PARALLEL GENDER REPRESENTATION IN ISSUES OF CONFLICT RELATED VIOLENCE: A PRE-REQUISITE FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES

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Abstract
Peace building in the aftermath of war related violence is a prerequisite for the development of post conflict societies. More often than not, women are assumed to be the only victims in cases of gender based violence and rarely is consideration given to the problems of men who inflict pain on women and the possibility that they are as much the victims of the system as are their women counterparts. Unfortunately, Peace negotiations invariably feature a predominance of males and so women are not adequately represented thereby bringing an imbalance to the outcome of the process. The plight of women as the sole oppressed has been long-sung and perhaps it is time to adopt a more inclusive approach to the subject of gender violence; one that gives equal importance to the men also, as victims of violence. This paper therefore brings to light the trauma of men from the conflict zone and highlights their problems as victims of social pressure and how their displacement by women in the post conflict environment may be responsible for their violent actions against women. The work makes use of existing literature as a source of data and aims to bridge the gap on the need for a parallel approach in the resolution of gender based conflict and violence.

Keywords: **Gender, Peace building, violence, sustainable development, parallel considerations**

Introduction
The aim of this paper is to prove that although women suffer far more than men in violent conflict situations, the negotiations tend to feature a greater involvement of men rather than women; to prove that men also suffer as victims of war when they suffer psychological displacement in addition to Post traumatic Stress Syndromes and other forms of violence; to submit the causes of short-lived gender violence resolution in post-conflict arena as traceable to the tilting gender biased profile of women as the only victims; to link this bias in gender posturing to the impasse in Gender and Development programs, which does not make a case

for a more inclusive negotiation which addresses the interests of the male in addition to the female in the interest of sustainable peace building and development in conflicted communities. Towards this initiative, we attempt the definition of key concepts which form the basis for this paper, beginning with gender, which according to Kottak (2008) refers to the culturally constructed differences between male and female. Gender roles are defined by the functions which a culture assigns to the different sexes, while stratification of gender refers to the unequal distribution of resources and rights between the genders. Gender stratification has been identified as being common in patriarchal societies in which women have inferior social and political status, relative to matriarchal ones. The tensions which arise as consequence of this unequal distribution of power across genders may be defined as 'conflict' but the formal definitions by Brand Jacobson (2002) are adopted because of the more detailed explication of the concepts. The most important of these are the concepts of 'conflict', which is defined as a situation that occurs when people feel there is an incompatibility between their goals, and when needs are unmet and expectations unfulfilled. Conflicts are also a normal consequence of development and social change as these processes influence and change existing social relations as well as patterns of power, (see http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/).

War as State Validated Violence
Violence is anything that inflicts harm, damage, pain suffering and sometimes even death- psychological, emotional, and physical (Brand Jacobson 2003). Structural violence, on the other hand is the violence built into our political, social and economic systems. The different allocation of goods, resources, power, opportunities are built into the structure governing their relationship. The next is 'direct violence'. This is understood as violence that is carried out by an actor and is the most commonly identified form of violence. In this case, there is an easily discernible causal relationship between the perpetrator, the act and the victim. Furthering on the concept of violence is 'cultural violence', described as aspects of cultures, values and social constructions which legitimize and enforce violence, thereby making it seem right and acceptable. It has also been observed that cultural violence becomes increased during communal conflicts such as wars, during which the men of patriarchies transfer domestic violence against women to the conflict zone in escalated levels.

However it is a documented fact that structural violence is far more common. In a study of systematic neglect of females, Barbra Miller (1997) describes women in Northern rural India as "the endangered sex". Societies in which full-fledged patrilineal, patrilocal complex is established and which is replete with warfare and inter village raiding, typifies a patriarchy. In modern patriarchies, violence is structured around the ideology of militarism; an ideology which confers positive values in its formalized form within the political entity. Within the state, violence is coated in such virtues as "courage", 'heroism', 'valour' and 'patriotism'. As a coercive ideology, the male ego is manipulated by a philosophy which suggests that the highest level of patriotism is that which demands the 'protection' of the land against the 'enemies', and be prepared to die, if necessary, for this ideal. To achieve this, the enemy is conceptualized by the state as an enemy that will destroy the citizens if they do not take the initiative and in this way, the state lends legitimacy and romance to war as the soldiers are desensitized to the murders committed on the battlefield in the name of defending the honour of their land. In this way, a soldier is portrayed as a warrior who "self-sacrificially" protects women, children and others who are "in need" of protection. This is used as an important motivator and fundamental basis for military recruitment because the concept of "protected" is crucial to the legitimacy of force and violence. Subsequently, because a protector needs to have an object of protection and something worth fighting for; when men are sent to war to fight for their home and country, they are told the aim is to protect their womenfolk from defilement by enemy men. Women are thus perceived as objects that need protection and are become instruments for the creation of pressure and guilt in their menfolk if there are any doubts about war. These men therefore believe they serve the interest of their women when they go to war, though it is ironical that the opinion of women is never taken into consideration in the discussion of war agenda by the state, (UN, 2003). Women rarely accept the ideology that people on the opposition side are enemies and in fact, the tendency is to empathize with women on the other side as fellow mothers and wives of men at war, a concern legitimizes their connection with each other, irrespective of coercive political assertions to the contrary. Thus any war agenda of the state rarely receive the support of women.

Moreover, in the aftermath of conflicts, within which women are profiled as victims, the reconciliation process is not always successful, especially in terms of achieving sustainable peaceful settlements. This impasse may be attributable to the simplistic and generalized view of the men as the aggressors on the one hand, and the categorization of the women as victims on the other hand, without delving sufficiently into the root causes of the actions of men from conflict zones and trauma as the major cause of their actions especially as it relates to violence against women. If real progress is to be made, therefore, gender inequalities and the

problems which arise from the phenomenon should ideally examine the problems of all gender groups from the onset of peace negotiations with an open mind. One can understand the apparent focus on women as the main victims (and sometimes it would seem, the sole victims) because the birth of gender itself is a field that arose as a result of the socially endorsed inequalities that has caused much suffering and neglect of women over the centuries. However, since peace building is predicated on the coexistence of both genders in the post conflict environment, it becomes imperative that such negotiations should examine the role of culture, socialization, and the intersections of these with war and gender violence, with particular emphasis on patriarchal societies.

The Deconstruction of Gender in Conflict Situations

Post-war and post-conflict societies provide outlined socially defined spaces with an open direction of development. The results are conflict initiated urbanization, social differentiation, changing patterns of social cohesion and *gender deconstruction*, all acting as catalysts for future development in such societies (Kaldor 2001, Munkler 2002). During conflicts which initiate the absence of men in patriarchies, the women have to fall back on their own skills and wit to fend for families. This need for survival in the absence of the men suddenly expand women's private and public spheres and roles and provide the opportunity to organize formal and informal local groups with the aim of providing relief to vulnerable populations of mainly women, the elderly and children. As the men are busy either fighting on the frontlines or at home, hiding from the police to avoid forced recruitment, women take advantage of their traditional invisibility to create a space of awareness and social relevance for themselves. The war situation subsequently results in the redefinition of traditional gender roles in favour of women which invariably, leads to their empowerment. They become newly committed women leaders who are able to assume leadership of their communities in the aftermath of the war. According to Slapsek (2000), since women have multiple roles, it is very difficult to draw the line between women as victims and women as agents of change within the society. They can be at the same time victims but also agents of important change and usually bear these mutual roles. Their roles merge and make complex the task set before society: to be recognized not only as victims but also as autonomous individuals who are capable to take action and demand change. In the absence of the men, the traditional identities of women are reshaped and engaged by national authorities most of which are men in the interest of successfully completing national projects and it seems that their identities which had only been useful as procreators of children within the culture is almost forgotten. For the men returning home from the conflict zone, the shift in role playing can create tensions that affect the dynamics of gender relations. The man who believes that he has gone to war as a sacrifice for the women of his society suddenly finds himself displaced from his position as leader of his family. His primary role as bread winner has been taken over by the woman, creating clashes in masculinity roles and interests. This results in frustration, anger and bitterness, especially when the man has to rely on his wife for sustenance. The woman on the other hand is reluctant to give up her hard worn freedom from the oppressive norms of patriarchy under which she had labored for so long. The men find it hard to understand, much less accept the new identities that the conflict had created in women.

Gender, Peace Building and Development in Post Conflict Societies

Conflict resolution is a process of resolving conflict designed to build relationships and address the roots of conflict through such tools as dialogue, mediation and negotiation (Schirch 2004). Reconciliation means different things to different people (Pankhurst, 1999). The process may take in several stages of activities, action and stakeholders within one region. It has been suggested that it should include public hearings, retributive justice practice, rituals of symbolic acts of forgiveness and possibly material compensation to be made by the offenders, where desirable by the parties. Invariably however, irrespective of the means chosen for settlement, the mediators are almost often men, on a universal level (Pankhurst 2000). Women are subsequently, thus marginalized as the negotiations exclude them from the peace process as a direct result of culturally gendered politics in favour of the men. Reconciliation is a sensitive process and has special significance and meaning for women which may differ from the value for the men. A case in point is that amnesty does not mean the same thing for men and for women. For a man, it relieves them from responsibility and accountability for criminal actions, especially those committed towards women, and they may never realize or understand the severity and effect of crimes committed towards women. On the other hand, amnesty leaves women vulnerable for further attacks, particularly when the attacker was a former neighbor, as is often the case in civil wars. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Europe as well as Burundi in Africa there are around ten thousand people suspected of committing war crimes who still enjoy

freedom, live and work in the country, (Sarajevo, 2005) All of them live next to their former "enemies" and victims.

More importantly, women are sexually vulnerable during a conflict in the way men are not. They suffer abuses that are rarely inflicted upon men such as mass rapes, enforced pregnancies or sex slavery. Their experience of the conflict demands special attention because it is different from men's. For these women, reconciliation should acknowledge the gender specific violence so that perpetrators are appropriately punished. However, punishment does not have to be necessarily retributive in its nature, it could be restorative. Instead of systematic punishment justified on grounds of the wrongdoing committed by a criminal and addressed by the action against criminal, restorative justice strives to achieve reconciliation between crime victims and the persons who have harmed them through the use of various non-conflict resolution forms (Hoffer, 2005). Also, for war widows, reconciliation can include compensation and application of inheritance and family laws that recognize them as main family providers (Bloomfield, 2005). Women's suffering should be publicly recognized as women often do not have political and social power to address their concerns. Even where they are given space to address their abuses, women feel uncomfortable speaking about sexual abuses in public hearings with males, their family, or community members present. Although quite successful, the South African model established by Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was not gender sensitive. The debates were weak on extracting the truth about women. According to official statistics of who made statements to the Commission, more than 55 per cent were women; however they only talked about experiences of their menfolk and their children (Sooka, 1999) Women did not talk about their own experiences, about themselves. In general, men spoke directly about their own experiences while women, for the most part, addressed suffering of others, often men and children. According to some researches, some women did that intentionally in order to "bring out" their "son's story" since "men spoke about themselves when they come to the truth commission." Therefore, they think it is them (women) who should bring these stories, as there is no one else to do so (Hoffer, 2005)

It is important to note that while reconciliation can bring relief, it also can bring shame and social stigmatization for women and so the action of publicly testifying for women and girls, to a large degree result in shame and social alienation for them; and not only for themselves but for their family members as well. This might have fatal consequences for women's future as they may become ostracized from their communities, be targeted for rape or doomed to spinsterhood as unfit for marriage. Therefore, a woman would chose to keep the secret of her abuse and remain a respected member of her community than initiate the valid prosecution of a perpetrator and be ostracized. Women might decide not to talk during these hearings which would explain the yawning imbalance in against female victim witnesses. In addition, even when they decide to speak up and risk social shame and their safety, they can encounter legal difficulties as in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina law which considers rape only as being male organ penetration. Therefore, the woman who had an AK-47 shoved up in her genitalia was not legally raped. Instead, the perpetrator committed an *indecent* act (Infoteka, 1999)

Furthermore, almost all peace processes exclude women from the negotiations among conflict parties. Therefore, women's needs are not adequately addressed during final peace agreements that often have long-term impact on future society. Peace agreements are not just about establishing a cease-fire but they are a framework for rebuilding and restructuring a whole war torn society. Men are involved in creation of reconstruction plans, which are very often gender blind while at the negotiating table, they are usually interested in the allocation of land and the new powers in the future state. Thus, issues of power distribution in the new government which will invariably consist of men is paramount importance and issues concerning women is often far below the priority scale on the reform agenda. Moreover, while transitioning from war to peace, men still keep high-masculinized society in which budget and all sources are tend to be allocated primarily to "security issues". In Bosnia and Herzegovina, both national and international community (all men) has been primarily concerned with establishing the national army and international security forces. In this way, they (again) brought into the country large scale, heavy duty weapons and military funding consume huge sums that could be used for such reconstructive projects such as health and education. It is clear that men either do not see or turn a blind eye to the need for a formal recognition and acknowledgement of gender transformation that occurred during the war. There seem to be a reluctance to recognize the strengths of women because this might be seen as threatening to the preservation of the norms of the patriarchal society.

Again, the effects of militarism are hard for women before and during the conflict but especially in the post-conflict period. Men returning from battlefields transfer their power to inflict violence from the war zone to their family and to their wider community. Reconciliation cannot be imposed by outside actors. Peace builders have an important role to play in any reconciliation process, but only after acknowledging the

traditional ways of addressing justice and forgiveness within a community. As a long-term process, reconciliation requires time and patience. Rehabilitation of victims and reconciliation between victim and perpetrator cannot be satisfied immediate after violent conflict (Kurtenback 2001). If the need for change and reconciliation is not internalized, there is likelihood that change would be temporary.

Reconciliation and Development in Post Conflict Societies
The word development is used in relation to industrialization of a country or persons. The tendency to see women as only victims in conflict situations has tended to down play the changes which the very experience of war has produced in them. In the absence of their men, women are left to fend for themselves and make decisions which hitherto had depended on the man. The woman, encompassed all around by physical pain and psychological trauma, emerges from her challenges and is redefined and becomes independent and confident. In the absence of the man at war, she is the bread winner and sole provider for the family, (Meintjes, S., Pillay, A., and Turshen, M. 2001). The displaced man from the war zone feels displaced, consequently. The mediation of peace should be sensitive to the fact that violent men in patriarchies often act in compliance with an established system which endorses their action, and that it is in fact possible for a man without violent tendencies to be deliberately violent in order to attract social respect within the patriarchy. Building a culture of peace is a process that should involve both men and women to question different types of violence, injustice and discrimination. Also, they should bear in mind that security cannot be measured through arms and guns but by measuring levels of understanding among people. If the men in power continue to perceive women primarily as victims, war widows, or heroic mothers, we have little room for post conflict social transformation (Cynthia E, 2002). In order to change this perception women have to play an important role as well. They also sometimes expose only their role as a victim and by doing so; perpetuate gender stereotypes about women solely seen as victims. Indeed, women are victims of the war but they are also survivors. However, women are often perceived as passive victims due to wide range of violence they experience during the war. Media repeatedly highlights information that describes the abuses women endure during the war while ignoring the actions taken by women as autonomous actors, while neglecting that of the men. As a result, the men process their trauma in private and many end up in psychiatric wards with post war trauma syndromes (PTS). Unfortunately, it is fellow men that negotiate the settlement of grievances, while the women are left out. This brings about a negative imaging of women with serious consequences for the understanding of the varied types of impact that war has on men and women and also impedes the recognition of creative and new solutions that women might propose.

Subsequently, post war agenda of reconciliation which is tenuous and brief is traceable to several levels of unequal representation in post war negotiations. The first is the fact that while women are rarely in support of war agenda, they nonetheless experience a disproportionately higher degree of suffering as a result of the violence than do the men. This should naturally entitle them to relative representation in the negotiations and reconciliation process, but sadly, this is never the case as they are often not directly included. Again, the fact that men are also victims is rarely considered on the platform of reconciliation, despite the fact that it is fellow men that constitute a greater number in the membership of negotiators. Consequently, the underlying empathy of men for their fellow men as victims may not produce objective judgment which can establish sustainable peace, and this should be the first step towards the attainment of a sustainable unified peaceful resolution.

Conclusion
As a step towards cooperative and sustainable development, it is important that negotiators consider the plight of men as victims of social conflicts, and on this basis, adopt an inclusive gender participation, especially one that is sensitive the needs of the male gender in the interest of lasting and cohesive development in post-conflict zones. As Slapdek(2000) notes,

> Being dependent on women's income might be quite frustrating and humiliating for men. Therefore, reconciliation processes should recognize gender issues, relationships between men and women, in addition to cross-ethnic and religious issues that might have been the initial causes of the war. Reconciliation should reach all levels of a community.

> Long term separation from women prevented men to observe and rationally accept that women got another, more active role and proven that they are able to undertake male role in the family. The majority of men, after coming from war fields are jobless; their increase in usage of alcohol and practicing domestic violence becomes apparent (Nikolic-Ristanovic 2002).

Again, as a result of the endorsement of violence against the 'enemy', including the sexual abuse of their women, many sexual offenders did not feel remorse for their actions. Without admission of guilt and remorse from offenders, we cannot preach forgiveness, this being the first steps toward reconciliation. If reconciliation is the end goal of conflict resolution, how can the unrepentant attitude of the men be resolved? Obviously, sustainable peace as a precursor for development cannot take place without the settlement of these issues.

A study of the worldwide grassroots projects of civil societies would reveal the overwhelming population as the majority of those affected in conflict situations and that they are therefore more eager to be involved in the process of truth and reconciliation. This is justified by the fact that a great number of NGOs that emerge during wars and other conflicts are initiatives of women. It is troubling, therefore that reconciliation activities are initiated by men as former soldiers between fellow men through public witnessing at which men talk about their experiences and regret for their actions towards one another men. It is important that in these forms of hearings, men should also demonstrate remorse for their actions against women by publicly apologizing to them, considering what great effort it costs a woman to summon courage to appear at these forums. In addition to the destructions that war brings in itself, it also acts as a catalyst for the break down of the patriarchal structures of societies that have confine the civil liberties of through the denial of their human and political rights. Hence, war becomes a catalyst that creates new spaces and generates new beginnings that undermine traditions and customs imposed on women in order to control their behavior in patriarchal societies. (Turshen 1998). A new conflict arises as the demobilization of male combatants initiates a simultaneous and parallel process of "demobilization" of women from their newly acquired roles of the war time. Men assume that with stripping of their military clothes and arms, they should reclaim their status prior to the war and that women should do the same and give up their painfully acquired roles of economic freedoms and independence. This reintegration of demobilized combatants and demilitarization of patriarchy clashes with women's acquired freedom during a conflict and their wishes to preserve it.

Finally, return to peace for women usually means return to the gender status quo that is irrespective of the nontraditional roles assumed by women during conflict. How to keep and consolidate the gains made during the conflict is as much a challenge for women as it is for the men coming home to find themselves displaced without an alternate role available for them. Many ex-combatants coming home from the war front expect a hero's welcome only to find themselves displaced from their domestic and public spaces by the women for whom they believe they have been fighting for. As Andrea Cornwall, (2007) states,

by disregarding the complexities of male experience, by characterizing the men as the 'problem' and focusing on women-in-general as 'the oppressed', development initiatives that aim to be gender aware can fail to address effectively, the issues of equity and empowerment that are crucial in bringing about positive change….domination as a male gender characteristic, for instance is not necessarily a male monopoly and in any case, a man's dominant streak is dependent on a given relationship as son, brother, father, wife and so on. In all these instances, he is sometimes submissive and dominant at others, depending on the cultural expectation.

We should therefore work to disconnect "courage" from "violence" as well as ambition from domination and exploitation (Connell 2002) Courage is not synonymous with violence just as success and power should not be used as domination over the less powerful and weak members of society, particularly, women. Both men and women have the potential for peacemaking and the responsibility to build and keep the peace. Our common task should be not to abolish but to reshape gender roles, by recognizing the fluidity of role play that can emerge as a result of social upheavals which place a demand on us as humans, not as male or female and all gender in-between, but as a symbiotic union in search of total growth of our world. In order to achieve this, we have to promote peace education not only in schools but also in other arenas such work places, community organizations, labor markets, mass media, science, and within family relationships.

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