

The Gendered Touch: Women's Agency
in Security and Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone

By
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A Thesis Submitted to
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts
in International Development Studies.

December, 2008, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-46939-2
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-46939-2

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Dedicated to my mother,
Adeline Chubb,
who has always been my inspiration.

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The Gendered Touch: Women's Agency in Security and Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone

by Jessica Chubb

Abstract

Achieving sustainable peace has become a necessity, since anything less presents serious security threats for both the warring country and for the international community.

Investigating how women can play pivotal roles in peacebuilding, and empowering them to do so accordingly, may be a significant step towards understanding how to achieve more sustainable peace, security and development. Using Sierra Leone as a case study, this thesis employs qualitative analysis of web-based data and other secondary analyses to understand the contributions of women's organizations in the building of peace and human security. Data suggest that non-governmental women's organizations in the country are filling voids in peacebuilding left by mainstream disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration methods. Through their social, economic, and political involvement, women have proved that they can be agents of positive change, and need to be recognized as major actors in peacebuilding, human security and thus sustainable development processes.

November, 2008

Acknowledgements

I am extremely fortunate to have had Dr. Evangelia Tastsoglou as my supervisor. Her wisdom, commitment, and patience in guiding me on this journey have been invaluable. I would therefore like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Tastsoglou for all her assistance, without which the completion of this thesis would not have been possible. In addition, I would like to extend my genuine thanks to Dr. Linda Christiansen-Ruffman for her insightful counsel. I am appreciative to Dr. Edna Keeble, as well, for the generous giving of her time and advice.

I wish to acknowledge Saint Mary's University, and especially the International Development Studies department, for the opportunity to pursue this Master's degree. My thanks also goes to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for the scholarships awarded to me, which were great sources of financial support.

To my mom, who has sacrificed so much for me, I am especially thankful. Her unfailing support, encouragement, and unconditional love have propelled me to believe that I could accomplish anything. I love and admire you very much mom, and I always will. You truly are an inspiration.

I would like to thank all my friends who have been sources of encouragement through the years. I wish to particularly acknowledge my dear friends, Helen Schellenberg, Aunshul Rege, and Asha Arabi. Their kindness and compassion, especially during those sometimes very challenging times, means the world to me.

I also thank my Almighty Father, from whom I draw my strength.

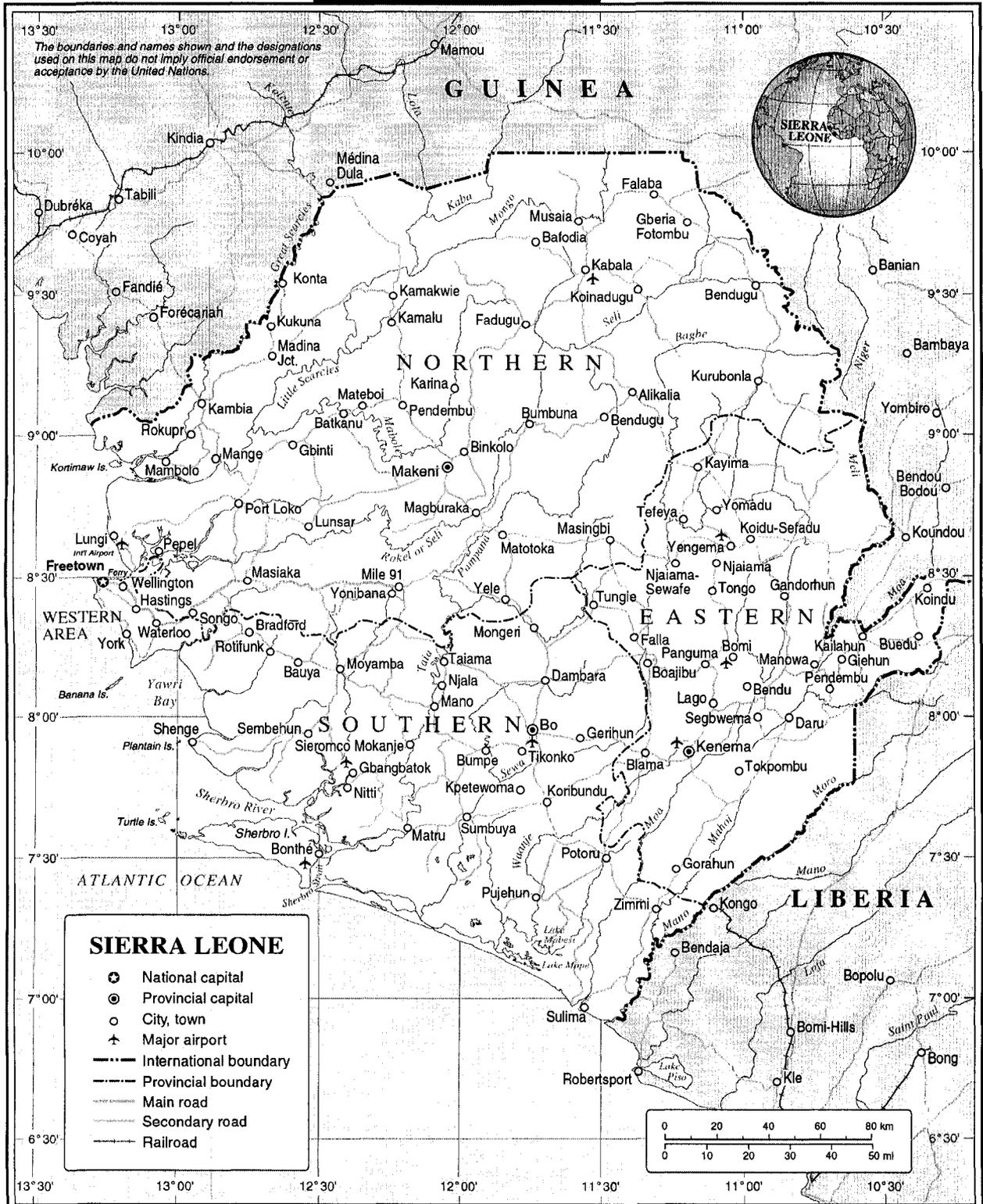
List of Abbreviations

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights	ACHPR
African Economic Community	AEC
African Union	AU
African Women's Committee for Peace and Development	AWCPD
All People's Congress	APC
Armed Forces Revolutionary Council	AFRC
Campaign for Good Governance	CGG
Commission on Human Rights	CHR
Community-Based Organizations	CBOs
Department for the Advancement of Women	DAW
Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration	DDR
Economic Community of West African States	ECOWAS
Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group	ECOMOG
Femmes Africa Solidarité	FAS
Fifty Fifty Group Sierra Leone	50/50
Forum for African Women Educationalists - Sierra Leone	FAWE - SL
Gender and Development	GAD
Global Fund for Women	GFW
Grassroots Empowerment for Self Reliance	GEMS
Grassroots Gender Empowerment Movement	GGEM
Gross Domestic Product	GDP
Human Development Index	HDI

Human Development Report	HDR
Internally Displaced Persons	IDPs
International Labour Office	ILO
Lawyers Centre for Legal Assistance	LAWCLA
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam	LTTE
Luawa Skills Training Centre	LSTC
Mano River Union	MRU
Mano River Women's Peace Network	MARWOPNET
Médecins Sans Frontières	MSF
National Patriotic Front of Liberia	NPFL
National Provisional Ruling Council	NPRC
Non-governmental Organizations	NGOs
Northern Ireland Women's Coalition	NIWC
People's Voice for Peace	PVP
Platform for Action	PFA
Progressive Women's Association	PROWA
Promoting a Culture of Equal Representation	PACER
Revolutionary United Front	RUF
Rural Women's Peace Initiative	RWPI
Sierra Leone Army	SLA
Sierra Leone Association of University Women	SLAUW
Sierra Leone Market Women's Association	SLMWA
Sierra Leone People's Party	SLPP

Sierra Leone Women's Forum	SLWF
South Sudanese Women Association	SSWA
Truth and Reconciliation Commission	TRC
UK Department for International Development	DfID
United Nations	UN
United Nations Children's Fund	UNICEF
United Nations Commission on the Status of Women	CSW
United Nations Development Fund for Women	UNIFEM
United Nations Development Programme	UNDP
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	UNESCO
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	UNHCR
United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone	UNIOSIL
United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone	UNAMSIL
University for Peace	UPEACE
West Africa Network for Peacebuilding	WANEP
West African Women's Association	WAWA
Women in Development	WID
Women in Peacebuilding Network	WIPNET
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children	WC
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom- Sierra Leone	WILPF-SL
Women's Progressive Movement	WPM
World Bank	WB
World Council of Religion and Peace	WCRP

Map of Sierra Leone



Map No. 3902 Rev. 5 UNITED NATIONS
January 2004

Department for Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

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Chapter One: Introduction

War: An Obstacle to Development

War is such a prevalent and destructive part of our global reality, it warrants the need to address the topic of peacebuilding. The pervasiveness of conflict in today's world is not something that can be disputed or ignored, since war brings with it nothing but human suffering and social disintegration. Loss of life, mass devastation, and a decline in the progress of any nation are the consequences of war. Often times, the persons who suffer the most are the innocents, unfortunate enough to be surrounded by such calamities. Anyone need only look at this ruinous nature and frequency of war in order to recognize the necessity of research that delves into the building of peace.

Alarming statistics have emerged, which state that the 20th century has been the most destructive one in recent history; according to statistics provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “nearly three times as many people were killed in conflict in the twentieth century as in the previous four centuries combined” (UNDP, 2005c, p. 153). The last century has actually seen a dramatic increase in civilian casualties of war during its course. An increase from 5 percent at the beginning of the century to 15 percent during World War I can be noticed. This number increased further to 65 percent at the end of World War II, to in excess of 75 percent in the decade of the 1990s (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002, p. 4).

Just as unfortunate as the large number of dead are the numbers of people whose lives are disrupted due to war. Every year millions of people are forced to flee their homes in an attempt to escape the ravages of war. For example, figures from 1997 show that there were approximately 8.1 million African refugees and internally displaced

persons in that year alone (Busumtwi-Sam, 2004, p. 324). Worldwide, as of 2005, conflict and its negative consequences have caused the displacement of about 25 million people (UNDP, 2005c, p. 151).

War is obviously destructive, and has adverse consequences where development is concerned. For one, war destroys lives, which are invaluable human resources, and how can a country have any chance to advance if its valuable human resources are being systematically depleted? The destruction of infrastructure is also very common during war, and this leads to a disruption in education, health and other social services. Furthermore, during times of conflict, money that could be put towards improving such basic social services is instead routinely used towards the war effort, leaving the vast majority of the population at a grave disadvantage. Additionally, with war comes insecurity, and with that comes fear, among other things, and so investments and other efforts at fostering growth will be halted. Indeed, violent conflict poses a challenge to development. As the 2005 Human Development Report precisely puts it:

Insecurity, losses of physical infrastructure, reduced economic activity, the opportunity costs of military expenditure, loss of assets and related vulnerabilities are a toxic combination for development. Conflict increases poverty, reduces growth, undermines investment and destroys the infrastructure on which progress in human welfare depends. (UNDP, 2005c, p. 155)

Development is undoubtedly threatened by the atmosphere of war (Ball, 1996), so it stands to reason that on the road to development, the advancement of security plays a major role.

When referring to security today, it is clear that military security is insufficient as a gauge, for the security threats in today's world necessitates going above just dealing with national defence. Therefore, human security (freedom from fear and freedom from

want) as defined by the United Nations (UN) is a more adequate expression of what countries should be striving for (UNDP, 2005c). This broader view of security, which focuses on advancing the wellbeing of individuals, correlates to the advancement of development. According to Sorensen (as cited in Theriault, 1999):

Security is a precondition for development; the activities connected with development in a broad sense, such as the creation of economic wealth and a decent level of welfare for the population, are impossible if there is not enough security for the population to be able to devote their energies to these tasks...a state which provides security and order is needed for the promotion of development. (p. 73)

The inextricable link between security and development is an important one to recognize.

Regardless of whether development is viewed through social, economic, or political lenses, it is apparent that progress cannot be achieved or sustained if continuous insecurity and violent conflict exist. Many countries positioned in the bottom 40 percent of the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) are there because of internal conflicts and the negative impacts they bring (Ball, 1996, p. 610). Dan Smith found that in 1993, 87 percent of conflict-ridden countries existed in the developing world, and were at the bottom of the Human Development Index (Theriault, 1999, p.73). Studies have shown that when not at war, countries tend to fare better with regards to life expectancy, mortality rates, and growth in GDP. A recent study by the World Bank (WB) has stated that 250 million, out of an estimated 600 million, Africans are living in abject poverty because of the armed conflicts in which they find themselves, wars that siphon money and resources out of the country, waste limited resources on the war effort, and destroy life and land (Busumtwi-Sam, 2004, p. 324).

As if being at war was not bad enough, even after there appears to be an end to violent conflict and a chance at peace, there are still likely to be difficulties. On average,

many wars resume after peace negotiations, plunging the already ravaged countries back into the abyss of despair and destruction (Francis, 2000). The UN admits that on many occasions after conflict has been officially declared over, it may well begin again. This could be because the warring factions often have no intention of actually abiding by the peace agreement, choosing instead to use the period during which peace talks are held to strategize and regroup. In other situations, even when the parties in a civil war do want the peace agreement to work, they may be ill-equipped to effectively solve/address the root causes of the conflict. War is also a business, and people involved in it feel 'lost' without it as their livelihood is taken away. Peace also brings power shifts that some may not be able to get used to (UN Department of Public Information, 2002). Whatever the reason, serious problems exist with regard to conflict; i.e. it is not only destructive in nature, but it tends to persist.

Unfortunately, the continent of Africa presents precise illustrations of the destructive nature and frequency of war. Africa is home to a large percentage of the world's conflicts today; almost 40 percent of global conflicts occur in Africa (UNDP, 2005c, p. 154). What is more is that in the past fifteen years, African wars have been, by far, the most brutal. In addition, research indicates that on the continent, after war has officially been declared to be over, 50 percent of all these wars tend to resume within the following decade (Neethling, 2005, p. 34). The war that wrecked the West African nation of Sierra Leone is one instance of this grim state of affairs of violent conflict. The adverse consequences of the violence in that country, which proved to be quite problematic, certainly make the need for peacebuilding clear.

The Country under Study: Overview of Conflict in Sierra Leone

Situated between Guinea and Liberia on Africa's west coast (see Map, p. vi), Sierra Leone is a country rich in valuable natural resources including ivory, gold, bauxite, and diamonds. This 29,925 square mile country is home to 4.5 million people, who make up 16 different ethnic groups (Sierra Leone Encyclopedia, 2008). A former British colony, Sierra Leone gained its independence from colonial rule in April 1961, but its new-found sovereignty quickly turned into leadership marked by corruption.

The political party *All People's Congress* (APC), which rose to power in 1967, greatly abused its power. In an effort to remove any opposition to its rule, the APC banned all other political parties, effectively putting an end to multi-party democracy. What is more, by the end of the following decade, only the ruling APC had access to any of the country's natural resources (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004). The unfortunate consequences of this governmental misconduct were the mismanagement of the country's resources by an increasingly dictatorial government (Bangura, 2004), an increase in diamond smuggling, and a sharp decrease over the years in government spending on essential social services such as healthcare, education, and housing (Kieh, 2005). Unprofessionalism, greed, and corruption were rife, as was inequality, poverty, human rights abuses, and a declining standard of living for the vast majority of the population (Yousuf, 1999).

Therefore, it was not completely surprising that unrest was brewing among local Sierra Leoneans who felt cheated by their leaders, and who too wanted to gain politically and economically. Triggered, therefore, by political corruption and greed, Sierra Leone's conflict began in March 1991 when the rebel group, Revolutionary United Front (RUF)

emerged in the country and began a little more than a decade of fighting against the Sierra Leone Army, and later against international intervening troops. The conflict was continuously fuelled by the relentless pursuit for power, the thirst for economic gain, and the constant illicit trade in diamonds. The RUF (and other military bodies) led a rampage of sadistic cruelty, engaging in rampant amputations, abductions, beheadings, mass executions, forced labour and sexual slavery, just to name a few. This ruthless behaviour continued even after several peace negotiations. In the end, with 50,000 dead, 500,000 refugees, and one million displaced persons (Sommers, 2000, p. 10), the horrible effects of the war were blatantly apparent.

In Sierra Leone today, although there exists a relatively calm political atmosphere, there is still fear of renewed violence more than half a decade after war officially ended. Forty-seven years after the country gained its independence, the West African nation still suffers from the ravaging effects of poverty and underdevelopment. Infectious disease is common, life expectancy is forty-two years, and a vast majority of the population is illiterate (Cockburn, 2007, p. 33). In 2002, immediately after the war, the country ranked 177th, the lowest in the world on the UNDP's Human Development Index, and still holds that regrettable position today (UNDP, 2005). The war certainly played a huge part in where the country is today, and the negative effects of it warrant the exploration of avenues towards building peace and security.

Building Peace

Upon war's end, Sierra Leone did go through official UN-sanctioned peacebuilding processes, but these courses of action proved to be insufficient. In general,

many peacebuilding efforts encompass disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes. These processes seek to disarm combatants, disband military structures, and assist ex-combatants and their families in readjusting to civilian life, socially, economically, and politically. To be sure, these processes are centrally important to the reconstruction of societies torn apart by armed conflict. However, what tends to happen more often than not is that the focus is usually put on disarmament and demobilization, while other important peacebuilding phases like reintegration are largely ignored or under-addressed (Ali & Matthews, 2004a). This is true of what happened in Sierra Leone; disarmament and demobilization were the focal points of the country's efforts at peacebuilding (McKay & Mazurana, 2004). Of course, in a post conflict situation it is imperative, as far as is possible, to remove the abundance of weapons from circulation. The existence of armed militia roaming the country and a large number of weapons remaining in circulation would put civilians on edge and retain a sense of unease and insecurity. This, coupled with the economic and social instability that emanated from the war in the first place, would ensure that stability may never be realized. Yet, disarmament and demobilization are not the only important things; aspects such as "socio-economic transformation and socio-psychological reconciliation" (Ali & Matthews, 2004a, p. 407) are just as important, and the DDR conducted in Sierra Leone failed to adequately address this.

Of particular importance to the processes of peacebuilding and development is the inclusion of women. The 2000 *Security Council Resolution 1325* on women, peace, and security, clearly notes that if there is to be any semblance of peace, there will need to be the participation of everyone (Sweetman, 2005). The importance of tackling women's

issues, in addition to their inclusion in post-conflict peacebuilding, is crucial to the success and sustainability of the process (Kalunga-Banda, 2005; Kuhne, 1996). However, in this regard, DDR in Sierra Leone fell short once again, as women were basically excluded.

It appeared from all the evidence that, at the end of day, women's needs and potential contributions towards peace had been largely ignored. Women failed to receive adequate help as victims and went fundamentally unnoticed as potential agents of change. However, in order to build lasting peace, the inclusion of women is necessary. Not only can they be valuable and unique contributors to the peace and development processes, but they should be allowed to do so. Cognizant of this need, women's organizations in Sierra Leone, for so long been marginalized from decision-making and other processes, are now taking the reins of change.

Research Objective and Hypothesis

My research seeks to examine how women are participating in building peace and security in Sierra Leone and whether their contributions have had a positive influence on those processes. The objective is to analyze the contributions of women's organizations that are working towards building peace and security in the country. By looking at their initiatives and activities, the thesis will analyze how local women's organizations actively approach peacebuilding. The challenges faced by those organizations will also be examined. It is my contention that the full participation of women in the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone adds a much needed and significant dimension towards achieving sustainable peace and development. Through their social, economic, and political

contributions towards the peacebuilding effort, women's organizations in Sierra Leone, at the non-governmental level, are filling a major void in the peacebuilding process; a void left by mainstream disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) methods.

Scope of the Study

This study will strictly examine post-conflict peacebuilding efforts by women's organizations in Sierra Leone. Underlying this examination are approaches from the security, peacebuilding and feminist schools of thought. Note that the concept of peacebuilding will be analysed with regard to post-conflict societies, as being the stage between a ceasefire or other negotiable peace deal and full-fledged development (Kuhne, 1997). It is recognized that peacebuilding efforts can begin even before tensions have escalated into conflict, and also while war may still be going on. However, for the purposes of this thesis, peacebuilding will refer to the building of peace after the official cessation of war.

In addition, as important as peacekeeping and peacemaking processes are, they are beyond the scope of this thesis and will not be addressed in detail. Furthermore, in the sample of groups explored, only organizations governed by women and addressing women's issues will be looked at. These organizations (whether or not they are indigenous or foreign), have chapters in Sierra Leone, work at least on a national level in the country, and seek to incorporate the gender perspective into their activities by ensuring that women's issues are not ignored. Therefore, this study will focus on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with a local presence in the country; those locally

initiated and also those initiated outside of Sierra Leone, but working locally and significantly for the cause of women and peacebuilding.

Definition of Concepts

A number of concepts are central to this thesis, and will be briefly defined here.

Gender

The term **gender** refers to the different roles and responsibilities attributed by society to men and women within that particular society (Barnes, Albrecht, & Olson, 2007). Gender does not mean 'sex'; it does not mean the biological characteristics or distinctions of male as opposed to female. Gender refers to how societies view men and women, and what roles have traditionally and culturally been assigned to each through socialization, and what structural arrangements have been put in place based on societal assumptions and norms about men and women (African Women's Development and Communication Network, 2007). Gender also looks at the identities that men and women form based on such assumptions, their relationship to each other, and how each one's behaviour impacts upon the other and on society as a whole.

This thesis does not combine the terms of gender and women, for they are not the same. This research does examine women's roles in peacebuilding, and in so doing, analyzes how the exclusion of women from official peace processes have left a distinct gender gap, which contributes to the inequality in Sierra Leone society. The roles of women in war are also examined, as are the unique ways in which women experience violence. By looking at women's perspectives, their concerns and priorities, one can

understand how both genders relate to each other, and why it is necessary to keep this in mind when planning any aspect of peacebuilding and security.

Empowerment

Empowerment by definition means “enabling power” or “power-to” (Peterson & Runyan, 1999, p. 256) and this is in direct contrast to having power over someone. “It is about enhancing the capacity of people to live and work together productively and effectively rather than coercively dividing and controlling people in a way that reduces their abilities to act individually or collectively” (Peterson & Runyan, 1999, p. 256). Visvanathan et al (1997) add to this by stating that empowerment is about people being able to take control of their lives, “gaining the ability to do things, to set their own agendas, to change events in a way previously lacking” (p. 372). Allen and Thomas (1992) speak of empowerment as “having or being given power and control. It is generally used to describe a desirable state of affairs in which individuals have choice and control in everyday aspects of their lives: their labour, reproduction, access to resources, etc” (p. 92). It is agreed that empowering someone gives him/her the ability to take charge of his/her life and make decisions as to his/her well-being.

Women’s empowerment

Women’s empowerment in particular entails a number of variables that inter-connect both women’s agency role and their well-being. Not only must women’s lives be enhanced, but they must be given the power to help bring about such self-improvement (Sen, 1999, p. 189). Firstly, women should be given educational opportunities, allowing

them to become literate and informed participants in decision-making processes. Secondly, they should have access to employment outside the home, and have the ability to earn an independent income. Finally, women should have ownership rights and access to social resources (Sen, 1999, p. 193). With all these factors in place, women would become more independent and, as such, have a voice in shaping their lives and the lives of those around them. Sen states that “women are increasingly seen, by men as well as women, as active agents of change: the dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter the lives of both women and men” (Sen, 1999, p. 193). Empowered women, in effect, have the ability through their enriched lives to foster development, thereby enriching the lives of others. When referring to empowerment then, it will be used to mean skills and knowledge which allow women to be more informed of the world around them, more independent, more in control of their lives, and more engaged in their communities.

Security

The term **security** will be used in the human security sense, for the most part. **Human security** is not so much concerned with weapons or the military protection of a country’s borders, as it is with securing the wellbeing of individuals within those borders (Hussein, Gnisci, & Wanjiru, 2004). The all-encompassing concept of human security primarily entails “freedom from fear and freedom from want”, and this UNDP definition will be used (UNDP, 2005c).

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding refers to the long-term process of rebuilding war-torn countries. In his 1992 *Agenda for Peace*, it was then United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who popularized the multi-faceted and important term of **peacebuilding**, defining it as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (Agenda for Peace, 1992, para. 21). It necessitates putting in place and sustaining social, economic, and political mechanisms that will diminish security threats, promote human security and allow people to pursue development.

Development

Development in this context will be viewed through wide lenses that allow the focus to shift to how people’s lives can be more enriched owing to things like educational and employment opportunities, and equal rights (Sen, 1999). The narrow economic perspective of development will not be seen as the only indicator of growth. Rather, economic growth will be assessed as part of a wider picture; one which includes the important aspect of human advancement (African Women's Development and Communication Network, 2007). In this way, the link between development, security, and peace will be apparent.

Plan of Presentation

This thesis is structured in the following way. **Chapter Two** contains the theoretical framework of the thesis. The various perspectives used in preparing the thesis,

i.e. the security, peacebuilding and feminist schools of thought will be put forth. Security and peacebuilding will be explained in relation to each other, and both will be linked to the field of development. In addition, feminist perspectives will be addressed and analyzed in relation to security, peacebuilding, and development. **Chapter Three** presents a conceptual framework, which is useful in consequently examining Sierra Leone women's organizations. This framework was developed by exploring women's organizations working globally towards peace. Looking at how these international groups organize for peace is important in understanding how Sierra Leone women's groups themselves go about pursuing peace. **Chapter Four** presents the research methodology used. A description of the approach, along with the data collection techniques employed in this study will be given. A qualitative approach was utilized. Within this approach, primary and secondary data were collected and examined using content analysis and through critically reviewing secondary sources. **Chapter Five** provides a background to the conflict in Sierra Leone; how the war devastated the country, impacted on the lives of all, especially women, and why there is such a pressing need for building peace and security in the African state will be addressed. **Chapters Six and Seven** contain the data collected on the Sierra Leone women's organizations. Their ideas and activities will be examined and an analytical account will be presented. In **Chapter Eight**, a brief conclusion is given, which will include the key points of the thesis, the challenges women's organizations are facing, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

It is necessary to now explore the relevant schools of thought used in this research. Perspectives on the issues of security and peacebuilding will now be put forward, as will feminist theories. They will all be analyzed in relation to one another. The connections between security and peacebuilding will be examined, and their vital links to development will be explained. In addition, feminist gender analyses of security, peacebuilding, and development will be looked at.

Peace, Security and Development: The Inextricable Link

Peacebuilding has become a buzzword in recent times as a result of the prevalence of conflict. While war is hardly a new phenomenon, the scale and intensity of the problem in the last few decades has been unprecedented. The chaos of conflict brings about not only considerable negative social, economic, and environmental consequences, but also takes a huge toll on human life. Progress, it can be seen, can never be sustained in a war-torn country. Moreover, it is evident that the effects of violence are far-reaching; affecting not just the afflicted countries, but posing a significant threat to regional as well as global security. The necessity for peace is apparent then, and key to the peace process is the establishment of security (Hussein, Gnisci & Wanjiru, 2004).

The Changing View of Security

There was a time when the concept of 'security' only conjured up thoughts of external attacks on the state and the military's role in protecting it. It signified a nation's

foreign and defence policies with regard to the protection of its national interests. It was noticed, however, that although exorbitant sums of money were being spent on territorial security, in actuality, this failed to translate into increasing human welfare. Studies proved that the number of people being killed annually (whether directly or indirectly) as a result of military combat was consistently increasing (King & Murray, 2001-2002). Moreover, the safety of nations meant absolutely nothing if the citizens within those nations were still plagued with crises such as famines or natural disasters, for instance. Realizing this, the originally narrow view of the term, which placed the state as the point of reference, began to change to include other aspects.

Furthermore, as the times were changing, it began to become clear that a more encompassing characterization of security was needed. Some intellectual thinkers began to broaden their ideas of security even before the end of the Cold War. Tickner (2001) cites Richard Ullman and Jessica Matthews as advocating for a broader definition of security, which would include matters of economic and environmental freedoms. The term 'common security' (Tickner, 2001, p. 43) was introduced in the 1980s by those who felt that the narrow definition of security was just that – narrow, and that security should be freed from its flaws by broadening its meaning to take account of the numerous new threats facing the world.

The downfall of the Soviet Union, however, and the end of the Cold War, really brought this new reality to bear, that of the unlikelihood of a major war among the great powers. Even some realists accepted the notion that security should entail more than just the conventional description of defending state boundaries through military action. One such realist, Barry Buzan wrote about expanding the explanation of security to include

freedom from societal and economic threats (Buzan, 1991). Still, while most realists chose to maintain their views, based on their original thought of what security entailed, several other scholars embraced a new security agenda, which expanded the concept. Ken Booth, who supports taking a critical look at security, specifically mentions that security should not only be expanded upon, but should actually begin with the examination of individuals' needs (Tickner, 2001). This is true, for "when we treat individuals as the objects of security, we open up the possibility of talking about a transcendent human community with common global concerns and allow engagement with the broadest global threats" (Tickner, 2001, p. 47).

This kind of thinking was noted in the UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report. "The concept of security," according to the Report, "...has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of nuclear holocaust....Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives" (p. 22). Today, though, national security no longer primarily applies when considering security (Hudson, 2005; Paris, 2001). In no way does this mean that the territorial security of the state is disregarded. What it does mean is that while the safety of the state is important, there really can be no secure state while there exists insecure people within it. Therefore, security today is seen to mean so much more and is now considered in terms of human security, notably, ensuring that fundamental human and other rights are observed, and that people's needs are met (Boas & Jennings, 2005).

Human Security

Two main ideas lay the foundation for human security. For one, it is recognized that the protection of individuals remains essential for security as a whole, whether national or international. Secondly, it has become clear that individual security lies not only in defence strategies, but includes all issues that would determine how persons can be free of individual and collective threats. Human security, then, is less concerned with weapons as it is with human beings' existence and welfare, whether these lie in the areas of economic, health, food, environmental, personal, community, or political security (UNDP, 1994).

As important as this notion is, there is general agreement as to the fundamentals of the concept. Still, for over a decade now, no consensus can be reached as to one standard definition, with existing descriptions being quite expansive. There have been a few voices of concern over this issue, from those who recognize the vagueness of the concept and the ensuing difficulties that this could possibly lead to with regard to measuring human security and enacting policies in this regard (King & Murray, 2001-2002). Roland Paris (2001) for instance, sees potential in the idea of human security, but fears that the usefulness of the concept might be somewhat diminished due to its imprecision. He writes that "existing definitions of human security tend to be extraordinarily expansive and vague, encompassing everything from physical security to psychological well-being, which provides policymakers with little guidance in the prioritization of competing policy goals..." (p. 88). Still, despite his criticisms as to definitional boundary issues, even he is resigned to admit that as a tool, the strength of human security lies in its ability to be all-inclusive. Its varied components ensure that it

remains universal and easily applicable to all people on a global scale, which is something the UNDP strives for with the notion. Individual countries are then free to construct a working definition of it (solidly based on the components set out by the UNDP's Human Development Report), which represents the most essential matters of security faced by their citizens.

The all-encompassing concept of human security primarily entails “freedom from fear and freedom from want” (UNDP, 1994, p. 24). This universal concern is of utmost importance, as the wellbeing of people is paramount. Indeed, the threat of potential outside attack is not to be diminished; it is a present danger in today's world. However, people are also (and probably first and foremost) concerned with more immediate everyday threats such as hunger, poverty, inadequate shelter, crime, disease, and internal warfare. As the Human Development Report of 1994 identifies, the two main features of human security are “first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression [and] second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities” (p. 23). As noted in the same report, “In the final analysis, human security is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced. Human security is not concerned with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity...” (UNDP, 1994, p. 22).

The Feminist Stance on Security

Feminist thinkers have also weighed in on the discussion surrounding security, expressing optimism that the new way of looking at security will have promise for

marginalized groups, most notably women (Bunch, 2003). Not surprisingly, many feminists fall into the category of critical scholars. Accordingly, they put forward the notion that the narrow conceptualization of security, i.e. seeing it as simply the need by the state to protect its borders from outside attacks, is an obviously masculine way of thinking, which does little to recognize and protect individuals' needs. Militaries in particular are actually seen by feminists to disregard the needs of individuals, being more concerned with 'winning the fight' than with the impact it has on its citizens. Tickner (2001) cites Simona Sharoni as saying that "In states torn by conflict, the more government is preoccupied with national security, the less its citizens, especially women, experience physical security" (p. 62).

Therefore, since much concern has been traditionally placed on the state defending its interests, in so doing, the bigger picture has been missed, that of security of human beings. Hence, if individual security is not considered, then it stands to reason that the gender aspect will be ignored as well. Rather than allowing the state to be the focal point while looking at security, feminists begin with human relationships, since they are more concerned with addressing human security concerns. The individual and community are placed first and foremost before the state or the international system of actors. Only when individual beings are placed front and centre of the security debate can the issue of gender be adequately addressed. Crocker, Dobrowolsky, Keeble, Moncayo, and Tastsoglou (2007) quote Tickner as saying: "Perspectives on security that begin with the security of the individual provide an entry point for feminist theorizing" (p. 69).

Even with the concept of human security taking precedence over the traditional forms of security, feminists are quick to point out that there may still be the problem of

gender being overlooked. For one, since the idea of gender was not specifically addressed in the Development Report, this is an indication that this may lead to, according to them, the same dismissiveness of the issues that affect women and men differently. Theorists such as Charlotte Bunch feel that women should have been singled out for special consideration based on the fact that there are certain issues that are unique to them. For instance, the issue of 'bodily integrity', as she puts it, is extremely important to women, most importantly as it concerns violence against women, and issues such as reproductive health (Basch, 2004). If these particular vulnerabilities are not taken into account, then it would only *appear* as if women were equally represented under the umbrella of human security while, in reality, traditional gender discrimination would continue to remain in place. For this reason, it is imperative for a gender perspective to be included within the realm of human security.

Feminists also point to a problem with the human security model that might otherwise have remained hidden. As it stands at the moment, with regards to human security, it is the duty of the state to advance the safety and well being of individuals. While this may seem benign enough on the surface, the underlying fact is that with the state having this responsibility, what may occur is the perpetuation of the same long-established discriminatory principles as they apply to women (Basch, 2004). For instance, it is evident that within states, certain persons have more access to resources than do others. Unfortunately, factors such as ethnic background and class oftentimes determine how those resources are meted out. The same is true for gender, and there is a possibility that in a distinctly discriminatory society, women might continue to be invisible and their needs continue to be ignored despite the presence of policies of human security. So while

feminists applaud the fact that the individual (as opposed to the state) is now being made the focal point of security concerns, it is paramount, and they stress the fact, that care is taken to ensure that all human beings feel secure.

Security: Crucial to Development

Security is of vital importance since it is fundamental to the overall development agenda; after all, development entails being attentive to the needs of human beings, rather than on only measuring per capita income and the wealth of states. It can be seen that the development literature traditionally focused on rising gross domestic product (GDP) as an indicator of progress. However, the notion of development has many other aspects (not just the limited view of increasing the GDP), and they must all be taken into account. In its first ever Human Development Report of 1990, the UNDP made it clear that development was to be focused on people (as opposed to nations). Attending to the health, education, economic wellbeing and freedom of individuals is what development is all about (UNDP, 1990; King & Murray, 2001-2002). This links nicely with the theory of capabilities postulated by Amartya Sen, who spoke of development as increasing the freedoms of individuals (Sen, 1999).

According to Sen (1999), development is “a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (p. 3). Going further, he says that “development requires the removal of many sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance...” (p. 3). This definition is a refreshing approach to the issue of development, enabling the exploration of other avenues of progress rather than strictly

economic issues based on industrialization, modernization, or growth of the GDP.

Viewing development through wider lenses allows the focus to shift to how people's lives can be more enriched owing to things like educational and employment opportunities, better health care, and equal rights. The narrow economic perspective of development, which for so long dominated information on the subject, should no longer be seen as the only indication of growth. Rather, economic growth should be assessed as part of a wider picture; one which includes the important aspect of human advancement.

Accordingly, since human security embodies all these aspects, then it stands to reason that human security is a vital part of development. Achieving progress in human security would be more than just a good step towards development. Ensuring that human security is attained is both a means to development and an end in itself. Giving people the opportunity to meet their own needs allows them to tap into their potential as human beings, and make a contribution towards their own development, which is indisputably a good thing in itself. Subsequently, with their increased capacities, they will then be better able to contribute to their societies. On the whole, development arises once people have access to their needs, freedom to make informed decisions about their lives, and the ability to meet their full potential. Human security and development, then, are intertwined. Former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan was therefore correct when he said that "...humanity cannot enjoy security without development or development without security, and neither without respect for human rights" (UNDP, 2005c, p. 151). A previous report by the United Nations Development Programme made reference to this as well when it stated that "achieving human development...depends on peace and personal security" (UNDP, 2002, p. 85).

The link between development and security, therefore, is a complex but indisputable one. It has already been established that development is fostered by promoting human security; i.e. allowing people the freedom and opportunities to meet their needs. Still, an added aspect of development can be seen to emerge from human security; that is, the more personally secure individuals are, the less likely a country is to deteriorate into war, thereby suffering the subsequent ill effects of conflict. Kofi Annan is quoted as saying that “insecurity linked to armed conflict remains one of the greatest obstacles to human development” (UNDP, 2005c, p. 151). The past century alone has given us ample evidence of the devastation that is brought about by war.

According to the Human Development Report (HDR) of 2005, the twentieth century has been by far, the most violent in history. An alarming statistic is that “nearly three times as many people were killed in conflict in the twentieth century as in the previous four centuries combined” (UNDP, 2005c, p. 153). What is more is that most conflicts occur in low income developing countries, and more particularly, in Africa, which has some 40 percent of all the world’s conflicts (UNDP, 2005c, p. 154). The fact that wars and civil clashes are, in recent times, lasting longer and getting more violent, coupled with the knowledge that these conflicts are occurring in already strained economies, makes it clear that the toll on human and other kinds of development is greater.

If there was ever any doubt as to the severe price paid for conflict, one need only look at the impacts that it brings. The obvious and most brutal cost is the loss of life suffered. Although exact numbers are hard to arrive at because of the chaos of war, estimates indicate that in 2000 alone, there were 310,000 direct deaths due to conflict,

more than half of which occurred in sub-Saharan Africa (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002, pp. 35-36). Available ratios show that for every one direct death, there are nine indirect deaths from conflict. Going on these figures, approximately 2.8 million people lost their lives at the turn of the millennium as a result of conflict (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002, p. 36).

With violence comes not only death, but for those who do survive, a laboured existence, which includes injury and disability, not the least of which is the psychological trauma suffered. The often rapid spread of diseases, when combined with failing or non-existent health services, only serves to amplify the crises being faced. Countries are usually plunged further into the depths of despair with the erosion of basic social and political institutions and services. Failing food systems, the collapse of educational services, and the loss of income are also serious costs, rendering entire populations helpless and hopeless. Moreover, the loss of human resources due to a vast number of refugees and internally displaced persons that result from periods of conflict can be seen as nothing more than negative when it comes to human development (De Coning, 2006). One instance of this was noticed in Sierra Leone, where the civil war of 1991-2002 displaced some 500,000 families, which in turn led to a 20 percent drop in the main rice crop production (UNDP, 2005c, p. 159).

Long term, all these negative impacts translate into continued and sustained underdevelopment. Persistent food insecurity (because of a loss of food production) can be noticed. For instance, during war times in Angola, 80 percent of agricultural land was abandoned, and in Mozambique, only 5 percent of land was used for cultivation purposes (Busumtwi-Sam, 2004, p. 324). It has been estimated that, overall, the 1990s in Africa

saw an annual 12 percent decrease in agricultural production because of conflict (Africa Peace Forum, 2004, p. 5). Conflict also brings with it malnutrition, high mortality rates, the collapse of livelihoods, increases in poverty and disease, and continuous instability in society that makes it next to impossible for the existing population to attend to even its most basic needs. With fewer productive members of society, and a breakdown of physical infrastructure and social services, what is sure to result is a loss of foreign trade and investment, and therefore a reduction in economic growth. According to the World Bank, the average civil war lasts for seven years. During this time, officials estimate that for every year of a civil war, a country experiences a decline of 2.2 percent in the growth rate of the economy (UNDP, 2005c, p. 155).

This can be due to a number of factors. With security compromised in war-torn countries, this presents a disincentive (and, quite possibly, an unfeasible situation) for investment whether domestic or foreign. Furthermore, capital flight is more likely to increase at times like these; all factors that contribute to a slowing of economic growth. As a matter of fact, statistics from some countries show that during conflicts, 20 percent of private capital is usually transferred abroad (UNDP, 2005c, p. 155). What is more, wartime brings with it unproductive spending. In 1985 in Ethiopia and Mozambique, the import of arms represented a whopping 81 percent and 61 percent of total imports, respectively (Busumtwi-Sam, 2004, p. 323). The inevitable increase in military expenses leaves even fewer resources for social services and the general upkeep of the country. There is, more often than not, a depletion (if not complete exhaustion) of any available natural and other resources. What little assets are available in war-torn countries are used by authorities, not to the benefit of the state or its citizens, but to fund and further already

destructive wars (De Coning, 2006). As well, to add insult to injury, because enduring conflicts tend to benefit certain sectors of society (e.g. politicians, military, or others in positions of power), the remaining sectors of that society are neglected. This leads to inequality and the distinct possibility that the disgruntled members of society may one day demand justice for themselves, thereby fuelling the fires of the conflict.

The link between underdevelopment (both social and economic) and the insecurity of conflict is therefore not a difficult one to recognize (Barungi & Mbugua, 2005; De Coning, 2004). Simply put, without the active advancement of human security, conflict may result, and such conflict inhibits development by wrecking havoc on states, thereby further increasing human insecurity. The ideas of security and development are so inextricably connected that there really can be no development without security. Since the presence and persistence of violence has such obvious and negative impacts, then it stands to reason that development can only be achieved once violent situations have been transformed into peaceful conditions. There is, therefore, a definite need for some sort of action in an attempt to bring about peace. How exactly this can be effectively accomplished and sustained is still being debated.

Taking a Step towards Peace:

Problematic International Intervention

There is often international support during times of crisis, but international intervention leaves much to be desired with regard to maintaining peace. Such involvement is not always successful and this can be seen in the failure of some efforts during the last decade (Crocker, Hampson, & Aal, 1996). The 1990s has certainly been

quite a test for both the African continent and foreign peacekeepers alike. During the Liberian war of the early 1990s, there was a complete lack of intervention. In the case of Somalia, the UN mission that was sent (after much vacillation) was at first promising. The initial high hopes of permanently quelling the conflict were soon dashed, however. Confronted by local Somali militia, and with few resources and limited support, the debacle that followed the foreign intervention during the Somali war from 1992-1995 has certainly laid bare the weaknesses with regard to outside help: "Between 1992 and 1995, 130 peacekeepers died and this was the highest fatality rate in the history of UN peacekeeping" (Sandile, 1999, p. 110). After these deaths and the continual challenge by aggressive military factions, a large number of peacekeepers withdrew from the fight, essentially abandoning the operation altogether. The intervention in Somalia had been an obvious dismal failure.

By the time the Rwandan genocide had begun its unfortunate run in 1994, the UN peacekeepers were not only hesitant to intervene, but when they did get involved, they provided only a limited number of peacekeepers (Sandile, 1999). Following the killing of ten Belgian soldiers, numbers were even further reduced to a mere 270 peacekeepers (Sandile, 1999, p. 110). The mass genocide which subsequently occurred can, in no small measure, be partly attributed to the vacillation and lack of commitment of the UN on the matter of providing assistance when it was so obviously necessary. This provides yet another example of how foreign intervention may not bring desired results.

However, even in the event that peacekeepers can claim some success, peacekeeping operations have tended not to resolve war in its entirety; serving only to allow for a temporary cessation of on-going conflict (Hawk, 2002). While in force,

peacekeepers may be able to bring an end to immediate violence, but this hardly ever translates into long-term peace. Devastated countries ravaged by war oftentimes just simply revert to their warring ways soon after peace has been supposedly restored. Global history has proven that once civil wars end, many of them tend to recommence, and this is particularly true on the African continent, where 50 percent of all wars resume within the following ten years (Bigombe, 2000, p. 323).

Furthermore, studies conducted over an extensive period of time have shown that approximately half of all peace agreements fail in their first five years (Neethling, 2005, p. 34). There are times when peace agreements come about not because the root causes of the conflict have been addressed, but because international pressure forces warring factions to hastily reach some sort of an agreement. Other times, those involved in conflicts give their consent to peace agreements purely for strategic reasons, and not because they have wholeheartedly committed to meaningful and lasting processes of establishing peace. Due to this, any efforts at building peace are often thwarted from their inception.

What is more, scholars admit that even the United Nations, prominent in peacekeeping operations, is far too concerned with militaristic security measures for it to be effective in carrying out the varied and complex measures entailed in the building of peace. This does not stem from the fact that the UN fails to see the necessity of peacebuilding; it is simply because the organization's peacekeeping mandate does not adequately include programs and mechanisms for peacebuilding (Grey-Johnson, 2006).

In this particular context, reviewing the actions of the UN and other intervening actors in the abovementioned wars is not done for the purpose of assigning blame per se,

but to bring to the fore the fact that international involvement is often limited and lacking, and therefore another way must be sought so as to ensure lasting peace. It is undeniable that conflict between and within states is of relevance to all humanity, as are the attempts at keeping and building peace. Building lasting peace in war-torn nations is among the most daunting of challenges today; yet it remains an extremely important goal now more than ever.

Peace Explained

What is, however, true peace? It is imperative that a complete assessment be made of it if there is any hope of attaining it. One thought hinges on the notion that to truly achieve peace, there needs to be two specific types of freedom: freedom from fear and freedom from want (UNDP, 2005c, p. 168). At the highest level, the United Nations was formed specifically to enable countries to band together in an effort to secure such peace. It was in that same year (1945) that the US Secretary of State, Edward R. Stettinius, stated that “The battle of peace has to be fought on two fronts. The first front is the security front, where victory spells freedom from fear. The second is the economic and social front, where victory means freedom from want. Only victory on both fronts can assure the world of an enduring peace” (UNDP, 2005c, p. 168). This, in effect, brings to the fore the concept of human security and its inextricable link to peace, which was explained earlier. Since then, other scholars have gone further and noted that when speaking of peace, a distinction needs to be made between positive and negative peace.

Those dedicated to the research and preservation of peace have long since recognized the difference between the two. Analysts have observed though that the

average person unknowingly refers to negative peace, i.e. simply the absence of war. They reason that although many persons might outwardly oppose war, there is, in general, an inadvertent perpetuation of a warlike atmosphere through the accumulation of weapons, the idolization of war 'heroes' and the dehumanization of enemies. Peace needs to be perceived for what it entails, rather than for what it does not (Bretherton, 2003; Ali & Matthews, 2004b). Positive peace is really what all countries should strive to attain. This involves "a peace that promotes reconciliation and coexistence on the basis of human rights, social, economic and political justice" (Murithi, 2006, p. 13). In this way, societies are actively and constantly advancing a culture of peace; ensuring the perpetual presence of social solidarity.

It is exactly for this reason that there is a need to go well beyond simple peacemaking and peacekeeping, since neither one by itself has proven to be effective at ensuring the continuation of peace. Generally speaking, peacemaking entails bringing about an end to conflict by, for example, compromising on the basis of negotiations. It has been defined as: "The use of diplomatic means to persuade parties in conflict to cease hostilities and negotiate a peaceful settlement of their dispute" (De Coning, 2006, p. 29). Peacekeeping exists along this same continuum, and involves the monitoring of any ceasefires or truces (David, 2002; Miall, Ramsbotham, & Woodhouse, 1999). It is essentially "a field mission, usually involving military, police and civilian personnel, deployed with the consent of the belligerent parties, to monitor and facilitate the implementation of ceasefires, separation of forces or other peace agreements" (De Coning, 2006, p. 29). Despite the importance of both peacemaking and peacekeeping, it is simply not sufficient either to attempt the cessation of war through the presence of

peacekeepers, or to endeavour to end hostilities between belligerent forces, while still perpetuating the attitudes and policies that may have brought about the war in the first place.

With its long-term initiatives, peacebuilding, though, goes much further to the root of the conflict so as to ensure the continuance of peace. Peacebuilding has the ability to institute policies and programs that help to firmly establish peace education and build capacity (Bretherton, 2003; Edomwonyi, 2003). Peacebuilding seeks to transform society, in that it lays the groundwork for continued social harmony, by removing political, social and economic bases that support violence, and replacing them with structures that allow for the maintenance of peace (David, 2002). The challenge then, is not merely to temporarily reinstate peace, but to ensure that efforts at peacekeeping and peacemaking are turned into processes of peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding Conceptualized

The concept of peacebuilding is hardly a static one. This complex, yet meaningful term has been around for decades, with many attributing the introduction of the concept to Johan Galtung. His was a simple definition that peacebuilding should develop “the practical implementation of peaceful social change through socio-economic reconstruction and development” (Miall, Ramsbotham, & Woodhouse, 1999, p. 248). Popularized by Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his 1992 *Agenda for Peace*, this former UN Secretary General defined the idea of peacebuilding as: “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (Kingma, 2002, p. 185; De Coning, 2006, p. 28). He at first focused on

structural aspects of the process and spoke of it mainly in terms of courses of action that dealt with the rebuilding of institutions and infrastructures damaged by war, and encouraging the building of bonds among formerly warring nations. Based on subsequent supplements to the agenda (most notably the 1995 addition), this definition has been expanded upon to include not only economic and political transformation, but also social and cultural development; peacebuilding should incorporate “equality and social justice, as well as relational and consensual actions aimed at improving relationships and addressing basic needs...and activities which nurture and strengthen an existing peace...” (Mazurana & McKay, 1999, p. 7).

Since then, the term has been defined broadly by some and narrowly by others, and for that reason its present definition is not fixed. While it is universally acknowledged that peacebuilding goes beyond the need to secure peace, scholars, practitioners, and writers alike have difficulty setting out precise limitations of what the concept entails. Nor should they have to, since it is already agreed upon that peacebuilding encompasses an ever-expanding vast array of aspects. Minimalist versions of it cannot be looked at as being sufficient, for they only entail the prevention of violence rather than promoting on-going security, reconciliation and capacity building. A maximalist approach is needed instead.

It has been accepted that peacebuilding is long-term in nature and it is the phase of the peace process that takes place after peacemaking and peacekeeping. In general, the requirements for peacebuilding are many. They have been identified in part as being: reconstructing society economically, politically, and socially through the demilitarization, demobilization and reintegrating of insurgents, the restoration of legitimate authority, and

the revival of the civil service. Peacebuilding also involves the re-launching of economic activities, reforming security, assisting the return of refugees and displaced persons, reconstructing relational behaviours, fostering healing and reconciliation after war-time atrocities, enhancing human rights protection, and promoting empowerment, justice and constructive ways of dealing with future grievances (Grey-Johnson, 2006; David, 2002; Mazurana & McKay, 1999).

Over the years, various researchers have tried to identify the major elements of peacebuilding by consolidating its varied aspects. Kuhne (1997) for instance names four main features within the concept: post-conflict peacebuilding, which are interim measures that occur between peacekeeping and development; political civic action or management; long-term political, economic, social provisions to transform society by addressing the root causes of conflict and helping to further peace; and the circle of preventative peacebuilding, which prevents a relapse into conflict (pp. 15-18).

Despite its varied nature, the concept has nonetheless gained popularity and momentum, and is now recognized as including at least three main features. As David (2002) puts it, the central elements of peacebuilding can be understood to be “the rehabilitation, reconstruction and reconciliation of societies that have suffered the ravages of armed conflict; the creation of the security-related, political and/or socio-economic mechanisms needed to build trust between the parties and prevent the resumption of violence; [and] an external (foreign) intervention (national, multilateral or UN) to help create conditions conducive to peace” (p. 21).

Peacebuilding: Neo-Liberal Roots?

Still, even with these promising features, the idea of peacebuilding has come under attack from the critics who see the theory (and practice) as nothing more than another opportunity for the imposition of liberal views. “Neo-liberal peacebuilding” (Jeong, 2005, p. 10-11) is known as peacebuilding that entails the formation of democratic processes and following principles geared towards an open market economy. Indeed, the concept of peacebuilding is rooted in liberalism, and three main ideas in particular help to illustrate this point.

For one, the doctrine of liberalism, quite influential in international relations, emphasizes the idea of democracy, as one of the ways in which peace can be brought about; a democratic state which guarantees the freedom of its citizens (David, 2002). Economic interdependence is also stressed as a way in which peace can be attained, for countries which have a cooperative relationship with each other are more likely to retain peace, since the costs of war are too great. It is worth mentioning here that Norman Angell believed that the perpetuation of capitalism and free trade was a guaranteed way to achieve peace. Finally, when help is sought or even offered by international organizations, it can be seen that there may be a great likelihood of such foreign intervention modifying the ideas and practices of individual nations, thereby perpetuating liberal views.

Critics of liberalism contend that peacebuilding principles often include these aforementioned things and therefore state that when peacebuilding initiatives are undertaken, what in fact occurs is a covert perpetuation of liberal values of democracy, free trade, and a strengthening of the role of international institutions in global affairs

(possibly to the detriment of nations' sovereignties). Roland Paris believes that "a single paradigm - liberal internationalism - appears to guide the work of most international agencies engaged in peacebuilding. The central tenet of this paradigm is the assumption that the surest foundation for peace, both within and between states, is market democracy, that is, a liberal democratic polity and a market-oriented economy" (David, 2002, pp. 26-27). Despite the criticism, however, it cannot be denied that the need for peace and peacebuilding is great. The alternative (perpetual conflict) with all the disadvantages that it brings should simply not be allowed to be an option.

Principles of Peacebuilding

Therefore, in analyzing the best ways in which to successfully put the elements of peacebuilding into practice, major principles emerge. These hinge upon conducting the processes of peacebuilding in such a way as to advance non-violent means of communication that promote reconciliation, and thereby cultivate empowerment and equality. Although it may appear obvious, it should be noted that the pivotal point of peacebuilding is the notion that non-violent means are the best ways to resolve conflict. Cheaper and less damaging than the use of force, the use of nonviolent methods as a path to peace is seen as superior to the alternative (Sampson et al, 2003). Facilitating the cooperation of all parties involved is more productive in the long run. Collaborative efforts and the fostering of understanding between parties are more effective ways to resolve differences.

Another key principle of peacebuilding is that such differences can be resolved through communication. Feelings expressed and ideas unearthed and discussed, could all

very possibly lead to positive change. By the communication of beliefs, needs and wishes, creative ways of solving problems may be possible, and compromise can be achieved. Open and honest communication can also bring a realization by parties of the commonalities between themselves. Realizing that there exists among them similarities and not just a combative relationship is crucial to accomplishing success in peacebuilding (Sampson et al, 2003). Former adversaries begin to notice a sense of interdependence and connectedness, and this can further help to build a constructive sustainable relationship. Humanizing the other side and attempting to instill empathy for each other is central to any and all peacebuilding activities.

An extremely important part of the peacebuilding agenda for many practitioners and theorists alike has been the promotion of reconciliation. This is seen to be significant in the transformation of society in the period following any conflict. Reconciliation allows former adversaries to heal and subsequently establish a community that is for the most part free of tension and future violence. To be fully successful though there is the need for three basic, yet vital, things: Acknowledgement - open, honest and complete acknowledgement by the perpetrators of their crimes/violence; Contrition - while admitting to past wrongs, it is necessary to show remorse, communicate apologies, and directly ask for forgiveness from the victims; Forgiveness - if the victims recognize the sincerity of the acknowledgement and contrition, then their voluntary forgiveness would constitute the final part of reconciliation (Lerche, 2002).

All this is not to say that the process of pardoning oppressors will be void of anger, bitterness or resentment on the part of both oppressors and oppressed. To hold this view would be to see this process in a simplistic and unrealistic light. It should be noted

then that during reconciliation, expressions of anger are encouraged (as they should be), and sometimes such anger may just outweigh any desire to forgive. Some people feel that rekindling old animosities by bringing forth the truth is not a constructive part of the peace process. After all, they argue, what part does controversy have to play within peace? However, burying the past and all its injustices is not conducive to sustained peace. What is important here is to realize that the central force of peace is that steps be taken not to repeat the past, and this hinges on the existence of understanding among all parties concerned. Truth is essential to this understanding. Without forthright dialogue of the truth there can be neither understanding nor healing of relationships; without healing there cannot be proper peace, no matter how transformed the political and economic structures.

Another fundamental principle regarding peacebuilding is that there should also be processes aimed at removing dominant destructive power relationships and replacing them with constructive ones, which lead to the empowerment of all concerned. When this is done, there will exist a more equal distribution of power. A major tenet of peacebuilding lies in strengthening the marginalized, which is something that can subsequently lead to substantial and sustainable change in society (Sampson et al, 2003). Still, knowing what the process entails, what ideally should be strived for, and how it can possibly be achieved are only some facets of peacebuilding. Another just as important course of action involves recognizing who exactly should take responsibility for carrying out the process. Who holds the duty of care?

Infusing the Local into Peacebuilding

It is worth noting that in the past, peacebuilding efforts were seen as being the forte of foreign interveners. Development efforts in general, seldom acknowledged or incorporated the value of local people and their culture into mainstream projects. However, this should never be the case. It is no secret that Western development organizations have their own cultures and agendas, which may differ from the target groups who they are trying to assist; something which may result in tension between the two groups (Eversole, 2005). Communities which are in a state of crisis are particularly vulnerable to this. Given the compromised state of post-conflict countries, there is indeed a significant risk that external intervention can have unforeseen, negative consequences. This is due, in part, to the fact that the peacebuilding process introduces a new set of relationships between the groups recovering from conflict and the external actors working to help them. If local parties feel that outsiders have imposed peacebuilding policies upon them, then intervention strategies are far less likely to be successful.

This is not to say that external intervention is unnecessary. Far from this, when communities find themselves in crisis situations, urgent international humanitarian interventions (which are almost always conducted with honourable intentions), can be quite useful in helping to alleviate the dire needs of the public. This is because foreign interveners are often good sources of knowledge and funding. Moreover, while the local populace may wield authority and have sufficient leverage within their own community, they may lack such authority at the regional and international levels. In this way, “outsiders” are necessary, as they do contribute to the process of development by bringing with them skills, knowledge, and financial resources. They can without a doubt

“...change external policies and finance local infrastructure, influence public opinion and open channels of communication, share technical knowledge and suggest new possibilities” (Eversole, 2005, p. 298). Therefore, local leaders and community organizations fighting to attain peace would definitely need to work in collaboration with international actors, which may help to make constructive local efforts that much more effective. However, it is always important for those external actors to bear in mind that the local people must be allowed to drive their own development. Foreign development workers, therefore, will be there to support the local people and help in alleviating any weaknesses that they may have. Still, local people’s unique cultural interpretation of development needs to be recognized and adopted in the planning and implementation of any development initiative.

Culture does make a difference in how development processes are pursued (Murithi, 2006). So while the views of “outsiders” cannot be disregarded, their views of development must never be imposed. Rather, their views must be guided by local visions of what progress entails, and this idea is no less true when specifically applied to peacebuilding efforts. In this vein, the culture of peace that UN officials have been recently advocating for stems from the belief that peace is not simply the responsibility of governmental officials and institutions. Ordinary local citizens need to be fully engrossed in peacebuilding efforts.

Traditionally, conflict resolution and state transformation were indeed addressed purely by means of state diplomacy. Government was often seen as being solely responsible for finding solutions to conflict. However, considering that conflicts emanate from society, civil society can (and does) play a major role in the struggle against

conflict. As Adejumobi (2001) so aptly writes, “Conflicts do not emerge in a vacuum, they are products of social structure and character of society of which the civil society is an integral part” (p. 1). Peacebuilding, then, must be a holistic process, which includes civil society organizations; groups which are comprised of those most affected by such conflict (Marshall, 2000; United Nations, 2002). More and more, it is being realized by development specialists that a transition needs to be made from “...the large-scale, short-term, externally driven humanitarian and military interventions that are typical in the midst of crisis to the more grass roots, longer-term, locally-driven development interventions...” (Neethling, 2005, p. 38).

Community Participation in Peacebuilding

It is important to take a look at local community participation in peacebuilding, for the idea has positive correlations to development. Although community participation has yet to be implemented completely, it has been an occasional visitor to public debate, especially in the 1970s. On many levels, community participation is valuable. In assessing and attempting to improve a conflict situation, it is absolutely imperative that the circumstances and factors surrounding the conflict be understood. Post-war rebuilding can only be accomplished if those trying to mitigate the conflict have a good understanding of how such conflict arose in the first place. What better way to achieve this than by ensuring the participation of the local population? Local people can give insight into community dynamics and the proximate and root cause(s) of all misunderstandings. With this in mind, the local community would be in a position to share its knowledge, and also to propose solutions and explain what resources are

available to effectively tackle the monumental task of reconstruction. It stands to reason therefore, that by mobilizing the local community, any external actors who are lending their support will be more informed and less insensitive to the needs and agendas of local people.

Indeed, the participation of local people provides them a good opportunity to share their knowledge and ideas, but this in turn also affords them a way to put aside their differences and begin the building and gaining of mutual trust and legitimacy. One of the key factors in the building of peace is the establishment of trust between all parties concerned. It is imperative that there is a fostering of positive relations between warring parties, to be sure, but at the same time also between any external actors and the recipients of their help.

The simple involvement of locals in any development project also produces positive long-term results in the form of capacity building. Capacity building, according to the UNDP, is the process by which individuals (and organizations and institutions too) learn to develop skills which enhance their abilities to tackle and prevail over their problems while accomplishing their set goals. In situations where violence has previously prevailed, then this capacity building translates into the building of peace, but more specifically "...strengthening the security of those within the region...enabling larger numbers of those within the region to enjoy fuller lifestyles, without diminishing the choices available for future generations" (McAllister, 2004, p. 122). To ensure that this is particularly effective, the UNDP acknowledged the need for beneficiary participation.

In the document, *The World Bank's Experience with Post-Conflict Reconstruction*, paragraph 6.1 clearly notes the importance of "...client ownership [and]

beneficiary participation...” among other things (McAllister, 2004, p. 132).

Peacebuilding is, after all, about promoting and supporting local people’s abilities to build self-sustaining capacities. Participation yields enlightened and empowered community members, who can build their own capacities by being allowed to largely assess their own weaknesses, make their own plans, execute their own initiatives and continue to use their new-found skills (coupled with their wealth of indigenous knowledge) to achieve future continued success (Gonzalez III, 1998). In this way, continually facilitating the involvement of local people fosters eventual self-sufficiency and in turn, sustainable development.

Allowing local communities to be a central force in conflict intervention and reconstruction does help to encourage empowerment through independent thinking and decision-making, and this empowerment further translates into other positives. It has already been noted that empowerment brings a better chance at future success. The thought is that also, if those previously involved in the conflict are given the opportunity to work together to address their differences (i.e. the causes of the conflict such as problems of land control and possible reform, or local representation), then tolerance may be fostered in such a way as to enable them to agreeably solve any future differences. The road to peace, therefore, might be more successful in the long run (Bigombe, 2000).

On the contrary, if the local population is not engaged, then there would be drawbacks to any peacebuilding initiatives that are undertaken. Local leadership, skills, and ideas would not be utilized and that would do nothing for improving the already existing tense and uneven power relations. Failure to involve local people means that any efforts undertaken may not adequately reflect local history, values, and needs, and might

therefore make the local community feel marginalized, certainly making an already volatile situation worse.

However, true success can only come about if the beneficiaries of any project are fully involved in the planning and implementation of development activities. Potential beneficiaries cannot be on the sidelines; instead they need to have an actual and significant input in the process, not just for a successful outcome in the short run, but for long term sustainability. True beneficiary participation policies have been employed, and have proven to be quite successful, in certain post-conflict African states, such as Uganda and Rwanda. It is recognized that it is one of the strategies that may smooth the progress into peace. Sometimes referred to as *decentralization*, (Bigombe, 2000), the strategy hinges on the involvement of the local community and entails the participation and eventual empowerment of local ethnic or religious groups. In order for this desired result to be obtained, however, true involvement meant that local participants had to be engaged, not just in the planning and assessing of their own needs, but also in managing and supervising what needed to be done in order to establish an environment more conducive to lasting peace (Maiese, 2003).

Obviously, researchers and development specialists should never think of this as an immediate and automatic solution. Allowing local participation is hardly a panacea in itself, but surely it is recognized as being a promising policy with regard to peacebuilding. Imposed peace agreements and solutions will simply never be sufficient, and although the presence of international third parties may (among other things) help to initially mediate the atmosphere of mistrust and hatred between traditional adversaries, it must be noted that ultimately, efforts at peacebuilding need to arise locally (Jeong, 2002).

Allowing and encouraging local involvement in the building of peace means that the thoughts, ideas, and skills of men as well as women are needed. The entire process of building peace needs to bring together all sides/parties of the local population. However, in many war-torn nations struggling to rebuild after conflict, the idea of encouraging the participation of women in peacebuilding efforts although known, has hardly been officially acted upon with gusto (Kuhne, 1996). It is women themselves who are therefore acting to ensure recognition of their rights and abilities.

Feminism: Bringing the Marginalized Front and Centre

The root of feminist theory is solidly based on the notion that women have been on an unequal playing field to men vis-à-vis political, economic, and social conditions. On the whole, all strands of feminist theory seek to bring out this asymmetry, understand the oppressive social practices that underlie the inequitable treatment of women, examine the reasons why this difference in power and privilege exists, and also put forth ways and means that these injustices might be overcome (Code, 1990). However, feminists differ as to what they identify as the major reasons for women's oppression, the theoretical questions they put forth, and the strategies for change. Yet all feminist schools of thought look at how different social phenomena like socialization and production have determined women's status in societies (Code, 1990), and feminists as a whole believe that there should be equality. Susan Okin (as cited in Tickner, 2001) defines feminists as "those who believe that women should not be disadvantaged by their sex; women should be recognized as having human dignity equal with men and the opportunity to live as freely chosen lives as men" (p. 11). However, feminism should never be seen as being

one standard belief. It is made up of many different ideologies, and there are a variety of approaches employed by feminist thinkers. Three of the main feminist schools of thought are liberal, socialist, and radical.

Liberal feminists cite discriminatory institutional policies and practices as major hindrances to women and argue that women should be afforded all the rights, equality of opportunity, and freedoms that societies have to offer (Tickner, 2001). Women's rights are human rights. This perspective argues that women should not be viewed in terms of their 'femininity' (Code, 1990), and therefore not be seen purely in the roles of wives and mothers simply because of their biological ability to bear children (Andersen, 1993). Liberal feminism emphasizes social and legal reforms that would encourage equal opportunities for women. These feminists also believe that it is gender socialization which is to blame for the differences in the ways in which men and women are treated. Therefore, the removal of discriminatory practices, and the modification of socialization techniques, as well as making the public more informed, would result in fairer treatment of women (Andersen, 1993). Liberal feminism, however, neglects to look at the social structures that cause inequalities, and which under-privilege women.

Socialist feminism puts forward a response to liberal feminism. These theorists contend that there is virtually no point to offering women equality and freedom if the basic social and economic structures are not changed. With socialist feminism, structure is more focused upon, as are the intersectionalities of inequalities, such as gender and class. This school of thought postulates that as a whole, women are oppressed by the capitalistic economic system, in much the same way that the working classes in society

are subjugated. The only difference is that, within a system that is capitalistic as well as patriarchal, women are also subjected to other forms of oppression (Code, 1990).

According to socialist feminists, in the labour force, men and women are both suppressed since in both instances, neither men nor women own the means of production or the products of their labour. In this way, the labour of both men and women is 'alienated' (Code, 1990, p.36). However, even with this state of affairs, women are further oppressed, since men hold superior positions to women. Furthermore, women who work in the home are not even recognized as being part of the labour force, as their work as housewives is not valued in material terms. Even though women are the "primary producers of goods and services for use within the family" (Code, 1990, p. 37), in a capitalistic system, their labour is not considered in monetary terms, and they are therefore considered to be outside of the labour force. Women and their labour are therefore undervalued. Capitalism and patriarchy both work to subjugate women (Andersen, 1993). Consequently, women can be seen to have it twice as hard. A complete restructuring of society would be needed to rectify those issues.

Radical feminists agree that women are in a disadvantaged position in society. However, radical feminists place their emphasis differently; they see patriarchy as the primary reason for women's oppression (Andersen, 1993). Patriarchy is central to the problem, as male dominance ensures women's lower status. So, "whereas material, economic, and social oppression are primary for socialist feminists, radical feminists are convinced that the oppression of women is at the root of all other forms of oppression" (Code, 1990, p. 39). "The personal is political" (Code, 1990, p. 39) they exclaim,

pointing to the fact that patriarchal society has organized things in such a way as to be disadvantageous to women.

Like socialist feminists, radical feminists agree that there is a marked difference in power between men and women, and this stems from the fact that women are assigned certain roles based on their sex, and are therefore automatically placed on a subordinate rung of society. Women are expected to be submissive, and men have asserted control over women's "sexual, procreative, and emotional labour" (Code, 1990, p. 40). Radical feminists believe that it is impossible for women not to be oppressed in any kind of dealing with men. This perspective reasons that the removal of barriers to women's inequality in society would not actually stop the discrimination against women, since that prejudice, and ensuing oppression, stems from deeply rooted beliefs and values in patriarchal society, something which has existed for far too long. They suggest that only the elimination of patriarchy would solve this problem. Accordingly, radical feminists feel that, rather than having women attempt to be equal to men, women's unique talents and abilities should be celebrated (Tickner, 2001). Ultimately though, they see female separatism as the only way to have the liberation of women in society.

Feminist Approaches to Development

Feminists were a vocal part of the move to include women in development, merging the themes of equality, development, and peace. The movements that exist today that are working so hard to ensure that women's voices are heard and that their role in development processes are recognized, have their roots in political and theoretical feminist concerns, and in feminism's early approaches to development; i.e. *Women in*

Development; Women and Development; and Gender and Development. Although these approaches are not mutually exclusive, they do each have their differences.

Based on liberal feminist theory, Women in Development (WID) developed in the 1970s in response to principles of development that failed to include women. During the 1950s and 1960s, Western development thought proposed that if countries of the South simply adhered to the development principles suggested by the richer Northern nations, then development and growth would eventually be realized. In both theory and practice, this Modernization theory was not inclusive of women's ideas or their contributions to the development process.

The problem of the biased treatment of women was not a novel one then, nor is it now for that matter. Women have been plagued by discrimination for many years. One of the first works of literature to bring forth this problem was that of Ester Boserup. Her often quoted work *Woman's Role in Economic Development* addresses the issue of how traditional development models did nothing to include women, which served to only further marginalize them (Tickner, 2001; Visvanathan, 1997). It was this public outcry of the need to bring women out of the shadows that was the motivation for further calls to action on women's behalf. The year 1975, therefore, saw the start of a decade-long push to lessen the invisibility of women, with the announcement of The United Nations Decade for Women.

WID was therefore intent on removing the invisibility that surrounded women, and was focused on having women enter the system as workers and on increasing their productive capacities (Porter, 1999). This approach emphasized that men and women are equally endowed and have the same capacities to attain success in life. All that is needed

in order for women to reach their full potential is that they be afforded equal opportunities. The WID approach to women's development, though, seemed to result in an ineffective addition of women to an already imperfect process.

For one, the WID literature did not acknowledge that women had been an important part of the development process for quite some time, and that because women's roles had been unremunerated, they had gone unnoticed. Furthermore, in its efforts to emphasize individual capacities, the WID approach did not recognize the structural hindrances that were in place in society; the approach failed to properly take into account the unequal system of gender relations that already existed, and this system's impact upon women (African Women's Development and Communication Network, 2007; Krieger, 2001). In this way, women's particular needs were not fully assessed by WID nor were their positions, vis-à-vis men, within the entire development process. Rather, women were merely included into the existing system. What this accomplished was a failure to truly understand how women fit into the process and how their needs could be addressed for maximum benefit to all concerned (African Women's Development and Communication Network, 2007).

Women and Development (WAD) attempted to expand upon WID. WAD recognized the limitations of the WID approach and sought to provide a broader theoretical framework with which to work. Instead of only looking at the inclusion of women into development processes, WAD focused on understanding the relationship of women to development. The WAD approach drew attention to women as being key economic players, and emphasized the importance of women's informal work (Porter, 1999). Also, WAD addressed the social barriers that posed a hindrance to women with

regard to development and, in so doing, acknowledged the fact that women's subordinate rank in society was not only about a lack of equal opportunity, but about how discriminatory structures excluded or exploited women (Krieger, 2001). In this way, WAD offered a more critical approach than did WID. Still, WAD too fell short, as the perspective failed to "undertake a full-scale analysis of the relationship between patriarchy, differing modes of production, and women's subordination and oppression" (Porter, 1999, p. 10).

Towards the end of the decade for women, another approach emerged as a result of the shortcomings of the existing literature. Gender and Development (GAD), therefore, sought to remedy the problems that had been overlooked by the focus on women and on women's inclusion in the workforce. It was necessary to go further and address the power relations in society that persisted in allowing imbalances. GAD tackled the uneven playing field upon which men and women stood, and looked at the unequal relations between men and women that contributed to women's exclusion in the development process (Krieger, 2001).

GAD discussed how women could become empowered through their collective actions. It was realized that the mere participation of women in the system would be insufficient without their interests, needs, and goals playing a significant part in any development agenda. It is about supplying them with the ability, through education, skills training and so on, to adequately utilize these resources (Zuckerman, 2005). Giving women access to more of these resources would allow them to participate more fully, and benefit through their interaction. Therefore, GAD focused, not on adding women to an existing flawed development plan, but on giving women the opportunity to be

empowered agents of change by availing them of the specific resources that they needed, thereby attempting to balance out and better the system, and allow for more equal and sustained development.

One feminist perspective put forth by activists, researchers, and policy makers from the Global South sought to develop a framework that dealt specifically with the reality and needs of women in that region. Rooted in the developing world, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) was launched in 1985. It situates women within their various colonial and neo-colonial contexts, and deals with issues of race, class, gender, and nationality, and the connections between them, since “for many women, problems of nationality, class, and race are inextricably linked to their specific oppression as women” (Sen & Grown, 1987, p. 19). DAWN also emphasizes that development must be understood within the context of the Southern poor, who make up the majority of the world’s people, and especially women.

This approach puts poor women in the world’s developing South at the centre of its analysis. DAWN sees the oppression of women of the South as being directly linked to oppressive gender relations (to be sure), but also to many development processes. The perspective shows how the commercialization and market-driven mentality of many development processes tend to neglect the needs and interests of women, and reduce women’s access to vital resources (Antrobus & Christiansen-Ruffman, 1999; Sen & Grown, 1987). This ensures the increased subordination and marginalization of women. Research has shown that despite the fact that women’s responsibilities have increased, their access to resources, employment, income, and social services has not. It is

necessary, therefore, to look at how resources are used and distributed, and how these impact upon women.

DAWN's framework, which strives to "attain the goals of economic and social justice, peace, and development free of all forms of oppression by gender, class, race and nation" (Sen & Grown, 1987, p. 9), validates the work of women, and in general, it seeks to link their work on a small scale to the larger-scale macro-economic issues (Sen & Grown, 1987). It points to women's capacity to organize themselves, whether collectively or individually, and thus be valuable contributors in their households and communities. For this reason, women's efforts should be recognized and reinforced. DAWN postulates that increasing women's access to resources and improving their ability to participate would allow them to firstly improve their individual situations, and consequently that of their communities.

Moreover, DAWN, as its name suggests, believes in constructing entirely new development analyses, ones which involve examining the social impacts that development has on poor people, especially women. It challenges prevailing structures and seeks to transform systems (Antrobus & Christiansen-Ruffman, 1999) into more accountable, people-centred, just societies, where basic needs are basic rights (Sen & Grown, 1987). It calls for political support and policy changes to ensure women's needs are met. It encourages the creation of organizations that capture women's visions, and where their goals and empowerment can be fostered (Antrobus & Christiansen-Ruffman, 1999). Furthermore, DAWN seeks to raise awareness, through education, of women's subordination and the need to change this. It is only when such a societal transformation

occurs that there can be a move towards a culture of equality, and subsequently, a culture of peace.

All these perspectives are important, as they situate women within development processes, and stress the need for gender equality and women's wellbeing to be taken into account. It cannot be said that there is ignorance of the idea that women should be held on par with men, and that female involvement in all aspects of development should be the norm. After all, this has been promoted for decades. The strengthening of women's movements in this regard and the elaboration of women's agendas can be seen to have grown especially during the four UN conferences on women, beginning with the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975, and with subsequent conferences held in Copenhagen in 1980, in Nairobi in 1985, and in Beijing in 1995, as well as through the active engagement of women in the UN conferences of the 1990s.

The *Platform for Action* (PFA), produced at the Fourth World Conference in Beijing, sets out a framework for achieving equality and empowering women. It explicitly states in paragraph 1 of its mission statement that "equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace" (United Nations, 1995).

There has, over the years, definitely been an increase in knowledge regarding gender equality and women's roles in development, but this knowledge has not been put to sufficient use or been transformed into adequate practical gains. This is no less true with regard to issues of peacebuilding, where women are still marginalized, and their views and input largely ignored during peace processes. Rhetoric must be turned into

reality; there is a desperate need for women's issues to be addressed particularly in the context of peacebuilding, so that the route to peace can be more evenly balanced and not disproportionately favouring one gender over another, as so often is the case.

Women: Contemporary Peacebuilders

Necessity of Women in Peacebuilding

Any activities in peacebuilding should include women for three main reasons. For one, during times of war women are frequently affected differently than men, and so, peacebuilding and reconstruction should therefore include the voices of women in a concerted effort to construct solutions that can right their unique wrongs. What is more is that when attempting to reconstruct a country after war, everyone's views and needs should be met so that a more equal society is had. A society based on justice and equality is more likely to successfully keep the peace. Lastly, women have an important role to play with regard to peacebuilding. Given the opportunity, women can make an enormous contribution to the success of peace efforts, based on their unique experiences and perspectives.

Firstly, it must be seen that the vulnerability of women during war is great. Women are usually specifically targeted and violence against them is often used as a war strategy to dehumanize and weaken not only them, but their entire community. They are maimed and killed, but also raped, sexually assaulted, and tortured. Since violence against women is widespread and sometimes unique, then so too must be their participation in peacebuilding so that any strides made will also include benefits for women, e.g. justice for gender-based violence. Women need to be recognized as being an

invaluable part of peace activities, and be allowed to get involved in the peacebuilding process. They need to move from being seen solely as victims, to being seen as agents of change in the reconstruction of their own communities following conflict, so that they can put an end to the bias that normally favours men (McKay, 2002).

Moreover, women's efforts are needed since previous activities have shown that when rebuilding takes place after war, oftentimes it does not take place on an equal scale for everyone. Women are very often compelled to resume traditional roles while men tend to benefit most from any improvements that may have taken place. Women return to dealing with familial issues for the most part, while men resume taking charge of societal, economic, and political issues (McKay, 2002), leaving the society, once again, without the valuable influence of the female voice. If male dominated peace accords are reached and male influence guides the direction of any changes made, then it stands to reason that women's priorities will be overlooked (whether voluntarily or otherwise) by the hands of post-conflict reconstruction. Without their contribution to community peacebuilding efforts, women may continue to be denied their basic rights to things like health care, education, and other social services. Their voice is needed and their actions are fundamental in decision-making processes and other post-war reconstruction efforts. It is reasonable, and only fair, that any decisions made regarding post-conflict peacebuilding be to the benefit of the entire population. Decisions made and steps taken should never be to the exclusion of some.

According to feminist gender analysts, Mazurana and McKay (1999), peacebuilding should include "...gender-aware and women-empowering political, social, economic and human rights. It involves personal and group accountability and

reconciliation processes which contribute to the reduction or prevention of violence. It fosters the ability of women, men, girls and boys in their own cultures to promote conditions of non-violence, equality, justice and human rights of all people, to build democratic institutions and to sustain the environment” (p. 9). This point of view brings to the fore the need for women’s situations and perspectives to be seriously addressed.

Finally, women are eager to contribute on the peacebuilding front, and more than capable of doing so. Women have often been said to be well suited as mediators. Described as being more empathetic to the plight of others, they are seen as more likely to successfully engage in reconciliation efforts. With regard to this, some theorists tend to assert the ‘essentialist feminism’ perspective, which speaks of women and men being quite different from each other and, as such, where the peace process is concerned, women (assumedly more tolerant and peaceful) are more equipped to assure peace (Richter-Devroe, 2008; Ward, 2006). Of course, generalized statements such as this tend to ignore the fact that depending on their nationalities and societies, women have different realities, so to classify them under the one umbrella of ‘inherently peaceful mediators’ tends to undermine the argument by leaving the point open for theoretical attack. Absolute proclamations and stereotypes such as these should be replaced with more qualified statements that take into account the diversity of global women, as well as their aptitude to establish peace. Moreover, the point that women are more capable of enacting peace should be established, not from an innate biological standpoint (which will be difficult, if not impossible to prove), but from a social one; providing the evidence that attests to women’s tangible successes in achieving peacebuilding will be indisputable proof.

Women's invaluable influence and potential need to be harnessed, especially since it has already been established that the participation of women is critical at all levels be they national, regional or international. The aforementioned *Platform for Action*, which was unanimously accepted, set out instructions for regional and international bodies for supporting the empowerment of women worldwide by encouraging their participation in peacebuilding activities (McKay, 2002). It states in part:

Recognizing that the achievement and maintenance of peace and security are a precondition for economic and social progress... [women's] full participation in decision-making, conflict prevention and resolution and all other peace initiatives is essential to the realization of lasting peace. (UN, 1995, para 23)

So too, Resolution 1325, which was adopted by the UN Security Council, is another such acknowledgment of this important issue. This October 2000 Resolution on Women and Peace and Security is yet another framework that was put in place in an effort to bring women and their issues to the forefront and to let the international community take positive steps in this regard. This sets out guidelines to encourage the inclusion of women and the gender perspective in aspects of peacebuilding and reconstruction (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002, p. 3). It states in part that:

...Expressing concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict... Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution... Recognizing the urgent need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations... Recognizing that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security... [the Security Council] Urges Member States

to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict...” (UN Security Council, 2000, paras. 4, 5, 8, 10 &12)

Women have always been important agents of positive change and with these international papers drawing increasing attention to this fact, there is hope that women’s participation in peacebuilding will become the norm (and not the exception) in the not too distant future. As asserted by former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan: “...there is no effective development strategy in which women do not play a central role...” (UNIFEM, 2002, p. 2).

Benefits of Women in Peacebuilding

It has been rightly noted by some analysts that women’s contributions to the processes of peacebuilding, though marginalized, have been rather effective and unique. Peacebuilding is multi-faceted and definitely culturally specific; however, all peacebuilding needs to incorporate the all-important areas of reconciliation and the healing of human relationships. It can be noted that, more frequently than any other group or organization dealing with peacebuilding, it is women’s organizations that stress the need for these important aspects to be addressed. Feminists observe that “...women’s grassroots and local NGO peacebuilding groups approach peacebuilding as an ongoing process that emphasizes relationships, basic needs...healing of psychological and spiritual wounds...forgiveness and reconciliation processes...”(McKay, 2002, p. 128).

Women’s peacebuilding groups are also committed to ensuring that any initiative of peacebuilding, in order for it to be effective, includes gender justice and a commitment to telling the truth about past atrocities. They emphasize “...promoting recovery from the

past, and seeking gender and social justice” (McKay, 2002, p. 128). These groups promote an awareness of gender issues in general and stress the ways in which the violence of wars affect women not only physically, but also socially, politically and economically. By so doing, the women act as much-needed informants of the injustices that plague women.

Besides, although willing to go to any means necessary to effectively achieve their goals, it is clear that women tend to engage in non-violent means of peacebuilding, choosing instead to form networks, demonstrations and campaigns in an effort to promote peace. Women are often more socially conditioned to be peaceful. Therefore, when it comes to peacebuilding, they have a tendency to engage in non-combative ways to bring about peace, which by all accounts is a better route to take. Women seem to have found a more peaceable road to peacebuilding.

Furthermore, in their roles as daughters, mothers, and wives, women are habitually recognized as the social fabric that holds societies together, and they add the centrality of this womanhood to their peace work. According to advocates:

When women participate in peace negotiations and in the crafting of a peace agreement, they keep the future of their societies, their communities, in mind. They think of how their children and grandchildren will be able to live in their own homeland in a peaceful and secure environment, how they will benefit from the structure of peace envisaged in the agreement. They have the broader and longer-term interest of society in mind. Whereas, historically in post-conflict situations, men are interested in ensuring that the peace process will give them the authority and power that they are seeking. (Chowdhury, 2005, p. 32)

Some emphasize that it is exactly because women are not power-seeking, and are often driven first and foremost by issues that led to the conflict that they tend to work in ways more likely to build a lasting peace. In other words, if they have no vested interests in political spheres for instance, then this means that (free of hidden agendas or

hindrances) they are at liberty to act simply for the public good and do whatever it takes to get results in this regard. Grassroots women's groups in particular (i.e. those who identify themselves as such) are at a further advantage, since they see themselves as doers and not experts. They are not clouded by the thought that they are in any way perfect at what they do, and do not act so as to seek any kind of recognition. These women are simply prepared to work hard for the sake of their families and communities. By and large, grassroots women are willing to work harder and, if need be, wait longer for results since they are not restricted by a time limit; something that is often imposed upon donor agencies and other international peacebuilders.

To be sure, women's actions serve their communities, but also allow them to build capacities, thereby empowering themselves. Their involvement and subsequent empowerment allow them to continue to strive for change (McKay, 2002). Once there is involvement of people who have a vested outcome in the finished product, then this builds self-reliance and an increased ability to recognize future problems, along with ways in which to solve them. This is particularly true of women, who have traditionally been marginalized in decision-making processes. Encouraging women's involvement and allowing them to define their own objectives and courses of action will no doubt foster empowerment (McAllister, 2004), thereby leading to a more stable and developed society.

Chapter Three:
Conceptual Framework: Using Empirical Studies of Women
Organizing for Peace Globally

It can be seen from the outset that there are many organizations in today's world working to bring peace either at national, regional, or international levels. In the war-torn nations of the world, and even in those countries where peace prevails, there are groups working feverishly in an effort to cultivate peace. Much can be said for the work accomplished by all these groups; still it can be noticed that unless the groups working on peacebuilding activities are actually women-centered, then very little is usually done with respect to including women's issues or initiatives. What this reveals is that many peacebuilding initiatives that are undertaken, though noble, inadvertently tend to be one-sided, and thus incomplete.

Unfortunately, peacebuilding organizations (UN ones included) tend to focus only limitedly (if at all) on gender issues. It is often not taken into consideration how conflict affects or how peacebuilding activities will affect women and men differently. In particular, when women are remembered, they are often seen purely from the standpoint of being 'victims' rather than persons who can be active participants in building a culture of peace. What this leads to is an inadequate tackling of peacebuilding. As noted by peace scholars, "A culture of peace consists of values, attitudes and modes of behaviour based on non-violence and respect for the fundamental rights and freedom of all people...The full participation and empowerment of women is essential to the development of a culture of peace" (Mazurana & McKay, 1999, p. 4). This brings to the forefront the absolute necessity of having women's organizations working towards

women's issues and concerns, for only then will women not be marginalized, and the broader goal of peacebuilding be realized.

The role of women is not simply conjecture though. It has been proven time and again that once women join together for peace, much can be accomplished. In addressing the involvement of women in the peace process the argument is always brought to light as to whether women are natural peacemakers, and it can be noted that some women's groups (particularly those at the grassroots level), often emphasize this view. As noted in the previous chapter, women are not biologically different from men when it comes to being peaceful. It often comes down to social construction; women are habitually socially conditioned to be more peaceful. It is from this platform that Elise Boulding operates; she needs no further convincing that women are indeed likely peacemakers. Her research and observations have led her to conclude that the building of peace is in many women's ways of thinking, and asserts that from very early on in life, women learn that as wives, mothers, and neighbours, they will in fact have to perform peacebuilding roles.

In this regard, for many women involved in peacebuilding activities, peace is not seen as simply the absence of violence, nor is peacebuilding simply viewed as a job. The entire process of peacebuilding is for them a way of life, something necessary for the survival of their families. In women's minds, it therefore becomes crucial to finding peace, and in many countries women have tried to use their leverage as wives and mothers (those who bring forth and nurture lives) to call for peace. In Africa for instance, Sudanese women in the mid 1990s urged all women to use their positions in their families to their advantage. At the Sudan Council of Churches' Christian Women's Conference, participants were asked to "...irrespective of their religion and ethnic

background, embark on educating men, children and husbands on the need for peace and peaceful co-existence of Sudanese people...” (Mazurana & McKay, 1999, p. 20).

What can be noted is that when women are allowed to participate in peace processes, much can be gained. Excluding women (whether voluntarily or involuntarily) from peacebuilding activities will only deepen the divide between men and women within societies, and thus lessen the chances for the success and sustainability of peace. Women’s groups continue to stress this, and continue to take the initiative and prove their importance by their actions. On nearly every continent, in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe, and Oceania, women have been involved in many aspects of peacebuilding processes, bringing with them knowledge, expertise, and a passion for peace.

Women working for peaceful solutions to the problems of war believe (and rightly so) that new and innovative ways of thinking are needed in order to build peace. The old ways are simply insufficient, for surely “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (Mazurana & McKay, 1999, p. 27). With this in mind, research has shown that women employ a wide range of approaches towards tackling the problem. Despite the fact that their strategies vary from place to place and from organization to organization, based on an examination of women’s work, seven major foci tend to be apparent in their peacebuilding activities: networking, advocacy, arbitration, reintegration, reconciliation and the healing of human relations, capacity building, and political involvement. It can be seen also that although certain organizations may have a predominant activity, seldom do they engage in only one single activity. On the contrary, most women’s groups tend to immerse themselves in the peacebuilding process, doing what activities are necessary in their particular context.

A View of Women's Peacebuilding Activities

Networking

One significant activity is the networking of women's organizations with each other. Networking, i.e. communication within and among women's groups, is an important activity in and of itself. It allows women to make important connections on both local and international levels, increase their access to relevant information and knowledge, build and strengthen their solidarity, learn from each other, and also allows them to effectively disseminate information about rights to women and the public at large. Furthermore, networking gives women's groups the chance to assess their activities and strategize for the future. Still, this networking has additional benefits, as it helps to advance other peacebuilding activities, which range from advocacy to arbitration; from reintegration to reconciliation; and from capacity building to political involvement in various local and national governments (Richter-Devroe, 2008). This is because once women network amongst themselves through meetings, conferences and workshops, they are then better able to help build the capacities of others, and fully immerse themselves in their roles as peacebuilders. The meetings of the Trans and Northern Caucasus regions in the 1990s show this.

The late 1980s saw a surge in the region in women organizing around issues such as healthcare, the economy, and improving women's participation and leadership roles in political arenas. In this vein, the first TransCaucasus Women's Dialogue was held in 1994, boasting the largest ever contingent of representatives from the two warring states of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Women from these republics, and also from Georgia (which was also at the time in the midst of a civil crisis) came together to find solutions to their

social, economic, and political problems, most notably to increase dialogue and solutions on the lack of peace in the region. Three main areas of importance were highlighted: “...assisting child victims of the conflicts, expanding conflict resolution training, and increasing their dialogue network” (Mazurana & McKay, 1999, p. 34). In addition to these projects, the groups planned to work in collaboration with the media to ensure the dissemination of accurate propaganda-free information.

In late 1996, the groups from the Dialogue of 1994 met again at an even larger gathering of NGOs and grassroots groups from the region. The conference, *Women for Life without Wars and Violence* focused on many issues surrounding peacebuilding and women’s role in it. At the conference as well, the giving of tangible help was also discussed and planned, such as providing help to trauma victims with regard to their physical and psychological needs. A centre was also established to ensure that what was discussed was actually implemented and continued. Workshops held in 1997, where there were in attendance participants from both Eastern and Western European countries, continued along similar lines to the conference held three years before. The workshops of the 2nd *International Conference of Women for Life without Wars and Violence* dealt with the rehabilitation of post-conflict victims, conflict management through peaceful means, and the promotion of a culture of peace (Mazurana & McKay, 1999).

The networking of women for peace certainly ensures that they (and others) realize the possibility for change when women are actively involved in peacebuilding, and it creates forums where such a realization can be transformed into action. Networking also brings with it another immediate major advantage. It allows women to ignore racial,

ethnic, and religious divides, and work together for the common good. The *Jerusalem Link of Israeli and Palestinian Women* is one such example.

As with so many other organizations working to resist war and change the course towards peace, those in Israel were, in the past, male-dominated. This changed in 1994, when a group of women peace activists came together to establish two organizations. The Israeli, *Bat Shalom*, together with its sister Palestinian organization, *The Jerusalem Centre for Women*, comprise the *Jerusalem Link*.

Bat Shalom is principally based in West Jerusalem and is comprised of employees and board members of different faiths and political opinions (Bat Shalom, 2008b). *The Jerusalem Centre for Women* is based in East Jerusalem and again, like its sister organization, *Bat Shalom*, sets a good example by being comprised of influential women members of varied political beliefs from all spheres of society, from peace educators to activists. Despite their obvious differences, these two organizations that make up the *Jerusalem Link* share a common dream of one day seeing twin states of Israel and Palestine, with Jerusalem being a shared capital for both states. This shared purpose has enabled the two groups to come together, differences aside, and promote a more tolerant, inclusive and just society, with the recognition and implementation of policies of human rights. As is stated in their declaration: “We, Palestinian and Israeli women, united in a joint effort to bring about a just, comprehensive and lasting peace between our two peoples, affirm our commitment to working together within the framework of The Jerusalem Link for the rapid realization of our common vision of peace” (Jerusalem Centre for Women, 2008, para 1; Bat Shalom, 2008a, para.1).

So too, the group *Women in Black (WiB)* seeks to work as an inclusive organization with a common purpose. The group (like the *Jerusalem Link*) also has roots in Jerusalem, and emerged twenty years ago in the region. A year earlier in 1987, the first Palestinian uprising had begun against Israeli occupation. In response to this, Israeli women began to protest the occupation by standing at a public intersection on a weekly basis for about an hour at a time. The first few vigils were quite small, but in no time at all, the numbers of vigils increased across Israel, along with the participants at each vigil (Women in Black [WiB], 2007b). Gradually, the *Women in Black* movement spread across the world as an anti-war voice. This organization has chapters in many cities around the world. Although well-known and established, the group does not like to refer to itself as an organization, and there is no official administrative body or governing constitution. The members prefer to identify themselves on the basis of their actions. As is clearly noted on their website: “We are not an organisation, but a means of communicating and a formula for action” (WiB, 2007a, para.1). Still, despite their avoidance of any formal structure, as a group, they have been around for decades (WiB, 2007a). Not only that, but the network now exists in 300 places worldwide in more than thirty countries (Cockburn, 2007, p. 52).

From its beginnings, *WiB* was able to cut across borders and differences in its activities with Israeli as well as Palestinian women. Today, much of the same inclusiveness can be seen in its segments all over the globe. This is true not only with regards to ethnicity, but, in some *WiB* groups, also to gender differences, for although *WiB* is mainly comprised of female members, and is clearly a women’s organization, they are also willing to welcome men who share and support the group’s ideas and join in the

network's activities (WiB, 2007a). Therefore, *WiB* is able to look beyond differences and work together to achieve a common goal.

At a meeting in Turkey in August of 1997, one woman from the Belgrade chapter of the group exclaimed: "We reject nationalistic ideologies. We work across ethnic lines... We denounce the on-going armed conflict in the Kurdish regions and call for a democratic and peaceful solution... We also believe that women have a very important role to play in the achievement of a participatory democracy and peacebuilding. And this we will achieve only when we are able to step outside the male ideological paradigms to join a movement that we have defined ourselves and feel the strength of women's solidarity" (Mazurana & McKay, 1999, p. 27). In this women's group, therefore, and in many others, it is the concerted purpose of action that appears to matter. Differences are definitely cast aside, as they network together to try to accomplish their peacebuilding goals.

Advocacy

As explained before, as part of networking, women's organizations worldwide tend to use such time to plan for upcoming actions. One such action involves them advocating for all aspects of peacebuilding – for justice, human rights, women's rights, peace, and demilitarization. Of course, advocacy can be approached from a variety of different levels; lobbying government officials, participating in public marches and demonstrations, putting on radio and television programmes, or even publishing relevant documents for distribution, all contribute to campaigning for peace and justice. In Argentina, for instance, the well known group *the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo*

has been advocating for justice for decades. The members chose to march, and from 1979 they began doing so around the Plaza de Mayo in front of the Government Palace. Grandmothers (and mothers) marched to protest the disappearances and deaths that were so rampant in Argentina at the time, and which would span almost a decade. The women sought truth and justice and felt that direct confrontation of the military government about the disappearances was necessary (McKay, 2000 p. 568).

Organizations tend to simultaneously use varied strategies in their advocacy approach, although oftentimes one strategy features more prominently than other types. *Women in Black (WiB)* is also famous for its commitment to opposing war and violence, and is actively engaged in promoting peace and justice. Its most well-known strategy in such advocacy is its silent non-violent protests.

The women of *WiB* are most well-known for their distinctive *black vigil*. Taking place on a regular basis, each silent autonomous vigil is publicly and repeatedly conducted, proving the dedication of those involved. The women who attend wear black (as their name suggests) and for the most part, stand silently holding signs in opposition to any acts of war or conflict. Informative leaflets are sometimes handed out by the women as they stand in stone silence (Cockburn, 2007). Depending on where they are located in the world, they may be challenging different acts of war at differing times, yet each movement remains in support of each other's cause, and in the final analysis, the objective is the same – to bring awareness to the destruction of war and call for an end to violence.

Through their advocacy activities, the *WiB* networks create a certain amount of solidarity between them. No matter where they are, they draw strength from each other,

knowing that they are all advocating for the same global peace and justice, albeit in different parts of the world. Their resilience is also immediately apparent. As the stand, they remain open to assaults and intimidation, and they do encounter these on occasion (Cockburn, 2007; Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002), yet they still continue to perform their ritual vigil.

They do not often engage in marches as part of advocating, although there have been such in the past. The chanting of slogans and chatting to onlookers is not the norm, but since each vigil is independent, slight flexibility in activities between different *WiB* groups can be seen. As such, some *WiB* groups have also paraded in costumes, lobbied parliament, and provided support to women who have been the victims of violence (whether as a result of war, or on the domestic front).

While they contest war in its entirety (realizing that it is detrimental to both men and women), and are open and accepting of everyone who shares that belief, *WiB* undoubtedly has feminist undertones (Cockburn, 2007). The network is well aware of the nature of the particular injustices inflicted upon women during times of war, and they feel that this violence/abuse is indeed connected on some level with the abuse and domestic violence that some women must experience during their daily lives. They remain aware of these injustices, draw attention to them as part of their advocacy campaign, and respond to them when the need arises. In this way, it can be seen that advocacy by *WiB* covers a broad spectrum, dealing with calling for an end to war, and also for a recognition of human and women's rights.

The *WiB*'s silent vigils are a unique form of action, and it is this uniqueness that makes it especially symbolic. For one, the fact that they stand regularly and publicly in

defiance of war is effective in that the group (with its protests, leaflets and placards) continues to bring awareness to the problems surrounding conflict, and their persistence does influence public opinion. As they stand on a weekly or monthly basis, they reach a wide range of persons in the public arena. The consistency with which they operate touches lives and the group does gain support for its cause. Moreover, the fact that they dress all in black and stand silently brings to mind the countless numbers of people who have been victims of war in one way or another, and this brings a certain sombre atmosphere to the mix and makes the entire campaign even more powerful.

The *Women in Black* of Serbia, for example, made headlines for their role in overthrowing the corrupt regime of Slobodan Milosevic. Stasa Zajovic of the Serbian section of this international peace group spoke of how the group of women stood outside government offices for years and, in true *WiB* fashion, silently held placards that denounced the government. For their acts, they faced direct opposition and abuse. They were arrested and assaulted, yet resiliently returned every week. “By turning our discontent into public demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience” she said, “we transformed ethical principles into concrete acts of disloyalty towards the regime. Along with many other women’s organizations operating in war zones, we built networks of solidarity combining feminism and anti-militarism. We created alternative women’s policy on the local, regional and global level, entering women’s resistance to war and militarism into alternative history” (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002, p. 78-79). Despite the fact that the group was threatened by the government, it finally succeeded in doing its part to topple the corrupt regime, and was even awarded the Millennium Peace Prize by

UNIFEM and International Alert (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002). Its non-violent silent resistance had at long last worked.

This kind of resilience by *WiB* is seen in all chapters of the network, and brings with it desired results. As one member of the New York chapter of *WiB* so aptly stated: “We shall be silent, but we won’t be silenced” (Cockburn, 2007, p. 57). The advocacy of *WiB* is an example of the path that many women’s groups embark upon and the spirit with which they go about this important task. Their unique actions are also testament to the fact that women’s groups are often forced to engage in distinctive ways of drawing attention to the pressing problems of violence in society. An important part of the reduction of such violence and promotion of peace is advocating for the demilitarization of societies.

Advocating for Demilitarization

As with so many countries at war or recovering from war, there tends to be not only an abundance of war paraphernalia, but, right along with this, also the aggressive attitudes of the citizens. These societies are so militarized, the pervasiveness of war on national, regional (and even international) levels seeps down into society on domestic fronts, which manifests itself in domestic violence (particularly against women), in the proliferation of arms, and in the militarization of the toys of children. So, as a recognizable part of peacebuilding advocacy, often organizations will call for a direct end to militarization of societies.

This was exactly what was noticed in Oceania in the southwest Pacific islands of Bougainville. Between 1989 and 1998, these islands were devastated by a violent civil

war, which raged between local groups and the Papua New Guinea government. In those nine years of conflict, an estimated 15,000 Bougainvilleans (ten percent of the population) died either directly from the conflict, or indirectly from the harsh conditions of war (UNIFEM, 2004, p.20). Not surprisingly, the population was beside themselves and even years after the official end to war, the effects of weapons in society were a major obstacle to development and peace.

Women's organizations who had previously played a role in trying to bring about peace agreements and an end to the war were now attempting to rid their society of weapons. Their advocacy approach in calling for demilitarization was to protest. In November 2003, in a press release, one of the organizations, the *Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency*, made it clear that disarmament was insufficient and that weapons needed to be completely destroyed. The release stated in part that:

These weapons cannot remain in our community. These weapons caused the deaths and injuries of our men, women and children. They raped our mothers, daughters and sisters. They created widows and orphans, destroyed our homes, crops and businesses. They are our fear of the past, not the hope of our future....There is no such thing as safe containment. Containers have been broken into, that is a fact....We cannot build a democratic and free Bougainville if there are containers of weapons with guns next to our polling booths....Prove to the people of Bougainville that you have learned from the hard lessons of the crisis. (UNIFEM, 2004, p.20)

After significant protests, women's groups could claim a certain measure of success, in that a programme was put in place for discarding weapons. Less than a year later, in the final week of April 2004, checks were conducted by the Security Council to update itself on the situation. At that time, it reported that more than 80 per cent of the weapons in Bougainville, (1,588 weapons) had been destroyed, and that half of the districts in

Bougainville (five out of ten) had completed the weapons disposal programme (UNIFEM, 2004, p. 26).

Women's groups in Asia too, in the last decade, organized a conference to network and voice their deep concerns and seek out solutions to the problem of militarization in their communities. They were well aware that the destruction of weapons would be favourable to this goal, but they also realized that like everything else, it would take some time to see concrete changes. Some women's groups of the Philippines wanted to do something that would have somewhat of an immediate effect, and they strategized that finding a way to get rid of toys of war would mark one big step in the right direction towards peace. The women therefore took concrete action to bring this about. Further to their protests and rallying cries, one Philippine's women's peace group, *Forward-Looking Women*, organized and literally held a burning ceremony where they encouraged volunteers to destroy or bury toys that depicted war/violence. The group's protests coupled with the boycotting of stores that sold such destructive toys, were instrumental in having those toys removed from store shelves (Mazurana & McKay, 1999).

The *WiB* network too has, in the past, also employed strategies in an effort to curb militarization in their countries and communities. Tactics of civil disobedience have been used to further their cause of demilitarization; they have used their bodies to barricade roads in defiance of war, and have sometimes gone as far as entering military bases and other restricted areas (Cockburn, 2007). These blockades and illegal entries into prohibited regions are done, not with the intent of being combative to the authorities in any way, but rather are still conducted in a peaceful manner, in keeping with the non-

violent tactics that women's groups have become known for. What all this makes clear is the range of methods used by women worldwide to accomplish the same goal.

Arbitration

As with demilitarization, women also play a huge role in bringing warring factions together and encouraging the cessation of conflict and the resolution of differences in non-violent ways. In so many war-ridden countries worldwide, intense animosities between opposing parties prevent them from even engaging in peace talks with each other, and because of this, conflict is extended. While communication may not necessarily end with any official accords being reached, everyone can agree that without communication, there can never be any resolution to war. This is why, in many instances, women (often at risk to themselves) compel rivals to converse with each other and attempt to work out some sort of an agreement.

So many cases point to women being able to accomplish this sort of arbitration when men were unable or (most likely) unwilling to do so on their own. As in the case of Sudan, the movement *Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace* met with the military leaders of various rebel groups. The women eventually gained enough of the insurgents' trust and respect that the organization's members were able to secure access to rebel controlled areas in order to deliver humanitarian aid (US Aid, 2007). This was a feat that had previously eluded men.

Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the woman's group *Mobilizing Mothers for Peace* has tried to present peaceful alternatives to the violence that has besieged the country for years. As with other women's organizations, *Mobilizing Mothers for Peace* does organize

and participate in peace marches and demonstrations, as well as urging both the government and rebel forces to cease the violence in the country, and a host of other peacebuilding activities. In addition, their founder, Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa, is well known for her arbitration skills. Cases of her conveying messages to the Sri Lankan government from the notorious Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are well documented. During peace talks in the country, the LTTE absolutely refused to speak with government officials, and it was Ms. Dharmadasa who acted as a go-between (US Aid., 2007).

Before, during and after official peace accords, women feature prominently as mediators. As is so often the case, after official peace agreements have been arrived at, many of these negotiations fail, warranting further and more intensive efforts if any semblance of peace is to be maintained. In the case of Bougainville, it was women's actions (not least of which were their negotiating skills) that helped to bring about a permanent and irrevocable cease fire on 30 April 1998, and then a further successful Bougainville Peace Agreement in 20 August 2001 (UNIFEM, 2004, pp.22/25).

Bougainvillean women were undoubtedly crucial in the fostering of dialogue between the military parties in the conflict. Oddly enough, although women generally never seem to be automatically invited or accepted into peace talks, their services are often inadvertently successfully utilized by male parties in a conflict. One example of this comes from 1997 when the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Bill Skate, travelled through Bougainville for the sole purpose of speaking with the warring factions and reaching an agreement. He did not come alone, however. Strategically on his part, he

invited four women to be on his delegation. He obviously realized the impact that women could have as mediators. As documented by UNIFEM (2004):

In the middle of the night, women knocked on the hotel door of one of the women on his delegation, bringing the women from the government out to meet with the [rebel] commanders. The women's delegation acted as the go-between, and was given the list of demands to pass onto the government. The next day the Minister for Bougainville Affairs was shocked and asked, "How did you get a meeting?" and was told, "The [rebels] trusted the women, there was a reason they came to us. (p. 23-24)

This mediation, as mentioned earlier, which was facilitated by the women, helped to resolve matters to such a degree that a successful peace agreement could be reached. This final stage of mediation hinges on the reconciliation of all parties concerned. Like all other aspects of peacebuilding, women's groups play a vital role in reconciliation, not simply between government or official persons, but also (and just as importantly) between ordinary members of the community. This reconciliation process is a crucial part of reintegration as a whole.

Reintegration – Psychological, Social, and Economic

Reintegration is a long, drawn out part of peacebuilding, which includes helping post-conflict society to cope with what has occurred. This course of action allows people to move from being just combatants or victims, to being fully-fledged civilians, people who are capable of participating and contributing to their community. Kingma, as cited in Sany (2006) identifies three elements of reintegration: psychological, social and economic. Accordingly, "the psychological dimension consists of a series of psychological adjustments the ex-combatant goes through to fit into the value system of civilian life" (p. 36). Further to this, "social reintegration addresses the wounds, scars,

and broken relationships within communities and between them and ex-combatants. The goal is to reconcile the ex-combatant with his or her community and to build and restore trust to a level where the ex-combatant can both contribute to and benefit from the nascent network of community relationships” (Sany, 2006, p. 36). Finally, “economic reintegration involves ex-combatants re-establishing a livelihood and contributing to the creation of wealth and growth in the community” (Sany, 2006, p. 36).

Reintegration then would obviously consist of providing access to trauma healing, counselling and other psychological services. While victims are not specifically mentioned in this particular definition, it stands to reason that victims as well as ex-combatants would need help in coming to terms with their realities. Victims would need to heal from the pain that they have suffered at the hands of fighters, and ex-combatants would need to deal with all the atrocities they have committed as fighters. Providing medical and other social services is therefore imperative.

So too is providing a forum that can foster open and honest communication in the society, where entire communities can eventually heal, forgive, and be willing to accept both ex-fighters and victims back. Reintegration is extremely important, as no society can really move forward from war unless it has healed sufficiently, overall bonds have been strengthened, and both returning and present members of the community are gainfully employed. Reintegration necessitates that the needs of all are addressed, not simply ex-combatants to the exclusion of others, since this will naturally lead to resentment in the community at large. Conflict affects everyone, and so reintegration needs to embrace all those affected. In dealing with reintegration, women’s organizations around the world are working to ensure that this is exactly what takes place.

Psychological Reintegration

Psychological reintegration can be illustrated by the group, *People's Voice for Peace (PVP)*, which operates in Uganda. This organization works at rehabilitating rape victims and other traumatized persons who have been severely and negatively impacted by war. For one, the *PVP* works in collaboration with health centres so that these all-important amenities can be offered to victims at little or no charge. Medical services are therefore freely provided to those who need them, such as amputee victims from landmines and/or rebel atrocities. *PVP* also provides counselling services and psychosocial support to war survivors, especially survivors of rape (Jonikaite, 2006).

This organization is a vital link in the psychological reintegration chain. Studies have shown that oftentimes, victims are reluctant to come forward and admit that they have been abused and molested. Girls especially are traumatized and in most need of help, yet they are the ones most embarrassed to admit this, as they are afraid of the stigma that will be attached to them. This is where the *PVP* steps in, as its members encourage and support victims of abuse, enabling them to get the counselling and other help that is crucial for both their physical and mental wellbeing. A long-term program of support and monitoring has also been put in place by *PVP*, and the group even makes home visits as part of such support (Jonikaite, 2006).

People's Voice for Peace has achieved tremendous success within the Gulu district and other districts in northern Uganda. Careful monitoring by them has shown that even those victims who initially reported having suicidal feelings because of what they suffered, have been able to come to terms with their experiences and are coping rather well. It is also noticed that once victims have been treated, many of them then

often give back to their communities by advocating for peace-building in their districts (Ochieng, 2002/2003).

Social Reintegration (Reconciliation)

Reconciliation or social reintegration is all about bringing opposing forces together, whether such opposition takes the form of warring factions in particular or general divisions within society. Like psychological reintegration, reconciliation is a must for any society trying to establish lasting peace. Discourse on reconciliation often dwells mostly on returning rebels and the process to reintegrate them back into society. This is understandable. Ex-combatants are often seen as bringing with them the same violence that they perpetrated during war and, not surprisingly then, they are often feared. They are also viewed as being a burden on society as they usually lack meaningful and productive skills that would contribute to the upkeep of the community. Hence, for any post-conflict society to flourish, it is absolutely necessary ex-fighters renounce their military (and often criminal) ways, and find legitimate means of existing in their communities. Societal laws and norms must be re-learned and accepted by them. At the other end of the spectrum, as former fighters try to re-acclimatize to their surroundings, they must also be accepted by their community members.

Still, reconciliation as it pertains to victims should not be forgotten. The victims of war are often plagued with guilt and shame from the events that they have experienced. Abuse victims, so in need of psychological counselling as explained above, also need to be embraced by their families and communities. Social cohesion on all levels should be strived for.

Reconciliation then involves removing guilt, fear, and suspicion among community members by encouraging truth and forgiveness, which will eventually lead to social healing and unity. Leff (2008) puts it best when he refers to reconciliation as a “process that includes the search for truth, justice, forgiveness and healing, and is rooted in the idea that societies are capable of moving from a ‘divided past to a shared future’ . Reconciliation involves acknowledging past wrongs and grievances in the hope of moving toward attitudinal changes that will eventually pave the way for developing a shared vision of the future, in which people can live harmoniously without returning to conflict” (p. 20).

As part of the reconciliation process, women’s groups organize meetings and conferences that act as communication forums, which help de-mystify the enemy and humanize both sides to the conflict. This helps to diffuse tensions and facilitates the reconciliation of opposing forces. Many women’s groups emphasize such humanity; i.e. they help in clearly articulating how war affects actual persons by encouraging the telling of stories or the use of pictures and other visual aids. Country statistics and government documents are kept to a minimum, not because these things lack importance; indeed they do not. However, women’s conferences want to share the personal experiences of people – the trauma, the impacts, the stories of survival, and the real and concrete issues that people have had to deal with. This speaking from the heart shows similarities in experiences, and creates opportunities for the healing of human relations and for bonds of friendship to emerge.

A case in point was the symposium of 1996, organized by a group of women in Bougainville, near Papua New Guinea. Coordinated by Sister Lorraine Garasu, the

Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum brought together various women who had been directly affected by a war that had at the time killed tens of thousands of people. The forum encouraged women to speak freely, thereby dissipating the tensions and mistrust which had pervaded their community for decades. The conference persuaded women to “put aside their differences... [and] work together on conflict resolution and related issues affecting them as women and mothers” (Mazurana & McKay, 1999, p. 24). Honest and open discussion by these women was truly instrumental in the humanizing of all participants and in the signing of a subsequent peace agreement, in which all parties to the conflict signed.

Women can and do undoubtedly play crucial roles in reconciliation, and other aspects of the peace process. Women's groups are quite vocal, and in addition to using conferences to get their message across, they also employ a variety of other approaches. Public education and awareness campaigns about peacebuilding efforts and the return of ex-combatants are used. Information is disseminated in schools and through the use of the media to prepare society for what is to come and to convince them that peace and reconciliation is possible. This is especially important in the rural areas, where people tend to be detached from important information as it relates to government or other programmes. In Uganda, operating locally at both rural and urban levels, the *People's Voice for Peace (PVP)* advocates for peace, and one of its major projects involves sensitizing the general public about the need for peace through a series of peace education activities such as holding peacebuilding seminars and airing documentaries that promote peace (Jonikaite, 2006). The dissemination of information and the use of media can be seen to apply to all areas of reintegration: both in psychological/social

reintegration (to sensitize people and encourage reconciliation), and also as a capacity building initiative (to educate the community on national laws and relevant programmes of peace).

Economic Reintegration (Capacity Building)

Capacity building initiatives are also key to the building of a stable society. This involves efforts at encouraging people to be more informed, self-reliant and productive. It does not only refer to the economic or financial reintegration of citizens, but rather, their substantive involvement in society. Capacity building therefore, empowers community members in varied ways through skills training, education on a variety of issues, the offering of micro-credit loans, and generally informing women of their rights. The building of capacity makes the success of the other aspects of reintegration more likely. This is because even if communities are willing to forgive and forget, without sufficient training, unproductive civilians might well resort to criminal ways in order to survive. Furthermore, it is only through training and education that the population will be empowered enough to sustain peace and promote development. Women's organizations understand this reality and play an important role in building capacities.

The *South Sudanese Women Association (SSWA)* formed in 1991 in an effort to restore peace during Sudan's long running war. Rival factions, with their constant attacks and civilian abuses, had the population in fear and the country in shambles. By September 2001, *SSWA* had instituted a program called *Women Working Together*, and was organizing workshops along those lines, which were attended by teams of women from local villages. The workshops provided training "in practical and interpersonal

skills, encourage[d] individual responsibility, [helped to] build supportive networks, and challenge[d] women to teach each other what they learn” (Duany, 2001, para. 9). The *Women Working Together* program is not only one of economic reintegration for the community at large, but one of personal empowerment for the women themselves. Every year, many more women are trained, and follow-up seminars are also offered in peace education, which will allow them to keep on track with current information.

The *PVP* in Uganda is also engaged in building capacities by fostering income-generating activities geared towards the economic empowerment of women, especially those who have suffered gender-based violence. The organization provides training in business and technical skills, and goes further to provide additional economic advancement. Through loans (or what is referred to as *revolving funds*), *PVP* helps to improve the economic situation of women (Jonikaite, 2006). Today many can support themselves because of this, engaging in activities such as selling fish and vegetables, making charcoal, and rearing goats (Jonikaite, 2006). As such, *PVP* has helped to provide a means to tackle poverty, while improving women’s economic independence.

The Jerusalem Link too sponsors many projects geared towards strengthening women’s capacities. Some of their projects deal with communication and the media; one such project involves training women on the use of video cameras and on the making of videos. Both Israeli and Palestinian women acquire skills on how to record political actions and how to document abuses of human rights in their communities. They are also educated on the means by which they can gain access to the broadcast media to share their video documentaries, further encouraging and emphasizing the important role that women can have in peacebuilding. Gila Svirsky believes that through education and

encouragement, the work that women do is by far the “most vital part of the peace movement in Israel – the most creative, most active, most substantial and most visible on the streets...” (Mazurana & McKay, 1999, p. 53). To be sure, with education and encouragement, women’s work can be substantial, not just in Israel, but everywhere.

Education, training, and economic independence certainly allow women to become more confident, i.e. confident in their abilities to positively change their lives and those in their communities. These things allow women to be more self-assured in their abilities to stand up for their rights and give them more of a drive to excel and a need to take charge of their future. This is why so many women’s organizations worldwide emphasize the building of women’s capacities. After all, once women are empowered, they gain the ability to be active participants in setting the direction of their country. Women are by far the ones who best know their needs, and they are, for the most part, the section of any population that fights for those rights. In order for concrete changes to be made, attitudes must be transformed and so must the laws of the state. How better to accomplish this than by women taking formal leadership roles in politics and government.

Formal Political Involvement

It is an absolute necessity to have women’s input throughout the peace process. By including men as well as women, any agreements arrived at and any changes made will have more legitimacy since they would have included the needs and ideas of a more balanced and representative sample of the population. Women have all too often had to struggle to get their voices and needs heard, oftentimes through informal modes of

participation such as advocacy. However, they do appreciate the fact that it is only through this constant struggle that they will be able to take charge of their future and maybe one day exist on an equal playing field with men. A woman's perspective is seldom remembered and it is usually women themselves who must insist on their issues being addressed. Taking their place in the formal political arena is one step in this direction.

In Northern Ireland for instance, women have been feverishly working to make themselves visible and engaged in the building of peace. For nearly forty years, the Protestants and the Catholics of the country had been at odds with each other, and this led to some violent conflict in the region. Since that time, the women of region have played an important role as arbitrators during the on-going battles that have raged in their country. Acting as mediators, women tried to lessen animosities and violence by bringing together the opposing Protestants and Catholics (Whitman, 2005). Throughout the decade of the 1980s, the women of Northern Ireland were also already organizing around other important issues such as education, health, economic well-being, and equality for women (Anderlini, 2003). Still, their input remained informal and unrecognized outside of their immediate circles.

Throughout it all, never once were women officially invited into any formal peace talks, or was a gender perspective taken into consideration. In 1996, when the idea of peace talks was in the air yet again, and the decision was made to choose parties for the peace talks based on elections, women again realized that their input was in danger of once again being disregarded. It was at this time therefore, that varied women's groups

throughout Northern Ireland made the decision to form their own political party. This was in the hopes of evading marginalization.

In that year therefore, the *Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC)* was formed in order to provide a woman's voice in political forums in the midst of often hostile masculinity. Their hope, and ultimate achievement, was to ensure that women participated in peacebuilding talks and thereby contribute and positively alter mainstream policies on the issue (Mazurana & McKay, 1999). Their campaign yielded sufficient votes that year, enough to have two women delegates elected to participate in the peace talks.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement was significant, as it laid the foundation for the peace process in Northern Ireland. Although it was a hard-fought battle for the women to be included in the peace talks, they played an important part. They opened a way for women's further participation, they arbitrated and fostered communication, and they ensured that the wording of the final peace agreement included specific provisions on women's rights. Accordingly, "within a list of rights that encompassed a right to equal opportunity and provision for human rights protection was a separate clause affirming 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'" (Ward, 2006, p. 275). This was a relatively small, yet significant victory for the *NIWC* and for all women of Northern Ireland.

International mediator (and a mediator during the Northern Ireland Peace talks) George Mitchell, spoke of the significance of having women sit at the peace table. In speaking of their determination, resilience, and abilities, he says:

The emergence of women as a political force was a significant factor in achieving the agreement. Women were among the first to express their weariness of the

conflict... The two women that made it to the [negotiating] table had a tough time at first. They were treated quite rudely by some of the male politicians... Through their own perseverance and talent, by the end of the process they were valued contributors. When the agreement included the creation of a new Northern Ireland Assembly, women got elected there too. Overall, in achieving the level of stability now enjoyed, women's involvement at all levels was a very important factor. (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002, p. 81)

The *NIWC* has continued to make strides and has made it clear that "its three guiding principles would be inclusion, equality and human rights" (Anderlini, 2000, p. 17). The numbers elected to the Assembly have increased marginally from 13 percent in 1999 to 16.7 percent in 2003 (Ward, 2006, p. 264). Still, the group hopes that the female politicians can use their infiltration into these decision-making bodies to influence thoughts and policies, and to build a society that is inclusive and respectful of the rights and needs of everyone.

As can be seen therefore, women across the globe are playing considerable and noteworthy roles in all phases of the peace building process. Through their actions, these groups contribute formally and sometimes informally to increasing human security and positive peace in their communities. Most women's organizations obviously focus their efforts on offering other women assistance, since it is women (as a whole) that have been noticeably neglected by formal processes. In so doing, their hope is to even out the playing field, and allow women to operate on a more equal basis in society, whether socially, economically, or politically. Dare it be said that without the help, support and undaunted determination of women's organizations, the processes of building post-conflict peace would be even more challenging than they are now.

The participation of women in peacebuilding therefore needs to be wholeheartedly promoted, encouraged and supported because of its invaluable

contribution. It is becoming clearer that this needs to be done, and the documentation of the achievements of women's groups is increasing. Still, there is a paucity of in-depth research on exactly what women are achieving in the local peacebuilding sphere. My research then seeks to close this gap and take a look at the work of organizations in Sierra Leone where women are making a marked difference in how peacebuilding operations are conducted.

Chapter Four: Methodology

The following is an explanation of the research methodology employed in this thesis. The reasons surrounding the choice of the particular case study are first explained. Subsequently, an explanation and description is given of the methodological approach, the selection of organizations under review, and the data collection and analysis techniques used.

Case Study Choice

War, an ever-present part of our global truth, is always devastating in its outcome. I have, therefore, always held an interest in understanding the ways in which the negative effects of war could be countered. For that reason, peacebuilding seemed to me to be an obvious and pertinent area of study for my thesis. In my quest to investigate the topic of post-conflict peacebuilding, and as a result of my preliminary research, I chose Africa as my broad area of interest. Africa stood out to me because, unfortunately, the continent is home to many of today's conflicts. According to the 2005 Human Development Report, "nearly 40% of the world's conflicts are in Africa...including several of the bloodiest of the last decade and a half" (UNDP, 2005c, p. 154).

Moving forward from there, I chose Sierra Leone as my country of study. I felt that Sierra Leone would make a good case study since the nation had fairly recently endured ten years of a devastating war that put it in dire need of a solid plan to build peace. Furthermore, although it has only been six years since the war was declared over, I reasoned that this was a long enough period to see what steps had been taken in the journey towards peace. To my mind, Sierra Leone was especially appropriate since it had,

a few years before, undergone and completed the official Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) processes of peacebuilding. These seek to disarm combatants, disband military structures, and assist ex-combatants and their families in readjusting to civilian life, socially, economically, and politically. These official peacebuilding procedures (which are a central part of any peacebuilding agenda) had been labelled a success, and I was eager to assess the courses of action taken and the outcomes.

My decision to focus on Sierra Leone was further reinforced by the fact that around this same time period as I began researching the country, I happened to meet a Sierra Leonean family at a social get-together. The sensitive subject of war was definitely not the main topic of conversation that day, but in the course of talking, I gathered that they had been forced to flee the conflict in its early stages and had been separated from a number of their family members during this time. Another passing comment revealed how much they wished for their country to be truly at peace. This chance encounter certainly put faces to this disastrous war. It made the realities of conflict become that much less distant and cemented my desire to investigate how the tragedies of war could be dealt with and how a country might be put back on the road to recovery.

In narrowing down my topic to a manageable point, I tapped into another one of my interests, which is gender. Sierra Leone would again prove to be a perfect study, as further research showed that there had been activity by women (either individually or collectively) in response to the disruption of social services, and in an effort to redress the general chaos that had befallen the African nation. Women had been involved, albeit sometimes informally, since the beginning of the war (and sometimes even before), and had continued to offer their services afterwards, especially upon realising that formal

DDR processes of peacebuilding had inadvertently neglected women. I therefore focused my research specifically on the contribution that women had made towards the process of building security and peace, and I settled on exploring how Sierra Leone women's organizations had become agents of change in this respect.

Methodological Approaches

In order to establish a relationship between women's organizations and peacebuilding, it was necessary for me to investigate and evaluate their activities. How do women's actions and women's organizations at the social, political, and economic levels translate into the building blocks of peace? This being an interpretive question, I felt that most suitable for this purpose are qualitative research methods. Normally, two of the main approaches on the methodological continuum employed for the purpose of conducting research are quantitative and qualitative in nature. Researchers from both approaches collect and analyze data in order to understand trends in social life. While the two can often complement each other, they are each unique. The idea of quality, in essence, refers to the nature of something: "the what, how, when, and where of a thing" (Berg, 2004, p. 2) whereas, quantity essentially refers to the amount of something.

The quantitative approach deals with what is referred to as 'hard data', i.e. numbers. Researchers using such an approach are very concerned with measurement and sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Coming from a technocratic perspective, quantitative researchers precisely measure variables. In this approach, people are objects to be measured (Neuman, 2003). Quantitative researchers follow reconstructed logic, and conduct their research in a very rigidly systematic fashion. Following consistent rules,

research is done using a “fixed sequence of steps” (Neuman, 2003, p. 141), and follows a linear pattern. Issues are therefore viewed in a somewhat narrow way.

Qualitative research, on the other hand, deals with ‘soft data’; data which takes the form of words, symbols, impressions, expressions, and so forth (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). It is concerned not so much with numbers, but with the ‘richness’ and nuances of the data (Neuman, 2003, p. 137). Using a transcendent perspective, qualitative researchers interpret lifestyles, social relations, and social phenomena. They strive for sensitivity in their studies, realizing that each context is different. People being studied are viewed, not simply as objects, but as human beings, who can hopefully be helped with positive social change, and/or who can initiate change themselves through the exercise of human agency.

Researchers using the qualitative approach follow logic in practice, meaning that logic comes out of each individual case as judgment calls are made along the way. This makes such research more cyclical and non-linear in nature, and therefore slightly less standardized than the quantitative approach. The qualitative approach allows for the gathering of different meanings, thereby understanding the whole. Not everything in research is black and white, and conducting qualitative research allows for this realization. Neuman (2003) quotes Uwe Flick who states that “circularity is one of the strengths of the approach, because it forces the researcher to permanently reflect on the whole research process and on particular steps in light of the other steps” (p. 141).

In looking at women’s organizations and their activities, it was more important to understand how women contribute to the processes of security and peacebuilding, thus a qualitative approach became necessary. What was being examined was not so much how

many organizations were engaging in which activities, or how many activities were being done by each. Of course, some quantitative data are being utilized mainly in examining statistics that point to the scope of the work that is done by some of the organizations studied. However, what was important was the overall activity. The focus is on how women's organizations are collectively contributing to promoting peace at the social, political, and economic levels. How do their ideas, beliefs and actions facilitate this? How are the needs of women in Sierra Leone being addressed by these organizations? Due to the kind of research being conducted, the qualitative approach was primarily used.

Selection of Organizations

At the outset, the aim was to locate women's groups in Sierra Leone that were engaged in peacebuilding activities. I realized early on that field research was going to be impossible for logistical purposes. Field work was contemplated at one point in time, but a decision was finally made against it because of the present conditions in the country. Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war had been so devastating that it was responsible for dropping the country to the bottom of the Human Development Index (NGOWG, 2006). Not only that, but the war was one of the most brutal in recent history. With rampant executions, amputations, child exploitation, and sexual and gender-based violence against women, this conflict proved itself to be a particularly vicious one and posed serious security threats (Sommers, 2000).

Today, the security situation has improved tremendously in Sierra Leone. Although this is the case, there are still security risks. Stability is threatened because of the high rate of unemployment, poor socio-economic conditions, and lingering political

and ethnic divisions (UN Security Council, 2008). Therefore, a travel warning still exists for this country, according to the consular warnings page of the *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* (DFAIT) website. Thus, the closest alternative to field research was presented by a web-based methodology.

In order to locate women's organizations online, an initial review of reputable peace and development websites was made. The *Peacebuilding Portal* website, which is a project of the *UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, and which is funded by the *UNDP's Regional Bureau of Africa* and the *African Union*, is one such website that provides directories and synopses of organizations in the field of development. It was explored, as were the *UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSAA)* website, the *PeaceWomen* website, and the *Sierra Leone Encyclopedia of 2007* website. In addition, the search engine *Google* was used in an effort to find potential Sierra Leonean groups to be used for the study. Furthermore, as potential organizations were looked into, any of their partner or donor organizations were also included as possible case studies. In this way, the names of more than ninety (90) organizations operating in Sierra Leone were uncovered. It was noticed therefore, that the country has no shortage of groups working on some aspect of peace, security, and development. Some, however, did not suit the criteria that I had defined as appropriate for this web-based study.

The criteria used to identify suitable organizations were as follows: for one, it was imperative that the groups be women's groups in both formation and policy; i.e. they needed to be governed by women and engaged in working on agendas made by women and aimed at furthering women's interests or providing for women's needs. This was simply because the thesis was to focus on how women had become agents of change for

both themselves and for others, thereby attempting to close the gender gap. Secondly, the organizations also needed to be conducting operations within Sierra Leone, whether or not they had been initiated in the country. Therefore, both foreign and indigenous organizations were acceptable. Thirdly, they needed to be engaged in working towards building peace and security in the country. Lastly, groups had to be non-governmental organizations, since the thesis was to address how groups other than governmental ones were contributing to peace. Based on these criteria and the information available online, the original extensive list of organizations was narrowed down to twenty-five (25).

However, it was necessary to once again narrow down this list, so as to gain maximum benefit from the research tools being used. As explained earlier, from early on in the research, the decision had been made to utilize the Internet and scholarly works to collect data, as opposed to doing field work. Since that was the case, it was realized that while information would no doubt be acquired, it might, in certain situations, be inadequate. Not all organizations would have documented their activities on the Web, and while others might have information posted about them, this may be very limited. Recognizing this potential restriction, it was necessary to ensure that any organizations that were ultimately selected to be part of the list had to have extensive information presented about them. Therefore, in addition to the four criteria listed above, a fifth deciding factor came into play; organizations needed to be so well-established and so well-organized that detailed information about their activities could be found on the Internet. Well-established and well-resourced organizations would more likely be systematic in the documentation of their activities. This ensured that all the organizations

chosen could be thoroughly examined, since information about them would be more readily available and decipherable.

This process, however, would narrow down the number of organizations being examined. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the limitations involved in excluding some organizations. In focusing only on organizations that were well-resourced and well-established, I may not have been able to capture the extremely local organizations; i.e. I was forced to exclude groups that may well be very active in peacebuilding, yet not have as many resources at their disposal so as to have their activities documented on the Internet. Furthermore, I realized that although the criteria I used in selecting organizations ensured that I examined the most well-established and resourced, that did not necessarily mean that these groups were the most active in peacebuilding. Of course, being able to examine every organization, or at least the majority of them, would have allowed me to definitively capture what work was being undertaken. However, this was not possible, and dare I say that even with field work, the scope of this thesis would not have allowed me to analyze every organization. The next best alternative was to select the ones that were most well-documented and playing a significant role in peacebuilding.

In this way, I sought to ensure that, as far as possible, the weight of the information would not be lessened. This is because (as mentioned before) the thesis sought to examine, not the number of organizations working towards peace, but the general contributions of Sierra Leone women's organizations in the area of security and peacebuilding. Organizations that were better established would tend to have more sponsors and, as a result, more money to embark upon projects. Therefore, they would be

more capable of being active in multiple areas of peacebuilding and on a more expansive scale. Hence, examining these organizations would present a good account of the activities being carried out by women's peacebuilding groups in the country.

Ultimately then, fourteen (14) organizations were selected for this case study. Of these, six (6) had their own websites, and so extensive primary information about their activities could be acquired. Of the remaining ones, four (4) of them (although they did not manage individual websites) had comprehensive enough primary and secondary information presented about them through online documents and pamphlets detailing their activities. This information existed through postings on peacebuilding websites such as the *Sierra Leone Encyclopedia* and *PeaceWomen*. The final four (4) included in this study had somewhat limited information, but it was relevant enough to be included. In addition to using the Internet as a primary source of information, secondary online data about the organizations were also found through journal and news articles. Furthermore, secondary information (through non-online books and journals) was also found on many of the organizations in the same way that it was found in order to create the theoretical framework of this thesis.

Data Collection Techniques

Within the qualitative framework being employed in this thesis, the main technique used was that of content analysis. Content analysis has been defined as “any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages” (Berg, 2004). Essentially, this technique is a systematic examination of content, and it can be used to analyze any piece of writing or recorded

communication. Such a technique enables the researcher to analyze information from a variety of sources, be it from field notes, interviews, or unobtrusive data. Content analysis was therefore used to obtain and analyze data about the organizations.

Primary research was conducted from the Internet, with regards to the activities of the organizations being used as case studies. Themes and concepts were noted and documented. There were two ways in which I identified those themes that I subsequently utilized in order to systematically analyze the peacebuilding activities and contributions of the organizations I surveyed. For one, through my critical literature review of various global women's organizations working towards peace (dealt with in Chapter Three of this thesis), I initially arrived at a list of ways in which women's groups contributed to peace worldwide. Subsequently, through an initial survey of the data on the particular organizations in Sierra Leone that I was to be examining, I recognized that these women's organizations in the African state, operated in much the same way as the global women's groups. As part of their peacebuilding and security agendas, Sierra Leone organizations networked, advocated and arbitrated, dealing with issues of reintegration, reconciliation, capacity building and formal political involvement. I did, though, uncover a few new sub-categories (within these main ones) that supplemented my original list.

In addition to this primary research conducted using content analysis, the Internet, along with scholarly books and journals were also used to collect secondary data about the organizations. As a tool for extracting information, conducting a critical literature review from all these sources proved extremely useful for acquiring secondary data. This was necessary in this particular instance in order to gain a more extensive understanding of the roles women's organizations play in security and peacebuilding. Books, journal

articles, and websites were also explored in order to collect information on the various schools of thought used in this thesis, i.e. theoretical perspectives on feminism, security, peacebuilding, and development.

Recording and Analysis of Data

As data were researched, information pertaining to the membership of the women's organizations, their partnerships and activities was recorded. Initially, data gathered were simply recorded and categorized according to each organization. Later on, these data were reviewed to identify the main themes that existed within and between the activities of the various groups: networking, advocacy, arbitration, reintegration, reconciliation, capacity building, and formal political involvement. Those categories and concepts were then used to systematically reorganize the information along thematic lines. Once complete, the content was again reviewed to ensure that no information had been excluded and that the constructed patterns and relationships were logical.

In this particular case, I would argue that content analysis and the critical literature review processes can be seen to be quite reliable. Data collected and analyzed using content analysis was based on factual accounts of the activities organizations were engaged in; however, it was necessary for me to interpret this information. Furthermore, secondary data collected in the critical literature review represented an amalgam of information that had already been interpreted in some way by previous scholars. Because the data collection processes I utilized are based on subjective interpretation and analysis, the possibility for bias always exists. However, in this instance, every effort was made to prevent interpretation bias. Wherever possible, the primary information gathered has been

triangulated by secondary data research. Furthermore, although by virtue of my methodology, a number of organizations may have been excluded (as has been mentioned before), the qualitative analysis of the existing web-based data on organizations portrays the overall picture, and reveals the nuances of women's peacebuilding activities in such rich intelligible detail to allow me to make the claim that such organizations are key players in peacebuilding and development.

Chapter Five: *Dynamics of the Conflict in Sierra Leone*

In order to truly appreciate women's value in peacebuilding and recognize the necessity of their involvement in the process, it is first crucial to understand the nature of the conflict in Sierra Leone (which brought about the need for peacebuilding in the first place), the role that women played in it, and their position in the aftermath. Firstly, though, a brief look at Sierra Leone's history will help bring forth the reasons for the unrest.

Situated on the west coast of the African continent, Sierra Leone is bordered by Guinea, on the North, and Liberia, on the East and North-East (Sierra Leone Encyclopedia, 2008). It is 29,925 square miles (73,326 sq km), and is divided into four main provinces: Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Area (See Map, p. vi). The country has a population of approximately 4.5 million people, who comprise 16 different ethnic groups (Sierra Leone Encyclopedia, 2008, para. 5). Sierra Leone is also a country rich in valuable natural resources including ivory, gold, bauxite and diamonds. A former British colony, the country moved towards independence in April of 1961, and followed a British system of parliamentary rule.

Two parties dominated the scene during this time, namely the All People's Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). There was notable political rivalry between the two, until the APC won the 1967 elections (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004). A year later, Siaka Stevens was instituted as Prime Minister. Drawing on the valuable resources of the country, Stevens ensured that the economy of post-colonial Sierra Leone was led mostly by the export of raw materials, but unfortunately, it quickly

became evident that the bulk of the Sierra Leone population was seeing no benefit from such trade.

The following two decades were marked by corruption and greed on the part of those wielding power. By the 1970s, the APC government (still led by Stevens, who had become President in 1971), had chosen to exert its power by privately controlling 52 percent of the diamond industry (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004, p. 10). This only became worse in 1978, when, in an effort to remove any opposition to his rule and to ensure his continued privileged status, Stevens amended the constitution and banned all political parties other than the APC (Bureau of African Affairs, 2008). What is more, only the ruling APC had access to any of the country's natural resources (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004).

The misconduct continued, and the 1980s saw a sharp decrease in government spending on essential social services such as health care, education, and housing. Diamond smuggling was rife, as were other indicators of governmental mismanagement, and the economy suffered as a result. This is evidenced by the pattern of economic growth over the years. During the 1960s and 1970s, annual growth averaged about 4 percent and 3.5 percent respectively. In the 1980s, however, growth was (on average) only 1.5 percent (Government of Sierra Leone, 2005, p. 1). Still, those in power prospered, while the citizens in their charge grew increasingly poorer (Kieh, 2005).

After General Joseph Saidu Momoh (handpicked by Stevens, who was retiring) came into power in August 1985, the corruption that had existed before only persisted. President Momoh's presidency, like the one before him, was marked by unprofessionalism, greed, corruption, and a declining standard of living for the vast

majority of the population. As Kieh (2005) puts it, “the decay of state institutions became endemic” (p. 170). Of course, the abuses of power, which enriched officials while increasingly worsening social conditions led only to resentment among the local population, especially the youth.

The Sierra Leone Conflict: A Decade of Brutality

In a country plagued with so much civil and political instability, it is not surprising then that, for quite some time, Sierra Leone had been teetering on the brink of insecurity. The situation came to a head in March 1991 when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels, emerged in Sierra Leone, supported by Liberian president Charles Taylor and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL).

A rogue army, made up of both Sierra Leoneans and Liberians, the RUF, under the direction of its leader Foday Sankoh, had made an agreement with Liberian rebel leader Charles Taylor. Taylor would offer training, arms, drugs, and other necessities to RUF combatants. In return, Sankoh would provide Taylor with the support he needed in his attempt to obtain power in Liberia. When the RUF rebels invaded Sierra Leone, they promptly occupied the diamond-rich eastern part of the country. This is significant, for much of the support that Charles Taylor received from the RUF came in the form of diamonds. The RUF was heavily involved in smuggling diamonds into Liberia (Smillie, 2007), and taking possession of the diamond-rich area also proved to be quite a lucrative settlement for them. It is estimated that the smuggled diamonds fetched millions of dollars annually on the world market (McKay & Mazurana, 2004, p. 30).

Initially, the RUF was quick to gain support from the mass of young people in the rural areas who, uneducated, unemployed, hopeless, and resentful of their place in society at the hands of the exploitative upper class, were more than willing to join in the fight (Yousuf, 1999). Whether or not they felt their cause was a noble one, it turned out that the group soon thereafter began to have difficulty generating support for its actions. The rebels, therefore, quickly resorted to the abduction of persons to help them carry out their daily military activities. It was not long before they had developed a reputation for being cruel torturers, intimidating in their demeanour and indiscriminate in their actions.

On the other side, the national army, the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) launched a counter attack. Before long, however, it began to waiver financially as it was losing money from a decline in sales of its resources. With the loss of money came a decrease in soldiers' salaries and with that, not unexpectedly, came a slight loss of motivation to battle the enemy. In 1992, factions of this army (under the name of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), broke away and began their rule over the country (a position which they held until 1996). The NPRC proved to be just as ineffectual as the former government in repelling the RUF (Bones, 2001). The rebel army was gaining ground, and by 1995 they held much of the Eastern province of Sierra Leone. In the meantime, there was corruption within the ranks of the NPRC, and by 1996 the party was ousted from power. It was in that year that Ahmed Tejan Kabbah rose to power after being elected president (Cockburn, 2007, p. 34).

Before long, a group of soldiers from the Army itself – top ranking Army officers – became part of the RUF and formed a new group called the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). It was this rebel group who, in 1997, ousted the reigning

president, Kabbah, and subsequently invited the RUF to form part of the new found 'government'. Oddly enough, even though the RUF had increasingly found it hard to garner support for its actions, the AFRC had no trouble gaining widespread support from persons from all sectors of society, especially high-ranking professionals and officials displeased by the Kabbah regime. A formidable force, the RUF and AFRC suspended the constitution and ruled amidst total chaos; political instability, a damaged economy, and human rights violations were the order of the day.

Through it all, the SLA continued its rampage against the opposing force. Unfortunately, the Army also became increasingly violent, turning its anger towards innocent civilians. Rape and other sexual atrocities, bodily mutilations, death, pillaging, and destruction of property were all too common occurrences perpetrated by the Army. Many citizens now admit that during the war, the Army itself was directly responsible for a great part of the pain and suffering felt by Sierra Leoneans (Bones, 2001; McKay & Mazurana, 2004).

Seven years into the war, foreign intervention began with the Nigerian military forces of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), and in 1998 the AFRC was finally ousted and Kabbah was reinstated. Despite sporadic elections, a ceasefire, which seemed to be a farce, and the semblance of peace negotiations (most notably the Lome Peace Accord of 1999), Sierra Leone was far from peaceful and violence was rampant between the state army (SLA), the RUF, rogue soldiers, and even the international peacekeepers who had, by that time, stepped in to lend a hand. In January, 1999 alone, there were a reported 6000 civilian deaths, along with the disappearances of 2,000 children (Bones, 2001, p. 59). Even after the UN

Security Council had established the mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in October of 1999 in order to enforce the Lome Accord, fighting was rampant.

UN peacekeepers continued to clash with the RUF, who by this time had coalesced with the reinstated President Kabbah. In 2000, the UN increased its force, but even this was not enough to prevent 500 peacekeepers and other UN workers from being taken hostage (Cockburn, 2007, p. 34; Diop, 2005, p. 9). At that time, any hope of peace collapsed. By 2001, the UN intervened again, this time with renewed force. Through a series of careful negotiations, at long last, at the beginning of 2002, and nearly eleven years after brutal war had begun, a tentative peace was reached. Although the Lome Peace Accord had been signed years before, for all practical purposes, conflict only ceased in the country in January 2002, when the war was declared to be over (McKay & Mazurana, 2004).

The Unfortunate Consequences

While there really can be no excuse for war, this one in particular seemed even more senseless. There was no obvious religious or ethnic agenda, and certainly no fight for freedom. What it was was purely greed, economic and political. The mining of diamonds continued to fuel the war and made RUF soldiers, as well as the Army, very wealthy. It is estimated that, annually, \$125 million was received by the former for illicitly mined diamonds (Cockburn, 2007, p. 36).

Liberia's Charles Taylor as well benefited enormously from the millions of dollars worth of conflict diamonds that were shipped out of Sierra Leone in the decade of the 1990s. Despite the fact that Taylor and his cohorts denied any link to or involvement

in the war, the UN and other organizations have research that indicates that “Liberia [had] been actively supporting the RUF at all levels, in providing training, weapons and related material, logistical support, a staging ground for attacks and a safe haven for retreat and recuperation, and for public relations activities” (Ali & Matthews, 2004b, p.131). Liberia’s backing of the war was, of course, purely for economic gain.

Although the figures are somewhat disputed, some analysts estimate that in 1999 alone, \$298 million marked Liberia’s total diamond exports for the year, despite the fact that the country has admitted to having far fewer diamond resources than could generate that kind of income (Ali & Matthews, 2004b, p.131). Liberia’s Charles Taylor profited much more from the war in Sierra Leone than he would care to admit. However, official figures tell a different tale. For example, Liberia’s diamond imports dropped a staggering \$35 million in the late 1990s, dipping from \$66 million in 1998 to just \$31 million a year later (Ali & Matthews, 2004b, p.131). These numbers indicate that there was no need to legitimately import as many diamonds, since so much illegal smuggling and profiting was taking place.

Amidst the greed and struggles for power, the brutality of the war was plainly evident. There had been public beheadings, rampant amputations, rapes, sexual slavery, sexual assaults, forced abortions, mutilations, the abduction of boys and girls, random mass executions, intense looting, and accounts of forced labour, and torture (Agenda, 2004; Ben-Ari & Harsch, 2005; Cockburn, 2007). All armed factions, most notably the RUF, AFRC, and the SLA, were guilty of abuses and human rights violations, especially against women. Reports by Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) make it clear that the RUF, the rebels who had begun the war in the first place, were “the

primary perpetrator[s] of human rights violations against women and girls, [and] pursued a deliberate strategy of violating women” (Ben-Ari & Harsch, 2005, p.1). It has been reported that in excess of 66 per cent of the abductions of women and girls, and 73 per cent of the reported cases of sexual slavery were carried out by the RUF (Ben-Ari & Harsch, 2005, p.1).

In the end, statistics indicate how much devastation was caused by the prolonged conflict in the West African state. Between 1991 and 1996, there were roughly about 15,000 people killed. By the end of the war in 2002, approximately 50,000 persons had lost their lives (Cockburn, 2007, p. 34; Diop, 2005, p. 10), although some statistics put this number at more than 75,000 (Bones, 2001, p. 55). In the early stages of the war, in excess of 40% of the population was forced to flee their homes (Agenda, 2004, p. 24). By 2001 though, Amnesty International reported that nearly 50% of the total population (a whopping two million people) was displaced (Agenda, 2004, p. 24). By the time the conflict had ended, in addition to the internally displaced persons (IDPs) there were an estimated 100,000 refugees (McKay & Mazurana, 2004, p. 30), although some estimates put the number as high as 500,000, especially in neighbouring Guinea (Sommers, 2000, p. 10). In addition, one survey conducted by UNIFEM uncovered that 17 per cent of displaced people experienced some form of sexual abuse during the war, including rape and sexual slavery (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002, p. 11). Other reports specifically mention that approximately 250,000 women were raped (Diop, 2005, p. 10).

Infrastructure was also widely destroyed. Basic social services were virtually non-existent; there was the destruction of nearly three-quarters of the educational facilities; and 84% of health centres was damaged (Cockburn, 2007, p. 34). Even after war had

been officially declared over, people remained vulnerable especially in the countryside, which had become filled with local military forces and also a strong armed international presence. Women in particular became victims of these militias, both domestic and foreign. There was a crucial need for steps to be taken towards security, peace and development.

The Uneasy Steps towards Peace

Official Procedures: Implementing DDR

It was the aforementioned Lome Agreement of 1999 that initially put forth the directives of how to go about the peace process. The Peace Accord set out the entire disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process. DDR, in essence, was supposed to aid in allowing former combatants to function legitimately in their communities after war. Partly funded by the UN, World Bank, and the government of Sierra Leone, the project was designed to accomplish three main tasks: “1) to collect, register and destroy all conventional weapons turned in by combatants; 2) to demobilize approximately 45,000 combatants...; and 3) to assist ex-combatants through demobilization to prepare them for reintegration” (McKay & Mazurana, 2004, p. 98).

Disarmament was the most essential part of the DDR process, and it is not difficult to understand the necessity of removing weapons from circulation. If this component is neglected or partially completed, then the consequences can be dire. In any post-conflict situation, without the willingness of combatants to lay down arms, there can be no peace. If armed factions persist in wielding weapons, what will exist is the distinct possibility of a recurrence of war. The existence of armed militia roaming the country

(and even just the fact that a large number of weapons remain in circulation), puts civilians on edge and allows the nation to retain a sense of unease. This, coupled with the economic and social instability that emanated from the war in the first place, ensure that stability will be long in coming.

Removing weapons from combatants' possession was only one part of the process. It was also necessary that ex-fighters be given some training and resources to help meet their basic needs once they are returned home. Therefore, once combatants surrendered their weapons and ammunition, they were given a short orientation, a small amount of money, and in addition, youth under the age of seventeen were sent to centres where they could acquire a skill or be enrolled in a programme of education of their choosing. Sometimes, former fighters are even absorbed into the new regime that is established, and this is exactly what occurred in Sierra Leone. This was an attempt to provide former fighters with an alternative to using war as a way to support themselves (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002).

A Flawed DDR Process: The Exclusion of Women

At the start of 2004, the Sierra Leone government officially announced that the DDR programmes in the country were completed. The programme in Sierra Leone was seen to be highly successful, declared as "the most successful implementation of a UN supported peace process to date" (Malloy, 2004, p. 16). An examination of the programme revealed though, that it had one major and obvious flaw; it had largely excluded and failed women. Studies indicate that overall, there was an 8% participation rate (McKay & Mazurana, 2004, p. 99) by women and girls, which meant that the vast

majority of the benefits of DDR went to men. Women had, by and large, been left out of this peace process. The sad fact is that the DDR program failed to live up to its potential.

With regards to the DDR processes, it appeared from all the evidence that, at the end of the day, women's needs and potential contributions towards peace had been ignored on three levels. For one, women failed to receive recognition as participants in the conflict. This recognition is important since, had they been acknowledged as such, they might have received the help they so desperately needed. Secondly, women, though recognized as victims of the heinous crimes of war that had been inflicted upon them, failed to receive the specific attention that they needed to adequately recover from the conflict. While DDR mainly paid particular attention to the demobilization of combatants and issues of governance, the drafters of the process did not strive to insist upon other aspects of peacebuilding such as reconciliation and healing. Those all-important features of building peace had largely been excluded. Lastly, in much the same way that women were rendered largely invisible as agents of the conflict, they again went fundamentally unnoticed as potential agents of change.

The drafters of the Lome Peace Accord of July 7th 1999, the main agreement with regard to building peace, are especially guilty of this exclusion. One lone paragraph in the document mentions women. Article 28 states that "Given that women have been particularly victimized during the war, special attention shall be accorded to their needs and potentials in formulating and implementing national rehabilitation, reconstruction and development programmes, to enable them to play a central role in the moral, social and physical reconstruction of Sierra Leone" (Malloy, 2004, p. 19). Yet, even with this meagre mention of the potential of women's participation and the necessity for it, women

were still excluded for the most part. This brings to the fore the regrettable fact that although the importance of women's participation was paid lip service to, little was done to ensure that rhetoric was turned into reality.

Although women and girls have always played a role within the context of conflict, there is often limited information written on such roles. It is often assumed that the primary perpetrators of war are male, and women's participation is overlooked completely. Even though very little tends to be written on the participation of females in conflict, this does not negate the fact that women/girls play a large role during violence. Studies have shown that between 1990 and 2003, females in 55 different countries played significant roles during war, and this is no less true with regards to the war in Sierra Leone. In the West African state, women and girls held roles in government forces, paramilitary and militia, and also in armed opposition groups, among other positions (McKay & Mazurana, 2004). It has been estimated that female combatants comprised 12 percent of the total armed forces (Diop, 2005, p. 9). Their reasons for being in the war are varied and it can be seen that, in as much as there was often involuntary involvement in the conflict, many women themselves chose to voluntarily join in the fight.

At times, girls were abducted or sold into the military by their families, either for money or as repayment for a debt (Bangura, 2002). While some girls were forced into joining armed factions, many others joined voluntarily, although it is arguably not voluntary, as their only other option to being part of the military would be for women and girls to struggle on the street, or die from neglect and starvation. Sierra Leone is a strongly patriarchal society where women's rights are placed below that of men. Women lack access to adequate education or healthcare, and studies have shown that female work

hours exceed that of their male counterparts. With a reality like this, many women saw the military as offering a better way of life in comparison. War was sometimes seen to be an escape, offering protection from an abusive or poverty-stricken life back at home, financial incentives, or chances at education or skills. Many times during violence this is true.

Granted, women were placed on a subordinate rung to men and forced to serve the needs of males, something which paralleled the reality of their everyday existence. However, they were often also given the opportunity to acquire skills and hold positions of power that they may not have had the chance to get had they not been participating in a war (McKay & Mazurana, 2004). No matter how they entered, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, upon entering, women had a range of roles assigned to them, many of which overlapped. Everything from fighters to spies, to cooks and slaves was taken on (and all other roles in between).

Initial numbers given by the UN and the government of Sierra Leone regarding the total number of fighters and also the number of women in the war are by no means accurate, as when planning for reconstruction, these numbers were proven to be too low. Admittedly then, the numbers of reported women and girls during the war was a conservative number because of a miscalculation of the amount of female involvement in the war. This was partly because of a blurring of women's roles during the conflict. 'Wives', in addition to their household responsibilities, were sometimes also fighters. Taking all this into account, the new total estimated numbers arrived at are: 45,000 fighters in the RUF and 10,000 in the AFRC (McKay & Mazurana, 2004, p. 91). However, even this latter number seems a bit unlikely, for during the process of DDR the

total number counted in the program of AFRC fighters alone was 8860 (McKay & Mazurana, 2004, p. 91). Therefore, it is felt if so many could have come forward during DDR, there must have been an even greater number who did not. Therefore, researchers indicate that a more reliable number of total AFRC fighters would be 20,000. Girls and women made up approximately 33-50% (McKay & Mazurana, 2004, p. 91) of these forces. Dyan Mazurana and Khristopher Carlson both confirm that the percentage of girls within the forces was indeed a high number, with children accounting for nearly half of the militia. The numbers in the Sierra Leone Army in particular are estimated to be 14,000, with about 33% being female (McKay & Mazurana, 2004, p. 91).

With so many women and girls in the armed forces, it is not difficult to come to grips with the fact that almost 50% of them were given training by their ‘captor husbands’ in the art of fighting and weapon use. This was recounted by many returning ex-girl soldiers. Eighteen year-old Bondu remembered how she was captured by the RUF at the tender age of ten in 1994. “At kabala” she says, “myself and my brothers were drugged every morning...we were also trained to use a gun. We used to go on raids twice every month” (Bangura, 2002, p. 4). Her story is not unusual. Time and again, women and girls recounted this tale. Frances, who was forcibly taken from her home in 1995 states: “After two weeks I was taught how to use the rifle both for self-defence and offensive operations. We attacked many towns and villages...” (Bangura, 2002, p. 5).

Still, many retained their primary roles as ‘wives’, cooks, labourers, in addition to being fighters. Other chores included being spies, nurses to the sick and wounded, producers of food, porters, messengers between rebel camps, or bodyguards at their own camps. Roles were performed simultaneously with documented proof that ‘wives’ were

fighters even for many months after they became pregnant and before giving birth (McKay & Mazurana, 2004). If a woman was 'lucky' enough to be a 'wife' of a commander, this meant that she could have possibly had some influence within the compound. She may have been responsible for food distribution in her compound while her husband was away. Of course, should there have been other 'wives' this responsibility was shared among them. Doling out discipline, punishment, and orders was often in their hands as well, as was the responsibility of choosing persons to go on missions to raid, spy, or kidnap.

Even with this sizeable number of women actively engaged in the conflict, figures consistently show that at war's end, more men than women participated in the DDR process. Approximately 92% of the total number of the fighters in Sierra Leone's war who received disarmament, demobilization and reintegration were male (Harsch, 2005, p. 17; McKay, 2005, p. 23). From the RUF, the number of men who participated in the DDR programmes was estimated to be nearly 20,000 as opposed to only 4361 women and girls (McKay & Mazurana, 2004, p. 99). From the AFRC, there were more than 8000 men as opposed to only 571 women (McKay & Mazurana, 2004, p. 99). Similarly, from the SLA, the number of men benefiting from the programme was approximately 445, as opposed to 22 women (McKay & Mazurana, 2004, p. 99). The numbers are quite obviously disproportionate. The DDR program was effective in reaching out to the male segment of the population; however, females were virtually ignored. Therefore, can the programme really be considered a success given that such a large number of combatants remained unaccounted for?

DDR, which was supposed to help ex-combatants, has been shown to have excluded women time and time again. Women fighters and even females who held other positions within the armed forces were discriminated against, thereby perpetuating gender inequality and hindering women's progress (Zuckerman, 2005). Some women were not allowed to enter the DDR programme because of the mistaken belief that women did not participate as fighters. Even UN and government workers held this obscured view. As noted by Béatrice Pouligny, a senior researcher at the Centre d'études et de Recherches Internationales (CERI) in France, women combatants were categorized as "dependents", which in effect meant that "they were precluded from receiving the benefits provided to 'combatants'" (Harsch, 2005, p. 17).

It seems the entire process was inadvertently geared towards men. Ordinarily, ex-combatants were expected to produce a weapon to be eligible to participate in DDR efforts. However, even if women had handled weapons during war, because they often did not own such weapons, then they were excluded from the process. This situation seems to be true, not only in Sierra Leone, but in many post-conflict countries. One female ex-combatant in Sierra Leone made it clear that "Unless you were a fighter with a weapon to lay down, you are not eligible to join the programme" (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002, p. 120).

Even when women were included, they were hardly catered for, being forced to live (albeit temporarily) in overcrowded, unhygienic, non-private facilities filled with men. Many feared for their safety without any recourse, still traumatized by the war they had coped with for so long. They were also prevented from gaining benefits such as resettlement money or micro-credit loans, if they were unaccompanied by their

'husbands', who (if present at the time) had to swear to the fact that the women were their 'wives'.

Obviously, if many former female fighters did not readily get the opportunity to benefit from a programme that supposedly contributed to peacebuilding, then the entire process cannot be seen as a resounding success as many UN and other officials would like to believe. It did benefit some, but by its exclusionary nature, it was flawed. Not only that, but the DDR process, in as much as it possessed certain good aspects, failed to adequately address the reintegration aspect in its entirety. Dealing with the social and psychological needs of former combatants is an important part of reintegration, as is reconciliation and healing, forgiveness, and acceptance in one's community. In the post-war period, women and girls were particularly in need of this; something that they did not readily receive.

The Gender Dimension: Addressing the Needs of Women

Gender-Based Violence in War

There is, inherent in every peace process, a gender dimension, since distinct from men/boys, women/girls have certain dissimilar experiences during conflict, and face differing obstacles afterwards. While more men than women may die during war (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002), women tend to experience more violence, more abuse, more exploitation. Women's bodies, through rape, forced pregnancy, and other sexual abuses, are often used to send a message to the enemy and used to instill fear in others. It is imperative that these differences be understood. Failure to recognize them can quite

possibly mean that women and girls will be unable to benefit from any courses of action taken with regards to peace, and this is evidently what occurred in Sierra Leone.

To begin with, the women and girls of Sierra Leone experienced many hardships that were not always visible. The experiences they suffered during the war left them with deep physical and emotional scars with which they had to deal. To be sure, they undoubtedly needed healthcare because of physical illness due to mistreatment, disability or disease. Still, women and girls needed psychological help as well because of their unique experiences faced in the midst of the conflict. Crimes against women during the war were many and were often perpetuated against them by men and boys. Rape and other sexual abuses were particularly damaging to them. One ex-captive tells her ordeal:

Nighttime proved to be most stressful, as I was forced to take drugs and other substances by my captors. I refused and was forcefully handled and raped. I nearly died because I was a virgin. The experience was so bad I started taking the drugs offered together with the alcohol to help dull the pain of what I was going through. This did give me temporary relief and helped me cope with what was to become the order of the day. What happened to me that night was the same for all the girls and women that were captured. It was the rule of the game. (Bangura, 2002, p. 5)

Another victim, Marion Kargbo, only nineteen when her city was invaded, testified to the harshness of her war experience. She stated:

I was staying with my family at Wellington when the AFRC/RUF invaded the city on January 6th 1999. The unfortunate thing for us was that, seven men abruptly entered our house and I was taken away from my parents since I happened to be the eldest child. On that day I was raped by seven men and by then I was a virgin so I bled profusely till I became unconscious. When I regained consciousness, the boss of the seven men took me as his wife. (Thorpe, 2006, sec. 4.4.2)

In Sierra Leone, these incidents of rape and sexual abuse against women were not simply collateral damage. As a gendered form of violence, rape was used not only as a

weapon against women, but as a calculated attempt on the part of the rebels to instil fear into everyone around. In her work with UNIFEM, Kenyan women's rights advocate, Binaifer Nowrojee of the Coalition for Women's Human Rights in Conflict Situations was instrumental in stressing the magnitude of the issue in Sierra Leone. "Violence against women was not just incidental to the conflict," Nowrojee is quoted as saying, "but was routinely used as a tool of war. Sexual violence was used in a widespread and systematic way as a weapon, and women were raped in extraordinarily brutal ways" (Ben-Ari & Harsch, 2005, p. 1). Furthermore, rape reinforced the ways in which Sierra Leone women were viewed, i.e. as subordinate to men. The despicable practice was often used as a prize to men and boys for committing horrendous acts of cruelty. Rape reduced women to being items of property to be used at will by men. In 2004, Kadi Sesay, Minister of Trade and Industry in Sierra Leone admitted as much:

Rape was used by rebel commandos in the Sierra Leone war to boost the fighter's morale and as a reward for committing intolerable acts of violence. Young boys who had been forcibly abducted and drugged were reportedly directed by senior fighters to publicly have sex with women old enough to be their mothers as a reaffirmation of the boys' manhood and masculinity and as part of the war booty. This war saw the utter degradation of women in Sierra Leone. Rape was so rampant during the Sierra Leone war that to many it seemed as if the general sense of superiority which men generally hold of themselves over women was translated into a sense of entitlement to use rape as a war weapon and an instrument to terrorise, humiliate and bring a community to its knees. (Sesay, 2004, p. 2-3)

Women's Ordeals Post-Conflict

Unfortunately, women's ordeals did not end once the war ceased. Post-conflict, their trauma is on-going, as women find it harder than men to reintegrate into their societies. Women who made the decision to join in the war face much discrimination upon their return since their decision would have undoubtedly violated cultural ideas.

These women are viewed with suspicion, in that villagers may not know what they are capable of. Since they are ex-combatants, then in the minds of other citizens, these women might be aggressive or dangerous.

However, whether or not they joined the war voluntarily, women are still ostracized simply by virtue of them being part of the war. These females are stigmatized and shunned for being victims of abuse, and for raising babies whose fathers are part of rebel forces. The stigma attached to them makes it next to impossible for them to be welcomed back by their families and friends in their communities (Ben-Ari & Harsch, 2005; Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002). While some relatives might be excited at the prospect of being reunited with a long lost relation, most are overcome by the shame and taboo of being related to 'dishonourable' women who have been with rebels, been defiled by them, or borne children who have been fathered by soldiers (Bangura, 2002; McKay, 2005). One young woman, Mamakoh, who fled her village at only ten years old and was shortly thereafter captured by rebels, gives an account. After having been with the RUF for approximately six years, she was finally freed in 1999 at the age of sixteen. Though one community organization made every attempt to find and reunite her with her family, they have rejected her. "I have been shunned" she says (Bangura, 2002, p. 4).

Another case in point that illustrates the lasting and devastating impact of the war on women is that of a 19-year-old woman who, back in 1991 at the start of the brutal civil war in the country, happened upon a group of 10 rebels, led by the notorious commander 'Mosquito'. She is quoted as saying:

Mosquito was the first person who raped me. Then he ordered his men to continue the act. Nine other men continued to rape me...After misusing me to their satisfaction, the rebels left me alone in a very hopeless condition...Even now the pain is still in me, which is creating problems in my marital home, because my

husband drives me from my home and says that I am barren. (Ben-Ari & Harsch, 2005, p. 1)

She is but only one example of the numerous women and girls who were subjected to this kind of inexcusable abuse, and who now have an extremely difficult time readjusting to post-conflict life.

Despite the fact that women and girls are not to blame for their being abused, once society perceives that its cultural norms have been violated, girls are isolated or completely shunned in society (McKay, 2005). It has been proven that female returnees are rejected by their communities more than their male counterparts. Girls face greater stigma than boys, and so find it harder to rejoin their families and communities. Oddly enough, according to research done by Shepler (as cited in McKay, 2004), “in many cases it is easier for a boy to be accepted after amputating the hands of villagers than it is for a girl to be accepted after being the victim of rape” (p. 37). What is more, is that studies have shown that group returnees and those gone for a short while fare better, and this poses a problem since many girls were gone for quite a long time, many for the entire duration of the war. Many women do not have a chance at decent survival upon their return because they have been away from their family and neighbourhood for so long.

For the girls, the shame is often too much to bear. Living with the stigma of having underage sex, fighting in a war with enemies or raising children with rebel fathers, or worse yet, unknown fathers, is often a lot to deal with. They are fearful of sharing with others these experiences, and oftentimes, girls and women live in secrecy in an effort to escape the stigma and discrimination which is sure to follow them. This just leads to further psychological torment, as they must keep their feelings bottled up. One young girl

in a village in Sierra Leone, who had been forced to spend three years in the RUF camps, spoke of how she was only a child when she was abducted. In telling her story the negative repercussions of the experience were evident. She said:

I was taken by the RUF when I was 14 years old. Now I am 17. I was made to be the 'wife' of a man for nearly two years. That is quick to say, two years, but every day felt like a year to me. I feel like an old woman now. Nobody will ever want me. I don't want to face my family because they know what happened. I will never love. (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002, p.119)

With no familial support, a negative reception from their communities, and no education and training, women and girls, like her, have a difficult existence.

The fact that women and girls suffered so uniquely during the war, were largely excluded during official DDR procedures, and continue to suffer discrimination in their communities can be attributed to the general structure of Sierra Leone society, which is patriarchal in nature. In Sierra Leone, as in so many other parts of Africa, both cultural and social norms that stem from such patriarchy play roles in such marginalization. As Thelma Ekiyor, former coordinator of the *Women in Peacebuilding Program* (WIPNET), so aptly puts it:

Patriarchy is practiced at its best or perhaps worst in Africa. Male dominance is evident in all echelons of power and spheres of life. Men define cultures and religions. Women are rarely visible in many areas of decision-making. Women's opinions are generally not sought at home, and by extension in communities. (Ekiyor, 2002, p. 1)

This treatment of women begins from very early on in their lives.

Patriarchy is definitely "enshrined and entrenched in West African societies" (Ekiyor, 2002, p. 1), and traditionally, the Sierra Leonean girl child is treated as less of a priority than her male relatives. Males are prioritized, and are therefore afforded more care and attention, benefiting more from education and other resources available. Girls,

on the other hand, are seen as not requiring the same care or attention. They are often kept at home to indulge in household chores and to get ready for marriage. As with so many other females in the West African region (and in so many other places worldwide), a girl's value goes unrecognized from the very beginning. She therefore misses out on many benefits such as the chance of getting an education, something which would bring immeasurable advantages in later life.

This biased attitude that favours men continues through to adulthood with every aspect of societal life. So, not surprisingly, Sierra Leone men also took precedence over women post conflict. They were the first and main recipients of help and the obvious choice to be brought to the negotiating table and to engage in other peacebuilding processes. Women, though, remain virtually invisible. Women make up approximately half (if not more) of the population of Sierra Leone, yet they are the least consulted group when it comes to official peace processes, the group that gains the least benefit from any programmes implemented, and they are generally the ones with the least amount of access to any resources or assistance (Malloy, 2004, p. 19).

Prioritizing Women's Needs

By and large, there was very limited reintegration support for Sierra Leonean women that would help them to cope upon their return home, despite the fact that women were in need of this help. In order to be fully reintegrated back into their communities, girls and women need education and/or skills training. Sometimes young women have babies, and so the availability of child care services is needed in this regard, not to mention adequate and affordable healthcare. Just as important, within the realm of

peacebuilding activities is a need for healing and reconciliation from the trauma of war. Psychological support, as well as community sensitization, needs to be as much a top priority in peacebuilding programmes as are political and economic aspects. After all, if Sierra Leone society cannot be rid of its hate and resentment, and female returnees cannot be free of discrimination, no one might ever be able to move on and function as productive, interdependent members of society.

Mazurana, investigating the experiences of girls and young women in war zones, has adamantly stated that “we should not ‘lose sight of girls’ in these UN disarmament and demobilization efforts” (Enloe, 2004, p. 95), as so often has occurred. Mazurana and other researchers have correctly pointed out that:

While it is true that masculinities often get swept under the political and analytical carpet, when they are dragged out it is still men and boys who tend to remain the centre of attention. It has proved consistently difficult to get serious attention devoted to women and - especially - girls, and to how their femininities are manipulated, by whom and for what ends. (Enloe, 2004, p. 95)

While the harm women suffer is undisputed and pervasive, they often have little or no redress based on the fact that they usually lack access to the same resources, authority, or rights as do their male counterparts. On the whole, women endure such violence and marginalization in society that it is necessary to address these if there is any hope for change. The only persons who consistently appreciate the significance of women’s issues, and address their necessities seem to be women themselves, hence the importance of women’s organizations.

In Sierra Leone, official peace processes that should have helped in mending the problems surrounding war neglected women’s issues and marginalized females. What is especially unfortunate about this is that it is required that women be given special

consideration. Enloe (2004) states that “There needs to be a feminist consciousness informing our work on gender...a feminist consciousness is what keeps one taking seriously - staying intellectually curious about - the experiences, actions and ideas of women and girls” (p. 96). The one constant in Sierra Leone society that seems to always do this are women’s organizations, and post-conflict, it fell to local women’s NGOs to fill the void and ensure that both women and their concerns were dealt with. They have taken on the responsibility of addressing issues that others missed, i.e. healing and reconciliation, the empowerment of women, and the inclusion of women as agents for their own development. Women organizing for peace seem to be the only ones who do not minimize the needs and potential contributions of other women and, in so doing, bring a more balanced approach to peacebuilding processes. These organizations contribute greatly in this regard, by continuing where the DDR processes left off.

Chapter Six:
Sierra Leone Women's Efforts at Peacebuilding
In Networking, Advocacy, and Arbitration

This thesis thus far has already made it clear that globally, women have been vital to peace work. Various international participants immersed in peacebuilding efforts have accumulated evidence of this. At a conference organized by one such peacebuilding group, the U.S.-based *Women Waging Peace*, it was stated that: “Women have their fingers on the pulse of the community and can gather essential information on the ground to mobilise post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction... Women foster confidence and trust among local populations, since they often care for the maimed, injured and orphaned. They propose constructive solutions while suggesting innovative approaches for dialogue among polarized groups...” (Ward, 2006, p. 267). In short, through their actions, women have often, in one way or another, contributed to enhancing human security and peace in their countries.

Turning to Sierra Leone, it can be seen that women's organizations have, both during and after the war, recognized the necessity for action and responded accordingly. As one activist put it, “In Sierra Leone, women have always been marching – and praying!” (Cockburn, 2007, p. 36). This is because many women have never known peace in their lifetimes, and so, acting in pursuit of peace has almost become second nature to them. Zainab Bangura is a highly respected woman in Sierra Leone who is known for her efforts at mobilizing women and civil society, and whose actions helped to bring the Sierra Leone war to an end. She once stated that “We hadn't known democracy in all my lifetime” (Cockburn, 2007, p. 36) and this is what galvanized her (like so many

other women) into action. The number of women's organizations working for peace in the country is testament to this.

While there are a number of women's groups in Sierra Leone engaged in peacebuilding to varying degrees, this study will focus primarily on ten of the more well-established non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in the country: *Mano River Women's Peace Network* (MARWOPNET), *Femmes Africa Solidarité* (FAS), *Women in Peacebuilding Network* (WIPNET), *Forum for African Women Educationalists - Sierra Leone* (FAWE - SL), *Fifty Fifty Group Sierra Leone* (50/50), *Grassroots Empowerment for Self Reliance* (GEMS), *Sierra Leone Market Women's Association* (SLMWA), *The Progressive Women's Association* (PROWA), *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom- Sierra Leone* (WILPF-SL), and *Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children* (WC). (See Appendix B for brief overviews of these organizations). In addition, cursory attention will be given to a few more groups working in peacebuilding, including the *Grassroots Gender Empowerment Movement* (GGEM), the *Luawa Skills Training Centre* (LSTC), *Women's Progressive Movement* (WPM), and the *Sierra Leone Women's Forum* (SLWF). Exploring all these organizations will provide a good sense of the activities and strategies that are generally being used by women in Sierra Leone.

Examining Women's Organizations

Like so many women's organizations worldwide, the work carried out by these women's groups in Sierra Leone tends to revolve around seven major areas: networking, advocacy, arbitration, reintegration, reconciliation, capacity building, and formal political

involvement. All these organizations employ a range of initiatives, often simultaneously, and seldom focus only on one particular area alone. Furthermore, every one of them incorporates gender issues into their perpetual quest for human security and peace.

Networking

In general, networking involves communication and partnership and is an extremely effective activity in the arena of peacebuilding. This is because through networking, many other activities might well be accomplished. Vis-à-vis men, women's social status is, in many respects, diminished and they are not often seen as being able to effect change, especially in an individual capacity. Therefore, women's networks offer alliances that empower women by creating solidarity and increasing their skills. Women can then use those skills and in turn empower other women in their communities, by being role models for them and more importantly, by providing tangible help. This in turn removes a certain amount of the powerlessness that women might feel, and this is a particularly important basis for building of sustainable development programmes, not the least of which is peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding is a multi-faceted long-term process, and the strength of collective action, which networking provides, presents an effective way to begin to substantially address the issues that crop up. Women who are involved in carrying out such activities should frequently come together and converse on the all-important issues. It gives everyone involved (whether local, regional or international actors) a chance to meet, exchange ideas, discuss strategies that have worked for their particular purposes, and also voice their concerns on those that have not had desired effects. In this way networking

allows organizations to improve their actions and have real influence in working towards the common cause of peace.

FAS, for instance, is very well known for its participation in networking meetings and conferences, and often uses this strategy to further its peacebuilding causes. The organization is a regular participant at a wide range of international conferences on a variety of pertinent issues such as the UN Commission's sessions on human rights. To be sure, these conferences help FAS to develop a sound knowledge and skills base, but this international stage is also used by FAS to voice its passion. It never declines an opportunity to take a stand, and has made numerous speeches on behalf of violated women such as those of the Mano River Region. In addition, having developed a long list of connections over the years with reputable international organizations, FAS has put the MARWOPNET group in contact with UN agencies and other international organizations that will be of assistance to them.

MARWOPNET uses these links to its benefit, and hopes that, through solidly functioning female networks, success will be built. From 29 February to 5 March, 2004 the group participated in an event held by the UN Commission on the Status of Women in celebration of International Women's Day. Another programme in which they were quite vocal was that which was organized by the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) during its General Assembly held in Geneva March and April of 2004. MARWOPNET took keen advantage of this opportunity to present their role so far in the peace process in the Mano River region (MARWOPNET, 2005d). In this way, the international community is informed as to what is being done and what is needed in the region. However, the rewards of networking go both ways. Since all women's groups can learn

from each other, MARWOPNET's attendance and participation at those conferences would undoubtedly benefit others.

WIPNET too continues to participate in international conferences, which presents the same good opportunities for representatives of the organization to voice their opinions and impart knowledge of peacebuilding and gender issues. March of 2005 saw its first ever participation in the session of the *UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)* in New York. Here the organization got a chance to critically review the Beijing Platform for Action, network with groups of like-minded individuals, showcase its own ideas, while sharing in the ideas and practices of others, and plan for future meetings and initiatives (Alaga, 2005).

Simply being a participant is not enough though. Going further, FAS is also known for its own facilitation of networking by actually organizing workshops and conferences for the purpose of strengthening the capacities of Sierra Leone women's organizations in the field. FAS recognizes the simple fact that for peacebuilding initiatives to be successful, local NGOs need not only to be in touch with the local people directly, but also need to get in contact with other NGOs working in similar fields and for similar purposes. Organizations need to draw from each other's abilities and strengths. FAS addresses this through effective networking tactics that ensures that when there are conferences and workshops dedicated to the peace process that many organizations actually participate.

In the few years prior to 2005 for instance, FAS arranged six workshop and training activities in the Mano River region, sessions which included a total of approximately 700 participants from a range of organizations (FAS, 2005, p. 23). It is by

speaking and learning together that skills and power will be increased. FAS has also organized discussions so that participants could share their experiences. In 2005, the organization, along with the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* (WILPF), put together one such session for the reporting on human rights violations in the region (FAS, 2008d). In March 2007, it organized yet another panel discussion on *Women and War in Africa: Experiences, Responses and Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325* (FAS, 2008d, para. 5).

MARWOPNET, following in FAS' footsteps, epitomizes true networking as well. Over the years, the Sierra Leone chapter has frequently organized such events, often ensuring that not only members of peace groups are present, but also authority figures from the government. In December of 2007, MARWOPNET held one such conference to encourage discussion and action with regards to women's participation in the security sector. The conference held in Freetown, was under the theme of *Women in Security: Challenges and Opportunities* (Centre for Development & Security Analysis [CEDSA], 2008). This brought together sections of government, community and civil society groups from the countries of the Mano River region. The talk hinged on the obstacles that prevent women from being involved in the creation and implementation of policies of security. Also analyzed were ways in which women could be more effectively introduced into security sector issues.

The same can be said for WIPNET. During the period of November 1st to 3rd of 2005, the organization held its fourth annual *Women in Peacebuilding Regional Conference*, which was held in Benin. This meeting happened to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Therefore, WIPNET

based the conference around the theme *Revisiting the United Nations Security Council Resolution in West Africa: Opportunities and Challenges for the Future*, and made the decision to use this forum to specifically discuss the effectiveness of this UN resolution in the West African region (Alaga, 2005).

There are occasions when networking is done in more of a casual atmosphere, as opposed to the formal meetings and conferences. Such get-togethers are just as important though. FAS has helped to organize such gatherings of unity. Their solidarity missions, as they refer to them, aim to bring women's groups together, make these groups' efforts and positive changes more visible, sensitize government officials on the need to involve women in the peace and development process, and highlight areas that need to be improved upon.

One example of this would be in January 2006, where 350 women from MARWOPNET and its partners participated in *Peace Caravan* in celebration of the inauguration of Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who had, back then, recently been elected as the first female president of Liberia (FAS, 2008c, para. 4). Solidarity missions like these have allowed women to draw strength from each other, while inspiring, influencing, and encouraging them all to take positive action in their communities. Also, such events actually allow them to realize dreams that they possibly would not have conceptualized before.

Therefore, networking works well since it brings solidarity to women peacebuilders, letting them know that they are not alone in the fight for peace. However, it goes beyond just discussion and solidarity; it allows possible collaboration on tangible projects. It is no secret that there is strength in numbers. In general, if something needs to

be done, then it is more likely to be accomplished successfully if like-minded individuals engage in executing the plan.

For instance, WIPNET has always held meetings, consultations and annual conferences with women's groups in West Africa. The *Mano River Union* (MRU) *Women's Peace Summit* was one such meeting, held from August 17 - 18 2003 in Cote d'Ivoire. Two hundred representatives from Sierra Leone, as well as Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Guinea met to discuss the necessity of fostering complete cohesiveness among women's organizations working for peace in the region. At that time, women deliberated on the possibility of having a common agenda, which would make it easier to influence policies at a higher level. To this end, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) was nominated to be an overseer and coordinator for peace and security issues in the region. Again, in November 2004, a meeting, which included the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Gender Unit, allowed WIPNET to discuss how best to ensure the mainstreaming of gender issues. At this time, the groups also came up with an actual policy framework for this (WANEP, 2006; Alaga, 2005).

Networking leading to collaboration can also be seen with the partnering of 50/50 with Oxfam. The two groups are in the process of working on a project called *Promoting a Culture of Equal Representation*, more commonly known as PACER, (Fifty Fifty, 2007d) to "promote just, equitable, accountable and representative governance in Sierra Leone through equal participation of women and men in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction and development initiatives in Sierra Leone" (Fifty Fifty, 2007e, p. 2). The two organizations even signed a Memorandum of

Understanding on 21st April 2006 (Fifty Fifty, 2007e). This is evidence of both their commitments to the project in bettering women's position.

Networking, then, presents excellent opportunities for development within and among women's groups. It facilitates communication, cooperation, and growth, all of which are crucial to the peacebuilding process. The networking of organization acts almost like a microcosm of what a peaceful society should be – one where there is the ability to discuss, collaborate, and develop.

Advocacy

Along with networking, advocating for all things peace-related is a major activity among women's organizations. Every group can be seen to participate in this in one form or another. Women in Sierra Leone have been known to participate in and organize rallies, marches, and prayer meetings, all in an effort to get their voices heard. Whether it is appealing directly to government officials at the highest levels to affect policy change, or campaigning for local awareness of the issues, advocacy is taking place. Many times, women join forces in their activism. On April 7, 2001, for instance, after the Lome Accord was reached, and in the midst of a shaky period of peace, women's groups collaborated and took to the streets in solidarity. The *Forum for African Women Educationalists* (FAWE), the *Sierra Leone Market Women's Association* (SLMWA), and the *Sierra Leone Women's Forum* (SLWF), in partnership with the Human Rights and Civil Affairs sections of the *United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone* (UNAMSIL) and other civil society organizations, organized nation-wide marches for peace. In many parts of the country, including Freetown (in the Western area); Bo and Moyamba (in the

Southern province); Daru and Kenema (in the Eastern province); and Lunsar (in the Northern province) (see Map), thousands of women marched, rallied, prayed, and called for everlasting peace. The activists advised their fellow women to speak to their husbands, fathers, brothers, sons and sisters and urge them to lay down their weapons and begin to cultivate a culture of peace (Sierra Leone: UNAMSIL, 2001, para.7).

UNAMSIL spokesperson Margaret Novicki said the UN was moved by the response of Sierra Leonean women to the need to help restore peace in their country. “We of the United Nations believe that women are a very strong force for peace, because women have the ability to come together in their numbers, to work towards a common goal,” she said. “[Women are] also the ones who bring the children up, and who can instill in children values of peace, tolerance and cooperation. So for us women are very, very important in building peace” (Sierra Leone: UNAMSIL, 2001, para.7).

Indeed, this is an important acknowledgement, and it is so necessary that women’s advocacy persists. It is obvious that, in general, it is impossible to get immediate societal change on important, yet sensitive, subjects such as building peace or promoting rights for the marginalized. It requires so much effort to bring about positive change. Had this been easy, wars would not persist for as long as they do now. Therefore, perseverance is an important step to success, and women seem to endure in that regard, working tirelessly for the cause.

Advocating for Peace:

For its part, MARWOPNET has always been active in advocating for peace and for an inclusion of the voice of women in the peace process. This can be seen even in the

precursor groups before MARWOPNET had even been formally established, and incidentally enough, it was through networking that MARWOPNET was actually formed. In January 1995, in the midst of the civil war in Sierra Leone (and six years after conflict begun in the neighbouring country of Liberia), a determined group of women from various religious and other development organizations formed the *Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace* (SLWMP). This movement was primarily about seeking justice and recognition of human rights for women, and about finding peace in the ever-growing turbulent Mano River region.

In May 2000, Nigeria and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) played host to women from Sierra Leone and Liberia, as well as representatives from Guinea. This meeting was organized by a range of other sponsors: *Femmes Africa Solidarité* (FAS), the *African Women's Committee for Peace and Development* (AWCPD), the *African Union* (AU), the *African Economic Community* (AEC), and the *UN Development Program* (UNDP). It was at that time that the regional women's peace movement, the *Mano River Union Women Peace Network* (MARWOPNET) was launched. The necessity of such a collaboration was explained by Liberian peace activist, Ms. Mary Brownell. The countries “are so interwoven,” she noted. “Once there is no peace in Liberia, there will be no peace in Sierra Leone. When there is fighting in Guinea, there has to be fighting in Liberia. That is why we had to be in touch as women” (Fleshman, 2003, p. 1).

Within a week of it being launched, the group wasted no time and was already on target raising awareness among the general population about the organization and its work, and recruiting new members so as to strengthen the group. MARWOPNET

continues to publicize its activities and frequently holds talks in various towns. 2003 saw an extensive awareness-raising campaign, with the group travelling around Sierra Leone highlighting the goals and initiatives of MARWOPNET, thereby advancing its work towards peace (MARWOPNET, 2005d).

Still, the organization's peace work does not stand on its own. Much of its advocacy promotes empowerment among people in general. MARWOPNET has been instrumental in coordinating the actions of other women's groups to ensure that they have greater visibility and power in their peacebuilding efforts. Without solidarity and support, women's groups will have very little success and the limited tasks they may accomplish might very well go unnoticed. MARWOPNET's support of them is therefore very important.

The organization's advocacy sessions are often coupled with added advantages in various forms. For example, in collaboration with *The Women in Peace Building Network* (WIPNET), MARWOPNET held meetings in Cote d'Ivoire in 2003, and while continuing its attempts at encouraging peace, the two organizations also stressed the necessity for social mobilization on the part of the community (MARWOPNET, 2005d). Therefore, it is not simply about the public silently supporting or passively agreeing with an organization's good work; it is about people developing enough confidence and skill to actively engage in peace work themselves, and this is what MARWOPNET seeks to do.

On the same theme, and in the same year, MARWOPNET, dialogued with Liberian refugee women in some parts of Sierra Leone and discussed how these women could get involved in advocating for peace. Yes, they are refugees and victims of a cruel

war, yet they could be agents of their own development even from their displaced position. So, together with WIPNET and the *World Council of Religion and Peace* (WCRP), the refugee women were encouraged to organize mass rallies and radio broadcasts to get their voices heard. These acts would be especially effective, as they were to coincide with Liberia Peace Mediation talks, which took place on May 25 – 26 2003 in Freetown (MARWOPNET, 2005d). The network has also persisted with this work of encouraging advocacy among the refugees paying particular attention to the camps that still exist in the Ivory Coast, Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

MARWOPNET is not simply about discussion of problems though; they take action to back up their ideas, and provide tangible human rights aid. This can be seen through their border outreach programs. Even while teaching the Liberian refugees to advocate for peace on their own behalf, it was realized that these women had actual and desperate needs. So, in mid 2003, the MARWOPNET women traveled to Kailahun and Zimmi (regions that border Liberia and Sierra Leone) to see first hand the plight of the refugees. The four day mission, which was funded by a U.S. sponsor, the group *Urgent Action Fund* of Colorado, presented an excellent opportunity to inquire exactly what the immediate needs of the refugees were, especially the needs of the women present. This information was then translated into significant humanitarian activities. MARWOPNET members took relief supplies on their visits such as fresh water and sacks of manioc (Cockburn, 2007, p. 41). These visits to IDP and refugee camps are an on-going activity. They always present excellent opportunities to listen intently to the needs of those housed within those camps, and also to address some of their more immediate and pressing needs.

Like MARWOPNET, WIPNET's advocacy efforts involve reaching people at every level, and this means that the group's members are sometimes compelled to arrange discussion sessions with governmental figures. WIPNET would like to see more positive interaction between women's groups and policy makers, and works hard in this regard to promote women's issues and sensitize those in authority. To this end, from September to November of 2005, the group organized various consultations between the Ministries of Women/Gender in a number of different countries. The nations of the Mano River Union (Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and the recently added Cote d'Ivoire) were involved, as were the countries of Senegal, Guinea Bissau and Gambia. What the meetings uncovered was the fact that many Ministries on Women/Gender (although they did address gender equality and women's empowerment) did not specifically concern themselves with the issues of peace and security. WIPNET has therefore seen that there is even more of a need for it to work towards influencing policy formation as it refers to peacebuilding and issues of security. They therefore recently partnered with the *Centre for Conflict Resolution*, located in Cape Town, South Africa, in an effort to advocate for more gender inclusion in peacebuilding initiatives (WANEP, 2006).

Advocating for Women's and Human Rights:

In advocacy, various mediums are utilized so as to reach as wide a range of persons as possible. Media is often used as a popular and effective means to reach the public. WIPNET uses its *Voice of Women* radio program to do just that. On the 7th of July 2008, this program was organized in Moyamba Town as a forum for speakers of different backgrounds to converse on socio-economic issues. Participants were drawn

from three civil society organizations and a male participant hailed from the Gender Awareness Program in Moyamba. The topic for discussion was *the role of women in development, and promoting the rights of women to participate in decision making positions*. It was an interactive program in which the moderator posed questions to participants as well as the listening audience (WIPNET-Sierra Leone, 2008, p.1).

Human rights activist, John Vanja, mentioned the importance of women's roles in development and the attainment of peace. A report by WIPNET shows that "he maintained that women's inclusion is crucial to community development in order to improve on the socio economic status of individuals. He referred to women as auxiliaries who push men when the carts of development get stuck. He lauded women's ability to persuade and to get things done" (WIPNET-Sierra Leone, 2008, p. 2). This program served as an advocacy device to sensitize the public on the need to include women in peacebuilding, and also served to promote WIPNET's and WANEP's goal of a peaceful Sierra Leone.

The *Women's Commission* (WC) is also actively engaged in campaigning for the rights of women and youth, especially young girls. As part of its three-year advocacy project, the *Commission* travelled to Sierra Leone in February 2008 to research displaced out-of-school youth and draw attention to their particular vulnerabilities. What they found was dismal. Less than one-third of females over age 10 can read and write. Seventy percent of youth are unemployed or underemployed (Women's Commission, 2008d, para 6). Sixty-two percent of girls marry before age 18 (Women's Commission, 2008a, p. 2). Pregnant girls and young mothers generally drop out of school to care for children (Women's Commission, 2008d, para 7). Furthermore, often poverty forces many youth

(especially females) to miss out on an education. Many remain at home because they cannot afford school supplies and uniforms. Others are forced to seek employment instead of attending school, in order to support their families. Of course, without access to school and with few economic opportunities or skills, young people are more vulnerable to sexual abuse, economic exploitation and recruitment into armed groups (Women's Commission, 2008d). By drawing attention to these realities, the WC is making it clear how essential it is for women's needs to be a priority. The organization can clearly see the underutilized potential in girls and women, and is therefore a firm advocate (at the local, regional and global levels) for building their capacities, thereby facilitating their growth as agents.

The WC would like, ultimately, to see women overcome the obstacles that prevent them from realizing their true potential. It has therefore partnered with a number of organizations in a campaign to push the *United Nations Security Council* to acknowledge and utilize the contributions of women worldwide who are working hard to build and maintain peace within war-torn countries. The WC and its partners now monitor the implementation of *Security Council Resolution 1325*. As the organization has made clear, "We work to ensure that displaced women's voices are heard at the highest levels of decision-making and that they are active participants in peace-building and reconstruction" (Women's Commission, 2008e, para. 1).

The group aspires to turn its advocacy work into concrete results. It is not content with only monitoring policies from afar. Working with their local Sierra Leone partner at the time, Binta Mansaray, the *Women's Commission* served as advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding a legislative draft that concerned refugee protection. Ms.

Mansaray spoke passionately about the rights of refugees and how, as returning citizens, it was imperative that their rights, along with the rights of internally displaced persons, be included in the nation's Refugee Act. This was a particularly notable campaign on behalf of women, as the vast majority of refugees and IDPs were women and their children, and there was absolutely no recognition of refugee rights included in legislation. This lack of recognition of their rights turned out to be a major disadvantage to them as refugees and IDPs, since it prevented them from benefiting from special programs and funding (Women's Commission, 2003, p. 9).

In addition, together with the *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (UNHCR), the Women's Commission's work also extends towards ensuring that refugee and displaced women and their children have a chance to participate substantively in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the agency's positions and policies (Women's Commission, 2008f). Additionally, the WC is undertaking on-going in-depth research that will further inform UNHCR's gender mainstreaming work.

Advocating for women's rights is something with which FAS is also involved. To accomplish their objectives, FAS lobbies policy-making bodies at the national, regional, and international levels, encouraging them to develop and implement policies which promote the full participation of African women in all aspects of the decision-making process. FAS has always been a strong advocate for women, and has made every effort to encourage their empowerment so that they will be wholehearted and effectual participants in their communities. At the regional level, FAS extended its regional lobbying campaign on gender mainstreaming and parity in the organs of the African Union (AU) in partnership with the African Women's Committee on Peace *and*

Development (AWCPD). In July 2003, FAS's efforts resulted in gender parity in the AU Commission, with the election of five women Commissioners (Diop, 2005; FAS, 2008a). FAS also consistently works to bring the gender issue into every aspect of development, be it health, education, employment or human rights.

Promoting the rights of women and girls is something that is near and dear to the hearts of all women's organizations, and this can be seen with FAWE as well. A sensitive area of concern is the gender-based violence that women were faced with during the war, and which they must endure on a daily basis. Not surprisingly then, FAWE engages in advocacy that hinges on this. Overall, the conflict that besieged Sierra Leone certainly made the need for this type of advocacy clear, but one particular incident propelled FAWE-SL into action.

Early in 1999, rebel forces had gained control of the capital, Freetown. When they were in the process of retreating from the area, it was reported that they raped a number of girls in schools that had been established by FAWE, which were meant to be safe havens and learning environments. These acts were the impetus for FAWE's quick action of launching an awareness and healing program (Barnes, Albrecht, & Olson, 2007). It was realized that many of these girls had already gone through the trauma of rape in earlier stages of the war, and were unfortunate enough to experience it yet again. Therefore, FAWE felt it more than necessary to speak up against, and draw attention to, such gender-based violence. The use of the local media was extremely important during this time, as both radio and television was used to inform the public of the issues.

Human rights is also a central theme covered by women's organization in their work as advocates. FAS, for instance, is committed to the pursuit of justice. It advocates

strongly against the perpetrators of war and violators of human rights, especially that of women. FAS seeks to have legislation enacted that will protect the rights of all innocent citizens and particularly the human rights of women. The group recognizes, and rightly so, that without justice and the diligent and consistent pursuit of it, there can be no peace. Therefore, it was influential in the drafting and implementation of the Protocol to the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*, which concentrates partly on “the culture of impunity and aims to establish mechanisms for justice” (FAS, 2008d, para. 2).

Being an organization specifically focused on human rights, GEMS also seeks to make the general public aware of present societal injustices, works to change those, and informs the public of any changes made in this regard. The group has been a long-time beneficiary of the *Fund for Global Human Rights* (an international sponsor), which, in 2003, donated \$15,540 to GEMS for their work in raising awareness (by way of a national campaign) of the discriminatory laws surrounding a woman’s right to own property (Fund for Global Human Rights, 2008, para.1). There is particular value in investing in this advocacy campaign. Land inheritance is of great importance in Sierra Leone, since the struggle for land often (if not always) leaves women at a disadvantage. This is because once fighters are disarmed, in an effort to earn an honest living, limited land becomes a prized possession to them. Women, who have traditionally had no rights to land, tend to suffer the most, as any hope of their retaining land for their use is usually dispelled. It is not within the scope of DDR processes to change discriminatory laws; that is definitely outside any mandate of such programmes. Therefore, women’s organizations such as GEMS that advocate for a change in the traditional discriminatory laws, and

women parliamentarians that ensure that such changes take place are an important addition to the status quo (Alghali, 2007, p. 25).

Moreover, in GEMS' continued work to support women in their fight for human rights, the organization makes note of all human rights abuses that come to their attention, and pays special attention to gender-based crimes against women. Earlier this year, the government of Sierra Leone passed three pieces of legislation for the purposes of reducing incidents of domestic violence and human rights abuses against women. In March of 2008, GEMS, in conjunction with a number of UN organizations, held a three day workshop aimed at enlightening the public on those new laws. Specifically targeting residents of the capital, Freetown, GEMS' programme coordinator, Catherine Greywood said that "Sierra Leoneans are silent about gender violence and human rights abuse against women, and the workshop aims at encouraging particularly women to speak out against ill-treatment meted on them by men" (UN News Centre, para. 5; Ford, 2008, para. 7). In excess of 150 participants from the Freetown communities of Wilberforce, Kroo Bay and Fourah Bay attended the workshop, which focused on the newly enacted laws, in addition to other related issues of peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution (UNIOSIL, 2008).

In keeping with the non-violence theme, GEMS held an advocacy campaign with women from various civil society organizations across Sierra Leone on July 11, 2007, where it stressed the need for elections that were free of violence. This campaign was mainly for the benefit of women, who often face aggression or threat of aggression when exercising their franchise. It was hoped that the campaign could spread a strong message to men, and also alleviate the fears of women with regard to this. The campaign doubled

as an opportunity to educate women and help them to make informed decisions at election time. The National Coordinator for GEMS, Barbara Bangura was optimistic that by creating an atmosphere of female solidarity and education, women would fully participate in the elections of August 2007 (Munu, 2007).

Advocating for Demilitarization:

On the issue of advocacy, it can be noticed that there are numerous aspects that can be campaigned for within any peacebuilding agenda. Human and women's rights, improvements to policies, and of course peace are the obvious ones. Entrenched within this is the matter of demilitarization, which is an extremely important part of securing peace in a nation. WIPNET has therefore joined in the fight to control the trade in and circulation of small arms and light weapons. It is well known that the availability of arms presents a serious hindrance to the building of peace and security. Many countries, realizing this, have seen the need to put regulations in place to control such weapons. However, this has been a challenge and the international community has yet to come up with an effective means of control.

WIPNET realizes that the sale and distribution of arms presents an actual problem in society, especially where women are concerned. It is true that men represent the majority of the direct victims of gun violence (WIPNET, 2005). Women, however, in addition to suffering directly, also suffer indirectly and disproportionately. For one, it is females who are the most vulnerable to (and suffer the most) assaults at the hands of armed men. Furthermore, once their male relatives are killed or maimed due to gun violence, women bear the brunt of the responsibilities of earning a living and caring for

their families. What is more is that large numbers of women become refugees or internally displaced as a result of violence and war, and they remain vulnerable to sexual assaults and molestation. Many of those attacks are carried out at gun point.

The women of WIPNET are vehemently opposed to guns and other arms for obvious reasons – they are destructive. Moreover, they equate gun violence to other types of violence against women. To them:

Violence against women, whether committed with boots or fists or weapons, is rooted in pervasive discrimination which denies women equality with men...Violence against women in the family and community, and violence against women as a result of state repression or armed conflict, are part of the same continuum: much of the violence that is targeted against women in militarized societies and during armed conflict is an extreme manifestation of the discrimination and abuse that women face in peacetime. Whatever the context or immediate cause of the violence, the presence of guns invariably has the same effect: more guns mean more danger for women. (WIPNET, 2005, para 5-6)

It is for this reason that in November 2004, WIPNET joined other civil society organizations and formally launched its participation in a campaign to control weapons, under the slogan *Arms Know No Gender*. This is an excellent example of the marriage of the two activities of networking and advocacy.

It was the member countries of ECOWAS that began a campaign in 1998 to reduce the circulation of arms in the West African region. They vowed not to import, export, or manufacture light weapons and small arms. Regrettably, this agreement was not strictly adhered to and it proved to be less of a commitment on their part than it should have been. Therefore, in 2003, on the anniversary date of the moratorium, the *Foundation for Security and Development in Africa*, the *Fellowship of Christian Churches in West Africa*, *Oxfam*, *Actionaid* and *Amnesty International (Ghana)* banded together to change the Moratorium from a “three-year renewable and voluntary

mechanism, into a lasting regional binding document - a Convention- that takes account of all international agreements on the control of small arms” (WIPNET, 2005, para 9). It is hoped that this campaign will be effective enough to control the circulation of weapons, thereby increasing the security of persons on community, local, regional, and international levels. WIPNET in particular is hopeful that it will be able to make a difference at the community level, through the group’s interaction with grassroots women.

Arbitration

Just as important as networking or advocacy is arbitration. In fact, arbitration could easily be first on any peacebuilding list. This is simply because before efforts at peace can move forward, there needs to be some sort of negotiation between warring factions. Often, even with formal peace accords in place, it is no secret that enemies on both sides fail to budge from their opposing positions and countries remain at war. Neutral parties are therefore necessary to help solve that problem. As was explained in Chapter Two, while foreign mediators might present some form of help, in the final analysis, local people are better suited to negotiating with other locals. After all, although certain segments of the population may be at odds with each other during conflict, who would know their own culture, traditions, mindsets, and needs more than the people themselves. Furthermore, it has been proven that given the chance, local women are more than capable of getting desirable results with respect to mediation.

Well known for its arbitration skills is the MARWOPNET group, and it provides one of the best examples of this peacebuilding activity. The promising organization

began early on to prove its potential for arbitration by appealing to the RUF for peace, and these RUF rebels were ones that even prominent international actors had great difficulty dealing with. The group's women were granted an invitation to the 24th ECOWAS summit in December of 2000, where members took the opportunity to speak passionately to the heads of state about the value of encouraging women in peacebuilding activities. Still excluded from formal peace processes and in dire need of more resources, MARWOPNET continued in its cause, despite these setbacks. Their fortitude amid challenges was evident from these early days, and their sometimes unique approach to the problems faced was highly commendable.

MARWOPNET's forte is advocacy and intervention, even at the highest governmental level. US conciliation trainer Louise Diamond calls this type of intervention "multitrack diplomacy" (Cockburn, 2007, p. 39). Although the women of MARWOPNET do not use such a term themselves, their actions are clear to everyone. Actually, their actions have been labelled by some authors as 'track-2 diplomacy' i.e. "supplementing the standard diplomatic moves of political leaders, foreign secretaries and ambassadors by involving the intervention of neutral non-state actors, including NGOs" (Cockburn, 2007, p. 39). This type of track-2 diplomacy was clearly seen in 2001.

In that year, amid escalating violence, the women sought to work as arbitrators between the leaders of the countries of the Mano River Basin. Tensions were mounting between Liberia and Guinea, and the heads of state were experiencing such friction among themselves that Guinean President, Lansana Conté was quoted as saying that he would never sit down with Liberian President, Charles Taylor (Fleshman, 2003, p.1).

Undaunted, the women from MARWOPNET organized a delegation to meet with the presidents. First on the list was President Charles Taylor, whom they met on June 7th, 2001.

Recognizing the strength and determination of these women who had come over to see him, Taylor is reported to have said, “Are you telling me that women leaders from Guinea are here in Monrovia? And women from Sierra Leone? How have the Liberian women managed to bring them here?” (Fleshman, 2003, p.1). He subsequently decided to meet with the group, saying that, “they are very courageous” (Fleshman, 2003, p.1). It was as a result of the efforts on the part of MARWOPNET that Taylor’s mind was swayed, and he eventually agreed to participate in a peace summit with the ambassadors from his neighbouring countries. The women of MARWOPNET subsequently went to see Sierra Leone’s President Kabbah to discuss with him what had transpired. He endorsed their actions, and they promised to pay a visit to Guinea’s leader.

The women then took their work over to Guinea in late July 2001 to engage in discussions with President Conté. They spoke of the brutality of the war and the suffering that it had caused. His mind was not so easily changed though, and he remained adamant that he had no desire to meet with or agree to anything with the Liberian president. The women, however, were also adamant, adamant in their resolve for an end to the conflict that had plagued their region for too long. Addressing the Guinean president, one of the elders stated: “You and President Taylor have to meet as men and iron out your differences, and we the women want to be present. We will lock you in this room until you come to your senses, and I will sit on the key” (Fleshman, 2003, p.1). Even though Conté initially found her brazen attitude amusing, he finally acknowledged what could be

accomplished by one group of determined women. He stated that “What man do you think would say that to me? Only a woman could do such a thing and get by with it” (Fleshman, 2003, p.1).

In the final analysis, there was really no option but to recognize the women for succeeding in getting President Conté to attend the summit and negotiate for a peace agreement. “Many people have tried to convince me to meet with President Taylor,” he said. “Your commitment and your appeal have convinced me” (Fleshman, 2003, p.1). MARWOPNET had succeeded in achieving what all others had failed in doing. This victory at achieving diplomatic political dialogue between the leaders of the region was a great achievement (MARWOPNET, 2005b), and led to the February/March 2002 Summit, held in Morocco, between the heads of state.

MARWOPNET, therefore, is to be praised for all its efforts in trying to bring peace to the region. At the UN General Assembly in December 2003, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan praised the work of civil society organizations in general “that have adopted effective multi-dimensional, coordinated and regional collaborative approaches in their struggles to promote peace” (FAS, 2008f, para. 6). More specifically, Mr. Annan expressly pointed out MARWOPNET for recognition, “insisting that the Network ‘aptly demonstrates’ all of these innovative and effective approaches” (FAS, 2008f, para. 6).

For its continued peacebuilding work in the region, the network was recognized by the United Nations in 2003. The presidents and vice presidents of MARWOPNET attended the UN General Assembly in New York where, on December 10, 2003, General Assembly President H.E. Julian R. Hunte, presented them with the UN Human Rights

Award for the year (FAS, 2005; Peacebuilding Portal, n.d.). This award certainly distinguished the network as an eminent one of dedicated women.

On the whole then, women have demonstrated that with skill and tenacity, much can get done in the way of peacebuilding. Their persistence has translated into tangible gains for all women in general. Communication has proven to be their biggest ally in their quest for peace. Through networking and discussions, women have listened to each other, learnt, and grown in their skill sets, and they have subsequently been able to make noteworthy contributions in the areas of advocacy and arbitration.

Their strides in networking, advocacy and arbitration can more or less be viewed as the first steps in the overall peacebuilding process. Of course, there is no definite start or end to any of the processes in peacebuilding. What is meant by this is that peacebuilding is a long and complex course of action where different processes freely flow into each other, and often where all processes are on-going to some degree. Networking encourages solidarity (in itself) and then contributes to other aspects of peacebuilding such as advocacy and arbitration by helping women to build a wealth of knowledge and skills. It seems that the processes work best when applied simultaneously. Still, the procedures of networking, advocacy and arbitration appear to be routes that would have to be tackled first (and, subsequently, continually as needed) in order to have a good basis with which to move forward.

Strengthening bonds among themselves, calling for peace, an end to the trade in arms, and an increase in human and women's rights, not to mention mediating disputes, would naturally have to be embarked upon as stepping stones to positive peace. Subsequently, society can be further transformed through the creation of sustained

structures that promote community solidarity, increase people's capabilities and continue on the road to security and peace. These mechanisms, described in the next chapter, are exactly what women's organizations in Sierra Leone have done. They have gone even further and played roles in the psychological, social, economic and political reintegration of members of their communities, thereby building a solid foundation for human security, peace, and development.

Chapter Seven:
Sierra Leone Women's Efforts at Peacebuilding
In Reintegration, Reconciliation, Capacity Building &
Formal Political Involvement

In the same way that women actively network, advocate and arbitrate, they also participate fully in the integration of members of the community, be it emotionally, socially, financially, or politically. In DDR processes (which international policy makers consider to be a fundamental step in establishing peace), reintegration was indeed supposed to be a vital part of the procedures. Alas, however, it came with its own problems of exclusion and marginalization. As has already been addressed in Chapter Five, women tended to be left out of the benefits of such processes in Sierra Leone for a variety of reasons, and even when they were involved, the help afforded to them was minimal. Both then and now, women seemed to be “suffering triple discrimination – as women, ex-combatants and the poor” (Alghali, 2007, p. 26). This is unfortunate, as reintegration is a crucial part of healing a society post-conflict, and exclusion of a percentage of the population is detrimental to any hope of sustainable peace and development.

Reintegration is the ability to offer support and help to ex-combatants and victims alike in order that they may be able to productively merge with their communities once more. Since the DDR process were so limited in their application, women's organizations have taken on the challenge and attempted to fill the void of including the most excluded set of persons – women. Many women's groups in Sierra Leone have made it part of their mission to offer in some way, psychological help, social reconciliation, as well as

economic and political transformation. By making these things part of their agendas, women's groups are in effect helping other women not just to survive, but to thrive.

Psychological/Emotional Reintegration

Many ex-combatants as well as victims suffer tremendously from mental and physical health problems. War has taken its toll on the living, and brought about unbelievable trauma that affects their daily physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Women especially, have had added burdens to bear. They have been subjected to the extra stigma of society that comes from them having been fighters, wives, been forced into sexual activities, or become unwed mothers. Many have been unable to cope with what they have done, what they have been forced to do, or what they have been subjected to. During DDR, medical care and counselling given, if at all, was negligible. Noticing this, women's groups have stepped up to help.

Initially during the war, FAWE, for instance, collaborated with several local and international organizations that could offer the necessary support to girls and women. The *Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW)*, the *Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs*, and *Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) – Holland*, and later on, the *United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)* each contributed counsellors, and counselling workshops were organized by *MSF-Holland* in order to boost the skills of counsellors. This organization in particular also helped in supplying essential drugs to the afflicted. In the space of three months, in excess of one hundred victims received medical treatment and counselling support (Hanciles, 2008, para 4). It was soon realized that the program should be continued, as more and more female

victims were either freed by their captors or began to escape captivity. FAWE was able to convince *MSF – Holland* to assist further, and the latter agreed to fund the entire program.

Throughout it all, the ultimate goal of FAWE was to get girls healed and back in school to give them every chance at reaching their full potential. Eventually, in March 1999, the Rape Victims Program was begun, and for quite some time, FAWE was the main organization providing medical and counselling services to rape survivors (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2002). Soon, more than 2110 abductees had benefited from this programme, of which 1,168 were rape victims (Hanciles, 2008, para. 4). According to Eileen Hanciles, the Executive Director of FAWE, “from 1999 - 2002, a total of seven thousand raped victims from nine displaced camps and settlements in six provincial towns were assisted” (Hanciles, 2008, para. 4).

FAWE continued its work with the victims of sexual and gender based violence, and strongly encouraged them to come forward, as so often, rape victims are too ashamed or terrified to admit that they have been violated. In seeking FAWE’s help though, victims could receive treatment and education and (by coming forward), they could probably encourage others to do the same. FAWE solicited help from various other local organizations such as the *Rainbo Centre* (which provided free medical services to victims), and the *Lawyers Centre for Legal Assistance* (LAWCLA) (which offered its assistance in the way of legal aid, at no charge) (Hanciles, 2008). Offering these services for free was a tremendous help since these girls could afford very little after the war, and having to pay for any of those would have meant that they would have been unable to get the treatment that they so desperately needed.

Part of mental care means addressing the worries of young mothers. Many girls and women (themselves so young), already violated by men in the midst of war, are violated for a second time by not having the necessary guidance or support as it relates to their status as new mothers. They feel alone, rejected, and helpless. FAWE seeks to redress this. Indeed, some of its programs cater especially to those young mothers/mothers to be. Young expectant mothers are given pre-natal care, and the organization also carries on such medical care after the babies are born. FAWE has helped well over 1,000 underage mothers survive the trauma of war (Davies-Venn, 2007, para. 27). One victim, Marion Kargbo, who had been brutally raped and taken as a captor wife explained how (now that she had been freed), she was rejected by her family and had no one to turn to. Luckily for her, FAWE came to her assistance. She said:

One day I was sitting at home crying and one of my school friend [sic] was passing and she saw me, she came to me asked me why. I did not hide anything from her, I explained everything that have happened to me so she told me about FAWE and not wasting time we went straight to the office at Fort Street by then. I was interviewed by Ms. Hawa Sesay and since I was pregnant and was also very sick, I was sent to hospital for medical treatment by FAWE. This continued while I was undergoing Counselling till I delivered my baby safely. (Thorpe, 2006, sec. 4.2.1 a.)

Haja Alimatu Abdallah, one of the women who works with FAWE, says that the organization's founder, Dr. Thorpe, always "tries to see how she can make the best out of a worse situation" (Davies-Venn, 2007, para. 28). FAWE still continues to offer counselling services to those who need it, and helps to refer students to doctors for medical attention when necessary (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004).

GEMS too offers overall medical aid to victims. It has established a Human Rights Unit that deals exclusively with such matters. It makes every effort to help the

victims of abuse, offering them counselling services, medical treatment, and a chance at an education or vocational training. One young victim was sponsored by GEMS in this regard, and her mother was even granted a small sum of money in order to start up a business, to help her on the road to independence (A profile, n.d.).

A Torture Victims Support Project has also been implemented in Makeni by GEMS. It is funded by *UN High Commission for Human Rights* (UNHCR) with funds from the *UN Voluntary Funds for Victims of Torture*. It targets 30 victims of torture (especially amputees and rape victims, including those women with children as a result of rape). They are counselled, enrolled in vocational schools and provided with start up kits at the end of their training (A profile, n.d.). All of this is intended to enable them to successfully reintegrate into society. In this way, GEMS has been able to effectively merge its psychological reintegration program with economic reintegration (a topic which will be addressed in more detail later on). Also, it is noteworthy that GEMS tries to offer assistance, not only to victims directly, but also to their families.

Similarly, MARWOPNET offers emotional healing to those most affected by war. Psychological healing and the effective reintegration of persons into their communities is an important aspect of peacebuilding and MARWOPNET is taking on this task wholeheartedly. The organization continues to work tirelessly to gather together enough resources and engage other national groups in attending to the mental as well as economic, and other resettlement needs of refugees and others affected by war.

Social Reintegration (Reconciliation)

In addition to dealing with the emotional and psychological needs of returning victims and ex-combatants, it is also necessary to tackle the social aspects of reintegration and the problems that arise with regard to the wider society. Obviously, after such a brutal civil war, ex-combatants would hardly be viewed favourably by other citizens. Initially, there will be feelings of mistrust, anger, hatred, and varied negative emotions to contend with. Former fighters themselves might feel shame at the atrocities they committed, or a sense of helplessness. In the same way, victims also suffer from shame and stigma. As aforementioned, girls, particularly those who have been sexually violated, are vulnerable and at risk of discrimination at the hands of community members and even members of their own family. What is needed then, are forums where discussion can be facilitated so as to air concerns, grievances, fears, and pain, and consequently foster healing in the society.

Reconciliation ultimately involves acceptance by the community of its returning members, and conversely, the ability for returnees to once again abide by the norms and rules of their society. This is extremely important to the peacebuilding agenda, but with formal DDR processes in Sierra Leone, it was the one aspect that was least tackled. Most of the healing was left to the community and it is women's organizations that stress the need for this more than any other group. This is well suited to women, who are prominently known for their effective use of communication and their non-violent means of building peace. Women tend to foster a deeper understanding, and thereby humanize adversaries. They encourage the acknowledgement of past wrongs, being remorseful, and the granting of forgiveness. Thereafter, communities (slowly but surely) may be able to

move forward from the hurt and pain and act as an interdependent unit for the development of all.

The *Women's Progressive Movement* (WPM) deals with reconciliation to some degree by catering to the needs of Sierra Leonean children and their families. Based in Freetown, the organization was founded in 1998. Its main purpose is to locate abducted children and ideally reunite them with their families. One unique thing about the group is that their dedication to their mission goes one step further. When the parents of abducted children cannot be found or in the event that the children's families shun them, members of the WPM take on the initiative and actually adopt these abandoned children. Today, nearly every member of the organization has taken on the responsibility of adopting at least one child. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for different members to take in several children at a time (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004). The organization truly provides a great example of how reconciliation and acceptance should work. Still, the organization's mission is really threefold. In addition to encouraging reconciliation among parents and returning children, it also provides economic and social assistance where needed. Lastly, the WPM helps women to become independent. In this way, it can be seen that the WPM tackles all areas of reintegration.

One of the steps in the reconciliation process is to inform the public of the need for reconciliation, exactly what it entails, and how this can be brought about. One of the ways of doing so is through the dissemination of information through community meetings, workshops or the use of the media. People are informed of their rights, and the disgrace of atrocities is publicized. This allows the truth to emerge, and this represents a step on the ladder of reconciliation. For example, GEMS has set up a group in Masiaka

Town in the Koya Chiefdom in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone. This will act as a meeting ground for women and an opportunity for GEMS to hold mass sensitization programs on the rights of women and children, the workings of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC), and on issues of peace & reconciliation.

During one such program, representatives of GEMS participated in humanitarian relief by distributing clothing, shoes, and toys to displaced children and underprivileged persons. Following this meeting, a two-day workshop was held on the theme of Peacebuilding and Reconciliation. In all, there were thirty participants from a diverse range of groups and sectors in society. Traditional healers, religious leaders, teachers, ex-combatants, and a number of community groups were all present at the workshop (A profile, n.d.). Through the creation of a taskforce, participants vowed to continue and expand the peacebuilding sensitization program to nineteen other regions in the Koya Chiefdom. It is important to note that the sensitization workshops were held in conjunction with the distribution of aid. By offering humanitarian assistance to those in need, it forces people to come together (be they victims or ex-combatants), and this fosters the beginnings of tolerance among the community.

GEMS, in collaboration with other human rights NGOs, has continue to serve as an excellent resource in a large number of other human rights sensitization workshops at the National Workshop Displaced Camp, an institution set up to house displaced and disabled persons. In particular, with support from other NGOs like *Campaign for Good Governance* (CGG), GEMS successfully organized a two-day Peace Building and Reconciliation Workshop. On the 18th & 19th of May 2001, it was held at Kroo Bay, which is one of Freetown's most depressed and densely populated areas. Women, youth,

and elders of the community all attended. GEMS received support from other NGOs in the community so as to facilitate this workshop, which ended in the production of an Action Plan to continue with the work on peace and reconciliation (UN, 2008a).

GEMS also contributes to reconciliation by working closely with the TRC, and is actually a member of the Special Court, and chairs the TRC Working Group. The purpose of the TRC, established in 2000, and the Special Court in Sierra Leone after the war was threefold: to scrutinize the degree to which human rights were violated, to give all those involved the opportunity to share their accounts of the war, and to bring some measure of justice. As has been so aptly put: “The advantage of truth commissions is that they start a national conversation that involves all parties to a conflict (from grassroots to leadership levels), and, through focusing on the victims, truth commissions can help to restore the dignity of those who have undergone human rights violations during conflicts” (Pilay & Scanlon, 2007, p.7). By working with the TRC and Court then, GEMS encourages victims to testify to their experiences, thereby facilitating truthful discussion of the issues.

As part of their quest to sensitize the general public to the effects of violence against women, the women of FAWE also work closely with the staff of the TRC. The TRC encourages the participation and testimony of women in an effort to draw out the truth about the prevailing culture of gender-based violence in the country, which was especially visible during the war (Barnes, Albrecht & Olson, 2007). FAWE, in working with the TRC, wants to ensure that everyone knows the brutalities that were suffered by women and children (Ikenze, 2003). The organization also works closely with the TRC to change the existing laws as they pertain to women’s rights. Its hope is that the recommendations and reports put forth by the TRC will work to help heal the wounds;

through the testimony of the women to the Truth Commission and the Special Court of Sierra Leone, and by publicizing this information, the perpetrators can be brought up, and a modicum of justice for the numerous victims can hopefully be achieved, thereby contributing to the healing process.

Economic Reintegration (Capacity Building)

Building women's capacities is one of the most important stages in the peacebuilding process. The fundamental goal of peacebuilding is ultimately to build positive peace, which has already been seen to be a process of cultivating an environment where there is "coexistence on the basis of human rights, social, economic and political justice" (Murithi, 2006, p. 13). Public participation in peacebuilding is therefore very important, as it is social solidarity that will eventually bring about the positive peace and human security that is needed. Such participation will be even more effective if there is a strengthening of societal capabilities. Working to increase women's capabilities in particular, adds a vital dimension to the formula, as this encourages women to break down traditional patriarchal gender relations, thereby formulating constructive relationships in society. It affords them the opportunity to improve their social conditions and subsequently actively contribute to building peace and developing their communities. Cognizant of these facts, Sierra Leone women's groups are striving to bring about an increase in women's capacities to play a role in a new society.

Capacities can be advanced in a number of ways: through educational and training courses, economic support, and generally informing women of their rights. All these would enable women to eventually play more functional roles in the building of peace. It

is a well known fact that education is a building block of development. As is documented by the UNDP, education “has both an intrinsic value (the benefits of being educated) and an extrinsic value (the potentials that exist for an educated person)” (UNDP, 2007, p. 30). The need to support educational programs is great in Sierra Leone. Presently, the literacy rate in the country is at an exceedingly low level, especially among women in the region. The most recent figures by *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) put the 2004 adult literacy rate at approximately 35.6 percent. On average, literacy rates among the female population fall between 24.4 percent and 25.5 percent (Sierra Leone, 2007, p. 3971; UNDP, 2007, p. 31). Promoting literacy is crucial because becoming literate is usually central towards improving human security and development. Literacy means that women’s prospects of employment would increase, and so too would the probability of removing themselves from abject poverty.

Once women are literate, training can go further towards advancing their chances at becoming more engaged in their communities. Education in this respect spans a range of things: teaching them to be effective oral communicators, and endowing them with advocacy, negotiation, and leadership skills. In addition, women could be trained in how to use traditional methods of messaging, and also how to come to grips with using to their advantage modern tools of mass information systems such as the Internet and emails. This will facilitate the sharing of information and the drive to engage more women in civil society. Women need to be prepared in order to successfully contribute to this. Should they attempt to involve themselves in societal processes without the necessary training, the result would be counter-productive. They would lack the information and confidence it takes and because of this, they may not contribute as they should. If they

were to contribute, then their ideas might be overpowered by men's and eventually, the women might simply resign to the views of their male counterparts, instead of pressing through with their opinions and needs. Capacity building, therefore, is no small step in the peacebuilding process.

Building the Capacities of Organizations:

Organizations themselves seek to build their own capacities before helping other women of the community. Members of the groups must themselves be trained. The members of WIPNET are well aware that they must first equip themselves with the requisite knowledge before they can attempt to help others. This is precisely why they provide on-going training courses to all their regional officers.

In Accra, Ghana, in February 2002 (only months after the organization was formed), a regional training workshop was held. The training offered the participants, who hailed from ten West African countries, "basic conceptual knowledge on peacebuilding and built participants skills in facilitation, mediation, and negotiation" (Ekiyor, 2002b, p.1). Some months before, in preparation for the launch of WIPNET, a training manual had been produced, and during this first training session, it was used as a good framework. In-country training workshops were also held as somewhat of a follow-up to the February one. Participants of the earlier workshop in Ghana held similar seminars in their respective countries to discuss what they had learnt and to impart to local WIPNET members knowledge and skills acquired. Sierra Leone held theirs in August of that year (Ekiyor, 2002b).

WIPNET-Sierra Leone in particular has decided (within their peacebuilding activities), to focus much of their efforts on engaging and empowering rural women. Consequently, a workshop was held in early August 2002 in the Kenema region of Eastern Sierra Leone to train group members on how to go about this effectively. The Sierra Leone group also arranges regular meetings, which they refer to as “bring and share” (Ekiyor, 2002b, p. 3). These provide a good forum to discuss any relevant issues to their peacebuilding work in the country.

More recently, in preparation for the *Rural Women’s Peace Initiative* (RWPI) project, WIPNET sought to train their representatives, and in January 2005, the group organized a two-day refresher course for those participating in the program (WANEP, 2006). An entire methodology was examined and, subsequently, a framework was put in place that allowed the officers to see exactly how the *Rural Peace Initiative* should be conducted for maximum benefit to all concerned.

As part of the continuous learning process, representatives of the 50/50 group often attend brainstorming and training workshops too, so as to keep up with the latest information and best development and governing practices. They can then disseminate this information to the public and use it in the best possible way. Therefore, in 2005, representatives from 50/50 attended the *Gender Action Research* Workshop organized by Oxfam (Fifty Fifty, 2007e). The workshop allowed for the discussion of which actions are to be put in place for the promotion of gender equality, and what works best to ensure women’s empowerment in development practices. On December 16th, 2006, another training session was held in Freetown to help promote gender parity in politics, and similar workshops are scheduled for 2008 as well.

FAS too, has always been active in the role of capacity builder; it conducts training workshops to familiarize its members on the specific needs of grassroots women in the areas of reconciliation, civic education, conflict resolution, negotiation and leadership. It has participated in and organized conferences focusing on a range of themes, and has documented and disseminated (among networks) women's best practices in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. For years, this group has set good examples of how networking and capacity building can come together.

A conflict resolution training workshop in 1997 is one such example. FAS was invited by women's groups in Freetown, Sierra Leone to conduct such a workshop so as to contribute to the capacity building of women in the country. The objectives of the training included: "Understanding the root causes of conflict and how to manage them; promoting tolerance; learning and dissemination of information to others; acquiring skills in dispute resolution; developing strategies; sharing techniques; [and] resolving conflict" (Diop, 2005, p. 22). Not only did the meeting include women's groups and NGOs and displaced women in neighbouring camps, but the FAS group also met with various government officials to train them on aspects of negotiation and mediation skills and discuss with them issues of common interest to help them plan strategic alliances.

Post-conflict, as part of its capacity building agenda, FAS organized (from April 9-13th 2007) a short course on gender and conflict in Africa, with the sub-theme of the workshop focusing on human rights and transitional justice (University for Peace, 2007). Taking place at Laguna Beach in Mbodiène, Senegal, the course brought together participants (both researchers and development practitioners) from twenty African countries, including Sierra Leone, and was sponsored jointly by FAS and the University

for Peace (UPEACE). There, through lectures, field visits, and hands-on activities, participants increased their knowledge and skills in the area of gender and peacebuilding. This was a follow-up course to a previous one that had been held in July of 2006 (FAS, 2007; University for Peace, 2007). The five-day conference, held from the 17th to the 21st of the month, took place in the exact location as the subsequent one a year later. Both of these training sessions were intended to establish a solid foundation for the creation of a Master's degree programme on gender and peacebuilding. This will be part of an already existing FAS initiative at the Pan-African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development (FAS, 2008e; FAS, 2006; University for Peace, 2006).

The Pan-African Centre was established by FAS for the purpose of being a reference centre; to reinforce FAS's role in capacity building and advocacy in support of women's issues. According to FAS documentation, the centre's primary goal would be to provide:

Advanced training and research in peacebuilding and development issues with a focus on gender. The trainings will target experienced individuals, such as programme officers of civil society organisations, researchers, or political decision-makers, to consolidate their expertise in these particular domains. (University for Peace, 2006, p. 4)

The Centre hopes to emphasize the link between the three issues of gender, peace and development, and it will be devoted to this exclusively. In this regard, the Centre will particularly focus on training professionals in the areas of conflict prevention, resolution, and management, as well as mediation skills and implementing post-conflict reconstruction programmes. In every training area, the role of women and the issue of gender will be thoroughly examined.

With its motto, *empowerment, equality and development*, the SLWF was formed in 1994 (Karamé, 2004), and has at its heart the promotion and protection of women's rights. In order to be efficient at this, the SLWF conducts regular training sessions for its members and other relevant persons. In 2005, Oxfam funded the organization under their capacity-building programme to provide for the training of finance and IT staff. SLWF is also very interested in addressing gender-based violence issues in Sierra Leone, but would first need to instruct its officers and put a plan in place for how best to go about this. For this reason, the group has recently submitted a proposal to the *World Bank* for the specific purpose of acquiring funds that would finance such a project (Barnes, Albrecht & Olson, 2007).

Building the Capacities of Women through Education:

The care with which women's organizations go about self-training is the same care that they extend to building the capacities of other women/girls in society. Women's organizations understand the usefulness of education, and the reality of what not having an education can do. Consider for instance, the harrowing time that female victims or ex-combatants have coping with life when they lack education, skills and a means of livelihood. Once the war was over, many fighter 'wives' were abandoned, forced to fend for themselves and their children. Deserted by their 'husbands', shunned by their families, and lacking any useful skills, the future seemed bleak for these girls. Education and skills training offer hope.

FAWE - SL views the education of women and girls as a priority, and assists females in building up their confidence and capacities, helping them participate more

fully in their communities. Founder of the group, Dr. Thorpe is well aware of the disadvantages that girls face, and endeavours to help them overcome those. Referring specifically to females in Sierra Leone, she says that:

The cultural strain on the girl is such that as soon as she enters puberty it's time to look for a man to get married. She's also a source of income, because she brings in dowry to the family. So these are things that kept girls from continuing their education. (Davies-Venn, 2007, para. 29)

This cultural factor, along with the devastating effects that the war had on females in general has meant that many girls/young women are denied the chance at an education.

To make matters worse, in the midst of the chaos of the conflict, schools and other education centres were destroyed (sometimes deliberately). This of course meant that with these institutions gone, children no longer had a place in which to formally learn. Therefore, during the war, FAWE went about arranging Emergency Displaced School Camps for thousands of children, where basic educational subjects were taught. Between 1995 and 2002, FAWE established eleven formal girls' primary schools throughout the country in the Northern, Eastern, and Southern Provinces, along with the Western Area (Thorpe, 2006, sec. 3.2.2).

In addition to building schools and promoting education, the organization also took the opportunity to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of sexual violence and abuse. The group was active in providing information to returnees at entry points and in transit centres and at settlement camps (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2002). In so doing, FAWE was involved in imparting more than just formal education; it was disseminating vital human rights information as part of its capacity building initiative.

After the war, FAWE continued to play an active role in the reconstruction of educational and community centres, and was instrumental in building new schools for girls (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004). In realizing their plan, the group provides training in basic literacy, and allocates scholarships to girls in primary schools run by FAWE, which caters for displaced disadvantaged girls, and also for other deserving girls who would otherwise be unable to pursue their education in secondary schools. Education, along with the provision of scholarships, adds to the chances of success of these girls. As of 2006, 7881 girls were receiving free education in these institutions, through FAWE supervised scholarship schemes (Thorpe, 2006, sec. 3.2.2).

As of 2006, with the help of *Action Aid International*, FAWE also launched a program that pays particular attention to the violence against girls in school. Fifteen schools so far have been pegged to benefit from the extracurricular educational program for girls. Various school clubs will be established and used as a way to instruct both school girls and their teachers on the value of protecting girls from gender-based violence and abuse. FAWE has set its sights further still on using the program to make families aware of the wrongs of gender-based violence, in an effort to change their attitudes towards their female children. FAWE has high hopes that the program will be successful at all levels and that eventually, the rights of females and the rights of the child will be acknowledged and acted upon in their society.

FAWE's ventures, then, are broad. To be sure, they include formal instruction, yet they also incorporate other lessons that will be useful in other areas. Throughout Sierra Leone, the organization has put in place Peace Education Programs in over a dozen chiefdoms, and has helped a large number of students. With the help of more well-

established organizations like UNHCR, FAWE is also able to assist returnee women and girls in the reintegration process by providing both an education and skills at acquiring income-generating employment.

Building the Capacities of Women through Skills Training:

The organization runs a skills training and development centre for pregnant girls/girl mothers and for ex-combatants, where they are given the opportunity to learn a wide range of skills. These include vocational skills such as masonry, tie-dyeing, tailoring, craft-making, catering, carpentry, and agriculture as well as the more formal educational subjects of mathematics, literacy and civic education. All these help girls to realize their potential of becoming self reliant. Realizing that increased education and literacy can only be an advantage, and also recognizing that so many girls are excluded from this process, it should be noted that FAWE is one of the very few organizations to date that actually allows pregnant girls in the classroom. The testimonies of a few of the young women who have been helped by FAWE speak volumes.

Marion Kargbo, who had received medical treatment after the war through the organization, also benefitted from the training that FAWE provided for her. She states:

I was also enrolled at the FAWE Skills Training Centre at Grafton where I studied Catering for three years. I graduated with a certificate in Catering in 2003. I am presently attached to the Canteen and Canteen Assistant at the FAWE National Secretariat. I have now accepted by my parents. I am very happy and proud to say that I can now pay school fees for my daughter who is now four years old and also care for her and myself. I am intending to have a Canteen on my own so that I can help improve myself and my colleagues too. I will always remain grateful to FAWE. (Thorpe, 2006, sec. 4.2.1 a.)

Comfort Ballie had harrowing experiences in the war, having seen her father murdered, and having to endure rape, separation from her family, and painful medical conditions.

She explains how FAWE provided her with the skills training she needed to be self-reliant. She states:

I came into contact with FAWE through one of the tutors at the Skills Training Centre at Grafton. I was enrolled and I studied Tailoring for three years and graduated with Certificate in Tailoring. I am presently attached to one Tailoring Shop. I can now sew and earn money on my own. I have one child a son, he is now three years. I am now able to care for him though not in all cases. I am intending to have a tailoring shop on my own so that I can help my friends. I am very grateful and I will always be proud of FAWE. (Thorpe, 2006, sec. 4.2.1 b)

Isha Kamara tells a similar story of how, in the midst of despair, FAWE came to her aid:

I am a victim of war and because I have no one to help and nowhere to go I heard about FAWE Lungi. I went to the women and I told them my problem so they assisted me in going into the Skills Training Centre. I am doing Catering at the Skills Training Centre and I am in Final Year. I am now on Job Experience at the Lungi Airport Hotel. After my job training I will want to work at the Hotel to continue my career. I have gained a lot of experience during my training. I am very grateful to the women of FAWE Lungi: the Founding Chair and all my tutors who have helped me to be somebody to day. (Thorpe, 2006, sec. 4.2.1c)

Still, it is not just the girls who are grateful to the organization for its crucial work in the communities of Sierra Leone. Community leaders can see a marked improvement in their various regions. For example, Chief Bai Shebora Sheka Ballay Kumkanda II of Kaffu Bullom mentioned the dramatic transformation that he had noticed in his chieftdom.

In a recent interview, the paramount Chief declared:

Thanks to FAWE, I have seen great changes in the lives of young women in my chieftdom. The women used to carry the burden of caring for the extended family system, during the war mainly as sex workers for the soldiers. Today FAWE has changed that system. The community is now fully sensitized on sexual gender based violence. Over three hundred women and girls have been weaned from prostitution and are now gainfully employed. The community now knows that women must have their independence as well.
That women are not drums to be beaten.
That women should avoid prostitution
That women should be educated.

I have seen the young women in my chiefdom becoming educated, and being equipped with income generating skills they are now focused. I appreciate the work of FAWE and invite FAWE to extend [sic] its services to all the other communities in my chiefdom. (Thorpe, 2006, sec. 4.4.2)

Skills' training is a form of schooling that is especially useful to women, as it can lead more immediately to career development. This is why many women's groups focus on this. In the Eastern province of Sierra Leone, in Kailahun, the *Luawa Skills Training Centre* (LSTC) was founded by six women with a vision. It has since grown in size to 120 members, and its purpose is to equip women with some of the skills necessary for their success and independence. Helping women to earn a decent self-reliant living, the Centre offers such practical classes as tailoring and tie-dyeing (Diop, 2005). The Centre is well entrenched in all areas of reintegration, but its main focus is capacity building with regard to women abductees, ex-combatants, and victims. The LSTC assists these women, but operates on a kind of reciprocity. Once women learn skills and start earning a living, they are required to assist in the upkeep of the organization's work by giving some of their earnings back to the group (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004).

At the national level, PROWA also provides skills training with its accredited training centres. The PROWA Training Institution which began in Kono, but now operates in Kono as well as Freetown and Kabala, plans to open more centres in the near future (Kamara, 2004). The PROWA Training Institution is much like the LSTC and FAWE, in that it provides vocational training to women who have been adversely affected by the war. It also invites less privileged women to take advantage of their services. It encourages independence by providing training in skills such as tailoring, batik work, creative practical arts, soap making, agriculture, hair dressing, traditional birth attendance, and HIV/AIDS prevention (Slonksnes, 2003). Like FAWE, along with

skills training, PROWA also provides instruction in basic adult literacy in their centres and is one of the few groups that encourage and allow pregnant girls to participate in their programs (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004). Training can last anywhere from six months to one year, depending on the vocation chosen. Those candidates who are successful in the program graduate with certificates signed by the Minister of Education - Technical Vocational Division.

The Institution, with the help of generous grants from a number of agencies, such as the *Friends of Sierra Leone*, is able to provide a little extra help to its graduates. They are provided with start-up kits in their various fields. Slightly similar to the policy of LSTC, graduates of the PROWA institute are also expected to give back, but this time, they are not necessarily obliged to give to the institute (although the much-needed help would never be refused). Instead though, they are encouraged to serve in their various communities, imparting what they have learnt and using their skill both to their benefit and the benefit of others. Many of the graduates begin small community associations and partnerships of their own (Fanday, 2003).

Mrs. Sia Kamanda is the founder and director of PROWA, and in a 2004 newspaper interview, she spoke of the importance of education and training to aid in the independence of women. What is more, women as productive citizens could subsequently commit to helping in the growth of their societies, as “the education of women is a task that is inherently very significant and vital to national development” (Slonksnes, 2003, p. 5). Mrs. Kamanda proudly pointed to the fact that although the organization started with less than 70 girls, more than 1,000 women have now graduated from their training programmes (Slonksnes, 2003, p. 5).

SLMWA too does everything in its power to provide women with the skills and resources that would make them more self-reliant, as the organization realizes that women in Sierra Leone in general lack accessibility to land and other assets. It also recognizes that providing education and employment opportunities for women in post-conflict situations lowers their risk of victimization. The Association therefore works with women to raise their basic reading and comprehension skills. The group also provides workshops, leadership training, and civic education to help empower women in a male-dominated society (Ikenze, 2003).

In research conducted by the *Women's Commission*, it was discovered that the most successful programs were those that, like many of the ones just examined, combine education and vocational skills training so that young people can earn money while going to school, or learn literacy skills while being apprenticed in a trade. Most groups recognize the necessity for this, as girls are not only in need of an education, but are also in need of skills coupled with financial assistance, since many of them have children and families to support. All in all, with educational and skills training programs in place, the organizations are making a tangible difference in communities throughout Sierra Leone. Founder of FAWE, Christiana Thorpe, relates one personal account that plainly shows this. She states:

I would like to narrate an incident that happened once on my way back to Sierra Leone after getting a visa to attend a conference in Spain in 2004. I had to go to Guinea to get my visa for Spain. My journey would normally have been six hours, but it took twelve hours because the roads were so bad. At the border, a lady of about eighteen to twenty years of age came up to me. She carried a plastic bag, and in that bag, there were two cans of ice cold soft drinks. Since I had been travelling for so long, I was very thirsty. The young women came up to me and said "Auntie, Auntie" - that is the name we give to someone who is a semi mother. "That is for you", she said, I asked her why - and she responded "Oh Auntie, you don't recognize me. I was in your FAWE centre and did catering and

food sciences.” The girl then showed me her shop: she had a little kiosk at the border town, where she sells drinks as well as making sandwiches and selling them. Her baby, which had been in our crèche, has now been enrolled in the primary school in the area. All the fatigue caused by my journey just disappeared. I felt so happy as I could see the difference that has been made in one person’s life. What a transformation! (Thorpe, 2006, sec. 4.2.2 b)

Capacity Building through Financial Empowerment

The SLMWA also helps women through other kinds of immeasurable support; for example, by providing small micro-credit loans, which have enabled women to rebuild lives and businesses shattered by the decade-long conflict. The war in Sierra Leone severely hampered the ability of women (especially market women) to make a decent living. The SLMWA has therefore stepped in to alleviate these difficulties. Micro credit had been shown in past circumstances to be rather effective at promoting sustainable lending, and also at encouraging independence especially among women (who have traditionally been denied access to resources). Therefore, in 2000, with the help of a grant of US\$50,000 from the *UK Department for International Development* (DfID), the SLMWA introduced micro credit schemes to increase the livelihoods of their members (Solomon, 2005, p. 11).

From 2000 to 2003, the micro-credit scheme enjoyed success, with the majority of the funds (90 percent) going towards directly helping market women. Loans ranged from 100,000 Leones (Le) (the official currency of the country) to about Le 300,000. This was the equivalent of about US \$45 to US \$135 (Solomon, 2005, p. 12). The smaller loans were made available to women who sold small market items, while larger loans were given to those who engaged in the trading on a larger scale, with items such as palm oil or fish. Loans were repayable daily, approximately Le 100. This is the equivalent of

about 2 cents (Solomon, 2005, p. 12). These loans represented tangible help from the SLMWA and went a long way towards empowering local women.

Reports indicate that of those who received the funding, 70 percent gained some benefit. What is more, and indeed an indicator of success, was that 80 percent of loans were recovered. When loans were not recovered it was as a result of unforeseen circumstances (Solomon, 2005, p. 12). As loans were repaid, additional credit was offered. Women were also encouraged to save some of the money they received. They were given training on how to effectively manage their money using a savings plan, and were even introduced to treasury bonds, once interest had accumulated on their money.

Market women from the districts of Freetown, Bonthe, Bo, Kono, Makeni, Kabala and Kambia benefited from these micro-credit loans. The advantages realized were many. The credit extended to them gave them the assistance necessary to become self-employed, as well as confidence in their abilities to be self-reliant. Many of the borrowers' employment opportunities were expanded, and they engaged in trades like second-hand clothing retailing and gara tie-dying. Families of borrowers also benefited since they gained employment. It can be seen, therefore, that "the credit programme had a multiplier effect that contribute[d] to national development goals of creating economic self-sufficiency and improving the standard of living" (Solomon, 2005, p. 13).

Since the introduction of the micro-credit schemes, women have definitely become more knowledgeable and skilled in matters of the economy, the market, and their development in general. This has transformed them into being more active and more vocal on the local political front. Through increased knowledge and self-confidence, women are more eager (and able) to involve themselves in community political matters.

In this way, SLMWA has helped women to develop a sense of increased awareness and confidence, not only of their rights under the laws of their country, but also of their rights to be treated with dignity within their families and their communities (Ikenze, 2003).

The organization, GGEM, founded in 1979, is an NGO that also strongly believes in the empowerment of women, and aims to do whatever it can to contribute to advancing a gender balance in society (UN, 2008b). To accomplish this, the organization readily supports the economic growth of women entrepreneurs through improved access to micro-credit services, and also through non-financial means, such as effective networking strategies and community development training. This, it feels, is the only way to raise women's status and thereby decrease the gender imbalance in society (Sierra Leone encyclopedia, 2007a; 2007b). GGEM's members accept as true that "respect for women and increased self-confidence and independence of women starts with the possibility of earning her own income" (UN, 2008b, para. 1).

GGEM therefore supports women's groups by providing skills training and also financial empowerment. In 2002, the results of an independent external evaluator from the Netherlands showed that GGEM has indeed "achieved the promotion of women's empowerment and strengthened more equally balanced gender relationships in their work areas in relation to the mission statement" (UN, 2008b, para. 2). In the past, the group put in place training services and established loan programmes, in an effort to support ten community-based organizations in the Port Loko and the Moyamba districts. Loans were offered to female entrepreneurs of various CBOs to facilitate capacity building. Loan repayment stands at 96.8 percent, which is an excellent indicator of the success of the programme.

GGEM hopes to continue offering these services, and intends to (in the coming years), expand into new areas of the country, increase its clientele base, and provide increased credit to beneficiaries. The organization does consistent monitoring and evaluation of its activities. It has already put in place capacity building courses for its staff members (to improve the quality of its work), and is in talks with its donors and development partners to ensure that its business plans come to fruition (Sierra Leone Encyclopedia, 2007b).

Making Women more Informed and Involved in Civic Issues:

A very vital part of building and strengthening the capacities of women is educating them on their rights, and on specific policies and international resolutions that have been passed that could be potentially beneficial to them. It is often realized that not everyone has the ability to attend education or training facilities. There are many women residing in rural areas that may have no access to such facilities. Still, there are certain pieces of information that everyone should have. To this end, in order to extend their outreach to women in the rural areas, some organizations employ other means like the media.

FAWE-SL began a radio discussion programme in June 2000, titled *Leh wi tok am trait* (let's say it straight), which seeks to inform, sensitize, educate, and advise. The topics include such things as sexual harassment and violence, the effects of war on children, FAWE's volunteer programme, and risk management. Much of what is discussed has customarily been marked as taboo. However, this programme represents an excellent forum to increase awareness, to encourage discussion (even of traditionally

sensitive and taboo subjects), and to educate women, albeit on a different scale. Although FAWE (along with many other groups) are working to improve education, literacy rates in Sierra Leone remain extremely low. Therefore, radio acts as a great medium for the dissemination of information, especially among portions of the grassroots community that are still illiterate.

To cater to the populace, WIPNET has taken it upon itself to translate its training manual into seven indigenous West African languages, a project which was begun in 2003 (Ekiyor, 2003). It has also done the same with the *Security Council Resolution 1325* (WIPNET, 2004). This, it hopes, will play a big part in helping rural and grassroots women to be more informed. By making knowledge more accessible to them, these women might be able to participate more effectively in the formal processes of building peace.

WIPNET continues to work very closely with community women's groups, and has launched the *Rural Women's Peace Initiative* (RWPI), which aims at strengthening rural women's groups so that they will be able to actively play a role in tackling and preserving peace in their communities. Like so many other local organizations, WIPNET chooses to address development and peacebuilding issues from the bottom up. Their research indicates that, in general, there is indeed a major difference between the levels of involvement of women in these issues. Moreover, this difference was evident especially at the rural level, where illiteracy and insufficient knowledge posed major hindrances to women's ability to become involved. Therefore, WIPNET (with help from the *Global Fund for Women* (GFW) and the *Women Peacemakers Program of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation*) decided to launch the RWPI in 2005, which is in effect a

capacity-building initiative for grassroots women's groups and associations (Alaga, 2005). This project was begun in Sierra Leone, as well as Senegal, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire.

One major accomplishment in the area of capacity building comes from WILPF. This NGO is responsible for the creation and hosting of the website: www.peacewomen.org. *Peacewomen* consolidates and provides detailed information about peace and security issues, accounts of women's actions, news stories, women's peacebuilding initiatives, and databases of women's organizations. It is, by far, an excellent learning and training resource for all things relating to gender and peacebuilding. Other women's organizations, independent researchers and policy makers alike (in Sierra Leone and internationally) can all benefit from this valuable source of relevant information.

The 50/50 group is also involved in strengthening women's capacities, especially in the political arena. In pressing for equality, it seeks to enlighten both government officials and ordinary citizens. So, in collaboration with FAWE and the *Lawyer's Centre for Legal Assistance* (LAWCLA), 50/50 produced a shortened version of the handbook, *Unequal Rights Discriminatory Laws against Women in Sierra Leone* (50/50, 2007e). By simplifying the book, the group hopes to be able to more readily educate the public on human rights laws and discriminatory practices. Moreover, it combines this capacity building with advocacy, by lobbying Parliament for a change to existing unfair laws. Also, their magazine, *Sierra Leone Women's Manifesto*, is produced and distributed to highlight the importance of having women involved in all sectors of development and particularly in the legislative and governmental process. Furthermore, the group recently

produced their *Breaking the Barriers* publication, along with a corresponding workshop – a session designed to address why women are faced with so many obstacles to political and other involvement, and steps that could be taken to rectify this. Moreover, the 50/50 group’s constant capacity building and advocacy initiatives have definitely led to a general awareness of women’s roles in the political process, and have led the leaders of eleven political parties to consent to having women represented in their parties by at least fifty percent (Diop, 2005, p. 17).

As part of MARWOPNET’s capacity building strategies, the organization (in 2002) put in place a five-year plan for women’s economic empowerment. In addition, a women’s training workshop was held on conflict management in October of this same year, which was supported by the *Department for the Advancement of Women (DAW)* (MARWOPNET, 2005d). Capacity building efforts span many angles though. At times, it is not only about providing formal education, training, or informing women of their rights. Often, organizations work on expanding the confidence of community women, in such a way that they can effectively and practically contribute to peacebuilding.

MARWOPNET seeks to tap into women’s abilities to try to create an ‘early warning system’. One of the head Sierra Leone representatives for MARWOPNET, Nana Pratt, has explained that “We want to train women to be watchful...to know what the indicators of war are. For example, to be alert to the smuggling of drugs, the movement of small arms and light weapons, strangers appearing in their district” (Cockburn, 2007, p. 41). In attempting to make women more aware of their surroundings and get them more involved in their community, MARWOPNET is in effect acting as an empowering agent – encouraging, supporting and enabling ordinary women to have the courage to

speak up for themselves and voice their grievances to their leaders. An excellent example of this is set out by Cockburn (2007):

At the village of Yenga, near the border between Sierra Leone and Guinea, a number of Guinean soldiers and their families had entered Sierra Leone and occupied the village. At first they claimed it was part of Guinea, citing the boundaries marked on some old colonial map. Marwopnet saw the potential for violence at Yenga. They went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and eventually accompanied President Tejan Kabbah on a trip to the area where he met Prime Minister Diallo of Guinea...Diallo conceded that Yenga was indeed Sierra Leone territory. In response to the soldiers' protests, it was agreed they might stay for some more months until they'd harvested the crops they'd planted. Some months later... Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff [a lawyer and first Vice-President of Marwopnet] went down to Yenga to check that the Guineans had kept their word and crossed back over the border. She found them still there, harassing local people... [Marwopnet] now took a delegation of women from the region to President Kabbah at State House, so they could raise their concerns with him directly. (p. 41)

Had it not been for the organization, local women may have continued to be intimidated, never finding the courage to handle the situation.

In December 2007, the work that MARWOPNET was undertaking with regard to the security in their nation was recognized. At a conference organized by the group itself, and under the theme of *Women in Security: Challenges and Opportunities' in Freetown*, the Minister of Defence, Pallo Conteh, spoke of the government's interest in strengthening women's capacities in this regard, as part of the "broader goal of empowering women which is one of the avowed aspirations of the President, Ernest Bai Koroma" (CEDSA, 2008, p. 8). He went further to state that:

We have learnt that peace and security depends on the rapid response to early indications of conflict...which requires imaginative strategies, creative and flexible approaches to which our women folk have always taken the lead and yet the potential contribution of women in the sub-region remains severely undervalued. This, in my view, is what this sub-regional conference aims to address. (CEDSA, 2008, p. 8)

MARWOPNET has also organized conferences and seminars as part of their approach to capacity building. The conflict transformation youth seminar, held in Freetown, Sierra Leone from April 18 to 29, 2004 was one such seminar, attended by nearly 50 young people from all across Africa. Preceding the seminar was an on-line training course, sponsored by the *United Network of Young Peace Builders*. The seminar brought together new ideas, enabled the learning of new skills, which the youth could then take back to their respective communities and help in the process of transforming the neighbourhoods (MARWOPNET, 2005c).

Overall, FAS has always been concerned with the building of capacities, and works to promote the role of women and civil society in resolving conflicts and maintaining peace in Africa. It highlights women's initiatives, capacities, and encourages their right to participate equally in efforts to restore and maintain peace in their countries, working especially with grassroots women's initiatives. The group is even responsible for helping to mobilize women in the Mano River region, and for helping to create MARWOPNET (FAS, 2008b). Going further, FAS was instrumental in aiding MARWOPNET in drafting up a Plan of Action that was adopted in 2000. This was in an effort to help in the peace process in the Mano River region, and to foster empowerment and gender mainstreaming (FAS, 2008b).

As its name suggests, FAS is all for ensuring solidarity between women and their efforts at peace, and so by partnering with local women's initiatives, FAS strengthens those groups' efforts, rather than competing against them. This international NGO favours the creation of a new social order that guarantees women equal access to, equal responsibility for, and equal opportunity to participate in decision-making. It ensures that

strengthening women's capacities and providing them with a voice in decision-making processes also takes place at the grassroots level.

Finally, in the Kroo Bay region, GEMS has branched out to encompass capacity building initiatives in the community. With funding from *Cordaid-Netherlands*, GEMS created a new development project. GEMS uses the project to actually provide aid to those persons most in need. The project makes skills training available, empowering women through this and micro-credit loans (A profile, n.d.).

Another initiative is its *Sponsor a Child* program, which GEMS launched in October 2000. The goal is to choose one child at a time, and to continue to provide for his/her overall basic needs over an extended period of time. One such beneficiary is 12 year old Hawa Kamara who, before GEMS' help, was a displaced child beggar who sought refuge at one of the Sierra Leone Camps for displaced persons. Presently, although she is being cared for by one of her aunts, GEMS' sponsorship is provided for all her educational, medical, and sustenance needs (A profile, n.d.). This program is constantly being evaluated, and more children are being added to the list of beneficiaries.

Formal Political Involvement

It has been theorized by some that one of the reasons why women's groups are able to act in the public's best interests is that they are often not caught up in the battle for political power. Many times, this is true as most women occupied in peacebuilding are not in a political race. Even so, those who seek office tend not to do so purely for the reputation of holding a highly regarded position in government. On the contrary, women are becoming increasingly aware that it is indeed necessary for them to hold positions of

influence, as they believe that representation in politics is the best way to affect change. Hence, to have women in place within the political system and engaged in the decision-making process brings hope of positive peace. Quite a few women's groups (through their advocacy and capacity building efforts) are working to ensure balanced representation of women in the political sphere.

The 50/50 group tries to be a source of encouragement for women, by blending efforts at capacity building with running for political office. One would think that women's organizations working on behalf of women would be a welcome opportunity in any nation, and that their work would be undoubtedly well received by women themselves. This in fact is not so. Many women in the Mano River region tended to be suspicious of women's organizations; they see them as elitist and far removed from the problems of the ordinary woman. This was exactly the case with 50/50. After the destruction of war and the difficult life that resulted, women did want a change and they needed help. Yet, when help was offered, many women were apprehensive that any change could come out of it.

During the 2002 elections, several women seemed empowered, saying that they would "no longer keep their heads low but raise them high" (Diop, 2005, p. 27). Still, there were numerous others who rejected the ideas of 50/50 as "a political gimmick by women of intellectual calibre to hoodwink their less favoured kin" (Diop, 2005, p. 28). In an effort to put those fears to rest, the movement's founder, Dr. Nemata Walker, saw that the answer lay in educating women from the grassroots level on the issues of politics. Not only that, but she mentioned that they were also broadening the group's base by

extending it “to the student population of 10 tertiary institutions in the country and...developing a women's manifesto on women's concerns” (Diop, 2005, p. 28).

When Sierra Leone held its first post-conflict elections in May 2002, it was noticeable that there was a dramatic increase in the representation of women. Although there was only one female presidential candidate, Ms. Zainab Bangura of the Movement for Progress Party, there were a total of 165 women on the electoral lists, as part of the 10 political parties competing in the elections. More than half of these women “were situated in one of the top eight ‘winnable’ positions” (Diop, 2005, p. 17). Ms. Bangura ultimately received less than one percent of the vote (Diop, 2005, p. 10).

During this period, and with the support of the *British Council* and other generous donors, 50/50 went about training potential new candidates and also those involved in managing their campaigns. The organization held campaign workshops, training them in campaign skills to give them an edge in competing during elections. Nearly one hundred women were trained during this time, along with twenty campaign managers (Diop, 2005, p. 10) and “received intensive leadership and campaign training, including the development of detailed work schedules, budgets, fundraising plans and financial goals” (Diop, 2005, p. 17). In 2005, one particular training session (funded by the *Westminster Foundation for Democracy*) offered instruction on public speaking, campaigning, lobbying, and advocacy, among other relevancies (50/50, 2007e).

In the midst of this training, the women of the 50/50 group advocated for better representation for women within political parties. Eventually, their hard work paid off and eighteen women were in time elected to Parliament (Diop, 2005, p. 10). This included three Cabinet Ministers and three Deputy Ministers. This may seem like a small

number, but it represented a huge victory for women, especially since this was triple the number of women elected in 1996 (Barnes, Albrecht & Olson, 2007, p. 18). What was nice was that of the eighteen women in Parliament, eight were actually recipients of the training offered by 50/50. The group's hard work had actually materialized into substantial gains. Only a few years ago, having women in Parliament was an uncommon phenomenon. Now, they represent 14.5 percent of parliamentary seats (Diop, 2005, p. 18; Barnes, Albrecht & Olson, 2007, p. 18). While there still is (of course) much progress to be made, this is indeed an extraordinary start. 50/50 continues to prepare aspiring female politicians for the electoral road ahead.

Continuing in its quest to ensure women's full participation in decision-making processes, the group conducts frequent checks in the different ward committees in the administrative regions of the country. An assessment between the years 2005 and 2006 showed that there was not adequate political involvement of women in their various wards; instead women were inclined to resort to their traditional roles of cooking and cleaning, while the men made all the decisions as usual. 50/50 is therefore working to ensure that women know what true participation in governance really means; that the traditional destructive power relationships are removed and that power is distributed more evenly. With a grant from the *World Bank* during the 2005/2006 fiscal year, 50/50 offered training to female ward committee members, which will hopefully supply them with the necessary skills to ensure social accountability from their local councils. 50/50 also formed the *National Council of Women Councillors* so that women have a forum within which to exchange ideas for the betterment of their communities (50/50, 2007e).

WILPF-SL is also very interested in gender equality with regard to political affairs. It regularly collaborates with MARWOPNET and SLWF through workshops and is actively engaged in advocacy issues, not the least of which is advocating for balanced political representation. It organizes and participates in campaigns for the equal inclusion of women in political and other decision-making positions. Group members also participated in the monitoring of the elections of May 14th 2002 (WILPF, 2002). It is worth mentioning that a member of WILPF was actually successful in those elections and became a member of the Parliament of Sierra Leone.

GEMS also engages in campaigns advocating for women's political participation. It is part of a taskforce formed to promote the idea of the introduction of a quota system for women in local elections. After local elections, in July 2008, GEMS, together with *Campaign for Good Governance* (CGG), held a short seminar with the female candidates of these elections, with the theme: *Empowering Women for Better Governance*. It was hoped that this workshop would be useful in preparing women for the next elections of 2012. Discussed at the conference was the issue of women taking the reins of change and making a political difference. This was an exercise in capacity building, in that the thirty women present were able to converse on everything election-related, from the many challenges faced by women in the recently-concluded local elections to how civil society organizations could play a role in helping more women to participate in the political process (GEMS and CGG, 2008).

Chapter Eight: Discussion/Conclusion

The current situation in Sierra Leone is relatively stable, which gives the men and women in the region hope for a better future. However, for the still fragile peace to become sustainable, and for the country to rise up from the extreme poverty it faces now, all stakeholders in society need to be empowered and included in the political decision-making processes, and involved in the socio-economic development of the country. The women and women's organizations of Sierra Leone had an enormous impact in helping to bring the conflicts to an end by pressuring the parties to make peace and move towards democratic cooperation. During war, women's organizations responded to the disruption of social services and strategized to cope with the violence and the loss of health, education, and economic facilities. While there is a lot more work to be done, it can be seen that upon the official end to the war, the women have never ceased to continue their quest for peace and security.

The purpose of this study was to examine exactly this - the contribution of women's organizations towards peacebuilding and security, since the latter is such an integral part of the former. The research aimed to examine women's groups' social, political and economic input towards the peacebuilding process. It was noticed that these groups were in fact moving forward in facilitating security and peacebuilding in their country. All of the organizations examined here hold the belief that human security and sustainable peace is needed to effect a measure of development in Sierra Leone. All of them realize that the official DDR processes had been less than stellar in their treatment of women. All the organizations appreciate and promote the idea that in order for peace and security to be truly realized, women need to be actively involved as empowered

participants in the process. Furthermore, women's organizations realize that all aspects of peacebuilding must be addressed.

These organizations are very vocal in advocating for peace, and all the groups studied engage in this. They realize the strength in their solidarity, and through their networking abilities, increase their expertise and power to achieve positive change. It is their networking and advocacy that leads them into pursuing other facets of peacebuilding. Networking especially brings to the forefront pressing issues that need to be addressed and the best ways to go about addressing them. Of these issues, what the organizations place particular emphasis on is capacity building.

In order to bring about the *freedom from fear* and *freedom from want* that the concepts of *human security* and *positive peace* entail, no part of the peacebuilding process can be minimized nor can anyone be excluded. Therefore, in trying to redress the shortcomings of the DDR processes, which (for the most part) neglected women, Sierra Leone women's organizations seek to first include women as beneficiaries. These organizations ensure that their groups' foci are on building the capacities of other women by attending to their educational and economic needs. The vast majority of all the organizations studied directly engage in capacity building through education, skills training, and economic advancement. It was realized that in Sierra Leone, the generally low literacy rates among women, the lack of education, and the disempowered nature of women have resulted in difficulties with implementing projects, a lack of representation of females in the social and political arenas, and general developmental problems for the country as a whole. This is why education and training is so vital and why capacity building initiatives are now so extensively addressed in the country.

Women's work tends not to offer handouts to other women. What they offer is much more. Women's organizations offer the ability to be educated, at the very least, to be literate. This increases women's likelihood of a better life. More education means that this can lead to better employment opportunities. Organizations offer the chance at independence through employment, and a chance to move forward from their present situations, and in so doing, women's organizations are offering not just the hope of improvement, but the actual means with which to do so.

It can also be noticed that the groups investigated (in addition to offering traditionally feminine skills in hairdressing or cooking, for instance) offer training to women in non-traditional roles such as masonry and tailoring. The organizations recognize that women have a variety of interests and go about trying to promote the diversity of those. Moreover, it is often realized that traditional jobs do not necessarily pay that well and so training in other skills are also encouraged so that women, once trained, stand a decent chance at employment.

In particular, in covering what the DDR processes missed, women's organizations also carefully focus on reintegration approaches in their activities. They make sure that their initiatives properly consist of psychological/emotional reintegration and social reconciliation processes, which are vital in any course of action in peacebuilding. It was clear throughout the study that gender especially plays a big part in this; women's groups working with other women facilitate these processes more readily. Girls and women victims are often frightened to speak with medical or other personnel who are capable of helping them. It was found that female victims would more readily speak with other women. Therefore, women's organizations play a major role in easing the route to

getting help for so many of these women. By offering help to women, and by making the peacebuilding process more inclusive and more balanced, the process is more likely to succeed.

The research shows that women's organizations are working on every aspect of peacebuilding, whether it is social, economic or political in nature. Women's organizations embody what peacebuilding is all about: They support victims, help in the rehabilitation of both victims and perpetrators, and facilitate the forgiveness and reconciliation that is so needed. They encourage empathy for others, the banding together to share common resources, and working in a spirit of cooperation in an effort to resolve common problems. Furthermore, the women's groups studied extend their activities, as far as possible, to varied areas in the country, so that both rural and urban women can benefit.

What is demonstrated by the evidence is that women's activities can be seen as a means to an end; women's initiatives are firmly intertwined in the processes of security, peace, and development. It is known that security is a precondition for both positive peace and development and vice versa. The activities that women's organizations engage in therefore strive to put in place initiatives that foster and maintain a culture of peace. The work of women's groups is a major factor in alleviating the fear and everyday threats that especially go along with a post-conflict state. In this way, women are contributing to human security. This is a vital part of peace, which entails not simply the absence of war, but the presence and promotion of social, economic, and political co-existence and justice. In their quest to achieve positive peace, women's organizations deal with advocacy and arbitration, and also tackle issues of reintegration that are good for both

peace and development. The organizations tend to focus on bettering the lives of other women, specifically because women have traditionally been marginalized, leaving a disparity in gender relations. In expressly focusing on the needs of those that have suffered conventional societal exclusion and been on the fringes of development, and seeing to their social, economic, and political welfare, women's organizations in Sierra Leone are tackling human security and positive peace; they are working to diminish the gender gap, thereby promoting a more equitable society – one in which social justice, solidarity, and development can flourish. This work performed by women's organizations can easily be viewed then as an end in itself.

Still, women's contribution and their work as agents of change is doubly beneficial, as it also represents an end in itself on both the small and the broad scale. Through participation in peacebuilding, local women are taking responsibilities for their own development, thereby empowering themselves. This also brings forth the idea of the importance of public participation in the peacebuilding process, since as women come together in this way, social solidarity (in general) is further strengthened.

Women's organizations are working very hard to empower women and to ensure that they have access to equal opportunities. The organizations' efforts at reintegration are especially commendable. By addressing gender inequalities and working to strengthen women's capacities, these organizations have proven themselves to be great advocates of change and have been invaluable contributors to the peace process. This is reminiscent of the GAD approach, which recognized the need to focus on gender relations and on how women could be empowered. However, without a revamping of

society, which would change the traditionally biased structure, discrimination and inequalities will persist.

In examining the work of women's organizations, no one feminist theory seems to adequately encompass all their views or their work. To be sure, all the Sierra Leone women's groups recognize that there exists in Sierra Leonean society discriminatory policies and practices that need to be surmounted as a step towards equality. In this way, all of these groups share certain liberal feminist perspectives. Still, other schools of thought need to be drawn upon in order to explain the situation in Sierra Leone. Both radical and socialist feminists would want to bring forth, for instance, that patriarchy is firmly entrenched in Sierra Leone, and this is clearly noticed as a major problem in the country. In order to truly build a culture of peace and ensure equality, the removal of discriminatory policies will have to accompany the restructuring of society.

Many of the women's groups explored in this research appreciate this reality and work at promoting peace education and an awareness of human and women's rights as a first step towards cultivating a culture of peace and equality. Still, this is a small step, for in order to truly rid Sierra Leone of the inequalities that exist within its society, and thereby enhance the efforts of women's groups, there is the need for structural transformation. This brings to the fore the DAWN approach to development, which speaks of the need to construct new ways of thinking and to transform societal structures into more just and equitable societies. The work of the organizations is hugely important, and they have made remarkable contributions to security and peacebuilding processes in Sierra Leone. However, this needs to be accompanied by societal change where women's

needs are always addressed, where basic needs are basic rights, and where structures do not impede women's progress.

Challenges Faced

Women's organizations do not seem to be short on initiative or drive. All the organizations reviewed are committed to working on peacebuilding, which is evidenced by their actions and their growing membership. What is at issue is the need to overcome the societal institutional hurdles that make the 'invisibility' of the work of women's organizations possible. Women's organizations are quite capable of making valued contributions to peace and development, as this is evidenced by this thesis. However, their contributions remained largely confined to the informal sector, and they are seldom accepted as formal players in peace processes. To gain any kind of recognition and even a semblance of equity in society, women and women's groups still have to struggle.

Although *Security Council Resolution 1325* has gone a long way in officially recognizing the importance of women as agents in peacebuilding and development, this rhetoric needs to be turned into reality. Therefore, women engaged in working for peace and development have to be recognized by their governments, governmental organizations, and central international figures as being key players in the process of building peace and security. What is more, women's organizations need to be empowered by these more powerful bodies to act in this capacity. Finally, for any of this to be effectively accomplished, real institutional transformation is needed to crush the traditionally biased structures that ordinarily prevent women from advancing, especially as agents of change.

Another just as important challenge that women's groups face is finding donors to fund the projects begun and sustain their implementation. Of course, local communities can contribute through fundraising. However, in a country that is only recently recovering from war, it is obvious that local resources would be limited. Even all the good intentions and works and from locals would not be sufficient if money and other resources are scarce or absent. More international help is desperately needed therefore and this is required on a continual basis. Theories of peacebuilding actually acknowledge this.

Researchers have made it clear that international aid is necessary in order to give at least some hope of sustainability. Mind you, this is not to negate that fact that peace and security need to come from within a country itself. Indeed, this thought still holds true. The only way a country can truly achieve peace and security, and have any hope of sustaining them is if the local population is intent on bringing this about. What international help does is supplement the ideas and actions of local actors. Peacebuilding projects need to be sustained so that they can make a long-term difference. In addition, future projects that address new elements, or add to the efficiency of existing projects need to be encouraged and funded. Funding is definitely needed to provide more educational services, more apprenticeships and skills training, and more microcredit loans, not to mention more services at reintegration. Foreign aid, therefore, is the critical support that enhances local action, and more of this aid is needed for women's organizations.

Possibility of Future Study

While this study examined organizations that are more well-established in Sierra Leone, I do recognize that there are numerous other groups working in the country. Many of those are small, rural, community-based ones. However, there is a paucity of information on these. One reason for the 'invisibility' of such community organizations is that, even if they may be quite active in peacebuilding, these groups seldom document their experiences and activities, and when they do, the circulation and publication of their work is often outside mainstream circles. What is more, small grassroots organizations seldom have access to the resources that larger organizations have, and this lack of funding makes it difficult for them to widely publicize their contributions.

Despite their size however, and their limited financial resources, what information that exists on such groups points to the fact that they are still working fervently for the cause of peace and security, albeit on a possibly smaller scale. More research could be conducted, therefore, into the activities of those groups. It would be useful to conduct on-site field research to identify these organizations. By interviewing representatives of the various groups, and also the community members impacted by their assistance, it would be possible to examine and analyze the initiatives undertaken. This could be studied in an effort to identify any unique problems that rural women are confronted with, and to explore how rural groups are dealing with those problems.

As we wait for future research to address those topics, there is optimism that at least this particular study has brought forth some key issues. It has identified key Sierra Leonean women's organizations engaged in the processes of security and peacebuilding. It has showed the positive outcomes within the country that have arisen from the work of

those organizations. In removing them from the shadows, this thesis has analyzed those organizations' efforts and initiatives in the context of Sierra Leone, to be sure, but also within the framework of international literature in the fields of feminism, peacebuilding and security. Through their collective agency, these organizations' activities are directly contributing to human security and peace, and by extension, development. Their continued efforts will surely assist in the sustainability of these processes. All this has therefore made it clear that the agency of women's organizations in this regard is undeniable. It is the hope, then, that the evidence will dispel the notion of women as being only victims and allow women's groups to be recognized as being capable agents, and thereby empowered to play visibly key roles in this capacity.

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Appendix A:
List of Sierra Leone Women's Organizations Examined

Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET)

Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS)

Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET)

Forum for African Women Educationalists - Sierra Leone (FAWE - SL)

Fifty Fifty Group Sierra Leone (50/50)

Grassroots Empowerment for Self Reliance (GEMS)

Sierra Leone Market Women's Association (SLMWA)

Progressive Women's Association (PROWA)

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom- Sierra Leone (WILPF-SL)

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (WC)

Grassroots Gender Empowerment Movement (GGEM)

Luawa Skills Training Centre (LSTC)

Women's Progressive Movement (WPM)

Sierra Leone Women's Forum (SLWF)

Appendix B:
Brief Profiles of
Main Sierra Leone Women's Organizations Examined

Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET)

The *Mano River Union* was established in 1973 to foster cooperation and economic interdependence between the three states of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. Sadly, this union became more famous for its conflict than its cooperation. This insecurity led to a desperate need for peace within the region. Therefore, with the assistance of *Femmes Africa Solidarité* (FAS), the *African Women Committee on Peace and Development* (AWCPD), and the *West African Women's Association* (WAWA), the *Mano River Women's Peace Network* (MARWOPNET) was founded in May 2000. As a regional organization, it encourages the participation of women in the peace process in the Mano River Basin. Led by women of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, there are chapters in all three countries, with the sub-regional headquarters located in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The regionality of the organization is its distinct feature; the group retains its strength by working together as a unit with women across the borders of the Mano River region.

The group signifies unity among various organizations and comprises women of all walks of life, from leaders and communicators, religious and businesswomen, to rural women and rights activists. They work in collaboration with the United Nations system and the embassies of many influential countries (MARWOPNET, 2005a). The network also works with a variety of civil society organizations to achieve its goals, and is most notably affiliated with FAS, AWCPD, and WAWA. MARWOPNET acts as advocate for

women's and human rights, arbitrator between adversaries, and a formidable force in promoting the resolution of conflict and the building of peace. It participates in summits, where it draws attention to women's contribution to the peace process, and liaises with African leaders, contributing to dialogue on the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict. (MARWOPNET, 2005d).

Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS)

Recognized as an international NGO, FAS began its days more than a decade ago in 1996 “to empower African women to assume a leadership role in peace building” (FAS, 2006, p. 4). FAS evolved in response to the violence in Africa, and so is totally committed to promoting structures for equality, peace and development in Africa, and acting as a source of support and communication between African women dedicated to the cause of peace and top women at national, regional and international levels. FAS' work focuses mostly on the Mano River region, but its members consist of a wide range of prominent women from a large number of African countries, along with a staff of professionals who are based in Geneva and New York, and who are experienced in the areas with which FAS is concerned.

The group's affiliation with a number of other organizations allows it to fulfill its goals. The organization, for instance, has “consultative status” (FAS, 2008g, para. 3) with the *United Nations Economic and Social Council* (ECOSOC) and “observer status” (FAS, 2008g, para. 3) with the *African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights* (ACHPR). It is also represented in the *African Union Women's Committee* and the *Economic Commission for Africa*. Moreover, FAS presides over the *Geneva Working*

Group on Women, Peace and Security, a group that observes and tries to advance the implementation of the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325.

Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET)

The *Women in Peacebuilding Network* (WIPNET) is a network of regional organizations, formed in late 2001, and is part of the *West Africa Network for Peacebuilding* (WANEP). It networks within and has chapters in ten West African countries: Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia, Benin, Gambia, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea Bissau and Togo. It has formed strategic partnerships with *Oxfam America*, *Oxfam Great Britain*, *the Global Fund for Women*, *Urgent Action Fund*, and the *African Women Development Fund*.

Its objective is to mobilize women, encourage unity among them, to build their capacity and thereby help them in promoting human security and sustainable peace in West Africa (Ekiyor, 2002b). In this vein, the organization helps in building the capacities of rural/grassroots women in peacebuilding, and supports their actions at both the community and national levels. WIPNET supports the merging of efforts by women's groups in other regions. WIPNET also works to encourage the mainstreaming of the gender perspective into peacebuilding processes and policies, and strongly believes in the integration of women's concerns and their participation in policy formulation and implementation in peace and security issues in the sub-region.

Forum for African Women Educationalists – Sierra Leone (FAWE - SL)

The *Forum for African Women Educationalists* (FAWE) is a regional NGO that operates in thirty-five countries in Africa, and that has a geographical focus on West Africa. It seeks to provide rudimentary literacy and income-generating skills to young girls and women who have been abducted, displaced from their villages, or otherwise negatively affected by conflict. As suggested in its name, female education is a top priority for this group. Through education, the organization hopes to bridge the gap between men and women in both formal and non-formal sectors, and it is fully committed to using the application of education towards sustaining development.

The Sierra Leone chapter of FAWE was inspired by former Minister of Education, Christiana Thorpe who, in March 1995, wanted to establish a place where girls (especially female war survivors) could receive an education. FAWE-SL works at training women and girls with a range of useful programs that encourage empowerment and self-reliance. In an effort to carry out its work, it has partnered with over 30 ministerial and government agencies, UN agencies, and also international and local NGOs.

Fifty Fifty Group Sierra Leone (50/50)

The *Fifty-fifty Group* (hereinafter referred to as 50/50) was formed in 2000 in Freetown. The group, comprised of dedicated women and “supportive men” (Fifty Fifty, 2007b), works to increase the level of female participation in representative government. 50/50 would ideally like to see a change in the political arena (and a change in people’s perception), leading to an increase in the number of women in government and other

decision-making bodies. As Abator Thomas, former group president put it, “In democratic terms a government that is exclusively or predominantly made up of men cannot claim to be a government of the people, for the people and by the people” (Thomas, 2005, p. 1). Their slogan, “A woman’s place is in the House of Parliament” (Fifty Fifty, 2007a) says it all. Accordingly, the group works to provide advice, skills, and training to those women who wish to enter the field of politics, and offer support to potential political female candidates. 50/50 also works to sensitize all women on the issue of running for office, be it local or national (50/50, 2007c, Objectives). The group is also active in seeking legislation that is balanced and equally representative of the rights of both men and women.

Grassroots Empowerment for Self Reliance (GEMS)

Grassroots Empowerment for Self Reliance (GEMS), a national women’s human rights organization, was established in 1998 as a way to help women (and their children) overcome the ravages of poverty. As a member of the *National Forum For Human Rights (NFHR)*, an organization that oversees all human rights NGOs, GEMS was founded on the premise that “basic social needs are basic human rights” (A profile, n.d.), and has concerned itself with undertaking projects in underprivileged communities. The group works specifically with grassroots women. GEMS’ mission is to help bring dignity and respect to marginalized women in society by helping them to achieve self reliance (United Nations, 2006).

Ultimately, the GEMS organization would like to see a well developed society where men work together with women and are constructive partners in development.

GEMS rightly realizes that, as beneficiaries, Sierra Leoneans should be directly involved in their own development. Therefore, when planning any development strategies, the organization keeps in this mind and ensures that the people themselves take an intricate role in their growth. In this way, growth will be sustained. GEMS has both urban and rural development programmes that cover a wide range of peacebuilding issues such as human rights (with emphasis on women and children's rights) and reintegration, which include programmes in capacity building, reconciliation, psycho-social counselling, and rehabilitation.

Sierra Leone Market Women's Association (SLMWA)

The *Sierra Leone Market Women's Association* (SLMWA) is a community-based organization that now operates nationally. It was established in 1996, as an offshoot of the Petty Traders Association, when some female members became disgruntled with the discriminatory way in which they were treated. At the time, the Petty Traders Association was the largest group operating on behalf of traders. However, the women of the organization found that although they paid their membership dues and gave just as much as the men of the group towards imports of food from Guinea, they (the women) did not benefit on an equal basis. Therefore, they branched off and formed their own organization in the hope of finding some fairness. Today, the SLMWA has blossomed into an organization of 6500 strong (Solomon, 2005, p. 9).

The Association works to protect and promote the rights and interests of women in communities. It is a sisterhood that lends support (in various ways) to women and their children (Centre for Conflict Resolution, 2006). The organization's main goal is to bring

together all women in post-war Sierra Leone to fight against the rampant poverty that exists. It aims to unite all Sierra Leonean women and to support their children's education. It is involved in assisting in economic growth, advocacy, community mediation, and human rights education (especially as it relates to protecting women's rights). It accomplishes its tasks by allying itself with different groups, most notably the *Global Fund for Women* (GFW), which is a generous donor.

The Progressive Women's Association (PROWA)

The *Progressive Women's Association* (PROWA) is a national women's organization in Sierra Leone that was formed in November 1991. PROWA operates primarily in the Kono district of the country (in the Eastern province), an area that has been heavily impacted by the prolonged civil war. Kono was one of the many strongholds of the RUF, and it was the last area to go through the disarmament process. As a result of this, the negative effects of the war were even more prominent in this area. Years after the official end to the war, the wooded parts of the area were still home to recently freed girls. Not surprisingly, they were in dire need of assistance - social, psychological, and financial. PROWA realizes these needs and is concerned with providing opportunities for female ex-combatants so that they may eventually be independent and productive members of society (Kamara, 2004).

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom-Sierra Leone (WILPF- SL)

This non-governmental organization operates on a national level in Sierra Leone, but is part of a wider international operation, and is actually the oldest women's peace organization in the world. It was founded in April 1915 in the Hague, the Netherlands, by

some 1300 women from Europe and North America (Cockburn, 2007; WILPF, 2008).

WILPF has consultative status with a number of UN agencies, including the *United Nations Economic and Social Council* (ECOSOC), and the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO). It also has special relations with the *International Labour Office* (ILO), *United Nations Children's Fund* (UNICEF) and other organizations and agencies.

WILPF established an office in Sierra Leone in 1996. It brings together women who share similar views and are determined to bring about and sustain peace. It strongly believes in negotiation and the reconciliation of warring factions as being an important part of any peacebuilding activity, and is committed to non-violence in achieving its goals. The group supports civil society organizations and seeks to promote social, economic and political equality among all persons, and it rightly realizes that exploitative systems will never be able to accomplish this. It participates in international debates on peace and security issues, works to bring about total disarmament and other features of conflict prevention and reconstruction, and is determined in its fight for the promotion and protection of human rights. It lobbies governments on local, national, and international levels. It mobilizes women everywhere on the basis of peacebuilding, develops education and action tools, puts together conferences and seminars, and ensures that the gender perspective is always put front and centre.

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (WC)

Founded in 1989, the WC has been committed for nearly twenty years to addressing the needs of women and children who can be categorized as either refugees or

internally displaced persons (Women's Commission, 2008c). The organization engages in field research, traveling to various countries so that WC members can witness for themselves the realities of local people. They work specifically in a number of war-torn countries, Sierra Leone being one of those. The WC identifies problems and then proposes solutions to these, writing guidelines and training manuals to help other humanitarian groups in their practical work. The WC also lobbies governments, the UN, and aid agencies alike in an effort to change legislation and policies affecting refugees and displaced persons so as to improve their lives. Through its advocacy efforts and detailed research, the organization seeks to provide help to the millions of refugees and IDPs worldwide, who would otherwise not have a voice in their development (Women's Commission, 2008b).



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