Engendering Peace in Africa: A Critical Inquiry Into Some Current Thinking on the Role of African Women in Peace-building
by Louise Vincent

Abstract
Romanticised, popular concepts of womanhood and of women's peace-building capacities need to be critically investigated. A gendered approach is recommended as a corrective to stereotyped perspectives about women and peace, as well as to gender-blind experiments. Such an approach may be found realistic and useful, not only in everyday circumstances, but especially also in war and post-war situations. Particular attention is given to gender in post-war politics, economy and social reconstruction.

Introduction

A view which has wide popular currency among aid organisations, intellectuals, politicians and citizens in the peace-building community, holds that women have special or different perspectives, experiences and capacities which make them non-violent in orientation and which render them particularly effective as peace-makers. These qualities, it is argued, have been largely ignored and under-utilised outside the family context. In the light of this, women are called upon to speak out and take action in order to "retrieve their power to say no to war" (UNESCO 1995)   the implication being that this is an inherent, natural predisposition that has been "lost" or artificially obscured.

This article argues that such notions are on dubious conceptual ground and rest on discredited essentialist accounts of womanhood. Such essentialist accounts ghettoise women by placing them in a category of their own which is removed from the diversity of identities and extended range of experience and ways of being that are by implication available only to men. They obscure the many differences between women and employ stereotyped categories that are themselves the product of gendered relations. The article argues that rather than focusing on "women" as somehow naturally suited to the task of building peace, what is required is a gendered 1 account which talks of women and men (and the relationships between them) and how they behave in gendered ways in relation to specific circumstances. Only by focusing on these relations of dominance2 and their attendant violence can we come to understand how they might be superseded. Talk of a "women's hermeneutic" obscures the fact that ways of thinking arise from the roles which women have been assigned, and that attitudes which emphasise peace, sharing and partnership are as much part of human identity and potentiality as is the capacity for destruction and brutality.

Gender versus women

Articles and stories documenting women's positive contributions to peace-building have become something of a growth industry. Women are said to be "active and ingenious participants in almost any aspect of post-war recovery and rebuilding" (Sørenson 1998).3 African women have been singled out for special attention in the peace-building efforts of international agencies, national governments and local civil society organisations in recent years4 The unquestioned assumption underlying all these efforts is that "women", in this case, "African women", constitute a category of person with common characteristics that lend themselves to being employed in the project of building peace.

The Zanzibar Conference on "Women of Africa for a Culture of Peace" held in Tanzania from the 17th to the 20th of May 1999 with the sponsorship of UNESCO in conjunction with the government of Tanzania, the Organisation of African Unity, the African Women's Committee for Peace and Development and other inter- and non-governmental organisations is a case in point. More than 300 participants including policy makers, academics, peace activists, and members of non-governmental organisations from forty-nine African countries and six European and North American countries, representatives of the UN family, the OAU, ECA and other regional institutions, including 25 ministers from 60 countries, 50 of them African, came together to talk about women's initiatives and potential for peace-building.

The conference was billed as providing a forum for African women to develop their own agenda for conflict resolution, peace-building and reconciliation. Its premise as understood by its UNESCO backers was that "African women's quest for peace and their strong determination to be involved in political decision-making in order to help solve problems at the roots instead of utilising stop-gap measures in emergency situations" had to be supported. In the words of Ingeborg Breines, Director of UNESCO's Women and a Culture of Peace:

Faced with the ever-increasing number of armed conflicts and persistence of violence world-wide, and acknowledging that women's visions, talents, skills and experience have been under-utilised in decision-making for far too long, the ultimate goal of the Conference was to provide a forum for African women to co-ordinate their actions for peace so as to effectively and significantly impact decision-making processes on the continent and serve as an early warning mechanism.5

The premise of the "Zanzibar Declaration" emanating from the conference was that women had, in the post-colonial period, enjoyed limited participation in democratisation processes and negotiations for peace on the continent tended also to be male dominated. This marginalisation had "denied Africa the use of women's talents, experience and skills as agents for peace and development" (Zanzibar Declaration 1999:Clause 2). Participants pledged themselves to promote non-violent means of conflict resolution, "African values for a culture of peace" and consensus-building and dialogue. Appealing to African governments and parliaments to reduce military expenditures and re-channel these resources to people's basic development needs, the Zanzibar Declaration highlights the importance of education in establishing a culture of peace and calls for the "strengthening of African women's capacities to sensitise, mobilise and reconcile the entire continent to the importance of peaceful means of conflict prevention, resolution and transformation" (Zanzibar Declaration 1999:Clause 16).

While there is some reference in the Zanzibar Declaration to "gender", the use of the term as synonymous with "women" appears to have been the underlying assumption of the conference. Salma Salim Amour, the wife of Zanzibar President Salim Amour, called on the "first ladies of Africa", and on all other women, to "sensitise their husbands to the culture of peace and convince them not to wage war any more" (UNESCO Presse 1999b). UNESCO's Director-General, Federico Mayor, underlining the importance of women in building peace, declared: "Women and life are synonymous terms. A woman gives life, she is the most apt at preserving it", adding that "only 4 per cent of decisions are taken by women in the world" while "women are the best messengers for peace" (UNESCO Presse 1999a). Similarly, the Vice-President of Uganda, Speciosa Wandira Kazibwe who is also Chairperson of the African Women Committee for Peace and Development, stressed the importance of women in building peace, notably due to their role in education: "Women have the advantage of moulding children at a very impressionable age. We must begin by loving our children and teaching them to love everyone irrespective of ethnicity, religion, race, gender, class." She further argued that "women do not

seek power for power's sake, but to improve the human condition" (UNESCO Presse 1999a).

While it is common, within this perspective, which characterises also for example the Kampala Action Plan on Women and Peace (1993), the African Platform for Action (Dakar, 1994), the Women Leadership Forum on Peace, (Johannesburg, 1996), the Kigali Pan-African Conference on Peace, Gender and Development, (1997), the inter-agency Workshop on Documented Best Practices of Women in Peace-building and Non-violent Means of Conflict Resolution, (Addis Ababa, 1997); as well as other African women's initiatives at local and national levels, to talk of "the mainstreaming of a gender perspective" (United Nations Economic and Social Council 1996), it is unclear why a gendered perspective would suggest the need for an African Women's Conference or initiatives focusing on women. The Zanzibar Agenda for Peace is described as a "gender contract" which would guide the participants in their actions for peace but goes on to refer to "we African women" who have "employed effective mediating techniques in our efforts to address the recurring violent conflicts" (The Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa 1999:Clause 2). It continues: "The women of Africa are deeply concerned with the persistence and proliferation of violence and armed conflicts" (The Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa 1999:Clause 3). The Agenda argues that while women have primarily been considered as the victims of conflict, their "life experiences and know-how are an enabling factor for playing key roles in various forms of preventive action" (The Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa 1999:Clause 8). Lip-service is given to notions of gender, but it is clear that what is really being spoken of is women rather than gender and that the category of "women" that the speakers have in mind is shot through with essentialist notions of who and what women are. In this sentimentalised ideal-type it is difficult to recognise the large numbers of women who contribute to violence, directly or indirectly by inciting men to defend group interests, honour, and collective livelihoods.

Rather than relying on romanticised (and ultimately oppressive) constructs of womanhood, a gendered approach attempts to heighten awareness of the particular (and changed) circumstances which war creates for the construction and reconstruction of gendered roles in a society. While particular circumstances vary, pre-war experiences along with those of the war itself will affect (but not pre-determine) the way in which gendered roles are reconfigured in the post-war period. In societies characterised by gender inequality and discrimination, the pattern is one of systematic exclusion and disadvantage of women for no reason other than that they are women. Along with the marginalisation of women goes the marginalisation of certain ideas and perspectives. In this sense it becomes possible to talk of the privileging not only of men themselves but of those perspectives and ways of being that are constructed as "male" and the concomitant marginalisation of those perspectives and ways of being which are part of the socially constructed category "female". It is however important not to confuse these social constructions with the real perspectives, experiences and attitudes of real women since it is quite impossible either conceptually or empirically to specify what these might be.

A critic might respond that it is in their (common) role as mothers or care-givers that women come to be characterised by attitudes of caring and nurturing which render them particularly unavailable to projects of militarisation and violence. Yet, even that most ubiquitous and powerful of cultural icons, woman as mother, has been deconstructed by feminists of many hues to reveal that "neither a woman nor a man is born a mother; people become mothers in particular historical and social circumstances. Even if pregnancy and birth are taken as part of mothering, the biological fact of birthgiving is, both medically and symbolically, culturally various. Once a child is born, maternal work can assume radical

differences.... Any mother speaking in or about a maternal voice is a particular person of a particular temperament, social location, and politics". (Ruddick 1995:52). The myth that mothers are naturally good which some have been so pleased to employ in the service of the peace project has as its inevitable counterpart the "bad mother" and it is betwixt these two equally oppressive stereotypes that real mothers do the real work of mothering. As Ruddick (1995:31-32) comments,

An idealized figure of the Good Mother casts a long shadow on many actual mothers' lives.... Many mothers who live in the Good Mother's shadow, knowing that they have been angry and resentful and remembering episodes of violence and neglect, come to feel that their lives are riddled with shameful secrets.... The myth that mothers are naturally good or wickedly bad inspires ignorant contempt for the actual work that mothers do.

Generalisations about the supposed commonality of women's experience in post-war situations include the fact that war leaves women as widows, victims of rape and torture, as the majority of internally displaced persons and refugees and as ex-combatants. However, as with "motherhood" the social significance of each of these categories of experience lies in the ways in which the structuring of gender roles in society which pre-date any specific war or conflict, create a gendered set of meanings and implications for certain roles. So, for example, to say that someone is a "widow" has social, economic and political implications and resonances which are not present if one refers in gender-neutral terms to "someone who has lost a spouse". But these resonances only exist because of a prior set of social structures which are gendered. Apart from contributing to the definition of women's specific post-war concerns, these structural and situational factors, as Birgitte Sørenson (1998)6 has pointed out, play a decisive role in defining the motivations as well as the constraints on women's involvement as social actors in the political process toward sustainable peace.

A gendered perspective of post-war reconstruction then, needs to look at the political, economic and social spheres in order to understand how these spheres are structured in gendered ways, perpetuating patterns of discrimination against and disadvantage of, women, albeit on a new terrain created by the conflict and the dynamics of its aftermath. In attempting to understand the gendered structuring of experience and relationships, however, it is important that social actors are not treated as passive bearers of structures but rather that human agency is recognised as an important ingredient in creating, recreating, mediating and contesting gendered identities. This point is particularly important in post-war contexts where social relations tend to be in enormous flux and where wartime conditions create a radically new set of experiences for many people, which can lead to new ways of viewing both themselves and their relationships with others. This in turn may create possibilities for change and/or conflict as some actors attempt to introduce new ways of being while others attempt to retain the status quo.

Gender and Post-war Politics

In the political sphere a common call on the part of peace-builders has been for quotas, a "critical mass" or simply increased involvement of women in decision-making positions both during peace negotiation processes and in the post-war political dispensation. However, if, as this article has argued, there exists no essential category of "woman" it is worth asking what lies at the basis of the call for greater women's representation in political decision-making. A number of (often unstated) assumptions appear to inform this demand. These may include questions of fairness (the idea that since men and women are present in the population in roughly equal numbers this demographic reality should be reflected in decision-making institutions) and/or the more far-reaching idea that there exists a

"women's approach" which is unjustifiably and damagingly absent from the dominant political discourse, and/or that women have a set of interests different to those of men which can only be defended by other women. All three of these concerns are, for example, present in the following explanation for why women ought to be represented in political decision-making in relation to peace:

Women's wish to be included in the peace negotiation process is more than a simple demand for numeric representation proportional to women's presence in a particular society. It is a demand based on the belief that institutions governed by men are unlikely to reflect the specific interests and views of the female population; instead, these institutions may reproduce and even reinforce the marginalized position of women in society. Insofar as female citizens have needs and priorities different from those of their male counterparts, they would themselves be interested in participating in such negotiations to ensure that adequate attention is given to their views (Sørenson, 1998).[7]

However, in all three cases conceptual and practical difficulties abound. Where women are influential in formal peace processes (Palestine; Guatemala) their influence is the result of prior mobilisation and organisation in defence of their interests. This is in itself difficult to achieve because women are not a homogenous category and while having certain fundamental commonalities they also have interests that profoundly conflict. Once negotiations move from the general (cessation of hostilities; establishment of peace) to the specific (land distribution; competition for developmental resources), class schisms, rural/urban divides and other areas of conflicting interest come to the fore.[8]

Moreover, initiatives to include women in greater numbers, which emerge from the national or central level, frequently do not reflect changes in attitudes or mores in the broader society. It is for example often pointed out that in Somalia, women were present early on in the Mogadishu peace deliberations. However, when it was recommended that all regional representations to the Transitional National Council should include at least one woman, it turned out that many clans would not accept being represented by a woman (Zainab 1996). Women are generally also excluded from the clan-based councils of elders, which in the present situation is a more important organ for political discussions (UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] 1994).

When we shift our focus to informal peace-building activities, often initiated at the peak of atrocities and instability, we see a very different picture. Here, women from all walks of life are among the most ardent participants, involved in a wide array of activities. However, the political nature of these activities is often undervalued. Women's activities in community or church groups, for example, are often labelled "volunteer", "charitable", or "social" despite their obvious political dimensions (Ferris 1998). Women themselves frequently adopt these appellations as a convenient legitimising tool for their political activities[9]. On the other hand, as women become politicised, and particularly when they form linkages with other women whose experiences are similar to their own, there is much testimony to suggest that the connection between what happens in the private domain of the family and social violence is rendered more transparent.

The conviction that peace should be approached at community and family levels is one shared by many women's peace organisations. But when peace agencies and activists glibly conclude that women must take up the cudgels for peace within their own families (Enloe 1993:47), they often risk underestimating both the psychological, emotional, physical and economic risks that women must take in order to challenge gender relations in their own families, and the far-reaching implications that such a challenge would have. Few women are in a position to take such risks and to ask them to do so is to place the responsibility for peace and justice on the shoulders of the most marginal, least empowered

and most vulnerable members of war-torn societies. Not surprising then, that where peace is won, it is often fragile and seldom just, failing to tackle the fundamental questions associated with societies whose very structure is dependent on violently enforced relations of dominance.

Gender and the post-war economy

War generates circumstances of crisis, which in turn evoke responses that may upset or radically alter traditional gender role definitions and patterns of behaviour. Adult males become economically inactive due to their participation in fighting during the war and the post-conflict situation leaves many families in which the adult males have been killed. Of necessity women in these circumstances enter into new economic roles. In northern Somalia, for example, war led to some nomadic women taking over men's traditional role in trade. They began to frequent markets, to sell livestock and milk and to buy other essential consumer items. While these activities were initially temporary coping strategies, they nevertheless had long-term consequences, as women learned new skills which could be used in post-war times as well. Many men now prefer that women make these long trading journeys indicating that war-time conditions can have long-term effects on gender role definitions (Sørenson, 1998).10

For those women who are combatants during the fighting or who are displaced from their homes, war may expose them to new ideas and new possibilities for economic activity. Watson's study of female returnees in Chad, for example, showed that they maintained and elaborated on relationships established while in exile: "women...were able to take advantage of the permeability of national borders in these key frontier zones to trade in Nigerian cloth, cosmetics, whisky and alcohol" (Watson 1996:136).

However, this process of re-definition is often highly contested and a source of conflict between men and women. For example, women who transgress social boundaries by becoming involved in trade are often stigmatised as prostitutes.11 Once women achieve a measure of economic independence, men risk losing control over them and women come to be seen as competitors for scarce economic resources such as jobs, trade routes and markets. The fact that some women resort to prostitution in the war or post-war situation becomes a convenient mechanism for discrediting all women's economic activity which is deemed to threaten men's interests. As women become increasingly successful in economic life, male-dominated state institutions adopt regulations and practices that undermine women's entrepreneurial activities and marginalise them as "problem citizens".

The ease with which women's economic activities are discredited or seen as marginal or unusual is heightened by the limited options for employment in the formal economic sector available to women. Here gendered relationships play a central role in excluding women and privileging men. For one thing, formal sector employment usually requires access to education and skills training and this access is gendered. Moreover, at the ideological level gender stereotypes are used to justify differential access and to minimise the scale of the perceived economic crisis in the post-war economy. With high rates of male unemployment due to demobilisation, economic decline and restructuring there is a strong motivation for governments to exclude women from the labour pool. Women are for the most part at the behest of state programmes which either encourage or discourage their participation in the formal economy because in the absence of socialised child care and other support for them in their roles as carers, their opportunities to enter the formal sector are greatly limited. The absence of programmes which make education and training available to women has a similar effect.

In the wake of demobilisation, and increased competition on the labour market due to repatriation and resettlement, ideologies of women's "proper role" which may have been de-emphasised during hostilities, come to the fore once more. Within this prevailing ideology war is seen to create unusual circumstances which require "unusual" responses, but once peace is restored, "Rosie the Riveter" must return to her natural métier, "lay down her tools and pick up her cookery books" (Beddoe 1989:4). To the extent that peace-builders draw on stereotypes of women's "natural" capacities and assumed biological traits, they are reinforcing rather than assisting in the fundamental revisioning of prevailing relations of gender dominance which justify women's exclusion from the public sphere of work and politics on the basis of their putative special responsibilities and proficiencies as mothers.

Social Reconstruction

At the social level, post-war societies face the challenge of rehabilitating the social sector and creating the conditions for the long-term social re-integration of war-damaged societies. Social services are often severely damaged by war, partly due to the reallocation of funds from social budgets to the military domain and partly due to the loss of professional personnel. Intrastate conflicts in particular, often target social sector institutions and cause massive social dislocation. As women often carry the main responsibility for the well-being of their families and communities, they are particularly affected by the social damage caused by war. For the same reason, they are also very active in restoring essential social services such as health and education, both during and after conflict.

Some commentators have seen this gendered role definition as having the potential to place significant power in women's hands. In war-torn societies, education is often regarded as an important agent of socialisation in alternative norms to prevailing attitudes of hostility. There are many examples of women's self-help groups (in Somalia, Rwanda, Uganda and elsewhere) that focus on trying to increase women's awareness of their indirect roles in conflict through their primary responsibility for socialisation of children and of the possibilities for change. Such programmes however are premised on the idea that the disempowered are through their very disempowerment able to challenge social structures. They take as given women's predominance in certain social roles and responsibilities and fail to challenge some of the bases for war and violence in relations of gender domination which alienate men from children, result in an absence of positive male role models performing functions of caring and nurturing, deny women access to power or authority, marginalise attitudes of peaceableness and valorise violence. Under these structural conditions women are far more likely to fulfil their socialised "responsibility" of reproducing relations of dominance and militarised attitudes than they are to challenge them.

The post-war social milieu is frequently one of heightened uncertainty about gender role definition, which creates the conditions both for challenge and for conflict. Accounts from war-torn societies indicate the frustration experienced by many women, especially female combatants who are suddenly excluded from positions of authority in the post-war social arena and again confined to the domestic sphere, where they are expected to revert to traditional ways of behaving. As a result, as a number of studies have indicated, women may be reluctant to return to their pre-war home villages and instead remain in exile or relocate to urban centres. Those who do return to their home villages may face hostile and suspicious social attitudes. Returning women frequently experience domestic violence and abuse, often related to alcohol abuse, which is in turn linked to male insecurity due to unemployment

or traumatisation during the conflict. Returnees' behaviour and new attitudes developed during war are perceived as a lack of respect for local cultural traditions and they find it difficult to gain acceptance and integration with the local community. Like returning female soldiers, women who have been raped or widowed and are difficult to incorporate into the dominant framework of woman as wife, mother or virgin daughter, face ostracisation and diminished access to resources (Sørenson, 1998).12

Rather than perpetuating unhelpful stereotypes, post-war social reconstruction needs, then, to be sensitive to the redefinition and renegotiation of gender roles and relationships that are likely to characterise the post-conflict society in complex ways. War erodes traditional social bonds giving rise to new nodes of conflict while at the same time destroying the social fund of goodwill, collective wisdom, shared norms and communication networks that provide the means for resolving conflict. As Chingono (1996:220) writes of Mozambique: "The erosion and, in some cases, the breakdown of public institutions has affected the interrelations between kin, friends, and neighbours. New forms of family and association are replacing kinship and extended family ties". At the most fundamental level then, war challenges are re-ordering relationships between men and women. We cannot get at this re-ordering by talking about women. Rather, it is the gendered nature of social institutions that are at the heart of appropriate interpretations of the social impact of war.

Conclusion

Essentialist notions of mothers and peace, which arise in the peace movement and in the discourse of aid organisations, appear in part to be building on a misappropriation of a wide body of feminist work which has critiqued dominant ideas of rational thinking and offered in their stead the notion of "maternal thinking". However, feminist scholarship has long conceded the absence of an essential "women's nature" and acknowledged what it calls the concept of "difference". For example, in Sara Ruddick's book Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace, she is careful to characterise mothering as a practice rather than as a biological inevitability: "mothers are not identified by fixed biological or legal relationships to children but by the work they set out to do.... This conception of mothering as a kind of caring labor undermines the myth that mothers are "naturally" loving. There is nothing foreordained about maternal response" (Ruddick 1995:xi).

Ruddick points to the potential of maternal practice to develop ways of dealing with conflict that are consistent with the goals of mothering. Such practices are marginalised as a result of women's marginal position in society's power structure. As Enloe (1993:246) puts it, militarisation occurs because some peoples' fears are allowed to be heard, and to inform agendas, while other peoples' fears are trivialised or silenced. The point is that attitudes of peace and caring are marginalised and that this arises from a social milieu in which war, violence, inequality and aggression have come to be legitimised; and unequal gender relationships and socially constructed gender stereotypes are very central to the process of legitimisation. By uncritically adopting these stereotypes, those with an interest in peace-building become part of the problem. As Ruddick (1995:xviii) points out, "neither women nor mothers, nor for that matter men nor fathers, are 'peaceful'". Instead, we need to understand that to the extent that a politics of peace, care and justice is possible, it must be created and actively fostered.

A gendered approach differs from the tradition of women's studies which isolates women for special treatment; tending to portray women as a homogeneous group. The result is the construction of a

universalistic narrative of women's experience of war. Yet "women come out of armed conflicts with highly diverse experiences and priorities for the rebuilding process" and develop "dissimilar strategies and employ different means to deal with what appear to be similar conditions" (Sørenson, 1998).13 A gendered approach is a corrective also to "gender-blind" accounts which employ categories such as "people", "the population", "refugees", "internally displaced persons", "demobilized soldiers", or "disabled persons", that conceal the gendered nature of experience. Processes such as state-building, national identity formation, democratisation, economic development and so on, which have previously been regarded as largely gender-neutral and often external to women's domains are themselves exposed as inherently gendered.

A gendered analysis, in contrast to both gender-blind approaches and those which focus exclusively on women, addresses the social relationships between men and women. In conflict and post-war situations gender relationships are challenged. Both women and men struggle to identify and consolidate new identities and roles. However, as these struggles of identity and status are often mixed with battles over resources and power, the reconstitution of gender is potentially conflictual. "As women and men set out to win, consolidate or reclaim different rights and positions, social institutions and categories such as community, family, household, workplace, and friendship take on new meanings and roles" (Sørenson, 1998).14

While women clearly are particularly vulnerable in times of crisis, it is important that this is seen not as a result of women's nature, but the result of social structures and mechanisms that turn women into victims and reproduce or even increase their vulnerability in times of crisis. If these structures and mechanisms are not challenged and exposed as gendered, processes of post-war reconstruction are likely to, despite initial gains, eventually result in the reinforcement of the relations of domination which make war more likely in the first place.

Notes

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1.While the term 'sex' is usually used to refer to the biological differences between men and women, the notion of 'gender' encompasses the socially constructed roles and characteristics which adhere to the categories 'male' and 'female'. These may differ in time and place.

2.Here I am drawing on Riane Eisler's formulation in Eisler 1988 in which she distinguishes between the 'partnership' societies of the Neolithic period which predate the 'dominator' societies of later periods that have come to be known as 'Western civilization'.

3.Concluding Remarks, p.1. http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-11.htm

4.The discussion of women's participation in decision-making in relation to war and peace in fact predates the recent discussion of post-conflict reconstruction. In 1975, the Nairobi Conference, which marked the opening of the United Nations Decade for Women, pointed to the need to involve women equally in decision-making. The recommendations of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the

Advancement of Women stated that: 'Governments should be encouraged to increase the participation of women in the peace process at the decision-making level, including them as part of delegations to negotiate international agreements relating to peace and disarmament and establishing a target for the number of women participating in such delegations' (United Nations Economic and Social Council 1993:Recommendation XX). At the Beijing Conference in 1995, the issue was again raised at the international policy level, when the conference defined it as a strategic objective to 'increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels...and integrate a gender perspective in the resolution of armed or other conflicts...and ensure that bodies are able to address gender issues properly' (United Nations Economic and Social Council 1995:61). Since 1989 the U.N.'s Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) have devoted much time to this issue. A 1996 report of an Expert Group Meeting of DAW reiterates the need for external and government actors to pay attention to women's particular needs and capacities in programmes relating to peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women 1996). In the early 1990s UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) founded a project called African Women in Crisis (AFWIC). The project document states that 'The mission of AFWIC is to promote a development-oriented strategy to the process of disaster mitigation which ensures that women are viewed as both crucial resources and full participants in all efforts to alleviate crisis situations in Africa' (UNIFEM 1994:7).

5.'Women Organize for Peace and Non-Violence in Africa'. Introduction by Ingeborg Breines. http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/projects/women_organize_for_peace_in_africa.htm

6.'Political Reconstruction', p.1. http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-03.htm

7.'Political Reconstruction', p.7. http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-03.htm

8.For a fuller discussion on the question of interests and women's representation see Vincent 2001.

9.For more on this see Vincent 1999.

10.'Economic Reconstruction', p.4. http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-06.htm

11.See for example Cheater & Gaidzanwa 1996:191.

12.'Social Integration', pp 1-5. http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-09.htm

13.'Conclusion', p.2. http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-11.htm

14.'Conclusion', p.2. http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-11.htm

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