

# Undergraduate Transitional Justice Review

---

Volume 1 | Issue 2

Article 4

---

2010

## West African Women Unite

Katelyn Jones

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/undergradtjr>

---

### Recommended Citation

Jones, Katelyn (2010) "West African Women Unite," *Undergraduate Transitional Justice Review*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 2 , Article 4.  
Available at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/undergradtjr/vol1/iss2/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Transitional Justice Review by an authorized editor of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact [tadam@uwo.ca](mailto:tadam@uwo.ca), [wlsadmin@uwo.ca](mailto:wlsadmin@uwo.ca).

## WEST AFRICAN WOMEN UNITE: THE INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN PEACE PROCESSES

Katelyn Jones

*This paper focuses on the necessary involvement of women within peace-building processes. It asserts that a comprehensive and inclusive approach to peace and security is needed between men and women for successful post-conflict resolution to take place in divided societies. The paper begins with a discussion of the absence and exclusion of women in traditional peace processes. By exploring the role that women's peace activism had upon conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, the paper then examines how the work of particular women's groups have stopped armed violence and attained post-conflict transformations. Illustrating the achievements of the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) and the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), the paper examines why women are integral to peace-building processes and prescribes particular methods to enable and empower women as advocates for peace.*

Peacemaking is a necessary force as long as violent conflicts continue to rage between peoples and states. Peace-building has become a 'buzzword' in international policy discourse as a way to characterize post-Cold War approaches to global security.<sup>1</sup> Although the concept of peace-building has spread widely in international rhetoric, the way it is defined, interpreted and executed is different from place to place. What is agreed upon, however, is the fact that peace-building must address the underlying causes of violent conflicts in order to either prevent the initiation of conflict or prevent its reoccurrence.<sup>2</sup> To build successful peace in a divided society, a comprehensive and inclusive approach to peace and security is needed across nationalities, ethnicities,

---

<sup>1</sup> Linda Etchart and Rawwida Baksh, "Applying a Gender Lens to Armed Conflict, Violence and Conflict Transformation," in *Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace*, ed. Rawwida Bakah et al. (The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005), 30.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

cultures, and particularly between men and women.<sup>3</sup> This paper will focus specifically on this latter concept, the need to establish equality in the roles of men and women in peace-building.

It has increasingly been recognized that men and women do not experience conflict in the same way.<sup>4</sup> Each has differing needs during the conflict and is afflicted by the violence and unrest in different ways. Thus, men and women require different treatment in the aftermath of conflict. Regardless of this fact, women have traditionally been and are continually excluded from peace processes. In this paper, I will argue that female participation in conflict resolution is essential to the successful restoration of peace. The stereotype that women are generally more inclined to collaboration, consensus and compromise than men is in fact supported by social science research. As these are vital features to the peace process, it is essential that women are considered, empowered and enabled to play a leading role in the peace process. There is urgent need for the inclusion of women in peace-building processes in conflict-ridden areas, in order to consolidate their role as effective advocates for peace.

It is clear that an integrated approach to preventing conflicts and rebuilding war-torn societies is the only way to achieve success. This process must be inclusive, accountable and ensure the equal participation of women and men.<sup>5</sup> Such an approach has been successful in nations spanning from Papua New Guinea to Rwanda.<sup>6</sup> My case study,

---

<sup>3</sup> Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana, "Gendering Peacebuilding," in *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century*, ed. Daniel J. Christie, Richard V. Wagner, and Deborah Du Nahn Winter (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 2001), 342.

<sup>4</sup> Victor Pungong and Elsie Onubogu, "Gender and Conflict Transformation in the Commonwealth," in *Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace*, ed. Rawwida Bakah et al. (The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005), 8.

<sup>5</sup> Pungong and Onubogu, "Gender and Conflict Transformation in the Commonwealth," 12.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

however, will be based on the experiences of women in the West African nations of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

Throughout this paper, I will illustrate the necessary involvement of women within the peace-building process. To do this, I will first consider the reasons for the absence and exclusion of women in peace processes. Next, by exploring the role that women's peace activism played in conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, I will describe how the work of particular women's groups have stopped armed violence and attained post-conflict transformations. I will concentrate on the achievements of the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) and the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET). Following this, I will explain why women are integral to the peacemaking process. Finally, I will prescribe methods to enable and empower women in peace processes.

The absence of women in international meetings of conflict resolution is well documented.<sup>7</sup> The traditional discourse on war and peace has either ignored women or regarded them solely as victims.<sup>8</sup> This lack of inclusion has been caused by a variety of factors. While young men have tended to fill the roles of 'protectors' by engaging in combat, women and girls have traditionally acted as 'providers' of household needs while violence rages elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Such gender-based differences require different and specific responses.

Elsie Onubogu and Linda Etchart suggest seven reasons for the absence of women in the peace process, all of which are supported by women's experiences in diverse

---

<sup>7</sup> Elsie Onubogu and Linda Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality and Equity in Peace Processes," in *Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace*, ed. Rawwida Bakah et al. (The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005), 34.

<sup>8</sup> Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality and Equity in Peace Processes," 34.

<sup>9</sup> Pungong and Onubogu, "Gender and Conflict Transformation in the Commonwealth," 8.

locations and contexts. Firstly, they suggest that because few women have wielded guns, the allocation of power in peace agreements has been limited to those who have been fighting for it.<sup>10</sup> In peace processes, most attention is given to the demands of those who committed the violence and far less to citizens affected by the conflict (whom could offer alternative perspectives for peace-building).<sup>11</sup> As men have been the dominant instigators and perpetrators of violent conflict, they have also been the sole planners of post-conflict reconstruction. However, some assert that “Allowing men who plan wars to plan peace is a bad habit.”<sup>12</sup> For the task of re-establishing peace to fall to the same individuals who initiated and perpetuated the conflict seems counterintuitive. Not surprisingly, this method has begun to be reinterpreted due to its ineffectiveness.

Secondly, Onubogu and Etchart suggest that there is an assumption which claims that what men from a community want is what women want also;<sup>13</sup> this presupposes that men represent the interests of the community as a whole, including the women. As stated earlier, men and women experience conflict in very different ways; therefore, when men determine how reconstruction should occur, the needs of women are undermined. This issue ties into their next argument: women have been excluded from public life because of tradition, customs or culture.<sup>14</sup> Participation in public life is essential for inclusion in processes of post-conflict reconstruction. Considering the fact that women are largely absent from national power structures, such as government, diplomatic or military

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>12</sup> Swanee Hunt and Cristina Posa, "Women Waging Peace," *Foreign Policy* 124 (2001): 38.

<sup>13</sup> Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality and Equity in Peace Processes," 34.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 39.

relations, they are scarcely considered to be participants of the negotiating parties in peace talks.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, the absence of women in peace processes is explained on account of logistical and security issues.<sup>16</sup> Because post-conflict reconstruction meetings and peace negotiations are often held in distant locations, security concerns arise for many women. In areas where sexual and gender-based violence has occurred, some may fear coming into contact with the very group or individual who abused them. Limited finances, lack of transportation or family commitments are other such issues that may prevent women from attending.

In light of these reasons, the involvement of women in the peace process has been and could further be effortlessly set aside. The complications that accompany the involvement of women are certainly complex; some would even deem this unworkable. However, women can also be the “most powerful voices for moderation in times of conflict.”<sup>17</sup> While most men arrive at the first round peace talks straight from the battlefield, women most often come out of civil activism or family care.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, Onubogu and Etchart conclude that those “responsible for the organisation of peace talks should ensure that women leaders and peace-builders are identified, that visible and effective security arrangements for women are put in place and that provision is made for their needs.”<sup>19</sup> If these few but essential accommodations were made, the invaluable participation of women in the peace process would invariably increase.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Hunt and Posa, "Women Waging Peace," 38.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Onubogu and Etchart, “Achieving Gender Equality and Equity in Peace Processes,” 39.

More recently, there has been greater international recognition of the need for gender mainstreaming\* in all levels of the peace process.<sup>20</sup> Such recognition is in part due to the UN's Second World Conference on Women in 1985, the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, as well as the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which puts women's rights at the forefront of determining their needs in post-conflict areas.<sup>21</sup> Such steps have proven vital to the recognition of women's necessary involvement in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.

### **African Women's Groups Lead the Way in Peace Processes**

Though women have been largely absent from official peace processes and peace-building initiatives,<sup>22</sup> African women's groups have "continued to use their numerical strength, sisterhood, and shared experiences to bring about change."<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, since the mid-1980s, these needed changes have been largely ignored by the spread of armed conflict that emerged in regions of West Africa. Most notably was the fourteen years of war that plagued Liberia, and crossed the borders into Sierra Leone and Guinea.<sup>24</sup> These associated conflicts caused tremendous suffering throughout each of the

---

\* According to the UNDP, gender mainstreaming serves to ensure gender equality and empowerment in mainstream policies and resource allocations. In practice, gender mainstreaming means identifying gaps in gender equality. A more extensive definition can be found at <http://www.undp.org/women/mainstream/>.

<sup>20</sup> Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality and Equity in Peace Processes," 34.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Thelma Ekiyor and Leymah Gbowee, "Women's Peace Activism in West Africa: The WIPNET Experience," in *People Building Peace: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, ed. Paul van Tongeren et al. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 134.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

regions. Under these circumstances, development of gender equality and empowerment came to a halt.<sup>25</sup>

The Mano River Basin comprises mass regions of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. At various times in the twenty-first century, these areas have been regarded as the most violent in the world.<sup>26</sup> According to the UNDP 2003 study, all three nations were classified as Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC).<sup>27</sup>

The Mano River Union (MRU) was first established in October of 1973 between Liberia and Sierra Leone, with Guinea later joining in 1980.<sup>28</sup> This union was designed to allow free movement of peoples and products through the regions in the hope of fostering economic cooperation and social integration.<sup>29</sup> Later, in 1986, a Non-Aggression Treaty was also signed between the three regions to again enhance the union.<sup>30</sup>

Despite these efforts, neither economic cooperation nor social integration between the regions could stop the outbreak of armed conflict. A series of violent chain reactions occurred in Liberia after an invasion by dissident forces from nearby Cote d'Ivoire in 1989.<sup>31</sup> This conflict caused a mass 'spill over' effect in Sierra Leone in 1991, then cross-border warfare into Guinea in 2000.<sup>32</sup> The collective conflicts have been characterized by

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Christiana Solomon, "The Mano River Union Sub-region: The Role of Women in Building Peace," in *Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace*, ed. Rawwida Bakah et al. (The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005), 171.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



“unparalleled human rights violations, blatant disregard for international norms and law pertaining to the conduct of war, and heinous war crimes.”<sup>33</sup>

These conflicts have been extremely complex due to the shifting of military and political alliances which has occurred between the three governments. Consequently, the conflicts have been “intertwined and have shown a ready potential to spill over and destabilise neighbouring countries.”<sup>34</sup> Explanations for the initial outbreak of the wars have been debated. Though some scholars suppose it was principally related to ethnic or resource-based disparity, other suggestions have been made. For example, Christiana Solomon sees that the “conflicts were rooted in the nature and type of state formation, the nature of domestic politics and increasing economic, social and political polarisation.”<sup>35</sup> She further suggests that the simulated “rhetoric of social justice and greater equity developed by the warring factions” appealed to recruits enough to “mobilise them to stage an armed social protest.”<sup>36</sup> It was these protests that soon erupted into armed conflict across three national borders.

The years of bloody war that raged throughout Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea have left the MRU severely fractured. The original goals of economic cooperation and social integration have been forgotten in the wake of mass violence against civilians in all three nations. The consequences of the wars are seen in the large-scale suffering, unnumbered deaths, forced migration of hundreds of thousands of people and gender-based violence.<sup>37</sup> Peace and stability in the region seemed an impossible task. However,

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

starting in 2001, women again began to play a central role in shaping processes of disarmament, negotiation and conflict resolution. Two women's groups instrumental in these actions were the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) and the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET).

WIPNET was initially an alliance formed between Christian and Muslim women. Their foremost goal was to use 'women's peace activism' to promote social justice.<sup>38</sup> Ekiyor and Gbowee (two women directly involved in WIPNET's movement) explain women's peace activism not just as antiwar activism, but as "the deconstruction of structural forms of violence existing in everyday society."<sup>39</sup> The particular ideology that this action was built on is as follows: "that systematic violence against women such as rape, forced prostitution, mutilation, etc., was an expression of a deeper systematic disregard for women existing in West African societies."<sup>40</sup> Led by this ideology, these women were convinced that it was possible to ensure that women play a central role in peace processes and decision-making in the Mano River region.<sup>41</sup>

Following its creation in 2001, WIPNET enacted substantial change on behalf of women in the MRU region, particularly in Liberia. In this time, the movement:

developed a training manual on peacebuilding; helped organize training workshops, conferences, and other meetings; conducted research; published stories on women's peacebuilding activities; engaged in peacebuilding and democracy-building activities in Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Gambia, and Mali; and undertook a range of other activities to build regional peace and mobilize women.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Ekiyor and Gbowee, "Women's Peace Activism in West Africa: The WIPNET Experience," 134.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Thus, it is evident that their achievements for women in the region were vast and wide-ranging in scope.

Also, among WIPNET's greatest achievements was their campaign to force the Liberian President, Charles Taylor, and the rebel warlords of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) to attend peace talks in June of 2003. These talks were carried out to convince the warring factions to reach an agreement and to end the war and suffering in Liberia. The campaign slogan they chose was simple: "We Want Peace; No More War."<sup>43</sup> The success of this single movement brought extraordinary change. They were able to pressure President Taylor into meeting with them, and at this meeting they "spelled out a clear program calling for an immediate unconditional cease-fire, dialogue for a negotiated settlement, and an intervention force."<sup>44</sup> WIPNET maintained their presence nearby the peace conference to ensure their demands were met and on 17 June 2003, a cease-fire agreement was signed.<sup>45</sup>

Also significant was the international media attention that WIPNET gained during this campaign. As a result, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for President Taylor and labelled him a war criminal. It was not until 11 August 2003 that Taylor agreed to resign, enabling a comprehensive peace agreement to finally be reached.<sup>46</sup> The rebuilding of Liberia continues with the inclusion and participation of women at every stage.<sup>47</sup> This mass movement for peace undertaken by the women of

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 133.

WIPNET exemplifies how women can contribute significantly both during the peace-building process and in post-conflict social reconstruction.

MARWOPNET is an alliance that also partners women in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. It is a network that finds common cause “despite tensions, cultural divides and different nationalities,” and aims to promote peace by connecting women from the Mano River regions.<sup>48</sup> Their central purpose is to emphasize the importance of the inclusion of women in the peace process and to pursue a common agenda for peace and sustainable development.<sup>49</sup> The network comprises thirty umbrella organizations which work to promote the same goals.<sup>50</sup> In a short amount of time, MARWOPNET’s network base spread to include other national, regional and international organizations.<sup>51</sup>

The breakthrough that MARWOPNET achieved in the political decision-making process was parallel to the events that WIPNET was involved in. With civil wars raging in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, the women of MARWOPNET began a campaign in 2001 to persuade leaders to engage in talks.<sup>52</sup> This campaign proved successful as they persuaded President Taylor of Liberia, President Lansana Conte of Guinea and President Tejan Kabba of Sierra Leone to come together for peace talks.<sup>53</sup> This was the first time that these three Heads of State would meet to discuss peacekeeping along their borders and the problems that spilled over from one country into the next.<sup>54</sup> Just as the women of WIPNET were to pressure President Taylor and LURD to peace talks two years later,

---

<sup>48</sup> Solomon, “The Mano River Union Sub-region: The Role of Women in Building Peace,” 177.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Femmes Africa Solidarité, “Engendering the Peace Processes in West Africa: The Mano River Women’s Peace Network,” in *People Building Peace: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, ed. Paul van Tongeren et al. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 588.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 589.

<sup>54</sup> Solomon, “The Mano River Union Sub-region: The Role of Women in Building Peace,” 177.

these women held peace talks between MARWOPNET delegations and the presidents in June and August of 2001.<sup>55</sup> The network's success in collaborating with leaders of the MRU enabled women to "secure access to decision making structures – especially in regard to peace and development processes."<sup>56</sup>

In addition, MARWOPNET made many other significant achievements. Some of which included programs to return and reintegrate refugees and internally displaced people to their homes, the destruction of small arms held by rebel groups, the rehabilitation of child soldiers and the increased cooperation of Mano River states.<sup>57</sup> Notably, MARWOPNET's capacity building continued to expand by hosting workshops that focused on equipping women to take part in peace-building.<sup>58</sup> The contributions of both WIPNET and MARWOPNET demonstrate that the inclusion of women in the peace-building process is invaluable to conflict resolution and sustainable development in conflicted and post-conflict societies.

---

<sup>55</sup> Femmes Africa Solidarité, "Engendering the Peace Processes in West Africa: The Mano River Women's Peace Network," 589.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 590.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 591.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

### Consideration, Enablement and Empowerment of Women in Peace Processes

The face of global security threats has changed significantly in the post-Cold war period. Armed conflicts have decreased on the battlefield and increased in communities bringing the consequences of conflict into peoples' homes.<sup>59</sup> As a result, women and children are much more likely to be the casualties of war. Whereas only 50 per cent of casualties were civilians in the Second World War, the figure is close to 90 per cent in more recent wars.<sup>60</sup> On account of this change, it is imperative that women are empowered in peace processes so immediate action can be taken to prevent further gender-based violence and to dispel of the notion that women are helpless in times of conflict.

Scholars have suggested that a feminist analysis identifies women's specific concerns about "peacebuilding, approaches peacebuilding from women's perspectives, [and] welcomes pluralistic voices and diverse methods."<sup>61</sup> Each of these is important to peacemaking and peace-building processes, therefore it is essential that women are considered, enabled and empowered to participate in the peace process. Although groups such as WIPNET and MARWOPNET have achieved great success in their struggle for women's inclusion, if further considerations were made and methods for inclusion were implemented, a larger collection of women could have further advanced the work of advocating for peace.

Returning to Onubogu and Etchart, they suggest three reasons for why women should be included in peace processes. Firstly, they explore the fact that human rights standards of equality and fairness require women's participation in public life, yet there

---

<sup>59</sup> Etchart and Baksh, "Applying a Gender Lens to Armed Conflict, Violence and Conflict Transformation," 22.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> McKay and Mazurana, "Gendering Peacebuilding," 342.

have been few attempts to apply their participation to peace processes.<sup>62</sup> Most states have adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, but failure to include women in affairs of the state (such as policy and decision-making) has legitimized their exclusion from any aspect of post-conflict reconstruction.<sup>63</sup> Next, they state that because conflict is highly gendered, women's varied experiences are central to their determination of post-conflict needs.<sup>64</sup> They explain that an effective peace process should be "built on the widest base of experience and therefore must take account of local women's lived experiences during the conflict and their enormous responsibilities post-conflict."<sup>65</sup> Lastly, the importance for women to progress from being perceived solely as victims to agents of conflict is illustrated.<sup>66</sup> This move would promote transformation and empowerment of women. Women have already developed and operated networks, movements and initiatives in conflict zones, their further involvement in post-conflict peace-building is essential for its success.

In order to provide a comprehensive prescription of methods of promoting women's inclusion in the peace process, specifics of how this ought to be fostered must be suggested. The implementation of the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security would be a powerful tool for all women's rights activists.<sup>67</sup> This motion calls for women's involvement in peace talks and in decision-making groups who formulate peace agreements. This would create opportunities for gender equality in post-conflict reconstruction. Nevertheless, this opportunity has been lost in numerous instances of

---

<sup>62</sup> Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality and Equity in Peace Processes," 40.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>67</sup> Femmes Africa Solidarité, "Engendering the Peace Processes in West Africa: The Mano River Women's Peace Network," 592.

nation-building in the twentieth century.<sup>68</sup> It has been suggested that in order for this tool to be used effectively, African women must “advocate for its implementation at the national level”, then the “international community must support them, both politically and financially.”<sup>69</sup> Such committed international support in this endeavour could increase the implementation of these ideas in conflicted areas of the world.

Gender balance and mainstreaming is also essential to increasing the involvement of women in peace-building. Access to education is essential to attaining either of these. Etchart and Baksh explain that “Sustainable peace is only attainable if all citizens, women and men, regardless of class or ethnicity, are able to vote in all elections and public referenda and be eligible for election in public posts.”<sup>70</sup> Without advanced education (let alone primary school) women are not even eligible for such roles. When interviewed about this issue, one African woman said this: “The basic need of women is education ... I think education will help everything else.”<sup>71</sup> Funds and effort must be directed towards increasing and enhancing educational systems as well as ensuring access to education worldwide, in order to ensure greater opportunity for the inclusion of women in public processes such as peace-building initiatives.

A crucial element of an effective conflict transformation process, and especially characteristic of the approaches of female advocates for peace, is a creative-conflict approach. This enables parties involved in violent conflict to be “respected, to be enabled

---

<sup>68</sup> Onubogu and Etchart, “Achieving Gender Equality and Equity in Peace Processes,” 38.

<sup>69</sup> Femmes Africa Solidarité, “Engendering the Peace Processes in West Africa: The Mano River Women’s Peace Network,” 592.

<sup>70</sup> Etchart and Baksh, “Applying a Gender Lens to Armed Conflict, Violence and Conflict Transformation,” 32.

<sup>71</sup> Perdita Huston, *Third World Women Speak Out: Interviews in Six Countries on Change, Development, and Basic Needs* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1979), 110.



to speak out, to be listened to and to become involved in decision-making.”<sup>72</sup> As women’s “full participation is stressed in all these processes ... it is frequently personal, interpersonal, creative and political.”<sup>73</sup> This may include imaginative activities to protest against violence such as the use of street theatre, vigils, patterned or coloured clothing, or peace walks. The women of WIPNET, for example, employed creative approaches to peace advocacy such as wearing white clothing and supporting a campaign of “No peace, no sex.”

In view of each of the above considerations, it is evident that there is urgent need for the empowerment of women as advocates for peace. There must be progress beyond the rhetoric of “peace-building” in international conflict resolution. One of the most pivotal areas of this progress is to establish an inclusive, accountable and equal vision of the roles of women and men in peace-building.

### Bibliography

- Ekiyor, Thelma and Leymah Gbowee. “Women's Peace Activism in West Africa: The WIPNET Experience.” In *People Building Peace: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, edited by Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, and Juliette Verhoeven, 133-140. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005.
- Etchart, Linda and Rawwida Baksh. “Applying a Gender Lens to Armed Conflict, Violence and Conflict Transformation.” In *Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace*, edited by Rawwida Bakah, Linda Etchart, Elsie Onubogu, and Tina Johnson, 14-32. The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005.
- Femmes Africa Solidarité. “Engendering the Peace Processes in West Africa: The Mano River Women's Peace Network.” In *People Building Peace: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, edited by Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, and Juliette Verhoeven, 588-593. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005.

---

<sup>72</sup> Etchart and Baksh, “Applying a Gender Lens to Armed Conflict, Violence and Conflict Transformation,” 28.

<sup>73</sup> McKay and Mazurana, “Gendering Peacebuilding,” 343.

Hunt, Swanee, and Cristina Posa. "Women Waging Peace." *Foreign Policy* 124 (2001): 38-47.

Huston, Perdita. *Third World Women Speak Out: Interviews in Six Countries on Change, Development, and Basic Needs*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1979.

McKay, Susan and Dyan Mazurana. "Gendering Peacebuilding." In *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century*, edited by Daniel J. Christie, Richard V. Wagner, and Deborah Du Nahn Winter, 341-49. New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 2001.

Onubogu, Elsie and Linda Etchart. "Achieving Gender Equality and Equity in Peace Processes." In *Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace*, edited by Rawwida Bakah, Linda Etchart, Elsie Onubogu, and Tina Johnson, 33-50. The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005.

Pungong, Victor and Elsie Onubogu. "Gender and Conflict Transformation in the Commonwealth." In *Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace*, edited by Rawwida Bakah, Linda Etchart, Elsie Onubogu, and Tina Johnson, 3-13. The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005.

Solomon, Christiana. "The Mano River Union Sub-region: The Role of Women in Building Peace." In *Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace*, edited by Rawwida Bakah, Linda Etchart, Elsie Onubogu, and Tina Johnson, 171-179. The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005.