the parliament and there are serious issues of abuses against the large numbers of displaced minorities from the south subsisting in IDP (internally displaced persons) camps in Bosasso and elsewhere, and absence of redress through the judicial system. MRG's researchers found an appalling pattern of gender-based violence against minority women in IDP camps, perpetrated with impunity.

(4) In south-central Somalia which is mostly controlled by Al-Shabaab insurgents, minorities (mainly Bantu) remain sidelined and defenceless, despite Al-Shabaab's supposed religion-based policy of non-discrimination. Al-Shabaab has forcibly recruited into its *jihadi* armed forces thousands of minority members (as well as clans), mainly Bantu but also members of caste and Benadiri groups, including many children. It has committed systematic human rights abuses including arbitrary executions and harsh *Shari'a* law penalties (stoning, amputation, flogging) imposed after unfair trials, both against its suspected opponents and those it considers violate its extremist interpretation of Islam in religious practice, dress and social behaviour. Minorities have been targeted for their beliefs: Al-Shabaab has jailed Barawani clerics and destroyed their historic Islamic mosques and burial graves, punished Bantu cultural practices and beheaded Bantu Christians.

5. Appeal for support for minorities by Somali women activists

At this conference on women's rights activism, it felt appropriate to make this appeal to Somali women activists for support for Somali minority rights. Human rights defenders in Somalia and Somaliland already have a record of supporting minority rights, although there is still a long way to go to achieve the minority rights objectives above.

- "Women are minorities" is a phrase sometimes heard from women activists when they criticise the marginalisation of women. There are similarities of human rights concerns on which to build a common advocacy platform among the vulnerable groups of women and minorities.
- Women have the capacity and opportunities to defend minorities, just as minorities should defend women's rights, within their own communities and all communities
- Women activists should (and do) oppose all gender-based violence, especially where it is targeted against minority women
- Women have important advocacy roles which they could bring to minority rights in the following areas:
 - *peace-building and reconciliation
 - *defence of vulnerable groups, including IDPs
 - *civil society activism and public awareness-raising
 - *long-term social reconstruction
 - *support for universal human rights, inclusiveness and tolerance.

6. MRG's recommendations on Somali minority rights

Protection of basic universal human rights by the various authorities is essential for the future of all Somalis, and it will benefit minorities too. Specific recommendations on minority rights are set out fully in the MRG report (pages 27-28) and are summarized briefly here:

(1) To the TFG, Somaliland and Puntland governments

- Specifically recognize minorities and entrench in constitutions and laws their rights to equality and non-discrimination in line with international human rights standards
- Provide due parliamentary representation for minorities, for example by reserved seats
- Establish official mechanisms for minority rights protection, publicly advocate for minority rights through a national action plan on equality and justice for minorities including gender protection, and observe international human rights treaty obligations including investigating past human rights abuses and preventing impunity
- Form independent and impartial investigations where appropriate into gender-baed violence in IDP camps

(2) To all armed forces operating in Somalia (including AMISOM and Al-Shabaab)

- Respect the Geneva Conventions and protect civilians in areas of armed conflict, with particular attention to the vulnerable minorities

(3) To the United Nations and its agencies, African Union, European Union and Commission, Arab League, and international development and human rights organizations

- Do not forget or ignore minorities and human rights violations against minorities
- Integrate minority needs into emergency and development assistance, with special measures targeting minorities' safety and livelihoods and protecting their identities and cultural heritages
- Prevent discrimination against minorities in all programmes including relief assistance to IDPs

- Support minority rights activism in Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland, and help to build the capacities of minority NGOs

(4) To countries of asylum for Somali refugees

- Take full note of widespread persecution of minorities in determining refugee status
- No forcible returns of minority asylum seekers to Somalia
- Note the special needs of minority refugee communities in host countries.

Gender Mainstreaming in Purchasing in the Humanitarian Context

Gyöngyi Kovács^{a,b}, Ala Pazirandeh^a, Peter Tatham^c

Introduction

In the humanitarian context, gender mediates access to aid. The gender of the beneficiary is not only intrinsically linked with her/his disaster vulnerability (Enarson, 2002), but also to their ability to physically access aid distribution points (Lutz and Gady, 2004) and even to be considered a beneficiary in the first place. There is, however, yet another factor mitigating an individual's access to aid: namely the humanitarian organization and its workers (Kovács and Tatham, 2009).

Particularly in the case of purchasing within humanitarian organizations, it is both the mainstreaming of gender among purchasers and as well as the use of the purchasing function itself to empower women that deserve attention. In relation to the latter, humanitarian organizations have frequently adopted a strategy aimed at increasing the income, skills and influence of women in local communities by purchasing from them (UNOPS, 2010). In case of former, the gender of the purchaser has been linked to the quality of decision-making in, for example, deciding what products to buy and distribute to beneficiaries (Min *et al.*, 1995). In particular, the gender of the decision maker affects their awareness of gender specific needs, and there is ample evidence of the wrong items being bought and of the needs of female beneficiaries not being considered sufficiently well in purchasing decisions. Examples of such failings include the provision of tents for refugee/IDP camps made of transparent materials that made it possible to detect females who were alone and, thus, exposed them to sexual violence; or the absence of hygiene items for females. Purchasing decisions are, thus, linked to the safety and hygiene, health and wellbeing of the beneficiaries.

Gender is, therefore, an important aspect that purchasers in the humanitarian context need to consider – and yet it is an area of current practice that has frequently

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been overlooked. However, this is less surprising when one considers the gender ratios of purchasing decision-makers which, in the humanitarian context, can range from 70:30 up to 90:10 male to female. Thus, although gender mainstreaming is undoubtedly on the agenda of many humanitarian organizations, there is clear evidence that this strategic aim yet to be implemented in the area of purchasing. The aim of this research is, therefore, to improve the situation of beneficiaries through diverse and more gender-aware purchasing decisions.

Gender in purchasing

Research on gender in purchasing has followed the career patterns of women (e.g. through the annual Ohio State survey that is distributed to CSCMP members, see Cooper *et al.*, 2010 for the most recent edition) and, more importantly, recognized the paucity of women in the profession. This has led to a number of programs with the overall aim of increasing the number of women employed in the purchasing field (as well as in the broader area of logistics and supply chain management). For example, the Canadian government initiated a program for “Women in Logistics” (WIL) in 2008, and established a task force under the umbrella of the Logistics Institute. WIL UK is, by comparison, a non-for-profit organization that supports the networking of women (mostly through their ‘LinkedIn’ group which is one of many targeting women in this field) and is endorsed by a number of important professional organizations in the UK. Similarly, the “Women Moving Forward” (WMF) program is supported by the Australian Logistics Council and other peak bodies. To date, over 430 women representing over 200 companies have taken part in the mentoring program of WMF which is specifically targeting the retention and development of women within the transport and logistics industry.

There is even a group – the Women’s Institute for Supply-Chain Excellence (WISE) – that is dedicated to supporting female humanitarians working within the broad area of supply chain management. By the same token, universities have invested conscious efforts to attract women to the profession, through mentoring programs such as in the former Empathy Net-Works Project of the University of Hull, and establishing positions dedicated to women including the prestigious Lise Meitner professorship at the Faculty of Engineering at Lund University. The fact that this is currently held by one of the authors of this research who has recently been appointed as a professor of supply chain management is testimony to the increasing awareness of the implications of the lack of females in this key business field.

There is, therefore, some cautious grounds for optimism that this increased focus may, over time, lead to an increase in the number of females entering and remaining in the profession. Unfortunately, however, its image remains determinedly male (Sohal and D’Netto, 2004; EP, 2007) – particularly in the humanitarian context. Some even talk about the truck driver image of the profession, which is partly reflect-

ed in the way that vacancy notifications tend to focus on functional and technical skills in the humanitarian context in contrast to the general management skills found in the business environment (cf. Tatham *et al.*, 2010). The hardships and physical/mental/security challenges of the profession are also greatly emphasized in such job advertisements. But, whilst recognizing that such challenges do unquestionably exist, a recent booklet published by WISE contains a number of reflections written by female humanitarians and these helpfully underline the positive aspects of being female in this field (Steele, 2010).

Whether gender has an impact (positive or negative) on purchasing has been disputed for a long time, with only limited research on which to draw. Unfortunately, such research as does exist is inconclusive. On the one hand, for example, Min *et al.* (1993) considered the role of gender in purchasing negotiations and came to the conclusion that women perform better on this task. However, when Kovács and Tatham (2010) investigated this in a survey, not only was gender not deemed to be a significant factor for performance, but negotiation skills were not seen as “female”. That said, the very same respondents (n=174) who regarded gender to be an insignificant factor, volunteered a total of 79 stories in which they indicated a positive (40) or negative (39) impact of the gender of the humanitarian on performance overall. This is surprising not only given their overall assessment in the same survey, but also the that there were so many responses to an open-ended question would end to indicate that gender is actually a matter of some importance..

Purchasing within the humanitarian context

Purchasing or procurement decisions should be understood as embracing all decisions related to the challenge of obtaining access to resources, capabilities and knowledge of external actors in the supply chain that are required by the organization and obtained through transactions (c.f. purchasing definition in Van Weele, 2010). Such decisions start with the decision to buy a resource needed but not owned, and are followed by the determination of the relevant specifications (what to buy, how much and in what quality and specifications), market analysis and selection of suppliers (who to buy from), negotiating and contracting (the terms of the purchase), to the operational decisions to order (e.g. when to buy), evaluation of the delivered goods/service, and follow up (for example, process improvement) (Van Weele, 2010).

Research has suggested that ensuring an effective purchasing can contribute to better returns, e.g. “up to 4% of sales value or 30% to profitability” (Thompson, 1996: 6). However, the applicability of such claims to the humanitarian context has yet to be researched as, to date, there has been limited research in this field (Shahadat, 2003); whilst at the same time, there are additional complexities inherent in purchasing for humanitarian operations. For example, purchasing of health related products

such as pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and contraceptives has proven to be a growing challenge, especially for developing nations (DeRoeck *et al.*, 2006; Ellis, 2011).

Among the main challenges in purchasing within humanitarian are the limited funding and resources, lack of demand transparency, and limited knowledge by purchasers (based on UNICEF data, 2010). One reoccurring theme within the reports from the field, whether dealing with longer term development projects or with disaster relief situations, is the lack of clear understanding about the demand. This usually results in a push strategy, where several goods (purchased or in-kind donations) are fast-tracked to the country of destination before an analysis of the actual need has been undertaken or completed. Such needs assessment (or specification) is recognized as the first step within the purchasing process (Van Weele, 2010) and, hence, the driver of the need to purchase. In other words, firms or organizations must first decide what to purchase, in what quantity and quality, before they begin to structure the purchase approach of whom from, and how to purchase.

In practice, given the complexities attached to information gathering from the field driven by, for example, poor or disrupted physical and/or communications infrastructure, language and cultural complexities and nuances, and even the existence of physical danger from a variety of sources, it is not surprising that needs assessment is a key issue. Both longer-term development projects, as well as disaster relief projects, introduce specific constraints that increase uncertainty and knowledge about the demand. For example, in case of health related products, Taylor and Yadav (2011) note that the nature of diseases present in a disaster situation is connected to factors that include weather, social, educational and economic state of livelihood. This, unsurprisingly, results in high demand uncertainty and, this is exacerbated by the fact that the disease incidence, transmission intensity, peak amplitudes and lengths of the disease season, and food yield and famine can all vary significantly in different time periods.

How can gender mainstreaming contribute to purchasing in the humanitarian context

In addition to the needs assessment challenges outline above, a further important issue is that of gaining access to, and information on, the differential needs of the population cohorts. For example, in some cultures it is not acceptable for women to work outside of the household or to speak with un-related men. As a result, the needs of this significant population may not be reflected in the assessments conducted by humanitarian organizations. *“In emergency situations the nutritional and health needs of women, including their reproductive and sexual health needs, and of pregnant and nursing mothers and their infants are often overlooked or neglected”* (McAskie, 1999). An example is the specific prenatal medication required for mothers, or even cloth-

ing types for women may not be captured by the needs assessment process – especially if the assessor (i.e. the humanitarian worker) is male.

Having women within the purchasing team of the humanitarian organizations can help gain a better understanding of the potential and actual requirements of those women who have been affected by the disaster or emergency. Although, it should also be recognized that, based on the information contained on the relevant UN webpage, “*some UN humanitarian agencies such as WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF have already made progress in developing gender-sensitive programming and policies. The same applies for some NGOs such as OXFAM and CARE*” (McAskie, 1999).

Some case examples

During the Chad Emergency, there was a need for sanitary towels to be distributed to women refugees in the camp. However discussions on the appropriate improvised sanitary towel went round in circles for about three months. During this time, women in the camp of reproductive age did not stop menstruating to allow the matter to be resolved. The logisticians involved did not comprehend what the alternative options were apart from the manufactured product they may have been familiar with back in a modern society. (Source: WISE, 2009:6)

The second was a case from the 2004 Tsunami. This was where a male logistician received a purchase request to supply the programme with women's underwear to be distributed to those affected in Banda Aceh. This gentleman forgot that women (and even men) come in different sizes. He placed an order for one size and in one color. Eventually the one-sized underwear had to be returned. This caused a delay in distribution and additional costs. (Source: WISE, 2009:6)

Summary

The challenge of achieving appropriate and equitable purchasing in the preparation for, and aftermath of, a natural disaster or a complex emergency is multi-faceted and is currently one that is only achieving limited success. This is not to say that disaster response agencies are unaware of its importance; rather that their efforts have yet to deliver significant improvements on the ground. With this in mind, it is suggested that a key step will be to increase the number of females directly involved in the purchasing process within the field (and, indeed, within the area of humanitarian logistics and supply chain management more generally). This would not only improve the breadth of advice available, but may also help overcome some of the concerns of the beneficiary community who have been beset by a disaster, and at the same time have their cultural norms challenged by the presence of (typically non-indigenous) male aid workers who, with the best will in the world, will struggle to comprehend and respond in an appropriate way.

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Economic Empowerment of Women

Almaz Negash

Context

Women are as great a resource for building peace, creating dialogues, understanding security and conflict prevention as men are. Unfortunately, men are almost always the major actors on the world's stage - in conflict and in peace and in economic development. But both men and women belong on that stage and both need to engage in dialogues to promote equal participation and to strengthen society as a whole.

Key Challenges to Women's Economic Empowerment

Women's economic empowerment must not be examined in a vacuum. Widespread cultural and economic practices work to prevent empowerment. To fully assess the opportunities and obstacles that exist, the intersection of political, social/cultural and environmental conditions must be analyzed alongside traditional economic indicators. Factors impacting women's economic empowerment include:

- Violence: women are the predominant victims of conflict, sexual violence, injury, death, intimidation and human trafficking
- Lack of adequate access to education, training and technology
- Lack of access to clean water, sanitation
- Lack of access to responsible health care/reproductive health.
- Lack of access to credit/finance, safe work conditions, living/minimum wages
- Cultural practices, tradition, religious interpretations of women's status
- Women's lack of knowledge about rights and laws (economic, social, political, religious)
- Lack of adequate representation in decision-making positions and governance structures

Research Result

Women's Economic Empowerment research result shows that increased income controlled by women gives them self-confidence, which helps them obtain a voice and vote on:

- Household decisions such as domestic well-being decisions. For instance, women tend to use income clout for more equitable decisions about sons and daughters' diet, education and health.
- Economic decisions: acquiring, allocating, and selling assets.
- Fertility decisions: economically empowered women tend to have fewer children
- Land use and conservation decisions: rural women tend to favor sustainable environmental practices since they are usually the ones that collect the families' natural resources such as water and firewood.

Conclusion

Women represent half the world's population, and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet. To discriminate and prevent half of humanity from reaching its full potential is economic disaster. Female economic power enhances the "wealth and well-being of nations". Women who control their own income are more willing than male counterparts to send daughters as well as sons to school, even when they earn less than men. In turn, a woman's level of education affects her decision-making process when it comes to questions about contraception, age of marriage, fertility, child mortality, modern sector employment and earnings.

Almaz Negash wrote the first version of Women's Economic Empowerment (2006) during her fellowship in Global Leadership and Ethics at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. She co-facilitated the theme on the economic empowerment of women for the Women Leaders' Intercultural Forum; an initiative of Hon. Mary Robinson, Former President of Ireland and UN Human Rights Commissioner.

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PART III

The Women's needs
in armed and violent
conflicts in the Horn of
Africa

UNPOS' Perspective on the Role of Women in Peace building and Development in Africa

Chantal Ekambi

UNPOS feels very honored and privileged to introduce this session on women's needs in armed and violent conflicts in the Horn of African in front of this very high profile audience. I welcome my brothers and sisters from Djibouti, Eritrea Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

This statement intends to be brief, to set the ground for research and give space to the presentation of case studies. I will briefly give some elements on the impact of conflict on women, and then outline needs of women in this particular context. Finally, I will share some UNPOS responses on this particular issue before giving the floor to the other presenters with concrete case-studies.

I – Impact of Conflict on Women

Today there is a need more than ever to address the situation of women in armed and post conflict situations. A number of resolutions have been carried by the UN Security Council that deal directly with the plight of women in conflict and post conflict situations. The UNSCR 1325, 1889, 1820, 1888, 1960, CEDAW and other regional conventions have been a milestone in ensuring that the needs of women are addressed.

According to UNWomen¹ in contemporary conflict 90% of casualties are among civilians, most of whom are women and children. Women and children also account for 80% of the world's 40 million refugees, who are in most cases fleeing from internal civil war and conflicts². Somalia is no exception; women have for over the last 2 decades fled from war and are in large numbers in the refugee camps of Dadaab and

1 UNWomen , Women, War & Peace. http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_war_peace/ accessed 13/08/2011)

2 From Pambazuka news issue 327 Africa: The role of women in peace building processes and post-conflict reconstruction. <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/fundraising/44239>. 2007

Kakuma. In Darfur Sudanese women have been targeted by rebels and mass raped which has been escalated by the discriminating laws against women in Sudan.

War affects women in various ways

Violence and suffering

They lose their relatives and property. Sexual violence is used as a weapon of war and is aimed at destroying communities and families. This violence has grave consequences that we know range from physical to psychological trauma and eventual stigma in society. In some circumstances, where the female combatants are not recruited willingly, women and girls are abducted to join the fighting groups. They undergo sexual abuse for survival.

Displacement and migration.

As mentioned earlier, women and children account for the largest number of refugees and IDPs in the world today. There is never enough security to protect the women in the camps and they always end up being violated sexually. In the camps they have limited health services and education, other resources such as firewood and water are limited and they have no safety. Trans border movements open the way to human trafficking.

Change of gender roles

In times of war, in addition to their classical social roles as child bearers, caregivers, caretakers, they become breadwinners, economic agents and service providers.

Duality of women's roles in conflict situation

It is assumed that women are peace lovers and peace makers. But they can also be drivers of conflict and spoilers.

II – Women's Needs in Conflict Situations

1 – Availability of basic social services

Health and Education facilities are much required during times of conflict. The health of mainly expectant mothers and victims of sexual violence is paramount; they need immediate and special attention to save life and also prevent the transmis-

sion of diseases like HIV. Education is more scarce than ever and this perpetuates illiteracy.

2 – Prevention and protection against violence

Sexual violence against women starts in the domestic sphere but is escalated during times of war. Unfortunately, the presence of armed forces always contributes to sexual and gender based violence in a number of cases. In too many countries, rape, trafficking in women and children, sexual enslavement, and child abuse, often co-exist alongside peacekeeping and stabilization operations. The UNSCR 1889, 1820, 1888 and 1960 are avenues through which such cases can be fully addressed.

3 – Support to sustainable livelihoods

The lack of economic opportunities places women and adolescent girls in an extremely vulnerable situation. Economically dependent on others, women and girls suffer domestic violence, trade their bodies for needed cash and commodities and are unable to realize their potential. The lack of livelihood options is far more prevalent in the situation of internal displacement than it is in refugee settings. Little attention has been given to viable income generation activities for IDPs, leaving women and adolescent girls marginalized and economically isolated³.

4 – Establishment of Rule of Law and of transitional justice systems

During the efforts to restore peace, security sector reforms are considered. Planning for security should include all the different sectors of government and also reflect gender equality. Recruitment of women into the military and police forces in decision-making positions should be highly considered as part of ensuring a safe environment for women especially. There is a need to build special units dedicated to gender sensitive crimes, and overhaul the previous training and operating practices that may have discriminated against women.

5 – Space for participation in peace building and peacemaking processes

Women play an important role in peace building as activists, advocates for peace. Women wage conflict non-violently by pursuing democracy and human rights⁴.

3 Dale Buscher and Carolyn Makinson, Protection of IDP women, children and youth, in Forced Migration Review(FMR) <http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/BrookingsSpecial/contents.pdf>, 2006.

4 Schirch L& Sewak. M, The role of Women in Peace Building in The role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict. An integrated programme of research, discussion and networking

However, most peace building processes are largely dominated by men; the voices of the women are rarely heard in such forums. It's important to acknowledge that women play an important role in building peace and their inclusion is very important. Involving women in peace processes does not only ensure a lasting solution but also covers areas of protection, inclusion and empowerment of women.

6 – Support from a vibrant civil society and from donors

CSOs bridge the gap in the absence of the government in times of conflict; they provide humanitarian assistance and in the long run also foster nation building.

However, not so much has been achieved yet but work is being done, mainly by women's organizations (local and international) and humanitarian agencies that strongly push for the inclusion of women in peace building and peacemaking processes at national, regional and international levels.

7 – Participation in institutional building and post conflict reforms

Women's participation in outreach and reconciliation activities is paramount. For nation building, there is sometimes a need for affirmative action mechanisms such as the use of the quota system which will place the women strategically in decision-making positions.

III – UNPOS Responses

3.1 An integrated response around two pillars

Political

Participation in the constitution making process

Participation in the High consultative meeting

Participation in the integration of local administration debate

Regular meetings of women organizations/civil society with the SRCG

Networking with CSOs.

Security

Gender sensitive National Security Stabilization Plan that caters for respect for International Law and Protection of Civilians.

Enrolment in the trained troops (in SPF among 500 trainees, 93 were women)

building. Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, January 2005.

Pre-deployment training given to TTCs

Encouragement of enrolment of women in the TTC.

I would like to acknowledge here the resilience of Somalia women who have endured 20 years of conflict.

III – Recommendations (if time permits)

More political will versus cultural resistance

Capacity building of women for efficient engagement

Systematic collection and analysis of gender segregated data, using specific indicators to guide policy-making and support humanitarian programs.

Overcoming the challenge of a fragmented civil society

Prevention of sexual violence from being perpetrated by ensuring that peacekeeping operations make life safe for women and girls.

Expanding services to SGBV survivors, to include provision of health services to treat fistula, HIV infection, and the many forms of physical and psychological trauma that women and girls endure;

Focusing on transitional justice systems to build capacity to prosecute perpetrators and ensure reparation to victims

SSR reforms, especially DDR programs to be accessible and tailored to address the needs of ex-combatants, female combatants and women associated with armed groups,

Resource mobilization and gender-budgeting in post-conflict programs to ensure that women benefit directly from national resources and other resources mobilized through multilateral and bilateral donors.

Maintain a minimum of 30% representation of women in peace negotiations, and ensure that women's needs are taken into consideration and specifically addressed in all such agreements. Such aggressive affirmative action in favor of women is necessary as a first step, because the sheer presence of women will break traditional/cultural barriers⁵.

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Caught between War and its Aftermath: The Experience of Internally Displaced Women in Sudan

Amira Awad Osman

Introduction

This paper focuses on the experience of internally displaced women in Sudan during armed conflicts and its aftermath, in particular in displaced persons' camps in the Triple Capital¹, Khartoum.

To enhance the analysis, the paper also uses fieldwork data gathered by in-depth interviews, discussion groups and oral testimonies to highlight women's experiences and to raise their voices during the armed conflict in Sudan. This includes their experience at the camps.

Moreover, as Vickers (1993) argues, war has an influence on gender relations, as it reinforces gender inequality and diverts resources from development. It is women who suffer most from lack of health services, poor education and economic stagnation. Nevertheless, and despite their great suffering during war, displaced women had managed to develop a wide range of livelihood strategies. These included taking new roles to provide for their families and to protect them.

The war

Armed conflict in Sudan was the major factor that led to displacement almost all over Sudan. However, my focus here will be on the war in Southern Sudan, which emerged in 1983 when Bor garrison, in the South, led by John Garang, refused to take orders from the central government and mutinied. This marked the birth of SPLA which led to the second civil war in the South (Ruiz 1998: 143; Deng and

¹ Khartoum is called Triple Capital, being composed of three cities, which are Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman.

Miner 1992:17). This war has been regarded as one of the bloodiest wars in Africa, which has claimed the lives of two million people. However, it has also been labelled as a forgotten war (Ruiz 1998: 139). After many peace negotiations, eventually in January 2005 the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in Nairobi to end the fighting (Malik 2005: 33; Verney 2006, Online)².

A lot has been written on the human cost of war in Southern Sudan. Johnson (2003: 151), for example, argues that in Southern Sudan the activities of warring parties have massively widened the scope of the war. Battles between the warring parties, with the intention of capturing territory, are not the only aspect of fighting. From the outset of the war civilians have been systematically targeted, as well as their resources. Social resources such as houses, schools and clinics were destroyed. Economic resources such as farms and livestock were also burnt and stolen. Environmental resources such as wild animals and trees were killed or destroyed. Moreover, large areas were littered with landmines and anti-personnel mines (Johnson 2001: 115; Verney *et al*: 1995). This made the countryside unsafe and affected farming and rearing of animals, the main sources of livelihood.

Multi impact of war on gender relations

Feminist literature on women in conflict areas reveals and theorises the ways in which war is gendered in different ways such as its institutions, its agents and the destruction it causes (Macklin 2004:75). For example, the war in Southern Sudan led to a shortage of men, forced and early marriages and poor health and education facilities.

a. Shortage of men

War led to a shortage of men in Southern Sudan. Abdel Salam and de Waal (2001:103) indicate that women in Southern Sudan constitute 60% of the entire population because men either joined the SPLA or died. A UNICEF estimation in 2001 suggested that the male population of Bahr al-Ghazal was only 25% (IRIN 2003, Online; Chawla 2003, cited in Fluehr-Lobban 2005:273). This low rate of men in Southern Sudan could be explained by a variety of reasons. Men in Southern Sudan have joined the armed militia, others have moved to the North looking for educational or training opportunities, and some went abroad. Some have died (Abdel Salam and de Waal 2001:103; Macklin 2004:82)), but there is no quantitative data to reveal the numbers of those who died. In such situations women have to take up new roles. This affects gender roles as a woman from Juba says:

In the past there was a clear line between the roles played by a man and a woman. For instance, men in the countryside were responsible for digging, women used to fetch water and cook...now women can do more. (El-Bushra and Sahl 2005:37)

2 In January 2011 people from Southern Sudan voted for independence and on 9th July this year, Southern Sudan was declared an independent country

Women were left behind in communities shattered by war with poor, or no education, no political voice, poor resources and poor access to income-generating activities. Nearly half of the households were headed by women (Fluehr-Lobban 2005: 273). Moreover, the war had made the countryside unsafe.

Abdel Salam and de Waal (2001: 109) point out that women's and girls' workloads, in particular their domestic tasks, had increased dramatically as they had to walk long distances, for instance, ten miles, to fetch water and firewood. Other domestic tasks women did included farming and building their huts.

b. Forced and early marriages

War also reinforced early marriages among families, in particular poor families, as a livelihood strategy and to ease their economic burden³. Girls accepted forced marriages in order to protect their families (El-Bushra and Sahl 2005: 35) or to help them financially. In such a harsh environment young girls became powerless when their families put pressure on them to get married. When a young girl gets married her husband should pay a dowry to her family in form of heads of cattle. Thus, marriage was seen as a material transaction rather than a personal bond between husband and wife. This family arrangement made divorce difficult as the wife had to get her family support and permission which may be difficult to gain since in the case of divorce the family would have to return the dowry (IRIN 2003, Online).

Second, marriage offered a girl a protection against sexual assaults and protection by a male guardian. Third, it was a strategy to avoid girls getting pregnant outside marriage (UNICEF 2005, Online). Fourth, for some families, it could be a strategy to start accumulating a new stock of animal wealth.

Box 1: illustrating girls' early marriages

In Southern Sudan, a teenage girl is more likely to be a wife than a student. Out of a population of over 7 million people, only about 500 girls complete primary school each year. By contrast, one in five adolescent girls is already a mother (UNICEF 2005, Online)

Payment of bride-wealth gave men a high position as heads of households and the right to control the labour and productivity of their wives and children (El-Bushra and Sahl 2005: 35). By contrast the wife had no power or right even to get a divorce and divorce became a family matter that had links to the survival of her family. In this sense, the gender relations within the household (husband and wife) were shaped by extended families, which had a say on marriage and divorce.

c. Health

War destroyed infrastructure including health clinics, transport etc and the suffering of women during war could be illustrated by the life expectancy of women from Southern Sudan, which was forty years (Macklin 2004:82). Furthermore, women's quality of life was one of the lowest in the world. In some war-affected areas, for

3 In Southern Sudan men pay *mahr*, bride-wealth, in form of cash and gifts or cows (El-Bushra and Sahl 2005: 35)

example, the rate of maternal deaths reached 862 per 100,000 (IRIN 2003, Online). Abdel Salam and de Waal (2001:104-105) claim that in Southern Sudan there was no discrimination in terms of provision of health services, however, men controlled their wives' access to family planning. This could be done simply by preventing their wives from attending a family planning clinic, where information and materials on family planning are available. This may lead to unwanted pregnancy and more children than women would like to have. Both would be an extra burden women have to deal with. Fluehr-Lobban (2005:267) also indicates that although contraception facilities may be available in cities and towns they were not available to single women especially after imposing the Islamic ideology.

The infant mortality rate is high. For example, in 2000 it was 73 per 1,000 live births whereas for under-fives the mortality rate was 115 per 1,000 live births (Fluehr-Lobban 2005: 267). These two high rates of mortality may explain men's behaviour in not allowing their wives to have access to birth control and to have many children. Also the high mortality rate could be a factor discouraging women from using birth control materials.

d. Education

The prolonged war had also affected the education system, leading to the closure of many schools, transferring some from the rural to urban centre or from the urban areas to Khartoum. These had many implications for the younger generations and deprived them from their right to education. However, it seems that poor girls suffered more from such policies as they were reluctant to go to school (or public places) in rags. Therefore, they may end up in early marriages or relationships with soldiers, who were more likely to get them pregnant (Abdel Salam and de Waal 2001: 106).

Box 2: showing the situation of girls' education

In some schools the average class size was five hundred pupils of which the number of girls ranged from five to thirty. In Rumbek and Yirol counties, the numbers of girls who went to school was only 6.6%. Girls' enrolment was half that of boys and fell sharply by secondary school level. At this age girls were prevented from going to school for many reasons, including lack of uniform and the belief that education would make them corrupt. Also marriage brings economic bonuses in the form of dowry paid to the family, (Abdel Salam and de Waal 2001:103).

Negative perceptions about girls' education were another barrier that hampered the education of girls and limited their chances in education. For example, men believed that women were their rivals and that educated girls would abandon their traditional roles as housewives and child-bearers. This perception made men reluctant to marry educated girls and prefer to marry those with less or no education, as the latter would be able to perform their domestic tasks. Moreover, educated girls were believed to be less respectful of social norms and traditions and their families feared that this would bring shame. Moreover, believing that girls' role was a reproductive one e.g., to help their mothers with child care, cleaning and fetching water, reduced girls' chances in education (Abdel Salam and de Wall 2001:107).

e. Violence against women

Women were subject to some sort of violence. El-Bushra and Sahl (2005: 33) state that when Sudan was in a state of war, many civil servants, in particular in war zones, did not get regular salaries and were unable to provide for their families. This had led to domestic violence between wives and husbands and some men turned to alternative ways to earn a living, such as taking guns and joining the army. Many men felt that they could take the law into their own hands by, for example, taking or abducting girls by force.

Box 3: showing a narrative by a woman who was living in Juba

There are a lot of cases where men go with young girls because they have money. They deceive the girls and because the girls are poor due to this present situation, they give in, thinking that the men will marry them and they will have a good life. In most cases when the girls get pregnant the men reject them...some girls give in to men at an early stage because of threats by soldiers: "if you refuse me I will finish you off" (El-Bushra and Sahl 2005: 33-36)

Moreover, women did not only suffer from the risk of public violence created by the external enemy but also from violence created by men from the local community. Domestic violence and coerced sex increased between husbands and wives (Jok 1999: 2000, cited in Macklin 2004:88). Domestic violence also occurred when combatants returned homes to find their wives with other men. This may lead to the husband killing the wife and her new partner (El-Bushra and Sahl 2005: 37)).

Women who were victims of domestic violence may not walk out of a violent relationship due to social factors such as a shortage of men, the stigma of divorce, or issues of custody of children as well as economic factors such as lack of income-earning opportunities (Pankhurst 2008: 311). Other factors such as fear of insecurity and violence outside the households created by armed conflict and insecurity, as is the case in Western and Southern Sudan, may discourage women from leaving their domestic abusers, "*Better the devil you know than the devil you do not*".

Displacement and its gender dynamics

To escape the armed conflict people had to seek safety in different areas such as Khartoum, the host of nearly 2 million internally displaced persons. People also needed to build their own shelters and to find a new source of livelihood. Here I will focus on the experience of internally displaced women in Al-Salam and Mayo displaced persons' camps in Khartoum which includes their role as breadwinners and protectors of their families as well as their role at the community level.

a. Women's role as breadwinners

Women at the camps managed to develop different livelihood strategies to earn income. This included trading in food and drink such as tea, which was legal as well as trading in alcohol and prostitution, which were illegal, according to *Sharia*

law. Prostitution. A remarkable perspective on prostitution, as an illegal livelihood strategy, comes from Aziza, my youngest prostitute respondent, in Al-Salam camp who narrates:

I have tried all means of survival but all did not work except prostitution. That is because there is much demand for it...I earn a lot from that...I want you to know that was not my choice. This is a choice I was forced to make, in darkness and behind closed doors...It is awful to earn money from something people around you even your daily customers are ashamed to speak about. It is scary to earn a living from something your government regards as illegal. It is so scary to know that you will be finished if the police catch you. On the other hand it is a job I do to survive here, and in urban places too. In this sense it is OK for me to do it otherwise me and my mother would die from hunger.⁴

Aziza's narrative illustrates that despite all moral, social and legal constraints, she had strong economic and social reasons to justify her involvement with this dangerous urban livelihood strategy which had proven to be profitable.

To minimise risk involved in prostitution, the prostitutes tended to limit their services to local people they knew, to their old customers or to new customers introduced to them by their old customers. Although this strategy may help to reduce chances of being caught, thus saving the livelihood itself, it reduced the income a prostitute would get.⁵

It is also relevant here to state that financial assistance such as getting a loan is very significant for running a business and developing new livelihoods. Based on that, some displaced persons sought loans from banks but were turned down, as explained by the following narrative from Scholl, a female who lived in Mayo camp, about the disregard of displaced persons by bankers when they approached them for financial assistance. She said:

I know citizens have the right to get a loan from banks. My husband read that in a newspaper but when I went with him to seek a loan nobody helped us...we tried many banks several times but without any success.⁶

This narrative illustrates that being a displaced person could jeopardise one's chances of getting a loan to build a new livelihood strategy. As help from banks, for example, is denied, some displaced persons are left in limbo. However, they had to keep searching for alternative ways to survive beyond the "money lenders" structure.

b. Women's role as protectors

Sadia, a 60 years old woman from Southern Sudan who resided in Al-Salam camp, was married but her husband no longer lived with her. She spoke about her ordeal and subsequently, the new gender role she had to take up:

I did not have a husband to protect me. When we moved here he started drinking heavily. He used to beat me and make a lot of noises that my neighbours could hear. I felt so insecure and embarrassed about that. I spoke to our *sultan* (leader) in the camp, who divorced us. I then be-

4 Oral testimony, Al-Salam displaced persons' camp, July 2002

5 Oral testimonies, Al-Salam displaced persons' camps, July 2002

6 In-depth interview, Mayo displaced persons' camp, June 2002

came a free woman. Later I found a job and was able to take care of my children. I fed them and protected them...I had good neighbours who were always ready to help⁷

Sadia's narrative showed that she had to be not only the main provider for her family, but also the protector. Moreover, her neighbours offered help to her and her children. The narrator also revealed the main factor that triggered changes in her gender role, which was not loss or death of the husband, but choosing not to have a husband (by divorcing him) due to other factors such as him being abusive and drunk.

c. Independent access to information

In the absence of electricity and new technology such as computers and the internet, as sources of information, many displaced persons had to rely on other means to have access to information. One of these sources was radios that used batteries. That was common among men who would gather under trees by the road or at the market to listen to a radio owned by a friend.⁸ On the other hand, women, in particular those who worked in the city as maids and domestic servants, could watch TV and listen to the radio and chat with their employers on what they got from the radio and TV. Amona, from Mayo camp, who worked as a domestic servant in Khartoum North said to me:

I had been working with my employer for more than 5 years...they treated me as if I was a family member...I could watch TV once I finished my daily duties. I could also take food and newspapers home.

Women who traded outside the camps were also involved in marketing networks outside the camps. These networks included cash and carry shops, minibus drivers and shop retailers. From these networks, women could gather useful information.

Women tended to share information obtained outside the camps with women in the camps, their families and relatives. In this way women contributed to information gathering, sharing and networking in their community. Azia, a woman from Mayo camp who sold food in Khartoum North said:

We women created our own network of information...women who went to town had a chance to see what was going on there, spoke to their employers or customers, visited some officials and may got information from them. Even those who had been imprisoned brought some valuable information to us when they were released. This information was then passed on by word of mouth and shared with people in the camp... at least there was no need to depend on men to tell you about what was going on because they simply did not bother telling us...they thought that we did not deserve to know...this made us feel strong, informed, independent and powerful... we could also chat with our husbands and neighbours about what we knew.⁹

In this sense, women's newly developed livelihood strategies did not only help them to earn income, put also exposed them to the outside world and facilitated their access to information and helped them to gain an opportunity to be a source of in-

7 Women only discussion group, Al-Salam displaced persons' camp, July 2002

8 Informal observation, Al-Salam and Mayo displaced persons' camps, June-September 2002

9 In-depth interview, Mayo displaced persons' camp, August 2002

formation, as men did, and not only 'recipients' of information. Thus, information gathering and sharing at the household and community level was no longer a male preserve. Women could get involved in conversations with each other and with their family members about issues related to their business such as a rise in fuel prices, and political issues such as peace negotiation, repatriation etc.

d. Community role and relations

At displaced persons' camps women were able to develop relations across their gender and to provide assistance and support to each other. For example, newcomers to the camps would get help and support. Moreover, many women were able to develop a community-based revolving fund (*khata*), which was a women's self-help saving scheme, where each woman paid a small amount of money each month, and every month a woman took that money to be used for different purposes such as paying school fees, buying new household furniture or helping husbands to repay loans.¹⁰ Here it worth mentioning that such revolving fund initiatives were not unique to Sudanese displaced women as other displaced women in different countries such as Uganda had developed a similar financial self-help scheme. For example, Acholi women from Uganda who were displaced in Kitgum had developed similar *kalulu* (revolving funds) to help members of the group to overcome financial difficulties associated with their displacement experience (Olaa 2001:108).

Some of these *tajamoat* also had *jameeiat* (informal co-operatives). Women who were members of these *jameeiat* had agreed to buy some households items such as big pots, serving plates, big tents, and blankets which could be used by the members or the community, for wedding parties and other social occasions.¹¹ In this regard, the *tajamoat* could be regarded as informal financial institutions which were meant to ease displaced women's financial difficulties.

Pattern of return to the South

Displaced persons started returning to their place of origin in 1991 when SPLA managed to control much of the South, thus creating a positive atmosphere for displaced persons to return home (Ruiz 1998: 150). However, this did not last long. In the late 1991 SPLA-United attacked Dinka civilians in Bor. This decreased the returning pattern and increased displacement.

The second and the largest pattern of return emerged after the signing of the CPA, as the agreement itself focuses on voluntary return, thus bringing more hope for return to places of origin. Before returning, some displaced persons tended to send male relatives to assess the situation in terms of security, resources available as well as potential constraints, as information provided by the authorities was unreliable as it mostly based on political objectives rather than the reality there. In this

10 In-depth interviews, Al-Salam and Mayo displaced persons' camps, June-August 2002

11 Women only discussion groups, Al-Salam and Mayo displaced persons camps, June-August 2002

context, the international community, such as NRC, has established an Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) to provide information to those who want to return (Mezza 2005: 40). For example, the spontaneous return of displaced persons at Mabilia, South of Tambura showed difficulties that returnees would face on their way back home. Lorenz (2005:37-38) shows that several international organisations including IOM assisted some 5,000 displaced persons from ten different tribes to return to their villages in Bahr al Ghazal. They had to struggle with mines, mosquitoes, guinea worms, swamps and rivers etc. Their journey was planned to take 30 days but it took three and a half months. 43 lives were lost and 23 displaced persons were crushed to death by a truck before the arrival of IOM.

Research by the Livelihoods and Social Protection Cluster of the Joint Assessment Mission (JAM), UNHCR, suggested that by 2007 about 70% of displaced persons would have returned (Malik 2005:32). However, it seems that this estimation was exaggerated and did not reflect the reality, as many who it was thought would go back to their place of origin did not travel as planned. Moreover, sporadic fighting between government troops and SPLA in the South jeopardised such ambitions (Personal communication with Mr Ajan, a former soldier with SPLA, Khartoum 2008). Other challenges such as capacity and resources were also barriers to returning home (Malik 2005:32).

Kälén (2005:41) a representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, undertook a mission to evaluate the situation of returnees to Southern Sudan. He found that displaced persons were not informed about the situation in their places of origin. For example, most of them had unrealistic expectations regarding social services and livelihood opportunities. Moreover, some returnees had been attacked and looted on their way back home. After arrival many remained without shelter, food and clean water. They also felt unsafe due to militia activities, land mines and the presence of armed activities. Therefore as Verney argues (2010, online) some returnees had to go back to their displacement sites, such as the capital, proving that displacement was not yet a thing of the past.

Nevertheless, the long return process to Southern Sudan continued. In 2009 at least 280,000 displaced persons returned to their areas of origin. However, IOM estimates that 10% of return movements to and within Southern Sudan were unsuccessful due to a lack of basic services and livelihood opportunities. This led to secondary displacement (NRC 2010: 17). In 2009, nearly 390,000 people were newly displaced as a result of inter-ethnic fighting in Southern Sudan (NRC 2010: 15).

Conclusion

War in Southern Sudan had a devastating impact on social, economic and environmental resources. It also destroyed people's livelihood by killing their cattle and landmining their farms.

War also had a gender impact. For example, it led to a shortage of men. This increased women's responsibilities, as many of them had to be heads of their households. It also led to mass displacement. Nevertheless, in displaced persons' camps women managed to build new roles and to be the main breadwinners and protectors of their families as well as a source of information. Moreover, women were able to build community relationships across their gender and to provide assistance to each other.

Since the CPA, many people had started returning back to their homelands hoping to live in peace and to sustain a source of livelihood. Moreover, as the country was heading for secession, a mass return to places of origin was more likely to take place. However, it is difficult to speculate on how displaced women would rebuild new livelihoods there. Therefore, further research is needed to articulate their concerns, worries, priorities and needs.

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The Assessment and Mapping of Initiatives on Women Protection and Livelihood Support in South Darfur

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This research assesses women's need of protection and livelihood in South Darfur's IDPs camps and host communities, and makes a database on the organizations (national and international) and government bodies working with livelihood and protection. The humanitarian crisis in Darfur leaves women more vulnerable to high rates of poverty, violence (domestic violence, sexual gender-based violence), insecurity and displacement. Many studies about the effects of war on women have been carried out but most of them focus on IDP populations and do not include the host communities, although they contain some of the IDPs. The objectives of the need assessment were to quantify IDP women's needs around their human rights protection and livelihoods in South Darfur and to establish a database on institutions working on women's protection and livelihood needs including national and international agencies, women's organizations, and government bodies in South Darfur. This needs assessment uses participatory rapid assessment techniques, applying gender analysis tools and processes and combines qualitative and quantitative tools (interviews, focus group discussions, story telling, participant observations, active listening). The first part of the research concerned the training of the team in holding field surveys, how the team deals with IDPs inside the camp to give the right information. The result showed that women in IDPs camps practice different income-generating activities (IGAs) to earn money. They need more training in IGAs and in new forms of work that let their products compete in the market and earn more money. Regarding protection, women need more training programs in human rights and violence. Most women need to see that reporting violence against them has a result. This report is the result of a study undertaken by a team of academic staff from the Peace Studies and Community Development Centre, invited and supported by UNIFEM and the University of Nyala in 2007 and comparing and assessing the situation in 2011.

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Introduction

1.1 Background

The humanitarian crisis in Darfur since 2003 has had a negative impact on livelihoods as a result of deaths, insecurity, displacement and impoverishment of people, giving rise to both refugees and IDPs in various camps, spread throughout the three Darfur states. The war has also affected women and children more severely, leaving them more vulnerable in various areas of their livelihoods. This situation called for an integrated response to verified human rights violations associated with low social status, high rates of poverty within a humanitarian context. In this context, more focused programming, targeting women and children as a specific vulnerable group, is necessary and urgent. While various initiatives for the protection of the human rights and livelihood needs of women are on-going from the international community, the government of national unity of Sudan and local NGOs in South Darfur, there are several gaps in the programme content as well as in effective delivery of services, including coordination among the various stakeholders.

Secondly, the existing initiatives focus mainly on humanitarian services in which services and goods are provided to IDPs without their informed and/or active involvement in key decision-making, such as in designing how they would like those services organized and how they would like to be involved. For example, women's experiences and perspectives on their protection and livelihood needs and the priorities therein have not been sought nor how best those priority needs can be met according to their own perspectives. Furthermore, development actors have little or no information about the relationships and the finer intricacies between women's vulnerability, domestic violence and gender-based violence (GBV) and women's coping mechanisms, that is how effectively they are able to access treatment and their experiences in trying to access legal redress for these violations within the IDP camp situation. The needs assessment exercise attempts systematically to understand various dimensions of the existing initiatives around women's human rights protection and livelihoods needs. It includes the specific focus and scope of the existing initiatives; how the IDP women are engaged and placed to participate in them from an empowerment and gender perspective; women's coping mechanisms for these experiences; the achievements, challenges, gaps and impact of these programme initiatives.

The needs assessment is intended to provide, among other key outputs, a chronological narrative and scan of women's experiences, events, timelines between their arrival in the IDPs camps and the situation now; what women in particular visualize for the future; how they can be supported to achieve their dreams around peace and security; basic and strategic needs using the human rights, gender mainstreaming and empowerment frameworks; how effectively they are able to access treatment and their experiences in trying to access legal redress to these violations within IDP camp situation.

The situation in Darfur affects the women in many ways. Women become vulnerable to violence (domestic violence, sexual gender-based violence (SGBV), insecurity, displacement and impoverishment. Their livelihood is affected, they lack skills, and ways to improve themselves and earn more money to live a better life. The situation calls for integrated initiatives which focus mainly on humanitarian services. Services and goods are provided to IDPs without their informed and/or active involvement in key decision-making such as in designing how they would like those services organized and how they would like to be involved, human rights protection and livelihoods needs. These initiatives do not include the host communities around the camps, which are also affected and most of which have taken in displaced women.

The objectives of the study were to quantify IDP women's needs around their human rights protection and livelihoods in South Darfur, and establish a data base on institutions working with women's protection and livelihood needs including national and international agencies, women's organizations and government bodies in South Darfur.

Findings of the Study

500 participants were reached from IDP camps around Nyala. Regarding host community respondents, the assessment reached and successfully interviewed 275 persons from all host communities around the targeted camps (table 1)

Database of organizations working with women's protection and livelihood support in South Darfur

1. International NGOs: The result showed that a total of 22 International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) working with livelihood support and women's protection activities in South Darfur are covered by the research survey. 14 of these 22 INGOs are working in livelihood support activities, mainly nutrition, income generation, agriculture and water. But 20 of the above total number are also working in the field of women's protection, which includes several activities and issues, mainly women's education and health, human rights, and women's protection in general. There are 15 INGOs working in other fields which are not included in the main two sectors of research (livelihood and women's protection).

The main activities, which are shared by most of the international NGOs, are concern with environmental issues and community development, animal production and health.

These international NGOs are working in different geographical areas in South Darfur, covering all IDPs camps around Nyala city and host communities, in addition to some urban and rural areas like Kass, Zalige, El dian, Labudo, Rehaid el berti.

2. *National NGOs*: 28 non-governmental bodies are presented. Three have activities in women's livelihood support, seeing income generation as pivotal for women's support. In addition, the domain of nutrition is one of the important axes. Eight offer nutritional support. A lot of work is done on women's protection. Seven from the total number are interested in Gender (women) as an important question. Half (15) of the non-governmental bodies play a role in education while 17 focus on health, which is considered an important sector. The domain of human rights and environment has engaged less interest; three for these, and four for water. There are also other domains not denoted in the profile. There are many non-governmental bodies working in peace building and capacity building (5). The distribution of non-nutritional and agricultural materials is also one of the main interests. The study comes up with the fact that these non-governmental bodies focus much more on income generation and livelihood support that can lead to the stability of the targeted families.

3. *Government bodies*: The result of the survey also showed that there are four government institutions and bodies working in the above activities (table 3). The Ministry of Social and Cultural Affairs works with income generation activities for women in IDP camps around Nyala city and host communities. The Commission of Women and Child Affairs (CWCA) works as the main governmental body responsible for women and children affairs, so it has different policies and strategies concerning women activities. The CWCA is also working through a small body called Combating of Gender Based Violence Unit. It has direct responsibilities for finding alternatives for women's livelihoods and protection. It works in all of South Darfur state especially in IDP camps and host communities. The State Gender Based Violence Committee (SGBVC), has representatives from different governmental bodies, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (police), the Ministry of Justice, and the Commission of Women and Child affairs. The committee works as coordinator in women's protection, especially the issues concerning GBV.

Protection and livelihood issues for women

1. *Women's perspectives on protection and livelihood issues for women*

75% of women heard about issues of human rights from different sources like women's centers, through lectures, and from the radio. 31.3% of women know about issues of human rights through national centers inside the camp. 62.5% of women saw bad treatment as a violation of human rights in general (Chart 1).

2. *Violence experienced by women as IDPs*

93.8% of women answered that there were new forms of violence that differed from the forms they experienced in the villages before the conflict broke out.

Women defined the new types of violence they have in IDPs as being hit by strangers, rapes and the entrance of strange men into the camp at night (56.3%). 100% of the women agreed there were no outcomes of the attempts to address the violence experienced by women/girls.

100% of the women agreed that there was a difference in the impact experienced by women as IDPs.

68.8% of the women agreed that no one tried to help in addressing the violence against women and 6.3% agreed that some national organizations tried to give help, 12.5% that some international organizations tried to give help and 12.5% some camp leaders. Women in IDP camps came from different areas of Darfur. Some lived in South Darfur, West Darfur and a few were from North Darfur. The women's ages ranged between 15 and 65.

31.3% of the women were farmers before they became IDPs and 25% practiced farming and rearing animals; 31.3% were farmers and traders and 12.5% practiced other types of work like farming, trading and rearing animals.

In their villages, 56.3 % of the women interviewed said some women owned land for farming. Of the 56.3% only 14.34% owned land.

The women in IDP camps were involved in many types of IGA activities like handicrafts, pasta making and sewing (31.3%), woodcutting and handicrafts (6.3%), handicrafts and pasta making (25%), trading (25%) trading and farming (12.5%). (Chart 10)

Women in IGA groupings faced many problems such as the unavailability of capital (62.5%), unavailability of capital and raw materials (6.3%), absence of markets (6.3%) and 25% said there was no chance of work.

According to the results, the study found that there were only 28 non-governmental bodies working with livelihood and protection, which represents 32% of the total 86 organizations, reflecting a low percentage of organizations working in the humanitarian field.

The results revealed that 93.8% of women experience new forms of violence, indicating that there are new forms of violence brought by war.

According to the results, the existing initiatives focus mainly on humanitarian services without informed and/or active involvement in key decision-making and there are inadequate coping mechanisms for women in relation to their protection and livelihood needs.

Women practice (learn) new activities to earn money.

Women are not enrolled in groups. The percentage of camp leaders trying to give help in addressing the violence against women is small compared to the help coming from international NGOs.

6-Recommendations

- 1- Design program content as well as strategies.
- 2- Women have to organize themselves in groups.
- 3- Women need to be supported financially.
- 4- Non-governmental organizations must play a big role in IDP camps in services like health and education.
- 5- Women must have training in human rights.
- 6- There must action taken regarding reported violence against women and results shown.
- 7- Security and safety for women must be established.
- 8- Peace could be restored and sustained within IDP camps and communities through disarmed people and secure villages.

Table (1) Camps around Nyala

| No. | Name | No of IDPs |
|-----|---------------------|------------|
| 1 | Salam (south Nyala) | 5406 |
| 2 | Derage | 18919 |
| 3 | Elseraif | 13862 |
| 4 | Autash | 34835 |
| 5 | Mosay | 3273 |
| 6 | Sakeli | 5333 |
| 7 | Belale | 24436 |
| 8 | Domaya | 6692 |

| Areas of activities | Other activities | Main activities “ Protection” | Main activities “ Livelihood” | Name of organization |
|---|--|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| Ariaf, Kinein Area, Mireir, Gawaia | Orphans’ support Non-nutritional materials | Gender (women) Health Education | Women livelihood support | 1- Fatima Al Zahra’a |
| All Nyala camps, Nyala | | Education | | 2- African Charity Organization |
| Al Radum, Kafia Kanji | Human development Support of small farmers Non agricultural materials | Health Education | Income generation Nutrition | 3- Al Radum for Rural Development Organization RCO |
| Direij, Utash, Location of the organization | | Health Education | Income generation | 4- Basma Charity Organization |
| Utash, Nyala | School supplies Schools of health enlightenment Sports equipment (women) | Education Health | | 5- Rufaida Health Institution |

| | | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Bileil camp, Al Diain, Al Naiem, Sailia, Wazarid | | Gender (women) Health | Nutrition | 6- Sudanese Social Development Organization(SUDO) |
| Id Al Firsan, Nyala, Al Diain | | Education Water Environment Health | | 7- Massar for Nomadic Development Organization |
| Id Al Firsan, Riheid Al Birdi | Cultural Programmes | Education Water Health | Nutrition | 8- Rural Development Associations Network |
| Utash | Child protection Capacity raising | Human rights | | 9- Bader for Development Organization |
| Karari, Hai Al Wadi, Al Sika Hadid, Direij, Utash, Sireif | | Gender (women) | | 10- South Darfur Network for AIDS prevention |
| Mireir, Nyala, Hai Al Wihda, Alban Dgadid, Utash | Training workshops | Human rights Health | Income generation | 11- Gadam Al Kheir for Child Charity Organization |
| Radio station (west), Al Sika Hadid, Al Nil, Al Yarmuk | | Education Health | Income generation Nutrition | 12- Mubaderun Organization |
| Hai Al Wihda, Sakali camp, Sarafaia | | Health | Nutrition | 13- Um Saddam Charity Organization |
| | Cultural symposiums | Education | Women livelihood Income generation | 14- Divorced Women and Absentees Care Charity Organization |
| Kalma, Utash, Direij, Al Salam camp | Cultural and sport training | Education Health | | 15- Al Yafien for Child Organization |
| Kalma, Bakhita centre, Nyala | Protection Negociation skills | Gender (women) Education | Income generation Nutrition | 16- Bakhita Charity Organization |
| Kalma, Zalindgei | Capacity building Awareness raising Legal support | Education | | 17- Good Will Organization |
| Al Madina centre | AIDS Prevention and bad tradition striving | Gender (women) Health | | 18- Al Madina Gender Centre |
| Utash, Al Muhafiz Area, Al Malaja Market, Al Fowz west | Children's clothing | Environment Health | Nutrition | 19- Al Rahma Charity Organization |
| Dar Al Salam Area | | Education | Income generation | 20- Productive Projects Development |
| | Id jolliness Capacity building | Health | | 21- Haraza for Peace and Rural Renaissance Organization |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| Marla, Tulus, Abu Ajura, Direisa | | Gender (women) Human rights Health | | 22- Ahlam for Child and Motherhood |
| Kass, Bileil, Nyala, Sireif | | Health | Income generation | 23- National Welfare and Development Organization |
| Hireiza, Gandura, Mukhabri, Dandura, Um Lawuta | | Education Peace building Water | Nutrition | 24- Relief and Development Association |
| Kalma, Yara faculty, Direij | Rehabilitation and training | Gender (women) Education Water | | 25- Jabal Marra Charity Organization |
| Utash, Location of the organization | Non nutritional materials distribution | | Livelihood support Nutrition | 26- Al Ajial Charity Organization |
| Direij camp, Sakali, University of Nyala, Manuashei, Bireir | Peace culture | Human rights Education Environment Health | Livelihood support Income generation | 27- Raiahin Al Salam Charity Organization |
| Bileil camp | Capacity building of women | Human rights | Women livelihood support Income generation | 28- Sudanese Initiative for the Horn of Africa |
| Nyala,Kass | | | livelihood support Income generation | 29- People Organization for Development & Rehabilitation |
| Alsalam\Sharia | | | livelihood support Income generation | 30- Sudanese Popular Committee for Relief and Rehabilitation |
| Nyala, Buram | | | livelihood support Income generation | 31- Al Radoum Charity Organization |
| Nyala | | | livelihood support Income generation | 32- Social Solidarity Organization(SSO) |
| Nyala | | | livelihood support Income generation | 33- Peace Development National Organization (PDNO) |
| Nyala , Idd Elfursan | | | livelihood support Income generation | 34- Noon Charity Organization (NCO) |
| Nyala , Tulus | | | livelihood support Income generation | 35- Mubadroun Organization (MUBADRUN) |

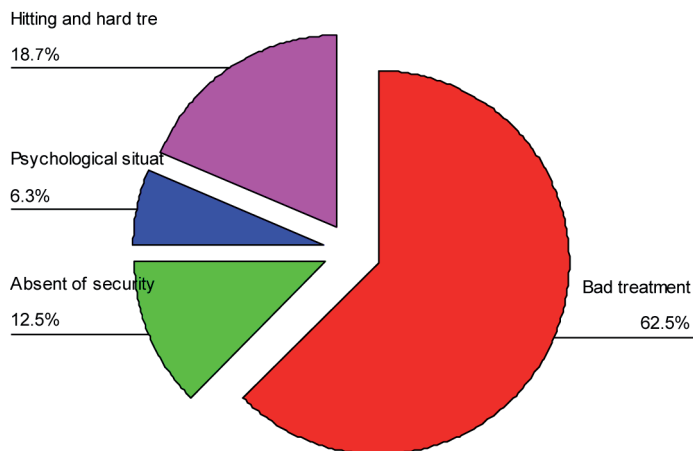
| | | | | |
|-------|--|--|---|--|
| Nyala | | | livelihood support Income generation | 36- Productive Project Development Organization (PPDO) |
| Nyala | | | livelihood support Income generation | 37- Afag for Peace & Development (Afag) |
| Nyala | | | livelihood support Income generation | 38- Mona Solar for Environment Organization (MSEO) |

Table (3) International NGOs

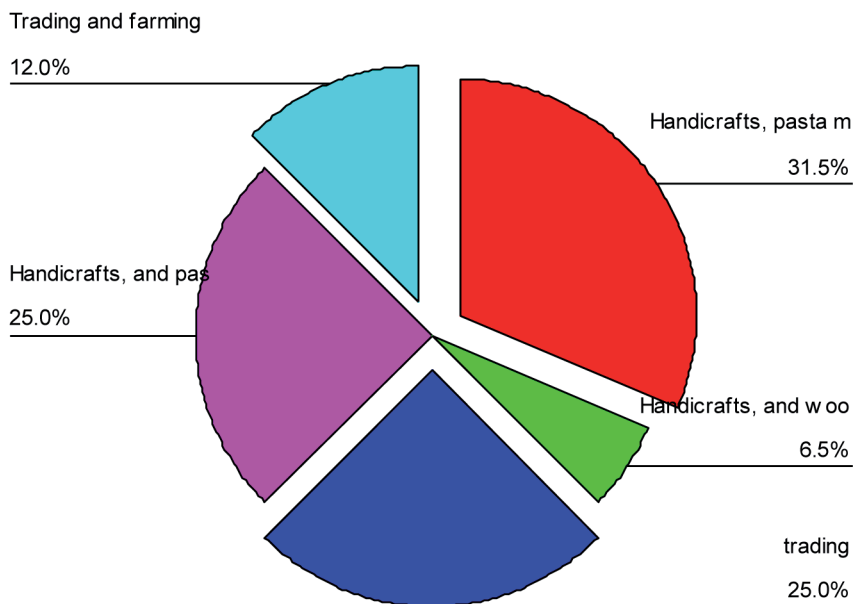
| Name of Organization | Main Activities | | | Area of Work |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| | Livelihood support | Women protection | Others | |
| (1) ZOA | -income generation -water -agriculture | -Education | -Community health -Animal production - Environment | -Gerida -Abujara |
| (2) International Rescue Committee (IRC) | -Nutrition | -Human rights -Women's health | -Rule of law -child & youth care -coordinator camp - Environment | -Kass -Kalma -Otash -Drieg -Bleal |
| (3) Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) International | - Nutrition - Income generation | | Animal Health Building houses Care of IDPs | Otach Driag El salam Kalma Umksar |
| (4) Development alternative (DAI) | | Women Protection | Development of Nomadic communities Reconciliations | Nyala Kass Zalinga East of Jable |
| (5) Samaritans Purse | Nutrition | Education | | Shiria Nyala East of Jable |
| (6) Muslim Aid, UK | Income generation | Gender (women) Education Health | | Sakali Mosa Nyala El dian |
| (7) Care International | Nutrition | Health | Community Development Environment | Nyala Kass Zalinga |
| (8) International Services Aid | | Health | Environment | Malam Shiria Derbat |
| (9) Spanish Red Cross | Nutrition | Health | Environment | Kalma Bilial Rehaid |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| (10) Soldieries | Nutrition | Education health | Coordinate Camp Community Development | El dian Mhagria Labodu |
| (11) Finland Red Cross | | Health | | Nyala |
| (12) Turkish Red Cross | | Health | | Nyala |
| (13) Tear fund | Nutrition | Health | Environment | Adila El dian |
| (14) Merlin | | Health | | Greada Sani afidi |
| (15) Medicine De Monde (MDM) | | Health | Mobile Clinic | Kalma Kass Nyalas |
| (16) Oxfam | Water | Health | Environment | Kalma Greada Umdokhon |
| (17) Johannter | | Health | | Nyala Kass EL dian |
| (18) Medicines Sans Frontier | | Health | | Nyala Kalma Mahagria |
| (19) Action Faimme | Nutrition Water | | Emergences | Nyala Kalma Greada |
| (20) World Vision | Nutrition Water Agriculture | Health Education | Social Welfare | Nyala Rehaid SHeria |
| (21) Norwegian Refugee Council | Nutrition | Education | Coordinate Camp | Kalma Aboajora Greada |
| (22) American Refugee Council | Water Agriculture | Education | Agriculture | Greada Tuols Demsoss |

Violation of human rights



Type of activities



2-Charles Villa. (2002) The art of Reconciliation. South Africa: Life and peace Institute.

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Gender & Transitional Justice: An Empirical Study on Somalia

Fowsia Abdulkadir¹ & Rahma Abdulkadir²

Introduction

Transitional justice can be understood as a holistic approach that could be useful in the processes of addressing systemic or pervasive human rights violation during limited or failed statehood periods such as times of civil war, (Bell & O'Rourke, 2007: 23-29pp). Nonetheless, initially this holistic model of transitional justice did not recognize gender based violence³ against women and girls (i.e. sexual violence) during war time as crimes against humanity. Further, the original model or approaches to transitional justice viewed sexual violence against women and girls as crimes against dignity and honour, (Frank, 2006). Over the past few decades, transitional justice approaches have undergone a significant change, demonstrated by two key events: the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. These two tribunals have dealt with issues and cases of sexual violence against women during war time, unlike previous tribunals. For illustration, both of these tribunals have recognized that rape as well as other types of sexual violence against women and girls can in fact be viewed as crimes against humanity that can be used as tools to commit genocide.

This in turn has definitely permanently altered the original model that was at the heart of transitional justice jurisprudence. Moreover, during the last few years the transitional justice agenda has come to include several mechanisms used to hold perpetrators of sexual violence against women and girls accountable and these can be categorized as (1) recognition, which includes both the domestic and international indictment of perpetrators, lustration of perpetrators, public apologies to victims and their families among other things; and (2) reparation, which refers to material

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3 The phrases sexual violence against women and girls and gender-based violence against women and girls are used inter-changeably. According to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the term **gender-based violence (GBV)** is used to distinguish violence that targets individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender from other forms of violence. It includes any act which results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm. GBV includes violent acts such as rape, torture, mutilation, sexual slavery, forced impregnation and murder. It also defines threats of these acts as a form of violence.

compensation to victims and their family members, (Frazer et al, 2003). In other words, as a direct result of the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, sexual violence against women and girls during war time is now considered as a weapon of war and, in some cases such as Rwanda, a tool employed to commit genocide. This, has thus replaced the view of gender-based violence during war as acts of violence against dignity and honour in the literature of transitional justice (Frank, 2006). Since these tribunals many studies have looked at how gender-based violence during war time can be addressed in democratizing nations and war torn countries in Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia.

Yet, there remain serious gaps in the literature concerned with the gendering of the approaches to transitional justice. For instance, on the one hand, there has been much effort in documenting and discussing how transitional justice can assist in improving the plight of women and girls that have been subjected to systemic sexual violence in civil war torn countries and in areas of limited statehood such as Sudan and Rwanda; on the other hand, many other cases remain undocumented and unexplored. The Somali case is instructive here as it provides for a complex case study in so far as it combines a complete collapse of the state and a protracted civil war.

Some scholars have argued that local Somali social organizations, and the norms that come with them (i.e. traditional Somali *xeer*), might have significant use in building a model of transitional justice that can provide mechanisms to deal with the widespread crimes against humanity in Somalia. The Somali kin-based traditional *xeer* or customary law can be conceptualized as a set of informal customary rules and norms that regulates most aspects of social life (e.g. socio-economic and political aspects) within and between Somali clan families, (Lewis, 2008). This paper, using survey data, aims to document the opinions of Somali men and women from different regions of Somalia on how to formulate a model of transitional justice that addresses the pervasive gender-based violence against women and girls that has been occurring in Somalia for more than two decades. It should be noted that the acts referred to as systematic sexual violence against women and girls that have been taking place in Somalia include rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery, (Gardner & El Bushra, 2004: 15-24pp). The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war refers to situations in which there are widespread and systemic acts of sexual violence that specifically target women and girls. Further, since the beginning of the ongoing civil war widespread systemic sexual violence against women and girls has been documented in Somalia by the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, (UNICEF Somalia, 1997).

Based on the above brief account from the perspective of an individual there is an interesting empirical question, as follows: Can the Somali *xeer* or customary law be a key determinant in the process of building a model of transitional justice that addresses sexual war crimes against women and girls in Somalia? In other words, this paper aims to empirically investigate whether Somalis hold the view that the Somali traditional *xeer* system should play a central role in the process of creating a model of transitional justice that can address the pervasive gender-based violence that has been taking place for the last twenty years in this war-torn country. This question can

be addressed using data compiled through surveys. This paper analyzes this dataset with a view to answering the above question using statistical techniques for surveys. Thus the overall objective of this paper is to investigate public opinion among Somalis about the role of the Somali traditional *xeer* or customary law in building a model of transitional justice that can address the pervasive gender-based violence against that has been taking place for the last twenty years in this war-torn country.

If, other things equal, survey respondents who believe that the Somali customary law or *xeer* should be central to the creation of a transitional justice model for Somalia also hold the view that the pervasive sexual violence against women in Somalia is a systematic tool or weapon of war, then there is strong support among the participants of the study for the types of arguments found in gender and transitional justice literature. In other words, if there is perception that acts of sexual violence against women during the war were actually war crimes against humanity, then there is support for the contentions found in the gender and transitional justice literature. On the other hand, if the survey respondents hold the view that sexual violence against women and girls in Somalia are acts against honour and dignity of the family and the clan i.e. not tools of war; then there is evidence in the data that there is no support for the above discussed view of gender-based violence as a weapon of war during armed conflict. Thus, the paper is organized as follows: the next section of the paper provides a brief and concise literature review of different perspectives on addressing gender-based violence against women during war time. Section three of the paper describes the expected empirical relationship, while section four of the paper provides a description of the survey and variables employed in this paper. Section five of the paper discusses the empirical methods used in the paper and section six provides the empirical findings of the paper. Finally, section seven concludes the paper.

Background to the Study

As highlighted above, efforts to add gender to transitional justice approaches have been most prominent with respect to addressing the treatment of sexual violence in conflict. In the course of the past two decades there has emerged in the transitional justice literature a focused feminist mobilization. This is organized around the goal of ending impunity for violence against women in general and sexual violence against women during war in particular, the use of sexual violence against women as weapon of war and a tool to commit genocide, (Bell & O'Rourke: 2007, 30-36pp). As mentioned above, this mobilization had a very clear relevance for transitional justice mechanisms, as it sought to draw attention to the widespread and systematic occurrence of sexual violence against women and girls in situations of armed conflict such as civil wars that have taken place in African countries. It stood on theorized notions of the relationship of gender to violence, and of the use and limits of international law, domestic laws and indigenous/local customary laws as tools with which to

address such violence (Bell & O'Rourke: 2007, 30-36pp). The rationale for the mobilization had three particular goals: first to ensure the recognition of gender-based violence against women during armed conflict as a serious war crime against humanity; second, to ensure prosecution for such war crimes; and third to ensure that legal procedures in courtrooms do not re-victimize the victims of gender-based war crimes, (Frank: 2006, 813-5pp). In short, the overall purpose of the mobilization was to secure the recognition of sexual violence against women in armed conflict as one of the most serious crimes of war by adding rape as a grave breach of the Geneva Convention of crimes against humanity and genocide (Frank: 2006, 813-5pp). Also, the famous Rome Statute⁴ of the International Criminal Court (ICC) codified the above discussed developments and went one step further by not only acknowledging rape but also sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, pregnancy and sterilization as crimes of war against humanity.

As mentioned above, the Somali case study is both important and interesting for two reasons: (1) there is a gap in both the mainstream transitional justice and in the gender and transitional justice literatures as the Somali case has received very little attention; and (2) the Somali case can be instructive in illuminating new useful paths or approaches to transitional justice as it provides for a complex case study in so far as it combines a complete collapse of the state and a protracted civil war. For example, while there have been multiple scholarly studies on other African war-torn countries such as Rwanda, Uganda, and Sierra Leone in the mainstream transitional justice literature, there has mostly been policy oriented United Nations reports on the Somali case with the exception of one study conducted by Margherita Zuin. In this study Zuin contends that it is imperative to employ an eclectic and unique approach to transitional justice that combines an internal local approach (i.e. *xeer*) based on Somalia's pastoral nomadic patri-lineal norms, local interpretations/applications of the *Shari'*⁵ and international approaches that have come out of the experiences of other war-torn societies, (Zuin, 2008: 90-108pp). Zuin's study is a very important and useful empirical work that explores a neglected case (i.e. Somalia); however, this study is limited in two ways: (1) it is concerned with a general model of transitional justice at the nation-state level and does not look into the specifics of gender and transitional justice in the Somali context; and (2) the model that is proposed in Zuin's paper does not take into account the gendered implications of applying patriarchal, traditional patri-lineal Somali *xeer* or customary law. A few words on the Somali tradition *xeer* or customary law regarding gender equality are in order here.

In the Somali traditional *xeer*, just as among other pastoralist peoples, male domination is reflected in ownership and herding of animals as well as in universality of *patri-lineal* descent and widespread *patri-local* residence, (Gardner & El Bushra, 2004: 15-24pp). In other words, the Somali system of kinship or clanism that underpins every aspect of life in this society is characterized by patriarchy and dichot-

4 For more details please see United Nations *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, 17 July 1998

5 Sharia is the code of law derived from the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Mohammed; however, Islamic laws and norms are interpreted and applied differently in different parts of the world

omization of the sexes. Therefore, segregation of the sexes and gender stratification, via patriarchy, are fundamental attributes of the tradition of the ‘pastoral-democrats’ found in this part of the world. Given that, there are multiple problems that contribute to the subjugation of women in the traditional Somali pastoral systems. For example, the traditional Somali customary law views violence against women and girls, especially rape, as acts against the honour and dignity of the involved woman/ girl’s clan, (Gardner & El Bushra, 2004: 15-24pp). Further, solutions to such problems often involved putting the dignity of the clans of both the victim and perpetrators before the basic individual rights of the victim. Therefore, it is imperative to seriously examine any suggestion that places the traditional *xeer* at the center of the transitional justice model for this nation.

Thus, this paper explores the following research question: can the Somali *xeer* or customary law provide a model of transitional justice that addresses the acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have been occurring during Somalia’s twenty-year ongoing civil war? Although, there are not many empirical studies that evaluate the role of the Somali traditional *xeer*’s capacity to address the widespread war crimes in the country, some scholars have argued that informal Somali social organization, and the norms that come with them might have significant use in the process of building a model of transitional justice for Somalia in general, (Zuin, 2008). This paper questions whether the Somali traditional *xeer* system can provide a viable model of transitional justice that can address the prevalent war crimes that have been taking place for the last twenty years in this war-torn country. The overall objective of this project is to investigate public opinion among Somalis about the usefulness of the Somali traditional *xeer* or customary law in building a model of transitional justice that can address the systematic and widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have been taking place in Somalia over the past two decades. The next section presents the key empirical hypotheses.

Empirical Hypotheses

The above sub-section presented the background to the study. The following table summarizes the expected empirical relationships. The effects of the factors to be controlled (i.e. gender) are described as well.

| Dependent Variable (Y _i): Question 10: (can customary law address rape during war time? CUSRAPE) | |
|--|-------------------|
| Independent Variable Names | Expected Relation |
| X _{1i} (Question 12) → Weapon of war | Negative |
| X _{2i} (Question 9) → Indignity | Positive |
| X _{3i} (Question 11) → Women’s Voice | Negative |
| X _{4i} (Question 13) → Prosecute perpetrators | Negative |

The combination of the above expected relationships forms the central empirical hypothesis regarding the validity of the causal relation espoused in the following thesis: the Somali traditional *xeer* can address the pervasive sexual violence against women that has been taking place over the last twenty years in this country; and sexual violence against women during the ongoing civil war in Somalia are seen as weapons of war, rather than acts against honour and dignity. That is, if it is the case that the respondents hold the view that Somali *xeer* or customary law can act as an effective mechanism for addressing gender based violence against women and girls, then the above relations should hold provided that there is interest among the population in addressing occurrences of gender based sexual violence against women and girls during the war. This general hypothesis has to be evaluated having controlled for gender and regional affiliation, two important sociological factors. Finally, given the nature of the variables, contingency table analysis would be highly suitable. However, there are many cases to consider and to reduce that number in order to get significant results some data manipulation was considered and implemented. In the next section of the paper the data for the relevant variables are described and data transformations discussed.

The Survey, Variables & Empirical Method

The survey had more than twenty questions and only 6 of those questions were used for this paper. The survey was conducted by the authors and was conducted in Canada and the United States. There were a total of 80 responses from the survey, however only 73 responses had values for all of the pertinent variables; therefore, the final data only included 73 responses and the remaining were dropped from the analysis. The data creation process is described in detail below, after the univariate analysis is carried out.

The first variable described is the dependent variable, which is Question number 10 of the survey:

$Y_i \rightarrow$ *the Somali traditional xeer or customary law can provide a viable model of transitional justice that can address the systematic widespread gender-based violence against women and girls that has taken place during the Somali civil war.* This variable is named *CUSRAPE* and is not normally distributed. Further, a little over 20% of the responses are concentrated in values above the “Neutral” categorization. This does not bode well for the empirical analyses since this indicates only 20 % of the respondents hold strong beliefs towards agreement with the statement that the traditional Somali *xeer* can be a useful mechanism in dealing with sexual violence against women during the Somali civil war. Table 1 in Appendix A provides some basic statistics on all of the variables of interest. For the dependent variable it is clearly seen that the majority of the data lie in the ordinal categories of 3, 2 and 1 (a total of 74.1%), implying that a major portion of the surveyed individuals believed that the

Somali *xeer* or customary law could not provide a viable model of transitional justice that addresses the systematic and pervasive sexual violence against women and girls that has taken place during the civil war in Somalia. Further, there is enough variation in the data that inference can also be drawn for those who did agree with the statement.

Question 12 of the survey is the first independent variable X_{1i} : \rightarrow *The systematic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have been occurring during the ongoing civil war in Somalia have been used as weapons of war by the perpetrators of these acts.* This variable is named *weapon of war*. The frequency distribution for this variable with an overlay of the Normal distribution is provided in Table 1 of Appendix A. It is clear from this table that the data are not *normally* distributed, especially given that the data are concentrated in values above the “Neutral” categorization. This bodes well for the general hypothesis to be evaluated. It seems that a fair number of the respondents do believe that systematic widespread sexual violence against women and girls during the ongoing Somali civil war has been used as a weapon of war. Whether this significantly affects the relationships hypothesized will be apparent in the bivariate analyses. Table 1 demonstrates that 71.2% of those surveyed view acts of sexual violence against women and girls in this war-afflicted country as tools or weapons of war.

Question 9 of the survey is the second independent variable X_{2i} : \rightarrow *The systematic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have been occurring during the ongoing civil war are acts against dignity and have not been used as weapons of war.* This variable is named *indignity*. The frequency distribution for this variable with an overlay of the Normal distribution is provided in Table 1 of Appendix A. The data are concentrated in values below the “Neutral” categorization. This demonstrates interestingly the indication that not many survey respondents strongly view the use of sexual violence against women and girls as acts against honour and dignity. Indeed, as per Table 1, 17.7% of respondents agreed or completely agreed with the statement in Question 9. This is a good indication for the overall hypothesis.

Question 11 of the survey is the third independent variable X_{3i} : \rightarrow *The Somali traditional xeer can be useful in building a model of transitional justice that accounts for Somali women’s voice in the processes of addressing systematic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have taken place during the ongoing civil war.* This variable is named *women’s voice*. The frequency distribution for this variable with an overlay of the Normal distribution is provided in Table of Appendix A. It is clear from this table that the data are not Normally distributed; indeed it is especially skewed to the left relative to the other distributions. Table 1 indicates that the vast majority of respondents (79.5%) disagree or completely disagree with the above statement i.e. they believe that it is unlikely that the traditional customary law would espouse institutions that would directly account for women’s voices in building a model of transitional justice that addresses sexual violence against women that occurred during the Somali civil war. This is another indication that many of the respondents consider that sexual violence against women during the Somali civil war were in fact weapons of war as explained above.

Question 13 of the survey is the fourth independent variable, $X_{4i} \rightarrow$ *in Somalia there is a need to prosecute perpetrators of systematic sexual violence against women and girls during the ongoing civil war*. This variable is named *prosecute perpetrators*. The frequency distribution for this variable with an overlay of the Normal distribution is provided in Table 1 of Appendix A. It is clear from this table that the data are much more normally distributed relative to the distributions of the other variables. Little over half of respondents (61.2% from Table 1) believe that perpetrators of systematic sexual violence against women and girls must be prosecuted i.e. legal authority would need to take priority over traditional customary when dealing with acts of systematic sexual violence against women that have taken place during the civil war. This acts as a confirmation of the statistics for dependent variable *CUSRAPE* above.

The control variable is *gender*. The survey data are almost evenly split between female and male respondents. A little over 60% of the respondents were male and the remaining female. Therefore, this should be an important control variable as it is not skewed and there is variation across this dichotomous variable. Finally, for all of the variables considered the medians are reported in Table 1 as well. The median numbers are important as the distributions for many of the variables are skewed indicating that the average as a measure of central tendency may not be the best. Comparing the medians it is seen that they correspond well to the raw percentages of being above/below neutral. Next, a detailed description of the appropriate statistical methods employed for evaluating the hypotheses is given.

We need to determine whether individuals, in this case survey respondents, who believe that the Somali traditional *xeer* or customary law can provide a viable model of transitional justice for addressing the systematic widespread gender- based violence against women and girls that has taken place during the Somali civil war (Y_i), also believe that the systematic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have occurred during the ongoing civil war are weapons of war (X_{1i}). The first step is identification of the dependent variable. The primary dependent variable will be the response to Question 10 (*CUSRAPE*). This variable is denoted as Y_i where the subscript denotes the i^{th} survey respondents' response. In order to test the general hypothesis above, what is required is to find out whether a Completely Agree type response to Question 10 (*CUSRAPE*) can be explained by similar responses to Questions: 12 (Weapons of War), 9 (Indignity), 11 (Women's Voice) and 13 (Prosecute Perpetrators).

The first independent variable, *weapon of war*, should vary negatively, as hypothesized above, with the dependent variable *CUSRAPE* Y_i ; let X_{1i} denote this first independent variable *weapon of war*. In other words, as Y_i increases X_{1i} should decrease. Further, in order to evaluate whether a strong belief in the sexual violence against women and girls in Somalia over the past twenty years (i.e. the current civil war period) exists, it is necessary to assess the relationship between these beliefs. In other words, the response to Question 9 (i.e. *The systematic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have occurring during the ongoing civil war are acts against dignity and have not been used as weapons of war*), which is the second independ-

ent variable denoted as X_{2i} , should be positively related to the dependent variable (Question 10). In other words, as Y_i increases X_{2i} should also increase.

An important condition that is required for the creation of a model of transitional justice that would deal with disputes between victims and/or families of victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence against women and girls in Somalia is a belief in the need to hold perpetrators accountable for the sexual war crimes committed. This means that respondents should hold the view that accounting women's voice (i.e. including women in the decision-making processes) is very important. Thus, Question 11, the third independent variable denoted as X_{3i} , (i.e. *The Somali traditional xeer can be useful in building a model of transitional justice that accounts for Somali women's voices in the processes of addressing systematic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have taken place during the ongoing civil war*) should also be negatively related to $CUSRAPE Y_i$ (Question 10). In other words, as Y_i increases X_{3i} should decrease.

Further, another key factor to consider is whether respondents' views regarding the role of the Somali *xeer* or customary law in building a model of transitional justice that can address gender-based violence against women and girls are directly connected to the respondents' belief in the usefulness of the *xeer* in prosecuting perpetrators of sexual violence against women and girls during the ongoing civil war. Thus, Question 13, the fourth independent variable denoted as X_{4i} , (i.e. *In Somalia there is a need to prosecute perpetrators of systematic sexual violence against women and girls during the ongoing civil war*) should also be negatively related to the dependent variable $CUSRAPE Y_i$ (Question 10). In other words, as Y_i increases X_{4i} should decrease.

The relations hypothesized above can be influenced by a variety of factors that must be controlled. Indeed, gender may play a large role. Therefore, one key control variable is considered, namely the responses to Question 1. Furthermore, all of the variables considered in the analysis are of the ordinal variety excepting the gender variable (Question 1, denoted as C_{1i}). The gender variable is dichotomous. The nature of the variables therefore influences the statistical techniques employed to evaluate the general hypothesis. The next paragraph describes the techniques employed.

The vast majority of the variables considered in this paper are of the ordinal variety. Therefore, the main statistical method to be used for inference on the hypotheses outlined above is contingency tables analyses. Although a regression analysis was initially considered, the authors decided to go with contingency tables analyses as regression analysis proved to be problematic due to the ordinal nature of the variables analyzed in this paper. Along with the contingency tables, since the data are primarily of the ordinal variety, Gamma and Kendall's Tau-b are employed as measures of association. Kendall's Tau-c was not employed as all of the contingency tables are such that the number of rows and columns are equal. SPSS provides significance values on the measures of association that are used to verify whether the relations suggested are significant or not.

The data creation process for analysis was as follows. First, the raw data were examined in SPSS and those questions that were not considered for analysis were

deleted. Deletion of these cases would not affect the significance of any results as the raw data had a relatively large dimension (N = 80) relative to the categories of the ordinal variables considered (6). Also, the responses for Question 1 were modified as follows. Females had values equal to 2 and those values were replaced with a 0. The next section of the paper presents the empirical findings

Empirical Results

Table 3.1: → CUSRAPE → (Question 10) & Gender (Question 1)
 $Y_i \rightarrow$ (Question 10) - *the Somali traditional xeer or customary law can provide a viable model of transitional justice that can address the systematic widespread gender-based violence against women and girls that has taken place during the Somali civil war*

| | Scale | # of Females | % of Females | # of Males | % of Males | | Total |
|---------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|------------|--|-------|
| Completely Disagree | 1 | 8 | 27.6% | 19 | 43.2% | | 27 |
| | 2 | 15 | 51.7% | 3 | 6.8% | | 18 |
| | 3 | 2 | 6.9% | 7 | 15.9% | | 9 |
| Neutral | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 9.1% | | 4 |
| | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| | 6 | 3 | 10.3% | 2 | 4.5% | | 5 |
| Completely Agree | 7 | 1 | 3.5% | 9 | 20.5 | | 10 |
| Total | | 29 | 100% | 44 | 100% | | 73 |
| | | Females | Males | | | | |
| Kendall's tau-b | -0.693 | -0.498 | | | | | |
| Gamma | -0.812 | -0.569 | | | | | |
| N of valid cases | 29 | 44 | | | | | |

The above table provides contingency tabulation for the dependent variable Y_i by Gender. The values in the table indicate that for female respondents there exists a strong negative association as approximately 79% of them either completely disagree or disagree with the statement: *the Somali traditional xeer or customary law can provide a viable model of transitional justice that can address the systematic widespread gender-based violence against women and girls that has taken place during the Somali civil war*. Likewise, many of the male respondents (64%) either completely disagree or disagree with this statement. Also, it should be noted that 9% of male respondents choose to be neutral and 24% of male respondents completely agree with above statement; compared to 13% who either agree or completely agree with the above statement and there are no female respondents who choose to be neutral. Lastly, the strong negative association for the females is further confirmed by the direction of the Gamma (-0.812) and Kendall's tau-b (-0.693); whereas there exists a moderate negative association for the males given the direction of the Gamma (-0.569) and Kendall's tau-b (-0.498)

Table 3.2: Weapon of War (Question 12) & Gender

X_{ii} -> Question 12:-> *The systemic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have occurring during the ongoing civil war in Somalia have been used as weapons of war by the perpetrators of these acts*

| | Scale | # of Females | % of Females | # of Males | % of Males | Total |
|---------------------|---------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------|
| Completely Disagree | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4.5% | 2 |
| | 2 | 1 | 3.5% | 2 | 4.5% | 3 |
| | 3 | 1 | 3.5% | 2 | 4.5% | 3 |
| Neutral | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.3% | 1 |
| | 5 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 9.1% | 4 |
| | 6 | 5 | 17.2% | 3 | 6.9% | 8 |
| Completely Agree | 7 | 22 | 75.8% | 30 | 68.2% | 52 |
| Total | | 29 | 100% | 44 | 100% | 73 |
| | Females | Males | | | | |
| Kendall's tau-b | -0.753 | -0.588 | | | | |
| Gamma | -0.911 | -0.738 | | | | |
| N of valid cases | 29 | 44 | | | | |

The above table provides contingency tabulation results for the first independent variable X_{ii} (*weapon of war*) by Gender. The values in the table indicate that for female respondents there exists a strong positive association as more than 90% of them either completely agree or agree with the statement: *the systematic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have occurring during the ongoing civil war in Somalia have been used as weapons of war by the perpetrators of these acts*. Likewise, many of the male respondents, 75% either completely agree or agree with this statement. Also, it should be noted that 13% of male respondents completely disagree with above statement; compared to 7% of females who disagree with the above statement and there are no female respondents who choose to be neutral. Lastly, the strong negative association for the females is further confirmed by the direction of the Gamma (-0.911) and Kendall's tau-b (-0.753); whereas there exists a moderate negative association for the males given the direction of the Gamma (-0.738) and Kendall's tau-b (-0.588).

Table 3.3: Indignity (Question 9) & Gender

X_{2i} -> Question 9:-> *The systemic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have been occurring during the ongoing civil war are acts against dignity and have not been used as weapons of war*

| | Scale | # of Females | % of Females | # of Males | % of Males | Total |
|---------------------|---------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------|
| Completely Disagree | 1 | 14 | 48.3% | 35 | 79.6% | 49 |
| | 2 | 5 | 17.2% | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| | 3 | 3 | 10.3% | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Neutral | 4 | 1 | 3.5% | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 5 | 2 | 6.9% | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 6 | 2 | 6.9% | 7 | 15.9% | 9 |
| Completely Agree | 7 | 2 | 6.9% | 2 | 4.5% | 4 |
| Total | | 29 | 100% | 44 | 100% | 73 |
| | Females | Males | | | | |
| Kendall's tau-b | -0.613 | -0.729 | | | | |
| Gamma | -0.722 | -0.859 | | | | |
| N of valid cases | 29 | 44 | | | | |

The above table provides contingency tabulation results for the first independent variable X_{2i} (*indignity*) by Gender. The values in the table indicate that for female respondents there exists a strong positive association as more than 75.8% of them either complete disagree or disagree with the statement: *the systematic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have been occurring during the ongoing civil war are acts against dignity and have not been used as weapons of war*. Likewise, many of the male respondents, 79.6% completely disagree with this statement. Lastly, the strong negative association for both females and males is further confirmed by the direction of the Gamma (-0.722) and Kendall's tau-b (-0.613) for females; and for males Gamma (-0.859) and Kendall's tau-b (-0.729).

Table 3.4: Women's Voice (Question 11) & Gender

X_{3i} -> Question 11:-> *The Somali traditional xeer can be useful in building a model of transitional justice that accounts for Somali women's voice in the processes of addressing systemic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have taken place during the ongoing civil war*

| | Scale | # of Females | % of Females | # of Males | % of Males | Total |
|---------------------|---------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------|
| Completely Disagree | 1 | 10 | 34.5% | 7 | 15.9% | 17 |
| | 2 | 13 | 44.8% | 10 | 22.7% | 23 |
| | 3 | 1 | 3.5% | 1 | 2.3% | 2 |
| Neutral | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4.5% | 2 |
| | 5 | 3 | 10.3% | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | 6 | 2 | 6.9% | 12 | 27.3% | 14 |
| Completely Agree | 7 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 27.3 | 10 |
| Total | | 29 | 100% | 44 | 100% | 73 |
| | Females | Males | | | | |
| Kendall's tau-b | 0.644 | -0.0428 | | | | |
| Gamma | 0.795 | -0.597 | | | | |
| N of valid cases | 29 | 44 | | | | |

The above table provides contingency tabulation results for the first independent variable X_{3i} (*women's voice*) by Gender. The values in the table indicate that for female respondents there exists a strong negative association as more than 80% of them either completely disagree or disagree with the statement: *the Somali traditional xeer can be useful in building a model of transitional justice that accounts for Somali women's voices in the processes of addressing systematic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have taken place during the ongoing civil war*. In contrast, only 40% of the male respondents either completely disagree or disagree with this statement. Also, it should be noted that approximately 55% of male respondents either completely disagree or disagree with above statement; compared to approximately 17% of female respondents. Lastly, the strong positive association for the females is further confirmed by the direction of the Gamma (0.795) and Kendall's tau-b (0.644); whereas there exists a moderate-to-weak negative association for the males given the direction of the Gamma (-0.597) and Kendall's tau-b (-0.428).

Table 3.5: Prosecute Perpetrators (Question 13) & Gender

X_{4i} → Question 13: → *In Somalia there is a need to prosecute perpetrators of systemic sexual violence against women and girls during the ongoing civil war*

| | Scale | # of Females | % of Females | # of Males | % of Males | Total |
|---------------------|---------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------|
| Completely Disagree | 1 | 1 | 3.5% | 21 | 50% | 22 |
| | 2 | 3 | 10.3% | 11 | 25% | 14 |
| | 3 | 2 | 6.9% | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Neutral | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 5 | 3 | 10.3% | 1 | 2.3% | 4 |
| | 6 | 7 | 24.1% | 1 | 2.3% | 8 |
| Completely Agree | 7 | 13 | 44.8% | 10 | 22.7% | 23 |
| Total | | 29 | 100% | 44 | 100% | 73 |
| | Females | Males | | | | |
| Kendall's tau-b | 0.566 | -0.576 | | | | |
| Gamma | 0.6973 | -0.717 | | | | |
| N of valid cases | 29 | 44 | | | | |

The above table provides contingency tabulation results for the first independent variable X_{4i} (*prosecute perpetrators*) by Gender. The values in the table indicate that for female respondents there exists a strong positive association as approximately 79% of them either complete agree or agree with the statement: *in Somalia there is a need to prosecute perpetrators of systemic sexual violence against women and girls during the ongoing civil war*. In contrast, only 27% of the male respondents either completely agree or agree with this statement. Also, it should be noted that 75% of male respondents either completely disagree or disagree with above statement; compared to approximately 20.7% of female respondents. Lastly, the strong positive association for the females is further confirmed by the direction of the Gamma (0.6973) and Kendall's tau-b (0.566); whereas there exists a strong negative association for the males given the direction of the Gamma (-0.717) and Kendall's tau-b (-0.576).

Conclusion

This paper analyzed whether individuals who believe the Somali *xeer* or customary law would provide a viable model of transitional justice that can address the pervasive gender-based violence against women and girls in Somalia. This central hypothesis was analyzed using survey data on a number of Somalis, with control for gender. The results of the statistical analyses show that there is significant agreement among respondents that may not necessarily be adequate or useful in the process of addressing sexual violence against women and girls. Closer examination of the data also shows that the survey respondents believe that the Somali customary law may have potential to help the people of this country come out of the seemingly endless armed conflict and rebuild their country. The participants of this study point to a very important fact; that the customary law is not capable of producing any meaningful or useful model of transitional justice that can address gender-based violence by itself. Further, most of the participants of this study viewed the acts of gender-based violence that have been occurring in Somali for the past two decades as systematic widespread weapons of war. Furthermore, there is a clear division in opinion among men and women participants of the study when asked whether perpetrators of sexual violence against women should be prosecuted, i.e. approximately 79% of female participants believe that there is a need for criminal prosecution compared with only 27% of male participants. The reasons behind this difference of opinion may be due to unstated loyalty to the customary law by the males. In other words, perhaps male participants would like to take the route of traditional authority to deal with the pervasive sexual violence against women and girls. Thus, these participants may idealize the adequacy of the customary law. As stated above, romanticizing the Somali *xeer* is dangerous because it does not consider certain historical facts about what was accepted and enforced by traditional elders (i.e. older men from dominant clans) in the name of the Somali traditional *xeer*. For example, explained the interviewees, traditionally, under the Somali *xeer* rape was addressed by forcing the perpetrator to marry the rape victim. In contrast, under the Bare regime, the former Somali government, rape was removed from the family court issues and added to the criminal code and was punishable by imprisonment. More specifically, as most of the participants contended, although the *Xeer* approach might have been useful in preventing rape within the close communal nomadic setting by making the perpetrators account for their actions, it is neither appropriate nor applicable for addressing the widespread and systematic sexual violence against women and girls in today's war-torn Somalia.

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Appendix A: Tables

Statistics

| | | Question | | | | | |
|----------------|---------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | | 12 | 9 | 11 | 10 | 13 | 1 |
| N | Valid | 73 | 73 | 73 | 73 | 73 | 73 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 2.78 | 4.74 | 5.84 | 4.40 | 4.26 | .60 |
| Median | | 3.00 | 5.00 | 6.00 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 1.00 |
| Std. Deviation | | 1.315 | 1.581 | 1.106 | 1.664 | 1.395 | .493 |

Frequencies

Question 12 (Weapon of War) - X_{1i}

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 1 | 2 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 2.7 |
| | 2 | 3 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 6.8 |
| | 3 | 3 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 10.9 |
| | 4 | 1 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 12.5 |
| | 5 | 4 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 17.9 |
| | 6 | 8 | 10.9 | 10.9 | 28.8 |
| | 7 | 52 | 71.2 | 71.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 73 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Question 9 (Indignity) - X_{2i}

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 1 | 49 | 67.2 | 67.2 | 67.2 |
| | 2 | 5 | 6.8 | 6.8 | 74 |
| | 3 | 3 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 78.1 |
| | 4 | 1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 79.5 |
| | 5 | 2 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 82.2 |
| | 6 | 9 | 12.3 | 12.3 | 94.5 |
| | 7 | 4 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 73 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Question 11 (Women's Voice) - X_{3i}

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 1 | 17 | 38.4 | 38.4 | 38.4 |
| | 2 | 23 | 41.1 | 41.1 | 79.5 |
| | 3 | 2 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 85 |
| | 4 | 2 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 87.7 |
| | 5 | 3 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 91.8 |
| | 6 | 14 | 6.8 | 6.8 | 98.6 |
| | 7 | 10 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 73 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Question 10 (CUSRAPE) - Y_i

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 1 | 27 | 36.9 | 36.9 | 36.9 |
| | 2 | 18 | 24.7 | 24.7 | 61.6 |
| | 3 | 9 | 12.4 | 12.4 | 74.1 |
| | 4 | 4 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 79.5 |
| | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 79.5 |
| | 6 | 5 | 6.8 | 6.8 | 86.3 |
| | 7 | 10 | 13.7 | 13.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 73 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 1 | 22 | 30.1 | 30.1 | 30.1 |
| | 2 | 14 | 19.3 | 19.3 | 49.4 |
| | 3 | 2 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 52.1 |
| | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 52.1 |
| | 5 | 4 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 67.6 |
| | 6 | 8 | 10.9 | 10.9 | 68.5 |
| | 7 | 23 | 31.5 | 31.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 73 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 0 | 29 | 39.7 | 39.7 | 39.7 |
| | 1 | 44 | 60.3 | 60.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 73 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Y_i → (Question 10) - the Somali traditional xeer or customary law can provide a viable model of transitional justice that can address the systematic widespread gender-based violence against women and girls that has taken place during the Somali civil war.

X₁₁ -> Question 12:→ The systematic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have been occurring during the ongoing civil war in Somalia have been used as weapons of war by the perpetrators of these acts.

X₂₁ -> Question 9:→ The systematic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have been occurring during the ongoing civil war are acts against dignity and have not been used as weapons of war.

X_{3i} -> Question 11:-> The Somali traditional xeer can be useful in building a model of transitional justice that accounts for Somali women's voices in the processes of addressing systematic widespread acts of sexual violence against women and girls that have taken place during the ongoing civil war.

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X_{4i} -> Question 13:→ In Somalia there is a need to prosecute perpetrators of systematic sexual violence against women and girls during the ongoing civil war.

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---------|---|---|---------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Completely Disagree | | | Neutral | | | Completely Agree |

Question 1 (C1i)

Are you: Female Male

Sitaat as Part of Somali Women's Everyday Religion: Peace-making and Religious Emotions*

Marja Tiilikainen

Allow muxubada Ilaahay nagu miisow
Allow meeshaan marnaba nagu meeri diintaa
Allow diintiyo sharciga deer nowgayeel
Allow na dhowee agtaadaa lagu dhargaaye
Kutala saaranaye Allow towbada nasuuxay
Agtaadana laguma qado oo qaxar mayaalee

God give more love to us
Wherever we go, teach us your religion
Make the religion and the law like a fence for us
God bring us near to you
We accept everything you say to us
Near you there are no difficulties and all our needs are fulfilled

The verses above are part of a *sitaat*¹ song, religious poetry performed by Somali women. *Sitaat*, also known as *Nebi-Ammaan*, *Hawa iyo Faadumo* and *Abbey Sittidey*, is a unique expression of Somali women's Sufi religiosity. *Sitaat* means Somali women's *dikri*, where women praise God, Prophet Muhammad, Sufi saints, and, in particular, the distinguished women of early Islam such as the Prophet's mother, wives and daughters. *Sitaat* is only sung by women and the events are organised and led by women.

Poetry in general is a central and highly valued part of Somali culture, and traditionally, it has been created and transmitted orally. Poems composed by women have not been collected or received publicity to the extent that poems composed by Somali men have (Jama 1991). *Sitaat* is part of religious Somali poetry (see Orwin 2001), but it is not well-known. Important studies of *sitaat* include the works of Lidwien Kapteijns (1996, 2007) and Francesca Declich (2000), both of whom have collected data on *sitaat* by ethnographic methods – Kapteijns in Djibouti mainly in the 1980s and Declich in southern Somalia between 1985 and 1988, that is, before the civil war that has brought profound changes in the Somali society on the societal, political as well as religious levels.

1 From Arabic *sitaat*, 'ladies' (Orwin 2001: 81).

* The original article "*Sitaat* as Part of Somali Women's Everyday Religion" has been published in: Marja-Liisa Keinänen, ed. *Perspectives on Women's Everyday Religion*. Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm, 2010, pp. 203-218.

The aim of this article is to understand the role of *sitaat* in the contemporary lives of Somali women in north-western Somalia, often referred to as Somaliland. When and how are *sitaat* sessions organised? Has the practice of *sitaat* changed in the midst of the on-going Islamisation in Somalia/Somaliland?

The data for this article has been collected as part of my on-going postdoctoral study.² I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Somaliland in the summers of 2005 and 2006, and in the winter of 2007, for a total of four months. The fieldwork was concentrated mainly in the largest city, Hargeysa, and its surroundings. As part of the data collection, I attended *sitaat* rituals organized by three different Sufi groups, belonging to the *Qadiriya* order, in Hargeysa. Moreover, I observed *sitaat* arranged on other occasions at homes and women's gatherings, altogether around 12 times. I spoke with participants of the groups and interviewed three *sitaat* leaders. All of the leaders were women between 50–60 years of age. In this article I use the Somali term *Sheekhad* (female religious expert) when I refer to these interviewees, together with their pseudonym names of Khadra, Nadiifa and Zahra. The smallest gatherings consisted of about 20 women and the largest of about 100. My Somali language skills are rudimentary, and hence, during the rituals as well as in the interviews, I was assisted by female assistants. I taped and video recorded part of the sessions. The material has been partly transcribed and translated to English/Finnish. I mainly use the Somali orthography. In order to pronounce Somali words properly, Somali 'x' can be thought to correspond the English 'h' and 'c' to an apostrophe ['].

The theoretical approach derives from comparative religion. My position towards the data has been to understand the Somali Muslim women as social and religious agents in their life-worlds in post-war Somaliland. In Muslim societies women's and mothers' agency is constructed in relation to gender-wise different roles and expectations. At the same time, however, Muslim women question these structures, actively interpret Islam and use their own strategies to challenge experienced hardships and suffering (Abu-Lughod 1986; Mahmood 2004). Through Islamisation, male knowledge easily becomes normative, and women need to develop strategies to prevent the eradication of traditional female knowledge (Evers Rosander 1997: 6–7).

2 The aim of my overall study is to explore how transnationalism organises and gives meaning to suffering, illness and healing among Somalis in exile. The study is a continuation of my PhD research on the everyday life of Somali women in Finland (Tiilikainen 2003) and funded by the Academy of Finland. I thank Professor Janice Boddy for insightful comments. I also want to acknowledge the financial support given by the Nordic Africa Institute and the Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth foundation for the fieldwork in Somaliland. I am grateful to Ibrahim Mohamed Hassan and Nasra Osman who helped me to translate and understand some of the Somali language material. Naturally, I am solely responsible for any errors.

Islam, women and daily life in post-war Somaliland

The population of the secessionist Republic of Somaliland, the former British Somaliland, is estimated to be around 2–3 million. The majority of the population live as pastoral nomads. Compared to the southern part of Somalia, the area has been relatively stable since the mid-1990s and it has been struggling to create democratic governance and improve the living conditions of ordinary people. However, Somaliland, as all Somalia, is among the poorest countries in the world. The unemployment rate is high and many households in Hargeysa are dependent on remittances sent by their relatives from the diaspora. Basic health care and educational structures as well as roads, water and electrical systems were ruined during the war, and continue to be severely under-developed.

The civil war has had an impact on urban households and the roles of family members. Traditionally, men have been responsible for earning the income for their families. As a consequence of the war, many previous breadwinners have died, or become disabled or mentally distressed. Moreover, the consumption of *khat*, the leaves of the *Khat* bush which have a mildly stimulating effect, has increased tremendously, especially among men. This makes the economic situation of poor families even worse and is a source of continuous dispute in families. Women have been forced to take greater economic responsibility than before. For example, many women sell products such as clothes, tea, *uunsi* (incense), vegetables or *khat* in order to provide for their families (e.g., Warsame 2004).

Islam is a natural part of everyday life in Somaliland and gives it a certain rhythm. *Aadaan*, a call to prayer, can be regularly heard all over Hargeysa including Fridays, the holy day for all Muslims. Islam underpins the basic values as well as everyday chores and practices. Somalis are Sunni Muslims and they belong to the *Shafi'ite* school of Islamic jurisprudence. Traditionally, Somali Muslims have been Sufis. The most important Sufi orders in Somalia have been *Qadiriya*, *Ahmadiya* and *Salihya* (e.g., Lewis 1998). Until recently Sufi orders have had a great influence in Somalia and Somalis have been moderate in their religious views. The rise of Islamic movements in Somalia began in the 1970s as part of the international Islamic revival, and as a reaction to Somalia's tangled internal and international politics. Two main groups have been *Jama'at al-Islah*, which has identified with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and *al-Ittihad al-Islami*, which is close to the puritanical *Wahhabi* and *Salafiyya* movements of the Arabian Peninsula (Berns McGown 1999; Hassan 2003). According to Mohamed-Rashid Sheikh Hassan (2003), *al-Waxda*, the first Islamic organisation in Somalia, was founded in Hargeysa in the 1960s. On different occasions it had close relations to either of the previously mentioned Islamist groups, *al-Islah* and *al-Ittihad* (Hassan 2003: 234). Islamic political activity in Somalia has increased significantly during the past decade (Menkhaus 2002: 110). Islamist groups have gained wide support particularly in southern Somalia, where no government so far has managed to establish stability. Islamic groups have gained support among

ordinary people by providing schools, orphanages, aid agencies and services to poor people who have suffered tremendously during the war (ibid: 114).

As of result of these tendencies, Sufi practices such as the annual commemorations of popular Sufi sheikhs seem to be in decline. For example, I.M. Lewis described, based on his fieldwork in the 1950s and 1960s, how the annual pilgrimage, *siyaaro*, to the shrine of Aw Barkhadle outside Hargeysa attracted several thousand pilgrims from all over the northern regions and large numbers of livestock were killed for the feasting (Lewis 1998: 89–98). When I visited the same *siyaaro* in the summer of 2006, only a maximum of 500 people participated and the event was hardly noticed in Hargeysa.

The reconstruction of the city of Hargeysa includes the building of mosques. According to a sheikh, before the war there used to be 60 mosques in Hargeysa, but now there are about 300. Only a few of them are Sufi mosques. Moreover, Islamisation influences the local healing traditions: a new phenomenon is the establishment of Islamic clinics, *cilaaj*, where sheikhs claim to heal by purely Islamic healing methods. According to Gerda Sengers (2003: 146), healers in Islamic clinics in Egypt propagate the “Islamic” lifestyle and fundamentalist views stressing the role of women as wives and mothers. Islamisation is visible also in new ways of dressing, as an increasing number of women cover themselves with large veils, *jilbaab* and also face veils, *niqab*, which is a new dressing code in Somalia. Moreover, I have been told that an increasing number of women go to mosques to pray. What is the position of *sitaat* under these new religious conditions?

Sitaat in practice

The setting

I was introduced to three different *sitaat* groups by local friends, who had connections to people going to these groups. I mainly visited the groups of *Skeekhad* Khadra and *Sheekhad* Nadiifa. The third group had been initiated by a woman who had a personal interest in *sitaat* and wanted to create an opportunity for herself and other women to practise it. The group seemed to lack clear leadership, but *Sheekhad* Zahra was one of the main characters in the group. *Sheekhad* Khadra and *Sheekhad* Nadifa had practised *sitaat* for about 30 years:

I started doing sitaat about 27 years ago. I was born in Hargeysa, but I lived four years in Qatar. I was married and had four children. My husband did not like Sufis, but I started to study religion. Already as a young woman I started to love religion, but my husband could not accept it. We argued a lot and then we divorced. I came back to Hargeysa in 1976. I started to visit xadras,³ I learnt more about religion and gradually I became a teacher. I also married a Sufi teacher. He used to make dikri.

3 *Xadra* and *dikri* mean ritual song of praising of God. The interviewed women used the term *xadra* also to signify the place where *dikri* or *sitaat* is performed.

He had his own xadra, and we worked together. We had five children. He died in 1990. When the civil war started [in Hargeysa], I escaped to Ethiopia. I returned to Hargeysa in 1991 and after a year a group of women contacted me, and asked me to be their sheekhad. The previous sheekhad did not return to Hargeysa after the war, but went to Boorame. These women, who started at that time, still continue and also new women come. Only two women left the group. (Sheekhad Khadra)

In her story the *sheekhad* highlighted a long learning process, whereas another had gained knowledge of *sitaat* in a dream:

I have done sitaat for 30 years. I started after I had a dream, where Faadumo Rasuul [the Prophet's daughter] appeared to me. In the dream I saw a drum and I started drumming. It was like I had always drummed, I made no mistakes. (Skeekhad Nadiifa)

The first group gathers at the home of *Sheekhad* Khadra, where a room is dedicated for *xadra*. The walls are covered with green and white silk textiles with Arabic writing and some pictures of tombs, in honour of Sufi sheikhs such as Sheikh Isaaq and Sheikh Madar. Along the wall there are long wooden rosaries, *tusbax*, which women use before the *sitaat* starts. The *Sheekhad* also has religious books with Arabic texts, some of which are recited during the *sitaat*. The same room serves both women and men. In the afternoons women have *sitaat*, and after they finish, men gather for their own *dikri*. The second as well as the third group pays rent for the room where they gather. Before each *sitaat* carpets are spread to cover the floor.

All of the three groups have regular weekly meetings, ranging from one to four times a week. I was told that the usual days for *sitaat* are Fridays, Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Specific weekdays are dedicated to different persons – Friday to the Prophet, Monday to the Prophet's daughter Faadumo Rasuul, Wednesday to *awliyo* (saints, holy persons) such as Jiilaani, Sheikh Madar and Sheikh Isaaq, and Thursdays for *awliyo* in general. One informant mentioned that *sitaat* can also be arranged on Sundays, and then it is dedicated to Hawo (Eve) and Adam. The specific days, however, may differ according to a group. For instance, a woman explained that in the group that she knew best, Thursday was specifically dedicated to Sheikh Isaaq. Moreover, *sitaat* is arranged during specific periods such as the month of the death of Faadumo Rasuul.

A *sitaat* session usually starts after afternoon prayer, *casar* (around 3.30 pm) and ends with the prayer after sunset, *makhrib* (around 6.30 pm). In one of the *sitaat* groups women usually continue even after they have prayed the *makhrib* prayer together. Each participant contributes to *sitaat* by bringing a small amount of money, perfume, incense or food/drinks. They may also bring gifts to the leader of the group. Incense and perfume are an important part of the ceremony. As a woman explained: "Whoever mentions the Prophet's name should smell nice". Occasionally, a woman goes around with a bottle of perfume, *cadar*, and participants stretch out their hands in order to be perfumed. Moreover, an incense burner creates heavy smoke. Sweet black coffee, *bun*, in contrast to otherwise common tea, is served during a pause. Most of the women who arrive, are married, divorced or widowed women. I have been informed that unmarried young women are usually too busy with other things and they start thinking more about religion only after they have had children. The

socioeconomic background of the women who arrange and take part in *sitaat* seems to vary. I have seen *sitaat* arranged in affluent homes and some of the women come from the upper classes, whereas some of the women are seemingly poor.

Women sit in a circle on the floor and all of them wear a large, covering scarf. One or two women beat drum/drums with wooden sticks, and women begin to chant. Different groups may sing different songs or use different words, and the order of the songs may differ according to participating women's desires. Moreover, women compose new verses and songs. First, however, women praise God and the Prophet. According to Lidwien Kapteijns (1996), after the Prophet, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, who was the founder of the *Qadiriya* brotherhood, and other *awliyo* like local saints or Sheikh Isaaq, the ancestor of the Isaaq clan that is a dominant clan in North Somalia, are praised. After these introductory songs, the main songs are sung to the distinguished women of early Islam: After greeting Aadan (Adam), Hawo (Eve), the first mother of humankind, is praised. Other women addressed and honoured in *sitaat* are, among others, the Prophet's mother Aamina (Amina), his foster-mother Xaliimo Sacdiyya (Halima Sa'diyya), Xaajra (Hagar), mother of Ismaaciil (Ishmael), Maryam (Mary), the mother of Jesus, the Prophet's wives and daughters, in particular Faadumo (Fatima) (Kapteijns 1996, 126–128). One of my interviewees, however, stressed that in her group after the songs for the Prophet, they next praise the women, and only after that *awliyo* such as Sheikh Isaaq because women existed before the *awliyo* and were their mothers.

Daughters of Faadumo Rasuul: Religious and social experience

All the women participate in singing and clapping the hands. The language of the songs is mostly Somali, but also some Arabic songs and/or words are included. One or two women may stand up and dance. When the songs pass, the atmosphere in *sitaat* becomes more intense and women become emotional. They swing their bodies in the rhythm of the songs, they may draw the scarf over the face, and gradually reach a religious trance, *muraaqo* or *jilbo*. A woman explained: "*Muraaqo* means a religious condition, a strong emotion. A woman feels deep love towards the person that is being praised. Sometimes she also may see this person". The breathing becomes heavier and she may stand up and bend the body back and forth at the waist. Sometimes a woman over-reacts: she does not control herself any more, but movements get wider and wilder, and finally she may fall down unconscious.

"In *sitaat* we praise Hawa, the wife of Ibraahim, the daughters of the Prophet and the relatives of Ismaaciil. They are our ancestors, hereafter we may become neighbours with them", *Sheekhad* Zahra reported. And not only hereafter, but Faadumo and other distinguished women and mothers, who are praised, are believed to be present among women who are performing *sitaat*. For example, *Sheekhad* Nadiifa said in a *sitaat* to participating women that Faadumo Rasuul was among them, but they did not know who she was. However, she could sit beside anyone and therefore everyone should be treated in a friendly way. At some point in the evening, women

shook hands with women sitting near them – this meant that at the same time they shook hands with Faadumo Rasuul. The *Sheekhad* identified her group as “daughters of Faadumo Rasuul” and welcomed also the researcher to become part of it.

According to women, after *sitaat* a person may get what she desired or hoped for. *Sheekhad* Zahra related that she calls the names of *awliyo* when she needs something: “*Awliyo* have secret knowledge that normal people do not have. *Awliyo* are soldiers of God”. She told how she was arrested before the war. The soldiers asked her for money and called her a prostitute. They said that she should be imprisoned for six months. She started to sing for ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, the founder of the *Qadiriya* brotherhood. Soon some other police came and asked the policemen why she had been arrested, and she was released.

In addition to singing, participants also pray together. A leader of the group, or whoever feels like it, may read *duco* [du’o] (prayer, blessing) and ask God, for, for example, good health, a husband for unmarried and divorced women and good children for mothers. A *Sheekhad* also gives general religious advice and instructions. A participant may ask others to pray for her if she is ill or has other problems. Once I was present when a woman started crying and as a result other women gathered around her, prayed and patted her on the back. A *Sheekhad* explained:

First a sick person should go to a hospital. If she cannot get help, we ask God. God has the decision, whether he helps or not. When people gather many times for the sake of God, other people may think that they are good people, and maybe God listens to their prayers. So, sometimes ill people come and ask us to pray for them. I do not use any other techniques than praying and reading the Koran, and often they get what they need. I have no other power to heal. I do not know if I am a chosen person, but God accepts the prayers of certain people more easily. (Sheekhad Khadra)

Women also discuss and interpret their dreams and visions together. Dreams may carry religiously important symbols and messages (in Egypt, see Hoffman 1997). For example, a lion that appears in a dream is a symbol of *awliyo*. A *sitaat* group may also collect money if one of the women needs economic support. Each participant contributes according to her economic resources. The main purpose of the *sitaat* group is, however, to practise religion:

The only reason for the existence of a sitaat group is to praise God, to practise religion, to teach these ladies about religion and to warn about bad things. This is not for the tribe or personal interest; the main purpose is God. God said that if two persons gather because they love God, not because of personal interest, money or tribe, God will reward them. This is the only reason we come here. We do not care about colour or clan; we are equal. We like each other, because we all worship God. According to our religion, we have to respect all people, whatever religion they have . . . Unbeliever or believer, our religion does not allow us to harm another person. We have to live together in a peaceful way. We do not have to look at their origin or to abuse them because of it. It is not allowed that you eat yourself, if your neighbour is not eating. If someone is going to take your property or to harm you, regardless of the religion, you are allowed to defend yourself. Otherwise, give peace to existing people, of whatever religion or clan they are. (Sheekhad Khadra)

Unity between women and all humankind was often stressed as one of the basic values. In the case of a dispute between two women, the other members of the group may try to mediate. If that does not solve the problem, the *Sheekhad* has to interfere, and if needed, pronounce a punishment to the person who is creating problems:

Sheekhad Khadra reported that in those cases they will arrange a celebration in *xadra* and read the Koran, and the person has to pay the costs.

Through *sitaat* itself Somali women also try to promote peace on a larger societal level. In the summer of 2006 I had a chance to follow an interesting discussion during one of the *sitaat* sessions. The discussion followed events that had taken place in Darroor, a Somali-inhabited area on the Ethiopian side of the border between Somaliland and Ethiopia. Two clans, Ciidagale and Habar Yoonis, sub-clans of Garxajiis, had been fiercely fighting over water resources and this upset the women in the *sitaat* group. In the group there were women from both tribes. The *Sheekhad* gave a speech to the women, where she pointed out that Ciidagale and Habar Yoonis are brothers and sisters. She told the listening women that they should collect women from both sides, bring them together and make peace between these women. She also urged women to tell their boys that they should not continue fighting. In order to get God's blessing, *ajar*, they should arrange a *siyaaro*⁴ in Hargeysa the coming Friday. *Siyaaro* would be arranged in honour of Sheikh Isaaq, the ancestor of all the Isaaq tribes. This raised a lively discussion among the women, and it was finally decided that in addition to Sheikh Isaaq, the forefathers of both fighting clans – Dacuud from Ciidagale and Saciid from Habar Yoonis – should be praised. Moreover, their father, Ismaciil, the ancestor of the whole Garxajiis clan should be honoured.⁵ Hence, women decided to bring the fighting clans of Garxajiis together by arranging *siyaaro* for all the important ancestors of the fighting clans, and ask for *duco*, blessing, from them. Further they decided how they could share the costs, the rent of the room and food expenses. The women's act echoes an old Somali tradition. According to Judith Gardner and Judy El Bushra (2004: 145), in Somalia there has been a tradition of collective prayer meetings, known as *allabari* that have traditionally been arranged at times of common need, such as drought. During the recurrent conflict in Somaliland between 1991 and 1996, however, women started to hold prayer meetings for peace.

Even though women in *sitaat* are active in trying to resolve on-going conflicts, they prefer to forget past conflicts. One *Sheekhad* explained that it is strictly forbidden to discuss the civil war, in Somaliland referred to as *faqash*,⁶ in a *sitaat* group:

It is not necessary to speak about the past; it may hurt someone and people become emotional. It is one of our rules, not to mention the previous problems. Religion says that we have to forgive. If we discuss these problems, Shaydaan [Satan] gets a good opportunity to make the problems bigger. If I take an example: If you want a wound to heal, you should not touch it all the time. If you have a problem, it is better to forgive and not to discuss it all the time. (Sheekhad Khadra)

In addition to regular *sitaat* groups, *sitaat* experts can be invited when a woman is pregnant in her ninth month: *sitaat* is arranged in order to ask for an easy delivery and a healthy child. *Sitaat* can also be specifically arranged when someone is ill.

4 *Siyaaro* means a visit to the graves of *awliyo*, but also commemoration.

5 Somalis venerate the clan ancestors – whether historical personages or not – in the same fashion as they do Sufi saints (Lewis 1998: 21–22).

6 Literally *faqash* means a dirty or corrupt person, and filth. Somalilanders use *faqash* to refer to the war starting in 1988, when the Somali government attacked the northern territories.

Moreover, it is nowadays common to arrange *sitaat* when a woman from the diaspora visits Somalia and is about to return to a resettlement country: through *sitaat* a safe return and continuous blessing can be asked. The event is usually videotaped, and hence, can be remembered later back in the diaspora. I have also seen *sitaat* at a wedding, where it was more like a cultural performance, and played out together with traditional women's dances. And once I also attended *sitaat* that was organised by a women's association. I was informed that their association had been running only a few months, and they wanted to receive blessing for their new activities.

Sitaat and religious change in Somaliland

As a consequence of the increasing influence of new Islamic movements, political upheavals and civil war in Somalia, religious practices and interpretations in Somalia are changing. As mentioned earlier, *Al-Waxda*, Unity, was the name of the first Islamic organisation in Somalia, founded in Hargeysa (Hassan 2003). Nowadays, the term *waxda* is commonly used by Sufis in Somaliland to refer to supporters of new Islamic movements, or in general Muslims who are seen to be different from traditional Sufis in the ways they practise religion. Sufis claim that Sufis follow the right path, the original Islam. A *Sheekhad* explained:

Waxda do not want to praise Prophet Muhammed. Waxda do not get excited over the Prophet in the way we do. But they are wrong. Those who belong to waxda have not yet seen what we have seen. (Sheekhad Zahra)

Hence, Sufi women (as well as men) categorise religious people into two groups, *waxda* and Sufis, who follow the original way of Islam and have a deeper knowledge of the religion. However, they admit that an increasing number of Somalis are followers of *waxda*. *Sheekhad* Khadra explained:

Nebi-Ammaan started when the Prophet moved from Mecca to Medina. Ladies welcomed these things [sitaat] and since that Nebi-Ammaan has been increasing. If you are asking about the situation compared to how it was before the war, the number of people doing sitaat is decreasing, because people are going to the other side, waxda. They say that you are not allowed to sing, celebrate or mention these things . . . You don't have to make a great celebration for the Prophet, that is shirk [sin]. You don't have to dance, visit his grave, to celebrate his birthday. You just pray five daily prayers, it is enough. During the Prophet's time, people welcomed these things; they played durbaan [a drum]. We are like those people; we sing in both Arabic and Somali language. If you praise the Prophet, it does not matter in what language. Waxda says all this is xaraam [forbidden]. If we tell these waxda, bring your books and show where this is prohibited, they never come. Mainly they influence women and children. According to our culture, when someone dies, we slaughter animals and collect money to give his/her family. But waxda does not accept these things. We made more sadaqa [voluntary alms] before, not so much any more. (Sheekhad Khadra)

My views on whether the practice of *sitaat* is in decline or not are somewhat contradictory. On one hand, I have often been told that the number of women, who take

part in *sitaat*, is decreasing. This has been explained by the influence of *waxda*, who do not accept praising the Prophet Muhammad and *awliyo*. “Women and Somali people in general are forgetting their own culture and the historical way of doing things. *Xadra* was originally religious culture, not Somali culture. Nowadays most women are going to a mosque”, *Sheekhad* Khadra explained. Another explanation given is that many women, who used to practise *sitaat* before the war, are now either dead or have moved abroad. Moreover, a woman explained that nowadays women do not have time to attend *sitaat* regularly, because they have to work and participate in earning the family income. Hence, according to her, *sitaat* is mainly arranged when someone asks for it. On the other hand, I have been told that the number of women in *sitaat* is increasing. And indeed, in many celebrations that I have attended, we have been sandwiched in overcrowded rooms. One of the *sitaat* groups regularly attracted 70–100 women. The group had plans to raise funds and build their own house for *sitaat*. What could be the reasons for the continued practice of *sitaat*, even though the official religious views do not encourage it?

“Sitaat is part of being religious, part of being good”

“*Sitaat* is part of being religious, part of being good”, *Sheekhad* Zahra explained. She had practised *sitaat* since she was six years old. Once, ten years ago, she wanted to end her practice. Then she had a dream that an animal was slaughtered in front of her. In the morning a woman came and gave her a sheep. Then she understood that she could not stop doing *sitaat*, as it was an important part of religion. She also gave another example of the necessity to continue *sitaat*: Once she had been invited to a village. Nine pregnant women from the village had died and the women who were left were very worried. She saw in her dream a lion, the symbol of *awliyo*, and the lion said that women had to continue doing *sitaat*. Hence, practising *sitaat* continues to be an inseparable part of being a good, moral and healthy Somali Muslim woman.

“A sitaat group is a women’s mosque”

“This is a women’s mosque”, *Sheekhad* Nadiifa noted. “We only read the Koran, we gather, say good things to each other, give advice, make *siyaaro*. We pray if a person is ill, if someone is getting married; we try to help each other. Everyone can pay what they can. This group is open for anyone who wants to participate”. Another *Sheekhad* explained the difference between *xadra* and a mosque:

The mosque and xadra are different. The mosque is only for praying and reading the Koran. In a mosque it is not allowed to eat khat and you have to be quiet. In xadra we can eat, sleep, we say nice things to each other; you can also eat khat. We teach each other good things. According to our religion, during menstruation it is not allowed to have sex, a man cannot touch the area between a woman’s knees and waist. She cannot read the Koran, she cannot fast or pray, go to hajj [pilgrimage], touch a Koran or enter a mosque. The man is not allowed to divorce her during menstruation; there are many rules. But in xadra a menstruating woman is allowed to join us; she can listen to the Koran and she can sing here. (Sheekhad Khadra)

Any place where women gather to do *sitaat*, becomes a religious space. Moreover, a *sitaat* group is a unique female religious space, where Somali women can memorise and reproduce the chain of the “daughters of Faadumo Rasuul”. In *sitaat* women are the religious experts, who can define the rules and interpret Islam in a way that better takes into consideration the needs of women.

“*Sitaat has been renewed*”

I have been told that the performance of *sitaat* has changed after the war, and a new element, dancing, has been added. A participant in *sitaat* complained:

Before the war we did not dance in sitaat, it was forbidden to stand up. Every person had her own place where she sat, we did not watch others, we concentrated on ourselves and praising. But now a new generation has come; it does not know the tradition, they do what they want, dance.

Another woman reported:

Sitaat has changed, it has been renewed. When I left Somalia 20 years ago, there was no dancing in sitaat. People sat when they experienced muraaqo, they just swayed themselves sitting. At that time, women who came to sitaat were usually poor. But now everyone comes to sitaat, regardless of income or social class. Now there is also dance in sitaat, I was surprised when I came back 9 years ago. Sitaat has become a party. I do not believe that sitaat is going away. When I came here [sitaat] today, I was stressed, but now I feel refreshed.

The *sitaat* sessions that I have observed have had very different levels of emotional intensity. On some occasions, indeed, *sitaat* looks like a party: women have dressed up in beautiful, expensive clothes, they have on make-up, they seem to enjoy themselves and they smile, dance, and have fun together. But even in this “light” *sitaat*, emotional feeling gradually grows. On other occasions, women seem to concentrate more on their inner experience; they sit down and sway their bodies. They do not dance, but stand up and bend the body rhythmically when they become very emotional. The leaders of the two regular *sitaat* groups that I followed most were quite strict regarding the way women can behave in *sitaat* and the leaders stressed the religious content and meaning as well as the seriousness of the ritual. However, modifications in *sitaat* and a party-like atmosphere may attract new women to participate. *Sitaat* is a rare place of relaxation and joy for women, who otherwise struggle with everyday stresses and worries. Moreover, *sitaat* has become not only a religious, but also a cultural performance that can be staged at weddings or other communal events. For women in the diaspora, arranging and attending *sitaat* while they visit their country of origin is also a quest for religious and cultural identity.

A transfer from saar to sitaat?

Spirit possession *saar* (*zar*) is a widely known phenomenon in the Horn of Africa as well as on the East African coast and its hinterland, in North Africa and the Middle East (see e.g., Boddy 1989; Lewis et al. 1991). Spirit possession refers to different states, where a spirit, for one reason or another, has entered a person. Spirits, in the Islamic world known as *jinn*, may cause various health and other problems. In

Somalia *saar*, which includes many different cults and spirits, is common, especially among women in all social classes. Different spirits have their own specific ritual practices, which may also vary in different areas and groups. Healing rituals often include the use of special incense, different dance styles, music and animal sacrifices (Ahmed 1988; Pelizzari 1997).

The aims for doing *sitaat* and *saar* are different as in *saar* the aim is to pacify a spirit that causes suffering and illness. However, both rituals share similar features: slaughtering animals and eating together, drumming, clapping the hands, singing, dancing, the use of perfumes and incense, and the togetherness of women. Moreover, both rituals may lead to trance. Lewis has also pointed out that there are similarities between *dikri* and *saar* dance, and he suggests a syncretism between the two ceremonies (Lewis 1998: 28–29). Today, Somali *ulema*, religious scholars, as well as many ordinary people, regard *saar* as a non-Islamic practice and hence, forbidden.

Many Somali men, in particular, do not seem to be familiar with *sitaat*. They frequently regard it as not a proper Islamic practice, and also confuse it with spirit possession, *saar*. Somali women, who participate in *sitaat*, however, make a clear distinction between these two rituals, and stress that *sitaat* has nothing to do with *saar*. A *Sheekhad* explained:

A jinni cannot come here [to sitaat], he will be burned here, he escapes this area. Saar and mingis are forbidden. We have here dikri, we have nasri (religious things; also success, victory). Jinn, saar, mingis, rooxaan⁷ do not come; they are xaraam [forbidden]! (Sheekhad Nadiifa)

According to women in *sitaat*, *muraaqo*, religious trance, and a trance caused by *jinn*, are different states: a person who experiences *muraaqo* is not ill, but a person who enters a trance caused by *jinn* is. Most of the participating women seem to admit, however, that it is possible that sometimes a *jinni* inside a person becomes active during *sitaat* and causes a trance. This can be noticed when a woman reacts very strongly, is uncontrolled, screams, dances fiercely and finally falls down on the floor unconscious. A few times I witnessed this behaviour. Other women around then discussed whether the reason could be *jinn*. *Sheekhad* Khadra explained:

Sometimes when women come to xadra, some of them have jinn, something called saar; we do not know. When they are new to our group and the saar is with them, they may fall down with saar and become unconscious. But if they join us, saar leaves from these women. Saar cannot stay long with these women who stay with us. Saar is always looking for a group who likes it. Some jinn come with women and try to hide with them. Every group joins its own group. When saar does not find its own group here, it leaves. The person becomes normal. (Sheekhad Khadra)

Sheekhad Nadiifa also wondered if those women who were eager to dance in *sitaat*, had previously participated in *saar*. This suggestion makes sense to me. As the participation in *saar* has become strongly labelled as non-Islamic and hence, something to be abandoned, at least some of those women who used to attend *saar* rituals, may find in *sitaat* an alternative ritual setting. The similarities in rituals lead to similar reactions in both rituals (see also Tiilikainen 2010).

⁷ *Mingis* and *rooxaan* are names for different spirits known in Somalia.

Conclusion

In this article I have described the organisation and the role of *sitaat* in contemporary Somaliland. On one hand, as a consequence of current Islamisation in the Horn, Sufi religious practices including women's *sitaat*, seem to be decreasing. On the other hand, my data shows that *sitaat* still has a strong foothold in the everyday religiosity of Somali women: *sitaat* continues to be an inseparable part of being a good, moral and healthy Somali Muslim woman. A *sitaat* group also provides women a unique female religious space where they can be the religious experts, define the rules and interpret Islam in a way that better takes into consideration the specific needs of women. Moreover, *sitaat* can absorb new, modern elements such as dancing, which may attract new women. *Sitaat* has also been renewed as it has been staged as a cultural and religious performance at weddings and other communal events. Finally, I suggested that some of those women who used to attend *saar* rituals, may find an alternative ritual setting from *sitaat* and hence, keep *sitaat* groups full and vital.

In analysing the data on *sitaat*, I found Danièle Hervieu-Léger's (2000) discussion on religious memory useful. She says:

In the case of religious memory, the normativity of collective memory is reinforced by the fact of the group's defining itself, objectively and subjectively, as a lineage of belief. . . . At the source of all religious belief, as we have seen, there is belief in the continuity of the lineage of believers. This continuity transcends history. It is affirmed and manifested in the essentially religious act of recalling a past which gives meaning to the present and contains the future. The practice of anamnesis, of the recalling to memory of the past, is most often observed as a rite . . . (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 125)

In *sitaat*, the female lineage up to the Prophet's daughters, especially to Faadumo Rasuul, and to other distinguished women and mothers of early Islam is memorised and enforced. This is a significant notion in the Somali society, which is strongly based on patrilineal clans. This historical female chain as well as a connection to Prophet Mohammed and *awliyo*, animated in religious trance, *muraaqo*, empowers women and supports them in the times of present uncertainty and crisis. Moreover, mutual help and sharing of problems and emotions in a *sitaat* group strengthens the unity and collective female identity of all participating women in spite of the clan. Peace-making with the help of divine blessings is one of the common goals for all women.

Finally, *sitaat*, as a comprehensive bodily and emotional experience, may appeal to Somali women more than the new puritanical interpretations of Islam. In the midst of current political and religious change in Somaliland, the separate worlds of men and women may even help women to maintain and revitalize distinctive female religious traditions such as *sitaat*. My data, however, raises many questions that need to be studied in the future. One of the interesting issues is the meaning of clans for the organisation of the groups as well as for women's religious identity.

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A Gendered Perspective on the Impact of the Conflict in the Horn of Africa¹

Cawo M. Abdi

This policy note focuses on the gendered consequences of the militarization of the Horn of Africa. Despite the different ‘moments’ of conflict these countries occupy, shared features of extreme social, economic and political violence adversely impact their citizens. Protracted refugee and refugee-like conditions, extreme disinvestment of social programs, increasing militarization and political repression adversely impact women thereby further entrenching gender disparities. Concerted national and international efforts and resources should support local democratic initiatives to find political solutions to these protracted conflicts and advance the struggle against sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination.

This Policy Note focuses on the gendered impact of the on-going conflicts in the Horn of Africa. Of the 35 million people assisted by the UNHCR around the world, five million live in the Horn: Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Djibouti². Hundreds of thousands have also died from armed conflict and famine in the Horn over the last few decades while millions remain internally displaced persons (IDPs) within their countries, or refugees outside their borders. A combination of factors have contributed to the tragic situation: dictatorial regimes and ethnic conflict as well as external interventions during the Cold war, when the United States and the former *Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* built fragile alliances with those in power. Regrettably the end of the Cold war did not lead to peace and prosperity in this region. Rather, American-led global war on terror has perpetuated foreign intervention and militarization, further fuelling bad governance and violent conflict.

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2 UNHCR. 2010.

Gender, Masculinity and Militarization

Gender refers to the constructed ideals of femininity and masculinity. It is conceptualized as relational, as women's subordinate roles and exclusion in relation to men who occupy higher positions of prestige and power in most spheres. An understanding of the constructions of masculinity is a prerequisite for any discussion of gender. Conflict and political turmoil erode spaces and opportunities to socialize young men to be well-incorporated into society. Such conditions propel many young men to seek survival opportunities as well as pride within armed groups³.

Political instability exacerbates already entrenched gender inequalities in patriarchal societies⁴. The subordination of women in the predominantly Christian and Muslim communities of the Horn of Africa combined with protracted civil wars and regional conflicts have had devastating impacts on women and their families. Although discussions of gender-based violence and gender inequality bring to the fore women's victimization, they might overlook the resilience and resourcefulness of women in conflict zones⁵.

Despite women's resilience, armed conflict and political instability adversely affect their lives. The gender gap is writ large in the Horn in terms of access to health care, education, political participation and economic opportunities. Countries in the Horn rank very low in these indexes. Ethiopia for example is the only Horn country included in the 2010 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, and it ranked 122 out of the 134 countries profiled. However on the gender inequality in educational attainment measurement, it was ranked 130 while it was placed 132/134 in gender gap in literacy rate. Given that Ethiopia is more stable than some of its neighbors (Somalia and Sudan), and also enjoys more international development aid than Eritrea, we can conclude that measurements of gender disparity are probably worse in these countries than in Ethiopia.

Regional instability and its gendered consequences

Violence and insecurity impacts all members of society while context-specific gender practices such as female genital cutting (FGC) and other Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) mostly affect women and girls⁶. As Eriksson Baaz and Stern cogently argue in their study on the Democratic Republic of Congo, "SGBV can neither be understood nor effectively countered if approached and studied in relative isolation."⁷

3 Large 1997, page 27.

4 Campbell 2005; Abdi 2007

5 Moser and Clarke 2001.

6 Men of course can also be victims of sexual violence. See Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010.

7 Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010, page 2.

Cockburn's four stages of conflict is a useful frame for the Horn countries which occupy different 'moments' of conflict; before the eruption of armed violence, ongoing armed violence, peace-making stage and post-war stage⁸. Somalia and Sudan belong to the second category as they are embroiled in ongoing armed clashes. Relentless war between the weak and corrupt⁹ Transitional Federal Government (TFG), supported by African Union Mission in Somalia forces (AMISOM), and Al-Shabaab, an extremist Islamist group vying for control of the Somali capital, has resulted in the killing and maiming of thousands, while displacing millions. Sudan is similarly steeped in instability in Darfur, where government-supported militias and violent opposition groups wreak death, destruction and rape. Following decades of conflict, struggles for basic survival continue in Southern Sudan which only now seceded from the North with which it engaged a protracted war that produced immeasurable human suffering over three decades. Ethiopia is similarly involved in intermittent confrontation with liberation movements such as the Ogaden Liberation Front (ONLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), with government soldiers reportedly committing war crimes and crimes against humanity against its own population.¹⁰ However in the context of this Note, Ethiopia is grouped alongside Eritrea as being in the peace-making stage while underscoring the tenuous nature of this stage. Apart from armed opposition to the ruling regime in the early 1990s, Djibouti is the exception to not having experienced any major war since independence in 1977, and is categorized in the first stage; however it shares troublesome features with its neighbors on governance, gender equity and regional and global political dynamics.

Somalia/Sudan

The short and long term gendered consequences of the wars in Somalia and Sudan are immense. The targeting of civilian areas, the burning and pillaging of villages and the systematic rape of women and girls in Darfur by government-supported militias and opposition groups since 2003 have led to major humanitarian crisis¹¹. Similarly rape and dispossession characterizes the Somali civil war that led to a complete state collapse in 1991. Warlords and their unruly militias imposed a reign of terror on Southern Somali regions, with women and girls' bodies becoming pawns for political violence. International human rights organizations also documented a continuation of this sexual violence by the Ethiopian forces who from 2006-2008 occupied parts of Somalia¹². The scope of SGBV in Somalia and Sudan is probably underestimated since rape carries enormous stigma within these communities.

8 Cockburn. 2001.

9 Transparency International 2010 identifies Somalia as the most corrupt nation in the world

10 HRW. 2008.

11 HRW 2005.

12 Amnesty International 2007.

The suffering Somali and Sudanese civilians experience does not end with flight, but rather extends to insecure camps in neighboring countries. For Sudanese women fleeing to Chad¹³ as well as Somali women fleeing to Kenya¹⁴ sexual violence in camps committed by militias, soldiers and camp police, international staff, and refugee men all testify to the fragile ecological context where camps are set up. The dependence on humanitarian aid with limited opportunities for employment and constrained freedom of movement all contribute to women's vulnerability to sexual abuse¹⁵.

The trauma of SGBV is aggravated for women in Sudan and Somalia, where FGC is a universal cultural practice. Men who sexually assault these women often use knives, cans and other unsterilized metals to open women's vaginas and this leads to tetanus and health complications and even death for some women¹⁶ Despite these insecurities, women in IDP camps or in refugee camps continue to care and manage their families' needs, often single handedly as their male partners might be partaking in the conflict, or might have died, or abandoned the family. Material deprivations and widespread violence mean that women fend for their children at a great risk. The complete collapse of infrastructure in war zones results in limited economical, educational and healthcare access. Whether in search of firewood, or trading in the markets or at home, the absence of law and order exacerbates women's subordinate position in these cultures and exponentially increase their chances of being robbed, raped or killed.

The American war on terror agenda is also exacerbating the gendered consequences of the conflicts in the Horn. Contrary to the non-refoulement clause in international refugee law, fear of 'terrorists' hiding within fleeing populations is increasingly leading to border closures. It is becoming more difficult for Somalis to cross into Kenya, with the apprehension that radical groups might commit terrorist activities against Kenya¹⁷. Kenya's efforts to contain the Somali conflict spilling into its borders and its impact on Somali refugees fleeing from this conflict is further complicated by American interests in the region. The latter contributed to America's logistical support for Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006, as well as funding for border tightening measures in Kenya¹⁸. These policy decisions impact women and their families who confront direct physical danger from conflict and/or become targets of SGBV in the hands of soldiers.

13 HRW 2005.

14 HRW 2010.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Abdi 2007.

Ethiopia/Eritrea

Many of the challenges and insecurities discussed above also apply to parts of Ethiopia where liberation movements are waging war against the Ethiopian government. The government's continuing confrontation against local militias such as OLF and ONLF, its intervention in the Somali conflict and its border-disputes with Eritrea divert resources from social and economic programs that could help alleviate its developmental challenges. Militarization, as a common trend in the region also negatively impacts definitions of femininity and masculinity and further reinforces traditional gender roles¹⁹. Thus, limited resources mean that families can only afford to educate some of their children, and boys are chosen over girls. Limited educational and economic opportunities for girls also increase their chances of early marriages. In a region with high maternal and child mortality rates, a 2004 UN report estimated that 30 per cent of girls aged 15 to 19 years old were married, divorced or widowed.²⁰ In spite of its criminalization in the penal code, FGC prevalence in Ethiopia remains extremely high, and domestic violence is widespread, with a World Bank report stating that 69 per cent of women in urban areas, and 88 per cent of rural women 'believe their husbands have the right to beat them.'²¹ Entrenched patriarchal cultures, the absence of infrastructure that can address women's grievances, and absence of refuge for those escaping violence all constrain the opportunities to combat these gendered injustices in an environment where political repression and human rights abuses of dissidents reigns.

Eritrean women's social and economic rights also remain precarious. The highly publicized instrumental role Eritrean women played in the liberation movement from the early 1960s to the secession of 1991 led to commendable gender gains during the conflict. Unfortunately women have been pushed to subordinate roles in both public and private spheres since the war ended. Despite constitutional reforms that on paper guarantee gender equality the regime in Asmara continues to trample on the rights of its citizens, including those of its female heroes. As in other countries in the Horn, very few women occupy positions of power despite their roles in the liberation movement²². In addition to the social and economic insecurities of the isolationist policies of this regime, domestic violence is pervasive, while over 90% of girls are subjected to FGC.²³ Moreover 38% of girls between 15-18 years old were married, divorced or widowed in 2000²⁴. Unfortunately continuing tensions with Ethiopia and Djibouti and political meddling in Somalia led to United Nations' sanctions which further isolate this regime, and consequently marginalize its population and their aspirations for democratic reforms including gender equality. This regime's repression is also fueling youth disillusionment, which is leading to new

19 Enloe 1983.

20 UN 2004.

21 SIGI 2009.

22 Campbell 2005.

23 U.S. Department of State. 2010 .

24 UN 2004.

waves of migration. Thousands of Eritreans escaping this regional instability (along with Ethiopians and Somalis) are perishing in the high seas in their attempt to get into Europe.

Djibouti

Djibouti has experienced relative stability. Its strategic location on the Red sea guarantees this resource poor nation a steady flow of foreign aid and presence. In addition to a French military base, the United States has also now established a military base in Djibouti for its war on terror. This has resulted in increased tensions between Djibouti and Eritrea. Despite resources from these military bases however, Djiboutian women suffer the consequences of social, economic and political exclusion as well as by discriminatory cultural practices similar to those practiced in other Horn of African nations. While gender equality is enshrined in law, and Djibouti signed The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1998, the country has made little progress in the pursuit of gender equality²⁵. Limited access to healthcare facilities and to educational opportunities, widespread practice of FGC and extreme poverty all adversely impact the well-being of women and their families. Moreover widespread consumption of the culturally-accepted drug, *khat*, further strains poor families' resources, with 30 per cent of household incomes estimated as being spent on this drug²⁶. Women continue to have little recourse to federal courts when confronting economic, psychological, or physical violence, all of which are dealt with at the family sphere. Using these traditional methods of conflict resolution further victimizes women, whose grievances are undermined by patriarchal structures.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

The recommendations that follow advocate for interventions premised on advancing political stability and democratic reforms alongside significant support for local civil society initiatives for peace and gender equality in the Horn of Africa.

25 POGAR 2007.

26 UNICEF 2008.

International Community

- The international community should pressure the governments of Horn countries to become more accountable to their citizens, promote democratic reforms, which would incorporate greater women's participation in local political dispensations and local peace building processes.
- In Sudan and Somalia, attention should be paid to adequate provision of fuel for cooking as well as water to enable women avoid long-distance travel in search of these necessities and thus decrease the risk of violent attacks.
- More pressure on AMISOM troops in Mogadishu to stop indiscriminate bombardments and killing of civilians in their confrontations with Al-Shabaab. Violence against civilians only fuels distrust of these peacekeepers, and wins recruits for Al-Shabaab, a group that also terrorizes women through its extreme interpretations of Islam.
- Systematic and targeted sanctions on the Sudanese government to stop the atrocities against women in Darfur.
- The donor community should support civil society groups pushing for democratic reforms in Eritrea, including the promotion of gender equity. Caution should be taken so that UN sanctions don't further exacerbate the social and economic crisis which disproportionately impacts women, children and the elderly.
- The recent release of Ethiopian opposition leader Birtukan Mideksa and the ongoing negotiations with opposition groups is a sign that this government is paying some heed to pressures to become more accountable to its people. Continuing such pressure on Zenawi's regime would hasten the process of democratization and peace, which enhances women's position in society.

Regional Organizations:

- Countries in the Horn should respect international law, and not close their borders to refugees including women and children escaping persecution.
- Increased international and regional efforts to support the nation-building efforts in Southern Sudan will contribute towards curtailing conflicts within the ethnic groups comprising this nascent nation and promote democratic institutions and gender equity.
- African regional organizations and the Arab League should play more instrumental roles in pressuring the Khartoum regime to stop violence against its own people, and speed up the reconciliation process.

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A Changing Transformation of Gender in Somalia: Women's Struggle and Survival in Patriarchal Society

Mohamed Haji (Ingiriis)

Abstract

The past twenty years have seen substantial changes in the status of women in the patriarchal Somali society. With that in mind, this paper traces back the role of women in the history of modern Somalia. These include the role of Somali women in the independence movement, gender changes during the military dictatorship and peace-building in the post-state period. It argues that women played a crucial role in many significant changes that happened in Somalia over the past seventy years. For instance, during the military dictatorship women entered the inner circle of authority, thus breaking the traditional social ceiling. The paper assesses the factors that shaped women's ascendancy to power during that critical juncture and how they managed to thrive under tyrannical rule. It also demonstrates the challenges and opportunities that the collapse of the state provided for them. The paper further explores the future role of women in peace-building, relief work reconstruction and national development.

Key words: Somali Women, Gender Justice, Leadership, Peace-building, Empowerment and Development.

Paper type: Conference Paper

I. Introduction

The fall of the Somali military dictatorship in January 1991, and the subsequent outbreak of civil war, heralded the most dramatic change in the social status of Somali women. Throughout the country, women faced the challenge of raising their children and leading their households alone. Additionally, they participated in the

local and national movements, thus positioning themselves in leadership positions in peace promotion, conflict resolution and community development, as well as other social schemes. The enormous transformation occurred when Somalia has become a unique case in human development and global security, essentially what Powell et al. characterised as a 'vampire state'.¹

Over the past twenty years, a few works have been conducted by several Somali and non-Somali scholars pertaining to changes in gender relations and the position of women in Somali society. Despite their insightful contributions, none has hitherto examined the role of women in political leadership and decision-making processes. Scholars have focused mainly on women's status in the context of war and deprivation, concentrating primarily on the effects of war and violence on women.² In one of the recent pieces of scholarship, some women write and talk about the conflict, their experiences and the difficult choices women have to make on a daily basis.³ In this genre of literature, Somali scholars hardly look at the different historical trajectories that Somali women had to take in modern Somali history. This is obviously the reason why further research on the struggle of Somali women in politics, leadership and peace-building is needed. As such, it goes without saying that, owing to the trauma of long perpetual civil war, more scholarly studies have documented the impact of war on Somali women.

In retrospect, the changing status of women in Somalia was shaped by four major historical developments: 1) the colonial period; 2) the democratic, civilian rule after independence; 3) the dictatorial military regime; and 4) the post-dictatorship and civil war era. Hence my attempt in this paper is four-fold. First, I will describe the role of women in Somali society and its historical background in the perspective of comparative gender studies. Second, I will discuss how women have played a vital role in nationalist movement and the civilian governments (1960-1969). I will also conceptualise how they survived under the dictatorial rule of Mohamed Siad Barre and the subsequent mayhem of the post-Barre era.

Third, I will discuss the Somali women's role as breadwinners, peace-builders and politicians in the past twenty years, and the constant ordeal and challenges they have encountered. Fourth, I will examine women's struggle to obtain recognition in decision-making circles and how they contribute to the social and economic life of current Somalia. I will argue that the role of women is important for the peace process, leadership and national development. Drawing on a comprehensive theoretical framework (i.e. historical and global), I will shed light on the persistence of women as peace-builders, politicians and breadwinners in Somalia in the last seventy years from the inception of Somali nationalism shortly before World War II.

1 Benjamin Powell, Ryan Ford and Alex Nowrasteh, 'Somalia After State Collapse: Chaos or Improvement?' *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organisation*, Vol. 67 Issue 3/4, 2008, p. 657-670.

2 Matt Bryden and Martina I. Steiner, *Somalia between Peace and War: Somali women on the eve of the 21st century* (Nairobi: UNIFEM, 1998), *op. cit.*, p. 67.

3 Judith Gardner and Judy El Bushra, *Somalia: The Untold Story* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), *op. cit.*, p. x and 13.

II. Women's Status in Patriarchal Society: Historical Backdrop

It is a truism that Somalia is a country of male exclusionism – that is, a patriarchal society that excludes women in any leadership role. In this socio-cultural dimension, men have ultimate power and women are viewed as household guardians. It is evident in the traditional Somali poetry that women have long been disadvantaged in this socio-cultural setting that empowers only men. Women were assigned principally to follow the traditional roles of wife and mother – a milieu in which 'their potential for individual and collective fulfilment was strictly confined'.⁴

One major common characteristic is that Somalia is a country of clans,⁵ where men are solid stakeholders in a customary law of *xeer*, which has, in essence, a profound implication on the lives of Somali women. A case in point is its contradicting feature of the depersonalisation of women. For example, 'sometimes a girl from a family convicted of a crime is forced to marry a member of the aggrieved clan as compensation. In other cases involving rape, the claimant is obliged to marry the perpetrator to keep her honour and the honour of the family intact'.⁶

It is within this profound patriarchal society that greater 'symbolic value' is placed on a male than a female personality.⁷ As a result, until recently, gender justice has been alien to Somali society, whose sayings reflect a degrading portrayal of women. One referenced aphorism that demonstrates injustice and women's inferior status says, 'A woman belongs in the house or in a grave'. Conceptually, it was easy to ascribe inferiority to women, because their primary roles in the society were defined as wife and mother, dependent on a male breadwinner.

Somali culture and social structure generally preclude women from participating in direct decision-making processes. Most decisions concerning the life of the community – whether about war, peace, migration, marriage, or divorce – were exclusively male affairs, usually adopted through rough consensus by lineage elders. Women were assigned to tasks like 'child-rearing, preparation of food, maintenance of the house, collection of water and firewood and supervision of small stock; they were often considered incompetent for more responsible roles'.⁸

4 Bryden and Steiner, 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 67. Although within their society women have always played a significant role in the economy, to quote Gardner and El Bushra, 'traditionally their sphere of influence and decision-making was, publicly at least, confined to home'.

5 For extensive analysis on Somali clan dynamics, see Abdalla Omar Mansur, 'The Nature of the Somali Clan System' in Ahmed, A. J. (edit) *The Invention of Somalia* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1995); Ali Jimale Ahmed, *Daybreak is Near: Literature, Clans, and the Nation-State in Somalia* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1996), *Conflict in Somalia: Drivers and Dynamics*, the World Bank (2005) and I. M. Lewis, *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1994).

6 The magnitude of *Xeer* in Somali clan system of justice is still visible in rural areas of the country. See Margherita Zuin, 'A Model of Transitional Justice for Somalia', *PRAXIS: The Fletcher Journal of Human Security*, Vol XXIII, 2008, p. 98 and Joakim Gundel, 'The Predicament of the "Oday": The role of traditional structures in security, rights, law and development in Somalia', Danish Refugee Council/Novib-Oxfam, November 2006.

7 Gardner and El Bushra 2004, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

8 See Bryden and Steiner 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

It is men, especially the elders, who traditionally possessed the authority to conduct peace mediations and women were historically excluded from decision-making forums 'where peace accords were hammered out'.⁹ Not only did men dictate to and dominate women, they exploited them in their quest for attaining or preserving political, economic or social power. How women could be dominated by men in power, and at times of war, was observable during the time of military dictatorship when they helped mobilise public for the rulers and for the opponents at the expense of the oppressed population.

Given the Somali nation's background as a deeply conservative society, women were separated from men for centuries. Additionally, the two had different roles and divergent responsibilities – that is, women were marginalised housewives of what could be depicted 'masculine bias', while men were considered to be natural leaders in a winner-take-all atmosphere. However, the role of women in rural districts has been often somewhat different to that of urban areas – i.e. Mogadishu, the capital; Hargeysa, Kismaayo and Baydhabo. In the rural case, people adhere to primordial tradition, while in the urban areas society has changed dramatically since post-colonialism.

III. Women's Struggle for Somali Independence

Women have been instrumental in many political and social changes that swept through Somalia over the past 70 years. In particular, the contribution of women in the nationalist movement of 1943-1960 demands a careful consideration as it was the foundation of future women's movements. Nevertheless, the gender scholarship has not yet given sufficient attention to the women's movement in the period of urban phenomenon in Somalia, which began during colonialism and multiplied in the aftermath of Somali independence. The significant aspect was how the women's struggle during the colonial era correlates with current women's efforts in nation-building and community development. Indeed, the lack of a women's movement during this crucial time of Somali history would mean that the contemporary movement appeared to be building a house without a foundation.

However, Somali women, who campaigned for independence, can be considered the champions of gender equality. They played a pivotal role in the campaign against colonialism soon after the formation of the Somali Youth Club (SYC) in May 1943. Nevertheless, their significant position surfaced in the years after the transformation of the SYC into the Somali Youth League (SYL)¹⁰ in 1947. The SYL provided them

9 Faiza Jama (undated), 'Somali Women and Peace-Building', *Conciliation Resources*, www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/somalia/somali-women-peacebuilding.php, accessed 19 March 2011.

10 The SYL was the first political organisation that was formed to wage an anti-colonial struggle to end colonial domination in Somalia. At the outset, it was a social youth club that advocated the independence of 'Italian Somaliland' and matters related to basic western education. However, it soon established itself as a political party. For a thorough explanation about the SYL, see Saadia Touval, *Somali Nationalism: International Politics and the Drive for Unity in the Horn of Africa*

with the opportunity to organise themselves, accumulating political experience by developing common national feeling and unity. While the SYL leaders were exclusively made up of men and none of its thirteen founders were female, the women's agency within the movement played an indispensable role in the mobilisation process for political independence and decolonisation.¹¹ It soon became apparent that women were the backbone of the organisation, which still retained a male-dominated attitude that had not shared any muscle with the women until they came to realise that the women's role is undeniable.

In spite of this, women put the fight for Somali sovereignty as their main priority, pursuing several approaches to accelerate the independence struggle prior to advocating for gender justice. One such successful method was using their poetry '*buraanbur*' as a weapon to mobilise the people and resist the colonialism. Indeed, women's *buraanbur* is part of the cultural life of Somalia and it plays a fundamental, if not essential, 'role in determining Somali society, educating society, conveying messages in political and social affairs and raising consciousness among the public'.¹² Poems composed by the likes of Halima Godane, Raha Ayaanle Guled and Hawa Jibril were a very powerful instrument in creating consciousness-raising effects and awakening their fellow Somalis to face off against colonial domination. For example, a *buraanbur* composed by Jibril explains why women joined the struggle against the colonialism:

We wanted to break away from our seclusion,
We wanted to have the responsibility,
To express our feelings and our views,
We wanted to show our concern for our country.¹³

Buraanbur became a real albatross round the neck of the British Military Administration (BMA), which ruled all Somali territories (except Djibouti) in the Horn of Africa from 1941-50. Another *buraanbur* composed by Godane in 1948 accentuates their sentiment toward the British at the time.

The men who were put in the trucks to be deported,
Our leaders who were arrested,
The official ban on gatherings,
O God, the King, may the British lose their dignity.¹⁴

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963) and Cedric Barnes, 'The Somali Youth League, Ethiopian Somalis and the Greater Somalia Idea, c.1946-48, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2772-91, 2007.

11 See more details on *UN-INSTRAW*, 2008.

12 Zainab M. Jama, 'Silent Voices: The Role of Somali Women's Poetry in Social and Political Life, *Oral Tradition* 9/1, 185-202, 1994, *op. cit.*, p.200. *Buraanbur* is 'the highest poetic form in [Somali] women's literature and has sub-categories which include the *hobeeyo* (lullaby), the *hoyaale* (work songs) and *sitaat* (religious songs)', Gardner and El Bushra 2004, *op. cit.*, p. xiv. As a general rule, Somalia was described as 'a country of poets' by British explorer, Richard Burton, who visited in 1854 and wrote *First Footsteps in East Africa* (London: Longman, 1956). Burton observed the 'country teems with poets'.

13 Jama 1994, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

14 Safia Aidid, '*Haweenku Wa Garab* (Women are a Force): Women and the Somali Nationalist Movement, 1943-1960', *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, Vol 10, 2010, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

Women's poetry soon received recognition within the SYL and built respect as well as responsiveness from the public. Ambaro Hussein, who was the wife of Yaasiin Haji Osman Sharmarke, a principal member of the SYL, composed a *buraanbur* that later on became the theme song of the SYL: 'Men wear the logo of our party on their hearts and they are not afraid of clan; let all those who are good and want to join come to the Somali League'.¹⁵

Without women's endorsement, the SYL could not have any common ground to mobilise the public behind them and to continue their struggle. The political activism of Somali women, moreover, did not only consist of poetry and moral support, they also helped recruit 'members of the organisation and collect funds, building great financial sacrifices among the people'.¹⁶ An extraordinary initiative was when women sold their jewellery to finance the anti-colonisation movement and its struggle, encouraging other Somalis to contribute financially and materially to the cause of Somali sovereignty. The Somali singer, Faduma Abdullahi Dalays, recalls that women collected their jewellery, going door to door and assembling the public in protest against colonisation.¹⁷ In this popular *buraanbur*, which was composed during the colonial period, Raaha Ayaanle Guled persuaded other Somali women about the importance of donating their jewellery for the cause of liberty at the expense of their need: 'My mouth with its missing teeth deserves to be filled with gold, but the more deserving of that gold is the liberation of my country'.¹⁸

The strategy of mobilising the public with poetry and door-to-door campaigning as well as financial contributions was significant throughout the Somali quest for independence. In January 1948 following a visit by a fact-finding 'four power' delegation from the United Nations, the SYL leaders – with the helping hand and cooperation of women – organised a public rally, signifying that the Somali public was abhorrent to the return of Somalia to Italy's fascist rule. Women composed the vast majority of people who came out in support of Somali independence.¹⁹

A subsequent confrontation, popularly known by Somalis as *Hanooolaato* (long live Somalia) between SYL supporters and then Italian community in Mogadishu with their loyal Somali adherents, saw the violent killing of a Somali woman by the name of Hawa Osman Taako, who is still regarded as the first female freedom fighter in the modern history of the Somali nation. That Hawa Taako's heroism was exceptional in the Somali context is the fact that she had her baby boy on her back when

15 See Lidwien Kapteijns and Maryan Muuse Boqor, 'Memories of a Mogadishu Childhood, 1940-1964: Maryan Muuse Boqor and the Woman Who Inspired Her', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 13.

16 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 113-14. According to Nurta Haji Hassan, a former notable female lawyer, women used to provide free food and drink for the weekly SYL gathering held in every Sunday.

17 Interview with Khadija Abdullahi Ali known as 'Dalays', *BBC Somali Service*, September 2010. Dalays was considered as one of the most leading Somali singers group called *Waaberi*. She actively contributed to the struggle for Somali independence during colonialism.

18 Safia Aidid 2010, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

19 Faduma Ahmed Aalim 'Ureeji', personal communication, 6 May 2011. During this incident, Aalim was with her mother Hawa Jibril who was among the SYL supporters. She still vividly recalls the *Somaliness* sentiment and nationalist fervour at the time as well as the atmosphere of Mogadishu.

she was martyred.²⁰ A monument was later erected to her by the Military Regime²¹ in honour of her role in the cause of Somali liberty and it came to represent not only the *Hanooolaato* incident, but the other freedom fighters, who were a symbol of Somali nationalism. Hawa Taako's monument in Mogadishu city centre can be said to be the Somali equivalent to the American Statute of Liberty in Manhattan, New York.

Nevertheless, courageous accomplishments like that of Hawa Taako dramatically changed local perceptions of women whose attempts to gain access to decision-making spheres soon received consideration. In 1952, a women's section within the SYL, led by two prominent women, Raaha Ayaanle and Halimo Godane, was established,²² yet it was not until 1959 that the first female member was accepted as a member of the Central Committee of the organisation. Raaha Ayaanle set the score by becoming the first female in Somali history to obtain official access to a decision-making circle exclusively dominated by men. At the SYL's *Congress Extraordinaire* in May 1959, a proposal was unanimously accepted that Raaha Ayaanle be a member of the Central Committee of SYL.

Somalia's first President, Aden Abdulle Osman, 'Aden Adde', who was the Speaker of the Trusteeship Legislative Council at the time, voiced doubts in that session since women 'lacked education and did not have the necessary political consciousness for leadership'.²³ Women who were present in the meeting were infuriated by his statement and they retorted to his speech with symbolic logic and persuasive argumentation by posing these rhetorical questions: 'Are you not arguing as the Italians? Are you not really supporting [Italian] contention that Somalis are not ready for independence, for they alleged that [Somalis] had not sufficient education and political maturity?'²⁴ Aden Adde's contention appeared based on favouring the creation of capacity-building and higher education for Somali women prior to admitting them into political gatherings where men based their politics on pervasive squabble.²⁵ Nonetheless, the power tussle between Somali men and women in politics was similar to that narrated by Fanon.

20 See Mohamed Haji (Ingiriis), 'The Miracle in the Manifesto: Lamenting for Lost Opportunities in Somalia', *Africa Review*, December 2010, (to be revised again soon), *op. cit.*, p. 11. *Hanooolaato* is described by oral Somali historians as the most serious incident between Somalis and Italians in Somalia's modern history when 15 Somalis, including Hawa Taako, and 52 Italians lost their lives.

21 In contrast, Ahmed (1996) offers an interesting perspective about the military regime's purpose in erecting a monument to Hawa Taako, contending forcefully that it was meant to operate as 'a political rhetoric'. He writes, '...with construction of the monument [by the approval of dictator Barre], Hawa Taako's anti-colonialism lost its 'multiaccentuality' and became a uniaccentual symbol, in that case the heroine becomes 'superorganic' and the monument 'projects the wish fulfilment' of a group within the nation', *op. cit.*, p. 4. However, for another distinctive account on the monument, see Nuruddin Farrah's novel, *A Naked Needle* (London: Heinemann, 1976).

22 Safia Aidid 2010, *op. cit.*, p. 116. This was the time when the Somali Women's Association – the first of its kind – was established in Somalia.

23 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

24 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 116. The author quotes this passage from Ruqiya Haji Duale, 'Women's Movements, Organisations and Strategies in a Historical Perspective: Somalia Case Study', research report, 1981, p. 31.

25 Several Somali women were given scholarships to study abroad during Aden Adde's tenure, mainly in Italy.

... [women] are suspicious of the townsman. The latter dresses like a European; he speaks the European language, works with him, sometimes even lives in the same district; so he is considered by [women] as a turncoat who has betrayed everything that goes to make up the national heritage. The townspeople are 'traitors and knaves' who seem to get on well with the occupying powers, and do their best to get on within the framework of the colonial system.²⁶

However, the women's movement continued to struggle despite a lack of encouragement from the 'men-in-trousers'²⁷ who began to compete with power prior to obtaining full political sovereignty. In 1954, southern Somalia witnessed the first democratic election for local municipalities. Two years later, in February 1956, the first general election was held. Women were not granted the right to vote in either of those elections, though they were based on parliamentary democracy. In October 1958, the second municipal election was held in the local council voting, which was the first to be held under direct Somali supervision.²⁸

Unlike previous elections founded on universal male suffrage, women were given the right to vote by the administration known as *Governo Somalo*²⁹ headed by Prime Minister Abdullahi Iise Mohamud, who was also the Secretary General of the SYL. This was the first time in Somali history that women were granted suffrage.³⁰ However, they did not vote as a separate bloc on gender issues in the election, for there was no such issue at the time. Stirred by these social and political developments, Halima Godane became the first Somali woman who contested for public office in the municipal elections³¹, but unfortunately she did not win a seat. With extreme enthusiasm and euphoria, most Somali people had fixed their eyes on seeing Somali independence within the two years to come.

26 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

27 During the colonial period in Somalia, one British colonial officer used this term to describe the urbanised, half-educated middle class men who advocated for Somali independence.

28 See A. A. Castagno, Jr., 'Somali Republic' in James Smoot Coleman and Carl Gustav Rosberg (eds) *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964, p. 512-559).

29 *Governo Somalo* denotes Somali Government in Italian. It was the government under the UN trusteeship that ruled Somalia prior to its independence (1950-1960). For more on how these democratic elections were held see Castagno, Jr. 1964.

30 Castagno 1964, *op. cit.*, p. 535.

31 Faduma Ahmed Aalim 'Ureeji', personal communication, 6 May 2011. A political discord between women had emerged from these elections. Godane joined an opposition party calling itself Greater Somalia League (GSL), thus siding with embattled politicians who attempted to use women to mobilise the public behind them, while Guled remained with SYL, signing a petition in favour of Iise's government in 1959.

IV. Women in Post-Independence Somalia

In July 1960, the Somali Republic was born as a democratic country.³² Exercising their right to vote and contest for public office in newly independent Somalia, women strived for an active role in politics, to serve on government committees and the National Parliament. The newly-born government recognised gender justice, improving their social status and rights enshrined in the constitution approved by referendum in 1961, but they did not provide women with space for political power.

However, the 'civilian' government, as it was known by Somalis and non-Somalis alike, encouraged women's dramatic transformational change in permitting them to be artists and to sing in theatres when, in fact, several traditional intellectuals in the patriarchal society were critical of the government's lenience of what they considered 'un-Islamic behaviour'.³³ The most famous and popular Somali female singers who emerged during this time were household names like Faduma Abdullahi Maandeek, Maryan Mursal Iise Bootaan, the late Halima Khalif Omar 'Magool' and the late Seynab Haji Ali Siigaale 'Bahsan'. It was in this era that the first waves of Somali female graduates returned to Somalia mostly with social science degrees, gained at European and American universities. Women were also allowed to be issued licences to ride motorbikes and drive cars which many countries in Africa and Asia regarded as significant of the new development of women's status in newly-born Somalia.

Yet women felt forgotten in decision-making and managerial positions, not because they were unfavourable, but there was a lack of real administrative skills in the government bureaucracy, which was in an infant state.³⁴ There was a debate among women as to whether the struggle for Somali independence produced an opportunity for them. For instance, not enough consideration was given to women like Faduma Ahmed Aalim, who was the first Somali woman to complete a university degree in Italy in 1962.³⁵ Equally, many of her peers who followed in her footsteps were unable 'to enter the civil service in spite of a policy of automatic 'grade A' government positions for anyone who had diplomas'.³⁶ In contrast, Nurta Haji Hassan, one of the first female lawyers in Somalia, recalls during this time that 'there was equal pay

32 Somalia, officially known as the Somali Republic, was the combination of two entities: Italian Somaliland in the south which was an Italian colony and British Somaliland in the north, a British Protectorate. The former gained its independence on 1st July 1960 and the latter on 26th June 1960, respectively. The two entities united on 1st July 1960. British Somaliland known today as 'Somaliland' seeks international recognition and has declared secession from Somalia on 18th May 1991.

33 Songs were composed denouncing the transformational change of women's status in the society. The well-known Somali poet Ali Sugule's song '*Habloow maad is bargabataan?*' (O women why don't you keep a tight rein on yourselves?) was one of the most compelling poems during this time.

34 Many commentators were critical of the government and soon started voicing their concerns. A Somali poet, the late Ahmed Ismail Dirie 'Qaasim' composed a poem '*dambi kuma hadlayee / ma arag dowladdaan rabay*' (Not sinful remarks what I am stating, but this is not the type of government that I had struggled for).

35 Faduma Ahmed Aalim 'Ureeji', personal communication, 6 May 2011.

36 Safia Aidid 2010, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

for men and women' performing work of similar skill and women were allowed four months of maternity leave.³⁷

Whereas many emerging African states in post-colonial Africa have come up with more repressive rule than colonialism itself, Somalia's post-independence period from 1960 to 1969 was a stark contrast to many African, Asian and Latin American states in terms of free speech and liberty. With regard to Somalia's post-liberation state of affairs, people had enjoyed a vibrant democracy and freedom of speech that allowed them to voice their grievances whenever they felt aggrieved. Hence, Aalim's mother, Hawa Jibril composed a *buraanbur* reminding women of how the 'civilian' government, regardless of women's sacrifices for sovereignty, treated them in not providing any meaningful positions of power.

Sisters, you sold your jewellery,
Depriving yourselves,
Enriching the struggle.

Sisters, you stayed as one,
United, even when your brothers [men],
Divided and deceived our nation.

Sisters, we were forgotten,
We did not taste the fruits of success,
Even the lowest positions
Were not offered,
And our degrees were cast aside as dirt,
Sisters; was this what we struggled for?³⁸

This grieving *buraanbur* did turn out to be successful as Aalim was soon appointed Director of the Women's section at the Ministry of Education as well as School Inspector.³⁹ But the paradoxical situation of gender relations at this time was synonymous with the Somali proverb '*sidaan kuugu lisay, iiguma hambeyn*' (as I milked a she-camel for you, you left none for me to drink). Discontented by the government's reluctance to deal with gender concerns and a closing of spaces, a plethora of women's groups emerged soon after Somali independence; for instance, in 1960, the first feminist organisation was established – the Somali Women's Association made up primarily of middle-class women and the wives of political leaders 'concerned with women's welfare'.⁴⁰ There was a feeling among Somali feminists that women felt that their domestic roles as servants of the house in the patriarchal society were reasserted as political power remained the domain of men after independence.

In 1967, another feminist association was formed by several middle-class women who lived in the main towns, especially in Mogadishu. The association – the Somali Women's Movement – was founded on advocating for the explicit aim 'to unify and

37 Nurta Haji Hassan, personal communication, 6 May 2011.

38 Safia Aidid 2010, *op. cit.*, p. 117. For a more detailed version of this poem, also see Gardner and El Bushra 2004, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

39 Faduma Ahmed Aalim 'Ureeji', personal communication, 6 May 2011. Ureeji would become the Dean of Somali National University during the time of the Military Regime.

40 Safia Aidid 2010, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

strengthen the collective energy of Somali women and educate the public in the basic and constitutionally guaranteed rights of complete equality of the sexes'.⁴¹ Women continued to organise themselves, establishing movements based on Somali feminism, which was a broad category of all feminists who held concepts of both Somali nationalism and feminism. It was a triumph for their agenda that their organisations were independent of government intervention and public funding. Dependency on financial support from the government would have restricted their ability to pursue their aggressive gender justice goal.

Forming separate organisations held little for them and for other women in the rural areas. Without a common ground, these organisations did not for a number of reasons produce any meaningful outcome to transform gender justice. First, those who formed the organisations were urbanised and their movements concentrated on a quest for political positions rather than creating social transformation and empowerment of women. Second, the urbanised women's movements found it difficult to flourish outside the main towns since most Somali women resided in rural areas.

Nevertheless, there was a process of a growing emergence of democratic associations that soon proliferated across Somalia, creating impressive change in terms of political consciousness and social transformation. Thinkers like Alexis de Tocqueville noted that associations of all types (e.g., political, religious and other special interests) are part of the different schools of democracy.⁴² So the formation of these feminist organisations implies that if Somali women's movements had received encouragement from the State, they would have made a great difference in helping people to embark on a social transformation consistent with deep democratisation and good governance. But the main encumbrance was the internal competition for power within the highest echelons of the civilian government, especially during the last years of its rule, although they achieved a safe democratic transfer of power from President Aden Adde's administration to that of President Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke – a rare move that was never seen before on the African continent – until the military regime ousted them in October 1969.

V. Women and the Era of Military Autocracy

Great social and political changes took place in Somalia following the military regime that took power by force. The military regime led by the dictator Mohamed Siad Barre gave women more power and status in the 1970s as Peru's Alberto Fujimori did in the 1990s. As such, it is often contended that the Somali dictator, Mohamed Siad Barre, was a saviour for women. During Barre's reign, a considerable number of women occupied senior public positions as members of parliament in what can

41 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

42 Although sixty-two parties participated in the parliamentary election of March 1969, this point in time was labelled in Somalia as '*dimograadiyaddii dacayda furatay*' (a democracy gone mad).

be said to resemble a deal with the Devil. However, most women who came to hold positions of power and influence during his period were mainly affiliated with the regime, either by marriage or by clan allegiance.

The major development was, nevertheless, that women served in local councils and played sports. During this time women played a role in the military and became officers, although they were not promoted as senior officers. Women serving in security services and working as secret police were also seen. But opportunities for secondary and higher education had also increased for women until the collapse of the regime in 1991.⁴³

Several works on gender roles in Somalia have hitherto agreed that the military regime was a golden era for women in Somalia.⁴⁴ Some scholars even used the term 'emancipation', dubbing the era of 'the discovery of woman'.⁴⁵ However, they appeared to have overlooked the condition of women in rural areas, rather focusing on urbanised women, who allied themselves with the regime due in part to several women's ambition to seek power to dominate others as military men in the regime.

There were women members of the Central Committee of the ruling party during the twenty-one years the government was in power. Several of them were appointed vice ministers. But none had been nominated to a full ministerial position, though most of these women were university-educated and had enough experience in politics.⁴⁶

One of the main legacies of the regime was that of dragging Somalia into a state that adheres to the social ideology trend of 'the law of the survival of the fittest', though it was not based on *Darwinism*, but primordial *Spencerism*. Barre saw in women an attractive means of consolidating his power in a time of heavy pressure from the public. Barre's plan was twofold. First, he wanted to enhance his reputation under the banner of gender equity. Second, his aim was to use women as an instrument to mobilise the public for ground support of his regime.

To consolidate power within the societal setting and, perhaps, to legitimise a regime that came to power by force, a women's section within the regime was formed, calling itself Somali Women's Democratic Organisation (SWDO). However, SYDO was extremely clan-based according to one former influential member⁴⁷ and it was fundamentally 'flawed by being part of the controlling apparatus of Barre's corrupt and highly-repressive regime'⁴⁸ coupled with its direct control from the office of the President.⁴⁹ Nurta Haji Hassan, the former Regime's Legal Counsel, recalls that women were just beating drums in praise of the ruling military men and they came to be branded as 'Devil's forces'.⁵⁰

43 See more details on this at www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Somalia.html, accessed 21 March 2011.

44 See, for example, El Bushra and Gardner (2004) and Bryden and Steiner (1998).

45 Elisabetta Forni, 'Women's Role in the Economic, Social and Political Development of Somalia', *Africa Spectrum*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 19-28.

46 Jama 1994, *op. cit.*, p. 189-190.

47 Nurta Haji Hassan, personal communication, 6 May 2011.

48 Gardner and El Bushra 2004, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

49 Bryden and Steiner 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

50 Nurta Haji Hassan, personal communication, 6 May 2011.

In 1975, the military regime promulgated a controversial decree of The Family Law, legalising equality between men and women. This unilateral decision infuriated Islamic scholars, who protested against it. The military junta responded with the death sentence of ten religious scholars in January 1975. This execution sent warning signals to the society in general and women in particular that the military regime's action was motivated by political considerations rather than social transformation and gender justice. It was evident that the military junta wanted to test their power within societal reflection by attempting to bring in a contentious law as they did in 1970 by announcing the application of 'scientific socialism'. Additionally, the military regime's ideology and rhetoric was not matched by the reality of a majority of Somali women.⁵¹ Many women distanced themselves from this law as it contradicted both Islamic law and Somali *Heer*. As written by El Bushra and Gardner:

Progressive reforms were made [like] Family Law in 1975 assuring women equal rights with men and making discrimination against women illegal. However, little was done to educate the general population about women's equality, or to enforce the provisions of the law. Hence the reforms made no impact outside the urban areas and elites. Nothing really changed for the vast majority of women who are rural and uneducated. [In contrast], the reforms to the Family Law play no part in contemporary legal practice, discredited completely by its association with Barre's regime.⁵²

In 1978 when an unsuccessful coup d'état endangered Barre's rule, it was women, along with his military police, who stood up in defence of the regime,⁵³ organising people through using the only radio in the capital – Radio Mogadishu – to build support. Several women demanded that the public back up the military junta, accusing rivals of impairing 'Somali unity', while others physically took up arms and attempted to prevent the regime from toppling.⁵⁴ Barre soon promised to reward women and it was at this time that the first vice minister of his regime was appointed.⁵⁵ However, Barre's rhetoric, and sometimes 'interventionalist' attitude to women's movements, did not bear out reality because Somalia was soon plunged into a profound, all-encompassing crisis due to his dictatorial tendencies and futile attempts to force his will on the people.

There were some women who merely applauded the military rule out of fear.⁵⁶ Several women who resisted the regime's oppression during the 1980s were arrested. One of the most notable female Somali singers, Saado Ali Warsame, was among those detained without trial for singing *kacaandiid* (anti-revolutionary) songs. Some of her colleagues resorted to exile like Halima Khalif Omar 'Magool', Khadra Daher Ige and Faduma Maandeeq. By the same token, several Somali women associated themselves with the opposition group, turning their most powerful weapon – *buraanbur*

51 See Bryden and Steiner 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

52 Gardner and El Bushra 2004, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

53 Interviews I conducted with two former Somali Police officers in London, 29 March 2011. On the day of the coup (9 April 1978), these officers noted that they had seen several women armed with rifles inside the Presidential palace inspecting the gate and guarding the military ruler himself who met people under a tree.

54 *Ibid.*

55 Faduma Ahmed Aalim was appointed as Vice Minister.

56 Nurta Haji Hassan, personal communication, 6 May 2011.

– against the regime. The Somali poetess, Maryam Haji Hassan, expresses in this poem how people suffered in the military dictatorship following the failed coup.

The committee [Barre's politburo] has let us down,
They eliminated the strong and the intelligent.
They detain the young as they reach puberty
The process of avenging these wrongs must begin
We must support those preparing to fight.⁵⁷

In the end, women participated physically and materially in the war against Barre's regime. According to Jama, the war against Barre's regime in the 1980s was seen as a just cause by many Somalis and many women took part in the struggle to end the dictatorship,⁵⁸ several of them becoming leading figures in mobilising the militias who overthrew the regime. But the impressive prediction of Somali women after Barre's ousting that was succeeding democratic institutions would secure their rights and they would be better off than under his rule. However, far from this aspiration, the country descended into complete anarchism that many still ascribe to the legacy of the military regime.

VI. Victims of the Civil War

What first started in January 1991 as a liberation struggle against the dictatorial rule and endemic corruption of the military regime soon degenerated into a 'murderous pattern of internecine aggression and reprisals, and later into a seemingly purposeless war between clan-based feuding militia groups, punctured only by asymmetrical and unconvincing claims to clan supremacy by one leader or another'.⁵⁹ It is without doubt that the civil war has brought unprecedented terror and horror to the psychological welfare of the most susceptible group in Somali society, who are given the least protection by their clans. The greatest burden, as in many cases of armed clashes in the world, has been born by Somali women, who have endured extreme levels of insecurity that made killing and looting a norm, whereas rape have become part of everyday life in Somalia.⁶⁰

57 Jama 1994, *op. cit.*, p. 192. This poem was released on a radio controlled by a Somali opposition based in Ethiopia in the early 1980s. The radio *Kulmis* (unison) was a propaganda instrument for opposition groups, while Radio Mogadishu was its equivalent for the military junta in this sense.

58 See Jama (undated), 'Somali Women and Peace-Building', *Conciliation Resources*, www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/somalia/somali-women-peacebuilding.php, accessed 19 March 2011.

59 See Bryden and Steiner, 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 2. For how Somali people are severely divided by inter-clan 'fractionalisation' and how that led to a protracted civil war, see Samuel M. Makinda, 'Politics and Clan Rivalry in Somalia', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol 26, issue 1, 1991, p. 111-126 and Abdi I. Samatar, 'Destruction of State and Society in Somalia: Beyond the Tribal Convention', *the Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 30, Issue 4, 1992, p. 625-641.

60 UN-INSTRAW 2008, *op. cit.*, p. 22. For more horror stories on how Somali women suffered under the internecine war, see Asha-Kaha, *Gumaadkii Muqdisho iyo Hargeysa*, a Somali written book

In the course of the civil war, women have experienced the physical horrors of ferocious conflicts between competing warlords vying for power and economic resources. The experience of the agony and misery in fluctuating conditions has had a bitter effect on women and children. Many women suffered from post-traumatic distress disorder, for they could not cope with the huge catastrophe that they have experienced. Psychotherapy assistance has had to be provided for grief-stricken women and their children by the humanitarian organisations that came for their rescue during and after the peak of the civil war.

As a result, the war has also caused a general loss of mobility for Somali people, but the effect is more significant for women than men.⁶¹ Some scholars have challenged those who argued that men were the real sufferers of war. For example, Cawo Abdi contends that in the time of war it is women who suffer more, because they become the focus of 'new sanctions in the invented traditions cultivated in conflict and post-conflict situations'.⁶²

Women have paid a high price in conflicts, which have been characterised by numerous cases of rape, yet it is still very difficult to obtain statistics to assess the scale of violence against women, which is believed to be widespread.⁶³ Some women who managed to flee from the war were caught in the Somali-Kenyan border, witnessing rape and other atrocities. Bryden and Steiner (1998) suggest that the war had accelerated what they call 'the feminisation of poverty':

The direct impact of war upon Somali women has been dramatic. Tens of thousands of men have been killed, leaving widows and orphans behind. Today, many women live alone or without relatives to support them, and a significant number of the women in Somalia are the only breadwinners in the family. Many [women] assumed the sole responsibility for their children, receiving little or no aid from their husbands, parents or relatives. The feminisation of poverty is thus on the increase.⁶⁴

Despite the terror they encountered, it is not surprising that Somali women were also a driving force for internecine civil war. They have contributed to the outbreak of violence and hostilities by siding with warring militias.⁶⁵ Although the number of women who physically participated in the civil war was small, some mobilised and encouraged clan militias to secure their clan's status in political power. According to Aalim, during the height of the civil war and the competition for power, women

(London: Lower Shabelle Publisher, 2000) and 'Horror in the Woods', *the Economist*, 10/23/93, Vol. 329, Issue 7834.

61 Social Institutions and Gender Index: <http://genderindex.org/country/somalia>, accessed 19 March 2011.

62 Cawo Mohamed Abdi, 'Convergence of Civil War and the Religious Right: Reimagining Somali Women', *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2007.

63 *Ibid.* The atrocities that women have faced during the heinous internecine war in Somalia is briefly chronicled in Inger Skjelsbaek and Dan Smith (eds), *Gender, Peace and Conflict* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), p. 4.

64 Bryden and Steiner 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

65 Birgitte Refslund Sørensen, *Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Issues and Sources* (Geneva: UNRSID, 1998), *op. cit.*, p. iii.

aligned themselves with their clans⁶⁶. Indeed, Somali women's culture of war looked like playing with fire.

Several incidents were documented during the civil war where women pressured militiamen to wear women's clothes or die on the war front for defending them from enemy clans. Faduma Jibril, a prominent environmental activist in Somalia, eloquently states that women should accept their share of setting fire to the Somali debacle.

Let us not pretend innocence. [We] have empowered and encouraged our husbands, our leaders and our militias to victimise our fellow countrymen. [We] cry, grieve and remain weary, but do not learn the lesson – a lesson that has cost [us] more than we [would] ever know.⁶⁷

However, there were women who advocated for the preservation of human rights in the context of a war environment. *Human rights* activist, Mariam Hussein Awreeye, widow of the prominent human rights lawyer, Ismail Jumale Ossoble, founded the Ismail Jumale Centre for Human Rights to monitor and record human rights violations, so that perpetrators could be brought to justice once legal institutions were put in place.⁶⁸ Currently, it is estimated that there are over one hundred and twenty different women's movements that are actively involved in improving the situation in Somalia, and women do not tire easily as they have been continually advocating numerous political, economical and social issues from 1991 to the present day.⁶⁹

On the other hand, over the years, several Somali women have lost their lives in many attempts to build peace and empower women. Among those murdered were Italian-educated Starlin Abdi Arush and Swiss aid worker Verena Karrer. These ladies were 'good Samaritans', dedicating their lives to empowering women by education during the peak of the civil strife. Both were based in Merka,⁷⁰ Somalia, where people felt devastated by their loss.⁷¹

Although devastated by decades of warfare, new responsibilities did indeed open up for women to take a more active role in Somali society at large, not only in pri-

66 Aalim, personal communication, 6 May 2011.

67 Bryden and Steiner, 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

68 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 45. A personal communication with Maryan Awreeye, 19 April 2011.

69 See David W. Graney, 'Women's Rights in Somalia: Women's Role in Conflict Resolution', unpublished paper for Utah Valley University. http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/Academic/hr-reconpb_womensrightsinsomalia_graney_april2010.pdf, accessed 19 April 2011.

70 I, the author, visited the town of Merka in December 2001, April 2002 and September 2002. I was once a guest of Starlin's charity organisation and had the honour to witness many community development programmes that had been beneficial for local communities, particularly women. Moreover, two months before Karrer's killing, I conducted an interview with her in which she vehemently blamed George W. Bush, the then US President, for igniting warfare around the world. She also accused international aid agencies based in Nairobi of not adequately assisting Somali people. Twice during of these visits, I also met the late Mana Abdurahman Suldan known as Mana Haajow, another humanitarian lady, who was running Ayub Orphanage Centre for orphan children in Merka. Mana Haajow passed away in December 2007 of a cardiac attack.

71 Starlin was killed in Nairobi in October 2002 by unknown armed men, while Karrer was gunned down in Merka in February 2002 by two militiamen. Starlin was survived by her family and her fiancé, Roland Marchal, a French academic expert on Somalia, who exclaimed in her obituary: 'She never much considered her own future; she only thought of her country'. See 'Starlin Abdi Arush, 'Peace Activist and Aid Worker, born 3 March 1957, died 24 October 2002', *the Guardian*, London, 4 November, 2002.

vate business and within the household, but also in peace-building, leadership and state-reinstating processes.⁷² As such, women transformed themselves into genuine leaders both there and in their households, assuming responsibilities that had been laid upon them with the disappearance of the state. But little has been altered by their struggle in the decision-making circles.

When the conflict and chaos led to the 'practical disappearance of all state structures [and] a major disruption of economic, social and political life and to an unforeseen humanitarian catastrophe',⁷³ many men lost their responsibility as family breadwinners and virtually became economically 'unproductive' in their households due to civil war repercussions. Thus women emerged not merely economically active in taking on the traditional position of men as chief breadwinners, but both breadwinners and peace-builders at the time of a fierce contest for power in Somalia. Though war presented an opportunity for freedom, however, it destroyed their chances of continuing their education.

However, women's position as breadwinners came with a new conundrum in the transformation of gender in Somalia. Men were often reluctant to assume their wives' role of looking after children. Consequently, women were encumbered with two colossal tasks – that is, as breadwinner and prime carer in the family. Many women filled roles that were traditionally held by men in the market, such as manual and menial jobs, in order to feed their children. Women's contributions to market production and the labour market in Somalia has not yet given them any influence at the negotiation tables, which remain a male-dominated environment.

When adapting to life under a ferocious conflict coupled with anarchic circumstances that wrecked the nation in a manner that some scholars dubbed 'the failed state par excellence', women proved to be unique peace-builders in war-time. As enormous and huge as the challenges facing them are, they have endured and still continue to endure the burden that surfaces in the absence of the state apparatus. It is therefore patent that most Somali women have endured agonies of separation and loss.⁷⁴ Though some have been managed to escape, thousands have lost their lives in the war, thus remaining the primary victims of war along with their children.

72 'Women, Peace and Security in Somalia: Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325', *United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW)*, 2008, *op. cit.*, p.21.

73 Riikka Koskenmaki, 'Legal Implications Resulting from State Failure in Light of the Case of Somalia,' *Nordic Journal of International Law*, Vol 73, 2004, *op. cit.*, p.2.

74 Gardner and El Bushra 2004, *op. cit.*, p. xi. Gardner writes in her introduction, 'For most, [women's] nuclear family – mother, father and children – has been [separated] by the conflict between clans, forcing them to make heart-breaking decisions in order to save themselves and their children. [As a result], for many this has meant separation from partners and children as each sought refuge in their own group territories or outside the country', *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

VII. Women's Peace-building and Development Schemes

One of the consequences of the war was that the flight of many urbanised women to the rural areas revealed women's potential in peace-building frameworks, advancing a peace culture as well as a sense of awakening toward gender justice in the rural locations. Though the term 'peace-building' is used as *nabad-dhis* in Somali, it refers, in general, to policies and programmes to restore stability and 'effective social, political and economic institutions after a war or serious upheaval'.⁷⁵ As such, women as mothers are most appropriate to be peace-builders, as well as leaders, to broaden the ethos of peace in their houses and inside the wider community. Influenced by paradigms like these, Somali women have carried out initiatives to build peace and create agreements between the clans in some parts of Somalia. As written by Gardner and El Bushra:

Traditionally, women have played an indirect but important part in conflict resolution. [For some years], women across Somalia have been deeply involved in peace promotion and peace-making. As well as exerting influence in private over their husbands, sons, brothers and uncles, the traditional means women could use to influence political decision-making, they have organised themselves and exerted collective influence at the community and wider level. [Their significant] contributions to ending violence and promoting peace have included formal presentations to warring parties, demonstrations, direct action, petitioning of politicians and elders, and provision of logistical and financial support to peace processes.⁷⁶

The Somali women's movement in peace-building is often linked to the horror they had encountered in the civil war. As women have argued many times, it was also a moral obligation for them to seek and foster peace.⁷⁷ During the height of the civil war, women could be anticipated to play 'the role of peace envoy or messenger between her husband's clan and her father's clan'⁷⁸ as fierce warfare flared up between rival clans throughout the 1990s.

Women have employed many strategies to end fighting between warring factions. One such strategy is composing poetry as a petition for peace and organising demonstrations against warfare. In many instances, after hearing the recitation of their *buraanbur* aimed at fostering peace and community cohesion, men felt not merely humbled, but were compelled to accept the message of their poetry – that is, to end war and armed hostility.

Maryan Ja'eyl, a well-known contemporary Somali poetess, stresses how *buraanbur* forms viable harmony among Somalis, describing it as a powerful tool that can

75 King, 2005, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

76 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 140. For more accounts on how women promoted peace-building initiatives, see 'Women and Peace-Making in Somaliland' compiled by Gardner and El Bushra (2004, p. 142-52) from an original paper by Zeynab Mohammed Hassan with additional information provided through interviews with Noreen Michael Mariano, Shukri Hariir Ismail and Amina Yusuf. For a recent observation on how women have promoted peace in Somalia, see Shukria Dini, 'Women Building Peace: Somali Women in Puntland and Somaliland', *Conflict Trends*, issue 2, 2009.

77 Interview with Asha Haji Elmi, a well-known women's activist in Somalia, in London, November 2009.

78 Gardner and El Bushra 2004, *op. cit.*, p. 9-10.

be utilised to create peace settlements and community cohesion.⁷⁹ Her two recent poems ‘*Allow nabad noogu deeq*’ (Oh god offer us peace) and ‘*aaway barafasooradii Soomaaliyeed?*’ (Where have Somali intellectuals disappeared?) not only aimed at promoting peace, but were pungent calls and prayers for peace. Equally, another *buraanbur* sent from Somalia during the course of the civil war by Faduma Mohamud Osman demonstrates how Somali women were committed to foster peace:

We, the womenfolk in *Bari* [East] region, are not vindictive
And are ready for peace making;
As always, we are in readiness fostering the unity of the Somali society.
To achieve justice for all is a principle vehemently
Supported by womenfolk
In the face of fallen and crying statehood and,
Devastation of the country,
Somali womenfolk do not sleep at ease.⁸⁰

That women are not only substantial, but essential in reinstating peace in Somalia is observable in this poignant *buraanbur* sent from Beledweyne city in central Somalia by Adar Abdi Fiidow. She describes her feeling thus:

Disarm now, discard and bury divisive ‘clannism’ for the sake of peace / Seek to resolve existing differences peacefully and intelligently with the pen and not the sword / Somalis, bury the hatchet, let there be no more slaughtering, and ordain peace as a priority issue for deliberation / Anti-peace elements and belligerent men who are yet unprepared for it – we are ready to challenge them and convince them to join the peace process / Somali women, whichever your country of abode, be reminded of action on this obligation / Somali womenfolk, strive to keep your war-mongering men in the bounds of morality / Wives should preach peace and reconciliation to their partners at home / Where are the writers and university professors, and why don’t they produce peace literature? Why don’t you propagate and consolidate peace regardless of your clan origin?⁸¹

Nurta Haji Hassan professes that peace starts at home, thus its promotion has to be done by women. It is significant to record that women have played an active role in ending warfare that had previously ruined the now peaceful zones of Somalia, notably Somaliland, Puntland and Galmudug. Women have been instrumental in promoting the importance of peace among their husbands, sons, fathers, brothers, uncles, cousins as well as to their mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, and other women relatives.⁸² These efforts soon produced fruitful achievements not just creating a peaceful ambience, but augmenting their position and status in society as well.

Another approach that women have used to foster peace and advocate for their rights is establishing non-governmental organisations, which were proscribed during the military regime. Through these initiatives, they have developed as a part of civil society methods evolved during the war. One NGO dedicated to giving voice to women’s concerns is Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC). Founded in 1992 by Asha Haji Elmi Amin, an influential women’s rights activist in Somalia, SSWC

79 Maryan Ja’eyl, personal communication, 7 May 2011.

80 See Bryden and Steiner 1998, *op. cit.*, p.42.

81 See Bryden and Steiner 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

82 Bryden and Steiner 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

was the first Somali cross-clan women's organisation and was given awards for promoting women's status and peace building.

In order to create space for women, Amin coined the 'Sixth Clan' concept which is a new term that has recently entered the Somali gender lexicon, referring to 'the clan of womenfolk'.⁸³ In an address by Amin to the Dialogue with Arab Women on Economic and Political Issues, Pan-African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development (Dakar, Senegal, 1 May 2005), she elaborated on her concept of seceding women from clan rivalry:

Our purpose was to create space for women in the peace process and to build a bridge to policy. The Sixth Clan was born out of frustration. Within our society, although [we are] victims of conflict we had no voice for the national solution. In a patriarchal society such as ours, women have no right to represent their clan, nor any responsibility for protecting the clan. A group of us had the idea to form our own clan, in addition to the five pre-existing clans. The Sixth Clan gave us the first political entry point for women as equal partners in decision making. The women elected me to be their leader. We went to the negotiation table with the five clan leaders. We put women's interests into the peace process... we engendered the language. Instead of merely referring to men, the language [in government documents] now says 'he or she'.⁸⁴

According to King, women have eventually persuaded rival leaders of the five main clans in Somalia to let them attend peace negotiations, especially that held in in Arta, Djibouti, in 2000, in which the Somali women challenged the delegates [at the Peace Conference] 'to think beyond clan boundaries in drafting a peace agreement'.⁸⁵ However, they were denied a platform as 'the Sixth Clan' for the latest peace conferences in Kenya and Djibouti. Such developments appear to underpin the challenges they have faced in their long walk and struggle to obtain a place in the decision-making circles. Amin explains how women had won seats on behalf of 'the Sixth Clan' in 2000:

It was a mission [we] dared, and won. It won with great difficulty. First, we changed the attitudes toward women (which had been horrible), on the part of the people and the leaders. We made the impossible possible. Second, we exercised our political rights... our own potentialities. We proved that if women are given the platform, they can wonderfully play a positive role. The problem is that we are generally not being given the platform. We impressed the men. We broke stereotypes. It is up to the women; if we don't display our commitment, nothing will change. The men want to sideline us, but they cannot deny us. Women should harness themselves with commitment and skills. The religious leaders came eventually to defend us. Our approach and persuasiveness persuaded the religious leaders, who began to support us.⁸⁶

Without women's participation, peace negotiations in Somalia will mostly end in failure. As Amin argued, 'The peace process needs women; women don't need the

83 For more detailed accounts of the 'Sixth Clan' paradigm, see Debra M. Timmons, 'The Sixth Clan – Women Organise for Peace in Somalia', *University for Peace* (2004); Isha Dyfan, Katherine Haver & Kara Piccirilli, 'NO WOMEN, NO PEACE: The importance of women's participation to achieve peace and security' (2004); Shelley Anderson (WFP Programme Officer) 'My Only Clan is Womanhood: Building Women's Peace Identities', an undated paper written for World Food Programme and 'The Other Clan: Save Somali Women and Children', *Peace Building Peace* website, accessed 15 April 2001.

84 King 2005, *op. cit.*, p. 38-39.

85 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

86 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

peace process, and the most difficult changes instigated by the peace process originated with women, who had previously been used by men'.⁸⁷ The recent Somali peace conferences saw many women allowed to play a role in the peace process, thereby culminating in some sort of arrangement over power-sharing, notably those held in Djibouti and Kenya.

Several other women organisations have emerged over the past twenty years; among them are the Coalition for Grassroots Women Organisations (COGWO) in Mogadishu and the IIDA Women's Development Organisation in Merka. These organisations have helped transform the position of women in Somalia in a number of ways. First, they have given a strong voice to those who had none, helping women to empower themselves. Second, they have proved their aptitude in peace-building framework and how it is based on a positive attitude unlike that of competing men vying for power. Third, they have advanced their struggle to obtain justice within gender dimensions, paving the way for their recognition in the patriarchal society.

Recently, Somali women have added their voice on the new Somali constitution held in Nairobi, Kenya, where discussions generated women's demands for greater participation. Until the 1960s, Somali women had not actively played a part in an ongoing debate on a national issue, but they still face challenges ahead of them. Jama notes:

Somali women-led civil society organizations have achieved much in the past two decades. They have helped to disempower the warlords, reduced the significance of clan affiliation, ensured civil society representation is essential to any peace and reconciliation process, and made progress on the participation of women in politics. But Somali women still face constraints in breaking through gender-based inequalities and cultural and practical barriers to equal political participation.⁸⁸

One crucial characteristic that many women have contributed to peace-building and community development in Somalia is what Birgitte Refslund Sørensen characterises as 'economic reconstruction' – that is, building hospitals, schools, mosques and other philanthropic activities. The public provision of basic services, including health care, water, sanitation and education constitute the 'dividends of peace' that visibly and immediately affect the lives and minds of war-affected people.⁸⁹

The other significant dimension is financially sponsoring their families and friends in Somalia, sending money constantly. Recent global research on women has shown that women are often seen as more reliable in sending remittances (money

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁸⁸ See Jama (undated), 'Somali Women and Peace-Building', *Conciliation Resources*, www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/somalia/somali-women-peacebuilding.php, accessed 19 March 2011.

⁸⁹ See Nakaya 2004, *op. cit.*, p.149. Ken Menkhaus summarised the Somali view of the state by writing: 'The revival of a state is viewed in Somali quarters as a zero-sum game, creating winners and losers in a game with potentially very high stakes. Groups which gain control over a central government will use it to appropriate economic resources at the expense of others, and will use the law, patronage, and the monopoly of legitimate use of violence to protect this advantage. This is the only experience Somalis have had with centralised authority, and it tends to produce risk-aversion and to instigate conflict rather than promote compromise, whenever efforts are made to establish a national government', quoted by Powell, et al., 2008, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

sent home)⁹⁰ than men. Nowhere in the world is this trend as visible as in Somalia which has recently been recognised as one of the countries where remittances are the lifeline of the nation. For many years, Somali women were active in social remittances, using traditional credit saving systems locally known as *shallongo*, *ayuuto* or *hagbad*, which is an association where each member contributes a specific amount of money on a monthly basis.

According to the UNDP, financial remittances from Somalis living outside the country are perhaps the outstanding feature of the Somali economy, and 'it has long been a crucial part of the economy.'⁹¹ Indeed, the most part of these remittances come from women who mostly lead households both in Somalia and in the Diaspora, salvaging the local community from 'the feminisation of poverty' in the absence of an accepted functioning central government.

As Powell et al. explains, 'This system [of money sent home] successfully moves \$500 million to \$1 billion dollars a year into Somalia'.⁹² It has become evident that remittances will continue to be the life machine for Somalis living in Somalia, at least in the short-term period when the country remains without a functioning government and local contestants are unable to reinstate a *modus operandi* in the capital Mogadishu. There is no data available for many parts of the country, yet the figures obtained so far illustrate that Somalia is the fourth most remittance dependent country in the world.⁹³

VIII. Struggle for Decision-making in the Public Sphere

Somali women now possess a quota, albeit small, in the current transitional Parliament in Somalia. The latest data from the World Bank shows that women occupy 6.1 per cent of seats in parliament.⁹⁴ They also have seats in parliaments in Somaliland, Puntland and Galmudug. Despite some challenges facing them, women's political participation is greater in Somaliland than in any other entity in Somalia. For one

90 Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 3rd edition, 2003), *op. cit.*, p.27-28.

91 UNDP, *Human Development Report, 2001*, New York, *op. cit.*, p. 104. The high level of remittances coming into Somalia has been credited for having helped Somalia to survive. See also Laura Hammond, 'Obligated to Give: Remittances and the Maintenance of Transitional Networks Between Somalis at Home and Abroad', *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, Vol 10, 2010.

92 Powell et al. 2008, *op. cit.*, p. 24. Bryden and Steiner (1998) stressed that western governments have been astounded to discover that even Somalis on welfare dependency have continued to send remittances to their relatives back home, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

93 UNDP, *Somalia's Missing Million: The Somali Diaspora and Its Role in Development*, Nairobi, 2009, *op. cit.*, p. 9. According to Menkhaus, 'Few countries in the world possess a Diaspora with as much economic and political importance to their homeland as does Somalia', cited in UNDP, 2009, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

94 World Development Indicator (WDI) and Global Development Finance (GDF) databases 2010, cited by the World Bank). See more details on <http://search.worldbank.org/all?qterm=gender>, accessed 7 April 2011.

time, there was a female candidate – Fawsiya Yusuf Haji Adam – who attempted to run in a presidential election. Several Somali towns have also elected women to their local councils. For instance, the town of Galkacyo in central Somalia became the first to choose women for its council in 2007. Consequently, about 30% of the local council were women elected by their constituencies.⁹⁵

In some instances, Somali women explored ‘unconventional ways’ to engage leadership through advocacy, kinship, personal connections and other methods available to foster an environment for ceasefire, disarmament, and the restoration of law and order. However, as Nakaya contends, ‘These movements did not influence in a major way the existing structures power base – that is, the clan system’.⁹⁶ It is within these paradigms that the main challenge of Somali feminism emanates, not from men in power – who hold on to their status in every way possible – but from clannishness which many women are prone to accept as a doctrine, like the rest of the Somali population.

It is noted that the Arta (Djibouti) peace process reserved 25 seats out of the 245-member Transitional National Assembly for women. Women have reached a historic milestone in the progress of their empowerment when they have gained the opportunity derived from this process to be represented in the Parliament. The culmination of that process has a profound significance for gender dimensions in Somalia as it was the first time a woman was appointed to a full ministerial position by a recognised Somali government with the support of the United Nations, the African Union and the Arab League. But the government failed to win the support of local warlords who divided the capital city into a patch of fiefdoms controlled by opposing militias and it could not spread its authority within and outside the capital.

The success of women in the latest Somali peace conferences was attributed to Asha Haji Elmi Amin and her organisation SSWC that helped women overcome violence and poverty, giving them a voice in the future of their country. For the first time in Somali history, Amin promoted women to run for a presidential position in 2004. Although women did not get much attention in the election, they won the hearts and minds of other women, who held that they could succeed where men had failed. Nevertheless, it has not been examined whether the participation of women in politics and decision-making forums will lead to greater social recognition of their rights in the future.

95 See, for instance, <http://www.so.undp.org/index.php/Somalia-Stories/First-women-councillors-in-Puntland.html>, accessed April 10 2011.

96 Sumie Nakaya, ‘Women and Gender Equality in Peace-building: Somalia and Mozambique’ in Tom Keating and W. Andy Knight (eds) *Building Sustainable Peace* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press 2004), *op. cit.*, p. 160.

IX. Conclusion: Women's vitality for the future

The role and status of women in the Somali community has begun to improve, but there is still a long way to go for women to achieve an equal status with men or to become more engaged in public life. It has become evident that Somali women have an indispensable authority in social, economic and political movements.⁹⁷ Not so long ago Somali women proved their potentiality for any dramatic change that may transform the current situation in Somalia by playing a pivotal role in a popular uprising led by the Islamist group calling itself 'the Islamic Courts Union', which uprooted infamous warlords in southern Somalia in June 2006. The group reinstated law and order temporarily, and ordinary people began to enjoy peace for months prior to the Ethiopian invasion backed by the United States in December 2006. Without women's support, the Islamist group could not have succeeded in gaining the recognition of the local population, which helped them secure six months of peaceful atmosphere in many parts of southern Somalia. However, women were not allowed a role within the authority of this group. It was here where gender activists could contend that women have all too often been treated as supporters for the ends of others, rather than for ends in their own right.⁹⁸

While some Somali feminists emphasise the importance of women in local community development schemes and leadership in developing gender equality, what has tended to be neglected is empowering women with learning and information. A more significant way that Somali women can be empowered is by giving them higher education and helping them to show their talent in formal processes. For instance, lack of access to schooling is detrimental not just for the future of women, but for the whole country as well. A Somali saying has it that, 'if you educate a woman, you educate a whole population'.

It is thus essential for empowering women to create households led by women free from ignorance and poverty. Higher educational attainment expands women's freedoms by strengthening 'their capacity to question, reflect and act on their condition and by increasing their access to information, because educated women are more likely to participate in public debates, care for their family's health and well-being and take other initiatives',⁹⁹ like building peace and societal development schemes. It

97 Bryden and Steiner (1998) observes, 'The economy has in some ways favoured women and has obliged them to replace men as the principal wage-earners in their families and has also empowered them in important ways', p. 40. For another study on Somali women's economic power, see Christine Choi Ahmed, 'Finely Etched Chattels: The Invention of Somali Women' in Ahmed, A. J. (edit) *The Invention of Somalia* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1995). Choi Ahmed presented a different perspective, asserting that in matters of economics and lineage, some women have been able to retain a modicum of personal power within Somali society.

98 See Martha Nussbaum, 'Women's Capabilities and Social Justice' in Molyneux, M. and Razawi, Sh. (eds), *Gender Justice, Development and Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), *op. cit.*, p. 49.

99 UNDP Human Development Report, 2010, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

has been acknowledged in a global development perspective that gender inequality remains a major barrier to human development.¹⁰⁰

The influence of women in the public domain varies considerably with regard to social status; women who are 'economically independent, culturally aware and highly educated command more respect in the society'.¹⁰¹ It has therefore been emphasised that expatriate Somali women have a better chance of being recognised as intellectuals – a status that was denied for women – and they may often offer 'alternative solutions to long-standing problems of Somalia'.¹⁰² In order to attain that goal, women need skills and real encouragement from a functioning Somali state as well as the support of the international community. Without a functioning government¹⁰³ that can protect and empower women, the future of Somali women is rather uncertain. As such, state-building and peace-building are intertwined and entail being combined together tightly. The religious and traditional clan leaders can also be vital in empowering women until the goal of nation-state is achieved in Somalia, for empowering women means initiating empowerment for a whole community.

The data¹⁰⁴ demonstrating that there is growing number of women activists and educationalists in Somalia as well as the mere fact that women comprise more than half of the population in Somalia is a clear indication that Somali women's future is not as ominous as it may seem. Since there is no functioning, stable Somali government, women require viable empowerment programmes from the international community, particularly transnational development agencies, like the World Bank and the UNDP. The European Union has already taken a lead in initiating the first programme to support the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in Somalia, enabling women to play a leading role on gender issues with the Somali authorities at all levels as well as with the international community.

... [the] programme is to support the promotion of gender equality and women's' empowerment in Somalia. It addresses the need to strengthen Somali civil society, particularly women's' groups - notably the Somali Women Agenda, (SWA) - to enable them to play a leading role on gender issues with the Somali authorities at all levels as well as with the international community.¹⁰⁵

Such development programmes could probably enhance women's position in the patriarchal society and enable them to hold on to the gains they have acquired after state fragmentation. It could also help women heal the wounds of the civil war.

100 UNDP (2010), *op. cit.*, p. 89. See also 'Gender Equality as Smart Economics: An Action Plan' in which Paul Wolfowitz, President of the World Bank, highlights 'Gender equality is not only a women's issue; it is a development issue', 2007, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

101 UNDP Human Development Report, 2001, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

102 Bryden and Steiner 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

103 In the context of socio-economics, for instance, the predicament of statelessness and the scale of its subsequent repercussion in terms of socio-political aspects remain immeasurable and will haunt Somalis for many years to come. However, one of the most urgent tasks of post-conflict reconstruction in Somalia was suggested to be the restoration of core state functions, including the provision of public goods and maintenance of basic education.

104 The CIA data on Somalia shows that women are more numerous than men.

105 See 'Supporting economic development and empowerment of women in Somalia, 2009', European Union website. http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/aap/2009/pr_aap_2009_som.pdf, accessed 19 March 2011.

To capture this self-presented opportunity from the vacuum, coupled with Somali women's long struggle to conquer their rights, Somali women need to unite and continue their struggle with more vivacity and persistence, for there is always a light at the end of every tunnel.

Somali Women's Political Struggle in Post Civil War Somalia

Yasmeeen Maxamuud

Introduction

“Wixii Xun ba Xaawa leh” (All that befalls a family comes from Eve)

A Somali proverb

Women are often the voiceless victims of war-ravaged societies, yet they find ways to contribute to peace and reconciliation. Somalia is no exception. A woman's role is usually confined within the walls of her home, reflecting a cultural reality rooted in religion. Patriarchal and lineage-based traditions have limited women's participation in education, economic and politics, and have kept them out of decision-making processes.

Somali society can be described as a male dominated patrilineal and patriarchal society. Traditionally Somali women are regarded as the backbone of society, primarily because they are responsible for the biological reproduction of the lineage and interclan alliances.¹ A women's position in Somali society is ambiguous. When married a woman still belongs to her father's clan and her behavior can reflect on the honor of her father's lineage. Her male relatives are committed to protect her and to claim compensation if she is mistreated or murdered. On the other hand, she must be loyal and devoted to her husband's clan to which she is linked through her sons. Women in Somali society were traditionally not permitted to participate in the official clan decision-making, because they are not a permanent member in any clan. However, they were always influential through both their affiliation to their husband at the household level and the networking capacity across clan boundaries.

There has always existed a disparity in the distribution of physical and intellectual tasks between the genders. Somali women's role has been to provide all the labor necessary to ensure the daily survival of the family. In addition women were always responsible for preparing the family's meals, breeding, caring for and educating children. Intellectual social activities were usually the domain of the men. This disparity was also reflected in educational matters. Young girls were more likely to be engaged in physical labor and domestic chores, whereas young boys had greater opportunities to develop their intellectual skills. Women's social activities were further hampered by their daily obligations.

1 Lidwen Kapteijst, *Women, and the Crises of Communal Identity* (Boston University Press, 1994).

Due to societal changes, the role of the Somali women has gone through some changes. State independence in 1960, as well the collapse of the state due to civil strife in 1991 has led to some changes in Somali women's role. The "promulgation of the family law" enacted in 1975 gave men and women equal rights in matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance. This law also promoted the equality of women in the workplace and in 1978 gave Somali women equal opportunities to participate in government and to reach positions of leadership. However, when these laws were enacted, not many women embarked on political life. Instead, a number of women started to enter the field of trade and business at all levels according to their ability to raise funds for family or other savings schemes such as *Hagbad*. Furthermore, Somali women gained a strong autonomy in business and demonstrated management capacities equivalent to men's capacities. Consequently, Somali women seem to have gained a new status since the civil war in 1991. The common opinion shared by many Somali experts, is that women have become the major breadwinners in Somalia. It is believed that 80% of the families in Somalia rely on women's income. Yet, there are a few women heads of household. Women may engage in income-generating schemes because the men are unemployed. Moreover men do not undertake such activities because society may look down on them and therefore they may lose their status. There is a dichotomy in the contribution of Somali women to civil society, conflict resolution, their involvement in government, and their participation in currently functioning political systems. Additionally, the international aid community does not consult women in serious decision-making matters such as humanitarian aid contributions, although these same organizations worsen the plight of women by investing more power in clan leaders, who are not as active in the betterment of society and the reconciliation process.

The question arises then, as to why Somali women, who are effective contributors to society in many useful aspects, are not given the opportunity to hold decision-making positions on issues that confront their communities? Why does society marginalize them by limiting their political involvement? This research proposes to examine Somali women's contribution to society and Somali women's political struggle. The research will analyze the activities of those organizations, which have flourished since the civil war. The ambition of the research is to explore if a common theme exists within these women's organizations, and if their main existence is to carry out social welfare activities and if there is any political motivation for these organizations and is such a practice encouraged?

The majority of the Somali women are illiterate, yet they were 70% of the voting population in the last election in 2003 in Somaliland² (IRIN 3/26/03). This affirms the belief that being politically aware will benefit the society as a whole.

2 "Elections in Somalia" IRIN, March 26 2003.

Statement of the Problem

This research will examine the participation of Somali women in post-conflict Somali politics and decision-making processes. The research will especially examine how women's economic recovery activities have contributed significantly to society, henceforth their change in status since the war. The study will focus on the traditional stigma attached to Somali women by society when they are perceived to be assuming roles traditionally held by men or when they aspire to have more involvement as decision-making entities.

The study will extensively research whether the status of Somali women has improved due to their new gained status; the study will further research if women in Somalia are politically marginalized. The research will attempt to answer the following questions:

- What is Somali women's participation in the political arena in post civil war Somalia?
- In Somalia, is there any involvement of women in the political decision-making process?
- Are there policies that are geared to increase women's involvement in political decision-making?
- What factors are hindrances to the political aspiration of Somali women?

Hypotheses

- In spite of their contribution to society, women in Somalia are politically marginalized.
- Women's lack of exposure to executive decision-making combined with cultural bias against women's leadership is hampering any political aspirations held by many potential players.
- In Somalia women do not contribute to a collective unified body.
- Somali women's status depends on their male relatives or husbands, therefore their political and economic empowerment are hindered since the women are not free to present their ideology and viewpoints and their opinion has a lasting effect on the clan as a whole.

Importance of the Study

This area of study is in need of investigation as it is very much overlooked. The Somali society as a whole and Somali males in particular does not acknowledge the contribution of Somali women to their society.

Despite the many forces marshalled against Somali women (their lack of financial training and of management skills and credit facilities, the absence of family and social encouragement and the weakness of their early education) in urban centers, they are playing a central and expanding role in trade, finance, and NGO activities. Since the war, women have filled simultaneous roles as home managers as well as breadwinners. But they face numerous obstacles to further achievements. This study will examine the reasons behind these obstacles.

Although ambitious, it is the researcher's desire to awaken awareness in academic circles as well as Somali society as a whole on gender issues confronting the society. There is also a dearth of studies documenting women's issues in Somalia to bring about social change. This study in turn hopes to contribute to such a consciousness.

Review of the Literature

General Literature on Women's Organizations

The writings on women's organizations in peace building demonstrate that these organizations were not founded to advance women's rights but are mainly engaged in the post conflict struggle or national struggle of a society in turmoil. In the case of the Palestinian women's organizations, writers like Orayb Aref Najjar³ illustrate women's struggle by examining the national versus the gender issue. Indeed, women see their fate and rights very much tied to a Palestinian State. She further reiterates that the Palestinian women's struggle for a Palestinian state does not have the luxury of requesting changes in their legal status because they are stateless. Instead, the women's struggle in Palestine is very much intertwined and conducive to the end of Israeli occupation and to the establishment of statehood.

Since the traditional conservative Arab culture limits women's functions to the private sphere, it has limited their involvement in public affairs. The writer further analyses the "public /private" dichotomy of Western feminism, which led her to the realization that if women are neglected in the struggle and their organizations, which contribute significantly to the betterment of a society under siege, are not empowered it will be to the detriment of the society as a whole.

Najjar further explains women's organization leaders' recognition that the personal is interlinked with the national agenda. She stresses yet again that when women

3 Bystydzienski, Jill. Ed. *Women Transforming Politics* (Indiana University Press, 1992) 143-161

organize to bring about social reform within their communities, women are engaged in politics, although society categorizes such action as social reform.

In the Palestinian context many such organizations burgeoned as a result of the Israeli occupation. Most of these organizations carried out activities that were social in nature. Although most of the women in these organizations came to the same conclusion of working for the empowerment of the disadvantaged Palestinian women in addition to the self-determination of the Palestinians, they did not have a common women's agenda to present to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as an inclusive blue print to improve the conditions of women⁴.

The examination of the existing Palestinian organizations reveals the following:

- That the political mobilization of women and nationalist movements are strongly associated;
- The involvement of women in nationalist politics is necessary but not a sufficient condition for women's emancipation;
- A central women's movement will carry more weight than a number of organizations allied with men's political parties.

Literature on Somali Women's Organizations

Poetry as Resistance

Historical prospects

Female writers Hassan, Adan, and Warsame trace the Somali women through the traditional roles and social awareness.

They attribute the Somali woman's strength to her non-submissive nature and further illustrate how these women refused oppression throughout history by expressing their grievances and hopes through poetry handed down by generations. These three women conducted research to study the Somali women's status in society. They discovered that although customs and traditions have limited them as women, Somali women's feminism was not a borrowed Western ideology, but an indigenous one. They contend that while women in the West expressed their dissatisfaction in written form, Somali feminists expressed their protests through poetry, work songs and children's lullabies. These women also formed informal networks, kinships, groups, and religious associations to strengthen themselves and fight oppression. These writers further articulate how Somali women have been ignored socially and intellectually throughout history. Somali poetry and literature, which is an important aspect of Somali life, lacks the great contributions by women. Although there were a great many female poets, their contribution to social literature has never been mentioned. In the same manner women's contribution in the struggle for independence has never been recognized.

It is apparent from the research conducted by these three Somali women writers, Hassan, Adan, and Warsame, whose essay appears in "Subversive Women" that

4 Bystydzienski, Jill, ed. *Women Transforming Politics* (Indiana University Press, 1992) 143-161.

Somali women were fighting for their rights against foreign occupation as early as the 1940's⁵. In 1959 the first women's organization "the Somali Women's Association" (SWA) was formed. The leadership was composed of the wives of leaders in the political parties. Although SWA voiced women's rights, most of its activities were in the area of social welfare. After independence, the plight of Somali women continued as the newly elected leaders did little to improve the conditions of women.

"The Somali women's movement" came to life as an answer to the continued political struggle of women. Educated middle class women spearheaded the foundation of the movement and one of its major goals was to fight for the social, political, cultural and economic rights of Somali women. The fruits of this organization with ideology were short lived as the Siad Barre regime came into power in 1969. As a result of this regime's principle of scientific socialism, all political parties and organizations were dismantled. The "Somali Women's Democratic Organization" was later established by the regime. This was a governmental organization that took advantage of the government's machinery to be a vehicle in women's rights and equal justice. These organizations' main objectives were the following:

- Mobilizing Somali women and raising their political awareness
- Training and expanding leadership in women's groups and the community
- Creating priorities in the establishment of change.

Amina M. Warsame details Somali women's involvement in the decision-making process in post-conflict Somalia in the 1990's. She contends that the complete absence of women from the public decision-making process is due to the following:

- Clan-based system of governance which does not give a woman a decision making position;
- Male decision makers are not eager to share a platform with women;
- Religious male diction which excludes women from public decision making;
- Cultural perception of women as weak leaders; and
- Women's lack of education

Despite all of these existing obstacles, Warsame focuses on the hope that exists within women's organizations. She also thinks women are beginning to effect social change and female stereotyping by uniting and working together for the improvement of women's lives. Organizations are achieving this objective by raising awareness through lobbying for women's rights, especially their leadership role. It follows then that Somali women's organizations must unite under one common agenda. They will be a force to reckon with in society if all their energies are utilized collectively. The consensus of the majority of writings on this issue is that women need to organize and be unified while accomplishing their individual objectives⁶.

There seems to exist a repetitiveness of the traditional role of Somali women in most of the literature on the subject. Most of the literature concerning this area

5 Saskia Wieringa, ed. *Subversive Women* (Zed Books, Ltd) 165-182.

6 Amina M. Warsame, *Queens Without Crowns*, (Life and Peace Institute, 2002).

rarely expands into other spheres such as the political involvement of Somali women. An essay written by Asha H. Elmi, Dekha Ibrahim, and Janice Jenner in Dorothy Hodgson's *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa*, investigates *Save Somali Women and Children* and *Wajiir Women for Peace*,⁷ two women's organizations, and their impact in society. Their essay elaborates on the strengths of the Somali female and her many roles in conflict resolution and peace making traditionally and currently.

In this essay as well as in others, we encounter women contesting injustices through their poetry or Buraanbur. Their essay also touches on society's reluctance to accept these women into roles that are perceived as traditionally male or powerful. Once more, we encounter society's unwillingness to allow these women in roles other than those passed to them traditionally. The two organizations detailed here *Save Somali Women and Children* and *Wajiir Women for Peace*, emerged for the same reasons as their counterpart, but these organizations are beginning to mobilize their energies to be part of any formal negotiations that impact their communities. They are demanding with very limited success direct participation in negotiations leading to any final peace accord that may impact their community and the writing of a new constitution for the country. Although forging these new roles for themselves in the face of political and social opposition remain to be seen, it is clear that Somali women are taking initiatives to redefine roles for themselves in the new Somalia.

Authors such as Alice Bettis Hashim in her book *The Fallen State*, tries to dissect the problems that have led to the deterioration of the state. Hashim tries to explain these problems by following the history of the Somali state from the colonial period to the civil war era. She starts by setting forth a new paradigm that should explain the Somali situation. She elaborates on the theory of the state and ethnicity and conflict theories to explain the Somalis case. She insists, although homogenous in many aspects such as race, cultural values, language and religion, the hostility which clans generate against each other in Somalia equals, and sometimes surpasses, that of totally distinct groups. Hashim's analysis of the Somali situation entirely overlooks the role of women in the society and hardly mentions their contribution⁸.

Lyons and Samatar follow a similar route to Hashim's in their book *State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* by first analyzing the political situation that has led to the state collapse and social disintegration. This book begins by explaining the historical basis of the Somali pastoral system. The authors further explain in great detail political norms and cultural values that are the link between society and economic structures by way of kinship ideology. The role of imperialism is also explained in the light of the corrosion of the old Somali moral order. The characteristics of the generation that brought independence to Somalia is described in this book as a group seeking a "rare chance to win personal profitable place"⁹ in the new state. The biggest winner of the lot was Siad Barre, whose regime led to civil strife in the nation. The authors dedicate a small space consisting of few lines in the whole book to articulate the Somali women's status in society during and

7 Hodgson, D. L. ed. *Rethinking Pastoralism In Africa*, (Ohio University Press, 2000).

8 Hashim, A. B. *The Fallen State* (University Press Of America, 1997).

9 Lyons, T, and Samatar, A. *Somalia: State Collapse, Multicultural Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* (The Brookings Institution, 1995).

post civil war. They reveal that women are marginalized by the patriarchal Somali society. Although the authors do not discuss the role of Somali women in any significant detail, the small space they have committed to explaining the condition of the Somali female is sufficient to point out that Somali women are paying the highest price by not being given a voice in society to help their situation. The authors come to the conclusion that these women's need for security, democratic life, material well-being, respect, and equality take a back seat to other issues confronting society. *Mending the Rips in the Sky*, edited by Hussien Adam and Richard Ford, consists of essays on various topics by multiple authors on issues confronting the Somali society in the 21st century. One particular essay by Hilarie Kelly, titled *The Potential Role Of Women Groups in Reconstruction*, explains how Somali women's organized local groups, such as *Abbaya Sitti* and *Hagbad* can transcend family, clan, and even ethnic ties. Kelly strongly suggests including women in the reconciliation process because their cooperation, particularly in terms of sharing resources and vital information is strategic for survival and improved welfare. She recommends that political leaders pay more attention to these Somali women's groups especially at the local level, to solve the various problems that face the nation. Kelly also points to the limitations of these women's groups as organizations with limited focus and sometimes parochial in nature. Kelly is another writer that thinks traditional roles set for women are limiting, especially since these traditions do not encourage women's decision-making abilities.¹⁰

In retrospect, Somali women are active participants of clan politics in Somalia as we speak. It is also well documented that Somali women were part of the instigation at the onset of the civil war. In a manner of speaking, they were the cheerleaders behind the warring factions. Some were even carrying weapons and a few women warlords are also pointed out. But the time has come for Somali women to look beyond their involvement as peace builders and think of themselves as political leaders that can lead the state to political stability. It is disheartening that Somali women are in an apologetic mode when it comes to claiming that spot, or that they are waiting in the sidelines for their political involvement to be handed down to them, although they know better.

Since Somali women are already active in many roles, the foundation for their political involvement and decision-making process has already been laid. Somali woman hold political capital that has not been tested before, because the international community as well as current leaders are all involved in the impasse and infighting between differing factions, warlords, and ad hoc leaders that are holding the entire country hostage. The political pedigree of Somali women has been ignored, ultimately to the detriment of society. In the 2003 talks in Kenya Somali women demanded 25% representation but were given only 12%. Ever since then every TFG administration as well as local administrations such as Somaliland and Puntland have appointed women to feel good, safe and predictable ministerial positions such as Minister of Family, and Minister of Women's Affairs. It is as if we have relaxed because we have a few ceremonial ministerial posts. According to a study done by

10 Adam, Hussien, and Ford, Richard. Ed. *Mending Rips In The Sky* (The Red Sea Press, Inc, 1997).

NDI, although the gender quota of female participation in Somalia is 12%, in reality only 6% of Somali MPs are women. It is imperative, therefore, that women are represented at all levels of the political spectrum and in the decision making process because Somali women's political rights are fundamental in the political framework. Studies have shown that women's participation in the political process contributes to the betterment of policies and improves the situation of society as a whole and in particular policies that strengthen the family situation in society.

Much research in the area of women's political participation shows that women legislators prioritize family-sensitive legislation and they are more likely to sponsor legislation that supports the betterment of family issues. It is therefore vital that Somali women have a more serious, organized and cohesive political role within the executive branch of government. Governments worldwide have taken great measures to include women legislators and to support women's election to high offices. And they have also increased the number of women in legislative and executive branches of government.

Sweden has the most effective party quotas for gender mainstreaming in the participation of women in the political process. Women's representation in parliament is currently 47.3% (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2007a). Swedish women have been mobilizing since the 1920s to bring pressure on political parties to elect more female candidates. Their efforts have resulted in political parties promoting women's representation in parliament until today it has reached 47.3%. One tactic that worked for Swedish women is when they threatened that they would form their own political party if the other parties did not promote their agenda to include more women. Political parties in Sweden also feared the loss of female voters, which is another reason why the number of female participants in politics is among the highest in the world.

For Somali women it may seem futile to attempt to ask political leaders and traditional leaders to increase their political participation in all branches of government. And since currently there are no voting systems where women in society participate to vote their leaders into office, the entire suggestion may appear ineffective. But since a cohort of international elements including donor countries such as the EU and US are most influential in the Somali context today, and since current leaders are usually handpicked by these powers, Somali women may seek their support.

General Recommendations

1. We already have quota laws for Somali women to participate in all aspects of political life in Somalia. But these laws have not really been put to use. It is imperative that these laws are followed and that women's participation is encouraged by leaders as well as the donor community and international players who at this time hold the power over who gets elected. Also let us keep in mind that quota

laws are most effective when they have quota targets (say 30 to 40 %), mandates that guarantee women's placement in winnable positions on candidate lists as well as strong enforcement mechanisms. Countries that follow highly enforced quota laws include Costa Rica and Argentina where women legislators comprise 39%.

2. Improve campaign financing for women running for office. It is a large hurdle for women to attract financing at this time. The regular sources of funding through traditional clan leaders as well as asking for backing from international donors seems a daunting task. But if there is an organized way of targeting potential backers that can be overcome. To this end, unless lists of possible financial backers are not prepared, any potential women candidate will meet many hurdles. This is one of the most important issues to handle before the idea of women candidate can ever be realized.
3. Educating and training citizens of the country on the importance of gender equity is also a point that should not be dismissed. A change in consciousness at home, in schools, and among women themselves remains fundamental. Such training and change in the way people think of women not only as breadwinners and domestic beings but also as political game changers, can contribute greatly to the success of women's participation in the political arena. Also with greater awareness, citizens will demand quota laws and other political efforts, in particular when citizens internalize that women's participation is the change the country needs at this time to halt the current violence and destruction that has been stamped on Somalia for the past two decades. Women political candidates also need to be trained and empowered on gender equity. Potential women participants need to generate a network of solidarity among women, both nationally and internationally.
4. Creating a united front. Unity need not create further division from Men, who can also serve as strong allies. Conferences that bring together women of different backgrounds, tribal affiliation and geographical areas, and other networking venues could serve as ways to solidify unity and solidarity with allies from across ethnic, tribal and gender lines, to increase cohesion and discuss future strategies.

Policy Recommendations

The international community must realize the benefits of the inclusion of women in political participation and must push for women's participation in politics. The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 called for the empowerment of women to realize their full potential in the development of their societies, with equal opportunities to exercise leadership. But recommendations alone are not enough. In the Somali context numerous obstacles remain to achieving parity with men. To build on past success and the gains Somali women have achieved

towards gender equity in decision-making, the following policy recommendations are suggested:

1. Training and education

Prioritize Somali women's education and economic independence

In order for the Somali public to meet the full potential of its citizenry, there must be an increase in the number of females in higher education. This step will ultimately broaden the pool of female candidates with the qualifications and experience necessary to run for and win political office. It is important to move from the thinking that women can only study in certain fields and not others, therefore diversifying the field in which women get their degrees (engineering, politics, science, economics, law, etc).

2. Effective gender quotas are a must

Gender quotas are nothing more than words on a page if they are not implemented fully. They need to specify a moderately high proportion of women (30 to 40 percent) and the quotas must include strong enforcement mechanisms, which women must campaign for.

3. Training and educational programs for Somali women

If not enough Somali women consider running for political office, then the international community, NGOs, and government agencies could offer training and educational programs to women, encouraging them to get involved in politics.

These are just a few recommendations in order to encourage Somali women to get involved in the political process. Women's groups, political leaders, and the international community need to promote women's equality and development in more effective ways to increase Somali women's access to the political arena. The journey to political equality is long, and while Somali women have made significant progress in different areas of society, the path to achieving these goals is long and tedious and needs the full participation of every citizen and in particular women's groups, traditional leaders and those who want to see a better, safer, more stable Somalia.

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