

# International Journal of Gender Studies (IJGS)

**Gender mainstreaming in the IGAD II SUDAN peace process**

**Eunice M. Ndonga**

---

## **Gender mainstreaming in the IGAD II SUDAN peace process**

**Eunice M. Ndonga**

**University of Nairobi**

**Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies**

[eunice.ndonga@yahoo.com](mailto:eunice.ndonga@yahoo.com)

### **Abstract**

Gender mainstreaming is generally defined as a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. This requires careful consideration of the implications, for both women and men, of actions, policies and programmes. In earlier peace processes, there was no particular attention to women's needs, experiences and capacities, and thus „gender mainstreaming“ came to be used to mean a focus on so-called „women's issues“. But current research and policy tend to include men's special needs as well, and point to the fact that sustainable peace can be obtained only if both women's *and* men's issues are taken into consideration

**Keywords:** *Gender, mainstreaming, IGAD II, Sudan peace process*

## 1. Introduction

*Gender mainstreaming*<sup>1</sup> is the term used for deliberate policies and actions to ensure a focus on gender and women's issues, and the engagement of more women personnel in a peace process. The aim of this contribution is two-fold: it will describe the torturous path towards the recognition of gender mainstreaming as a tool in the delicate work for peace and security on the international level; it will then focus on the elements of successful gender mainstreaming – and what may still hamper its implementation.

Gender mainstreaming is generally defined as a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated<sup>2</sup>. This requires careful consideration of the implications, for both women and men, of actions, policies and programmes. In earlier peace processes, there was no particular attention to women's needs, experiences and capacities, and thus „gender mainstreaming“ came to be used to mean a focus on so-called „women's issues“. But current research and policy tend to include men's special needs as well, and point to the fact that sustainable peace can be obtained only if both women's *and* men's issues are taken into consideration<sup>3</sup>.

### 1.1 Gender mainstreaming as a quality-improving strategy

As we have noted above, the UN system generally defines „gender mainstreaming“ as a strategy aimed at addressing the concerns and experiences of both women and men. Mainstreaming gender into peace-building processes – also when the focus is on women only – necessitates assessing the implications „...for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in any area and at all levels.“<sup>4</sup> Four closely interrelated dimensions characterize successful gender mainstreaming: gender balance, gender awareness, cultural sensitivity and local knowledge.

#### 1.1.1 Gender balance

On the relief/work/peace operation side: in all groups and committees planning or carrying out a humanitarian assistance/ post-conflict programme, there should be a gender balance – on all levels

---

<sup>1</sup> *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations*, Lessons Learned Unit, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UN, July 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Louise Olsson, „Gender Mainstreaming in Practice: The United Nations Transitional Assistance Group in Namibia“, in Olsson & Tryggstad, eds. (2001), pp.97–110.

<sup>4</sup> Sumie Nakaya (2003) „Women and Gender Equality in Peace Processes: From Women at the Negotiating Table to Postwar Structural Reforms in Guatemala and Somalia“ in *Global Governance* 9 (2003), pp.459–476, at p.462.

and in all stages of the work – to ensure that the needs and concerns of women are taken into consideration. For the benefit of the reconstruction of the civil society, these issues should be included from the very beginning of the process.

On the host-society side: local women on all levels should be integrated into the process, and their voices heeded from the first day. It must be borne in mind that „women“ do not constitute one single, homogeneous category, but are individuals who may have varying needs and aspirations<sup>5</sup>. Ensuring a gender balance among the international personnel – preferably fifty per cent women – will not in itself guarantee that more attention is paid to gender issues. It is necessary to provide training for both women and men in the following three areas that are also fundamental in successful gender mainstreaming:

### **1.1.2 Gender awareness**

By this it is meant the ability to recognize and integrate a gender aspect into each and every activity. It is a combination of gender analysis and equitable action, aimed at improving the situation of the target group: individual, family, community or society. It includes awareness of changes in gender roles and the consequences of these on the relations between women and men. For instance, it has been found that domestic violence tends to rise among refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as on the return of combatants to their families<sup>6</sup>. This will in turn have an impact on women's security and their capacities as agents in the peace-building process. This calls for both women and men peace operators to be trained in gender awareness.

### **1.1.3 Cultural sensitivity**

Peace and humanitarian operations usually take place in countries with cultural values different from those of the international personnel. For the success of the mission, it is important to avoid cultural conflicts with the host society. Such conflicts often concern contacts between foreign male personnel and local women. This is not to say that contact between international personnel and all members of the host society is to be avoided, however: it is indeed necessary and desirable. International personnel on their side often wrongly assume that women's roles in a host society (above all in Muslim societies) are restricted to the private arena, and that they therefore are not in a position to act as partners. The challenge is to find ways to work together with local women without violating local norms<sup>7</sup>. Ensuring the presence of women among the international personnel

---

<sup>5</sup> For further development of this point, see Nakaya (2003), pp.461–463.

<sup>6</sup> Julie A. Mertus (2000) *War's Offensive on Women: The Humanitarian Challenge in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan*, Bloomfield, CT., Kumarian Press, Inc., p.97.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, Mark Malloch. **Gender Mainstreaming at UNDP**. UN New York, 23 September 2004. This is a statement by Mark Malloch Brown, UNDP Administrator, to the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board on gender mainstreaming at the UNDP. Available via the UNDP website:  
<http://www.undp.org/dpa/statements/administ/2004/september/23sept04.html>

– on all levels and in all functions – is one way to do this. All personnel have to be trained in cultural sensitivity – and in ways of overcoming eventual cultural barriers to good co-operative working relations<sup>8</sup>.

#### ***1.1.4 Local knowledge***

Different conflicts have different dynamics and characteristics. This is a point that international assistance should take into consideration, in planning and in implementing peace operations. This is equally true for the civilian population, including the women. In wartime, the majority of the killed, the disappeared and the prisoners of war are men, which mean there will be a majority of women, and of female-households<sup>9</sup>. In post-conflict Rwanda, for example, women comprise seventy per cent of the population, and fifty per cent of the households are headed by women. The role of women in the peace-building process and – equally important – the massive demographic changes – have necessarily had repercussions on the situation of women. Five ministers and 25.7 per cent of the Members of Parliament are women, as are thirty per cent of the Gacaca court judges. On the other extreme, many of the women who were raped during the genocide and infected with HIV, are now – nine years later – starting to die, “causing a crisis at the family level as so many of them are single household heads, and at the level of state infrastructure as women had assumed a greater role.”<sup>10</sup> This situation will be reflected in the needs and the capacities of the women of Rwanda in their further participation in the postconflict reconstruction of society.

There may be important disparities in needs and capacities between women from the educated elite and women from poorer segments of society. In Africa, however, it would seem that, whereas mainly women from the elite form organizations, these organizations then function across societal dividing lines. One good example is MARWOPNET – a network of women’s organizations in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, established in May 2000 to contribute to the search for regional peace and security. To date, MARWOPNET’s most notable achievement is its success in bringing the heads of state of their three countries back to the negotiating table in 2001.<sup>11</sup>

## **2. Lessons drawn from gender mainstreaming in the peace processes of other countries**

The PFA calls for Governments to establish National machineries for the implementation of the platform. There is also a call for collaborative efforts between NGO’s and Government agencies.

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Barriteau, Eudine. "Engendering Development or Gender Mainstreaming? A Critical Assessment from the Commonwealth Caribbean." **Feminist Perspectives on Gender and the World Bank**. Eds. Edith Kuiper and Drucilla Barker. London: Routledge. Forthcoming December 2004.

<sup>10</sup> *Gender Profile of the Conflict in Rwanda*, UNIFEM/WomenWarPeace.org, n.d.

<sup>11</sup> Africa Recovery, February 2003, p.17.

There have been several national initiatives to increase the participation of women in the National Peace processes. In selected African Countries that have experienced conflicts, women's groups have taken up bold and effective strategies to ensure their participation in the peace process. During the inter-Agency Best Practices in Peace Building and Non-Violent Conflict Resolution Conference in Addis Ababa in 1998, several case studies were revealed<sup>12</sup>.

In Liberia, women organized themselves effectively through two national networks to influence the peace process. After the active participation of women, a long-term sustainable peace process was developed that was inclusive of both women and men. In Sierra Leone, Sudan, Somalia and Northwest Somalia various women's movements for Peace was formed to promote a peaceful resolution of the conflicts. In Rwanda, women's action was centered on influencing the central political process.<sup>13</sup>

In the Republic of Congo, women participated in the development of two peace pacts, namely those of 1994 and 1997. In Mali the participation of women in an internal conflict involving the Northern Tuareg peoples has played an important role in reconciliation and restoration of trust between the communities<sup>14</sup>. The experience of Liberian women in the peace talks held in Accra, Ghana where they organized a delegation of six women to make a forced entry into the 1994 Accra Clarifications Conference, demonstrates that Governments and regional bodies may still be gender-biased against women in peace initiatives. Yet the strategic presence at the conference gave the women a high visibility through the print and electronic media. The Governments of Liberia and Burundi also took steps to include the participation of women in the peace building process. The Liberian government supported a woman Interim President who was instrumental in negotiating the lasting peace that this country enjoys today<sup>15</sup>.

## 2.1 Women and Peace-building

The suggestions that follow as to the use that might be made of international law for developing a gendered framework for post-conflict peace-building in Africa are general, as in each instance account must be taken of local conditions<sup>16</sup>. Just as women experience war differently from men (and different women experience war differently from each other), so are their experiences of post-conflict gendered. However, there are some important starting points. First, there can be no

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Rehn & Sirleaf (2002) *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building*, New York, UNIFEM.

<sup>14</sup> Kari Karamé (1999): „Women and War: a highly complex interrelation“ in Helland, Karamé, Kristensen and Skjelsbæk eds: *Women and Armed Conflicts*. A study for the Ministry of Foreign affairs, Oslo, NUPI, pp.4–35.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> *An Agenda for Peace, Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping*, Report of the Secretary- General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, UN Doc. A/47/277 - S/24111, 17 June 1992, para. 21.

assumption that, for women, the violence stops with a formal ceasefire. The forms and locations of gendered violence may change at the cessation of active conflict, but violence against women is likely to persist<sup>17</sup>. The collapse of civilian structures may mean continuing and pervasive lawlessness. The widespread availability of small arms, unemployment and economic insecurity, and demobilized former (mostly male) combatants all contribute to continued violence against women. Second, post-conflict, women's relations with war-traumatized children, family members and former fighters all place gendered demands upon them<sup>18</sup>. Third, demographic changes flowing from the conflict, in particular the disproportionate number of women and women-headed households,<sup>19</sup> impact upon issues such as access to and ownership of property, housing, caring responsibilities, and return after internal or international displacement. Fourth, concepts of reconstruction and rehabilitation may be misnomers in the case of women. Both concepts assume an element of going back, restoring to a position or capacity that previously existed. But this is not necessarily what women seek<sup>20</sup>.

In many instances conflict will have empowered women and opened up new opportunities that did not previously exist. The goal should rather be societal transformation – not restored dependence and subordination, but a continuation of any positive changes in women's status and an accepted new social position that accords full citizenship, social justice and empowerment based upon respect for standards of women's human dignity and human rights. As Sheila Meintjes has expressed it: "women do gain from the shifts in gender relations during the war, they may lose their wartime gains in the cusp, in the period between war and peace. Thus the transition from war to peace emerges as a critical moment in the shifting terrain of gender power"<sup>21</sup>.

Those involved in peace-building must be careful not to make assumptions about the needs and priorities of women within the conflict zone. Women themselves often have very clear ideas about priority issues within their own context, and the fullest account should be taken of their views. For example, women in Burundi asserted the need for measures to protect women and girls, including mechanisms for the prosecution of crimes

of sexual violence, legalization of women's right to inherit land and access to education for girls. Liberian women united over the need for disarmament over elections<sup>22</sup>. The goals of women from

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace in Africa, Report of the Secretary - General, April 1998, para. 63.

<sup>19</sup> The PRWA, article 20, covers widows' rights.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Sheila Meintjes, (2001) „War and Post-War Shifts in Gender Relations“ in Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen (eds.) *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transition*, London and New York, Zed Books, p. 64.

<sup>22</sup> S. Anderlini *Women at the Peace Table: Making a Difference* (UNIFEM, 2000), p. 20.



the DRC<sup>23</sup> were the inclusion of women in transitional government, addressing violence against women, addressing impunity, disarmament, reintegration of child soldiers<sup>24</sup> and support for traumatized civilians. What women need is a safe and secure space to be able to reflect on what they most need, to articulate their conclusions and to have them taken seriously in peacebuilding.

Certain categories of women may have specific needs. Former women combatants may face particular difficulties in reintegration, especially where they are perceived as having transgressed gender roles or where demobilization programmes, including rehabilitative measures, are directed towards male combatants. Some women may have been active in the transfer of small arms, and face destitution if this is stopped. Those who are pregnant or who have given birth to children as a result of rape may require particular assistance. So too do those who have sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/AIDS. There may be girls who were abducted and forced to „marry“ the abductor. Women from the Diaspora might find on returning that their perceptions and goals differ from those who have lived throughout the conflict<sup>25</sup>.

„Top-down“ efforts to impose programmes and policies must be avoided. International and even regional agencies may be ignorant of local initiatives and programmes; without finding out the position of women on the ground, they may marginalize local women’s groups. Telling is a comment from Kosovo that „the international community has marginalized us women in a way we never have been before. We have never felt so pushed aside as we feel now.“<sup>26</sup> At the same time it cannot be assumed that greater community involvement necessarily ensures greater attention to women. International and regional personnel may focus on liaison with male-dominated community groups and be willing to accept myths and stereotypes of women’s place within the community without testing the reactions of local women. It is also important that issues do not become labeled as either „women’s issues“ or as other „important“ issues. There are gendered dimensions to all aspects of peace-building – political, economic and social – and in this sense gender mainstreaming is required throughout all substantive discussions and operational measures<sup>27</sup>.

---

<sup>23</sup> Femmes Africa Soldiarite, Paper prepared for Expert Group Meeting, „Peace Agreements as Means for Promoting Gender Equality and Ensuring Participation of Women“, UN DAW, November 2003 available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/peace2003/reports/OP1FAS.PDF>

<sup>24</sup> Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, 2000, article 7 requires states to cooperate in the „in the rehabilitation and social reintegration of persons who are victims of acts contrary to this Protocol, including through technical cooperation and financial assistance“.

<sup>25</sup> ICRC Women and War team (2004). Addressing the Needs of Women Affected by Armed Conflict. Geneva:ICRC, pp. 59 - 60

<sup>26</sup> Member of Motrat Qiriaz, an umbrella of four Kosova rural women’s networks, cited in OSCE, *Gender Aspects in Post-Conflict Situations*, 1. Code and Custom, p. 5, available at <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/gender/>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid



## 2.2 Gender mainstreaming in Sudan peace process

Women suffered disproportionately in Sudan's civil war<sup>28</sup>. They lost fathers, brothers, husbands and sons to fighting and forced conscription, and were even occasionally frontline soldiers themselves. All too often, women along with their children suffered at the hands of combatants who perpetrated terrible crimes against them, such as forced displacement, rape, abduction and slavery. In Sudan as in many countries, women are the main socializers in the family, and the primary link that joins family to society. Culturally, women are the peacemakers in the family, and by extension can and do act as a stabilizing force for peace in society as a whole. Because of this societal role, women's participation is vital to sustaining peace in Sudan. However, women have been largely excluded from the peace negotiating and peace implementation processes for varied reasons. First, the enormous loss of life in Sudan's civil war has created massive economic insecurity and left a staggering number of women as heads of households. Due to limited resources, many Sudanese women and their children live in abject poverty.

This obstacle as well as a traditional gender bias has led to a marginalization of women in the efforts that produced the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement. An Operation Lifeline Sudan report noted that there was scant involvement of women in the Sudanese peace process. "The women of Southern Sudan would be expected to overcome their acute trauma and contribute in new ways to the future of their communities... [however] all but a handful of those sitting around the table discussing the future of Sudan are men," said the report.

As Sudan enters a new era guided by the CPA, laws will be enacted to create and protect the rights of women. Already, it is anticipated that a new national constitution will address the question of gender bias and that affirmative action will be considered in the South. In spite of the progress that has been made, women are ill-prepared to fully embrace the opportunities these new developments will offer due to the devastation of the war and the numerous obstacles it created. In addition, although women of both the North and the South suffered during the war and share many common concerns, communication difficulties and cultural prejudices have kept women from joining forces in the efforts to improve their lives to promote peace in Sudan.

The issue of engendering the peace process in the Sudan emerged from the Nairobi Forward looking strategies for the advancement of women to the year 2000, following the Mexico discussion in 1975<sup>29</sup>. The Beijing (1995) International Platforms & Beijing+5 put great support for action to be implemented in regard to gender studies and the ideals of equality, democracy and peace. Accordingly, many women groups in the Sudan are started to involve in peace building at both sides of the conflict: The Sudanese Women Union (SWU), New Sudan Women

---

<sup>28</sup> ICRC Women and War team (2004). Addressing the Needs of Women Affected by Armed Conflict. Geneva:ICRC, pp. 59 - 60

<sup>29</sup> International Conference on Sudanese Women & Peace Making Maastricht, the Netherlands 11th-13th April 2000 (unpublished paper).

Federation (NSWF), SPLA women's movement, Sudan Council of Churches (SCC), New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC), Babiker Badri Scientific Association for Women Studies (BBSAWS), Sudan National Committee on Traditional Practices (SNCTP), Women Action Group (WAG), Sudanese Women Association in Nairobi (SWAN), Nuba Women Peace Group, Mandi Group and the Nuba Relief Rehabilitation and Development Society (NRRDS). In fact, many individual organizations and group organizations from the above mentioned put great efforts in raising various initiatives and training in the issue of peace building<sup>30</sup>.

Another example is the Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace. Founded in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1994, it works across ethnic lines in South Sudan, and also meets with women from the northern part of the country. The organization was represented at the Machakos Protocol negotiations in July 2003, where its members had to face the reluctance of many men who refused to sit together with women. According to one leading member, three quarters of the women in South Sudan are widows; as sole breadwinners of the family, they must work hard to keep it together. They have to find ways to cope with the new situation. Some opt to fight as soldiers, leaving the children with their own mothers; other work for peace and reconciliation within the community. "The peace process should be inclusive. Women should not be sidelined: they should be part of the process."<sup>31</sup> Other goals of Sudanese women's peace movements are: to educate the Sudanese people on their rights, improved access to education and health facilities, respect for the culture and the languages of the people, and self-determination for the people of the South and other regions. They ask for regional and international guarantees to the conflict solution in the Sudan.<sup>32</sup>

It is essential that women play a key role in the peace building process in conflicts around the world. Although UN Security Council Resolution 1325 urges states to engage the equal participation of women in conflict resolution and peace building, women too often continue to be underrepresented<sup>33</sup>.

As women often bear the brunt of the effects of war, including sexual violence, abandonment, and increased economic burden, women have a right to partake fully in the resolution of conflicts and subsequent reconstruction efforts. Furthermore, without the full participation of women, such efforts will not be as democratic or as successful. The many victims of rape as a weapon of war and other forms of horrific violence know firsthand the hardships of conflict and would likely be the first to promote peace<sup>34</sup>. Women have a unique opportunity to rebuild their communities after conflicts have ended. Frequently left in the majority after violent conflicts, women have both greater need and opportunity to support their families through creative entrepreneurship. In addition, post conflict situations can offer women increased prospects for leadership in newly

---

<sup>30</sup> Sudanese Women in the Civil Society Agenda for Peace, 15th Jan 2000 (unpublished paper).

<sup>31</sup> The passage on the Sudan is based on an interview with Awut Deng published in *The East African* (Nairobi), 20 January 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Anna Rahma, Women & Peace Making in Sudan; Roles and Vision of Sudanese Women, paper to Hague appeal for peace conference, 11th –15th May 1999 (unpublished Ibid paper).

formed governments or civic organizations. There is a dire need for women's participation in peace building around the world; women survivors of war possess the drive, insight, and power to contribute to the conclusion of conflicts worldwide<sup>35</sup>.

At the Machakos and Naivasha negotiations between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) it was assumed that resolving the Sudanese conflict meant sharing power and resources between political forces along regional or geographical divides. This approach neglected other constituencies and the fact that a just and sustainable peace, based on good governance, equity, justice and democracy, requires an environment where every citizen has the opportunity to contribute to decision-making and development. In particular, Sudanese women play a very central role in their society, in physical and psychological welfare as well as conflict prevention and peace building. It is therefore important that women are not just seen as passive victims, or as representatives of political parties, or as having no political affiliation or perspective, but that they are encouraged to participate fully and see their perspectives taken seriously and incorporated into solutions to political conflicts<sup>36</sup>.

### 2.3 The multiple roles of women

Women were never simply guests at the negotiating table. The roles they play as combatants, supporters of fighting forces and peacemakers qualify them to sit at the negotiating table and to assume an active role in implementation. Thousands of women had joined the southern liberation struggle in response to a political situation that affected whole communities, leaving the comfort and security of their homes not just to accompany their husbands but to fight for freedom, democracy, equity, justice, rights and dignity<sup>37</sup>. Their roles in the conflict ranged from combatants to providers of support to fighters, including feeding and caring for sick and wounded soldiers. Although in any armed conflict women are victims of violence, bombing, landmines, hunger and diseases, it is not correct to portray them simply as innocent victims. In Khartoum, women contributed gold in support of the *jihad* and encouraged their sons to join up, while in the south, the Nuba Mountains and southern Blue Nile women contributed food and encouraged their sons to join the SPLA to fight marginalization and oppression by the government in Khartoum.

On the other hand, Sudanese women have worked very hard to keep families and communities together during conflicts through singing peace songs, persuading their husbands, sons and brothers to stop fighting, risking dangerous peace missions across enemy territories, or marrying across enemy lines to unite or reconcile warring communities<sup>38</sup>. There were times when women stopped conflict from escalating by defying or opposing decisions by male members of the community to go to war. In one case women from a community in southern Sudan were reported to have threatened not to comply with their conjugal obligations until their husbands stopped

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Dodson, Debra. **How to Create a Gender Balance in Political Decision-Making**. Brussels: European Commission.

<sup>38</sup> Dodson, Debra. **How to Create a Gender Balance in Political Decision-Making**. Brussels: European Commission.

killing each other, while in some areas of the south women threatened to expose their nakedness (a curse in most Sudanese customary beliefs) to protest ethnic conflict.

Women have also taken a leading role in creating links and forums for resolving inter-ethnic conflict, leading to many grassroots peace accords<sup>39</sup>. Examples include the people-to-people processes, such as the Wunlit Covenant between the Nuer and the Dinka and the Lilir Covenant between Nuer groups. It has been reported that when it was decided by Dinka elders that a peace delegation was to be sent to Nuer land, no one wanted to go; it was the brave wife of a Dinka chief who demanded that her husband lead his people to Nuer land, even though she was aware of the high risk involved. Another example where women stood together in solidarity against their husband's political position was the period following the split in the SPLM/A. Women from both sides of the split continued to visit one another, maintain communication and provide a forum to discuss issues that affected their communities, something no man was capable of<sup>40</sup>.

In order to effectively address social, economic and general problems of war facing women, many women organized themselves into groups, networks and NGOs on both sides of the political divide. These activist networks (including the Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace, New Sudan Women's Federation, and New Sudan Women's Association) went all over the world advocating peace and drawing attention to what was then referred to as 'the forgotten war.' In Washington DC, the UN Headquarters in New York, the Hague and Beijing, women lobbied the international community to pressure Sudan's warring parties to end the war<sup>41</sup>.

It is clear that the absence of women at the negotiating table in Naivasha or Abuja was not due to lack of experience and capacity, but to the perceptions of their role.

---

<sup>39</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). **Study of Gender Mainstreaming in the Caribbean**. Funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). 15 March 2000. This paper describes and analyzes gender mainstreaming in the Caribbean. The countries studied comprise Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. This report also focuses on the institutionalization of gender equity through an analysis of government activities, both administratively and in policy and programmes. The effectiveness and impact of such gender mainstreaming initiatives is also analyzed. This document is available in pdf format at <http://www.eclac.cl/publicaciones/PortOfSpain/7/LCCARG607/carg0607.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Massiah, Joycelin. **Putting Gender on the Agenda: the Next Generation**. Milroy Reece Memorial Lecture, Solidarity House, Barbados. 10 November 1999.

<sup>41</sup> Mohammed Patricia, Catherine Shepherd and Elsa Leo-Rhynie. **Gender in Caribbean Development: Papers Presented at the Inaugural Seminar of the University of West Indies Women and Development Studies Project**. UWI Press. 2002.

This book contains articles by Caribbean scholars and activists and reflects varying disciplinary approaches to women's studies. Beginning with gender and development theories, the book covers historical and conceptual feminism, analytical and methodological challenges of studying gender within the social sciences, women's literature and literary criticism. The book also examines ideology and culture, gender, race and class, gender issues in the family, gender in the labour market and the work of women's organizations.

## 2.4 A gender-blind agreement

Despite the active role women played at various levels to bring peace to the Sudan their role has tended to be underestimated or ignored during negotiations. This may have originated from the misconception that women are passive victims of war, forgetting the very important role they have played in negotiating, keeping and building peace in their communities<sup>42</sup>.

The most disappointing aspect of the 2005 *Comprehensive Peace Agreement* (CPA) and 2006 *Darfur Peace Agreement* (DPA) was that negotiations for an equitable share of power and resources were premised around political forces and regional interests. Neither mediators nor drafters gave much thought to other constituencies or dimensions, such as gender, along which power and wealth could be shared<sup>43</sup>.

Yet conflict in Sudan is not just a matter of political rivalry but is triggered by many forms of marginalization. The late Dr John Garang, the SPLM/A leader and briefly the First VicePresident of Sudan and President of Government of Southern Sudan, publicly recognized women as the 'marginalized of the marginalized.' Long before the negotiations, he used affirmative action (quotas and training) aimed at creating a critical mass of women capable of influencing policies and decisions.

The SPLM/A leadership nominated a handful of women leaders as members of the delegation to Machakos and subsequent rounds of negotiations. However, this did not necessarily enable their strong participation: the women were often co-opted to these delegations at short notice with very little opportunity to consult with each other and develop a women's peace agenda; they were expected to contribute to the overall party position which was gender-blind to begin with; and they were always a minority, ill-prepared for debates with seasoned politicians who ridiculed or intimidated anyone who dared to spend much time on gender issues<sup>44</sup>. Similarly, views from wide range of categories of women were never sought. For instance, former women soldiers were left out in these negotiations and so was their valuable experiences and information regarding peace and reconstruction<sup>45</sup>. On the other hand they face daunting challenges upon return. This is clearly demonstrated by the following story from a former women soldier the researcher interviewed.

*"I was only 12 years when I was abducted by the soldiers. I was with my friends fetching firewood. The soldiers did not ask any questions. They just demanded in loud voices that we carry their*

---

<sup>42</sup> Massiah, Joycelin. **Putting Gender on the Agenda: the Next Generation.** Milroy Reece Memorial Lecture, Solidarity House, Barbados. 10 November 1999.

<sup>43</sup> Dodson, Debra. **How to Create a Gender Balance in Political Decision-Making.** Brussels: European Commission.

<sup>44</sup> CIDA: Gender Analysis in Peace-Building Initiatives [http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cida\\_ind.nsf/d86cbc87319a898c8525677e0072d6f8/38e406811791e81485256990004f1c1e#9](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cida_ind.nsf/d86cbc87319a898c8525677e0072d6f8/38e406811791e81485256990004f1c1e#9)

<sup>45</sup> UNDP: Gender Approaches in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations <http://www.undp.org/erd/ref/gendermanualfinal.pdf>

*luggage and not ask any questions either. The journey through the forest was horrendous and scaring. Every soldier had a „right to our young bodies“. At first I did not know what was happening when one of the other girls started screaming in the bush. But all I knew was that it was terrible. When my turn came, I was just thrust into the bush and violated...the pain was piercing through my heart and for a moment I wished I could die.*

*Then the soldier gave me more luggage to carry and shouted at me to catch up with the others. It was so inhuman. This went on throughout the journey. I do not know how long we trekked. Finally we reached destination and had to train how to use the gun. Fail to shoot and you would be dead. I longed to go back home and begin a new life. I wanted to tell the people all I had seen and the cause for the fighting, ..... how to protect young boys and girls, and how to bring peace to our country...and more.*

*But when I finally left the bush I was faced with a big dilemma- where was home and who would accept me anyway. In fact even when the peace negotiations began, all of us were largely ignored and no one sought our views. How my life was wasted”!<sup>46</sup>*

Another example can be seen from the fact during the negotiations SPLM/A women proposed a minimum quota of 25 per cent for the representation of women in the civil service, legislative and executive at all levels of government, as provided for by the SPLM/A constitution<sup>47</sup>. One senior male member of the SPLM/A delegation laughed and asked where the women would be found to fill these positions. The 25 per cent quota was eventually accepted in the larger group, where there were at least three women, but then the all-male SPLM/A drafting committee reduced this figure to 5 per cent. The SPLM/A Chairman raised this to 10 per cent as a compromise. Later on we learned that it had been dropped altogether when government negotiators refused a quota for women in power sharing on the grounds that they had not been fighting women<sup>48</sup>.

There are articles in the final agreement that recognize customs, traditions and religion as sources of moral strength for the Sudanese people; personal and family matters including marriage, divorce, inheritance and succession fall under the competency of customary law. Yet some customs and traditions have contributed to the marginalization of women.

---

<sup>46</sup> Fitzgerald, Mary A; (2002) Throwing the stick forward: the impact of war on Southern Sudanese Women

<sup>47</sup> *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations*, Lessons Learned Unit, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UN, July 2000

<sup>48</sup> Sheila Meintjes, (2001) „War and Post-War Shifts in Gender Relations“ in Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen (eds.) *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transition*, London and New York, Zed Books, p. 64.



Even when women were consulted about gender issues or directly included in the peace negotiations, it was only a gesture to showcase democracy and inclusiveness: their perspectives and their experiences in peacebuilding and negotiation were not recognized or fully utilized<sup>49</sup>.

## 2.5 Learning from experience

The SPLM/A women's realization that the CPA did not require any party to achieve genderrelated targets prompted them to share their experiences with Darfurian women during the Abuja negotiations. We told them how we had been shocked that the CPA - apart from making provision for a bill of rights - left women to the mercy of governments and political parties. The Darfurian women took these experiences seriously and with support from UNIFEM and other organizations (who realized they had not done enough to support the SPLM/A women), quickly started to lay down the strategy for influencing the peace process and the final document<sup>50</sup>. They lobbied to be involved and the result is over 70 sections in the agreement referring to women, including the recognition of gender-based violence and the recommendation that women be involved in drafting legislation<sup>51</sup>.

However, like the CPA, the DPA now relies largely on men for its implementation, and the likelihood that the DPA will be fully implemented appears very slim. Given the insensitivity of many Sudanese - particularly men - towards gender issues, it will be hard work for Darfurian women to get the government in Darfur to commit to such important initiatives as gendersensitive police training. A lack of commitment to implementing the provisions of an agreement can render even a good agreement useless, so the full participation of women in the implementation of CPA, DPA and the recent *Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement* is essential. This can be achieved through the effective dissemination of the agreements and the Interim National Constitution and through building women's capacity to organize themselves to negotiate, lobby and advocate for their rights and interests<sup>52</sup>.

Even though many individual Sudanese men resist gender mainstreaming, in the south the official government position is favourable to women's equality and empowerment. Consequently, the south's Interim Constitution has a 25 per cent quota for women's representation in the legislative and executive, making it unconstitutional for any government institution not to have women in decision-making positions. The President of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) has appointed women as chairpersons for the Human Rights Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission, and he reportedly officially refuses to view any list of appointees for State and GoSS

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> S. Anderlini *Women at the Peace Table: Making a Difference* (UNIFEM, 2000), p. 20.

<sup>51</sup> *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations*, Lessons Learned Unit, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UN, July 2000

<sup>52</sup> Jennifer F. Klot: „Women and Peace Processes: An Impossible Match?“ in Louise Olsson ed.: *Gender and Peace Processes – an Impossible Match?* Uppsala, Collegium for Development Studies, 2002, pp.17–25.

positions that does not include women. Currently two cabinet ministers, four Chairpersons of Parliamentary Committees and two presidential advisors are women<sup>53</sup>.

On the other hand, at the Government of National Unity level, the National Congress Party, including its women leaders, opposed both a quota for women in the government and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Instead they preferred 'women's empowerment,' a vague term which does not effectively tackle the issues of rights and freedoms.

## **2.6 Gender mainstreaming, rehabilitation and reconciliation towards peace in Sudan**

The right of women to participation on the same level as men is inscribed both in the charter of the United Nations and in international law<sup>54</sup>. With their experiences and agency during war and armed conflicts, local women have insightful knowledge of the needs of the civilian population. Involving more women personnel in a peace mission has proven beneficial for contacts with the host society and within the mission as well<sup>54</sup>.

Rehabilitation<sup>55</sup> is the process of renewal and sustainable recovery for a society that has been ravaged by unrest and destruction. This process is an enormous undertaking for a society that has been at war for decades. In a workshop dubbed stewards for peace, attended by a group of North and southern Sudan women, participants emphasized the importance of taking steps for rehabilitation and highlighted five areas that should be addressed in the initial stages of the healing process to ensure women's rights are advanced in Sudan<sup>56</sup>.

Civic Education: Many Sudanese in general and women in particular, are uninformed about their basic human rights. Women should be involved in developing civic education curricula to ensure the female perspective.

Decision-Making: Women have almost no role in decision-making at the community, regional or national level. Currently, Sudan's law and cultural traditions are not supportive of increased participation for women. There is a need to strengthen the capacity of women to prepare them for decision making and to increase the number of women participating in elections and government. Sudan should adopt a quota system to jump-start the participation of women in all decisionmaking institutions.

---

<sup>53</sup> *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations*, Lessons Learned Unit, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UN, July 2000 <sup>54</sup> UN Document A/52/3/Rev.1.

<sup>54</sup> S. Anderlini *Women at the Peace Table: Making a Difference* (UNIFEM, 2000), p. 20.

<sup>55</sup> Jennifer F. Klot: „Women and Peace Processes: An Impossible Match?“ in Louise Olsson ed.: *Gender and Peace Processes – an Impossible Match?* Uppsala, Collegium for Development Studies, 2002, pp.17–25.

<sup>56</sup> Rehn & Sirleaf (2002) *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building*, New York, UNIFEM.

**Redistribution of Resources:** Women do not have a role in the critical issue of redistribution of resources as it relates to rehabilitation<sup>57</sup>. Generally, women lack skills to participate in this area, and there is gender-biased exclusion at the local level. Leadership training for women, lobbying and advocacy by women and an increase in the number of women at decision-making levels will help address these inequities.

**Education:** The poor quality of education, particularly at the primary and secondary level is a social problem for all of Sudan and affects Sudanese of both genders. It is particularly harmful to women, however, who lag far behind men. The current curriculum is gender-biased and should be revised with input from women. Better trained and highly motivated teachers are needed as well.

**Discrimination:** Women suffer from discrimination in employment and education and in society in general. Women must be empowered through access to information about rights and to skillbuilding so they can affect positive change. The government needs to provide equal rights under the law to both males and females. In the same vein, both the government and civil society must heighten national awareness that some cultural and religious beliefs are discriminatory. Women should lobby for the ratification of Covenant on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

**Reconciliation**<sup>58</sup> is often a necessary precursor to rehabilitation, since it calls for mutual understanding and respect. Workshop participants identified six areas that need to be addressed in order to build a solid foundation for reconciliation efforts in Sudan.

**Settling the Past:** Reconciliation starts with the acknowledgement of wrongdoing and atrocities, followed by apologies and forgiveness. Sudan must recognize there is unity in diversity and should model its reconciliation efforts on the South African approach. Women must participate in reconciliation efforts, have access to trauma counseling centers and be provided with a platform for public testimony by victims.

**Building Trust:** Sudan must be aware of the opportunities and threats relating to reconciliation and use all available tools – role plays, dramas, songs – to build trust across cultures. Integration of IDPs & Refugees: The government must create jobs and provide access to credit and vocational training to returning Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees<sup>59</sup>.

---

<sup>57</sup> Louise Olsson, „Gender Mainstreaming in Practice: The United Nations Transitional Assistance Group in Namibia“, in Olsson & Tryggstad, eds. (2001), pp.97–110.

<sup>58</sup> Jennifer F. Klot: „Women and Peace Processes: An Impossible Match?“ in Louise Olsson ed.: *Gender and Peace Processes – an Impossible Match?* Uppsala, Collegium for Development Studies, 2002, pp.17–25.

<sup>59</sup> Report of the Secretary- General, “Gender Mainstreaming in Peace Keeping Activities” A/57/731 (New York: United Nations, 2003), p.11

**Civic Education:** There is a lack of knowledge and communication on basic rights, good governance and conflict resolution. Sudan must recognize the importance of civic education in this regard and integrate it into schools. Media can be an effective tool to quickly educate the populace.

**Media Development:** There should be comprehensive civic education programming in the media, particularly with regard to cultural diversity, women's health and women's rights. Women's participation in all levels of media will enhance this effort, and there is a great need for capacity building for women in all fields relating to media (reporters, anchors, technicians, researchers, etc.). A three-year program to train approximately 2,000 women in all fields related to media is recommended<sup>60</sup>.

**Women in Politics:** Traditional and cultural norms inhibit the inclusion of women in politics. Women also lack awareness of election laws and procedures<sup>61</sup>. Civil society should push for just and fair legislation, and there needs to be a concerted effort to increase the number of women in political parties. A network of organizations should be created to prepare and submit a list of priorities concerning the needs of women. These priorities should be presented to all donors who are active in Sudan's reconciliation efforts.

### **2.7 Constraints facing Sudanese women to achieve successful peace activities**

In 1997, the groups working in peace building identified the following obstacles: Erosion of familiar and traditional peace mechanisms system of kinship are replaced by civic organizations which lack women, representation and a relation to the home land, specially when based outside of the war-affected areas. The role of intermarriage, inter-cultural assimilation and traditional conflict resolution has changed due to interventions from outside<sup>62</sup>. Members of women's groups are usually overworked and carry too many responsibilities. Some have little education or training for mobilizing grass-root women, limited access to information, men play the most important roles in both political and military affairs in Sudan and there is little attention of political organization to voice women's concern ,and Travel between North and South is extremely difficult.

## **3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

---

<sup>60</sup> Louise Olsson, „Gender Mainstreaming in Practice: The United Nations Transitional Assistance Group in Namibia“, in Olsson &. Tryggestad, eds. (2001), pp.97–110.

<sup>61</sup> *Gendering Human Security. From Marginalisation to the Integration of Women in Peace-Building*, report prepared by Kari H. Karamé, Fafo report 352/ NUPI report no. 261, Oslo, NUPI, 2001.

<sup>62</sup> A. Bari, A. Bari, Sudan Between Peace & War, UNIFEM, 1998

### 3.1 Conclusion

In this study, it was hypothetically argued that failure to incorporate gender mainstreaming in the IGAD led Sudan Peace Process has negatively impacted on peace management and sustainability in Sudan. In addition, it was also stated in form of a hypothesis that mainstreaming gender in conflict management and peace building processes enhances sustainable peace. For women, girls and women leaders involved in armed opposition groups and women leaders within civil society, their meaningful participation in peace negotiations marks a pivotal step in setting post conflict governance and reconstruction agendas that takes women's and girls' needs and priorities into account. This was clearly illustrated in the case of South Africa. Token inclusion of women at the peace negotiations, where it was demonstrated that towing the agenda set by the male leaders, does not produce positive results for women and girls in the frameworks and agendas that emerge. Another good example is the peace negotiations of Sudan conducted in Kenya. Failure to include women in the peace talks meant that the issues affecting the socio economic and political aspects of women were not addressed afterwards. Furthermore, the study has demonstrated that failure to include women in the IGAD II Process has contributed greatly to the lack of everlasting peace after the signing of the peace accord. Were the women involved, they would have brought a different dimension to the peace table in terms of putting agendas forward that would have safeguarded peace and reduced the effects of war on the civilians in general and women in particular.

When women negotiators and women representatives are not present at the peace talks, women's issues, concerns and priorities are usually also absent at the peace table. In fact despite international laws such as CEDAW and the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, and important initiatives like SC Res 1325 that stipulate the need for gender inclusivity and non discrimination and although women had participated in the armed struggle, most were excluded from decision-making positions in the new governments and security forces that were established. Most of the male combatants on the other hand were well incorporated into the new government and contributing to the rebuilding of their country. On the other hand, most of the women, especially former combatants are still languishing in poverty, some unable to return home for fear of being shunned by their communities.

The study has established a number of reasons why women in Sudan continue to be underrepresented in decision-making positions even after the signing of the peace accord. Patriarchal traditions, practices and national and customary laws are central factors contributing to women's inability to enter these positions. Further, high levels of illiteracy and poverty, unequal work burdens within their homes and communities are often the result of these patriarch customs, practices and laws and are among the main factors why for instance women and especially leaders formerly associated with fighting forces as well as women civilians have a difficult time accessing the formal political sphere and, thus, why they have correspondingly low representation in decision-making positions, including in peace negotiations and reconstruction activities. Often times and even in other instances outside of the Sudan Peace Process, cultural reasons are given to

justify women's continued exclusion. However, it is important to recognize that culture is dynamic and that taboos about women being decision makers could fade in time if women entered the public, civil and political arena.

Although it is unclear whether or not women formerly associated with fighting forces are among those who could or should play a public role in advocating for more inclusive and just social, political and economic change, it is clear that they face a daunting task in accessing both public decision-making forums and civil society spaces. Notably, civil society organizations whose agendas are women's rights, peace, equality and reconstruction often have similar goals to those of women leaders coming from fighting forces. However, networks and alliances with such organizations are particularly difficult for women formerly associated with fighting forces to build, often because there is little agreement or trust among the former women fighters, civil groups and the general public. Indeed, civil society, women focused groups, and women rights groups in particular, are wary of building alliances with those formerly associated with the fighting. Consequently, women formerly associated with fighting forces would have to engage in much negotiation, truth-telling and reconciliation with other members of civil groups, and in particular women's groups, for the forming of such alliances to occur. Importantly, it is likely that only through such alliances that women formerly associated with fighting forces would likely be able to achieve the kinds of change they are seeking within their societies. Though this group of women has not been solely the focus of this study, they form a critical mass whose role and experiences can inform peace processes in a more encompassing way so as to incorporate all views. This is an area that may require further examination.

In conclusion therefore, this study has found the IGAD II led Sudan peace process was did not mainstream gender in its processes and that this lack of inclusion of women in the IGAD II peace process contributed in and hence was responsible for the part failure of the objectives of the process. Hence, the hypotheses are true.

### **3.2 Recommendations**

This study notes that the CPA did create a new democratic political space and committed the government to good governance and the rule of law, justice, equity and respect for human rights. Sudanese women need to rise to the challenge of building a solid foundation for democracy by doing everything possible to increase their political participation and create an equal and level playing field for all citizens. The greatest hope now for women across Sudan is that they will be able to expand on the Bill of Rights in the Interim National Constitution as well as effect change through the mid-term elections and effective mobilization. The peace agreements and their shortcomings are important areas for their campaign, making women realize the need to increase their representation in legislative assemblies at state and national levels, to gain more influence