

CHAPTER 33

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS AND PEACE INITIATIVES

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WOMEN'S mobilization around peace operates at many levels, from the grassroots to the national, regional, and international levels. Many of the issues that have animated women at the local level deal with community reconciliation; access to water, food, and other resources; as well as engagement with the militia toward the goal of disarmament. At the national level, women activists have sought to be included in peace negotiations, and constitution-making processes and elections, often through the adoption of quotas. Women activists have also sought to influence the disarmament and demobilization processes, while being attentive to women's concerns in all aspects of peacemaking, peace-building, and state-building. Coalitions of women's organizations supported by international organizations like the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and its successor, UN Women, were critical to the success of such initiatives. They have mobilized subregionally in the Horn of Africa, in West Africa's Mano River region, and elsewhere to share strategies and organize collectively. At the international level, they have sought to influence the United Nations in ways that would bring pressure to bear on their governments and other actors involved in peace processes, including advocacy for the passage and monitoring of UN Security Council resolutions calling for measures to increase women's involvement in all aspects of conflict resolution and greater attentiveness to women's concerns in conflict (see Otto, Chapter 8, and Goetz and Jenkins, Chapter 9, in this volume).

A number of key features have characterized women's peace mobilization at all levels in the post-Cold War era. First, although women's organizations have often tried to participate in formal peace negotiations and disarmament processes, they have been largely excluded, with their contributions to peacemaking unrecognized (see Bell, Chapter 32 in this volume). Formal peace processes dominate the scholarship, media reports, and the attention of policymakers and, as a result of these exclusions, women often have been relegated to informal and grassroots peace strategies. These local contributions have not received the recognition they deserve because of their quotidian nature: they are not

dramatic, nor do they always directly impact the national-level peace negotiations. Yet they are every bit as important in impacting the daily lives of communities and families.

Second, women's peace efforts have often taken the bridging of difference as a starting point, rather than an end point. In other words, instead of seeing peace as a goal to be reached at the end of talks, they have regarded peace as a process that is achieved by working together across difference around common gender-based and other concerns. For example, in many contexts, women from opposing camps have come together to peace talks or peace conferences, and from the outset worked jointly as a group, rather than sitting at opposite ends of the table with their particular party, faction, or rebel organization (see McWilliams and Kilmurray, Chapter 42 in this volume; Bunting et al. 2001). The bridging of difference occurs among women activists often as a result of the evolution of common women's rights agendas. At the local level, it is often related to the need to find practical solutions to meeting daily needs.

Third, local efforts have been more successful when reinforced by international and regional pressures and support for changes in the status quo when it comes to women's rights. Similarly, international efforts have been bolstered by pressure from below from local women's movements. The interaction between domestic and international pressures and the diffusion of influences from regional and international organizations has often been critical, particularly in demanding greater female political representation, constitutional changes, and changes in legislation.

These characteristics, common to many instances of women's mobilization, are explored here through examples from particular conflicts. The chapter first looks at women's exclusions from formal peace processes and how women's organizations have nevertheless sought to influence those processes, largely through grassroots pressure and informal strategies. It then shows how and why women's organizations have often been oriented toward building bridges across difference. Finally, the chapter concludes by examining the extent to which women activists have engaged in initiatives involving regional and international organizations in order to put pressure on governments through the international arena. Women's multilevel strategies involving institutions at the local, national, regional, and international levels have complemented each other in important ways, while reflecting varied goals and opportunities.

EXCLUSIONS FROM FORMAL PEACE PROCESSES

Scholarship has shown that civil society, including women's organizations, can make a difference in enhancing peace outcomes when they have been included in peace talks. Civil society is often seen as bringing added legitimacy to the negotiation process. Since the Cold War, 34 percent of peace negotiations have included at least one civil society actor. When civil society actors are included in peace agreements, the risk of peace

failing is reduced by 64 percent, regardless of regime type (Nilsson 2012). Moreover, when women are brought into the peace processes, the likelihood of their success is enhanced. This was shown to be the case in forty peace processes since the end of the Cold War where women's engagement was positively correlated with greater implementation of the process and had a positive impact on the sustainability of peace (Paffenholz et al. 2016; UN Women 2015).

In spite of the positive benefits of including civil society actors, at the most basic level, women's organizations have found it difficult to get women represented in peace negotiations. While there has been no significant change with respect to women being included as chief mediators, negotiators, or signatories, in recent years there has been an increase in the number and frequency of women's informal representation through consultations between mediation teams and women's organizations. In 2014, mediation teams included at least one woman on all of the peace processes that the United Nations led or co-led, which was a slight increase from 2011. Senior women participated in 75 percent of the processes, compared with 36 percent in 2011. And gender expertise was requested and provided for 67 percent of the processes, compared with 35 percent in 2011 (UN Security Council 2015).

But in spite of these small changes, women are largely excluded from formal peace processes. Not only do women generally not have significant formal roles in the peace talks, they have also experienced difficulty gaining consultative access to the negotiations, which would provide women's organizations with a formal mechanism with which to influence and observe the proceedings (Bell, Chapter 32 in this volume). Overall progress toward increasing women's formal roles has been slow even since 2000, despite passage of UN Security Council resolution 1325.

These exclusions are even more egregious when one considers that often women's organizations have been among the few actors seeking cooperation across political, ethnic, religious, and other differences that had contributed to conflict, yet combatant and government forces were the only ones deemed relevant to bring to the negotiating table. In Sri Lanka, for example, six rounds of peace talks between 2002 and 2003 ended in failure. Women's organizations had worked in the conflict zone for years and had extensive informal networks that had been able to defuse tensions and facilitate inter-community dialogue and cooperation. Moreover, the only committee that truly functioned in the peace process was the Sub-Committee on Gender Issues (SGI), which was made up of members appointed by the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It worked because the SGI members were "non-political, civil society rights activists, academics and community workers who were not constrained by political considerations, party affiliations or electoral success" (Satkunanathan and Rainford 2009, 123). Nevertheless, the SGI was seen by the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE as a mechanism that existed simply to appease women's and international pressure groups, rather than one that could play a role in the peace process; thus its impact was limited. In spite of the successes of women's organizations in building cooperation across so-called enemy lines, other civil society organizations that were included did little to press for women's participation in peace talks.

Strategies to influence peace negotiations

Women's organizations have sought a variety of strategies to influence talks and advance a women's rights agenda in peace negotiations, often with mixed results. Women's organizations have sought observer status for women when they failed to become negotiators. But being in a non-speaker observer role means that they have limited influence; for this reason, UN Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) calls for women's representation in all peace negotiations, not simply as observers.

Women's organizations and leaders sometimes work behind the scenes through informal initiatives. For example, Betty Bigombe became an unofficial mediator between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda, thus paving the way for official talks in Juba in 2006. But in general, apart from those who have held official roles as representatives of their political parties, women's organizations have had to lobby for a role for women through ad hoc pressure as well as collective mobilization. In many cases, UNIFEM, and later UN Women, provided important support for such efforts. More often than not, women's organizations have sought to influence the negotiations from the outside. Some have held parallel peace conferences, rallies, and other events to draw attention to women's demands and exclusions from official peace processes.

From Uganda to Liberia and Nepal, women activists have pressed not only for a role for women representatives in peace talks, constitution-making processes, and in the newly constituted political arrangements. They have also at various times advocated for the holding of peace talks (e.g., Nepal in 2004), a rapid conclusion of peace talks when they were lagging (e.g., Liberia in 2003), the holding of elections (e.g., Sierra Leone in 1996), the holding of free and fair elections without interference from militia (e.g., Mozambique in 1994), the delay of elections until soldiers were fully demobilized (e.g., Liberia in 2003), and the demobilization of soldiers with the assistance of civil society and women's organizations (e.g., Liberia in 1996 and 2003).

Women activists' informal peace strategies

While women activists have rarely been part of official peace negotiations, more often they have been engaged in informal efforts to end wars, at times through peace movements, but more often through small collective initiatives, generally outside of or alongside the formal processes established by the United Nations and other governmental actors. Such efforts, which are rarely officially recognized, have, in fact, contributed to both short-term and long-term peace. They often have created the foundation for peace talks and have fostered back channels for negotiation.

Women's collective strategies have ranged from organizing rallies and boycotts to promoting small arms confiscation, organizing reconciliation ceremonies, negotiating with small groups of rebels to disarm, and negotiating with rebels to release abducted children and child soldiers. Peace activists have played a role in preventing the resumption of

conflict by monitoring and advocating against the sale of small arms, carrying out conflict resolution workshops, and participating in campaigns for “clean” diamonds. While these initiatives were hardly the sole cause of the decline in conflict, they have increased the pressure for conflict resolution.

The international community, policymakers, media, and scholars have tended to disregard most of the efforts by women peace activists. In part, this is because they are difficult to measure and document; however, it is also because they are considered unimportant since they involve women, whose activities are often seen as relegated to the private sphere. While this may be slowly changing due to efforts by the United Nations and international NGOs, grassroots initiatives still generally receive little attention, since their impacts are localized. Nevertheless, they can be extremely important to the communities affected by conflict. Thus, the lack of research on these activities is more telling of the gaps in the literature than of an absence of women’s engagement in informal peace activities.

The case of Somalia

A few examples drawn from Somalia serve to highlight the variety and nature of these types of activities. There was a proliferation of women’s NGOs in Somalia after the early 1990s, when feuds between the clans fueled civil war and ultimately state collapse. Women had held positions of power in the Siad Barre government (1969–1991), in the army, as judges, and as ambassadors. With the end of Barre’s rule, women became more organized in associations that cut across clan divisions, partly because women did not have the same relationship to clan as men, and unlike men, they married outside of their clan. Women worked on issues of health care, violence against women, food security, education, job training, obtaining housing, and learning about conflict mediation. They persuaded fighters to trade in weapons for career preparation classes (Ingiriis and Hoehne 2013; UNIFEM 1996).

These organizations not only opened up inter-clan dialogue on peace, they also discussed a long-term vision of Somali society and the creation of a national constitution, which was eventually passed in 2012. In 1992 a local women’s organization, the Somaliland Women Development Association (SOWDA) in Hargeisa, raised funds and started a police force. Women in Bosaso did the same and managed the police force until a local administration was established in 1998 (Mohamed 2004). One organization in Somalia, the IIDA Women’s Development Organization, brought women together from different clan backgrounds. Several networks of women’s peace organizations were active during the conflict, including the Nagaad Umbrella Organization and the Somali Coalition of Grassroots Women’s Organizations (COGWO), which helped form a broader Peace and Human Rights Network consisting of twenty-two Somali organizations. COGWO has served as a successful mediator between rival faction leaders. Its actions helped diffuse hostilities in the area, so that people no longer feared crossing the Green Line that divided warring clans. Their activities eventually laid the groundwork

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for more formal peace negotiations (Farah and Lewis 1993; Mohamed 2004; Osman 2000). Today the country is still fragmented and Somalia continues to experience extremist violence, although Somaliland and Puntland have stabilized.

Quotidian informal activities generally do not make it into the headlines, but they are nevertheless essential to both survival and peacemaking. During conflict, because of gendered divisions of labor, some women cared for internally displaced persons, provided trauma counseling, organized basic literacy programs, and ran healing and reconciliation workshops. As best they could, they saw to it that their communities had access to food, fuel, water, and other basic necessities. To obtain these resources, they sometimes have had to work across so-called enemy lines. In individual and collective acts of bravery, women activists have negotiated with fighters and have sought to persuade them to disarm. Thus, the daily practical activities of survival have been at the core of women's mobilization around peacemaking. Rather than being derivative of an essentialized nurturing characteristic of women, these activities are often an extension of the carework roles that women typically adopt (or are forced to adopt) in so many societies.

The example of Nepal

The experience of women in Nepal provides another example of the strategies women have adopted to influence the peace process. Nepal was embroiled in a civil war between the government and Maoist forces from 1996 to 2006, started by the Maoist Communist Party of Nepal, which sought to overthrow the Nepalese monarchy and replace it with a republic under their control. Women had participated for years in many peace rallies in Kathmandu and around the country: in 2004, women rallied to pressure the government and Maoists to resume peace talks, which had collapsed in 2003 after two rounds, and in 2006, millions of women took to the streets to participate in mass demonstrations against King Gyanendra, which led to new talks between the interim government and the Maoists, ending in the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Nepalese women took on leadership roles in their communities and in civil society through grassroots peacebuilding efforts and risked their lives to negotiate with government security forces and Maoist rebels. They provided health and shelter for survivors of the conflict. In order to advance resolution 1325 in Nepal, UNIFEM organized a meeting in 2005 of women from fifty-seven districts together with all political parties, which resulted in a ten-point declaration that contributed to the peace process. UNIFEM and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) organized workshops, training sessions, and other awareness-raising activities with the police, military, government departments, NGOs, and other stakeholders in promoting the resolution.

Women's organizations held two large national conferences in 2007 to strategize how to bring women into the process. They sought many of the considerations typical of women's rights mobilization during conflict, focusing on women's claims to influence the peace process and political power in a transitional and post-conflict arrangement. Their demands included 33 percent female representation in all decision-making

positions and ways to strengthen women's access to policymaking more generally. The Women's Alliance for Peace, Power, Democracy and the Constituent Assembly (WAPPDCA), a coalition of NGOs, sought to be included in peace negotiations every step of the way and used resolution 1325 as a resource to press its demands.

In spite of all these activities, women were not included in the peace talks when the government and the Maoists drew up a twenty-five-point Code of Conduct in 2005, nor were they brought into the Comprehensive Peace Agreement talks. Two women were brought into the constitution-making process consisting of fifteen delegates—but only after most of the drafting had been completed. Moreover, women were initially excluded from the Constituent Assembly committee that reworked the 2006 interim constitution, although later pressure from women's groups expanded the committee to include six Dalit women representatives. The ceasefire monitoring body included twenty-nine men and only two women (Abdela 2011).

Pressure from women's rights activists resulted in an interim constitution mandating a quota for women candidates in the Constituent Assembly (CA), which doubles as a legislative body and an institution tasked with drafting the new constitution. As a result, women won 33 percent of the legislative seats in 2008, a large increase from 17 percent in 2007. In 2009, an umbrella of women's organizations organized a march of over ten thousand rural women in the Kathmandu Valley. They presented 120 demands to the constitution-drafting process. A Women's Caucus within the CA was formed that same year to advance women's rights. It has worked with other CA members, political parties, civil society organizations, marginalized communities, local authorities, the media, and other professionals to develop these recommendations. Partly in response to reticence by parties to support the quota, women activists launched a media and advocacy campaign called 33 Percent Women. They lobbied the president, launched a major media campaign, encouraged women to vote, carried out voter education campaigns, and trained prospective women parliament candidates.

As a result of these lobbying efforts, the Nepalese women made major gains in the new 2015 constitution, including equal rights between spouses in property and family affairs, the right to lineage without discrimination, the right to participate in state structures and bodies based on proportional inclusion, and many other rights regarding reproductive health, education, health, employment, social security, protections against violence, and rights for the LGBTI community. In spite of these positive provisions, women continued major protests after the constitution was promulgated because it included restrictions on a woman's right to pass on citizenship to her child that do not apply to men.

The Nepal case illustrates the enormous challenges that women activists often have faced as a result of exclusions from formal peace processes. It also shows the importance of mass mobilization and pressures by the women's movement in seeking formal representation in the talks and in the new legislature. It highlights the role of international actors like UN agencies and the use of resolution 1325 in achieving their goals of political representation in the aftermath of conflict.

REASONS FOR SUCCESS: BRIDGING DIFFERENCE

Many of women's quotidian activities have led women activists to seek to bridge clan, ethnic, and religious difference through peacemaking activities. Peace, thus, is seen as a process, not simply an end point of negotiations. Peacemaking permeates daily life and involves the active building of bridges on a daily basis. This has occurred during conflict as well as in the aftermath of conflict.

Yet women have also participated in and supported conflict and divisive political movements based on nationalism, ethnicity, religion, and other differences. Women have encouraged fighters, have assisted them, and have fanned the flames of conflict. In countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone, women comprised 20–30 percent of the fighters.

Nevertheless, women activists have also engaged in peace-building activities that bridge difference both in communities and in national-level peace talks. Most important, they often share a common agenda regarding women's secondary status. This agenda can cut across differences of all kinds (e.g., class, race, ethnicity, religion) and, unlike other causes, has the *potential* to unite the broadest array of a population because these issues often affect women in every group. Another reason for this unity across difference was mentioned earlier: women are typically relegated to carework roles, which necessitate immediate solutions to problems of survival that cannot wait for the resolution of peace talks.

The example of Burundi

An example from Burundi illustrates how women's organizations have bridged difference. In the 1999 Burundi peace negotiations, the pursuit of commonality was the foundation for women's engagement in the talks, not an end point, as is commonly the practice. Formal peace talks were initiated in 1999 in Arusha, Tanzania, to lay the basis for a new constitutional arrangement and, in 2000, seventeen parties signed peace accords in Pretoria, South Africa. Women in the Burundi peace talks sat together, rather than with their ethnically based political parties. One of the participants in the 1999 Arusha talks, Alice Ntwarante, explained,

We [the women] were united in purpose, despite our ethnic split—three Hutus and three Tutsis. The various political parties to which we women belonged tried to split us up, but we resisted them. We said, "No! We stand together with our sisters. We are here to represent women, not as members of such-and-such a political party." Our unity spoke for us. We said to all Burundian women: "Come and join us! There is a place for you!" This was the big success of Arusha for women—that we remained united.

She contrasted the stance of the women to that of the male party negotiators:

I told myself, here are the men, the key players, who are going to negotiate, but right at the start of the conference they can't communicate with one another. Each was turning his back on his adversary. Each had brought his ideas to the peace table. They were partisan, even extremist. (Bunting et al. 2001)

This is not to say that the women did not have differing views or disagreements, but they started from the point of unity, sharing a common women's rights agenda. This was a considerable accomplishment given the general weakness of civil society, which at the time was riven by political and ethnic divisions. While a few organizations like the human rights group Ligue Iteka and the development organization Organisation d'Appui à l'Autopromotion played similar peace-building roles, there were not many that could bridge differences across such a wide swath of the population as key women's organizations (De Reu 2005).

Burundian women's peace efforts began in 1993 when the organization Women for Peace was formed with the support of African Women in Crisis (AFWIC) and UNIFEM. The following year, the Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB) was formed as an umbrella for seven organizations; it quickly grew to fifteen organizations by 1996. CAFOB insisted during the peace talks that women be represented in all aspects of the peace process and that all issues raised be looked at from a gender perspective. They also demanded a 30 percent quota for women in the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive branches of government, as well as in all bodies created by the peace accord. They argued that the final agreement include rights to property, land, and inheritance, along with a formal recognition that Burundi girls and women suffer discrimination because of culture and policies that are not sensitive to women's particular needs. The demands highlighted the need for (1) equal access to education for girls; (2) an end to impunity when it comes to rape, sexual violence, prostitution, and domestic violence; (3) attention to the needs of women refugees and in particular female- and child-headed families; and (4) many other crucial concerns. Twenty-three of these recommendations were ultimately included in the final peace accord as a result of the group's lobbying efforts and ability to remain united in purpose.

The second explanation for efforts to bridge difference has to do with the ways in which women have often cooperated around meeting daily needs across ethnic divides. During the civil war in Burundi, such cooperation between the Tutsi and Hutu groups served as a balm for women. The Centre for Women in Burundi worked with Hutu women from Busoro and Tutsi women from Musaga villages and reported stories of women who in the worst of the fighting in 1999 came to organize an exchange of humanitarian aid as a gesture of solidarity between them. Women from Musaga collected what food and clothing they could find for the women in Busoro, who had been previously attacked. As they heard gunshots in the surrounding hills, they gathered at an administrator's office, gave speeches pledging support to one another, and chanted and sang and

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danced for hours, "We are the women of Busoro, we are the women of Musaga, give us peace, give us peace now!" until the gunshots subsided (FAS 2001).

In Burundi, as in so many conflicts, the nature of women's demands reflected the ongoing and multifaceted nature of women's struggles. It shows how peace is not something that is attained in one event or agreement, but rather, through an ongoing series of concrete actions and activities involving people on all sides of a conflict.

INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

Women's movements and women's activism around peace have been supported to a certain degree by international initiatives from regional and international organizations. They also have been supported by changes in international norms, which influence the actions of donor, diplomatic, United Nations, and regional bodies, and international NGOs. The Fourth UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 played an important role in changing some of the norms and practices regarding women's leadership. resolution 1325 did the same for women's involvement in peace-building activities. Numerous commentators, however, have observed how the lack of support from the international women's movement has frayed these capacities and linkages, with serious implications for local mobilization.

Tangible technical and financial support from UNIFEM/UN Women, UN peace-keeping forces, and other UN agencies has often been critical in helping women's rights organizations gain access to peace talks and other transitional processes. Organizations like the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security serve as a link between women's human rights activists in countries affected by conflict and policymakers at the UN Headquarters. Similarly, regional organizations like the Federation of African Women's Peace Networks (FERFAP), Mano River Union Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET), and Femmes Afrique Solidarité (FAS) were instrumental in facilitating local women's peace initiatives in countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Thus, even though peace movements have been driven by local-level dynamics, they have benefited from critical international support and pressure on their governments in terms of changes in international norms regarding women's rights and representation, interventions by the United Nations and other multilateral actors, and financial aid from bilateral and other donors, in addition to the adoption of key UN treaties regarding the role of women in peacemaking.

CONCLUSION

Women's movements have pressed their demands for peace, for a greater role for women in peacemaking and in politics, and for gender equality. Women's exclusions from

formal peace-building processes and negotiations have relegated their activities to more informal and localized arenas that all too often go unacknowledged by scholars, journalists, and policymakers. Peacemaking for them goes well beyond peace negotiations and disarmament exercises: it includes informal strategies and permeates everyday life.

The practical everyday nature of women's peace-building has meant that women activists have tended to pursue peace *as a process* during conflict. In conventional peace negotiations, the signing of a peace agreement, holding of elections, and demobilization of militia are generally seen as the end point. In contrast, peace is often seen by women's organizations as an ongoing process that involves working together to solve common problems and meet important everyday needs.

The ability of women's organizations to build bridges across ethnic, religious, clan, and other differences that have contributed to conflict stem from (1) the common concerns they often share to improve women's status as citizens and political actors, and (2) the quotidian nature of women's concerns in running households and communities, which require the kind of cooperation that cannot wait for the resolution of peace talks.

Finally, international and regional pressures and support have bolstered local and national initiatives of women peace activists through the passage of resolution 1325, direct support by women's organizations, and the diffusion of international norms regarding women's rights and participation in peace processes.

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