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**FAITH, GENDER AND PEACEBUILDING:  
The roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in the conflict between the  
Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya**

**Jacqueline Christine OGEA**

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University of Bradford

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## **ABSTRACT**

Jacqueline C. Ogega

“Faith, gender and peacebuilding: The roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in the Conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya”

Key words: Faith, gender, peacebuilding, women’s roles, Kenya

This thesis explores the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of South-western Kenya. While religion has at times legitimated women’s exclusion and predominantly created male religious elite figures in peacebuilding, I demonstrate how women of faith deploy religious resources for peace. Acting within complex unequal gendered socio-cultural conditions and positions, the women of faith deploy religious faith as an identity, motivation, and legitimating moral authority and voice in peacebuilding. Gendered barriers hinder them from finding status and a place in formal peacebuilding mechanisms alongside males, but still the women of faith struggle and develop an attitude and disposition of moral influence, and faith power that facilitates them to act as agents in peacebuilding. The women of faith deploy religious resources in mourning and burial rituals of healing and reconciliation, in everyday spiritual practices of sharing lives, and through services that provide security and protection especially for children, the elderly, the injured and the infirm. Religion enables women to establish protective infrastructure through women of faith networks and organizations that provide services to the community, mobilize human capital, and conduct outreach and community engagement. I show that even as the women of faith deploy these religious resources for peacebuilding, they recognize the gendered barriers they are faced with and the public peacebuilding mechanisms that they are excluded from. Deployment of religious resources for peacebuilding intersects with gender identities and relations, and in some instances religious faith transcends established gender norms and gendered barriers or even removes them.

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To you my dear children Norah and Neil, that you may forever seek knowledge and understanding.

And thank you Mom for teaching me that even when the sky is falling, combining courageous faith with hard work leads to positive results.

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## CHAPTER 1

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Research question

This dissertation examines the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in relation to religious resources, gendered barriers and opportunities in the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities of South-western Kenya. The research question that I investigate is: What roles have women of faith played in peacebuilding in the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of South-western Kenya. What religious resources can they deploy? In exploring this question, I examine related questions on the conflict context and conditions such as: What is the nature of the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities of south-western Kenya? What barriers and opportunities exist for the participation of women of faith in peacebuilding in this context?

The analysis goes beyond a mere description of activities to a critical analysis of how intersections between gendered barriers and opportunities (such as social norms, unequal gender relations and identities, legal systems, institutional mechanisms) and religious resources (both tangible and intangible), affect the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in this context. My hypothesis is that women of faith, and the organizations they have formed, play significant roles in peace building in the study context. The assumption is that women of faith deploy religious resources to contribute to peacebuilding. I situate the conflict and women's peacebuilding roles within a gendered and historical, socio-cultural context. I consider women of faith as gendered beings with multiple identities and relations, which may enable or constrain their peacebuilding roles. Although men of faith and people without religious belief may also have contributed to peace building, the voices, agency and ways of making meaning and valuing by women have often been left out of research and theorizing (Gilligan, 1982; Hodgson, 2005).

The study is specifically concerned with the notion of religious faith – faith as understood in Christian and indigenous African religions in the study context. I consider religion as a resource for peacebuilding, drawing from four major categories that will be discussed in greater detail in preceding chapters: 1) moral values; 2) beliefs and practices; 3) motivation and agency; and 4) spiritual relationships for religious-social action. My approach to religion is a sociological perspective, considering it as a resource; a unified system of faith which guides, motivates, enables action and provides adherents with meaning and purpose in life (Weber, 1968; Weber, 2001; Durkheim, 2001). Religion can be found in all aspects of life, including rituals, ceremonies, festivals, symbols and art, sacred places, objects, proverbs or sayings, beliefs and worship (Mbiti, 1991). A religious group or individual may be influenced by all kinds of things, but if they claim to be acting out of religious grounds, their perspectives ought to be understood as such (Weber, 1980). With the wounding and suffering that conflict and violence generates, religion may provide meaning to rekindle hope and resilience as well as offer moral ideals drawing from religious practices, norms, beliefs and teachings that may compel and sanction people of faith to take moral action for peace (Zaleski, 2010). Religion's transcendent capacity, sacred spiritual practices and visions for maintaining harmonious relations with the cosmos are particularly relevant to this study. Therefore, the meanings of peace incorporate a faith perspective that emphasizes the inner peace with the spirit within that brings true peace in the world with other humans and with nature. While gender-aware peace focuses on egalitarian relations between women and men, faith perspectives on peace integrates maintaining right relations with the transcendent (divine, God or other), in harmony with oneself, the community the universe and the cosmic totality including dead ancestors and spirits (Durkheim, 2001). The emphasis is on a spirituality of peace, a way of harmonious living that maintains the interaction between the social-cultural, moral and spiritual and that brings individuals face to face with themselves to confront inner wars and find peace within (Chittister, 1998).

My study makes “women of faith” subjects of inquiry, on how or whether they deploy religious resources in peacebuilding, and the possible gendered barriers and opportunities they may experience. I approach this study with the view that women of faith are gendered actors who may be guided or sometimes constrained by societal values, morals and ideals. Women’s faith identity is neither essentially static nor separate; it is in dynamic interaction, relationship and/or influence with other gender identities. I focus on the different experiences and roles of women of faith arising from their heterogeneous composition, their diversity of religious beliefs, their multiple identities as well as their individual agency. I assume that women of faith as actors in peacebuilding may be both individual and collective entities. They may act within religious organization or outside of it in as long as they engage faith as a foundation for their actions. Their actions may be located within unequal social systems where they have to keep the rules and regulations emerging from institutional bargaining and unequal gender statuses and positioning. As such, women of faith may face gendered barriers and opportunities that influence their peacebuilding roles.

### **Rationale for the study**

Although religion is believed to be a positive force for social action and peacebuilding ((Appleby, 2000; Hertog, 2010; Vendley, 2005; Lederach, 1997; Weber, 1968; Weber, 2001; Durkheim, 2001; Mbiti, 1991), the roles of women of faith and their experiences in deploying religious resources in peacebuilding have not been adequately comprehended. One barrier is that women as gendered beings have historically and systematically been excluded and marginalized rendering their roles in peacebuilding invisible (Allen, 1971; Allman, Greiger, & Musisi, 2002; Lindsey, 2011:3; Lerner, 1986:4; Heckman, 1995:23; Gross, 2005:17). Particularly where women reclaim their roles in non-conventional ways, their contributions are dismissed, explained away, re-configured or confined to sexual roles of caregiving or motherhood (DePauw, 1998; Anderlini, 2007; Pankhurst, 2000). These patterns of marginalization and invisibility are prevalent in the field of religion and peace where the engagement of religious actors in

peacebuilding has tended to predominantly create male religious elite figures (Hertog, 2010), largely excluding and marginalizing women of faith.

A second problem is that religion has at times legitimated gender oppression and excluded women's leadership within religious communities and in the forefront of public life (King, 2005: 8-9). This has led to scepticism on whether religion can be a resource for women to promote peace. As a socio-cultural institution, religion has propagated certain attitudes and beliefs about roles and responsibilities, obligations and modes of interaction that are unequal among women and men (Karam, 2001). In the process of socialization and identity formation, religious teachings and worldviews have profound influence on roles, experiences, self-understanding and status of women and men (King, 1995). Broader social structures and institutions of religion are largely male dominated, where women of faith command only limited and largely informal and local authority or influence, away from the public realm (McGrory, 2008). As a result of these constraints on women, feminist discourses have tended to regard religion with disdain, incriminating world religions for fostering and institutionalizing patriarchy and the subordination of women (McGrory, 2008). Religion has also been used to legitimize conflict. Throughout history, religion has been adopted as a discourse through which certain interest groups defend their own political or economic interests and strengthen forces of nationalism and ethnicity based on the complex sets of identity involved (Hertog, 2010; Philpot, 2007).

In contrast, this study assumes that women of faith, and the organizations they have formed, may deploy religious resources to play significant roles in peacebuilding. While acknowledging that religion has at times excluded women and been a source of conflict and violence, there is the potential in religion to be utilized as a positive force and resource by women and in some cases serve as a critical source of women's empowerment (Maher, 2007). I consider religion as a resource for peacebuilding providing intrinsic religious motivations and offering social, moral, spiritual and organizational assets that lead to action on societal problems (Appleby, 2000; King, 2005, Suwanbubbha, 2010, Vendley, 2005,

Hertog, 2010). The overarching concern of religion is with the transcendence and spiritual foundations for meaning making, motivation and a sense of moral obligation for social action by individuals or faith communities (Weber, 1968; Weber, 2001; Durkheim, 2001). The evidence from the literature indicates that while utilizing their multiple identities, women have deployed religion as a resource to actively struggle for voice and negotiate their moral authority and social agency through a variety of religious actions and interpretations (Maher, 2007). In her comparative case study of Brazil and Chile, Macaulay identifies the existence of secular-religious cleavages that affect women's activism, voice and vote. (Macaulay, 2006). Similarly, Drogus and Stewart-Gambino show how through church-based and popular movements, Chilean religious women considered politically passive confronted the military state and were successful in bringing about change that restored democratic institutions (Drogus & Stewart-Gambino, 2005).

I use a case study of women of faith in the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of South-western Kenya to explore how they deploy religious resources to promote peace and produce theory grounded on their experiences. I apply feminist understandings on women's agency and voice to explore roles beyond a mere description of activities to a critical analysis of the gendered barriers and opportunities women of faith may encounter in peacebuilding, and how religious resources may enable or constrain the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in this context. Feminist approaches problematize the conditions and positions of women that lead to unequal opportunity and marginalization of women's roles. Closely linked to this are critical understandings of patriarchy and its reproduction of hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity that generate barriers, violence and often legitimate men while constraining the roles of women (Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005; Goldstein, 2001; Johnson, 2005; Gilmore, 2009; Kimmel, 2004; Hodgson, 2005). Understanding the arenas of power, dominance and subordination in conflict and peace helps offer insight into gendered complexities of peacebuilding.

Feminist approach recognizes and emphasises women's agency: women's ways of knowing, valuing, meaning making and participation (Gilligan, 1982). Agency attributes to the individual actor the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life even under the most extreme forms of inequality or coercion (Moser, 2001: 4). This means that women overcome social, cultural and institutional barriers to transform from a state of being victims or always subordinated to being social actors, who are knowledgeable and capable of transforming their own situation (Hodgson, 2005). My study explores the experiences of the research participants and validates their "voice" and "truths" on the meanings of faith in their peacebuilding roles. I do not assume any pre-conceived notions or "truths" on what peacebuilding roles for women of faith ought to be. Instead, exploring the experiences of the research participants and establishing their "truths" on how the violence was ended provides insights into what peacebuilding really looked like in the given context.

The results of this study can contribute to understanding the close relationship between religion and gender and make women of faith visible as agents of peacebuilding (King and Beattie, 2005; Hodgson, 2005). Such understandings and visibility can help shed light on the relevance of faith and gender to peacebuilding and address implications for religion in the largely secularized contemporary debates on gender and peace. The results of this study can also make significant contributions to the field of peacebuilding by utilizing a feminist gender-aware methodology in research. There are two blind spots whereby peacebuilding does not see religion very easily and gender is not often really understood in the development, conceptualization and methods of the field of peacebuilding (King & Beattie, 2005).

The results of this study can offer insight into how peacebuilding roles of women of faith intersect with gendered relations and multiple identities. The study may contribute to understandings of the conditions in the conflict context and peacebuilding arena influencing the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding and the gender-based barriers and opportunities that they face. The grounded theory

on what I observed can contribute to academic and indeed even policy discourses to illuminate how women of faith deploy religious resources for peace, and the gendered barriers and opportunities that exist.

The theory and analytical model of faith and women's peacebuilding that emerges from this study may offer insight into gender-aware analysis of peacebuilding roles of women of faith in regard to how they deploy religious resources. The analytical model may also provide a framework with concepts for gender-aware analysis of the core factors influencing the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding and suggest how women of faith may be further encouraged and supported to overcome gender-based barriers and opportunities. The results can contribute to increasing visibility on the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding, and illuminate their particular needs, motivations, constraints and capacities.

In addition to academic contributions, the results of this study may offer relevant contributions to policy on gender and peacebuilding as represented in the global policy commitment to support women's roles in peacebuilding under United Nations Resolution 1325 (United Nations, 2000). This resolution is viewed as a tool for women's empowerment in peacebuilding processes, and advocates for women's participation and mobilization as a means to render peacebuilding more effective. The findings of this study offer insights to how women's peacebuilding roles may be impacted due to their multiple gender identities including religious identities. Empowerment may mean different things to different women, and in this case women of faith draw their power from the religious resources they deploy for peacebuilding. Such spiritual agency of women of faith has received very little attention in peacebuilding policy and practice. The findings of this study illuminate how women of faith deploy religious resources for peacebuilding, and the gendered barriers and opportunities that affect their participation. The insights and concepts emerging from the study could indeed inform policy on women, peace and security.



The use of the case study of the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya could also be of significant contribution. There is little written about these two communities in relation to the nature of the conflict, the gendered barriers and opportunities for women of faith in peacebuilding, and how religious resources are deployed by women of faith for peacebuilding.

### **Research design**

I utilize a qualitative case study design in order to focus on detailed, in-depth data collection from multiple sources in a specific location, and for a particular group (Bryman, 2008: 57; Robson, 2002:89), women of faith. Qualitative research is particularly valuable for studying a phenomenon within its natural setting and making inquiry into meanings that people attach to it (Bryman, 2008: 140; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:3).

The qualitative case study design is especially well suited for the study's gender-aware feminist perspective, which offers a worldview or basic set of beliefs that underlies and informs methodology and methods in this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 22; Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 1; Guba, 1990:17). The philosophical orientation of a gender-aware standpoint is a critical, interpretive perspective which demands a focus on observable qualities that may not be quantified and lend themselves to interpretation or deconstruction (Glesne, 2011:283). It is based on social constructionist epistemology, which holds the view that roles, identities and meaning making are socially constructed and not determined by an individual's biological makeup (Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005; Gilmore, 2009; Johnson, 2005; Butler, 1988; Bolich, 2007). Gender-aware feminist perspective posits that there are alternative ways of knowing, and asserts that it is necessary to frame women's ways of knowing which have historically been marginalized (Gilligan, 1982; Marshall & Young, 2006). Therefore understanding the historical processes of formulating "truths" meant that I observe other realities and "truths" beyond traditionally prescribed definitions on what peacebuilding is or is not.

The choice of a case study is important because as Yin suggests, a case study “benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). The choice of a case study allows me to develop theoretical propositions based on a gender-aware feminist perspective. This involves a systematic process of collecting and analysing data within a given case study, as well as creating theory. Grounded theory is therefore applied in this study within the framework of a qualitative case study research to inductively discover, develop and provisionally verify phenomena through systematic data collection and analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:23). As Corbin and Strauss observe, “A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008,p. 23). The case study investigates the real world using qualitative methods of data collection such as interviews and life stories. The case study allows structure and rigour enabling me to enter the research with assumptions and preconceived themes based on the literature (not as absolute truths), while grounded theory provides appropriate flexibility to that helps me produce theory on the roles of Gusii and Maasai women of faith in peacebuilding, in a real setting, grounded in the data as the foundation of theory formation (Yin, 1994: Charmaz, 2006). This approach is particularly well suited for this study because it enabled me to be open on observing the research hypothesis in order to allow a grounded theory on a gender-aware model on women of faith in peacebuilding to be created and validated during the research process and grounded in the empirical data (Campbell, 2011, p. 9). The focus of study is on the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding within natural settings (Bryman, 2008: 140; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:3), making inquiry into faith resources, and gendered barriers and opportunities.

### **Research location**

In a qualitative study, it is essential to understand the research location in order to make sense of complex relationships between situations, actions, contexts, scenes and settings (Creswell, 2007: 39-41; Richards & Morse, 2007: 29-31). A gender-aware standpoint challenges, problematizes and investigates the relationship between gender and spatial divisions based on the claim that women

and men experience spaces and places differently, and these differences are themselves part of the social construction of gender and place (McDowell, 1999, p. 12). This study concentrates on selected villages from Nyangusu and Kilgoris whereof the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of South-western Kenya occurred. Nyangusu is an area inhabited by the Gusii people. It is located at the border of Maasai land in the southeast, where ethnic clashes have taken place. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood and economic activity in Nyangusu area for the Gusii people. The Maasai inhabit Kilgoris area. The major economic activity in Kilgoris is livestock keeping, particularly cows and goats. However, in recent years, agriculture has gained prominence, particularly along the areas bordering Gusii agricultural communities. Another economic activity is tourism resulting from the Maasai Mara game reserve at the Mara Triangle.

Both the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities are said to be “notoriously religious” and most of them would engage both modern religious beliefs and practices of Christianity as well as traditional African religions (Mbiti, 1991). The Maasai traditional religion is monotheistic. They believe in a God called Enkai or Engai, a single deity with a dual nature. Depending on the nature he takes, Enkai is given several other local names. The central human figure among the Maasai is the Laibon. He is believed to be closest to the spirit world and hence acts as a diviner, a healer, and a prophet. The Laibon is highly respected and adored by the members of society. The Maasai also practice modern religions, predominantly Christianity. The Gusii traditionally believed in one God called *Engoro*. Today, most Gusii people are Christians, mainly Roman Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists. However, they also believe in African religious practices including sorcery, witchcraft and the beliefs on ancestral spirits. Both women and men serve in various leadership roles as sorcerers, diviners or traditional healers. For the Maasai and Gusii, religion pervades every aspect of their every activities, it is their way of life (Mbiti, 1991). The two ethnic communities practice cultural rituals as sacred and spiritual rites of passage including circumcision for young males and females, which also train young men to become warriors and later to serve in the clan of elders as peace negotiators.

## **Sampling procedures**

I used non-random purposeful sample selection to identify and recruit men and women from religious communities of the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities as subjects (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007). Purposeful sampling was also used to identify religious institutions and women's organizations from major faith traditions (different Christian denominations and African Traditional Religions) for institutional analysis. Individual women of faith and collective groups of women of faith were the primary units of analysis. The focus was on how women acted and how their roles were shaped (or not) by structures, processes, resources, organizations and institutions.

Due to cultural and religious beliefs and social norms restricting interactions between men and women and across age-sets, some participants - particularly clan and tribal elders and senior religious leaders - were difficult to access directly. To overcome this challenge, I employed chain sampling to locate participants, particularly men who had participated in militia groups, religious leaders and clan elders. Having located a few members of the target group as gatekeepers, their assistance was sought to help identify and recruit other research participants. The limitation in using this sampling method was the potential for bias, as participants volunteered themselves and identified others to take part in the interviews. In order to mitigate this bias, any participant who had a close personal tie to the person who referred them, or who had a clear conflict of interest, was eliminated from the study. Out of a total of 62 interviewees contacted, I eliminated 7 from the interviewing process on this basis.

## **Methods**

This study explores the extent to which women of faith, and the organizations they have established, contribute to peacebuilding. The question I pose is what roles have women of faith played in peacebuilding in the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities of South-western Kenya. This question begs qualitative analyses of if, how and why women of faith are motivated by or

utilize their faith to promote peacebuilding. In order to generate data for this qualitative case study design, I utilized the following methods and procedures for data collection and analysis:

First, I developed pre-determined themes from the literature on conceptual themes and issues that seemed to reflect the most important aspects of understanding religious resources and gendered barriers and opportunities affecting the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding. These conceptual themes and issues are presented in table 1 below.

What roles have women played in peacebuilding?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence prevention, early warning and emergency response.</li> <li>• Rebuilding and reconstructing</li> <li>• Healing and reconciliation: relationships, community, common visions for peace</li> <li>• Truth, forgiveness and justice</li> <li>• Negotiations</li> <li>• Peace education</li> <li>• Peacebuilding services of care</li> <li>• Civic engagement and activism</li> </ul>	
What religious resources can women deploy for peacebuilding	
Moral values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious force that creates within individuals a sense of moral obligation to adhere to societal demands</li> <li>• Religious moral ideals seeking to reconcile worldly imperfections with extraordinary power of divine goodness</li> <li>• Institutionalized religious warrants</li> <li>• Scriptural values and teachings that proscribe violence and promote moral ideals for peace</li> <li>• Religious practices, norms, beliefs and teachings that compel or sanction people of faith to take moral action.</li> </ul>

<p>Religious beliefs and practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A unified system of sacred beliefs and practices that form an expression of social life resulting in societal cohesion of united moral communities</li> <li>• Beliefs about God, the supernatural/transcendent, environment and human behaviour</li> <li>• Sacred texts/sayings, scripture, proverbs, worship - meanings and practice</li> <li>• Myths and symbols on creation, life and death, and human existence from which individuals and groups find meaning in life.</li> <li>• Symbolic power, collective consciousness of the transcendent</li> <li>• Prayer and ritual as tools for peace and spiritual support to maintain struggle</li> </ul>
<p>Religious motivation and agency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious commitment and motivation provides meaning reassuring life, responding to people’s needs, and relieving suffering (in a world that is troubled and full of suffering).</li> <li>• Conviction and attitudes motivated by religious values and meanings of life.</li> <li>• Self-sanctions of personal understandings of faith provide intrinsic religious motivations and helping create visions of peace rooted in religious experience</li> <li>• Yearnings for wholeness and transcendence, captivated by the lure of the divine and the all-consuming, all-transforming fire of spirit</li> <li>• Agency: Personal spiritual meanings, personal moral values, personal moral voices/choices of women</li> </ul>
<p>Spiritual relationships and religious-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious communities that enable social action (congregations, groups, institutions, social networks)</li> <li>• Spiritual relations: with other humans, environment, the</li> </ul>

social action	divine, spirits or ancestors (living and dead) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visions for inner peace and transcendent action – for the common good, Spiritual/inner peace</li> </ul>	
What gendered barriers and opportunities exist for women in peacebuilding?		
	Barriers	Opportunities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The social construction of gender roles and identities ascribes specific roles to women and men and results in unequal valuing and subordinate positioning of women’s roles in peacebuilding</li> <li>• Pervasive violence: institutionalized culture of violence, hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity; Rape and gender-based violence.</li> <li>• The historical exclusion of women from public life and formal structures, political participation and their marginal position in society.</li> <li>• Unequal gender relations, socio-cultural norms, legal or institutional practices – exclude and/or neglect women’s roles, threaten women’s security and limit their participation, mobility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender roles are changeable, particularly during and in the aftermath of conflict; Individuals have multiple identities, and faith identity offers an alternative positioning and status for women</li> <li>• Religious resources and the seeming inviolability of religious activity provide protection for women from threats; transcends their subordinated gender identities</li> <li>• Women’s public engagement with religious practices is widely accepted; formal structures are disrupted during conflict; Informal women of faith networks and organization still operational and offer opportunities for women of faith to play roles in peacebuilding.</li> <li>• Women’s agency as social actors enables them to transcend victimhood and play significant peacebuilding roles at the community level where they offer</li> </ul>

and voice.	much needed services; women's innovation and creative peacebuilding based on human needs gains credibility
Table 1: pre-determined conceptual themes from the literature on roles, religious resources that can be deployed for peacebuilding and gendered barriers and opportunities	

Second, based on these pre-determined themes, I developed an interview guide that included open-ended questions and subject areas. The interview guide provided “more structure than in the completely unstructured, informal conversational interview, while maintaining a relatively high degree of flexibility” (Patton, 2001: 407). The basic structure and guiding questions of the interview guide was as follows:

<b>Interview Guide</b>	
Introduction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief introduction - of research team, participants, and research goals</li> <li>• Informed consent</li> <li>• Confidentiality and Anonymity</li> <li>• Data uses: for purposes of the research as consented above</li> </ul>
Background to the conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious, political, socio-cultural, economic context and issues;</li> <li>• What was conflict about? Where did it take place? How did it start? When did it take place? Which do you consider worst conflict and why? How did it turn out? Where were you when it happened? What did you do? Who else did what?</li> <li>• How did the conflict affect different groups; men, women, children, families, community.</li> <li>• In your view, what were the major causes of the conflicts? Who are the main actors?</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What forms of violence took place, where and how did they take place</li> <li>• What is the current status of the conflict?</li> <li>• What would you consider the major barriers and opportunities to peace? Why?</li> </ul>
Roles of women of faith in peacebuilding and how they deploy religious resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where did individuals or families turn to for help during the conflict?</li> <li>• How and why was the violence ended?</li> <li>• What is the meaning of peacebuilding from your experience?</li> <li>• What religious resources are available for peacebuilding?</li> <li>• Who are women of faith? What roles did women of faith play in peacebuilding?</li> <li>• How did women of faith deploy religious resources for peacebuilding? How effective? Why?</li> <li>• Were there any barriers and opportunities that women of faith faced in their peacebuilding roles? How were the barriers overcome, if at all? How did women of faith utilize opportunities for peacebuilding, if at all?</li> </ul>
Additional comments, thoughts	Any other comments
Table 2: Interview guide with open-ended subject areas	

Third, I conducted a pilot study prior to the fieldwork to pre-test the research design and anticipate challenges that could arise that would otherwise not be readily apparent. The pilot study established that there was a high level of religious belief among the population, which meant that it would be an exceptional individual in the case study region who professed no religious belief. Both the Gusii and Maasai people can be said to be “notoriously religious” as Mbiti suggests of African religions and peoples (Mbiti, 1991). The pilot study also

established “sensitivities” on matters relating to the nature of conflict, faith and gender identities. Studies have noted that certain phenomena such as death and sex may be considered “sensitive” within specific cultural and social contexts and if ethical considerations are not made, potential harm to research participants, researchers or those who transcribe may result (McCosker, Barnard, & Gerber, 2001). Sensitivities were also reflected in the forms of divisions of roles and the structuring of communal and interpersonal relations on the basis of sex, age and ethnicity. The structuring of interactions on the basis of age and gender suggested that as a female researcher, gaining access particularly to male participants would require engaging middle-aged male research assistants. The pilot study also established “sensitivities” on matters relating to the nature of conflict, in regard to the emotions of trauma, pain, grief or sorrow generated from related violence.

Fourth, prior to conducting any interviews, I obtained written consent from relevant public authorities, including the chiefs, religious leaders and administrative police in both Nyangusu and Kilgoris. Given the rural context of the research, almost everyone knew each other in the villages and I was obviously a newcomer who needed to be introduced to the general community. I conducted 2 public information sessions through community meetings called “barazas.” These sessions provided a public introduction of me and the research assistants, and provided me with the opportunity to offer a brief background on the nature and purpose of the study.

Two men and two women served as research assistants, two from each ethnic community, accompanying the researcher through most of the process of gathering data. The female research assistants were utilized during the women-only focus group discussions. For all other data gathering processes where I was interviewing both men and women, the male research assistants accompanied me. Selection of these men was based primarily on the social norms that disallow women to interact with men by themselves. Since I was a woman and was the primary researcher, there was an expectation in the community that a man would

help me gain better access to men, make interviewing sessions more comfortable especially for men, and having one man and one woman interviewing would reflect better the social norms and stereotyped attitudes regarding interactions between women and men. All the time during the interviews, we maintained gender balance interviewing one community at a time. The men and women selected as research assistants had “insider” knowledge of the context, culture, politics, gender, relationships and language. Each served as a scribe for the fieldwork for their ethnic community. I was a native speaker of the Gusii language, but not of the Maasai language. Kiswahili language was used as a common language between the Gusii and Maasai. Although the Kiswahili language was used for interviewing with the Maasai, there were instances when the Maasai research assistants served as translators when interviewees could only speak in Maasai language.

Fifth, I collected data utilizing the interview guide. My fieldwork was conducted over a period of 10 weeks between July 22 to September 6, 2010 and July 25 to August 31, 2011. The timing of data collection was critical because participants had their own personal obligations. Besides familial and community responsibilities, the Maasai and Gusii communities work as employees, farmers, traders or small business owners. I respected their schedules working around their time mostly in the afternoon after they had completed their farm-work, business or trading activities. I conducted home visits and accompanied the women who were narrating their life stories as they went about their chores of drawing water or caring for their families. In total, I contacted sixty-two interviewees out of whom fifty-five participants were interviewed. I also observed two events as they took place in real time. Table 3 below presents the grand total of interviews that I carried out and the two events I observed.

Focus Groups: 4 x n = 10	In depth Interviews: n = 11	Life Stories: n = 4	Observation: n = 2 events
Table 3: Number of participants interviewed and events observed			

I used the following methods to collect data:

**Focus group discussions:** I conducted four focus group discussions, two for the Maasai, and two for the Gusii. The groups were separated by gender, so two of these groups for each ethnic community were women only groups and the other two were mixed groups. The ten individuals in each of the groups shared similar characteristics relating to ethnicity, culture, and geographic proximity to the conflict prone areas. The individuals included women of faith, government representatives, civil society, former warriors, and local leaders and men religious or spiritual leaders. Interview questions generated qualitative data based on the participants' views and perspectives about issues relating to the nature of the conflict, gendered barriers and opportunities for peacebuilding, and how women of faith in deploy religious resources for peacebuilding. I analysed the information I gathered by comparing responses with other responses from key informant interviews, life stories and observation.

**Key informant interviews:** I conducted eleven individual interviews with former warriors, health workers, local government chiefs, clan elders, spiritual and religious leaders and leaders of women of faith groups. The demographic details of the key informant interviews are presented in table 4 below:

<b>Key informant</b>	<b>Maasai</b>	<b>Gusii</b>	<b>Total</b>
Former warrior	1	1	2
Local government Chief		1	1
Clan elder	1		1
Women of faith Leaders	1	1	2
Health workers	1	1	2
Spiritual leader – Laibon	1		1
Religious Leader – Priest	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>

Table 4: Demographic details of key informant interviews

Although the interviews were open-ended and conversational, the interview guide helped me to solicit information from participants about the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding.

**Life Stories:** I collected four life stories from 2 Gusii women of faith and two Maasai women of faith through home visits and interviewing. These were selected based on recommendations through snowballing where other participants thought they would have particular direct and personal experiences of the conflict such as widowhood, abductions and displacement resulting from the effects on the war on their families. The goal was to encourage the participants to tell their story in their own voice in a natural setting about their life experiences of the conflict and their roles in peacebuilding. I spent about six hours with each life-story participant who told their story as they went around their daily activities including drawing water from a stream located at the border area where conflicts had been rampant, which elicited particularly relevant memories. The stories were narrated often without interruption, with occasional probing to solicit additional information relating to key themes in the interview guide. I recorded the life-stories and transcribed them in narrative form.

**Observation:** I observed one Maasai cultural rite of passage and one religious service at a local church involving both the Gusii and Maasai. The Maasai rite of passage ceremony was recommended by one of the research participants as an important place to observe the graduation ceremony of the Moran warriors that was taking place in real time. The religious service at a local Catholic Church in Poroko was recommended through the snowballing sampling method because it was right at the border where conflict was rampant, and the congregation composed of both the Gusii and Maasai ethnic groups and therefore integrated both languages and cultural events in worship. Observation of these cultural and religious rituals and ceremonies provided me with first-hand information about how these communities go about their cultural and religious convening activities. It was also helpful in unfolding patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication, use of songs and rituals, and relational aspects in regard to gender and ethnicity.

I took pictures, recorded the events and transcribed notes from my observations, which I codified and qualified with the responses from the research participants.

Sixth, I used simple descriptive and analytical data coding to present the data drawn from focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, life stories and observation. I found these types of data coding particularly helpful because gender analysis requires a transformative, deconstructionist and interpretive paradigm (Glesne, 2011:283). After transcribing the data and typing it up to a word document on the computer, I used different colours to highlight a list of theme codes that emerged from the data. The coding was open ended reflecting participants' views and perspectives, keeping the variation in respondent's answers and making comparisons in order to identify common themes (Kumar, 1996, p. 211). I grouped observations that I made according to common themes. Whenever new themes emerged, I included them in the master list. In some cases, I used *in vivo* coding where I integrated the same words of the participants to themes to answer the research question. Whenever needed, I counted the number of responses to determine the relative frequency of types of responses. I conducted follow-up visits with research participants to interpret and further explore the themes that emerged from the participants to ensure they were a reflection of their views. The patterns that emerged within or across units of data were analysed, synthesizing the contributions from the participants with pre-identified themes and excerpts from the literature, and grounded on the gender-aware feminist perspective.

While gathering data, I sought approval to discuss "sensitive" matters prior to holding interviews. The questions on the conflict and its impact to the communities were much more complex and emotionally involving. Almost all the participants had a difficult time speaking about the details of rape, abductions and gender-based violence, and the trauma and stigma associated with that. Some participants simply broke down recalling their lost ones and the conditions of the conflict. In such cases, I stopped the interviews and paused to check with the research participants if they wanted to continue or not. I also avoided questions

requiring feats of memory to minimize biases arising from fault or blocked memory. Some respondents simply said “I don’t want to remember please”, or “I can’t remember how it happened, maybe someone else will”. I noted such painful memories and probed instead for general information on the nature of the conflict, barriers and opportunities for peacebuilding rather than specific details. I had to however remain intentional in ensuring that my probes did not include my own personal reflections or emotions. I also checked in on those who helped transcribe and remained much more aware of my own emotional feelings. Another level of sensitivity related to gender relations and norms and strong feelings on religion as sacred. Some women were not able to freely speak in the presence of men. To facilitate their participation, I conducted women-only focused group discussions and conducted key informant interviews with women participants in safe settings where the women were free to speak.

Language caused a particular challenge for me in interviewing the respondents from the Maasai community who do not speak Swahili language that is a national language commonly understood by most Kenyans. In such cases, I used a local interpreter and adopted some local mannerisms, words and phrases in Maasai language relating to greetings, physical characteristics and customs. In certain occasions, I had the women respondents dress me in local attire. This meant spending much more time in research among the Maasai community to allow interpretation and understanding, and to blend in.

In chapters three and four, I explore the emerging themes in more detail, describing and analysing them through discussion. Where possible, I cite the literature to situate the ideas within existing theories and provide insight to gaps or potentials for theory-building. I present the data collected in different ways including percentages, actual numbers, descriptive phrases or narrative form. I use tables, charts, diagrams and images to present some of the data in a visual manner. In some instances, I present data as direct quotes or paraphrased sentences of the participants’ own reflections. Personal narratives and long quotes are presented in boxed cases as concise examples of key emerging

points, with backup from reflections and perspectives from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews (Descombe, 2007). The data is presented as true but not factual. Due to matters relating to confidentiality and security of the participants, no real or ethnic family or clan names of participants are used. Instead, participants are featured through codes.

### **Situating myself as a reflexive and reflective researcher**

Gender-aware feminist perspective posits that an individual conducting research must situate herself/himself as reflexive and reflective researcher, embracing her/his own subjectivity and interest in the study (Olesen, 1994). Olesen asserts that it is necessary for a researcher to have “sufficient reflexivity to uncover what may be deep-seated but poorly recognized views on issues central to the research” (Olesen, 1994, p. 165), as well as to remain committed to reflectivity by pondering the impressions, deliberating recollections and records to ensure that preconceived notions are not affecting data collection and interpretation (Olesen, 1994, p. 242).

My motivations for this study emerged from my professional experience, personal identities and from my academic interest to gain deeper understanding of the models of faith and peacebuilding. My initial interest to undertake this study on the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding emerged from my work as a director of the women’s mobilization program at a non-profit organization where I was responsible for establishing multi-religious women of faith networks, mainstreaming their roles in peacebuilding, as well as increasing their agency and visibility as religious actors in peacebuilding in the public arenas including at the United Nations. During the ten years of my tenure, I encountered essentialist views of women of faith as always having a comparative advantage to promote peace, countered with secular arguments of religious faith as always subjugating women. I also observed exclusionary or separate convening of women of faith and male religious clergy who were often given prominence.



It is worthwhile to note that I was conscious of the prior contact and knowledge I had in the research site as a Kenyan female who was born and raised in South-western Kenya. Although such knowledge was critical to gaining entry into the area and understanding cultural forms, I was conscious of potential bias and pre-conceived notions. In addition, I was conscious of my identities as a woman and a person of religious faith, and remained committed to a constant self-reflection of potential bias that could arise from my beliefs and self-understandings.

I entered this research conscious of my personal trajectory and committed to reflexivity and reflectivity to ensure that preconceived notions are not affecting data collection and interpretation (Olesen, 1994, p. 242).

### **Validity of the study**

The level of validity and reliability expected from the study recognizes gender-aware feminist perspective, which asserts that women's experiences are valid and significant indicators of reality, and that women's voices and perspectives are critical (Harding, 1991; Hodgson, 2005). This means that the results of this study can be verified in a contextual environment involved with gathering data of events as experienced by research participants (Nelson, 1990). I believe this study could be easily verified if women of faith, assenting from and motivated by their faith were engaged in peacebuilding in a different context of violent conflict with varied peacebuilding conditions. Gender-aware theoretical and analytical framing is consistent, despite the varied experiences and realities of women arising from their contexts and circumstances.

The philosophical orientation of a gender-aware standpoint is a critical, interpretive perspective which demands a focus on observable qualities that may not be quantified and lend themselves to interpretation or deconstruction (Glesne, 2011:283). My theory on an analytical gender-aware model of women of faith in peacebuilding may help guide data collection and understanding the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding. As suggested by Yin, a case study "benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and

analysis” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). The approach I adopted in gathering data enabled me to gather rich narratives and statements of the research participants on their real life experiences, and to continuously verify with the themes from the theoretical propositions developed from the literature review (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002).

To ensure reliability and validity of the data generated from this qualitative case study design and gender-aware feminist perspective, I conducted a pilot study prior to the fieldwork to pre-test the research design and anticipate challenges that could arise which would otherwise not be readily apparent (McCosker, Barnard, & Gerber, 2001). Rather than seek to prove or disapprove the hypothesis, I remain flexible and open to new, unintended results, or even potentially new directions. I also take a multi-method approach and adopt a self-reflective attitude in order to actively validate or critique existing knowledge on peacebuilding roles, be aware of biases, observe the gendered nature of phenomenon and formulate and whenever necessary re-formulate research questions in ways that could best gather data on the experiences of women and men participating in the research on the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding. A gender-aware feminist perspective specifies that validity seeks to advance the experiences and voices of women, framing their ways of knowing and meaning making (Gilligan, 1982). My study explores the experiences of the research participants and validates their “voice” and “truths” on the meanings of faith in their peacebuilding roles. The emphasis is on particularity over generalization (Marshall & Young, 2006).

### **How the dissertation is organized**

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. In chapter 1, I introduce the scope of my study by discussing my research question and rationale for the study. I justify the choice of a qualitative case study design that also utilizes grounded theory. I present the location, sampling procedures and methods of data collection and analysis. I illuminate the philosophical orientation of a gender-

aware feminist perspective that I take in this study, and reflect on my own trajectory as reflective and reflexive subject in this study.

In chapter 2, I focus on literature review to elicit relevant concepts and develop pre-determined themes for the study. I draw from the concepts and themes to provide a backdrop for the results of this study. I focus on review of four bodies of literature divided into four sections: 1) gender and peacebuilding; 2) women's roles in peacebuilding; 3) women of faith, religion and peacebuilding; and 4) the conflict trajectory in Kenya. I begin the review with a more detailed consideration of conceptual issues on gender and peacebuilding arising from the gender-aware analytical approach. The purpose is to gain deeper understanding of gendered barriers and opportunities for women in peacebuilding. This is followed by a historical analysis of women's roles in peacebuilding highlighting both barriers and opportunities. I then examine literature on women, religion and peacebuilding and identify conceptual themes on religious resources that can be deployed for peacebuilding. Here, I discuss the different role of religion in women's experiences, explore the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding and the social meanings of religious perspectives. Finally, I offer context to the study by exploring literature on the conflict trajectory in Kenya.

In chapter 3, I discuss empirical data generated by this study on gendered barriers that exist in the conflict context and how they affect the roles of Maasai and Gusii women of faith in peacebuilding, and structure how religious resources are deployed. I focus on four barriers emerging from the study discussed sequentially in four sections. The first barrier is that women have limited space, safety and voice to participate in peacebuilding relating to livestock, land or political participation, all of which are major sources of conflict and peace. The second barrier is that manhood identity formation institutionalizes a culture of violence that excludes women from leadership roles in peacebuilding such as through village councils of elders and border peace committees. The visibility and status of women of faith in peacebuilding is therefore very limited. The third barrier is the prevalence of the use of rape and gender-based violence as

weapons of war. This was considered by participants as a major security threat to women that not only limited their mobility but also silenced, traumatized and intimidated them away from peacebuilding roles. The fourth barrier is gender-based othering—the notion of constructing “otherness” on the basis of sex. Maasai and Gusii women of faith were perceived as subordinate insignificant others, which resulted in violence against them with impunity and their persistent lower status in peacebuilding. The chapter points to how within such conditions of seemingly insurmountable barriers, faith offers tremendous opportunities for women of faith to act.

In chapter 4, I present and discuss empirical data generated by this study on the roles of Maasai and Gusii women of faith in peacebuilding and how they utilize various opportunities to deploy religious resources for peacebuilding in this context. One of the opportunities is deploying faith identity as resource for legitimacy and moral authority in peacebuilding. A second opportunity is deploying religious resources to promote healing and reconciliation. Another opportunity is re-purposing socio-cultural practices to promote shared lives and relationships for lasting peace. Similarly, women of faith traverse social norms, transcend demeaning perceptions and transform gendered roles of care as they deploy religious resources to engage in protection and violence prevention. The chapter is divided into four sections that discuss each of these opportunities in more detail.

In chapter 5, I draw conclusions of this study in the light of the research question on the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding and how they deploy religious resources. I present a synthesis of empirical findings on the barriers and opportunities women of faith face in peacebuilding, and how they deploy religious resources for peacebuilding. I explore theoretical and policy implications, and reflect on contributions to the fields of religion, gender and peacebuilding. I also reflect on future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a literature review that elicits relevant concepts and develops pre-determined themes for the study. I draw from the concepts and themes to provide a backdrop for the results of this study on the roles of women of faith and how they deploy religious resources for peacebuilding. I focus on review of four bodies of literature divided into four sections: 1) gender and peacebuilding; 2) women's roles in peacebuilding; 3) women of faith, religion and peacebuilding; and 4) the conflict trajectory in Kenya.

This chapter is divided into four sections reflecting the four bodies of literature. The first section begins with a more detailed consideration of conceptual issues on gender and peacebuilding arising from the gender-aware analytical approach. The purpose is to gain deeper understanding of gendered barriers and opportunities for women in peacebuilding. The second section examines a historical analysis of women's roles in peacebuilding highlighting both barriers and opportunities. In the third section, I examine literature on women, religion and peacebuilding and identify conceptual themes on religious resources that can be deployed for peacebuilding. I discuss the different role of religion in women's experiences, explore the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding and the social meanings of religious perspectives. In the fourth and final section, I offer context to the study by exploring literature on the conflict trajectory in Kenya.

#### ***GENDER AND PEACEBUILDING***

This section reviews literature on gender and peacebuilding to provide a gender-aware analysis of barriers and opportunities for women in peacebuilding to provide insight into the research question on the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding and how they deploy religious resources. I explore five inter-related themes that affect women's peacebuilding roles: 1) social construction of gender roles and identities; 2) hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity; 3) rape

and gender-based violence; 4) gender relations; and 5) gender differences. The chapter ends with discussions on how concepts in gender and development, and gender analysis relate to peacebuilding.

### **Social construction of gender roles and identities**

One of the barriers for women in peacebuilding is the social construction of roles and identities, which ascribes specific roles to women and men and results in unequal valuing and subordinate positioning of women's roles (Lindsey, 2011:2; Butler, 1988; Bolich, 2007; Brettell & Sargent, 2009; Moser 1985). There are essentialist arguments for the universal differentiation of roles for women and men on the basis of biological functions rather than social construction, such as Gray's sex role theory that presents a dichotomous division of roles between women and men. He perceives men to be naturally aggressive, rational and objective, and women passive, submissive and subjective (Gray, 1992:16-18). His argument is that in the face of disrupted social stability [such as in war and conflict], assigning different roles to men and women is central to restoring and maintaining social equilibrium (Gray, 1992:18). Some scholars reject such notions that men and women's identities are innate, biological, and rigid (Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005; Gilmore, 2009; Johnson, 2005; Knoppers, 1993 Brettell & Sargent, 2009; Burke & Stets, 2000; Lindsey, 2011; Connell, 1995). These scholars argue instead that identity formation is a socially constructed and learned process whereby over time, individuals are able to self-identify and categorize themselves in particular ways in relation to other social groups. The process of identity formation produces different consequences for women and men, boys and girls – whose roles, attitudes, beliefs, behavioural patterns and other ways of being are expected to conform to the relevant social group categorization (Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005; Gilmore, 2009; Johnson, 2005). Regardless of whether it stems from or incorporates biological differences, gender identity is continuously constructed in public dialogue with other people, places and roles (Butler, 1988; Bolich, 2007). As Butler puts it:

“...gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously

constituted in time - an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.” (Butler, 1988, p. 519)

For purposes of this study, gender identity is defined as the different ways the attributes of masculinity and femininity are constructed and defined across space, age, time and cultures. Gender identity affects the position and roles of women and men (Brettell & Sargent, 2009:192) in societal conflict and peace. Gender identity as a social construct differentiates women and men by defining and appropriating certain specific behaviours, characteristics, roles and forms of interaction with each other and with the larger community (Lindsey, 2011:2; Palpart, Connelly, & Barriteau, 2000; Strickland & Duvvury, 2003). This often results in a sexual division of labour where women and men are ascribed different gender roles appropriate for their social position. Patterns of gender roles portray women predominantly in subordinate social positions and in low-prestige and less-valued statuses relative to men (Lindsey, 2011:2). Hence, women’s roles receive far less status than the roles played by men, and women’s contributions are consistently undervalued (Palpart et al, 2002; Moser, 1993).

The study also notes that gender is not the only identity individuals hold. There are a variety of other attributes that constitute one’s identity and position in society, including religion and ethnicity (Brettell & Sargent, 2009; Moser 1985). An individual’s actions, interests and attitudes are shaped by the particularities of their social positioning, gendered roles and multiple identities. Rather than considering gender as a single category, this study adopts a perspective of various gendered identities. This conceptualization is rooted in the assumption that gender in itself is a dynamic social structure: it does not reside in a person but in social transactions that occur and reoccur in interaction with others (West &

Zimmerman, 1987: 140). To this end, how might faith identity position women of faith to deploy religious resources in peacebuilding? I assume that women of faith in this context hold multiple identities, belonging to African Gusii or Maasai ethnic groups, and different religious groups.

### **Hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity**

Another barrier for women in peacebuilding is that during conflict, gender plays a major role in shaping, producing and reproducing dichotomous hegemonic masculinities and subordinate femininities (and others), as well as in creating divisions and separation of roles between women and men.

The theory of hegemonic masculinity argues that in most societies across the world, aggression and violence is a persistent social construction that structures the power of masculine identity as dominance (Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005; Goldstein, 2001; Johnson, 2005; Gilmore, 2009; Kimmel, 2004). This results in a hierarchy of masculinities based on complex patterns of hegemonic structural violence. The term 'hegemony' refers to "*the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life*" (Connell, 2005, p. 77).

Hegemonic masculinity subordinates femininity and non-hegemonic masculinities through systematic processes of cultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization, and marginalization or de-legitimation of alternatives (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846). Although not all men espouse hegemonic masculinity, those who do display power over women, as well as over other men (Kimmel, 2004: 85-86 & 91).

Hegemonic masculinity essentially demands that men use violence and subordinate or exclude women, defeat enemy men, or punish effeminate men (Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005; Burke & Stets, 2009; Johnson, 2005; Kimmel, 2004:89). This results in the individual and collective identity formation that is linked closely to the social construction of "otherness," reinforcing the notion of *other men* – those who don't fit the hegemonic norm – as "less than" real men



(Kimmel, 2004:86-87; Ellis & Meyer, 2009: 3-5). It also results in women being seen not only as different and subordinate, but as essentially “nothing” (Ellis & Meyer, 2009: 3-5). The gendered otherness becomes a fundamental category of human thought where woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man, and not in reference to her (Beauvoir, 1949, p. xvii). Hence being a man means being the absolute subject *not being anything like a women* – a notion of anti-femininity that relentlessly repudiates everything considered feminine in a given context (Kimmel, 2004:86). And being a woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria as the *inessential, incidental other* without reciprocity (Beauvoir, 1949).

There is also the formulation of the “other” as the *enemy man, the villain* to be sought for, fought and defeated. In this conceptualization, “real manhood” is only possible for a distinct minority (Kimmel, 2004: 90). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during the second World War and the war in Vietnam, Japanese and Vietnamese men served as unmanly templates—small, soft, effeminate—hardly men at all, in contrast to the vigorous and “manly” American men. Johnson suggests that it becomes possible to justify and accept warfare, aggression, violence or even killing as a means to defend society and family:

“..... War allows men to reaffirm their masculine standing in relation to other men, to act out patriarchal ideals of physical courage and aggression, and to avoid being shamed and ridiculed by other men for refusing to join in the fight. .... It is an opportunity for men to bond with other men—friend and foe alike—and reaffirm their common masculine warrior codes.” (Johnson, 2005, p. 139).

Warfare exists as a system because of patriarchal notions of manliness and related structures of control and dominance, sustaining a romantic notion of hegemonic masculinity as self-sacrificing manhood (Johnson, 2005, p. 139) that I refer to in this study as “violent-man-as-protector”. Hence when men go to war and commit atrocious acts such as rape, torture, abuse, and murder, Johnson

claims that they do so to affirm masculine identity and its system of control and domination that encourages men to settle disputes, manage human relations, and respond to conflict through the use of coercion and violence (Johnson, 2005: 140-141). Although men may at times be personally motivated by feelings of love and self-sacrifice to be ferocious in the face of danger to defend their families and communities, violence is presented as a necessary, desirable and inevitable proof of manhood (Johnson, 2005: 140) - proof to other men, to the community and to themselves.

Perhaps a major problem that the notion of “violent-man-as-protector” creates is that it makes invisible the roles that women play as protectors. Because of the general belief that men are the providers of security and protection in society, the roles women may play in this area remain invisible, unrecognized and undervalued. This study explores the extent to which women play primary roles as protectors. I argue in this study that the roles of women as protectors have yet to receive the recognition they deserve in the field of peacebuilding. To do so will require a radical shift from hegemonic conceptualizations of protection and security, which tend to make women’s inferiority indisputable (Lerner, 1986: 210-211). Such worldviews institutionalize the exclusion of women from public life and political citizenship in times of both war and peace. Critical questions I pose in this regard for this study are: What are the forms of hegemonic masculinity for the Gusii and Maasai? To what extent do hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity shape the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding? Can women of faith overcome such violence to promote peace?

### **Rape and gender-based violence**

Perhaps one of the greatest barriers to women’s peacebuilding roles is rape and gender-based violence. The use of rape as a weapon of war is designed to destroy the social fabric of society (Leatherman, 2011; United Nations, 2008). Hegemonic masculinity and the homophobic fear of being seen as “less than a real man” forms the basis for gender-based violence (Baaz, 2009; Kimmel,

2004). Feminine identity includes the notions of women as sex slaves (such as comfort women) or symbols of community and/or ethnic identity, which makes them primary targets of sexual violence in situations of violent conflict (Tanaka, 2002; Leatherman, 2011). As Leatherman writes, sexual violence in armed conflict:

“...has carved a path of humiliation and destruction, turning the lives of women and girls into the currency of chattel and slaves, and the feminization and emasculation of men and boys.” (Leatherman, 2011, pp. 1-2).

As witnessed in various conflict situations such as in Rwanda, Bosnia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the effects of rape are devastating on victims, families, and entire communities. Girls and women who are raped are sometimes driven from their homes by the shame and stigmatization (Baaz, 2009). The United Nations adapted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2008 that noted that:

“women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instill fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group; and that sexual violence perpetrated in this manner may in some instances persist after the cessation of hostilities;” (United Nations, 2008).

Rape and gender-based violence against women is used to humiliate men based on other masculine identities - men as fathers, sons, brothers, husbands, and boyfriends. Often, men are forced to watch their loved ones endure rape and other forms of sexual abuse without being able to play the role of protector, further fraying the norms and connections of communities (Moser, 2001). This kind of dual abuse for the primary victim and their close family member(s) is often linked to women’s identity as reproducers of society, and has been effectively used as a weapon of war in several countries including Rwanda and

Mozambique (Moser, 2001, p. 7). Rape and gender-based violence has been defined as a gendered, systematic and targeted form of combat to be prioritized in peacebuilding (United Nations, 2008). Hence, gendered patterns of both rape and gender-based violence should be considered as fundamental elements of conflict analysis and peacebuilding

It is necessary to note however that some men and women may not conform to gender identities or succumb to expectations of violent masculinity and subordinate femininity. Hence, rather than merely apply hegemonic masculinity and/or subordinate femininity concepts in general to all men and women, some argue that it is better to explore the preciseness of these concepts to particular contexts as they interact with the dynamics of gender roles and identities (Pankhurst, 2007, p. 53). The argument is that men are not inherently violent people, and neither are women intrinsically peaceful beings. This approach helps problematize masculinity and violence rather than explain or defend it. It also helps focus on a holistic notion of peacebuilding that not only aims to stop direct physical and personal violence, but also address structural and cultural violence that threaten the socio-cultural wellbeing and identities of individuals and groups (Galtung, 1969: 167-191).

So in this study I consider peacebuilding with a gender analysis of: the absence of war or direct violence; the absence of structural violence which is the root cause of direct violence; and the absence of cultural violence—transformation of attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate direct and structural violence (Galtung, 1998). I examine forms of structural violence embedded in rites of passage to explore the social construction of masculinity and femininity. Empirical findings discussed in chapter 3 suggest that male circumcision plays a major role in structuring roles in peacebuilding among the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities. Male circumcision is a significant formation of hegemonic warrior manhood identities for both the Gusii and Maasai. It is the foundation upon which male-only councils of elders and border peace committees are established, thereby institutionalizing the exclusion of women from such peacebuilding

mechanisms and roles. On the other hand, Female Genital Mutilation, although it is important in producing and reproducing structural violence, did not emerge as structuring the conflict or peacebuilding roles of women in this context. Hence, my study does not make a close examination of Female Genital Mutilation, which is practiced among the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities, and its role in conflict and peacebuilding.

### **Gender relations**

Another barrier to women's peacebuilding roles is the unequal gender relation, which result in violence and in the exclusion or neglect of the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding. Gender relations shape how women and men are impacted by conflict, and determine the roles they can play to intensify the conflict or build peace.

Conflict and peace theorists emphasise the need to examine unequal relations that promote structural violence and prevent human beings from realizing their full potential (Jeong, 2000:22). Structural violence supports dominant asymmetric power relations, which play an important role in maintaining the culture of violence (Jeong, 2000:27). They argue that for peace to be achieved, it is necessary to build more sustainable relationships among parties in conflict (Lederach, 1997, p. 20; Lederach, 2000:45-55). But there exists a lack of analysis on gender relations. Yet gender is a social construct of unequal relations produced and reproduced through a broad range of social contexts, interactions and situations (Gerson & Peiss, 1985; Kabeer, 1994, p. 84).

There is evidence to suggest that gender relations lead to the division of roles that produce and maintain inequalities between women and men (Kabeer, 1994; Young, 1997). This is achieved through institutional resources, norms, values, rights, and responsibilities that women and men are expected to access, control and claim (Kabeer, 1994). Gender relations may be conflictual or collaborative as men and women are involved in a constant process of negotiation and re-negotiation within their groups, or outside of them (Razavi & Miller, 1995, p. 26). It

is therefore necessary to deconstruct institutional and group practices and see the social relations of gender within them (Kabeer, 1994:84-90).

Equally important are individual gender relations involving close personal relationships where women act alone in relation with immediate family members, particularly husbands, children, siblings, parents and parents-in-law (Rowlands, 1998). The argument is that personal relations and experiences are in fact structured by socio-political structures and institutions (Butler, December 1988, p. 522). This is due to gender norms that reward and punishes certain behaviours, ensuring that personal relations recapitulate, individualize and specify pre-existing cultural relations (Butler, December 1988, p. 526). Women's peacebuilding roles arising out of personal relations are in fact situated within pre-existing unequal gender relations between women and men (Puechguirbal, 2010). Individual women may act invariably in accord with certain sanctions and proscriptions in society (Whitehead 1979; Elson 1991).

Such sanctions or proscriptions are often based on gendered cultural forms, practices, needs, capacities and structures of power or prestige of groups, institutions or individuals (Young, 1997, p. 387). Power is a fundamental component of gender relations as it often produces consistent differences between women and men's roles and their access to resources and decision-making abilities (Miller, 2001). Gender roles and identity prescribe that women exhibit less power or powerlessness and assume "subordinate" behavioural characteristics, while men enact power and absurdly assume more domineering qualities that often reflect excess of agency. So gender relations are concerned with who wields power, how it is legitimated, and how such power structures women's and men's roles as separate and unequal (Bolich, 2007, p. 83).

Therefore it is necessary to explore power imbalances that define gender relations and influence women's and men's roles, access to resources, status and their visibility and participation in peacebuilding. Resources are not only material, but also include non-material resources such as spiritual resource, socio-political

and cultural ties, time and labour. This study explores the extent to which women's roles in peacebuilding are positioned in the matrix of unequal gender relations at social, institutional and personal levels. In all these, I address the gap in the links between gendered relations and faith relations— which I consider as spiritual relations with the divine and transcendent creatures, spirits, the dead, nature or spaces. A focus on divine relations and their gendered nature within indigenous or modern Christian religions has not received much attention in the fields of gender and peacebuilding.

In order for peacebuilding to be achieved through the building of relationships, the unequal gender relations have to be transformed, relational attitudes deconstructed and women who are often in subordinate positions empowered to be agents of change. Empowerment means that women develop the ability to negotiate, communicate, and influence the nature of relationships between parties in conflict, with men and with other women (Rowlands, 1995, p. 103, 119), and with themselves. Peacebuilding is transformative of unequal relations towards more collaborative and egalitarian gender relations. It is also about women's agency and voice regarding their ways of knowing, valuing, meaning making and participation (Gilligan, 1982). Agency attributes to an individual woman peacebuilding actor the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life even under the most extreme forms of inequality or coercion (Moser, 2001: 4). This means that women transform from a state of being victims to being social actors, who are knowledgeable and capable of transforming their own situation.

### **Gender difference**

Closely related to gender roles, identities and relations are the barriers arising from the concepts of gender difference. While differences exist between women and men, and among women, they are too often used to justify and promote gender inequality including in roles and deployment of resources. There has also been a trend of gender differentiation based on biological differences between women and men, which justify stereotypical and discriminatory practices, leading

to the subordination and exclusion of women from the public sphere, democratic citizenship and political life (Brown, 1993; Lerner, 1986 : 205-207; Marvin Fox, 1949; Heckman, 1995:2; Herman, 1993:50; Sullivan, 1989:2). Gender theorists reject gender differentiation on the basis of biological determinism and argue instead that gender is the social organization of sexual difference (McDowell, 1999, p. 14). It follows that the differences between women and men are not natural and fixed, but are social knowledge through which individuals in society establish meaning and bodily difference (Beauvoir, 1949). Biological or sexual difference is important, but only as a specific axis of power that cannot be conceptually isolated from the textures of social power and resistance that constitute the social construction of gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). There is therefore an intricate relationship between biological sex and gender, which results in different needs and roles of women and men in society.

Gender differentiation is institutionalized through the processes of gender-role socialization, gendered violence, the gendering of relationships and formation of gender identities. These processes that institutionalize gender differentiation and inequality are not apparent; they are pervasive, self-perpetuating, consistent and institutionalized through systemic societal structures (Reeves & Baden, 2002; Johnson, 2005). These forms of institutionalized differentiation embody relations of authority and control, and result in unequal access and control over resources, entitlements, choices and benefits for women and men (Moser, 2001; Kabeer, 1994).

Gender differentiation results also in gender differences in needs, perspectives and experiences of women and men. Gender theorists tend to group gender needs into two major categories: 1) practical gender needs, and 2) strategic gender interests. Practical gender needs are essential requirements for human survival, such as food, water, shelter, health and safety (Molyneux, 1985). Although all human beings have these basic human needs, meeting them is a social activity that arises from the concrete conditions of women's positioning within the gender division of labour and their resulting gender roles. Practical



gender needs also relate to the different biological functions of women and men. For instance, a pregnant woman or one who has delivered an infant would have different needs from a man, or from a non-pregnant woman, during a conflict. This study will examine how practical gender needs affect the roles women play in conflict and peacebuilding. The study will also examine strategic gender interests such as protection, security, self-esteem and dignity. Peace theorists often address these issues without acknowledging their essential gendered nature. The theories on human needs contend that there are a variety of material and non-material needs that should be sought simultaneously in order for peace to be attained. Conflict theories identify such needs as including: a) security—the need for structure, stability and freedom from fear and anxiety; b) identity—the need for recognition, respect and a sense of self in relation to others; c) distributive justice—the need for fair allocation of resources among members of the community; d) freedom—the need to exercise choice in all aspects of one's life without any physical, political or civil restraints; e) participation—the need to actively partake in and influence society; and f) self-esteem—the need to be recognized by oneself and others as strong, competent and capable (Rothman, 1997; Burton, 1990).

A gender approach contends that human needs such as these are gendered and therefore should be differentiated based on different needs, experiences and perspectives of women and men (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 2001). Peacebuilding in this regard is defined not merely as an absence of violence and hostilities, but also the enjoyment of economic and social justice, gender equality and the entire range of human needs and fundamental freedoms within society (United Nations, 1985, p. Para 13). It endeavours to meet gender needs and interests including the security and material needs of women, as well as re-affirm their dignity and worth as valued human beings (Burton, 1990:36-48).

A gender-aware standpoint also challenges, problematizes and investigates the relationship between gender and spatial divisions based on the claim that women and men experience spaces and places differently, and these differences are

themselves part of the social construction of gender and place (McDowell, 1999, p. 12). I examine the extent to which settings, spaces and places are marked by binary gender, religious and ethnic divisions, and how these hinder or facilitate daily interactions and women's roles in peacebuilding.

Women and men have different experiences of conflict and perspectives on peacebuilding based on their sex and gender. I note that as a social group, women are not homogeneous—there are distinctions among them and faith is one such distinction. I also assume that the difference between women and men and among women are socially constructed and not a necessary reflection of reality. The focus is on relations and organization of diversity between women and men and among women. Equally important is the focus on the different needs of women and men during conflict, and the different roles that women play in peacebuilding. Do women and men experience conflict differently? How is gender difference created/assigned and lived among actors in the conflict? What are the real and perceived needs and responsibilities, constraints and opportunities of women relating to peacebuilding roles?

### **Concepts on gender analysis, empowerment and women's agency**

A number of different approaches have been developed on gender-awareness in development discourses that seek to address gendered barriers and increase opportunities for women. The meaning of peacebuilding that has emerged emphasizes the link between gender and peacebuilding. There are a lot more concepts and approaches in gender, and the examples above provide important highlights from which important conclusions can be drawn in this section.

Gender analysis is a fundamental overarching conceptual approach in examining women's roles in peacebuilding. At the heart of the gender analysis framework is the assumption that women's roles are shaped by their gendered conditions and positions, including assets, endowments, vulnerabilities, and legal and institutional systems that often undermine their efforts. Applying a gender lens to women's peacebuilding roles means analysing barriers and opportunities that

exist for women in peacebuilding context arising from gendered conditions and positions. It also means exploring how women and men experience conflict and peace differently and thus, have different motivations and capacities for engaging in individual or collective action.

Gender-awareness in conflict analysis entails a continuous and dynamic process dedicated to a variety of data sets that are gender-disaggregated. This implies a reflexive process that is conscious of the effects of gender discrimination and inequality on one hand, and avoids gender bias in the way information and data is gathered and/or interpreted. For instance, the fact that women do not show up for interviews, or in the public violent context is not indicative of their lack of engagement or interest. A gender-aware analysis may reveal certain gender-specific constraints such as tense conflict situations combined with gender norms and attitudes on roles of care within the family that may limit women's participation. I see several benefits of integrating gender to the process of conflict analysis as summarized in table five below:

<b>Benefits of gender-aware analysis of conflict to illuminate peacebuilding roles</b>			
<b>Redresses widespread gender inequality</b>	<b>Determines conflict actors and their gender roles</b>	<b>Captures a range of women's roles and experiences</b>	<b>Better understanding of conflict context and dynamics</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refines understanding of gender identities and how they affect vulnerabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies how women and men, boys and girls participate in conflict</li> <li>• Differentiates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives serious attention to women's particular vulnerabilities, perceptions, and needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examines the differential effects of conflict on women and men, girls and boys</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyses historical factors and systemic exclusion of women emerging in the root causes of conflict</li> <li>• Addresses essentialist binaries that cast women as always peaceful and men as always aggressive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the capabilities of different actors (women, men, boys and girls) to intensify or resolve the conflict</li> <li>• Analyses varied roles and motivations among groups of men, women, children – they are not to be homogenized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showcases women’s capabilities, agency and resilience (these have been historically ignored)</li> <li>• Addresses women’s specific needs arising from biological factors such as pregnancy and child-birth in emergencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reveals gendered social and relational issues as security and peacebuilding</li> <li>• Explores meanings, sources and activities of conflict to illuminate risks, barriers and opportunities and potentials for women to build peace</li> </ul>
<p>Table 5: Benefits of gender-aware conflict analysis</p>			

A gender-aware conflict analysis requires intentionality, systematization and commitment at all levels of research and practice. It assumes that during conflict, gender identity plays a major role in shaping, producing and reproducing violence, as well as in creating divisions and separation of the enemy based on hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity. Rape and gender-based violence is considered as a gendered, systematic and targeted form of combat to be carefully examined as fundamental elements of conflict analysis and prioritized in peacebuilding. Such an approach helps to problematize masculinity and violence rather than explain or defend it. It also helps focus on a holistic notion of peacebuilding that not only aims to stop direct physical and personal violence, but

also address structural and cultural violence that threaten the socio-cultural wellbeing and identities of individuals and groups (Galtung, 1969: 167-191). Peacebuilding is therefore considered with a gender analysis of: the absence of war or direct violence; the absence of structural violence which is the root cause of direct violence; and the absence of cultural violence—transformation of attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate direct and structural violence (Galtung, 1998).

Women's peacebuilding roles cannot of essence yield a static view, without reference to changes over time in contexts, norms gender relations and identities. In which case, analysing women's peacebuilding roles does not constitute an apolitical stance with a mere enlisting of tasks and responsibilities. If such analysis were to be effective, then a deep understanding of women's roles that accounts for gender role socialization and masculinity and femininity identities becomes an imperative. Women's roles are then viewed in relation to their gender identity and in context and reference to men.

Examining women's roles entails questioning patriarchal systems and power relations in conflict and peace situations. This means examining roles alongside relationships, institutions and the power dynamics of access, control and decision-making. Gender analysis of women's roles must go far enough to question the systems of participation and representation and the socio-cultural assumptions entailed therein. The goal for gender analysis is not only to document and create the visibility of women's roles and call for representation, but also to analyse ways in which the promotion of women's roles can lead to long-term commitments to transformation. The central question to investigate roles would be what power, access and control do women need to exercise their peacebuilding roles? At the same time, bringing such gender analysis into the centre of peacebuilding requires alternative political spaces where gender roles and identity can be debated and analysed and transformed.

While it is necessary to build more sustainable relationships among parties in conflict (Lederach, 1997, p. 20; Lederach, 2000:45-55), a gender-aware feminist perspective posits that gender is a social construct of unequal relations produced and reproduced through a broad range of social contexts, interactions and situations (Gerson & Peiss, 1985; Kabeer, 1994, p. 84). In the context of conflict and peace, unequal gender relations result in violence and in the exclusion or neglect of the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding. Gender relations shape how women and men are impacted by conflict, and determine the roles they can play to intensify the conflict or build peace. The argument is that in order for peacebuilding to be achieved through the building of relationships, the unequal gender relations have to be transformed, relational attitudes deconstructed and women who are often in subordinate positions empowered to be agents of change. Empowerment means that women develop the ability to negotiate, communicate, and influence the nature of relationships between parties in conflict, with men and with other women (Rowlands, 1995, p. 103, 119), and with themselves. Peacebuilding is transformative of unequal relations towards more collaborative and egalitarian gender relations.

It has also become clear from the analysis of concepts above that gender-based inequality can have implications for women's roles in peacebuilding, and therefore gender equality must become a fundamental goal for attaining lasting peace. The challenge to attain gender equality still persists in all fields today, because the approach is often reduced to mere inclusion of women to the mainstream. The main problem is a narrow representation of gender equality where women are the subject of change, and where the goal is to fit women into the status quo rather than transforming the status quo. Ensuring effective participation of women in patriarchal systems calls for radical transformations and political will, which is not easily attainable. It is also too simple to assume that the participation of women will lead directly to fundamental change in itself, as this would deny different socialization processes gender inequality power dimensions and gender identities that women and men assume. With such inequality, the literature indicates that men dominate in deliberative processes while women are excluded, or sometimes

women participate in their own oppression and exclusion. To be transformative, the promotion of women's roles in peacebuilding should also be a strategy of empowerment where spaces are created for gender equality as a goal and women as actors. Peacebuilding interventions that separately target women or men, and processes that ignore or fail to leverage gender or relational differences may miss the mark and thereby risk being ineffective.

The empowerment approach has been propounded by a number of scholars, which problematize patriarchy and the constructions of femininity and masculinity identities and calls for transformation of the status quo to ensure attention is paid on gendered specificities (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2005; Anderlini, 2007; Sørensen, 1998; Kabeer, 1999). Empowerment calls for the manifestation of the distinctive gender perspectives of women and men and demands inclusion. It seeks to displace patriarchal gender hierarchies and deconstruct discursive regimes that engender the subject. What is problematized is not (only) the exclusion of women, or men as a norm, but the gendered world in itself. The normative argument defending this position is rather that gendered identities are themselves a product of particular political discourses.

There are two levels of empowerment, at the personal level (*power within*) and collective level (*power with*), so that individuals, communities, and organizations gain mastery over their lives in the context of changing their social and political environment to improve equity and quality of life (Williams, Seed, & Mwau, 1994). How might women of faith mobilize their *power to* make decisions for peace? How might they apply their *power with* in building alliances and creating social interactions across cultures and religions in a highly divided society for peace? And how might they express their *power within* to promote peace and their self-esteem and confidence as leaders in this field following the traumatic events of the conflict, as well as promote trusting relations with the other women.

Some scholars argue that empowerment should seek to address women's practical gender needs and strategic gender interests (Kabeer, 1994; Kabeer &

Subrahmanian, 1999). Practical gender needs are those that women identify in their socially accepted roles in society. They arise out of gender division of labour, so they relate to care-giving and nurturing roles. In peacebuilding, some of the roles of women have been in response to immediate necessity, identified within a specific context of violence and conflict, such as water provision, health care and food for families. On the other hand, strategic needs refer to those women identify because of their subordinate position in society, and though varied according to particular contexts, they seek to transform women's subordinate position related to gender divisions of labour, power and control. Roles to address strategic gender needs may include responses on issues such as legal rights, domestic violence, and equity in benefits and/or wages, and women's control over their mobility. Although this framework has received criticism for being oversimplified and lacking theoretical grounding, meeting practical and strategic gender needs is seen to assist women to achieve greater equality and change existing roles, thereby challenging women's subordinate position. It is therefore worthwhile to analyse which types of gender needs do peacebuilding roles seek to address.

Others have emphasized the capabilities approach, where empowerment means that women (and men) have voice and are given the opportunity to undertake different roles they wish to and become what they are actually able to be; attaining their full potential (Nussbaum & Glover, 1995; Sen, 1995; Moser, 2001). This suggests that assessments are taken to analyse what opportunities or obstacles there are to full and effective empowerment for women and men in activities and ability, and to devise measures to support the opportunities and address the obstacles. The capabilities approach aims at foregrounding and addressing inequalities in resources and opportunities, both in public and private spheres including the institution of family.

Closely linked to the notion of capabilities is agency, which attributes to the individual actor the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life even under the most extreme forms of inequality or coercion (Moser, 2001: 4). This means that individuals transform from a state of being



victims or perpetrators to being social actors, who are knowledgeable and capable of transforming their own situation. In conflict situations, women as social actors transcend victimhood and find alternative ways of formulating their objectives, however restricted their resources, to build peace. Similarly, men transcend stereotypical views of their roles as perpetrators, to become agents of peace. Although issues of men's agency and responsibility have received little attention in peacebuilding research, Pankhurst sites an example from El Salvadorian men who were able to change their behaviour once the guerrilla movement required them not to behave violently to each other or to women and other members of their communities (Pankhurst, 2007). There are also growing examples where men have been involved as allies in efforts to end violence against women, although the effectiveness and reliability of these approaches is not well understood or documented. Hence, agency helps promote positive roles so that both men and women become subjects able to sanction their agency and voice as equal actors in peacebuilding.

Another approach is mainstreaming, which is seen as transformative because it claims to address and redress the gendered nature of systems and institutional processes. Mainstreaming aims at integrating women and fundamentally changing existing patriarchal systems and power relations in ways that can enhance the participation of women as decision makers so that their voices, perspectives and agendas are recognized (United Nations, 2002; United Nations, 1995).

A gender aware approach to women's peacebuilding roles provides a conceptual framework for re-conceptualizing peace. If positive peace is viewed as resolving conflicts non-violently (Galtung & Jacobson, 2000; Galtung, 1996), promoting equality and wellbeing of all and ensuring justice and human rights (Anderlini, 2007; Pankhurst D. , 2000), then peacebuilding must encompass short-term and long-term roles that give adequate attention to gender norms, identities and relations that perpetuate inequality. Investigating women's roles will therefore examine participation not as nominal membership but a dynamic, interactive

process where women have voice and decision-making influence. Investigation of roles therefore raises the questions on who participants, how do they participate, what effects this has on peacebuilding, and what factors constrain or enable. Such analysis not only makes visible what is invisible, but also ensures equal valuing of women's roles. Women's roles are therefore important in themselves as entitlements for women as human beings and means of empowerment – but also as goals to achieving equity, efficiency and sustainability in peacebuilding efforts. A distinction between gender sensitive approaches and gender transformative approaches need to be made in ways that can help institutionalize the concepts of gender role socialization, gender identity and power relations to promote gender equality in peacebuilding.

### ***WOMEN'S ROLES IN PEACEBUILDING***

This section examines literature on women's roles in peacebuilding and barriers relating to historical undervaluing and exclusion of their roles. The category "women" is examined as a group in this review of the literature, without necessarily creating distinctions relating to religious identities. The goal is to explore literature on the various roles that women have played in war and peace and to illuminate resources, barriers and opportunities.

#### **Historical marginalization of women's roles in peacebuilding**

Women have historically played significant roles in peacebuilding but their roles have historically been excluded, undervalued and misrepresented (Lindsey, 2011:3; Lerner, 1986:4; Heckman, 1995:23; Gross, 2005:17). Women in the World War period played triple roles and new identities all at once; the patriotic farmer, fighter, nurse, employee, and above all were expected to remain the greatest mothers and caregivers (Blatch, 1918, pp. 10 - 14). (Goldstein, 2001). Women who joined World War II actively fought for peace and formed transnational movements such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which mobilized women to play significant roles in resolution of international disputes by mediation and non-violent means, and urged that

women should have the vote (Rupp, 2011, pp. 7-8). Despite their contributions, the rise of nationalism and the struggle for democracy during and after the cold war systematically excluded women. It became apparent that although the cold war may have shaken up and strained conventional gender roles and relations, no permanent change occurred: Women continued to face hostility to their work in male-dominated jobs, their labour was devalued, and the ideology of motherhood was reinvigorated so that women remained primarily charged with the responsibility for the home (Goldstein, 2001, p. 175).

### **African women's roles in colonial Africa**

Meanwhile in Africa, following the period of the scramble for Africa in the 1880s, European powers dominated, carving out vast territories as their own and establishing often brutal regimes to enforce their rule (Asante, 2007; Life, 1967; Pakenham, 1992; Gellately & Kiernan, 2003). By the beginning of the First World War in 1914, all of Africa, except Ethiopia and Liberia, was under colonial rule with European imperialism. Colonialism became institutionalized violence, sometimes with excessive brutality in the guise of civilization and development (Rodney, 1981). The Belgian colonization of the Congo for instance engaged in widespread brutality, stripping of the region of both natural and human resources. The Belgian colonialists under king Leopold the second, trafficked rubber and other natural resources as they committed serious atrocities against Africans including cutting off hands, whipping, murder and enslavement of women who were often held captive in order to force their husbands to meet the rubber quotas (Hochschild, 1998).

The brutality of colonialism on African women was widespread—forcing Victorian notions of domesticity on African women in order to mould better mothers and wives; constantly using coercive force under the barrel of the gun; engaging in violent sexual politics; obsessing with African women's bodies to ensure they gave birth to healthy babies to reproduce the colonial workforce; and advancing economic exploitation particularly in agricultural production and reproduction by

women (Allman, Greiger, & Musisi, 2002, p. 6). African women were relegated to biological functions and a fixed domestic sphere of childbearing and housekeeping. African men were allowed to have access to the public. African women's economic reproduction in rural agriculture was deemed informal and marginal to the colonial economy, while African men's urban work was upheld and remunerated. But African women's experiences were not homogeneous. Through western educational systems, the colonial system fostered differences based on class, urban/rural dichotomies and status, and one could find wives and mothers who were considered more "civilized" based on western models of the nuclear family.

However, most accounts of colonialism in Africa are a landscape gendered male (white male) and presented in dichotomous forms, often with androcentric and Eurocentric representations of African women as weak, powerless victims with no agency (Allman, Greiger, & Musisi, 2002, p. 3). Without denying the brutal forms of violence, African women were active agents in the making of the colonial world, not mere hapless victims. Through their daily lives and within the prescribed roles in families, communities, church, schools, ritual and belief, African women negotiated their power, participation and worked as farmers, queen mothers, migrants, and political leaders (Allman, Greiger, & Musisi, 2002, p. 9). African women were among those who resisted the establishment of colonial rule with movements such as the Maji Maji uprising of Tanganyika, Asante Resistance of Ghana, the Battle of Adowa in Ethiopia and the battle of Isandhlawana. Most of these anti-colonial uprisings were led by religious leaders who belonged to indigenous religions, had formed their own African Independent Churches, or were Christians who opposed colonial rule as a way to stay faithful to the religious teachings on peace and justice. But besides joining the general resistance movements led by men, African women initiated their own actions and organized for change. They negotiated a range of political, economic and social forces of colonialism such as colonial rule, missions, taxation, cash cropping, biomedicine, labour migration, white settlements and racial discourses of Power (Allman, Greiger, & Musisi, 2002, p. 1). They actively rebelled against the colonial system

that weakened women's position in African societies, making them invisible and powerless (Allen, 1971, p. 59)

One good illustration of this point is when, in 1929, Ogu Umunwanyi—the Aba Women's War led by Igbo and some Ibibio women from the provinces of Calabar and Owerri in south-eastern Nigeria became one of the first and most serious revolts against British colonial rule (Mba, 1982; Allen, 1971). Under indirect rule, British administrators ruled locally through "warrant chiefs," essentially Igbo individuals appointed by the governor. Traditionally in the pre-colonial period, Igbo chiefs had been elected by the people. The warrant chiefs became increasingly oppressive—seized property, imposed inhuman regulations, and unnecessarily imprisoned people. The colonial administrators had planned to impose special taxes on the Igbo market women, who were supplying the food and non-perishable goods to the growing urban populations in Calabar, Owerri, and other Nigerian cities. The women organized themselves into thousands and congregated at the Native Administration centres in Calabar and Owerri as well as smaller towns to protest colonial regime. The women chanted, danced and sang songs of ridicule, forcing some warrant chiefs who were collaborating with the colonialists to resign their positions (Allen, 1971, p. 60). The women who were particularly distressed by the nature of colonial administration, demanded that they be included in native courts, and at some locations broke into courts and prisons where they released prisoners (Allen, 1971, p. 61). Colonial Police and troops intervened with the barrel of the gun, branding their actions irrational and violent, and killing and wounding several women. Despite this, the Aba Women's War prompted colonial authorities to drop their plans to impose a tax on the market women, and to curb the power of the warrant chiefs.

The Aba Women's War involved complex organization and a wide range of peacebuilding and negotiation skills. In colonial Magde of South-western Mozambique, Gengenbach suggests similar skills where women not only resisted colonialism, but their actions were in fact strategic engagement within a context

where meanings of colonialism were gendered and negotiated, but also changed over time. Gengenbach argues that African women in the colonial period were clearly motivated by their own agendas, engaging things European with the aim of buttressing feminine forms of knowledge, power and authority in local community (Gengenbach, 2002, p. 21). By the 1950s, when Nationalist movements in Africa uniformly demanded political independence, African women had already been at the fore-front demanding for inclusion, opportunity and freedom from colonial legacies that actively promoted racism and discriminatory policies that restricted Africans from economic, political, educational participation and development.

Yet, their roles in the struggle against colonialism were largely ignored when nationalism and political independence became a reality in the early 50s and 60s for most African countries. Political parties that formed systematically excluded women. Women's contributions in nationalist movements and in the new political and economic systems developed post-independence was limited, invisible, marginalized and almost banned altogether. This marginalization and invisibility may be explained by what Allman and others refer to as chronological boundaries that framed African colonial history, which were based on formal political markers, such as a decisive military defeat, a treaty of "protection" or the hoisting of the flag of independence (Allman, Greiger, & Musisi, 2002). Such markers are not gender neutral, but rather signify definitive moments in the colonial histories of male political elites and fail to capture the day-to-day struggles of African women as agents of change who shaped and were shaped by the colonial world (Allman, Greiger, & Musisi, 2002, p. 10).

### **Women's roles in peacebuilding in contemporary societies**

Current literature on contemporary conflict, peacebuilding and reconstruction demonstrates increasing recognition of women's varied roles in peacebuilding, their perspectives and particular needs (Anderlini, 2007; Pankhurst, 2007; Strickland & Duvvury, 2003; United Nations, 2002). This recognition is based on real examples where women have contributed effectively to peacebuilding as individuals or collectively through the organizations they have built. Even where

women are prevented from participating in political activities relating to post-conflict reconstruction, they do organize civic education targeting women on the importance of voting, they provide legal counselling on rights and how to exercise them, and have begun to engage in formal negotiations, power sharing and constitutional reforms (Sorensen, 1998).

The United Nations Resolution 1325 acknowledges women as negotiators, peacemakers and advisors (United Nations, 2000). Soresen outlines several prominent peacebuilding roles by women, from negotiations for peace, to agriculture, to rehabilitation, reintegration and reweaving of the social fabric. As an innovative way of mobilizing their agency and constructing a vision for peace, there are cases where women in Northern Ireland and in Liberia suppressed their political and religious identities and collaborated together as women around issues of social and prisoner's welfare as well as on calling for ceasefire and pressuring through religious prayer for the signing of the peace accord in Liberia (Strickland & Duvvury, 2003; Anderlini, 2007).

Women have also engaged in integrated approaches trying to work with the local community in mediation and reconciliation. Women's peacebuilding roles have involved psychosocial support, counselling and provision of basic needs for women who have been sexually abused and stigmatized by their communities. Women have worked with men to reconcile the entire community so that those women are able to come back and to be integrated within the community (Amnesty International, 2007; Ngongo-Mbede, 2003). Examples include innovative programs run by grassroots women's groups and civil society movements include training local nurses and traditional birth attendants and healers to treat victims of sexual violence with particular sensitivity, providing appropriate medical services, offering psychosocial counselling and providing mother and child care.

Women victims have found their voices, and others have assisted victims of sexual violence and rape to testify or submit statements to Truth and

Reconciliation Commissions (TRC), which are mandated to establish an impartial record of the abuses that occurred in the war, as a step towards achieving national reconciliation (Ntahobari & Ndayiziga, 2003; Secco, 2008; Manjoo, 2008). Gathering information specifically about sexual violence is not easy because in addition to the trauma, women and girls confront stigmatization, further victimization and social taboos against speaking publicly about rape and other sexual violence. In Sierra Leone for example, women themselves worked to break the silence and speak out on the routine horrific crimes of rape perpetrated against women. Because of this role of women in finding their agency to voice their experiences of violence, the TRC report of Sierra Leone was successful in including the various crimes and human rights violations against women and girls (Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone, 2004; Secco, 2008:77-86). These included killing, rape and other sexual violence, sexual slavery, slave labour, abduction, assault, amputation, forced pregnancy, disembowelment of pregnant women, torture, trafficking and mutilation of women's bodies. The country faced an enormous rise in cases of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases resulting from this violence. Some women joined the rebel forces, but many were abducted and then forced to carry out armed actions. These women were largely excluded from the disarmament and reintegration programmes of Sierra Leone's peace process, which favoured men and boys. Because matters that relate to crimes committed against women are often ignored, mischaracterized, or just completely under-investigated, the role of women in ensuring these matters are brought to the fore and impunity addressed through the TRC processes is an important step towards building sustainable peace (Secco, 2008: 65-68).

Women have also worked to demand for reform of legal, judicial and police systems to make it easier for victims to report cases of sexual and domestic violence. Despite these efforts to document the brutality against women and promote healing and reconciliation, male dominated systems thwart the efforts aimed at ensuring that survivors of sexual violence receive justice, acknowledgement of their suffering, and full, meaningful and effective reparations,



as well as end impunity for perpetrators. Gender inequalities still persist and impede reintegration of women and girls into the community (Human Rights Watch, January 2003; Secco, 2008)

In situations of destruction and displacement, existing literature shows women playing pivotal peacebuilding roles, including reintegration activities such as reunification of families, health counselling, job referral, vocational training, protection of women and child refugees (Reychler & Paffenholz, 2001). Women respond to emergency situations by putting in place survival strategies and working to provide basic services such as food, water and shelter for their children and communities, despite the shortages. They nurse the injured and support women at childbirth. They assume new roles and responsibilities as heads of households. As the men mobilize for combat, there are examples of women's mobilization of pro-peace activists and organizations. Sometimes, as earlier indicated, they may draw their moral authority from their gendered roles as mothers or wives – which is generally more acceptable and possible for women to protest from their gendered identity (Reychler & Paffenholz, 2001: 64)

Women have played important roles in demobilizing and re-integrating former combatants, who are predominantly male. Of particular relevance have been their contributions in processes of traditional healing (Becker, 2003). Women have played key roles in rituals to provide spiritual cleansing, healing and reconciliation. Many traditional healer and ritual leaders in Mozambique for instance were found to be women, and they played central roles in healing and reconciling rebel leaders and their families (Becker, 2003: 67-68). However, examples of women's roles in re-integration of women and girls former combatants is difficult to find, perhaps due to the general stereotypical view that women are not or must not be in combat activities.

Women have also played key roles in prevention and mediation of violent conflict, leading to formal peace processes. Most prevention and mediation roles by women mobilize their gendered roles and perceived agency in their biological

status as mothers. The expectations for mothers are to restore peace required for the smooth functioning of families and communities. Therefore, in addition to taking primary responsibilities for the education of children and inculcating in them values for peace, women have played central roles in preventing, mediating and advocating for peace and the cessation of violence by deploying their motherhood roles in protection of children, families and communities threatened by violence and conflict. Most examples however portray stereotypical roles for women in prevention and mediation that relate to education of children, inculcating moral values of peace in communities and reconciling warring parties in traditional non-formal settings. Examples can be drawn from Burundi and Cameroon where women have worked as mediators, engaging institutional mechanisms such as customary courts for conciliation (Ngongo-Mbede, 2003; Ntahobari & Ndayiziga, 2003). It is absurd however, that women are upheld for their gendered roles as givers and protectors of life and at the same time blamed when they fail, in the face of conflict and violence, to construct and consolidate peace as mothers and nurturers.

Women as agents for peace have played fundamental roles in building movements for peace. Women's organizations and networks have been used effectively to mobilize women to initiate formal peace negotiations, maintaining support for the process and facilitating implementation of the accords ( United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2005). In Colombia, for example, the UNIFEM report indicates that despite repeated attacks, disappearances, kidnappings and threats against women leaders, they continue to organize, develop agendas for peace, and join other civil society campaigns for peace talks, dialogues and renewed negotiations. Similarly, examples can be found in Northern Ireland where women collaborated effectively and created a foundation for negotiations for peace (Anderlini, 2007; United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2005). Other examples can be found in Mozambique and Eritrea where women's movements mobilized for support for the struggle for peace and protection of the specific needs of women and children (Sørensen, 1998). These cases may not be generalized as they depend on the political contexts and their

interactions with women's situations, positions and identities. For example, women's organizing for peace in Uganda was not permitted following undemocratic political processes. On the other hand, building women's movements in Afghanistan or Algeria did not prove to be an effective strategy because of opposing worldviews along secular and Islamic lines, which reinforced the stereotypical roles of women as an embodiment of their cultural heritage and family social structure and saw movement building as irrelevant and/or oppositional to that ideal (Sorensen, 1998).

Women have also engaged in various grassroots activities for peace. These range from peace education to economic reintegration. Examples include movements such as mothers of soldiers in Russia or Women in Black of former Yugoslavia, who actively advocated for peace and played a major role in shaping public opinion. Where there are disappearances or political torture such as cases in Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala or Sri Lanka, women have been active ingenious actors calling for human rights protection, the end to impunity and the assurance of compensation (Vincent, 2003; Cockburn, 2001; Sørensen, 1998; Anderlini, 2007). This is not to ignore that women too succumb to nationalist discourses, based on their other social identities such as ethnicity or religion (Sorensen, 1998:12).

Women's roles in reconciliation and social reconstruction have been pivotal. With large numbers of victims, widows, amputees, orphans and several others whose lives are torn apart by the ravages of war, women have played fundamental roles in reweaving the social fabric and social integration of vulnerable groups (World Bank, 1998; Sorensen, 1998:55). It must be noted though that although women play creative and innovative roles of providing psychosocial counselling and support, the changing traumatic impacts of war call for greater measures to support their roles and efforts. Mental health concerns for women and girls has not been prioritized by governments to help facilitate the innovative roles of women in rebuilding lives and the social fabric of their communities (Amnesty International, 2007).

Women's agency in rebuilding social capital has been emphasized, and their potential as strong community leaders who can facilitate the rebuilding process recognized. Skills demonstrated by women reflect collaboration and the principle of community action across ethnic, religious, linguistic and other divides (Strickland & Duvvury, 2003: 12-13) Burundi is one case where the powerful capacity of women to cross ethnic and religious divides has been demonstrated. In extremely difficult genocide situation, the Hutu and Tutsi women in Burundi worked together to return to their homes from the camps and began to live together engaging in normal agricultural activities and sending back their children to school. These women worked together to rebuild their homes and return lives to normalcy (Meintjes, Pillay, & Turshen, 2001: 54) Women have served as agents of post-conflict reconstruction aimed at building the physical infrastructure and resuscitating economic, governance and social institutions. Unfortunately, these contributions by women have received little recognition.

Women have also played key roles in political and democratization processes. There are examples where women have participated actively in constitution making or constitutional reforms such as Eritrea and Cambodia. Women have taken active roles to increase the participation and representation of women in governance. For example in Rwanda, women (working with men and other civil society groups) have contributed in post-genocide rebuilding through political governance, organizing women's councils at all levels of government, and instituting an electoral system with reserved seats for women in the national parliament (Burnet, 2008 ). The increased political participation of women in Rwanda represents a paradox in the short term: as their participation has increased, women's ability to influence policy making has decreased. In the long term, however, increased female representation in government could prepare the path for their meaningful participation in a genuine democracy because of a transformation in political subjectivity. Women have also participated in constitution making. Participation in matters relating to the constitution is important because constitutions define people's political, social and economic

rights and may offer opportunities for women's empowerment and economic reconstruction (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2005). Women and their organizations have also played active roles in election processes, where they have urged women to vote, advocated for the right to vote and to be voted for, and actually succeeded in having women take up political positions.

### **Persistent exclusion and invisibility of women's roles in peacebuilding**

To sum up, this section has examined a variety of peacebuilding roles that women play. It has also illuminated barriers and opportunities that women face in undertaking these roles, and historical factors of marginalization and exclusion. It has become apparent that women's peacebuilding roles tend to take the conventional gendered division of labour. There are a number of examples where women have played key non-traditional roles. However, women's participation in non-traditional peacebuilding roles is not without challenges. Where conflict changes traditional gender roles and women acquire a momentary space in which they undertake non-traditional roles and assume much greater leadership responsibilities within the household and public arenas, the situation does not necessarily empower women and advance gender equality. It does not necessarily result in a decrease in the demands of their traditional roles (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002).

In what Pankhurst terms as post war backlash, her study recognizes that women face particular difficulties in post-war situations when gender-based violence escalates targeting women for having taken up non-traditional roles and responsibilities and forcing them to conform to traditional gender roles "back" into kitchens and fields, even if they were not so occupied before the war. Pankhurst posits that even in situations where there is no extreme backlash, there is sufficient examples documented to show that post-war issues, (and roles), are different for women and men including political nominations, testimonies in courts for truth and reconciliation, education, formal employment and mobility (Pankhurst 2007).

It is important to note that women have also experienced a number of obstacles in participating in political processes in post-war reconstruction. The evidence shows that due to patriarchal political structures, men often broker peace as political leaders and lock out women in the structuring of the new order (Meintjes, Pillay, & Turshen, 2001: 76). It is therefore important as suggested by these authors to organize women in the period preceding negotiations and prepare them to take up unconventional roles in peace-making and power brokering.

Key factors in conflict analysis have become apparent. Women play central roles in contexts of conflict and war. However, their participation and roles have historically been marginalized, systematically discriminated against and made invisible. Although women are disproportionately casualties of conflict and war, they are all too often objectified as victims of conflict with little reference to their active participation. It is important to engage in critical gender analysis to understand the multidimensional and multi-faceted nature of conflict in any context where peacebuilding intervention is to take place. A gender-aware understanding of a conflict context enables identifying forms of violence specific to women and girls, men and boys that need to be stopped. It also helps make visible positive responses and processes to reduce violence that could be supported, particularly those by women that are often invisible and hidden from the public view. Doing gender-aware conflict analysis helps show the varied forms and modes of involvement by different actors—women, men, boys and girls—and makes visible their different views, needs, capacities and visions for peace. It helps deepen understanding on the root causes of a conflict such as those relating to structural and economic inequality, beyond its triggers.

A gender-aware analysis on the nature of conflict helps redress the inequalities resulting from historical and systematic exclusion of women from participation in all spheres of life, particularly in matters pertaining to war and conflict (Lerner, 1986: 52). Such inequalities relate to the production and reproduction of knowledge, the participation and representation of women and men in war and conflict, and the invisibility/visibility of women and men's contributions to war and

conflict. It is evident that these have historically been unequally constructed through biological essentialism and androcentric worldviews. Women's contributions to conflict and war remain invisible, ignored and/or unacknowledged. Conflict and war are themselves gendered constructs, and often very little is told about women's understanding of their meanings or stakes. Conflict analysis that does not take into account these elements of gender inequality and the *gendered nature* of conflict is detrimental to peace.

In addition, although there are many examples where women individually or collectively contribute to peacebuilding, with activities spread out at all levels, economic, social, political or other, little attention is paid to their different contributions, their primary concerns, their resources or capacities. They are positioned in the margins and reduced to targets and beneficiaries (Soresen, 1998). Their contributions are often overlooked, take conventional forms, occur outside formal peace processes and are often considered extensions of existing gender roles (Enloe, 2002; Moser & Clark, 2001; Meintjes, Pillay, & Turshen, 2001). Women's pivotal roles are further undermined through patriarchal institutional practices and structural factors of systemic discrimination. It is therefore worthwhile to examine women's contributions in relation to the institutional practices and structural factors that affect women's roles in peacebuilding.

Additionally, peacebuilding roles undertaken by women, such as reproductive health support, reconstruction, demobilisation, negotiation, psychosocial support and ensuring secure livelihoods for all hardly alter or transform norms and institutional practices. As a result, gender inequalities in peacebuilding roles still persist. Fundamental roles pertaining to economic rehabilitation strategies, land reform, electoral processes and public works tend to exclude women (Soresen, 1998; Reyhler & Paffenholz, 2001; Strickland & Duvvury, 2003). Women are often excluded from formal dialogue and peace negotiations given the patriarchal male-dominated decision-making institutional mechanisms. Women play only

minor roles in political negotiations and plans to implement peace accords and enact institutional policies.

Women's unequal access to resources including political instructions, media (which often communicates messages on peace accords) may lead to further marginalization since their interests, needs and perspectives will not be represented or debated, or sometimes they may be trivialized (Reychler & Paffenholz, 2001:66). The use of outside investigators or peacekeepers that are seen as experts but not trained and equipped to recognize and address gender-based inequalities exacerbates women's situations and further marginalizes their needs and roles (Strickland & Duvvury, 2003:23). Women face specific obstacles in voting, standing for elections or even having gender equality as a focus of discussion in election debates. There are also examples where reconstruction programs have not recognized or given priority to supporting women and girls ex-combatants, and so they do not benefit from land allocations, credit schemes, skills training, and reintegration and demobilization. Women specific needs such as for basic physical security are taken for granted, and there are hardly any governmental services to address women's needs. But an even more crucial obstacle and less examined is the institution of patriarchy and systemic discrimination arising from institutional practices and structural factors.

### ***WOMEN OF FAITH, RELIGION AND PEACEBUILDING***

Having examined the nature of barriers that women in general face and their roles in peacebuilding, this section focuses on conceptualizing women of faith and religious resources for peacebuilding. I explore literature on religion, women and peacebuilding to identify conceptual issues relevant to my study on the roles of women of faith and how they may deploy religious resources for peacebuilding.

#### **Who are women of faith?**

In this study, I conceptualize women of faith as agents, self-aware actors who make intentional choices (Boden, 2007) for peace. As religious actors, women of



faith are formed by a religious community and act with the intent to uphold, extend or defend religious values or precepts for peace (Appleby, 2000). They may be lay, ordained or religious nuns. Individual women of faith may practice their faith publicly in community with other believers, or privately. My assumption is that women of faith play transformative peacebuilding roles in religious communities (Hertog, 2010), and their actions are not only in support of women but also for the common good.

Women of faith can be supported by religion in two different ways. First, they can be legitimated and motivated by their faith to act as agents of peace, individually or collectively - even in the face of opposition. Alternatively, religious structures, institutions, resources or assets can provide concrete support to women in their peacebuilding efforts.

Women of faith may engage in peacebuilding in a secular, non-religious or religious idiom, as long as faith plays a role in their efforts to transform conflict and promote peace. Women of faith may be engaged with others in genuine partnership and community to address common threats to peace. They are not to be expected to act in isolation, exclusive from the societal affairs. Understanding their roles as agents of peace includes inventorying religious organizations, structures, their activism and visions for peace, as well as their interconnectedness with other religious or non-religious actors.

A danger to be avoided lies in essentialist views of women of faith and their organizations as “peaceable” or in assuming that “women of faith” are the only ones with faith. Faith can be widely held and shared by non-religious people. And among religions, there are a variety of faiths and belief systems, some of which may be in conflict, or not wholly attributable to religion. There are those who feel absolutely certain that their particular faith tradition possesses the “only truth,” and so all other faiths are wrong. The “others” in this case may be those representing different religious belief systems or those with secular or non-religious faiths.

Considerations of women of faith as agents of peace assume significant scepticism towards such delegitimizing, proselytizing or pontificating views.

My goal in this study is not to adjudicate the “truth” claims of any particular religious belief system or to measure competing levels of religiosity. Rather than seek to establish the “truth” pertaining to any faith tradition, I consider women of faith as those acting within their multiple identities, working collaboratively among different faiths and across cultures for human flourishing and the common good. The focus is on the role of religion on women’s peacebuilding actions and ideas, and the reciprocal motivations and legitimation of women of faith as peace builders.

### **The different role of religion in women’s experiences**

Religion has not always played a positive undifferentiated role in women’s experiences, or in motivating and legitimating women. Some argue that religion has at times limited women’s participation and excluded their leadership within religious communities and in the forefront of public life (Hodgson 2005; Hertog, 2010; King, 2005). In her research on the experiences of Maasai women of Tanzania with Catholic missionaries, Hodgson found that early missionaries highly restricted the participation or involvement of Maasai women in missionary outreach and Church-related activities (Hodgson, 2005). While actively seeking to engage men, the missionaries restricted Maasai women from attending mission schools or homestead instruction and services. Similar patterns of exclusion have been noted in contemporary peacebuilding, which has tended to predominantly create male religious elite figures (Hertog, 2010), largely excluding and marginalizing women of faith.

Even when women have been involved, religion has propagated certain attitudes and beliefs about roles and responsibilities, obligations and modes of interaction that are unequal among women and men (Karam, 2001). For example as Hodgson notes, the efforts by Christian missions were directed at training African

women to be good wives and mothers, propagating an ideal Christian family. But for Maasai men, the missionaries sought out their participation and involvement while actively dissuading women from holding formal leadership positions in the church (Hodgson, 2005). It is no wonder then that broader social structures and institutions of religion are largely male dominated, where women of faith command only limited and largely informal and local authority or influence, away from the public realm (McGrory, 2008). There also exists the propagation of androcentric views where the perspectives of men are taken as the norm for all groups, while the experiences of women are ignored, trivialized or disparaged (Hodgson, 2005; Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 2001).

Apparently, religion, like gender, is quintessentially a social phenomenon that affects the gendered nature of meaning-making and gender-role socialization between men and women. Therefore, gender issues in religion are complex, ubiquitous, and mutually embedded within each other (King, 1995). On one hand, religion may provide resources for transformation and empowerment of women; and on the other hand it can create and legitimate gender-based oppression or discrimination. In the process of socialization and identity formation, religious teachings and worldviews have profound influence on roles, experiences, self-understanding and status of women and men (King, 1995). It cannot be denied that some of the deepest discriminatory sentiments and meanings about the agency and roles of women and men originate in religious ideas, misrepresentations and misinterpretations. Religion has particularly deep inter-generational gender-based structures -; institutions, cultures, relations, resources and practices that affect the roles women and men can or cannot play in peacebuilding. Another challenge lies in the misuses of religion to escalate conflicts or to the detriment of women. For instance, as suggested by Hertog (2010), religion may be adopted as a discourse through which certain interest groups defend their own political or economic interest. Or, as a very strong identity marker, religion may be used to strengthen forces of nationalism and ethnicity based on the complex sets of identity involved (Hertog, 2010). Often, women are excluded and marginalized from nationalist and ethnic debates.

Where religion has fostered divisions and violence, it may be possible that some women of faith and the associations they have built serve to reinforce conflict ideologies, foster division and promote violence. Equally, to serve patriarchal ideals, world religions have at times distorted, denigrated or even denied women's experiences (Hodgson, 2005). These challenges and barriers have resulted in secularist gender discourses that have tended to regard religion with disdain, neglecting the relationship of spirituality with other domains of power, and/or incriminating world religions for fostering and institutionalizing patriarchy and the subordination of women (McGrory, 2008; Hodgson, 2005).

The key questions are how have women responded to the barriers they face in religion? Can the role of religion in women's experiences be differentiated? In order to explore these questions in a meaningful manner, scholars suggest that it is necessary to apply gender analysis. For purposes of this study, I apply feminist understandings of women's agency and voice to explore roles beyond barriers and a mere description of activities. Feminist approaches problematize the conditions and positions of women that lead to unequal opportunity and marginalization of women's roles. Closely linked to this are critical understandings of patriarchy and its reproduction of hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity that generate barriers, violence and often legitimate men while constraining the roles of women (Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005; Goldstein, 2001; Johnson, 2005; Gilmore, 2009; Kimmel, 2004; Hodgson, 2005). The analysis is not only on barriers and forms of subordination but also on agency and power as it links to other forms of social difference such as ethnicity and religion (Hodgson, 2005; Gilmore, 2009; Connell, 2005). As Hodgson notes, despite sustained missionary efforts to evangelize men and limit women, so many Maasai women overcame the social, cultural and institutional barriers to their participation in the Catholic Church to convert to Catholicism and became the backbone of the church. For the Maasai women, the experience of their conversion to Catholicism interacted with gendered political and economic dislocations to motivate them to surmount the restrictions on their missionary encounter and involvement with the Catholic Church (Hodgson, 2005).

Therefore, the task of examining the roles of women of faith as agents of peace is a complex, sometimes political undertaking. Rather than define the agency of women of faith in peacebuilding through mere description of their activities, a gender-aware analysis provides critical frames and lenses to examine processes, socio-cultural or religious structures, relationships, entitlements and resources that affect how they may deploy religious resources. Spirituality may well be a domain of power for women in diverse religious contexts, but women's roles may vary under the influence of Christianity, Islam and other so-called world religions (Hodgson, 2005). The emphasis is on women's agency: women's ways of knowing, valuing, meaning making and participation (Gilligan, 1982). Agency attributes to the individual actor the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life even under the most extreme forms of inequality or coercion (Moser, 2001: 4). This means that women overcome social, cultural and institutional barriers to transform from a state of being victims or always subordinated to being social actors, who are knowledgeable and capable of transforming their own situation (Hodgson, 2005).

My study explores the experiences of the research participants and validates their "voice" and "truths" on the meanings of faith in their peacebuilding roles. I do not assume any pre-conceived notions or "truths" on what peacebuilding roles for women of faith ought to be, and how faith can empower or constrain them. Instead, exploring the experiences of the research participants and establishing their "truths" on how the violence was ended provides insights into what peacebuilding really looked like in the given context. Examining women's roles entails questioning patriarchal systems and power relations in conflict and peace situations. This means examining roles alongside relationships, institutions and the power dynamics of access, control and decision-making. Gender analysis of women's roles must go far enough to question the systems of participation and representation and the socio-cultural assumptions entailed therein. The goal for gender analysis is not only to document and create the visibility of women's roles

and call for representation, but also to analyse ways in which the promotion of women's roles can lead to long-term commitments to transformation. The central question to investigate roles would be what power, access and control do women need to exercise their peacebuilding roles? At the same time, bringing such gender analysis into the centre of peacebuilding requires alternative political spaces where gender roles and identity, as they intersect with religion, can be debated, analysed and transformed. What is problematized is not (only) the exclusion of women, or inclusion of men as a norm, but the gendered world in itself. As Hodgson argues, gender may shape the terms, contours and outcomes of women's experiences; on the other hand, religion can serve as a resource for women to negotiate gender and ethnic identities, and other domains of power. Ultimately, religion can be a domain of power for women that should not be subordinated to political or economic domains. (Hodgson, 2005).

### **Religion as resource for peacebuilding**

One of my assumptions in this study is that religion is a resource for peacebuilding. My approach to religion is a sociological perspective. Most scholars of the sociology of religion consider religion as a system of faith, which guides, motivates, enables action and provide adherents with meaning and purpose in life. In all these, the overarching concern of religion is with the transcendence, spirituality and harmonious relations with the cosmos (Weber, 1968; Weber, 2001; Durkheim, 2001). Durkheim considers religion as a force that created within individuals a sense of moral obligation to adhere to societal demands (Durkheim, 2001). To him, religion was a unified system of sacred and forbidden beliefs and practices that form an expression of social life resulting in societal cohesion of united moral communities with symbolic power and collective consciousness of adherents on the realities of life (Durkheim, 2001, p. 47). Durkheim was concerned with the sociology of religion as a communal phenomenon and the communal bonds established through participation in religious activities.

Weber's arguments are based on concepts of religious foundations for meaning-making, motivation and social action (Weber, 1968; Weber, 2001). To Weber, social action is in the perspective of the actor, who relates their actions meaningfully to other actors and whose actions are guided based on the relationship with others (Weber, 1968). Weber notes that a religious group or individual may be influenced by all kinds of things, but if they claim to be acting out of religious grounds, their perspectives ought to be understood as such (Weber, 1980). Particularly in a world that is troubled and full of suffering, Weber argues religion may help provide meaning reassuring life, respond to people's needs, and relief suffering. In addition, Weber posits that religion may provide moral ideals seeking to reconcile worldly imperfections with extraordinary power of divine goodness (Zaleski, 2010), a collision in Durkheim's conceptualization between the sacred and the profane. In such case, drawing from their religious practices, norms, beliefs and teachings, people of faith feel compelled or sanctioned to take moral action. Weber introduces the concept of individual consciousness where he proposes that the reason behind regular actions is the meanings individuals attribute to their actions:

“The real empirical sociological investigation begins with the question: What motives determine and lead the individual members and participants in this socialistic community to behave in such a way that the community came into being in the first place and that it continues to exist? (Weber, 1968: 18)”

Weber adds that people not only attribute meaning to their actions but also to social relationships—the behaviours of others in their reciprocal relationships. Weber's concept of the ethic of conviction provides further insights into religious attitudes in a person's intentions acting as a free agent in relation to certain ultimate values and meanings of life (Weber, Roscher and Knies: *The Logical Problems of Historical Economics.*, 1975). Unlike Durkheim who considers the essence of society as a social whole, Weber argues that the essence of society is constituted by individual actors. Parsons expands these ideas further to what he

terms moral action, where the actors internalize norms of a social group to become personal values of the actor in their own moral judgment system. So rather than always depending on institutionalized religious warrants, individuals may engage in self-sanctions of their personal understandings of faith that are independent of external forces, which makes them accountable for actions based on personal moral values (Parsons 1986: 169; 1951: 64; 1978: 370).

There are parallels of these ideas on the social construction of gender. Like Durkheim, proponents of gender-aware approaches emphasize the idea that women and men are social beings, and society regulates their individual actions, as well as social action—so that societal roles, attitudes, beliefs, behavioural patterns and other ways of being are expected to conform to the relevant social group categorization (Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005; Gilmore, 2009; Johnson, 2005). This results in unequal gender roles, identities and relations in society, and in the unequal valuing of social action.

Some argue that even within religious systems and practices that reflect and reinforce gender subordination and inequalities, examples can be found of women as active agents and religious subjects in their own right (Karam, 2001; King 1995; Maher, 2007). Throughout the history of religions, there are cases that show women of faith as social actors taking part in wider religious and social protests and movements (King, 1995). So women may not always be subjugated, oppressed, blinded or brainwashed by religion (Karam 2001). Karam argues also that it is not religion that is oppressive to women, but rather its interpretation and implementation. Proponents of gender-aware approaches emphasize women's agency, in agreement with Weber's ideas of individual action and consciousness. Agency attributes to the individual actor the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life even under the most extreme forms of inequality or coercion (Moser, 2001: 4). This means that individuals have the capacity to transform from a state of being regulated by society to being wilful social actors, who are knowledgeable and capable of transforming their own situation. While acknowledging that religion has at times excluded women and



been a source of conflict and violence, there is the potential in religion to be utilized as a positive force and resource by women and in some cases serve as a critical source of women's empowerment (Maher , 2007).

King suggests that religion provides myths and symbols on creation and existence, from which individuals and groups find meaning in life. It also offers narratives of redemption, healing and salvation on which individuals and groups can build hope. Religion encompasses what King terms as "way-out" eschatological utopias, making it possible to transcend suffering when all seems hopeless. Religion is the means to express deepest human yearnings for wholeness and transcendence, captivated by the lure of the divine and the all-consuming, all-transforming fire of spirit (King, 2005:8-9).

Similarly, McGrory posits that the spiritual resources and practical assets that religion offers can be applied by women of faith as a source of empowerment to act as agents of peace (McGrory, 2008). There are three categories of spiritual resources that McGrory identifies: beliefs; scriptural values and teachings; and prayer and ritual. Beliefs and teaching provide a lens to recognize injustice. Scripture values & teachings inspire and motivate women of faith to action. And prayer and ritual offer tools for peace and spiritual support to maintain struggle. Ultimately, these resources, McGrory argues, are translated into practical religious assets that empower women in various ways. Religion provides a sense of identity that strengthens women's individual & collective struggles & solidarity. Religious values motivate women to rebuild damaged relations, not lapse into sense of victimhood. Even when all seems hopeless, religious resources foster inner strength and generate commitment, resilience and courage. The trusted faith-based institutions, congregations, groups and communities are a vehicle for involvement, and often are already mobilized to work for peace. Religious beliefs offer spiritual lenses to recognize injustice, leading women to take up practical opportunities to promote peace education in institutions available to them, such as faith and familial institutions. Scriptural values & teachings inspire and motivate women of faith to take action. The seeming inviolability of religious activity

provides protection to and opportunities for women to act. Prayer and ritual offer tools to maintain the struggle as a sacred religious obligation by fostering inner strength and generating commitment, resilience and courage. These spiritual resources and attitudes may help women of faith to rebuild damaged relations, and not lapse into a sense of victimhood and vengeance. In addition, faith provides a sense of identity that strengthens individual & collective struggles & solidarity and enables women of faith to stay motivated to take action for peace (McGrory, 2008).

Additionally, Vendley argues that religion offers spiritual, moral, social and organizational assets to transform conflict (Vendley, 2005). Such resources, Vendley argues, can support people of faith in advancing peace education, advocacy, mediation and reconciliation. For instance, social assets can enable grassroots religious networks to educate local populations (families, congregations, general public) about seeds of conflict. They can also facilitate faith leaders to promote community justice initiatives, bridge divides among different warring parties, work to heal trauma, rebuild communities and reintegrate former child soldiers into religious community institutions. Moral assets can enable people of faith to speak out against hatred, violence against women and children, and violence between different religions, ethnic groups or communities. Moral assets can enable people of faith to reclaim the space for mediation, articulate the moral responsibilities to prevent violence foster community reconciliation that protects the rights of women and children, and of all groups and engage in nonviolent activism for peace. Spiritual assets can enable faith individuals and groups to invoke religious practices to counter messages of hate and calls for violence. Spiritual practices that foster mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation are promoted in this case. These social, moral, and spiritual assets are seen as instrumental in resolving conflicts, providing intrinsic religious motivations and helping create visions of peace rooted in religious experience (Vendley, 2005). Drawing on differences and the unique identity of each religion, religious actors are said to derive their moral judgments from spiritual values, morals, and ritual conduct (Suwanbubha, 2010). For example, attributes such as

loving-kindness, awareness, and open-mindedness are regarded as mental factors important in Buddhist morality that lead to action on societal problems.

Perhaps such action and motivation can be best understood in the light of Durkheim and Weber's conceptualizations of religion as a system of faith, which guides, motivates, enables action and provide adherents with meaning and purpose in life. Drawing from their religious norms, beliefs and teachings, people of faith feel compelled or sanctioned to take action, a sense of moral obligation to adhere to societal demands (Weber 1968; Durkheim, 2001). Communities of faith may therefore have a lot of influence based on moral sanctions, symbolic power, collective consciousness of the transcendent, as well as personal meanings and attitudes. Parsons concept of moral action expands these notions further by suggesting that actors internalize norms of a social group to become personal values of the actor in their own moral judgment system. So rather than always depending on institutionalized religious warrants, individuals may engage in self-sanctions of their personal understandings of faith that are independent of external forces, which makes them accountable for actions based on personal moral values (Parsons 1986:).

But some would argue that moral values are gendered and shaped by social constructions of identity and relations of power. To what extent might women be considered moral beings, legitimated to act as religious actors? In her study, Gilligan found that women and men have different experiences and their thought patterns convey different ways of structuring relationships and are associated with different views of morality and self (Gilligan, 1982: 62). These differences, Gilligan argues, occur within a social context where gendered factors of social status and power combine with biological sex to shape the moral voices and choices of women and men. Gilligan argues that often, the voices and moral choices of women are ignored and marginalized while men's voices are promoted as the universal moral choices. This kind of androcentric approach is problematic because it fails to capture what may be unique and meaningful to a group of people or individuals in the way they think about the world (Kelly, 1963). Kelly

calls such a worldview personal constructs, and argues that it is important to investigate personal meanings that events hold for people, and the uniqueness of how each person or individual group may use such meanings to make sense of lived experience.

Religion is a major fundamental social institution that conserves and supports gender identity and socialization, passing on values and ideals that guide moral decision-making of individuals in society (Bolich, 2007, p. 70; King & Beattie, 2005, p. 9). Although religion is claimed to have a great potential to contribute positively to peacebuilding in divided societies (Appleby, 2000; King, 2005; Suwanbubha, 2010; Vendley, 2005; Hertog, 2010), a focus or reference to women of faith is difficult to find. It is important to explore personal meanings of peacebuilding in the light of gender expectation and social norms, so as to capture the different voices and moral choices of women of faith as agents of peace, which have often been marginalized (Gilligan, 1982:2; Kelly, 1963). How might women of faith deploy religious resources for peacebuilding? What gendered barriers and opportunities may exist for women of faith in peacebuilding?

### **Religion and women's social action for peace**

The role of religion in women's activism and social movements that characterize democratic transitions and governance has gained great interest in recent years. While utilizing their multiple identities, women have deployed religion as a resource to actively struggle for voice and negotiate their moral authority and social agency through a variety of religious actions and interpretations (Maher, 2007). In her comparative case study of Brazil and Chile, Macaulay identifies the existence of secular-religious cleavages that affect women's activism, voice and vote. (Macaulay, 2006). Similarly, Drogus and Stewart-Gambino show how through church-based and popular movements, Chilean religious women considered politically passive confronted the military state and were successful in bringing about change that restored democratic institutions (Drogus & Stewart-Gambino, 2005).

Examples can be found in history of women assenting and motivated by their faith to build peace. As early as the 1300's, saintly women like Catherine of Siena, also known as the Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church, had become a renowned peacemaker. She played a central role in reconciling warring parties of her native city and healing an international feud between Florence and the Holy See, as documented in her biographies and letters to the Pope and King of France (Siena, 2012). The spiritual resources that Catherine of Sienna employed include prayers, colloquies between the divine and human soul, dialogue, and hope in divine providence. Similarly, in the 1840's women leaders of the women's suffrage movements claimed those women's rights including the right for civic engagement and moral authority was inalienable and divinely ordained (Rutgers, 1997). One of the foremost leaders of the abolition movement and advocate of women's rights, Sojourner Truth, depended on prayer and fasting for inward light and spiritual strength to act (Gilbert, 1850). Rosa Parks, often referred to as the Mother of the civil rights movements for defying legally enforced segregation and demanding racial justice for African Americans, says that her activism relied on faith, courage, hope, prayer, determination, trust, fearlessness, spiritual beliefs and awareness of inalienable God-given dignity and rights for all human beings (Parks, 1994).

Additionally, women's religious activism is discussed in the documentary film titled *Acting on Faith: Women's New Religious Activism in America* (Antell, 2005). This film explores the lives and work of women of faith from 3 religious traditions—Hindu, Buddhist, and Islam— whose faith fuels their activism making them both religious and secular activists as they work to create new movements for change in the United States of America. For these women faith, activism and identity are deeply intertwined. They pioneer new religious activism by combining complex identities rather than choosing between them.

Similar patterns of leadership have been documented in women of faith across the world. In her forthcoming chapter on Muslim women negotiating peace in

Indonesia, Anwar argues that the women in Aceh ascribed their active involvement in work for peace to the inspiring memory of great female queens and to Islamic teachings about gender justice. Working within a conflict setting where women's access to formal politics and central government was limited, and religion was viewed as contributing to such restrictions; the women viewed Islam as a source of their identity and authority as peace builders. Even when subjected to physical, mental and sexual violence from the military and rebel groups, the women worked together with peace activists from faith-based organizations to meet the needs of the victims and resist the oppressive conflict. The women risked their own lives delivering food and essential services for victims and refugees in camps, and coped with the destruction of homes, killing of husbands and sons, and impoverished conditions for families and villages. The women used Islam as a tool for public activism and resistance because its platform of gender justice undergirded their mobility, courage, and endurance. Although different Muslim women interpreted the religious significance of their peacebuilding work differently, Islam was an overarching frame for peace that pervaded all aspects their life, including Sharia Law and underlying customs that regulate personal, family, and social relationships (Anwar, Forthcoming Chapter).

Similarly, women from different religions came together with male religious leaders and effectively played a mediation role in the conflict of Sierra Leone in 1997 (Religions for Peace, 2009; Turay, 2000; Ogega, 2011). Following two decades of violent conflict, a group of women of faith from the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone were among those that met with the Revolutionary United Front rebel group in successful efforts that led to peace talks and the return of child soldiers. This effort helped to advance complex negotiations, then at a critical point, that involved many partners, including government officials and regional and international intergovernmental bodies like ECOWAS and the United Nations. Over 50 children held hostage by the rebel groups were eventually released, and this led to more rigorous negotiation process between the rebel groups and government (Religions for Peace, 2009; Turay, 2000; Ogega, 2011).

The women who met with the rebel group acted within their multiple identities as authoritative community leaders, mothers, and as women of faith who worked collaboratively across faith lines for the common good. They demonstrated a moral vision and religious identity that legitimized their actions and provided a somewhat less threatening form of moral authority to the rebel group. Their peacebuilding actions and ideas appealed to the practical emotional and moral vision for family and community life, stressing mercy, hope, prayer, community reconciliation (Lederach, *Building Peace-Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, 1997) and the need to safeguard the wellbeing of children. The women used their gender identity as mothers and their religious identity as moral capital to involve the rebel leaders in a problem-solving discourse. They re-humanized the rebels saying, “You are our children,” appealing to them to free the child soldiers and envision an end to violence and return to normalcy. Their approach and demeanour disarmed the rebel group who in turn acknowledged that “You look like my mother” in this case countering messages of hate and violence and creating bridges for the peace agreement that was realized months later. The fact that the women came from different faith traditions gave their messages of reconciliation special force and significance (Ogega, 2011).

A similar case is captured in the documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* that shows the central role that women of faith played leading to the successful mediation of the conflict in Liberia that had lasted over a decade. With the leadership of Leymah Gbowee, market women of Christian and Islamic faiths mobilized together when peace talks were in near collapse and demanded for a peace agreement between the ruling government at that time and the rebels. The women of faith used songs, prayers, religious attire (dressed in white) and religious institutions to mobilize for action. They began their activism by mobilizing women in churches and mosques, and performed their actions through cultural idioms such as threatening to remove their clothes, and in secular spaces such as at the open fish market. The women did not get a place at the negotiating table but they still participated by forming human barricades at the negotiations where they demanded that a peace agreement be reached (Reticker, 2008). Despite

their contributions, the women were marginalized and their contributions were not rewarded in the formal processes of negotiation and peace-making. These women acted in faith, and did not hesitate to utilize their secular cultural identities and tactics of protest and resistance such as exposing a mother's nudity, which was culturally forbidden and considered a curse.

Similar activism is employed by women in the social movements and struggle to transform multiple forms of violence in post-coup Honduras (Maher M. A., forthcoming 2014). Within a context of impunity and public insecurity, women actively participate in social movements and protests to address violence including femicide, gang and criminal activity, sex and narco-trafficking, and police and military brutality. The Forum of Women for Life movement that they formed engaged various women with religious identity, particularly from the Roman Catholic Church, but was not a religious coalition. Yet it expressed a collective spirituality for social justice that facilitated the women's creative civic power. To reject the violence and commemorate the lives of victims, the women utilized spiritual spaces and practices by conducting monthly vigils in the central park in front of the Catholic cathedral, erecting temporary altars on the steps of the cathedral, and calling for justice through public proclamations. They contributed a lyrical, contemplative, and artistic dimension to the demonstrations using religious symbols and practices such as meditation bells, crosses, candles, flowers, song, poetry, silent contemplation and prayer. As Maher argues, their public street protests were secular—spontaneous, political, continuous, and transformative—but they also were a channel of spiritual expression, intentionally mirroring and giving new meaning to Christian practices such as altars, communal prayer, silence, song, meditation, proclamation and ritual.

Maher distinguishes the efforts of the women activism with a Christian identity with those of indigenous and Afro-descendent communities which incorporated a clear analysis of racial, ethnic and ecological justice based on a history of colonization, economic exploitation and enslavement. Indigenous women's leadership in Honduras moved beyond gender justice to protect collective civil,



political, economic, ecological, social and cultural rights that had been historically denied. They created national platforms where they demanded transformation of rights of indigenous communities, with respect to their lands, culture, or natural resources. They led protests such as the “Protest of 214 drums” in April 2011 where they women carried out spiritual cleansing in the streets of Tegucigalpa, commemorating 214 years since the Garífuna peoples had come to Honduras. In all their efforts, indigenous women’s activism incorporated indigenous spirituality whose ethical framework for public policy was grounded in a worldview of ancestral wisdom of “Living Well” with other human beings, nature, ancestors and the spirits. Their activism displayed the spiritual source of their political strength by utilizing indigenous spiritual practices of collective deliberation processes that included burning incense, trembling, invoking the energy and orientation of ancestors (male and female), drumming and ceremonial invocations, using shells, singing, dancing and performing rituals of healing for nature and community (Maher M. A., forthcoming 2014).

Indigenous Zande women of Central Africa are said to mediate conflict by incorporating spiritual and cultural beliefs on the power of elderly women to bestow curses on evildoers (Mathey, Dejan, Deballe, Sodio, Koulaninga, & Moga, 2003). Indigenous religions of the Zande peoples accord sacred respect to elders, particularly elderly women who are given prominence in mediating conflict. It is therefore widely believed that if an elderly woman from the Zande community imposed herself between warring parties, they had to stop fighting. And whenever violence escalated or a conflict reached a stalemate, Zande women would pronounce curses in spoken word as they exposed their nakedness before the combatants imploring them to stop the bloodshed and pursue peace. If the fighters did not act upon such intervention and continued fighting, it was believed that they would suffer punishment and misfortunes from ancestral spirits and God for disrespecting the women and the will of the people (Mathey and others, 2003, p. 41).

Obviously, the examples above do not reflect an exhaustive review of religious

resources and the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding. Nonetheless, the review provides sufficient insight into how women of faith deploy religious resources to induce social and political change and promote peacebuilding, and the gendered barriers that they face in doing so. In this study, I consider religion as a resource for women of faith in peacebuilding, drawing from four major categories that have emerged from the review of literature in this section: 1) moral values; 2) beliefs and practices; 3) motivation and agency; and 4) spiritual relationships for religious-social action. These religious resources are delineated in table 6 below.

Religious resources	
Moral values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious force that creates within individuals a sense of moral obligation to adhere to societal demands</li> <li>• Religious moral ideals seeking to reconcile worldly imperfections with extraordinary power of divine goodness</li> <li>• Institutionalized religious warrants</li> <li>• Scriptural values and teachings that proscribe violence and promote moral ideals for peace</li> <li>• Religious practices, norms, beliefs and teachings that compel or sanction people of faith to take moral action.</li> </ul>
Religious beliefs and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A unified system of sacred beliefs and practices that form an expression of social life resulting in societal cohesion of united moral communities</li> <li>• Beliefs about God, the supernatural/transcendent, environment and human behaviour</li> <li>• Sacred texts/sayings, scripture, proverbs, worship - meanings and practice</li> <li>• Myths and symbols on creation, life and death, and human existence from which individuals and groups find meaning in life.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symbolic power, collective consciousness of the transcendent</li> <li>• Prayer and ritual as tools for peace and spiritual support to maintain struggle</li> </ul>
Religious motivation and agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious commitment and motivation provides meaning reassuring life, responding to people’s needs, and relieving suffering (in a world that is troubled and full of suffering).</li> <li>• Conviction and attitudes motivated by religious values and meanings of life.</li> <li>• Self-sanctions of personal understandings of faith provide intrinsic religious motivations and helping create visions of peace rooted in religious experience</li> <li>• Yearnings for wholeness and transcendence, captivated by the lure of the divine and the all-consuming, all-transforming fire of spirit</li> <li>• Agency: Personal spiritual meanings, personal moral values, personal moral voices/choices of women</li> </ul>
Spiritual relationships and religious-social action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious communities that enable social action (congregations, groups, institutions, social networks)</li> <li>• Spiritual relations: with other humans, environment, the divine, spirits or ancestors (living and dead)</li> <li>• Visions for inner peace and transcendent action – for the common good, Spiritual/inner peace</li> </ul>
Table 6: Religious resources for peacebuilding	

The question remains as to how women of faith deploy these religious resources for peacebuilding. What opportunities and barriers might they face in doing so? I apply the conceptualization of religion as a social system of faith, which guides, motivates, enables action and provide adherents with meaning and purpose in life (Weber, 1968; Weber, 2001; Durkheim, 2001). Religion’s transcendent capacity,

sacred spiritual practices and visions for maintaining harmonious relations with the cosmos are particularly relevant to this study. Therefore, the meanings of peace incorporate a faith perspective that emphasizes the inner peace with the spirit within that brings true peace in the world with other humans and with nature. While gender-aware peace focuses on egalitarian relations between women and men, faith perspectives on peace integrates maintaining right relations with the transcendent (divine, God or other), in harmony with oneself, the community the universe and the cosmic totality including dead ancestors and spirits (Durkheim, 2001). The emphasis is on a spirituality of peace, a way of harmonious living that maintains the interaction between the social, political, economic and spiritual and that brings individuals face to face with themselves to confront inner wars and find peace within (Chittister, 1998). Such spiritual peace may incorporate cultural bases ingrained in cultural concepts such as the philosophy of African ubuntu—community sharing based on the notion of belongingness “I am because we are” (Cutter, 2009).

My study makes “women of faith” subjects of inquiry, on how they deploy religious resources in peacebuilding, and the gendered barriers and opportunities they may experience. I approach this study with the view that women of faith are gendered actors who may be guided or sometimes constrained by societal values, morals and ideals. Women’s faith identity is neither essentially static nor separate; it is in dynamic interaction, relationship and/or influence with other identities. Women of faith may at times act as secular women in complementarity, difference or possible tension. Women of faith do not have to choose from their multiple identities to play their peacebuilding roles—they may privilege some of their identities or utilize all simultaneously as needed. I focus on their different experiences and roles arising from their heterogeneous composition, their diversity of religious beliefs, their multiple identities as well as their individualism. I assume that women of faith as actors in peacebuilding may be both individual and collective entities. They may act within religious organization or outside of it in as long as they engage faith as a foundation for their actions. Their actions may be located within unequal social systems where they have to keep the rules and

regulations emerging from institutional bargaining. They may influence the processes of peacebuilding while operating within their multiple gender identities and gender relations.

This review provides a backdrop for this study to investigate how Maasai and Gusii women of faith of southwest Kenya can deploy religious resources for peacebuilding, and the particular barriers and opportunities that exist in this context.

### ***THE CONFLICT TRAJECTORY IN KENYA***

This section sets the context for the current study by introducing the study area and exploring existing literature on continuities of the conflicts in Kenya from pre-colonial period to the contemporary period.

#### **Introduction to Transmara and Gucha districts of south-western Kenya**

##### **The Transmara district**

Transmara district is located in the south-western part of rift valley province. It is made up of five administrative divisions; Kilgoris, Pirrar, Lolgorian, Keyian and Kirindon. The Maasai are the main occupants of the area. Its total area is approximately 2900 km<sup>2</sup>. The district borders Gucha, Nyamira and Bomet districts to the North, Narok district to the east, Migori and Kuria districts to the West, and Tanzania to the south. The population was estimated to be 560,951 persons in the 2009 census (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2009). The district is divided into the highlands, which lie between 2200m and 2500m above sea level and the plateau, which rises from 1500m to 2200m above sea level. The district is suitable for livestock production as well as arable agriculture. Currently the dominant activities include beef livestock rearing and maize farming. Other enterprises where potential exists include dairy farming, quarrying and mining, sand harvesting, bee keeping and cash cropping.

### **The Maasai ethnic community**

The Maasai are a Nilotic ethnic group of semi-nomadic people located in Kenya and northern Tanzania. They are well known because of their distinctive customs and dress code and also because they are found near major tourist attractions like national parks and game reserves. The estimated population, according to the 2009 population census, was 841,622 (KNBS, 2009). The Maasai are mainly pastoralists although some of them practice small-scale agriculture to supplement their diet. They also trade items with their neighbours in order to have access to products they do not produce.

The Maasai are said to have originated from the lower Nile valley north of Lake Turkana and began moving southwards around the 15<sup>th</sup> century. As at the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, they had occupied the northern part of Kenya and southern Tanzania. The Maasai community is highly patriarchal in nature. The men are the key decision-makers while the women are subordinate and in some cases, are equated to children (Kenya, 1985).

The Maasai traditional religion is monotheistic. They believe in a God called Enkai or Engai, a single deity with a dual nature. Depending on the nature he takes, Enkai is given several other local names. The central human figure among the Maasai is the Laibon. He is believed to be closest to the spirit world and hence acts as a diviner, a healer, and a prophet. The Laibon is highly respected and adored by the members of society (Kenya, 1985). The Maasai also practice modern religions, predominantly Christianity.

### **The Gucha district**

Gucha District is a district in Nyanza province. It is also called by the name: South Kisii District or Ogembo District. The district has three constituencies: South Mugirango Bomachoge and Bobasi Gucha District which covers an area of 667 square kilometres with most of the land above 1800m above sea level. The district borders Kisii Central to the North, Migori district to the west and Transmara

to the South (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Agriculture is the main mode of subsistence. Apart from numerous small family plantations, there are large sugarcane fields. The population is mostly Gusii, but the district borders Maasai land to the southeast (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

### **The Gusii ethnic community**

According to Maxon (1989) the Gusii of south-western Kenya are one of the largest ethnic groups in East Africa. The highlands they inhabit are ranked among the most productive lands of Kenya in the production of both cash crops and food crops. The highlands are considered one of the most important agricultural regions of Kenya.

The Gusii were colonized much later than other ethnic communities in Kenya, and their experience under British rule was quite different. Because their resistance lasted longer, they are said to have faced harsher brutalities under colonial rule (Maxon, 1989).

Ochieng'i (1971) suggests that the Gusii are a small Bantu tribe that occupies most of the south-west portion of Kenya highlands. Between them and Lake Victoria is the Nilotic Luo. To the East and South-East they are bordered by the Kipsigis and the Maasai. The highlands are also one of the most densely populated and fertile areas of Kenya. The Gusii constitute the sixth largest ethnic group, comprising about seven per cent of the national population.

The Gusii also do a lot of domestic farming, and supply their communities and the rest of Kenya with food. Traditional foods grown by the Gusii include maize, millet, sorghum, yams, pumpkins and green vegetables. Bananas are a popular fruit in Kisii land and are often found growing along the constantly flowing riverbeds. As a result of the intensive farming that takes place on the densely populated Kisii land, very little free land remains. Besides farming, the Gusii tribe also raises livestock on their crowded farmlands. Besides agriculture, they are also popular for the soapstone carving and basketry.

The Maasai also practice modern religions, predominantly Christianity. The Gusii traditionally believed in one God called *Engoro*. Today, most Gusii people are Christians, mainly Roman Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists. However, they also believe in African religious practices including sorcery, witchcraft and the beliefs on ancestral spirits. Both women and men serve in various leadership roles as sorcerers, diviners or traditional healers. The Gusii value their family cohesion and will in most cases be found living in close-knit family groups.

According to Ochieng'i (1971), the Gusii traditionally inhabited the south-western highlands of Kenya, covering an area slightly more than 750 square miles at the turn of the century. The region falls roughly between 0° 30' and 1° 00' South Latitude and 34°30' East Longitude. The Gusii land is essentially a highland area, ranging in elevation from approximately 4,500 to 7,000 feet above sea level. Being a Bantu group, the Gusii did not originally occupy the highlands but rather, they migrated into the region. Their migration resulted in conflicts between the original habitats of the area, the Kipsigis.

### **Historical context: ethnic conflict in the south-western region of Kenya**

The different ethnic groups that occupy south-western region of Kenya (the Gusii, Maasai, Kipsigis, Kalenjin and Luo) practice different modes of subsistence farming and livestock keeping (Fukua & Markakis, 1994). For instance, the Gusii people practice agriculture, the Maasai are pastoralists, and the Kipsigis are agro-pastoralists. These communities are located in rural villages characterized by scarce resources and limited mobility.

The conflicts among different ethnic communities in Kenya have a long history, spanning the period prior to the establishment of the British Colony to the present independent political state. Like many other groups, the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities of South-western Kenya have had intermittent conflicts for decades.



Ochieng'i (1971) argues that the conflict between the Maasai and the Gusii started towards the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Ochieng'i, 1971). Their first conflict occurred along the Kipchoriat valley in the present day Kericho district. The Maasai attempted to raid Gusii's homesteads for cattle, leading to the break-out of war, the death of the Maasai leader, and the retreat of the Kisii back to their previous settlement at Kabianga. For years following these attacks, the Gusii were on the defensive against the Maasai whom they considered a well-organized warrior group and determined enemy. The Maasai continued raiding Gusii homesteads, but the raids were carried out at night rather than during the day. To counter the enemy, the Gusii embarked on the 'Bur system', which involved digging wide and deep trenches around their villages. At the edge of the trenches, they would plant the quick growing 'Emekubo' tree, along which they would strew heavy acacia thorns. This worked for a while to keep the attackers at bay. With time, the Gusii came up with a more lasting solution to the attacks. They constructed forts around their villages and were able to keep the Maasai away until the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The arrival of the Kipsigis towards the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had tremendous and far reaching consequences for the already settled Maasai and Gusii people. The Kipsigis attacked both tribes. The Maasai retaliated. This led to more attacks from the Kipsigis leading to the displacement of the Maasai. When the Maasai were defeated, they turned their attention to the Gusii, who were supposedly weaker than them. They attacked the Gusii and forced them out of the area in less than a generation (Ochieng'i, 1971).

More recent accounts indicate conflict between the Gusii and the Maasai in the 1980s and the 1990s. Some of the most violent forms of violence are said to have occurred in 1989. At that time, it is reported that the Maasai politicians deployed a contingent of over 200 armed Administration Police to evict many non-Maasai people who had settled in Narok area in Rift Valley province of Kenya and owned farms and families for generations (Republic of Kenya, 1999). Violent assaults

were witnessed, farms destroyed and homes set on fire. The Gusii people were among those evicted and displaced.

In the period of 1990s, the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai escalated into extreme violence. Maasai witnesses give accounts of the violent war waged against them by the neighbouring Gusii ethnic community including violent raids and theft of Maasai livestock; the “robbing” (rape) of Maasai women; the burning of houses; and violent killings (Republic of Kenya, 1999). Gusii witnesses give accounts of similar violent activities. There are reports in the Akiwumi report commissioned by the government of an unforgettable massacre at Nyabitunwa trading centre in October 1997, where many Gusii people were killed by the Maasai with alleged support from the government security forces. There are also reports of armed administration policemen supervising the illegal harvesting of food crops by the Maasai from farms leased by the Gusii community. Also during this period, several Gusii people who were residents in Maasai land were forcibly evicted and transported by the use of government vehicles (Republic of Kenya, 1999).

### **Conflict context: Pre-colonial and colonial Kenya**

Many scholars argue that the root causes of the conflicts in Africa are not mere ethnic disagreements. Rather, these conflicts are embedded in socio-economic inequalities and political struggles spanning pre- and post-colonial periods (Achebe, 1975:83; Bienien, 1974; Lunyigo, 1989:39; Nyongeo, 1987; Mboya, 1963; Zartman, 1985). Even when the wars appear to involve two or more ethnic communities, the conflicts are a reflection of historical injustices and inequalities and/or national political actions that exacerbate existing tensions between states, religious or ethnic groups, clans or lineages.

As illustrated by the description above of the 18<sup>th</sup> century conflict between the Maasai, Kipsigis and Kisii, there was periodic conflict between different ethnic communities in the part of East Africa that was to become Kenya prior to the

imposition of *Pax Britanica* (United States Agency for International Development, 1997). Nilotic pastoralist groups such as the Kwaavi, Seguju and Maasai engaged in livestock raids and violent attacks in the Rift Valley with each other and with Bantu ethnic agricultural communities. By 1920, the British had established their colony in Kenya and exerted absolute power and control over economic, political, administrative and judicial institutions, except in the Northern Frontier District, which remained in a special security category right up to independence (International Crisis Group, 2010; United States Agency for International Development, 1997). Although the British administration retained some forms of indigenous legal institutions under the indirect rule policy, they delimited their powers, organized them along ethnic lines and gradually eliminated local institutions and customs and replaced them with English notions of order, law and statutory codes (Hasham, 2010, p. 225).

The British colonial rule also imposed a distorted land ownership structure that reserved arable and good pasture land for white settlers, leading to large white-only settlements which came to be known as white highlands (Rutten, 1997, p. 77). The British colony implemented a major land reform in Kenya in the 1950s that was based on western ideas of individual freehold tenure, and at the same time allowed for registration of group titles, especially in semi-arid areas of the country (Rutten, 1997, p. 71). Ethnic communities such as the Maasai who were pastoralists lost huge amounts of land to white settlers under colonialism. The Maasai were displaced and confined to reserves as pasture land under the 1904 and 1911 treaties. The colonial powers intensified agricultural activity and introduced land title deeds by removing traditional tenure where in the past land had been communally owned (Rutten, 1997, p. 76).

These conflicts led to various violent resistances from such groups as the Nandi and the Giriama and smaller revolts from the Kamba, Taita, and others. The British used brutal force to suppress violence and contain conflict. They also imposed laws and curfews, such as employing the main Mombasa-Nairobi road as a *de facto* no-man's land separating the feuding Kamba and Maasai.

The British colonial rule did not succeed entirely in suppressing resistance. One example of a widely documented resistance movement is the Mau Mau rebellion that began in 1952 and lasted nearly five years. The Mau Mau rebellion was directed against the British colonialists to recover land lost to the White settlers and, by extension, to bring British rule itself to an end (Rutten, 1997). It was also directed against the Kikuyu people who were collaborating with the colonial state and economy. The Mau Mau rebellion against British rule resulted in 1952-59 state of emergency, ultimately suppressed with many casualties and reports of serious human rights abuses (International Crisis Group, 2010). During this period, African political participation was increasing across nations and international focus was on ending colonial rule. This led to the first direct African elections to Legislative Council held in 1957.

The conflict that Kenya experienced during the colonial period may be described as negative peace. Galtung's peacebuilding theory suggest that negative peace is not desirable, because although there may be an absence of organized collective violence, it thrives on unequal and systematic exploitation of a large group of people by a few powerful individuals or groups (Galtung, 1967, pp. 12-14). Colonial rule operated on a feudal system that used divide and rule techniques to ensure that ethnic communities did not have opportunities to come together and join forces to effectively oppose colonial powers. It took away land from communities and reserved it for white settlements, displaced indigenous people and rendered some landless, and exploited the labour of people to increase agricultural productivity for the colonial economy (Rutten, 1997). Colonial rule also marginalized, undermined and rejected indigenous forms of communal systems of justice claiming that they were repugnant to the English principles of good governance, justice and equity (Hasham, 2010, p. 239).

### **Conflict trajectory in post-independent Kenya**

Kenya got its independence from the British colony in 1963. The international political context following Kenya's independence was a volatile one with the cold

war and new nationalist movements in African states that had won freedom. As Oyugi reports, barely one year into independence, the politics of the cold war began to impact the political climate in Kenya, contributing to ideological polarization between the political left and the ruling party, the Kenya African National Union. The left received support from the Soviet Union and the right received support from the West, heightening political tensions and leading to a fraction in the ruling party in 1966 and the creation of a new opposition party, the Kenya People's Union (Oyugi, 2000).

Some political leaders in Kenya advocated nationalist movements and Pan Africanism create self-governed African independent nations grounded on African systems and cultures (Mboya, 1963). Meanwhile, following independence, the transfer of land formerly owned by white settlers was made primarily to Kenyan elite farmers (Rutten, 1997, p. 77). For land that was not yet allocated, Kenyan land use policy focused on its adjudication and registration, replacing customary land rights by individual tenure arrangements. The rationale was that this would lead to economic development, as individual owners would use the land as collateral for loans for long-term investments. Unfortunately, this created a group of landless people, as even more land become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few Kenyan elite families constituted particularly of businessmen, politicians and civil servants (Rutten, 1997).

Oyugi suggests that in rural areas, Kenya experienced intermittent conflicts between different ethnic communities. The conflicts were mainly over grazing land between the Maasai and her neighbours in the rift valley and southwest Kenya. At the national level, the country experienced two attempted *coup d' états*: the first one was plotted in 1971 but was stopped before it took effect, and the second one was carried out in 1982 and required the fighting of the various components of the armed forces before the coup was finally suppressed (Oyugi, 2000).

## **Kenya's recent political militancy and electoral violence**

The most significant phenomenon in the conflict trajectory in Kenya over the last two decades is political militancy and violence witnessed primarily around elections. A report by the United States Agency for International Development indicates that the 1992 and 1997 elections saw major attacks on groups opposed to the ruling party. The attacks were largely ignored by security forces and unpunished by the judicial system. Some attacks were aimed at entire communities, while others were aimed at individual candidates, activists, and businessmen-supporters. The violence sometimes provoked counter-attacks (United States Agency for International Development, 1997; International Commission of Jurists, 2000). The appearance of localized, semi-political, largely informal militias first surfaced during the return to multiparty politics in 1992 as part of an effort to counter political liberalization and reform movements through violence. Over a dozen militia groups are said to exist, the most prominent of which is the Nairobi-based *Jeshi la Mzee* ("Army of the Old Man"). Several of these groups are associated with individual politicians in the ruling party hard-line factions, but some are associated with politicians from opposition parties (Kenya Human Rights Commission, 1998; Brown, 2001). The political militancy and violence experienced following the general elections of 2007 has been described as the worst humanitarian crisis in Kenya since independence (IRIN, 2008). Analysts reported that inflammatory and divisive messages along ethnic lines were distributed widely through songs or statements broadcast on radio, television, party rallies, billboards, posters, leaflets, or mass emails and phone texts (IRIN, 2008). Hundreds of homes were burnt, over 1500 were killed and over 250,000 were displaced. Incidents of sexual violence were reported to be very high, particularly for women and girls who had been displaced (IRIN, 2008).

Although the post-election violence has been widely described as ethnic and tribal in nature, some claim that basic economic inequalities are the root cause of the violence. Scholars note that ethnicity has been manipulated in Africa's historical and contemporary socio-economic and political economy to cause divisions relating to land ownership, territorial boundaries and political values. Some argue

that conflicts relating to political values have increased following independence for African states that underwent colonial rule, due to hegemonic administrative political regimes based on manipulation from the political elite (Chazan et al, 1992:193). Ethnicity is viewed as a scapegoat rather than the root cause of the problem. The current study considers the viewpoint that ethnicity could offer potential opportunities for peace within a framework of communal solidarity and unity in diversity (Mboya, 1963; Bienien, 1974:131).

According to Oucho (2002), the central rationale of the violence and conflict in this region is to maintain the political and economic status quo in the region during the run up to the general elections in 1992 and 1997. He posits that land and interethnic hostilities singularly or together could not have led to the atrocities and conflicts found in the south-western region. To him, the problem is political manipulation that is further compounded by laissez-faire system of land sale and allocation which often takes no account of communal tenure and is deeply flawed due to corrupt allocation and registration practices (Oucho, 2002). The main motivation behind the violence was to influence voting in favour of the incumbent. Until 1991, post-independence Kenya was characterized by one party rule and excessive centralization of power. In such a scenario, the leader and group who capture the state presidency, have control of an enormous amount of resources and thus can reward supporters, provide for group members, and create barriers and opportunities to entry into political and economic markets. Violence in the south western region was part of such a strategy (Oucho, 2002).

These and many more attacks that took place between the people of the south-western region of Kenya act as a basis for the conflicts that still plague the region. For instance, in the 2008 post-elections violence, a similar scenario was presented whereby members of different ethnic groups attempted to push out any immigrants in what came to be called 'ethnic cleansing'. The conflicts were mainly over land and leadership positions (ICG, 2010). Some argue that the conflicts in the south-western region are mainly political in that they occur between communities that support different political movements and ethnic in that they

occur between ethnic groups as they struggle for natural resources (Maxon, 1989). Similarly, according to Fukua and Markakis, conflict in Africa is mainly caused by intense competition among groups and individuals for the scarce resources. Such conditions are the product of historical inequalities and divisions, which can be said to have set the stage for the current conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of South-western Kenya (Fukua & Markakis, 1994).

There is no mention of the roles of women of faith in the literature on the conflict trajectories in Kenya, and hardly any analysis of the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya. It is difficult to find a gender analysis of barriers and opportunities that exist for women of faith in peacebuilding, and there is hardly any reference to the potential role of religion as a resource for peacebuilding.



## CHAPTER 3

### GENDERED BARRIERS AFFECTING THE ROLES OF MAASAI AND GUSII WOMEN OF FAITH IN PEACEBUILDING

#### Introduction

One of the significant findings of this study is that gendered barriers and opportunities in the conflict context affect the roles of both Gusii and Maasai women of faith in peacebuilding. This chapter discusses data generated by this study on the gendered barriers in the conflict context and peacebuilding arena that affect the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding. I focus on four barriers emerging from the study.

The first barrier is that women have limited space, safety and voice to participate in peacebuilding relating to livestock, land or political participation, all of which are major sources of conflict and peace. Women's roles in peacebuilding in these areas were historically constrained by various social-cultural, structural, legal and practical barriers. Norms do not enable women to own land or have the legitimacy to discuss land disputes; women are not allowed to raid or own livestock, and therefore the perception is that they have no voice in livestock-based peacebuilding; and women's participation in politics is limited due to social norms and gender roles. In addition, peacebuilding roles relating to land, livestock and political negotiations were viewed by participants as public roles in peacebuilding where women had no space or place. The second barrier is that manhood identity formation institutionalizes a culture of violence that excludes women from leadership roles in peacebuilding such as through village councils of elders. To be a Gusii or Maasai man is to be a good warrior; expected to safeguard, protect and control livestock, land, territory and ethnic lineage and wellbeing. There isn't really an alternative form of being. Manhood identity formation rituals included male circumcision as a rite of passage from childhood to manhood and ended with the formation of clans of elders who served in village councils and border peace committees. The visibility and status of women of faith in peacebuilding was therefore very limited. The third barrier is the prevalence of the use of rape and

gender-based violence as weapons of war. This was considered by participants as a major security threat to women that not only limited their mobility but also silenced, traumatized and intimidated women peace builders. It was considered a social death for women (and men) survivors. The fourth barrier is gender-based othering—the notion of constructing “otherness” on the basis of sex—emerged as a central barrier structuring the roles of Maasai and Gusii women of faith in peacebuilding. As a primary formulation of “otherness,” women were perceived as subordinate insignificant others, which resulted in violence against them with impunity, exclusion and a persistent lower status in peacebuilding.

I now present and discuss these barriers in detail, utilizing the rich narratives of participants, combining excerpts from interview data with relevant citations of the literature as it relates to my research question on the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding, and how they deploy religious resources.

### **Women’s limited space, safety and voice**

I found that women have limited space, safety and voice to participate in peacebuilding relating to livestock, land or political elections, all of which were identified by participants as major sources of conflict and peace. Women’s roles in peacebuilding in these areas were historically constrained by various social-cultural, structural, legal and practical barriers. Generally participants indicated that Gusii and Maasai women were not allowed to own land and so they did not have the legitimacy to discuss land disputes; women were not allowed to raid or own livestock, and therefore the perception was that they had no voice in livestock-based peacebuilding; and women’s participation in politics was limited due to social norms and the burden of care roles. In addition, peacebuilding roles relating to land, livestock and political negotiations were viewed by participants as public roles where women had no legitimacy to engage. There are parallels with the literature where women were excluded from fundamental roles pertaining to economic rehabilitation strategies, land reform, electoral processes and public negotiations (Sorensen, 1998; Reychler & Paffenholz, 2001; Strickland & Duvvury, 2003). Participants in my study suggested that both Maasai and Gusii women

were excluded from formal dialogue and peace negotiations convened and led by councils of elders and “border committees” or political rallies, political party negotiations, and public meetings called “barazas”. The institutional structures of these peacebuilding processes simply did not accept women. Women had no rights over land, livestock or politics, all of which were intertwined. Additionally, social norms and expectations did not accept and/or entertain women’s roles in such public arenas. Tense conflict situations combined with gender norms and attitudes that shunned political participation over roles of care within the family also limited women’s participation.

### Livestock

Most participants (39 out of 55) said that livestock was a major source of conflict between the Gusii and Maasai, and women were excluded from livestock –based negotiations. Livestock raids often generated cyclical waves of violence that victimized women. Related attempts to restore raided livestock largely excluded women, and often re-victimized them. I attempted to represent the cycles of violence generated from livestock raids in figure 1 below.

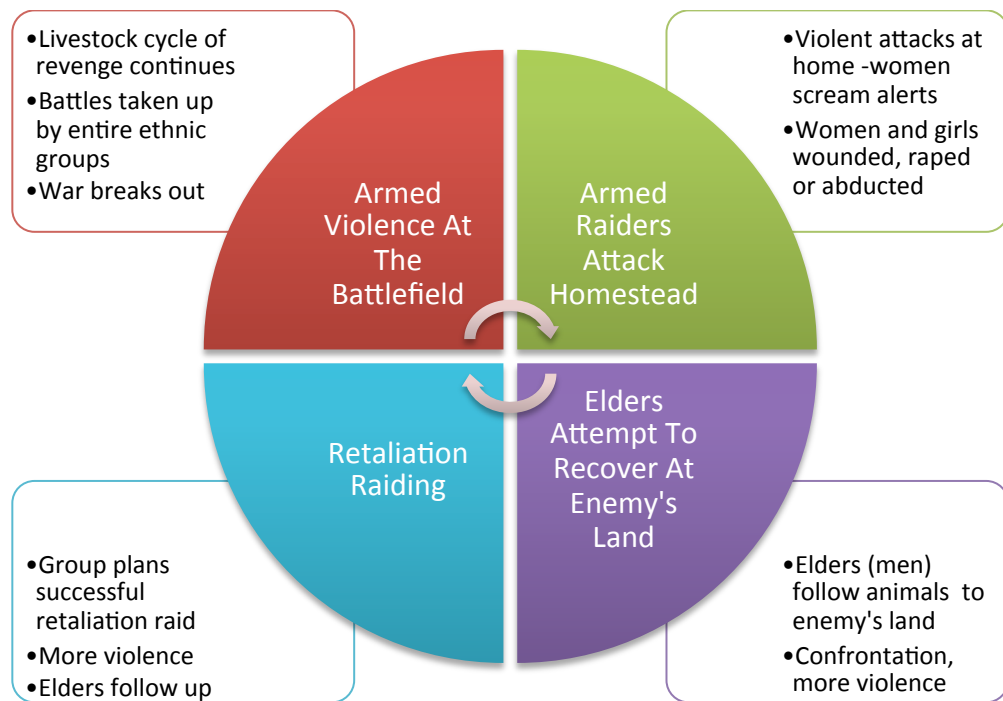


Figure 1: Cyclical violence generated from livestock raids

As illustrated in figure 1 above, the primary actors in livestock raids were men, serving either as warriors, raiders or in the council of livestock negotiating elders. Women played some roles in screaming to alert the community of imminent danger, but they were seen as primarily victims in such violence with no place for peacebuilding.

There were three major reasons why livestock conflicts had prominence and were a major source of concern. Firstly, livestock was a major source of income for both the Maasai and Gusii communities. The livestock produce meat, milk, skin and manure all of which are utilized for economic purposes. For both communities, livestock had a power for traction; therefore direct marketing of livestock for cash was a common practice. For example, cattle would be sold at the market centres to meet the educational needs of a male child. Most trade relations between the Maasai and Gusii were based on sales or purchases of livestock, and sometimes livestock markets were conflict hotspots with outbreaks of violence. Livestock are held as an investment for credit and savings and, therefore, are an important source of economic advancement and prestige. Ownership of livestock is inevitably linked to ownership of land, which is a means of their production. But also men may sell livestock to purchase land. Only men were socially considered as responsible for the sale or purchase of animals such as cattle and goats. However, women were allowed to sell small quantities of livestock produce such as milk to buy household food and non-food items like kerosene and soap.

Secondly, both communities depended on livestock for livelihoods. Like land, Maasai and Gusii rural households depended on livestock as a source of food production and household nutrition. As part of household nutritional value, livestock enabled families to directly use products such as milk and milk products for nutritional value, and to utilize products such as manure for household food production such as production of vegetables. Women seemed to have social

control in utilizing livestock resources such as milk for household food and nutrition.

Thirdly, for the Maasai and Gusii communities, livestock was one of the most prime markers of prestige, a symbol of wealth and social wellbeing. The payment of dowry for marriage was widely practiced among the Gusii and Maasai, and livestock was a key asset to meet this social-economic need. As suggested during a key informant interview with a Maasai clan elder,

“When a Maasai young man has grown up to the age of marrying, he has an obligation to get some cows in order for the father to include the son’s contribution to the family’s obligation to pay dowry. Young Maasai men who cannot afford a cow find themselves raiding livestock in order to prepare for marriage, which is considered a very essential but expensive stage in life.” (KI – MCE: 04, interviewed 28/08/2010)

Like the Maasai, the Gusii still believe in dowry payment for marriage of women, and so cattle may be offered directly as dowry or sold for cash payments of dowry. Ownership of livestock was considered by both communities as a measure of household and societal wellbeing, and for individual men as a measure of manhood. The more livestock a man owned the more likelihood that they would have access to economic resources, be able to marry, achieve higher status and serve in the council of elders.

Hence, both the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities strove to increase livestock productivity and in turn ensure food produce, generate cash income and build assets for their survival and wellbeing. In turn, the major drivers of livestock-based conflicts were economic, livelihoods, and social-cultural factors. Men emerged as the only visible conflict parties and peacebuilding actors in this arena. Although women were said to undertake roles relating to livestock management, they faced

major barriers in controlling livestock assets, decision-making and participating in livestock-based peacebuilding roles. The barriers were embedded in structural factors of lack of ownership and unequal gender division of labour relating to livestock management and production. In order to examine this further, it is necessary to explore the patterns of livestock production and management specific to each ethnic community, and their implications on ethnic and gender relations and roles.

The Gusii in Nyangusu area are smallholders who own only a few livestock. They raise their livestock in a mixed farming system that integrates livestock production with agricultural farming. On the other hand, the Maasai livestock systems are more complex than the Gusii ones. Maasai typically own large herds of livestock: cattle, goats and sheep. In both cases, typically, rural Gusii and Maasai women undertake primary responsibilities for the care and production of livestock. With the help of older children, Gusii women take primary responsibilities for feeding the animals typically from maize crop residues, banana stocks, or native Napier grass. Animals also graze on fallow land or browse on homestead hedgerows. Some Gusii families lease land in Maasai land where cattle are taken for grazing. For the Maasai, because they tend to have larger pieces of land than the Gusii, livestock is often grazed on farmland. Smallholders follow similar patterns like those among the Gusii for feeding. Women from both communities are also responsible for management of natural water resources for livestock, most of which are shared between the two ethnic communities. Although men play some roles in health-related needs of livestock, Gusii and Maasai women are also responsible for the health needs of livestock, ensuring that animals have medicines, salt and nutritious food. Women are also responsible for milking of the cows and for Maasai the goats as well. It is also a common practice among the Maasai to have women and girls undertake roles in public grazing, which are uncommon among the Gusii people. When conflict escalates to violence, most men and young men took responsibilities for fighting at the battlefield, or migrated for security. This increased the workload and insecurities of women as they had to take responsibilities of all livestock-related activities normally handled by men and

boys, such as grazing. Access to water sources also became insecure because water resources are located in the community and shared between the two ethnic groups. With the taboos on women's mobility in territorial spaces during conflict, and with the escalation of rape and gender-based violence, these roles place women at greater risk of violence and insecurity.

In war as well as peacetime, women are indeed the primary care givers and protectors of livestock. They also have social control over its management and production. Women perform all the day to day activities related to caring, feeding, cleaning, health and production of livestock. Despite their primary roles in livestock care and production, Gusii and Maasai women have limited control or ownership over livestock, particularly cattle and goats. Gender divisions require that only men can own livestock, livestock products and related assets such as land that sustain livestock production. The women are excluded based on institutional norms and long-standing rights governing livestock and land ownership. This exclusion determines the socio-economic position of women, and influences their status in livestock-based peacebuilding.

The nature of livestock-based peacebuilding undertaken by the Gusii and Maasai communities relies on council of elders constituted of only men. Almost all participants (53 out of 55) suggested that generally women in the Maasai and Gusii communities did not participate in livestock committees that discussed raids and return of livestock, neither did they have the social permission to follow-up raided livestock, or serve in dialogues regarding political violence or territorial matters. Women also did not serve as warriors in either of these communities and therefore would not be envoys whenever there were negotiations between *Chinkororo* and *Moran*, the two major warrior groups. Such peacebuilding does not account for the roles of women in livestock management and production; neither does it pay attention to the centrality of livestock to livelihoods and household nutritional sustenance.

## Land

Land was said to be one of the major causes of protracted conflict between the Gusii and Maasai (53 out of 55 participants). Participants suggested that historical factors had contributed to hatred and contestations over land that often escalated to violent attacks. A majority of the participants (49 out of 55) suggested that women did not participate in negotiations and peacebuilding roles relating to land-based conflicts. Although these participants did not say that women were incapable of participating in land-based peacebuilding, they suggested those societal attitudes, norms and perceptions limited women's roles in matters relating to land disputes and peacebuilding. This was suggested in the remarks of the two participants who insisted that Gusii and Maasai women had no space and voice in public matters including land disputes and resolutions (KI – GFW: 01, Interviewed 19/08/2010; FG – MM: 40, Interviewed 29/07/2010).

There are historical factors on changes in land tenure and land use systems that have contributed to the exclusion of women in land-based conflicts and peacebuilding. A major threat of colonial rule was land encroachments and displacement of indigenous communities, which participants said led to ethnic and intra-ethnic divides and contestations. When Kenya became a British colony in 1920, a feudal system was introduced where indigenous people became landless tenants who offered permanent services such as agricultural labour while the British colony assumed all right to land ownership and control (Ogendo, 1991, p. 54). Apparently the British colonial rule's imposition of a distorted land ownership structure that reserved arable and good pasture land for white settlers (Rutten, 1997, p. 77) affected the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities as well. Participants shared that British Colonial rule displaced both the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities forcefully taking over productive land and setting it out only for white settlers. According to a Gusii elder, the Gusii people were displaced as the British colonial government forcefully acquired their land to establish white highlands in what is now known as the Kisii Settlement Scheme (KI – GLC: 03, Interviewed 28/08/2010). Indigenous Gusii people who were displaced from



various areas resettled around Gucha Nyangusu. This land became the Gusii communal land, by virtue of the fact that this ethnic community inhabited it.

Equally, according to a Maasai elder, the Maasai were highly affected and displaced by colonial encroachment on land, particularly due to their pastoralist culture of migrating with their livestock from one place to another (KI – MCE: 04, interviewed 28/08/2010). The land for the Maasai was therefore declared by the colonists as unoccupied and easily taken away as white highlands. The Maasai who occupied the study area along Transmara Kilgoris area were therefore believed to have been displaced from different localities across Kenya, and had varied forms of intra-ethnic cultures that are evident in the names of their three major clans in the locality: Moitanik, Isiria, Uasin Nkishu. Forceful evictions caused land and livestock contestations, divisions and conflicts between the Maasai and Gusii, as well as within the ethnic group based on the different clans, further serving the colonial policy of divide and rule. And when the colonial powers intensified agricultural activity and introduced land title deeds, traditional land tenure systems were completely altered to incorporate corporate or individualized ethnic and economic survival needs beyond the previous meanings that conceived of land as sacred and communally owned. Territorial boundaries were never agreed upon by the local people but forcefully enforced. As a participant shared during a key informant interview:

“Transmara initially was called Olorukoti meaning where many people visit. Nobody owned the place, it belonged to all creatures. There were many Maasai clans that migrated to Transmara from other places of Kenya, following forced evictions during the colonial era. Then land title deeds were introduced. Under the colonial administration, there were two prominent Maasai chiefs who failed to agree on land territorial boundaries between Maasai and with other ethnic groups like the Gusii and Kipsigis. The chiefs were from the Moitanic and Uasin Nkishu clans. The colonial masters favoured the Uasin Nkishu clan so when they saw that Moitanic Chief was strong and was about to win the battle on the correct landmarks

to determine the boundaries, they dropped him and instead replaced him with a weak chief called Ole Paapai who agreed on boundaries set by the colonialist. To date, fighting still takes place over these boundaries.” (KI – MCE: 04, interviewed 28/08/2010).

Another key informant suggested that the territorial borders were never really agreed upon by the Gusii and Maasai but set in an arbitrary manner by British colonialists. A Gusii chief named Obara was said to have carried a white man who was tired from Mogonga to Isena, and then it was decided by the colonialists that Isena would be the boundary. There was no due consideration of the real boundaries as perceived by the local people (KI – GLC: 03, interviewed 28/08/2010).

In keeping with existing literature, participants indicated that the British colonial administration retained some forms of indigenous governance institutions under the indirect rule policy, such as through chiefs and home guards. However, local chiefs were always men, organized along ethnic and clan divides, had limited powers and were replaced not by the people but by the colonial masters. Decisions were imposed on the Gusii and Maasai indigenous communities as agrarian changes led to their incorporation into the colonial economy. Traditional land tenure systems were changed and replaced with western notions of titled land ownership primarily for economic agricultural and livestock production.

For commercial production purposes, the British colonial government introduced new economic labour of two forms: migrant agricultural or livestock production labour economies where Gusii and Maasai rural men migrated to large estates to take up low-paying waged labour, and forced labour in the community with imposed taxes enforced through indirect rule of local chiefs and home guards. Cash crops particularly tea, coffee and pyrethrum became a priority produce. Maize was introduced both as a cash and subsistence crop. Livestock production was commercialized and slaughter-houses established. Hence, the dynamics of land-conflict were embedded in historical factors of colonialism and political

manipulation that had led to changes in patterns of land tenure and use, displacement of indigenous communities, destruction of livelihoods and creation of tensions on ethnic identities (Rutten, 1997).

The participants suggested that these threats persisted after Kenya's independence in 1963, and have continued to present time. Patterns of land ownership followed those established by the British colony. These patterns included communal ownership of land held by groups that shared ethnicity or culture. Such land was lawfully registered in the name of group representatives under the provisions of Kenyan law. The Maasai community therefore held vast land along the rift valley, Maasai Mara and Kilgoris area under communal ownership, which they used as community forests, grazing areas and shrines for worship (MG –FG: M, Interviewed 29/07/2010). Other unregistered land was lawfully held by the Kenyan government as trust for the Maasai communities, and for purposes of conservation of wild animals such as in the Mara region. The Gusii community did not seem to have such vast land that was held as communal land. So land patterns for Gusii were focused more on private ownership and individual holdings. Following independence, nationalist movements demanded re-allocation of land to indigenous communities. Participants claimed that few Gusii and Maasai individuals benefited from re-allocation of land formerly owned by white settlers following independence, because the transfer of land was made primarily to Kenyan educated and elite agricultural farmers (Rutten, 1997, p. 77) who were able to purchase the land. Although this did not cause landlessness for most communities that had settled in Nyangusu and Kilgoris areas at that time, it changed the patterns of land use at the household level with emphasis on cash crop production for economic gains, and other subsistence production for livelihoods.

Modern land tenure and use patterns reflect three major forms of ownership: legal trust by national government, group-owned through cooperatives, or individual holdings by owners who had title deeds. The state owned land as government trust generated a lot of conflicts during elections. This is because of failure on the

part of post-independence Kenyan government to redress the colonial injustices relating to land encroachments, continued injustices and abuse of legal trust vested on the government, and political manipulation of local communities by politicians who promise land title deeds to individuals over trust land for political gains. The Maasai claimed that their land was illegally allocated to individuals from different ethnic communities by the government, including the Gusii. The Maasai were vulnerable to such injustices due to the initial Maasai's nomadic pastoralist lifestyle nature, which meant that they moved from one place to another in search of livestock pasture. Land clashes between the Gusii and Maasai had led to evictions of groups of people who were leasing trust land in Maasai land for many years, and who had been promised permanent tenure. There were divisions and contestations over control of land that was group-owned, particularly group ranches that individuals had hoped would create tourist attractions. And individual holdings were getting dramatically fragmented following rapid growth in family size.

The imminent threat of possible landlessness has become apparent over the years. Individual land holding titles entrusted to individual household heads to subdivide among sons in the family have led to excessive fragmentation of land particularly among the Gusii community. Most Gusii families can no longer depend on their over fragmented pieces of land for subsistence farming. So, they lease or purchase land from Maasai families that still own relatively larger pieces of land. Meanwhile for the Maasai, land use patterns have principally changed from nomadic pastoralism to agro-pastoralism and in some cases to pure agricultural cultivation, leading to diminished grazing area and adverse effects on livestock production.

The modern land tenure systems rely on individual's ownership of land and violent struggles to acquire and protect land. Most of Maasai grazing land has now been privatized, or politically apportioned like the Mara land to create ranches and game reserves. In addition, a lot of Maasai land is now leased to individuals or groups for farming, in return for much needed cash. Land

privatization has led to overgrazing, land degradation; some Maasai households now depend more on subsistence farming because livestock production is no longer able to sustain their livelihood (MG - FG: M, interviewed 29/07/2010). And for the Gusii people, participants said that their population had increased rapidly, and there is limited land that they can cultivate. More and more Gusii people are leasing land from the Maasai for cultivation because their own pieces of land are too small to sustain their livelihood needs (MG - FG: G, interviewed 28/07/2010).

Land remains one of the most prime social, economic and development asset by both the Gusii and Maasai communities, and a livelihoods necessity. Rural households need land to survive: to produce food, generate income and build economic assets. Individual male owners view it and/or utilize it as a resource for subsistence farming, food and livestock pasture production, commercial sales or leasing or as collateral for loans for long-term investment. Intensified land-based conflicts are exacerbated by factors such as diminishing land resources, territorial contestations, and fear of loss of individualized land, competition over scarce natural resources such as water, food insecurity, and fear of diminishing livestock transient forage resources.

These land tenure and use changes had tremendous implications on gender roles and relations. Both the migrant labour and the agricultural production activities locally led to re-organization of indigenous household forms and the division of roles and responsibilities. Post-independence, most men continued to serve as migrant workers away from home, with continued burden of labour on women in the rural communities. With most men serving commonly as migrant workers away from home, women had to shoulder the responsibilities of agricultural labour at home as well as domestic responsibilities. The introduction of land title deeds meant that although women assumed full responsibility for farming in household farms, they had no rights over the land and the labour products. Farm products, particularly domestic cash crops were first and foremost taxed for colonial or national state economy, and then controlled by men who had ownership rights and control over the produce of domestic cash cropping. So women's labour

increased as their control of economic assets decreased, resulting in loss of power as they depended on their husbands or men land-owners for survival.

In addition, there were no social proscriptions or legal provisions for land ownership or secure tenure for women as individuals or as a group. When displacements took place following land clashes between the Gusii and Maasai, women were not only displaced but also sexually abused and exploited. In addition, women who became widowed as a result of the conflict suffered additional problems since they did not have rights over ownership of land. Although legal provisions now allow Maasai and Gusii women to own land through the new constitution, social norms still exclude women's ownership to land. So women remain the main actors providing agricultural labour, with limited control over agricultural products and with limited *de facto* land ownership rights.

Any conflicts relating to land rights therefore exclude women because social norms are so that women cannot make decisions on land they cannot own or whose products they cannot control. Participants suggested that women were systematically excluded from land ownership (legally until 2010, and socially), and subsequently from all matters relating to land dispute resolutions. A majority of the participants (53 out of 55) shared that women were excluded from roles in land dispute resolution because it was not considered culturally appropriate since they did not own land.

### **Political elections**

Participants identified violent political elections as a major source of violence closely linked to livestock raids and violent land disputes. The participants said that following Kenya's independence, special power was vested in the state and its elected members of parliament who imposed their political ideologies and used force to divide different ethnic communities into districts and election constituencies. Within this context, the nature of the conflict included pre- and post-election violence. The participants said that the most memorable, violent and life threatening battles over the past three decades were those fought in the years

1983, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002, and 2004, all of which reflected pre- and post-election periods. A man in the focus group indicated,

“Since the introduction of multi-party politics in Kenya in 1992, things have never been the same. Every year before and after elections is likely to turn violent” (FG – GM: 31, Interviewed 29/07/2010)

The participants reported that political incitement and propaganda relating to land ownership had exacerbated the conflict. During Gusii focus group discussions, several participants reported having purchased and/or leased land from the Maasai on several occasions. Following the commercialization of land, the Gusii purchased and leased land from the Maasai for farming. But during the political campaign period for general elections, political leaders incited the Maasai to chase away the Gusii who had purchased land in Maasai land. One participant shared that sometimes landowners sold the same land more than once to different persons, and at times individuals or groups who had legitimately purchased land were forcibly evicted without compensation.

Political manipulation was also identified by participants as causing violence around the time of political elections. In the focus group discussions, it was reported that some of the politicians bought votes from the people and used money to incite people to fight over land rights. Participants added that politicians even abused power and used government police forces to legitimize state violence against local civilians. They spoke about several occasions since 1992 where the government of Kenya had deployed the General Service Unit (GSU) to Nyangusu and Kilgoris during conflict and even placed a permanent base in Kiango to stop violence through the use of violent means.

Similarly, a participant sharing her life story recalled that in 1992, the GSU was so brutal and mercilessly whipped anybody they got near the border and directed

bullets and tear-gas to innocent people. She also cited incidents in 2004 fighting where political leaders in Maasai land had the government administration police supervise the stealing and/or destruction of maize plantations of the Gusii people had cultivated on land they had leased from the Maasai. She remarked that:

“That can make people to fight. Nobody would like to see their sweat (hard –earned labour) go to waste” (LS – GF: 03, Interviewed 04/09/2010).

Another participant related a similar case:

“I remember I had farmed over 6 acres in 2004 and was about to harvest when the war broke out. We were not allowed to harvest the food we had grown on leased farms. Instead they taunted and provoked us saying, “We will see how you will survive. You can eat your many children.” After that, our men took on the arms.

The other problem is that sometimes a fraudulent landowner may lease the same piece of land to more than one person, and then does not refund any of the parties’ money, causing competition and violence. So, when this happens, the fighting breaks out.”

(LS – GF: 01, Interviewed 04/08/2010).

Only about a third of the participants (18 out of 55) thought that resolutions of the pre and post-election violence lay in political negotiations that engaged local leaders and national government officials or external actors. More than half thought that resolution of political conflicts lay in the hands of the local people, and therefore it was necessary for local communities to participate in civic engagement.

But local people were, in the perceptions of the participants, men. Although both political engagements and civic participation were said to have been utilized as forms of peacebuilding, men were the main actors in these roles. Almost all participants (53 out of 55) said that both Gusii and Maasai women did not



participate in politics and their civic engagement was minimal. Asked why, a female key informant who was leading church-related activities wondered: “Where would I leave the children, and where would I find that time?” (KI – MWFL: 06, Interviewed 12/08/2010). Probed as to whether her church-related leadership constrained her in similar ways, the participant suggested that leadership within a religious community merited her time and was socially accepted and unquestioned by her spouse. The context above is not indicative of women’s lack of engagement or interest in politics or civic engagement. Rather, it suggests that political participation and civic engagement puts serious limitations on women’s time resource and gender roles. It also points to social norms and expectations that limit women’s participation in these areas.

### **Manhood formation and a culture of violence and exclusion**

I found that manhood identity formation was a major barrier to women that institutionalized a culture of violence and excluded women from leadership roles in peacebuilding. Like in the literature, manhood formation among the Maasai and Gusii ethnic communities incorporated various practices tenuously constructed as war or peace that continuously constructed hegemonic gender identities in public dialogue with ethnic identities and territories, and in distinction with the perceived subordinate identities of women (Butler, 1988; Bolich, 2007). Manhood formation for the Maasai and Gusii was hegemonic identity constituted over time through various rituals that included male circumcision as a rite of passage from childhood to manhood and ended with the formation of clans of elders who served in village councils and border peace committees. Peacebuilding roles instituted gender identities as defined in hegemonic manhood, excluding women across spaces and places perceived as public and manly such as village councils of elders and border committees institutionalized to negotiate for peace, and positioning their roles as separate and subordinate. The visibility and status of women of faith in peacebuilding was subordinated and very limited.

To be a Gusii or Maasai man meant to be a good warrior; expected to safeguard, protect and control livestock, land, territory and ethnic lineage and wellbeing. There wasn't really an alternative form of being. Warrior rituals of manhood were considered as "sacred" and a culture of violence was institutionalized where women were primarily victims and the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding were not legitimated. Manhood as hegemonic and womanhood as subordinate gender identities structured the gender division of roles in warfare and in peace. I found that circumcision rites of passage to manhood formed systematic processes of warrior formation that culturally consent to violent alternatives, espouse men's power over women and other men and institutionalize hegemonic masculinities that marginalize or delegitimize any other of alternatives of being (Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005; Kimmel, 2004). Hegemonic masculinity therefore structures roles in war and peace.

Participants shared that warrior formation rituals began with male circumcision as a rite of passage from childhood to manhood and ended with the formation of clans of elders who were the decision-makers. The cultural and sacred rituals of male circumcision initiated young men to the battlefield, providing a lifelong framework of knowledge that gave positive social meanings to violent response to conflict as a means for a warrior to defend his culture and protect lives and livelihoods. The circumcision rituals are distinctive to the cultural practices of the Gusii and Maasai, each reflecting ethnic identities and cultural ways of being. However, there are basic features and elements in these rituals for the formation of warriors. Initiates are determined through age-sets. Women and girls do not have their own age sets, although married women may be recognized through their husband's age sets.

Warrior training begins early during circumcision as early as age 10 for the Gusii and age 14 for the Maasai. For the Maasai, circumcised boys form groups like military battalions that live together in a secluded place throughout their training. For the Gusii, circumcision takes place for groups of boys who are then escorted in a group each to their homesteads where they undergo training at the

household level. The foundational aim of the warrior training is to form young men's worldviews on their power to defend themselves and protect their own, even if that meant killing or dying.

Both Maasai and Gusii rituals and rites of passage were said to form warrior identities where young men felt brave and honourable when they won a battle, and to provide practical training on combat. In addition, participants reported that both the Gusii and Maasai initiation rites of manhood trained young men to make and use small arms for combat such as knives, machetes, spears, arrows, *rungus* [clubs] and bows. The participants reported that the arms also served the purpose of differentiation of the "other," so that the way they are carried, used and made was a ritual demonstration of ethnic and religious beliefs of one group against another, or of a group united against another. Participants in focus group discussions said that cultural weapons, language, combat gear and style united warriors against the enemy.

In my interview with a Maasai male spiritual leader who led the circumcision rite of passage for the Moran warriors, he explained that young men received extensive training in combat:

"After the circumcision, warrior camps are formed in a ritual ceremony called *manyatta*, where the warriors spend over 3 years in training. The young men stay together and bond as a group, *Moran* warrior brothers of the same age-set. The teaching is conducted by a spiritual leader, who also, together with other elders, blesses and prays for the *Moran* warriors to succeed as protectors of culture, women, children, livestock, land and livelihoods. As a group graduates from this age set, a new set of warriors is trained." (KI – MSL: 11, Interviewed 04/09/2010).

All twenty participants in the Maasai focus group said they had undergone circumcision rituals that trained them to be effective *Moran* warriors. They

suggested that for a Moran to outgrow this stage of a warrior, it took about 8 - 10 years, a period during which young men played central roles in conflict. A key informant who had served as a Maasai Moran warrior for a decade, reflected on his own experience of circumcision rite that affirmed his manhood as a defender and protector,

“I felt that I became a whole man, Maasai Moran Warrior. I was ready to fight and win wars to defend our community and protect our livestock and women.” (KI – MFW: 02, interviewed 19/08/2010).

Like in this statement, it was common for research participants to make references to women as objects, to be protected like livestock. Equally, all twenty participants in the Gusii focus group noted that circumcision of Gusii boys was an important identity marker in the formation of manhood for defence and protection against the Maasai, Kipsigis and other warring tribes. One of the oldest participants who reported that he had fought as a Gusii warrior since the colonial period in 1931 noted that as an elder, he initiated young men to become warriors during circumcision, which he believed was an important stage in life,

“During the ceremony, we perform certain rituals as we sing, carrying machetes, bows and arrows. The initiation song we sing means that we are presenting the boys-turned-men, in broad daylight, as brand new brave men who will fight in Maasai land, and Kipsigis land” (KI – GFW: 01, Interviewed 19/08/2010)

Young boys (as young as age 10) inherit enmity and adversaries from adult men during circumcision rituals, and ethnic differences begin to emerge as real threats to manhood and to the wellbeing of communities. Apparently, long before war breaks out between the Gusii and Maasai, young men’s identities (as young as age 10) are already being formed as warriors and protectors of their land, territory, livestock and communities. Although both communities undertake

circumcision rituals for girls, the expectation for girls is to be supportive and loving wives and mothers. Young women do not learn warfare, including how to bear arms and attack their adversaries. Warfare between the Gusii and Maasai is therefore a socially constructed and learned process that is marked with circumcision rituals. All Gusii and Maasai warriors were said to be circumcised men.

The Gusii men in the focus group discussions claimed that after the rituals of circumcision, young men could stand up against fear and conquer it during war.

“Boy circumcision is very important for the Gusii people. This is the mark of our identity. It is the time that boys become men, to fight like men to protect their tribe and kinship from any enemy.” (KI – GFW: 01, Interviewed 19/08/2010)

Once young men have been circumcised, they are expected to be prepared for any fights, and to live up to the expectations of being courageous and fearless. A key informant who had served in the Gusii *chinkororo* warrior group recounted a real life experience of the killing of a Gusii warrior which frightened all the warriors to tears, a fear that they could not display publicly because it would not make social sense in their performed identity as brave and strong warriors:

“All of us cried. But when we got near the village, we dried off every tear as we chanted our arrival. There is a way we return to the village with the injured or dead, in mock combat, to show our bravery.” (KI – GFW: 01, Interviewed 19/08/2010)

Funerals rites of dead warriors included mock combat, with a processional of warriors performing war drills and tactics at the graveside. Small arms were used in symbolic combat rituals of burial ceremonies whenever a warrior was killed in battle. Participants also shared about rituals that surrounded the storage and use of arms. Special rituals were performed once a spear had been used to kill

someone in battle. Participants said that the small arms used in combat were not mere symbols of pain, gains or losses in warfare; they were primary expressions of religious and ethnic identities and were considered sacred in the ways they were stored, handled and used.

Regardless of whether identity expectations are real or not, the Gusii and Maasai Moran warriors continuously construct their gender identity as brave and undefeated manhood when in public dialogue with men and women in their community (Butler, 1988; Bolich, 2007). Showing any form of emotion such as tears would contradict the gendered expectations of their roles as brave warriors. So the identity of warriors is not a stable identity from which violence emanates, but rather it is tenuously constituted and performed in time through stylized repetition of acts that constitute an illusion of an abiding gendered self (Butler, 1988:519).

Circumcision among the Gusii and Maasai typifies ideal manhood as if fearlessness, endurance and violence were natural attributes of all warriors. When the rituals are conducted, Maasai initiates wrestle with each other and with lions, while Gusii initiates are escorted in a form of mock combat that upholds them as brave and vicious defenders. With chanting, singing, survival and common experience of pain and loss, the young men become aware of their warrior identities and are energized to project their identity as warriors to their world. Through cultural performances and discursive dialogues with the young men, violence gains a form of positive intent, as long as a man is so acting to defend and protect.

Gusii and Maasai warrior identities are hegemonic: warriors must show their masculine power through brute aggression, violence and dominance over their enemy, effeminate men and women (Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005; Goldstein, 2001; Johnson, 2005; Gilmore, 2009; Kimmel, 2004). This kind of hegemony and brutality is evident in what a research participant, a former Maasai Moran warrior said:

“They (Gusii warriors) then mutilated his body, chopped off his head, hang it on a stick and went to the top of the hill to incite us [opponents] for war. They said to us “*we will do the same to you and your young men, and then we take your women*”. We had to defend ourselves.” (KI – MFW:02, Interviewed 19/08/2010)

This pattern of abducting women is similar to what I found in the literature, where Maasai communities testified that the neighbouring Gusii ethnic community had engaged in atrocious acts against them including the “robbing” (rape) of Maasai women. (Republic of Kenya, 1999). Whenever Gusii warriors engage in excessive acts of violence, Maasai warriors retaliate and vice versa, forming complex patterns of violence whose ultimate goal is to sustain a hierarchy of masculinities and claim a leading position as warrior defenders (Connell, 2005). Rape becomes an instrument of their wars. When beaten in battle, warriors perform their culturally expected hegemonic manhood, raping women and emasculating men. As one of the participants put it,

“We wanted to show the village that despite all that had happened we were circumcised men, not *ebisagane bosa* [uncircumcised women], we were not useless, defeated cowards.” (KI – GFW: 01, Interviewed 19/08/2010)

The roles, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and the very existence of warriors is expected to conform to the social meanings of manhood (Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005; Gilmore, 2009; Johnson, 2005) so constructed through rites of passage and warrior tires. Defeat in war delegitimizes warrior manhood, but also threatens ethnic identity. Gusii and Maasai warriors therefore are expected to wield brute force, control, defence and protection of their ethnic communities. For warriors to show any form of emotion other than unbridled rage suggests resemblance to feminine identity, a pathology that would compromise the gender and ethnic identities enacted through warrior manhood constructed through rites of passage. Reference of the fallen warriors as a “circumcised men”

as opposed to “uncircumcised women” is an attempt to redeem and re-humanize them. It is indicative of the constant implicit awareness of the meanings of the warriors’ gender and ethnic identities.

As already indicated, warrior manhood is based on age sets of young men. When these young men grow up, their roles become institutionalized as they marry and join the elders who serve in border committees and councils of elders building peace and negotiating land, livestock and other related conflicts. Warriors, warfare and peacebuilding are therefore expressions of gender and ethnic identities and gender roles that form over time. Young boys learn to use small arms during circumcision rites, and then they use the small arms in combat as young warriors, and ultimately transition to the elders’ councils and committee where older men carry small arms such as “rungus” that now bear new and special meanings of peace with spiritual and social-cultural symbolism and significance.

Manly warriors defeat the ethnic enemy, and their manliness measures itself against femininity and rejects it. It is not all womanhood that is rejected here; on the contrary womanhood as motherhood—*‘we will take your women’*— is objectified as worth fighting for and defending because it symbolizes reproduction of lineage. Typically womanhood is dominated and subordinated—*‘uncircumcised, useless, defeated cowards’*—and marginalized as emotive. Such attributes perceived as womanly—cowardice, fear, crying, worthlessness, defeated weakness—seem to endanger or otherwise compromise the manly hegemonic warrior identities so constructed as courageous, ruthless, raging protection and victorious defence. Whether such perceptions are true or not is not considered. So, both violence and victory in battle is perceived as power over other men, and over women (Kimmel, 2004). This is the worldview and attitude of Gusii and Maasai warriors whether they win or lose battles. This is what they must project to their own communities and upon the outside world of the ethnic enemy.



The conflict between the Gusii and Maasai is therefore both a cultural and gendered arena to prove in real world that men can live up to this violent hegemonic manhood so constructed as protection in its culturally determined form. So when Gusii and Maasai men meet in real space inhabited by the adversary, combat is legitimated as they each implicitly become aware of a conspicuous warrior identity as circumcised men, never to be effeminate or subdued by “other” ethnic enemy warriors. Such an identity is tied to contestations over land, livestock and ethnic territories, which equally contribute to and are a consequence of violent warfare. Even when they lose, warriors must return to their communities with a performance as if their acts were heroic and victorious so as not to compromise and/or contradict societal expectations and the security of their communities.

So warfare is a major role that shapes peacebuilding among the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya. As already indicated, through a process of socialization, Gusii and Maasai men are the only ones expected to fulfil this role as warriors. In line with the literature, warfare constructed as masculine serves a number of purposes: it affirms men’s warrior identity; it re-affirms men’s masculine standing in relation to other men making it possible for them to bond together as warriors; it provides an arena to act out and live patriarchal ideals of courage and aggression; it offers the opportunity for hegemonic masculinity to be enacted as control and dominance as effeminate men are ridiculed and women- other- than- nothing subordinated; and it justifies violence as a as inevitable proof of manhood and a means to defend oneself or society (Johnson, 2005, pp. 139-141). As indicated by the participants, rites of passage are gendered, and battlefields were reported to be contested spaces where men fought as gendered ethnic others. This process of gender identity formation produces different consequences for women and men in peacebuilding.

Participants suggested that women were largely excluded as insignificant others with almost no place both in conflict and peacebuilding. The division of labour compares to the sharp division of roles between women and men were clearly

marked at the beginning of the cold war (Blatch, 1918). Given that only Maasai or Gusii men were expected to fight as warriors, women considered inessential others, who often would be expected to remain at home caring for children.

But this was not the reality of both Gusii and Maasai women's lives in the conflict trajectories. Like women in the cold war, Maasai and Gusii women were needed to win the war in the warfront, to defend their villages and households from violence, and to assume the full responsibilities for the care of their families. At the battlefields, both Gusii and Maasai women played significant supportive roles and provided labour and sustenance to the warriors: Support included providing stones, pebbles, water, food, and other basic necessities. Participants suggested that these supportive roles by women, though less visible, were equally central to the warfare. Women played significant roles in the battles in homes including labouring to stop livestock raids. As part of their expected reproductive roles, women in the home front provided care for the needy including children, the injured, the elderly and the infirm.

This conceptualization of warfare as a landscape gendered male serves to constrain women in two major ways: Firstly, their roles in peacebuilding in the battlefield are unrecognized or marginalized. Secondly, any other roles that women play in war and peace are made invisible, domesticated and/or unsupported. Women end up playing significant roles but that are predominantly considered of subordinate social position and of lower-prestige and less-valued statuses relative to men's and their contributions are consistently undervalued (Lindsey, 2011; Palpart et al, 2002; Moser, 1993).

### **“Spoiling women”: the indignity of rape and gender-based violence**

I found that the use of rape and gender-based violence as weapons of war was prevalent among the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities. This was considered as a barrier by participants because it remained a major security threat to women that not only limited their mobility but also silenced, traumatized and intimidated women peace builders. Participants used words such as “common”, “sadly often”

“all the time” “always” “almost normal” “given” “unavoidable” to express the prevalence.

As suggested in statements of the participants, rape and gender-based violence included atrocious acts such as abductions, which had long-term effects on women and girls. As reported by the participants, rape and abduction was a common form of conducting war. The purpose was to destroy the social fabric of society, just as the literature indicated (Baaz, 2009; Leatherman, 2011; United Nations, 2008; Kimmel, 2004). Feminine identity for both the Maasai and Gusii communities included the notion of women as symbols of community and/or ethnic identity, which made them primary targets of sexual violence, abduction and rape in situations of violent conflict. Participants reported that rape, abductions and sexual violence were major conflict dynamics that were prevalent and that limited women’s mobility and choices for peace. Defeat in warfare for the Maasai and Gusii was constructed also as including violating women through rape and gender-based violence including abductions.

“...and went to the top of the hill to incite us [opponents] for war. They said to us “*we will do the same to you and your young men, and then we take your women*”. We had to defend ourselves.” (KI – MFW: 02, Interviewed 19/08/2010)

Although rape and gender-based violence were not the only forms of violence that occurred during the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai, they were the most prevalent with the deepest traumatic impacts. They pervaded every stage of the conflict and severely limited the safety of women and the roles they could play in peacebuilding. The table below summarizes the pervasive nature of rape and gender-based violence identified by participants in focus group discussions.

<b>Typologies of violence and gendered impacts</b>					
<b>Type</b>	<b>Who harms</b>	<b>Who suffers</b>	<b>Where</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Effects/impacts</b>
<b>Fighting and hostilities</b>	Men (young and old)	Men mostly young men	Battlefield  Market  Grazing ground	When war escalates  Sometimes in relative peace	Physical injuries, emotional psychological harm, death, <b>castration, rape, sexual assault</b>
<b>Accomplishment in horrific acts</b>	Women	Men and women, boys and girls	Battlefield, homes, water points, roadside, pathways	War escalates, seeking revenge, sheltering combatants,	Death, emotional harm, physical injuries, guilt, <b>rape, sexual assault,</b>
<b>Rape and sexual assault</b>	Warriors State police Other men	Women and girls	battlefields, home, water points, road/foot paths,	When feeding warriors, when collecting firewood or water, in search of food, when escaping to safety	<b>Rape, sexual assault,</b> physical injuries, death, abandonment, grief, social stigmatization, infection with HIV/AIDS, emotional psychological harm, forced pregnancy, forced marriage
<b>Torture</b>	Men	Young men	battlefield	When war escalates	<b>Castration, sexual assault,</b>

					physical torture, emotional, health injuries, mutilated bodies, psychological harm, mental illness, death,
<b>Abduction</b> <b>Forced inter-ethnic marriage</b>	men	Young women	Battlefield Home anywhere	At war time	Forced inter-ethnic marriage, <b>Rape, sexual assault</b> , forced pregnancy Stigmatization – called traitor, spy by either ethnic group
<b>Livestock raids</b>	Men	Women, men children	Homesteads Gazing grounds	Any time	Loss of livelihoods, fear, death, physical injuries, triggers more violence, <b>rape, sexual assault</b>

Table 7: The prevalence of rape and sexual violence

As indicated in table 7 above, rape and gender-based violence were pervasive and took place at home, in the battlegrounds or in the community. There were even experiences of rape and gender-based violence in the hands of state military. Narrating her life story, a woman shared about such violence in the hands of government security forces saying:

“The GSU [paramilitary wing of Kenya’s military force] imposed warrants on us, destroyed our property, and then raped women and girls, innocent children. Who can protect us?” (LS – GF: 03, Interviewed 04/09/2010).

Participants reported that the violence left many women widowed and children orphaned. Being widowed or orphaned was said to exacerbate risks for women and girls to rape and gender based violence. In sharing her life story, one of the participants widowed from war said that the threats to security for her were even higher:

“As a widow, I never sleep. I have no security for my children other than myself. People are used to the idea that only men can protect the home, so whenever there is fighting, widows are targets and as a single mother, I have to confront warriors or other violent men and stop them from burning my house or abducting my daughters.” ( LS – GF: 03, interviewed 04/09/2010)

The participants reported that once girls or young women were abducted, they were forced to be married to the “enemy” tribe. It was reported that such girls or women would be treated with suspicion by both communities, and sometimes considered spies since they have to maintain kinship ties with both ethnic communities, putting them at risk of further violence.

Discussions with participants in the women only focus groups also reported that for the Maasai and Gusii women, wartime sexual abuse included rape, abductions and brutal assaults such as grabbing of breasts and buttocks or stuffing *rungus* (war weapons) into women’s genitalia. A key informant who had treated such cases working as a nurse shared that most women and girls who made it to the health clinic had serious injuries from rape and sexual assault, and some of them

died (KI – GHW:07, Interviewed 25/08/2010). Participants had difficulties discussing matters relating to rape and violence against women further.

I also found that gender-based violence against men was also prevalent in both Maasai and Gusii communities. Participants in the mixed focus groups shared that gender-based violence against men was used to punish, humiliate, and create fear and submission. Common forms of such violence identified by the participants were battering men's genitalia and castration. Gender slurs are used to further humiliate and emasculate men. During an in-depth interview with a participant who had served in the *chinkororo* warrior group, he recounted a real life experience of the castration of a Gusii warrior by the Maasai fighters that he experienced:

“They tied his arms and legs separately each to a tree branch, his body facing up to the sky. Then they violently assaulted his groins until his testicles ruptured. They castrated him. He screamed like a woman. I have never seen a man cry like a woman” (KI – GFW: 01, Interviewed 19/08/2010).

Patterns of violence against men revealed extreme brutality and the atrocious emasculation of men. Accounts of castration or sexual assault against men tended to express the emasculation of gendered identities, where effeminate manhood was likened to “being a woman” essentially a subhuman category linked to perceptions of feminine weakness, cowardice or emotion. So having a man scream like a woman was enough humiliation to his warrior identity, and the identity of his entire warrior group. Gender-based violence against men also included humiliation through sexual assault or rape of female relatives such as wives, daughters or sisters. In this case, this was considered an attack on multiple masculine identities of Maasai or Gusii men as warriors, fathers, sons and husbands. As Moser suggests, this kind of dual abuse for women and the men they are related to was linked to women's identity as reproducers of both the

Gusii and Maasai societies. It was therefore an effective weapon of war as it has been in several other countries including Rwanda and Mozambique (Moser, 2001).

Within this context, protecting women from rape and abductions, and men from castration had greater meaning for the Gusii and Maasai warriors. Such protection was linked to their biological functions of reproduction, and to the continuities of ethnic and clan lineages. A majority of participants (39 out of 55) suggested that winning wars included protecting women from rape and gender-based violence, and men from castration. Fights provoked by threatened or actual rape or gender-based violence were viciously fought, and men were at greater risk of retaliated gender-based violence. A former Maasai warrior shared that after castrating a warrior, it was common to hear chanting or songs that incorporated statements such as:

“We will take your women because you have no means of sexually providing for them”. KI – GFW: 01, Interviewed 19/08/2010).

Apparently, rape and gender-based violence denied human dignity and stymied individual and societal wellbeing. Most participants suggested that rape and gender-based violence were considered shameful and not easily discussed or addressed. When probed to offer specific details on the nature of rape and gender-based violence, most participants (40 out of 55) said it was difficult to discuss because the pain was so desperate. Others declined to comment. A key informant expressed pain in discussing rape, which she referred to in a round-about manner as “spoiling” saying:

“There are some conflicts which I cannot talk about because various traumatic activities took place i.e. spoiling [raping] and killing innocent women and children. Women accepted to be spoilt [raped] provided they are given food. *Achiiii Baito!* [An expression of deep painful shock] It was very sad. But it remained the reality of our lives

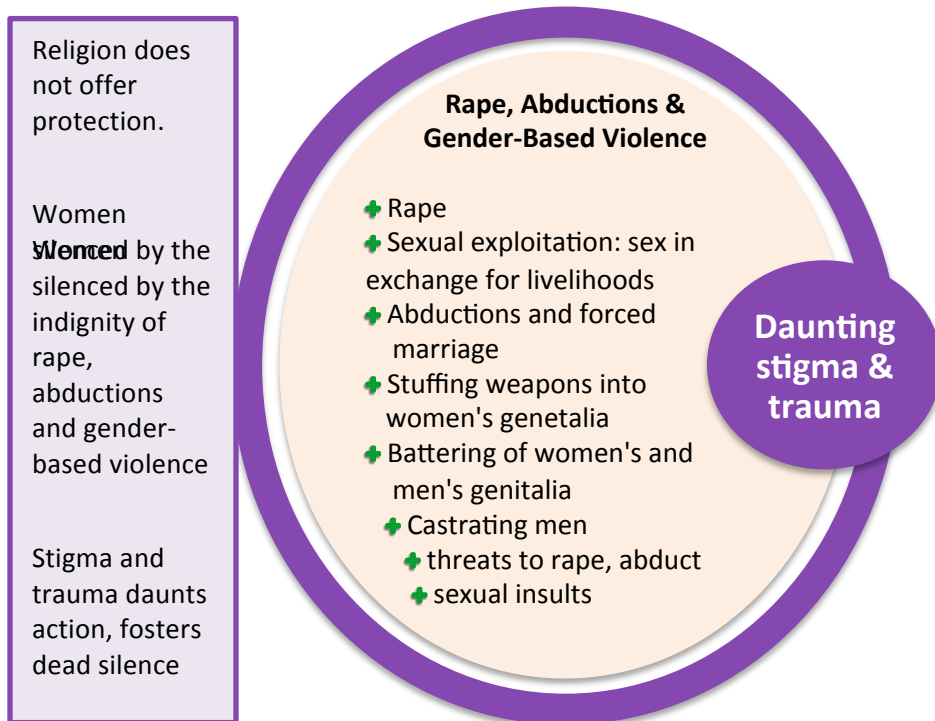


during the fighting. Please, I do not want to remember those moments.” KI – GWFL: 05, Interviewed 12/08/2010).

The statement suggested that rape and gender-based violence was traumatic and stigmatizing at the same time. It also indicated that besides rape, women were sexually exploited as they were forced to engage in sex in order to safeguard their children, families and their own survival. The protracted conflict context placed women in vulnerable situations that forced them to engage in transactional or survival sex. This finding echoed Leatherman’s discussion of rape and sexual violence as a path of destruction that turns the lives of women and girls into the currency of chattel and slaves (Leatherman, 2011, pp. 1-2). Participants in the women only focus group discussions indicated that whenever violence escalated for long periods, food production was disrupted and the communities depended on food aid from humanitarian agencies, which were few and worked primarily through churches and government law enforcement institutions. Although the hope had been that humanitarian workers and law enforcement officials would protect the people, participants suggested that they misused their power to engage in exploitative and abusive sexual relations with women and girls, most of whom could not negotiate distribution of food to them and their loved ones without exchange for sex or sexual favours (WO-FG: GF, Interviewed 26/07/2010, WO-FG: MF, Interviewed 27/07/2010). Such experiences were said to be common, although not discussed due to the shame and stigma associated with that.

To most participants (41 out of 55), whether directed at women or men, rape and gender-based violence were considered another form of death: a social death that punished, humiliated, demoralized and traumatized long after the fighting was over. According to the former warrior who had served as a Moran warrior for a decade, when Maasai warriors suffered from sexual violence and castration, it was as if they lost two wars and they were better off dead in his opinion (KI – MFW:02, Interviewed 19/08/2010). And for women, terms used to describe such atrocities such as “spoilt” suggest that the physical damage and socio-cultural loss and harm were considered irreparable.

More than half of the participants (33 out of 55) suggested that rape and gender-based violence often triggered defensive reactions from warring parties and led to retaliated violence. A former Maasai Moran warrior shared that the killing and mutilation of a Maasai school boy had generated retaliation and violence provoked by the sexual slurs of taking away women for rape, abduction or other forms of gender-based violence:



In summary, the nature of rape and gender-based violence in the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of South-western Kenya was gendered, systematic and targeted form of combat as represented in figure 2 above. It included rape, sexual exploitation through transactional sex in exchange for livelihoods, abductions, forced marriages, stuffing weapons into women’s genitalia, battering women’s and men’s genitalia, castrating men, constantly threatening to rape or abduct women and sexual insults. Women (and men) are silenced by the indignity of rape and sexual violence. Religion does not offer protection or way out of the indignities of rape, abductions or gender-based violence. The stigma and trauma daunts action

and fosters dead silence surrounding these violent and traumatic acts. This is the context against which Maasai and Gusii women of faith played their peacebuilding roles. Generally, most participants (48 out of 55) felt that the conflict context and peacebuilding arena was not safe for women. Peacebuilding arenas relating to territories, land and livestock were emotionally charged and sometimes during negotiations, violence would break out. And generally, there were social norms that prohibited women's mobility. So both the conflict and peacebuilding contexts and dynamics were a threat to women, a factor that created fear, limited their mobility and discouraged them from participating in peacebuilding roles. As one participant put it:

“You do not know what you will meet out there, or what will follow-you to your home. It is very risky for everyone, but especially for women and girls. We live in constant fear.”(FG - MF: 18, Interviewed 27/07/2010).

### **Gender-based othering: the archetype barrier**

Gender-based othering emerged as a central barrier structuring the roles of Maasai and Gusii women of faith in peacebuilding. Gender-based othering subordinated women but also allowed the warring communities to construct sameness and difference, the in-group and out-group, and to affirm their own self-identities of hegemonic manhood. Gender-based othering was a form of archetype barrier that produced, reproduced and maintained “otherness” on the basis of hegemonic masculinity for men and subordinate femininity for women. It was a vehicle through which gender identities in peacebuilding were constructed, affirmed and enacted. Gender-based othering subordinated and catalysed the exclusion of women from public peacebuilding roles relating to negotiations and decision-making with the council of elders, or with border committees resolving land disputes, livestock raids, and political life (Brown, 1993; Lerner, 1986; Sullivan, 1989:2). It exacerbated or resulted in violence against women, men and effeminate others. It also played a major role in separating and marginalizing women's peacebuilding roles. It created and maintained a boundary between

masculinity and femininity that did not allow or recognize any other gender alternatives of being. It consolidated the notion of violent-man-as-protector, subordinated femininity, humiliated and dehumanized women and situated women's gendered otherness in peacebuilding.

Gender-based othering was relational, using violent hegemonic power over women and over other men. For a Maasai or Gusii man, being reduced to a woman-like man comes with derogatory associations such as cowardice, weakness, fearfulness, and helplessness. This is contradictory to what any man stands for, and particularly a Gusii or Maasai warrior. Hence, men who encounter this threat first and foremost react violently as an attempt to resist and dissociate with the feminine identity. As one of the participants asserted,

“We wanted to show the village that despite all that had happened we were circumcised men, not *ebisagane bosa* [uncircumcised women], we were not useless, defeated cowards.” (KI – GFW: 01, Interviewed 19/08/2010)

The use of the language “uncircumcised women” is a widely accepted insult to any man, a derogatory epithet for effeminate men and inverted dehumanizing violence against women. The words acquire new meaning during conflict, revealing the attitudes towards women who are viewed as “useless”, and “cowardly”. Unlike women, warriors and their groups are named to show strength, courage and endurance: Chinkororo is the name of the traditional Gusii warriors which participants understood to mean “we will reign on you like men”, a chilling threat to any enemy and a statement of readiness to protect livestock and community from any attack from the Moran warriors. The name Moran used for warriors of the Maasai community connotes victory even over the fiercest lions, an exuberant display of extraordinary strength often performed in spectacular war dances. Hence, gender-slurs and labels of acting like women or at the least uncircumcised women serve not only to insult but also to threaten both the ethnic and gender identities of men who are expected to be undefeated in battle

following the circumcision rites of passage that bestow upon them hegemonic ideologies of courage, endurance and strength to protection. Gender slurs have a special effect in reproducing and reinforcing violence. So when men fight in response to such derogatory gender slurs, it is in contestation and/or negotiation of their core identities and a claim of normality in the terrain of otherness. They also fight to protect themselves and their families or communities from real threats to safety. Gender-based othering begot and espoused physical violence, rape, abduction, sexual violence, castration, humiliation, and other degrading acts against effeminate men and against women. In this process, consciously or unconsciously, women become the insignificant others—uncircumcised women—treated with indignity, dehumanized other-than-nothings.

Othered men may redeem themselves through retaliated violence and only then can they be incorporated as defenders and protectors. As suggested by one participant:

“They said to us *“we will do the same to you and your young men, and then we take your women”*. We had to defend ourselves” (KI – MFW: 02, Interviewed 19/08/2010).

In the words of the participant above, “taking your women” implies an attack on men’s ethnicity, their lineage and kinship embodied in women’s reproductive roles and biological functions of motherhood. Hence, othered men must defend themselves often violently by: standing up for their gender and ethnic identities; defending themselves from imminent violence (including castration); and preventing the abduction of their women which would mean loss of their ethnic lineage and humiliation of their entire community. Gender-based othering mobilizes men into a competitive spirit to fight to the end for real or perceived gendered security. Losing manhood (through castration or socially) is likened to death (social death) or losing a war—“it is as if we lost two wars.” It is apparent that non-violent reaction or a show of emotion would not grant a warrior personhood, so men who behave that way in this context may be considered non-

persons—they are, in the words of the research participants, “women”. Such perceptions reinforce cultural violence and inadvertently the subordination, domination, dehumanization of women.

Gender-based othering achieves a great deal in subordinating women’s gender identities, dominating women and dehumanizing them as non-persons. Othered men are always considered inferior, yet even the least of men cannot be as inferior as a fine woman. I found that both Gusii and Maasai men and women share in this belief, as reflected in meanings and subjectivity of language. Some of the terms that participants used to denote femininity or womanhood included “useless”, “nothing”, “worthless”, “uncircumcised”, “cowardly”, “fearful”, “timid” “worrisome”, “hopeless”, “nobodies”, “helpless”. Such gender-demeaning language is effective in fuelling the conflict, treating women as inferior, separating and demeaning their peacebuilding roles and dominating and controlling women’s status and influence. The demeaning language defines how men speak to and about women as well as how women perceive themselves and speak to or about each other. Ultimately, othering through derogatory subjective language and labels limits women’s speech, dehumanizes and controls women’s gender and ethnic identities. With such meanings, both women and men succeed in using gender-based othering to fuel the conflict, separate peacebuilding roles, and inadvertently subordinate and dominate women to the extent that femininity seems inimical to being human.

How does this notion of gender-based othering situate women’s roles in peacebuilding? First, women’s peacebuilding roles are situated within unequal gender relations that justify and enforce the exclusion, separation, subordination and dehumanization of women’s roles and identities. Ultimately, gender differentiation is institutionalized through pervasive, self-perpetuating, structures of violence embodying relations of authority and control and resulting in unequal entitlements and choices for women in peacebuilding (Reeves & Baden, 2002; Johnson, 2005; Moser, 2001; Kabeer, 1994). The conviction of two male participants that both Gusii and Maasai women have no place whatsoever in

peacebuilding is born out of this belief of gender-based othering – the belief that women are insignificant others. Kenyan Maasai and Gusii women of faith are situated in peacebuilding through asymmetries of hegemonic power in the institution of marriage, cultural rites of passage, and sexual relations. As a result, women are restricted from participating in most public roles in peacebuilding such as village peace committees, land dispute negotiations, political negotiations and livestock return committees. So peacebuilding takes place in complex environments structured by gender identities, roles and relations. Inadvertently, peacebuilding perpetuates, and implicitly enforces gender inequalities and asymmetrical power structures that constrain and marginalize women's roles.

Second, the circumstances against which Kenyan Maasai and Gusii women play their peacebuilding roles are violent, insecure and demeaning. Although gender-based othering increases social risks for both women and men, it inadvertently puts women at greater risks embedded within widely accepted social norms that restrict women's participation, restrict their freedom of speech and mobility, and violate them physically, socially or sexually. In addition to the risks of othering men impose on female victims such as rape and abductions, there are other risks that women face in the family and community that can be just as salient yet invisible. These range from limitations of speech before men, to restrictions on movement, to the burden of care and its limitation on women's time, to targeted physical or psychological harm. For women to engage in peacebuilding roles, they must negotiate their mobility, traverse their inferior voice, juggle their constrained time resource, as well as navigate a violent environment. As a participant indicated,

Women accepted to be spoilt [raped] provided they are given food.”

KI – GWFL: 05, Interviewed 12/08/2010).

The term “spoilt” is a form of othering, a violation of the dignity of women who have already been victimized through rape, abductions or sexual assault. This form of sexual exploitation is to be differentiated from when rape and abduction is

used as an instrument of war. The term that men use for that kind of rape as discussed in earlier sections is also indicative of sexual exploitation where women are objectified as property of men- men are “robbed” of “their” women. Although the conflict context places women in a vulnerable situation that in most cases violates them sexually or forces them to engage in transactional or survival sex in order to safeguard the survival of children and families, such women are socially putrefied and even socially unfit to participate in peacebuilding roles.

In summary, gender-based othering is a form of structural and behavioural violence as well as institutionalized exclusion of women that poses a number of barriers to women’s peacebuilding. It is prosperous in violence. It thrives with the use of derogatory language, gender slurs and chilling threats (we will take your women, we will reign on you like men, we are fierce – kill lions, we are not useless, uncircumcised women). It results in the structuring of unequal relations and roles, and the use of rape, abductions and gender-based violence. And it institutionalizes gender exclusion and rewards hegemony so that even men who act violently in the course of the fighting can be perceived as strong, brave and protective and ultimately serves in the councils of elders (Table 8 below).

<b>Gender-based othering between the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya</b>		
<b>Typology of gender-based othering</b>	<b>Characteristics/Practices</b>	<b>Barriers for women and men</b>
<b>False, alienating and demeaning judgements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women cannot speak in front of men</li> <li>• Women are too emotional, have no control</li> <li>• Women are weak and helpless</li> <li>• Our culture – cannot change the council of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silences women’s voices</li> <li>• Excludes women</li> <li>• Women’s peacebuilding roles remain invisible</li> <li>• Women self-exclude due to low self-esteem</li> <li>• Denies women space to participate</li> </ul>



	<p>elders or church structure, always been like this</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women lack confidence in themselves, self-doubt “do we really do anything”, we “don’t do much”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alienates men from emotive, non-violent practices</li> <li>• Out of touch with reality – idealistic visions of false and/or performed masculinity/femininity become “facts”, institutionalized culture of violence</li> </ul>
<b>Violence of words</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender slurs, derogatory language: don’t be like a woman, you are just a woman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demeans and intimidates women</li> <li>• Dehumanizes women and effeminate men</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender-based threats</li> <li>• We will take your women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undervalues women’s roles</li> <li>• Internalization and self-affliction,</li> </ul>
<b>Violent attitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combative</li> <li>• Aggressive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• societal expectations defeat individual agency</li> </ul>
<b>Violent actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical violence</li> <li>• Fighting</li> <li>• Violent livestock raids</li> <li>• Violent land/territorial disputes</li> <li>• Rape and gender-based violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limits women’s mobility</li> <li>• Glorifies men’s aggression, escalates violence, ethnic fighting standoffs almost always involving rape and sexual violence against women and girls</li> </ul>
<b>Violence of silence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traumatic violence that individuals cannot talk about publicly or directly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stigma, denial, discrimination, trauma, shame, re-victimization,</li> </ul>

	such as rape, castration, sexual assault and abductions (spoilt, robbed women)	indignity, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limits women’s mobility and participation</li> <li>• Impunity</li> </ul>
<b>Hegemonic othering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Torture, atrocious acts, ruthlessness, “they had him cry like a woman”</li> <li>• Manner of killing – hang head on a stick and threaten – “we will do the same to you and take your women”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bondage of violence - gratifying, heroic thrill for the hegemonic man,</li> <li>• Violence in name of protection and defence,</li> <li>• Obsessive ritual killing as emasculating enemy</li> <li>• Women are mere victims – incidental to achieving the hegemony of men</li> </ul>
Table 8: Forms of gender-based othering and resulting barriers		

Gender-based othering creates the conditions under which women of faith play their peacebuilding roles. It also positions women in peacebuilding: as othered insignificant others. For women, peacebuilding is a risky political process that requires acting within this context, or even transcending issues relating to gender-based othering.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ROLES OF MAASAI AND GUSII WOMEN OF FAITH IN PEACEBUILDING

#### Introduction

The data in the previous chapter demonstrates four inter-related barriers that affect the roles Gusii and Maasai women of faith play in peacebuilding. The women have limited space, safety and voice to participate in peacebuilding relating to livestock, land or political engagement, all of which are major sources of conflict and peace. Cultural processes of manhood identity formation institutionalize a culture of violence that excludes women from leadership roles and formal structures of peacebuilding. The prevalence of rape and gender-based violence as weapons of war results in security threats to women that limit their mobility and it also silences, traumatizes and intimidates them in peacebuilding. Gender-based othering—the notion of constructing “otherness” on the basis of sex—perpetuates perceptions of women as subordinate insignificant others, which results in violence, exclusion and a persistent lower status in peacebuilding.

Even with these insurmountable barriers, empirical findings suggest that women of faith find opportunities to deploy religious resources to engage in various peacebuilding roles. Religion seems to offer women a means to act within these conditions, withstand or in some instances transcend the gendered barriers and play roles in peacebuilding. In this chapter, I present and discuss data generated by this study on the roles of Maasai and Gusii women of faith in peacebuilding and how they utilize various opportunities to deploy religious resources for peacebuilding in this context. One of the opportunities is deploying motherhood and faith identities as resources for legitimacy and moral authority in peacebuilding. A second opportunity is deploying religious resources to promote mourning and burial rituals of healing and reconciliation. Another opportunity is advancing everyday spiritual practices of sharing lives as a form of peacebuilding by deploying both cultural and religious resources. Similarly, women of faith also take the opportunity to provide faith-based security and protection services.

The chapter is divided into four sections. I begin the first section with a discussion on how motherhood and faith identities offer the opportunity for women of faith to deploy religious resources for peacebuilding. In the second section, I discuss findings on the typology of mourning and burial rituals by Gusii and Maasai women of faith, as shaped by a wide range of spiritual and cultural practices of these two communities. In the third section, I present and discuss the peacebuilding roles of shared lives, whereby Maasai and Gusii women of faith maintain interaction and bridge broken relations through everyday practices of sharing life and bonding at interpersonal and communal level. In the fourth section, I discuss how Maasai and Gusii women of faith provide faith-based security and protection services, traversing social norms and transcending demeaning perceptions on roles of care. I present the approach they take in doing their security and protection for children, vulnerable adults, and needy men rooted in and inspired by their religious faith and resources.

### ***MOTHERHOOD AND FAITH IDENTITIES: WOMEN'S LEGITIMACY AND MORAL AUTHORITY IN PEACEBUILDING***

Findings from my study suggest Maasai and Gusii women of faith combine motherhood and faith identities as resources that offer them legitimacy and moral authority for peacebuilding. In this section, I discuss this finding in more detail.

#### **Motherhood and faith identities: combined and even warped**

In keeping with gender identity as a central structure of the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding, motherhood and faith identities emerged as major resources deployed by women to engage in a common cause for peace. Both motherhood and faith identities provided powerful influences that enabled Maasai and Gusii women to transcend exclusion and the indignity of violence and gender-based othering that has emerged in previous sections. I found that social norms and perceptions allow Maasai and Gusii women to promote peace as mothers (or grandmothers), reproducers of lineage. In this case being a woman did not represent only the negative inessential other as suggested by Beauvoir (Beauvoir,

1949). Although femininity was objectified and even relentlessly repudiated (Kimmel, 2004:86), the motherhood identity of women was an essentialized significant other. Motherhood was so valued in these communities because it was considered instrumental to the production and reproduction of lineage. So, with motherhood, Maasai and Gusii women transcend their otherness to play socially accepted peacebuilding roles.

Due to the nature of the conflict and violence that disrupts social and familial order; motherhood does not merely confine Maasai or Gusii women to the home. As mothers, women could move around in public spaces to find food and water, to care for the injured and the infirm. Such peacebuilding roles were more acceptable and possible for Maasai and Gusii women acting within gendered roles of care as mothers (and sometimes as grandmothers or wives – mothers of men’s children), similar to patterns presented by Reychler and Paffenholz (Reychler & Paffenholz, 2001). The findings suggested that motherhood and faith identities were often linked. There were times when women derived their moral authority from both faith and motherhood with the gendered roles they proscribed to promote peace. Both motherhood and faith identities can therefore be elaborated as gender roles that are socially, culturally and historically constructed.

When sharing stories about how the violence was overcome, almost all participants said that both Gusii and Maasai women utilized both motherhood and faith identities to build peace. However, faith identity emerged as transcendent: motherhood identity was said to be more powerfully used when utilized alongside women’s faith identity. Mothers blessed warriors, their sons prior to the conflict, wives cleaned and stored war weapons in faith, and older women (grandmothers) performed various spiritual rituals. At the battlefield, women undertook their prescribed roles of caring motherhood through faith and prayer but also transcended such roles to provide moral, psychological and physical counsel against violence. When mothers and wives went to the battleground to feed the warriors, they utilized their moral authority as mothers and their legitimacy to lead prayers over meals to dissuade the warriors from violence, a role that was not

permitted for women in both societies. Elderly mothers and grandmothers organized shared spiritual activities such as beer parties that brought together women and men from both ethnic communities to transform adversarial relationships.

But these roles, though sometimes public, had less social value and prominence than the traditionally recognized peacebuilding roles dominated by men such as border committees and elder peace committees. And even within motherhood roles, social norms and disproportionate roles in caregiving reinforced circles whereby women were unable or unwilling to invest their time and efforts in so called “public” roles in peacebuilding (KI – MWFL: 06, Interviewed 12/08/2010). Motherhood identity was also exclusionary, since women who were childless did not participate in any of these roles, and would remain perpetual insignificant others in this case. Despite its limitations, women in this study took advantage of their motherhood identity as essentialized significant others to play their peacebuilding roles.

Often the Maasai and Gusii women held and upheld their faith identities in peacebuilding. Many women respondents spoke passionately about the role of religion in their lives and in the process of peacebuilding. Religion provided an indisputable identity for them to negotiate barriers and create opportunities based on their different identities, and to take the opportunity to promote peace. As one woman expressed during a focus group discussion,

“Even with unlimited barriers, we [women of faith] are not limited in faith and spirit.”(FG – MF: 24, interviewed 29/07/2010)

In the women only focus group discussions, the women acknowledged the insurmountable barriers they faced: limitations to their mobility, the burden of care, violence, and disregard of their voices. As women, they were nobodies and would have little influence if any. Within the spiritual arena women had a position and standing that enabled them to transcend stereotypes and speak safely about

peace in ways that they could be heard. Religious faith became a resource, providing deep motivation for the women to keep on working for peace. Faith also became the baseline for these actions that provided a safe position for women to challenge gendered limitations, and to even warp gender identity and transcend its prescriptions. So faith was utilized as a resource, mechanisms and as an identity. When telling her life story, one woman shared that,

“We are silenced most of the time. But when it comes to religion, we women have authority. It is as if we [women] can give the Ten Commandments of God [Biblical proscriptions against violence] and ask men to evaluate themselves.” (LS – GF: 01, Interviewed 04/08/2010).

Like the perspective of this Christian woman, both Gusii and Maasai women’s moral authority to speak on peace was rooted in their faith identities, whether Christian or Indigenous religions. Their visions for peace were rooted in religious belief, which allowed them to integrate religious language (such as the Ten Commandments) and their beliefs in the transcendent into their peacebuilding roles.

The women were not ignorant of the barriers and opportunities; neither did they minimize the implications on their peacebuilding roles. With faith, women were able to face and challenge the limitations that their gender identities presented, and remained safe in doing so within their inviolable faith identities. Their faith identity was often more powerful than their motherhood identity. Within the motherhood identity, there seemed to be a hierarchy of recognition. For instance, women’s gender identity as wives did not seem to offer much moral authority as faith identity. Although wives would in most cases be mothers, the relations between a husband and wife were structured through patriarchal power of men over women that constrained women’s movement and authority as wives within any given household unit. So, wives negotiated their voice within gendered relations at the household level by privileging their faith identities, rather than their

motherhood. This is evident in the words of a participant who shared her life story of a joint funeral and burial ritual ceremony that women of faith coordinated between the Gusii and Maasai that stirred a concern at household level and threatened her relations with her husband:

“Word spread everywhere that we Gusii women had conducted a burial with the Maasai enemy while the fighting was going on. And when I returned home and my husband said he heard about this demanded to know why I was working with the “enemy”, I just answered, ‘we *took* prayers to our small Christian community that happened to be in Maasai land at this time. And we read the word of God.’ Who could question the word of God?” (LS – GF: 01, Interviewed 04/08/2010).

This shift from “1” position to “we” as collective women, is indicative of the protection that faith accorded the women whenever they traversed gender norms, as well as the strength in a collective group of women of faith. Another shift was from wife to motherhood to faith identity. This type of shift was narrated as a personal experience of a participant when narrating her life story whereby she shifted to her faith identity to weigh in on her husband who was responding violently to her caution against the use of violence saying she had no right to speak to him. Using her moral authority and religious language rooted in indigenous faith, she said to him,

“I am not speaking to you. I am stating the wisdom of Enkai [Maasai Indigenous God] and the beliefs of our ancestors on peace. Surely, no one has authority over these.” (LS – MF: 02, interviewed 21/08/2010)

As a wife, her spouse had authority over her mobility and manner of speech with him. Almost all women in the women only focus group discussions shared this experience whereby they privileged their faith identities over wife or motherhood.



Faith identity offered women both voice and defence against potential violence whenever they traversed conventional social norms on a woman's place and relations within the family and society.

During women only focus group discussions, participants revealed that their faith was a deep motivation for them to keep struggling for peace, even when the circumstances seemed bleak and hopeless. They also indicated that faith enabled them to defy social norms and conventional wisdom on a woman's place and voice in the conflict and peace, given the violence, exclusion, and the indignity of gender-based othering they have to endure. This ability is apparent in the words of the participant in her life story where she forcefully articulated and disseminated her vision for peace rooted in her religious belief. With faith, the women are able to create a space for their action, navigate it, and transcend the systemic, structural and interpersonal risks and barriers and opportunities to their participation.

Women depended on their faith identity for all their personal and collective actions that utilized religious assets and resources for peace. Faith identity served as armour, protecting them from potentially atrocious limitations and positioning them to forcefully articulate and disseminate their visions for peace. Within a context that was saturated with violence, subordination and exclusion of women, faith identity radically positioned them and lit their paths to peace. As indicated in figure 3 below, the conflict context was a complex landscape for women of faith.

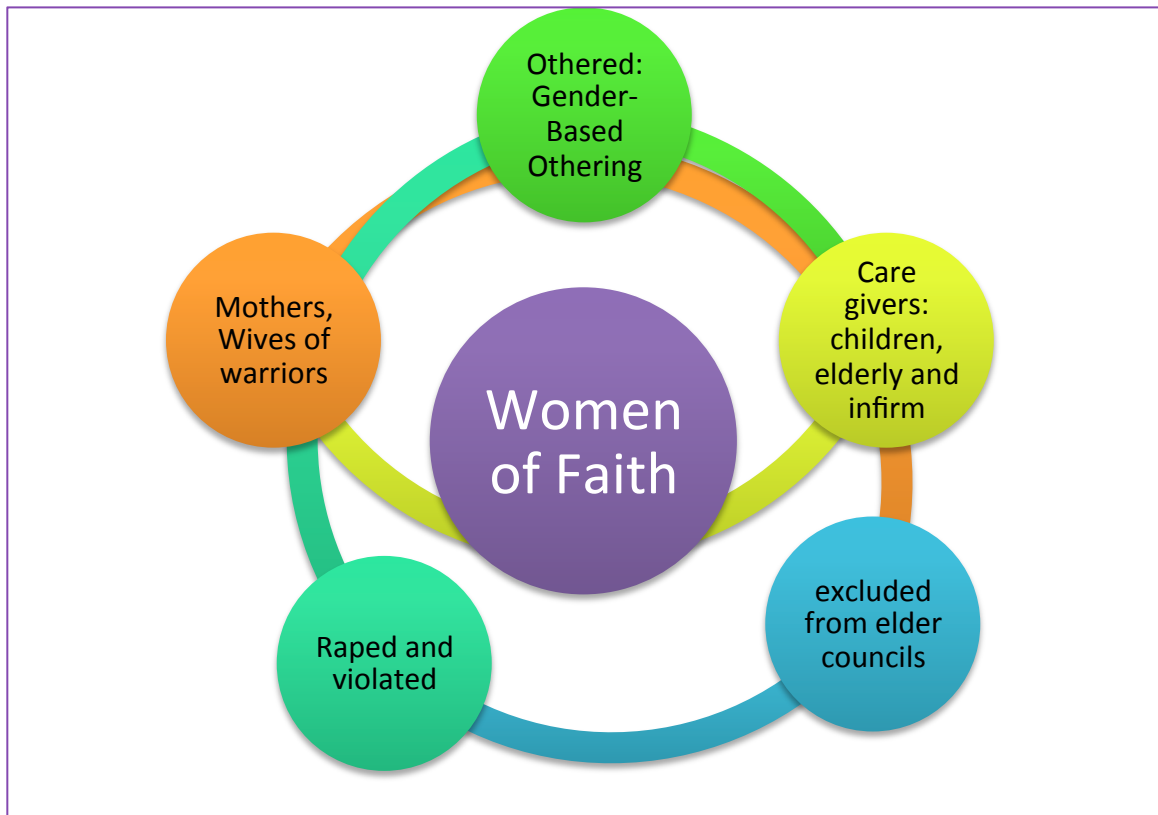


Figure 3: Conflict context: a complex landscape for women of faith

The women of faith had multiple identities: as wives, mothers, caregivers belonging to different ethnic communities. Often these identities led them to face a number of gendered barriers in the conflict context and peacebuilding arenas. In order for them to engage in peacebuilding, they had the greatest leverage as women of faith. For Gusii and Maasai women, faith is an identity that facilitates and motivates them in peacebuilding. They play their peacebuilding roles within a context that often constrains them, excludes, violates and even others them as already seen in the previous chapter. Faith not only provides a sense of identity that motivates women’s action for peace (Vendley, 2005; McGrory, 2008); in most instances, faith is the only acceptable means for women to create visions of peace rooted in religious experience, find their voice and take action. Faith identity is protective armour against what may be perceived as trespassing gendered expectation on what women could or could not do. Faith identity requires a radical power, one that participants refer to as a power full of faith

### **A power full of faith: women's spiritual agency**

The Maasai and Gusii women not only privilege their gender identity of motherhood; but they also utilize their faith as the foundation of their peacebuilding. The conflict dynamics and context are often a threat to women, a factor that creates fear, limits their mobility, dispossesses them of almost all kinds of social power and discourages them from participating in peacebuilding roles. Within this context, the women's disposition requires a radical kind of power: one that participants referred to as transcendent power—a power full of faith. The women understand, experience and enact their peacebuilding roles in, through and by faith.

The notion of transcendent power full of faith is women's spiritual agency; a disposition of influence, and a type of attitude that governs the peacebuilding roles of women and offers them sufficient source of faith and spirit to take action for the common good. Such spiritual agency is made possible due to the often acceptable and socially indisputable faith identities of women. Underneath the shadow of motherhood, women conceal gender-based otherness and engage their faith identities as spiritual agency to promote peace. Unlike their othered gender and ethnic identities, faith offers women an alternative power with a position and standing that transcends their otherness and privileges their voice and self-perception. As one woman expressed during a focus group discussion,

“Even with unlimited barriers and opportunities, we [women of faith] are not limited in faith and spirit.”(FG – MF: 24, interviewed 29/07/2010)

It is contrasted with the binaries of power and powerlessness that often consider women as victims and men as perpetrators. Often women can access and control religious assets relating to social reproduction including practical emergency needs. In wartime, such assets are critical for survival, healing and hope. Even when the gender identity of motherhood is contained and silenced as inferior, faith

identity offers alternative language with which to negotiate and transform subjectivity to significant voice:

“It is as if we [women] can give the ten commandments of God [Biblical proscriptions against violence] and ask men to evaluate themselves.” (LS – GF: 01, Interviewed 04/08/2010).

Scriptural values & teachings inspire and motivate women of faith to take action, and the seeming inviolability of religious activity provides protection to and opportunities for women to act (McGrory, 2008). With faith, women persist in their voices for peace, navigate social risks that prescribe violence, and find the right words to defend themselves against gendered limitations to their freedom of speech:

“I am not speaking to you. I am stating the wisdom of Enkai [Maasai Indigenous God] and the beliefs of our ancestors on peace. Surely, no one has authority over these.” (LS – MF: 02, interviewed 21/08/2010)

The faith power stands and even collides with cultural norms as women assert their voice. At the same time, the women make claims to faith-based representational power—representing the divine, God or spirit. From the perspective of the women’s experiences, this type of power full of faith is not merely symbolic representation of power from high above. It is the basis for how women of faith understand, value and establishes meaningful actions for peace rooted in faith. With this power, the women do not get intimidated in fear, but can speak on with courage and resolution. With faith, they can employ super-sacredly religious sanctions against violence, and regulate the violent behaviour of men in their families and in society. With the spirit of power that faith enables, women feel fortified against societal reproaches. Faith helps them go through risks and barriers and opportunities, and sometimes removes them.

With faith, the women invoke assistance from God and divine spirits to gain confidence to play out their peacebuilding roles. They believe that the divine plays a role in empowering their actions and making them effective peace builders. Their faith identity offers promising directions to enable local mobility. In faith, they can move around to take part in spiritual rituals and prayers before, during and after violence breaks out, invoking peace and non-violence. Faith becomes the basis of their power within that dispels the fear within and transforms the women into agents of peace.

Women's power full of faith is in sharp contrast to hegemonic masculinity and gender-based othering, which is built on fear, shame, false bravery, violent protection, combativeness and violence. Power full of faith helps bring sober-mindedness on the realities of war – truth telling on killing, being killed, rape, displacement – and fearlessly condemns such acts as falling short of humanity and spiritual proscriptions against violence. It exhorts men, especially young warriors, to choose non-violence and makes impressions on warriors, husbands, and others by stirring their faith and a desire for peace. It advocates for a code of conduct based on values such as sobriety, hope, moderation, temperance, quietness, reflectiveness, sharing, and honesty. This is in contrast to hegemonic behaviours based on power over others, aggression, fear, shame, retaliation, completion, anger, violence, confrontation, full of bluster and masking of pain. Faith serves as an important identity for women to exercise social control, enabling them to indirectly reject hegemonic masculinity and gender-based othering, and the violent power it espouses.

Women's faith identity is neither essentially static nor separate; it is in dynamic interaction, relationship and/or influence and even tension with other identities. Gusii and Maasai women privilege motherhood and faith identities—and sometimes utilize both simultaneously to play their peacebuilding roles. Although faith precedes and engenders women's agency and peacebuilding roles in this context, their actions must be in conformity with their gender roles. Even with and through faith, the women cannot participate in certain male dominated

peacebuilding roles such as those relating to land disputes and livestock raids. Their peacebuilding interventions are unable to tackle gender discriminatory norms and transform unequal land and property rights, or to challenge the culture of violence manifest in gender-based othering. It is as if the women must always battle in faith through every role, fighting to redeem themselves and overcome gender-based societal norms or even their own self-perceptions. That is why initially participants struggle with the questions about what roles women of faith have played in peacebuilding—because their identity is inferior and so it follows that their roles are disregarded and invisible. Although they have considerable voice and influence as spiritual beings, their inferior status as women (insignificant others) is an overlapping disadvantage. The notion of a power full of faith implies then that gender identity cannot be separated from women's faith identity, and that a loss of faith could be paralyzing in this case.

Women's disposition of faith as foundational to their peacebuilding roles utilizes prayer as spiritual action.

### **Prayer: spiritual action for peace**

A power full of faith relies on prayer as transformative action. In agreement with the literature review, prayer emerges in this study as one of the spiritual resources that women of faith employ to promote peace. Prayer offers tools to maintain the struggle as a sacred religious obligation by fostering inner strength and generating commitment, resilience and courage (McGrory, 2008). Like Catherine of Sienna, Sojourner Truth, and Rosa Parks reviewed in the literature, Gusii and Maasai women draw their spiritual power to act and their moral authority as peace builders from prayer, defying social norms that limit their voice and participation (Rutgers, 1997; Gilbert, 1850; Parks, 1994). The basis of their prayer is occasioned by the violent conflict, the sense of hopelessness, their awareness of their gender and faith identities and their hope in restoring and rebuilding what is lost.

For Gusii and Maasai women prayer is more than a spiritual resource—it is spiritual action, a peacebuilding role. Because they are often considered insignificant others with social norms that govern their mobility and speech, their prayer is an act of courage and bravery. It is also a state of being, an attitudinal power full of faith that challenges and withstands gender-based othering.

The patterns that emerged from the women-only focus group discussions revealed that women engaged prayer as action in different ways (WO-FG: GF, Interviewed 26/07/2010, WO-FG: MF, Interviewed 27/07/2010). Some utilized prayer as a source of strength that mobilized their action and even ordained it as divine representation. The women also utilized prayer to draw attention to the realities of the conflict situation; the different forms of violence and the wounding, suffering and indignity the fighting had caused to everyone in the community. The women shared that they found voice to be able to lament prayerfully in the public within their communities asking mournful rhetoric questions such as: “why is peace so elusive?” “Why are we so broken?”, “Where is the presence of goodness,/divinity/God/Engoro/Enkai? Why is there so much distance with the divine?”. Other prayers that participants shared women engaged in focused on confession and forgiveness as a relational dynamic. Recognizing the wrongdoings against others, the suffering caused to the enemy and failures to contain violence, the women expressed sorrow, and then sought forgiveness from the transcendent and from those who have been wronged. The women also petitioned for their own needs and those of their families and communities. Some of the practical gender needs the participants in the focus group discussions highlighted in prayer were food, shelter and safety. Intangible needs that participants shared women commonly petitioned for were endurance, healing, forgiveness, mercy, divine will and peace. Finally, the participants shared that prayer enabled them to lay out shared visions and hopes for peace, For example they would envision— “this family sitting together again with our children and enjoying a meal in peace”, “I long to exchange a banana for milk”—and they would go out and pursue those visions for peace to make them practical. They

prayed that peace is possible and that the events of war and human suffering will end.

Within their varied forms of prayer, there seemed to be permeable territories where purpose and strengths, memories and hopes overlapped and were harmoniously linked. There was also a transcending overlap between hopelessness and hope, suffering and human flourishing, based on analyses of the human condition and the reality of the conflict. The forms of prayer emphasized community and relationship – with the divine/spirits/God, with others, with the “enemy” and with nature; laid out timeframes for action; demanded that listeners take action; and garnered the spiritual strength of the women to arise and take action.

Perhaps for security reasons, the structure of prayer for peace was often open and innovative, unlike the more strictly structured religious services and formal prayer led by religious clergy or spiritual elders like the priest or Laibon. Often the women could not find a quiet place away from the distractions of violence. So forms of prayer were conducted within contexts of fear and insecurity; such as at funerals or burials, or when on the run for life, or at the battlefield serving meals to warriors. It was hardly silent and contemplative in a given quiet place. Nonetheless, it was deliberate, constant and innovative in structure. Indigenous structure included chanting, singing, spiritual folklores, speaking out loudly, spiritual sayings and proverbs, invocations of ancestral spirits and harmony with nature, repetition of same words loudly over and over again and body movement. Christian structure included scripture reading or quoting, repetition of relevant scripture texts, interception, invocations of the Holy Spirit, liturgical dance and singing gospel music. Sometimes it was a combination of both indigenous and Christian practices as was the case of burial prayers shared by one of the participants (LS – GF: 01, Interviewed 04/08/2010).

The women offer the prayers individually or collectively with words and movement. The same prayer may be said by individual women or a group of them



at different locations in a coordinated fashion. Sometimes it relies on religious services or formally organized faith-based networks already established, such as the *Mama Mkatoliki* (KI – GRL: 09, interviewed 02/08/2011) or the small Christian community (LS – GF: 01, Interviewed 04/08/2010), other times it is based on personal relations and individual agency. Prayer may involve women only, or mobilize congregations of women, men and children in communal or household prayer. The ritual dance prayer that I observed at the church service engaged women, men and children in symbolic disarmament in the revolutionary circle of peace is a spiritual commitment to peace against which women in their divine representational power could hold the men accountable (O – CS:01, observed 31/07/2011). In addition to the representational power, women led communal prayer with moral authority over men and children because prayer presupposes powerlessness of those who pray and with divinely power, they (and anyone) can pray in the presence of any human or earthly authority.

Prayer as action does not require a lack of faithfulness to other forms of identities and action, such as those based on ethnic and gender identities. In fact, prayer is in intricate relationship and sometimes collides with women's gender and ethnic identities in peacebuilding. The women's prayer roles are practiced both in the private and in the public. In both, prayer encourages bodily expression, muttering, empowering silence and the projection of voice. Hence, the women trespass social norms that limit their authority, freedom of expression and speech to demand for and take action. Their prayer fosters ethnic identities of the Maasai and Gusii peoples and their way of life. It reflects and utilizes ethnic and cultural values, forms of speech, dance patterns and artefacts. Through prayer, women make significant advancement in gendered actions for peace as mothers, and even in public and secular ministry of service like nursing and care – treating wounded people and protecting children and the elderly through, with and in prayer. Prayer pervades their every action and every path to peace.

## ***MOURNING AND BURIAL RITUALS OF HEALING AND RECONCILIATION***

I found that both Gusii and Maasai women of faith played significant roles in promoting mourning and burial rituals of healing and reconciliation. In this section, I discuss how the women of faith deployed religious resources in mourning and burial rituals of healing and reconciliation to promote peacebuilding. I begin this section by examining the faith beliefs and practices on death by the Maasai and Gusii, exploring the positioning of the roles of women of faith. It then presents the major characteristics of the nature of death in the conflict setting, identifying the dynamics of violence, loss and vengeance based on conflict-related deaths generate for the Gusii and Maasai communities. Based on this background, the section discusses the findings on the typology of mourning and burial rituals by Gusii and Maasai women of faith, and how women of faith employ a wide range of spiritual and cultural practices of these two communities.

### **Women healers and faith beliefs on death**

The Gusii believe that death is an ancient irreversible curse brought about through greed, and that the dead have an afterlife that can lead either to good ancestral spirits, or evil spirits that may cause harm and bring suffering to the community. They have rituals of honouring the dead to ensure that the afterlife would be positive ancestral spirits and not to bring to them “*ebirecha*”, the evil spirits, or the devil in modern culture. They also believe that killing humans causes suffering to the perpetrator, their family as well as to the entire community, resulting in unending punishments and *ebirecha* – evil spirits. Murder is therefore strongly prohibited. Anyone who commits murder has to undergo elaborate rituals of cleansing to deliver the individual and the entire community from imminent punishments and evil spirits. Both Gusii women and men perform such rituals of cleansing to drive away evil spirits from individuals, homes and the community.

The Gusii have very intimate relationships with the dead. In modern culture, an adult male would typically be buried within 3 days, and a female or child within 1-3 days. The dead are often cleaned and dressed in the best attires, and their bodies displayed publicly at home for viewing by loved ones, friends and community

often in coffins. The Gusii have a tradition called “*okogesa*” where they keep awake night and day spending time with the dead to honourably say goodbye and reconcile, as they share food, mourn and talk with one another for a period of 24 hours. After the funeral and mourning, the body is buried in a grave dug on the ground on the family compound. Although the Gusii show a deep relationship with the dead, they believe that if anyone suddenly came across a dead body, the living individual had to perform some sacrifices called “*okongwansa*” to cleanse themselves of any evil spirits. These cleansing rituals were often performed by spiritual healers and sorcerers, who may be either male or female. A legendary tale of a Gusii warrior named Otenyo who resisted and fought the British Colonial government killing a British official is based on the belief that Legendary Otenyo had supernatural protection based on the medicine from his aunt named Moraa who was a medicine woman. According to the folklore, Moraa the medicine-woman was believed to have led a rebellion of the Gusii against the colonial establishment in Gusii land.

The Maasai indigenous attitudes towards the dead are also based on deep respect and honour of life and death. Unlike the Gusii who bury the dead in a grave, the Maasai leave the dead outside their homes, under trees or in the open. It is believed that if an individual was good, hyenas would devour the body the first night of their death. If the body is not devoured, animal sacrifices are made to cleanse the person and keep away curses. Individuals may throw leaves, grass or stones on the dead bodies that are not devoured to cover them up and to keep away any evil spirits from themselves.

The Christian attitudes towards mortality for both the Maasai and Gusii were based on shared principles of the Christian faith: that death is a passage from earthly life to a new everlasting life. So for Christians in both communities, the death would typically be buried on earth and mass celebrated by an ordained minister who blessed the dead body before it was laid down to rest. The Christians believed that the body may decompose, but the soul would be

resurrected. Participants shared that most Gusii and some Maasai people who were Christians had retained indigenous beliefs about death. So funeral and burial was often an integration of Christian and indigenous religions and cultures

Other roles of female spiritual healers among the Gusii and Maasai identified by participants were those of diviners, sorcerers, and herbalists. The diviners were said to prescribe healing sacrifices that would appease the displeased spirits of the dead and escape their wrath. Sorcerers provided defence against the ever-present evil and destructive power of witchcraft. Herbalists offered healing herbs, grains and plants to the ill, wounded or dying. I note existing literature which indicates that these roles of healers were outlawed by the British administration during the colonial period through the “Witchcraft Act” of 1925, and although part of the law was revoked following Kenya’s independence in 1963 (Sindigia, Nyaigotti-Chacha, & Kanunah, 1990), it created tensions on its practice. The spread of Christianity through western missionaries prohibited such practices among its Christian congregations. Despite these challenges, participants suggested that such practices were still existent in modern culture, although often “hidden away” and practiced secretly. Christians combined traditional healing with modern medicine. Future research would explore historical factors that have undermined women’s roles in traditional medicine and help illuminate the roles of women in the science of traditional healing and cure through indigenous herbs or supernatural powers. This chapter focuses on faith healing, which goes beyond physiological cure to incorporate social, psychological and spiritual elements of healing.

### **The nature of death, loss and vengeance**

As already indicated in preceding sections, during conflict death is both a terror and a catalyst for vengeance for various reasons. Participants expressed that conflict-related deaths were much more impactful than natural deaths because they were very sudden, untimely and violent. Communities lost large numbers of people at an incident or within a very short period. The traumatizing manner in which individuals were killed also impacted the communities.

Recalling an unforgettable incident, a key informant cited an incident at Konangare/iyenga, one of the hotspots where 25 people were killed in one instance of retaliated violence (KI – MCE: 04 Interviewed 28/08/2010). The killings started due to a rumour that a Maasai had been killed by the Gusii and his body was at the border of Konangare. The Maasai organized themselves to attack the Gusii and learned too late that this was bait that claimed over 10 people's lives in one instance. So, the key informant recollected that the Maasai warriors went back and re-organized themselves for an attack that he said claimed over 15 lives of the Gusii people. Such killings would go on in cycles of revenge but were said to be always devastating. As a key informant health worker said that the bodies that they received at Akemo valley mortuary were badly mutilated. The health worker suggested that the experience with death during conflict was too traumatic,

“We can never get used to such violent deaths, so the more they happen, the more heart-breaking” (KI – GHW: 07, Interviewed 25/08/2010).

Participants shared that the nature of death was atrociously violent, with bodies often mutilated and or body-parts chopped off by spears, poisoned arrows and machetes. An account of a former Maasai Moran warrior captured the killing and mutilation of a Maasai school boy:

“Armed with machetes, spears and swords, the militia took the school boy out of a *Matatu* [public service vehicle] and killed him in cold blood. They then mutilated his body, chopped off his head, hang it on a stick and went to the top of the hill to incite us [opponents] for war. They said to us “*we will do the same to you and your young men, and then we take your women*”. We had to defend ourselves.”

Killing often generated retaliated violence. Another reason why death was so impactful was that survivors were constantly faced with the imminent and vivid prospect of death. Survivors also had difficulty coping with the large numbers of violent and sudden deaths and resulting traumas for survivors including widows and orphans whose lives are torn apart by intense debilitating terror and the ravages of sudden and violent deaths.

In focus group discussions, participants indicated that sometimes due to the violence, the people were denied the opportunity to undergo their varied burial rituals and rites for the dead. This meant that the trauma was deeper since there was no closure or cleansing of spirits according to their beliefs. A woman in the focus group discussions reflected on this saying:

“Some bodies are never found, or sometimes they are badly mutilated. You know like in the case of my neighbour Ruth, her husband’s body was never found.”

The participants said that women died less from direct injuries from combat, and more from injuries resulting from attacks in their homes, in the community when providing care, or during child birth. The participants reported that pregnant women were at the greatest danger of death of themselves or the infant during the conflict, and some of them who survived would suffer longer-term obscured birth-related effects including fistula. These pregnant women would also lack access to health facilities, food or other essential needs. Other deaths or long-term injuries resulted from physical injuries that warriors endured.

These factors were said to cause a lot of grieving and unbearable shock in the community, and to escalate the violence. The participants explained that the public mourning for people who die in the conflict was emotionally charged. A woman in the focus group discussion described the mood of such burials as filled with “vengeful emotions”,

“Following the burial of a warrior or an innocent person killed in the fighting, most likely another fighting takes place the next day, or a few days after. So many people are filled with vengeful emotions.”  
(FG - GF: 19, interviewed 26/07/2010)

Burial and funeral ceremonies were therefore noted by the participants as fundamental to promoting healing and reconciliation. Besides the trauma that conflict-related deaths caused, burials could easily become the means to deepen the conflict, open new unseen wounds and renew hatred toward the enemy. Participants in the focus group discussions pointed out that burial ceremonies presented both potential for conflict escalation and opportunity for healing and reconciliation. They claimed that women of faith took advantage of the opportunity that burials presented to promote peace. The section below discusses in more detail how women of faith engaged in peacebuilding through burial rituals of healing and reconciliation.

### **The meaning of healing and reconciliation**

As already indicated, much of the survival of Gusii and Maasai society and religions is embodied in their response to death. This is more so following the outbreak of violent conflict. When sharing experiences on how they responded to conflict-related deaths, almost all the participants I spoke with stressed the role that healing and reconciliation played. Most of the participants (49 out of 55) shared that both Gusii and Maasai women of faith were central in playing this role of healing and reconciliation through rituals of mourning and burial.

Before presenting and discussing the findings relating to this theme on mourning and burial rituals of healing and reconciliation, I offer John Paul and Angela Lederach’s conceptual themes on healing and reconciliation in the context where people have suffered collective experiences of penetrating unspeakable violence (Lederach & Lederach, 2010). They stress a repetitious back and forth relational focus that seeks to address the often hidden and intangible elements of violence that affect healing and reconciliation. They suggest that reconciliation must begin

from and be solidified around spatial encounters within social and physical geographies where the estranged meet, exchange, engage and even embrace to create and re-create common ground for peace (Lederach & Lederach, 2010: 4-5). They emphasize that through its metaphorical structure and face-to-face relationships, social healing can achieve both individual and collective reconciliation based on the lived experiences of local communities affected by violence and faced with a need to address grievances and deep loss in the presence of their enemies (Lederach & Lederach, 2010: 6-9). The nature of healing that they present is not a one-time political event but rather a complex permanent dynamic aspect of on-going life, daily presence and constant vigilance with ups and downs, prevention and cure in the midst and aftermath of open violence. Although violence is a constant threat, healing and reconciliation provides spaces of interaction where individuals and communities resiliently build a way forward while still living in the presence of their enemies and all that makes their suffering vivid, painful and difficult.

This definition provided an explanation of the concepts and goals of healing and reconciliation, which corresponded in a large part with those of the participants. Healing and reconciliation among the Gusii and Maasai follows similar patterns of repetitious relational actions that seeks to address the often hidden, intangible and emotive elements of violence. Such healing focused on healing intergenerational invisible wounds, social wellbeing, spiritual values, personal motivations, roles and responsibilities rather than mere physiological cure.

While the idea of solidifying reconciliation around spatial encounters within social and physical geographies is an important one, the experiences of participants showed that geographical spaces and places are gendered and determined by unequal gender norms and relations that limit women's access and participation, more so during violent conflict. Hence, for spatial encounters to take place for women peace builders, geographical spaces and places required transcendent transformations. As a result, women's roles in healing and reconciliation were not apolitical, and often they were limited to only certain spatial encounters on the



basis of unequal gender relations and women's subordinate social statuses. Participants pointed out that faith identity provided the mode and mechanism for women to create and/or participate in transcendent spatial encounters for healing and reconciliation. The reference was on faith healing, which encompassed Lederach and Lederach's concept of social healing but necessarily transcended it and incorporated spiritual aspects given women's social standing relative to men's and the inviolability of women's faith identity.

Another understanding that almost all the participants I spoke to stressed was the importance of encounters with self for inner healing, 'healing of the heart'. Participants indicated that spaces and places were not only geographical; participants pointed to non-material non-physical spiritual spaces within individual's hearts, minds, thoughts and words. These were the spaces where seeds of hatred were sown, and where pain, anger, vengeance and violence reigned, controlling individual's actions. Encounters with oneself were therefore given primacy in the process of healing and reconciliation. When sharing her life story about how women promote inner healing, a participant indicated,

"It is all about your heart. You have to ask yourself, what is in your heart? Because you can have violence planted in your heart, or peace. If you have violence planted in your heart, then that is how you will act; and if you have peace planted in your heart, your actions will show it. If you bear hatred for your neighbour in your heart, it is going to show itself when you stand by idly when your neighbour's life is at stake, or when you actually cause harm to your neighbour. Death from the violence we experience during conflict convinces the heart to choose violence, as if that is the only means to proof to the dead that they were loved. But instead, it generates more hopelessness, suffering, deeper wounds, for generations and generations. It kills hope and wholeness, and has no space for forgiveness. So, we must first heal the hearts of people of all violence. We must build peace within our hearts. And

that is the message we spread to our children, husbands and society in our daily practices.”(LS – MF: 04, interviewed 20/08/2010)

For women of faith, the primary purpose of healing and reconciliation was beyond physiological health or return of lost material assets such as livestock and land; it was the interlinking of psychological, social and spiritual encounters, a re-awakening that sought deeper inner healing of broken hearts, bodies, minds and spirits. It focused on both personal and collective healing, predominantly invoking “we” in reference to the individual’s need of belonging and personhood that was tied to collective healing and the hope for interdependency. It focused on repeated actions of care and concern for others, building human relations in difficult and atrociously violent circumstances; but it went beyond that seeking to establish transcendent relations and balance with nature, the environment, with the dead, with divine spirits and with God/Enkai/Engoro. Their definition of healing and reconciliation operationalized their faith-based mechanisms and identified ongoing repeated actions that reliably assisted women of faith to promote transformative peacebuilding. Participants associated healing and reconciliation with themes of dignity, forgiveness, wholeness, and the spirituality of hope and human flourishing. The two were interlinked and required a combination of personal and societal transcendence of suffering, a spirituality of hope and human flourishing

### **Mourning and burial rituals of healing and reconciliation**

Some of the activities included performing honour for the dead, condemning the violence and comforting the survivors. Women were strategically positioned to undertake these roles. Almost all the participants (42 out of 55) said that generally it was more acceptable and less risky for women to participate in such funeral ceremonies with the “enemy” group than for men. A key informant interview suggested that men’s participation posed serious security risks saying,

“If a Gusii man showed up at a funeral where a Maasai *Moran* warrior had been killed by *Chinkororo* Gusii warrior, he would most likely be lynched right there.” KI – MFW: 02, Interviewed 19/08/2010

The participants said that some men such as clan elders, religious male priests or pastors, law enforcement personnel or doctors may interact with persons of different ethnicity during the conflict, but only to play their functional roles as pastor, doctor or police. Even then, their ethnicity put them in a vulnerable position where they may be at risk of violence perpetrated against them. Besides, formal institutions and social order collapsed during violent conflict, making it impossible for clergy and other religious leaders to interact with the communities before normalcy returned. Other participants thought that men were generally not good with emotional matters of healing and tended to gravitate towards retribution and/or retaliation. Furthermore, funerals and burial ceremonies involved a number of gendered roles such as cooking, mourning, feeding and caring for the afflicted, roles that were perceived as best undertaken by women. For these reasons, women of faith took on more visible leadership roles during conflict-related burial and funeral ceremonies. One of the participants who shared her life story spoke extensively of a memorable burial ceremony she helped lead that promoted healing and reconciliation:

I will never forget when the son of Salome was killed during the violence that left more than ten people dead. Salome was a member of our *Jumuiya* (small Christian community). We needed to be with her and offer our support, even though the political and ethnic animosities were high. The priest could not go. There was no order in our community, and everything was in disarray at church. But our *Jumuiya* still decided to go to Salome’s homestead for the burial ceremony, despite all the tensions. We consulted with Salome’s family and other sisters in faith from the Maasai community who were members of our *Jumuiya*. They agreed to include us in the program. We had faith. During the burial ceremony, Grace had the opportunity to read the bible saying: *‘the righteous perish, and no one*

*ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil.'*

Then the Maasai sisters sang a mourning song. A male relative of the dead warrior read the eulogy as required. Several male elders spoke. "We will not be defeated," the chief and clan elder mourned. This was followed by the moving talk from the deceased grandmother, a wise old woman who spoke in Maasai spiritual parables of wisdom condemning the senseless violence that led to the untimely death of her grandchild. "*This death is another one that could have been prevented,*" she mourned as she mentioned the names of all those who had been killed in war. A woman traditional healer performed a cleansing ritual for the deceased and a healing ritual for all of us.

We sang together in unison as the body was laid down to the grave. And in the quiet moment of the final prayer, my voice roared and trembled as I read the closing word of God: *'God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'* Men wept in silence. Children cried. Women wailed asking for accountability to protect life and the universe as required by Christian morals and African traditional religions.

*"We have failed and brought suffering to ourselves. No mother should have to bear this pain I carry today, no more killing,"* Salome mourned.

(LS – GF: 01, Interviewed 04/08/2010).

This account shows how the women of faith, working together across different religious identities and ethnic divides, invoke religious beliefs and practices such as scripture reading and prayer to promote healing and reconciliation. Even when messages of violence and vengeance were overwhelming through the clan elders' remarks that "we will not be defeated", the women of faith counter such

messages of hate and violence with spiritual parables on peace. They emotionally appeal to the mourners by focusing on the realities of death and loss, all of which they assert could have been prevented. They find their own voices and moral authority to condemn such senseless killings. The women of faith also simultaneously engage multiple relations and networks. They utilize kin relations such as grandmothers, as well as religious relations such as members of their own community prayer groups – the jumuiyas. They engage informal faith, kin and community-based networks and efforts to speak about healing, reconciliation and breaking the cycle of violence. Such relations and networks would be present in the aftermath of violence, ensuring sustained infrastructure for on-going healing and reconciliation.

Typically burial ceremonies would be led by a senior male religious leader (ordained clergy for Christians). But due to the tensions and disruptions in the community, this is not possible. The women of faith utilize religion to serve as bridges to ethnic or clan differences. Hence the women create alternative rituals engaging their own networks and relations to engage a female healer in performing cleansing and healing rituals to reconcile the dead with the living confront the pain and create an enabling environment for healing the mourners. These practices reflect three of Lederach's concepts of reconciliation that foster truth, mercy, and peace at grassroots level. As Lederach outlines, truth represents the longing for acknowledgement of wrong and the validation of painful loss and experiences; mercy articulates the need for acceptance, letting go and new beginnings; and peace underscores the need for interdependence, wellbeing and security (Lederach, 1997). But Maasai and Gusii women don't seem to have the legitimacy to engage directly with Lederach's fourth concept of justice, which seeks vindication of individual, and group rights while advocating for restitution and social restructuring. The women of faith must first locate themselves within existing unequal relations and statuses in an unequal system of power that accords different and inequitable rights and capabilities to advocate for restitution and/or socio-economic structuring. So the women of faith privilege religious language and action, and on the intangible non-material things including feeling,

thoughts and emotions. But they also rely on interpersonal relations and societal values of human dignity and community. The participants in women-only focus group discussions (20) reported that funeral prayers typically focused on prayers for the person who had died, remembrance of those who have died in the past and are connected to the deceased person, prayers for forgiveness, prayer for the family of the deceased that is mourning their loss, and then prayer for the community so that there can be healing.

Funeral prayers	
<b>Prayers For The Dead Person</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflecting on the life of the dead person</li> <li>• Acknowledging the death was preventable</li> <li>• Remorse and desire to end such painful suffering</li> </ul>
<b>Prayers Of Remembrance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Naming before God, ancestors and the congregation people who have died as a result of the senseless war: Warriors, women, children</li> </ul>
<b>Petition For Forgiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Struggle with suffering on divisions/violence between the Gusii and Maasai while confronting/mediating vengeance</li> </ul>
<b>Prayers For Those Who Mourn</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comforting the family</li> <li>• Re-generating the family and the children at the funeral</li> <li>• Mourning</li> </ul>
<b>Prayers For The Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For peaceful rest of the souls or spirits of the dead</li> <li>• For peace and healing and understanding in the family and community</li> </ul>

Table 9: Typology of funeral prayers by Gusii and Maasai women of faith in Kenya

Table 9 above represents the typology of funeral prayers of collective healing and reconciliation identified by the participants. The prayers were not mere eschatological utopias, but well-thought out and planned action to eliminate the violence and promote healing and reconciliation. The women of faith first prayed for the dead with conviction not only to honour them, but to shame the community for causing such a death that could have been prevented. This emotional process led to the prayer of remembrance where the women led the mourner in a historical analysis of the conflict and all the senseless deaths that have resulted from it. This had an effect not only on the bereaved family, but on entire communities at a very personal and collective level. The women of faith then focused on needed forgiveness, moving away from the atrocities to healing.

The women acknowledge that healing cannot take place without forgiveness, which includes truth telling on the devastating divisions and atrocious forms of violence between the Gusii and Maasai. The women engage the mourners in prayer for forgiveness that is not one sided: they recognize that each community has contributed to the suffering. So in addition to confronting and mediating vengeance, the women of faith ask for accountability of actions from communities, arousing healthy shame and guilt in a self-evaluative process of reflection on atrocious actions that reinforces responsibility and remorse. Finally, the women of faith engage mourners in prayers for protection and healing for the bereaved and for the entire community. By doing so, they provide comfort and promise regeneration for the bereave family as well as the community. They assure the peaceful rest of the souls or spirits of the dead. They also pray for continuing peace, healing and understanding in the family and community. The women of faith confront death so that it bears conviction rather than doom, and it encourages individual and collective action for peace, rooted in a strong belief system of faith. They leverage their faith network – the prayer group – but move beyond it to find new ways of promoting lasting inter-ethnic, non-kin and inter-faith relations for peace.

In narrating her life story, a woman suggested that that burial ceremonies in wartime were transformative of the sense of hopelessness that war brings (LS – GF: 03, interviewed 04/09/2010). Another participant in the mixed focus group discussions shared that funeral ceremonies led by women of faith offered hope when all seemed hopeless:

”Funerals are a time for sadness, but we do not mourn as if we have no faith. My most encouraging scripture that was used during my husband’s funeral when he was killed in battle is 1 Thessalonians 4:13: *‘we do not want you to grieve like others who have no hope’*. We genuinely mourn, yet we never feel defeated – we share so much hope that funerals end up inspiring not only us women, but also men and children. This keeps us united as a network of women of faith, our sadness is mixed with hope that one day the killings will stop and that we will all live together in harmony.” (FG - MF: 30, Interviewed 29/07/2010)

The funerals were viewed by a majority of the participants (41 out of 55) as inter-related activities intentionally planned by the Gusii and Maasai women of faith to promote healing and reconciliation of a broken community. The participants said that the burial ceremonies were not just a one day event, but a methodical process of healing with integrated steps. Figure 4 below is an attempt to represent some of the most basic steps for this healing process identified by the participants.



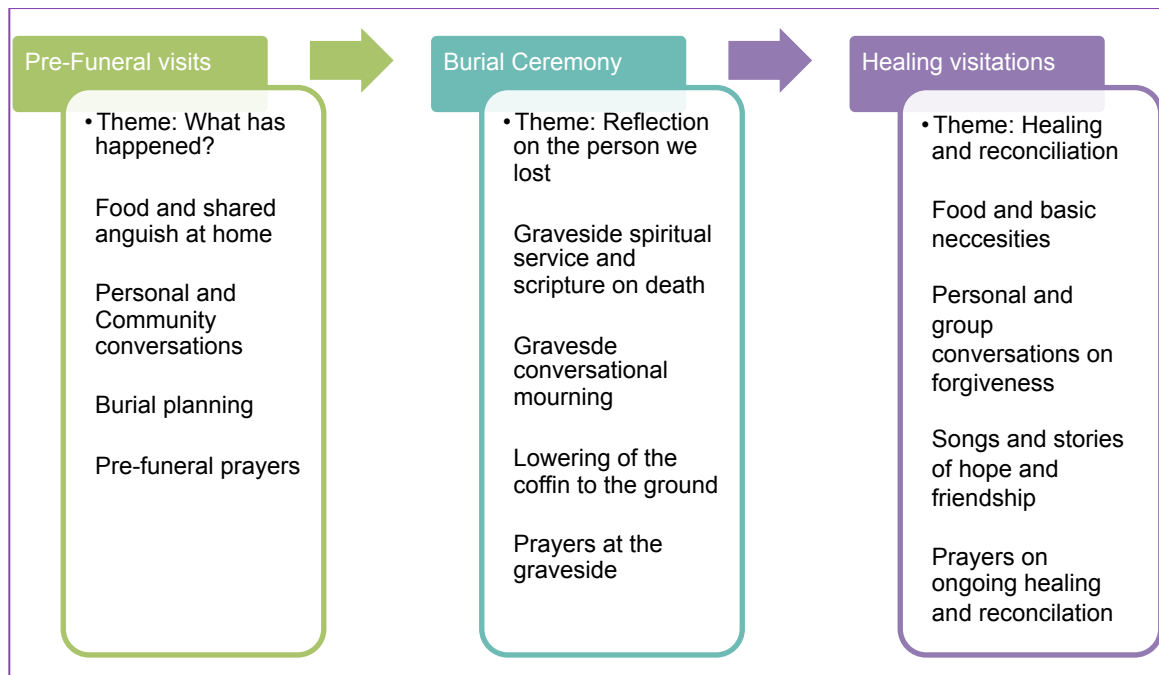


Figure 4: Interconnected steps in funeral rituals of healing and reconciliation

Rather than focus on one-time events at the burial, the rituals were repetitious actions that were replicable as ways of life in the aftermath of violence. Women of faith were said to courageously take up leadership roles in organizing and leading pre-funeral visits, burial ceremonies and healing visitations despite the security risks during burial ceremonies where mourners are often charged with hatred for the enemy and flaring vengeance. Having laid the ground for friendships to develop, the women continue visitations and sharing day to day roles such as shared labour and ceremonies for harvest in the aftermath of violence.

**Brokenness and the spirituality of human flourishing:**

Funeral and burial rituals of healing and reconciliation do not aspire to erase the brokenness or minimize the violence that death imposes on individuals and communities; it transcends it and transforms it into hope. Through them, the women of faith succeed in offering an urgent message that stops current and imminent violence bringing hope and lighting the path to peace.

As illustrated by Maasai clan elder during a key informant interview,

“I have been to many funerals and I can tell you, the spirit and content of the rituals that women lead always move me towards desiring peace. With broken hearts, the women recalled all who had been harmed, and confessed on behalf of each of our ethnic groups –asking for pardon and forgiveness. As an elder, burial rituals during conflict enabled me to face and own my pain, and opened my heart to be able to forgive those who had committed the acts of murder. Sometimes when we sit together as elders we talk about accepting this message of collective healing and reconciliation that women preached.” (KI – MCE: 04, Interviewed 28/08/2010)

The women’s approach is emotive (broken hearts) and powerful. Even when society has so subordinated them, their power full of faith cannot be stopped at the burial rituals. Women’s power full of faith is in sharp contrast to hegemonic masculinity and gender-based othering, which is built on violent protection, combativeness and a desire to retaliate. With their power full of faith, the women bring sober-mindedness on the realities of war – truth telling on killing, being killed, rape, and displacement – and fearlessly condemn such acts as falling short of humanity and spiritual proscriptions against violence. Although they share the same arena with men, their approach exhorts men who are seeking retaliation to choose non-violence. In faith, the women advocates for a code of conduct based on values such as sobriety, hope, moderation, temperance, quietness, reflectiveness, sharing, and honesty. They make impressions on warriors, husbands, and others by stirring their faith and a desire for peace. Faith serves as an important identity for women to exercise social control in this regard, enabling them to indirectly reject violence, hegemonic masculinity and gender-based othering with violent power they espouse, and instead engage a power full of faith.

Within ascribed gender roles as caregivers, women play prominent roles in relations and rituals of the dead. But also, I found that Gusii women were respectable spiritual healers. Such roles conformed to women's gender identity of care, and so were less threatening to hegemonic masculinity. Healing focused on the emotive, a world more womanly than manly. In addition, often such roles, though powerful, were intimately played in the locus of the home. As such, these healing roles were "domesticated" in regard to the gendering of place and space. So it is not surprising that women, so othered as subordinate become significant others as healers and reconciliatory.

Because of their roles, the meaning elders and warriors ascribe to the funeral and burial of one of them who has been killed during the fighting are transformed from violence to hope in human existence that is reconciled with a new perception on personal responsibility and relationship with the divine. This transforms mourners' and warriors' violent thoughts and needs for retaliation and repositions them within a spiritual arena – creating visions for human flourishing that are based on every individual's standing with their God/spiritual/ancestral spirits - and their future life beyond physical death. By choosing to focus the funerals and burial rituals on human flourishing and divine relations, women of faith are empowered and claim legitimacy to heal and reconcile by cultivating inner awareness, moral responsibility, and spiritual accountability for current life and future life.

#### Women-warrior relationship

Gaining a broader perspective on brokenness arising from the nature of death during conflict creates the opportunity for Maasai and Gusii women of faith to build a spirituality of human flourishing that is based in relational connections and continuities of community healing and reconciliation. Funeral and burial rituals emerge not as mere rituals, but as the spiritual mode and mechanism the women of faith use to carry out their peacebuilding roles.

### ***EVERYDAY SPIRITUAL PRACTICES OF SHARING LIVES***

Another major finding of this study was that women of faith advanced everyday spiritual practices of sharing lives as a form of peacebuilding by deploying both cultural and religious resources. Participants indicated that sharing was important for social cohesion and relationship building because with violent conflict, communities begin to die, families disintegrate and the social fabric of village life breaks down. When telling their stories on how peacebuilding was achieved, almost all participants stressed the importance of everyday practices of sharing life and bonding at interpersonal and communal level. The majority of the participants (38 out of 55) reported that women of faith played central roles in ensuring both the Maasai and Gusii communities were co-existing, sharing lives and relationships of reciprocity and interdependency during and after conflicts. This inter-dependency was not limited to faith alone, but was strengthened by the fact that there was diversity in economic, spiritual and social cultures of the two different ethnic communities. Women of faith utilized their multiple identities of motherhood and faith in carrying out this role. Participants in the focus group discussions reported that the Maasai and Gusii women promote co-existence through exchanging food, spiritual rituals, livestock, farm products, collective worship, fellowship and festivities.

Participants reported that in order to convene communities to share their lives in the midst of violent crises, women of faith used song, dance and food to bring together men, women, boys and girls. Participants suggested that such spiritual and cultural events created a safe space to remember the good times lost through war, helped to break barriers and opportunities of hatred, fear and blame, and refocused the energies of the community on relationships of shared living and mutuality. Often times, songs, dance and food were the only creative means left for women to penetrate into the hostile experiences of violence that created mistrust and wrecked societal wellbeing. When sharing her life story, a woman who lived by the border and spoke both the Gusii and Maasai languages, shared that:

“Women strive to maintain shared lives between the Gusii and Maasai whether there is fighting going on or not. We learn one another’s languages and ways of life. We worship, pray and sing together. Our children play together. Whenever we maintain that sense of community sharing, then we are building peace. (LS – MF: 02, Interviewed 21/08/2010).

Learning one another’s language helped to cut down communication barriers and opportunities in very practical terms. But it also opened doors to share lives based on genuine cooperation. Joint prayer and worshiping together demonstrated their efforts to live shared lives and establish lasting relationships. The women of faith sought to make their experiences practical, leading by example to eliminate enmity for generations so that children could learn to play and live together harmoniously.

### **Worship service and fellowship**

Collective worship services and fellowship were identified as primary roles that women of faith played in promoting shared lives and advancing transformative relations. To observe such worship service, I participated in a church service at Poroko in Ritumbe centre where Maasai and Gusii Christians congregate together for prayer and service every Sunday and observed how the two communities went about their service (O – CS:01, observed 31/07/2011). The congregation was composed of women, men and children. Women of faith played a central role in organizing the service, reading the scriptures, singing in the choir and directing children and youth in a liturgical dance during offertory. I observed the way the congregation went about their service as a community, particularly by the different forms of dance and song that retained a religious character and mobilized everyone’s participation in singing, clapping and dance movements of rhythmic swaying and chanting.

A ritual dance was performed as a peace offering. The congregation, led by women of faith broke into a ritual dance. The dance, as I reported, was an

expression of communal prayer but also a celebration of the diversity of character and traditions of the two ethnic communities. A procession of women, men and children lined up in the back of the church. The Gusii and Maasai men stood side by side carrying spears and arrows, and dressed as if in combat, peace combat. The Maasai and Gusii women stood side by side, Maasai women adorned in jewellery around their necks, and Gusii women wearing jingles on their legs. The children stood in line. Then the women broke into song, and the entire procession danced in rhythmic movements towards the front of the church. The whole congregation joined in song as they swayed back and forth clapping and singing praises of peace and community.

With their continuous movement, the procession of dancers made their way to the front of the church where they created a kind of revolutionary circle of peace as men laid down the weapons they carried at the altar as an offering for peace. The entire congregation seemed to be seeking peace not only in words, but also in the whole being of their bodies and souls as they made rhythmic and transformative gestures, movements and chants of faith. I observed how this ritual dance sought to foster the ethnic identities of the various peoples and their way of life. It was African religious spirituality integrated in Christian Church worship, and it reflected not only the religious values of the Maasai and Gusii peoples, but also their ethnic identities in their forms of dance and the artefacts they carried or adorned themselves in.

All participants in the focus group discussions claimed that religious services and fellowships brought them together despite their ethnic identities, and allowed fellowship and friendships to develop and grow. During violence when the physical structures of the churches can no longer function, the faith-based relations already established provide the structure to continue everyday fellowship practices at interpersonal level. As observed by a participant, worship and fellowship is about lived human experiences and not about physical structures of a church.

“The church is just a structure. We are the church. It is our hearts and spirits that cooperate and collaborate. Without that, we do not have a church. So we continue to share ourselves during the violence when the church is closed. We send peace messages to one another by word of mouth. These days, we even use mobile phones to text one another prayers for peace, or to coordinate service activities that we partake individually because we cannot congregate together during the violence, but in communion with one another. We utilize our small group leaders to share the same worship and service messages to every individual (by word of mouth or through mobile phone texts), and then every individual repeats the same actions, reflects on the same scripture readings and actively seeks peace in their own lives. Faith would be in vain if we do not put it into practice. So we fellowship even when violence escalates” (LS – GF: 03, Interviewed 04/09/2010).

Worship services and fellowship in this regard are intangible assets innovatively practiced even without the physical structures of religious institutions.

***Risaga or Ribina: re-purposing shared labour and indigenous prayer for peace***

We have seen already that the nature of the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai is protracted, with patterns of escalation and de-escalation. In the aftermath of violence, women of faith re-purpose socio-cultural practices such as those that mobilize shared work and the celebration of good harvest to promote peacebuilding. Participants spoke of one example of such sharing related to sharing of labour through a cultural practice called *Risaga*, an indigenous labour sharing practice that joined together gender-based groups of women (or men) for reciprocal labour on each other’s farms. *Risaga* originated as a Gusii practice due to their dependence in small-holder agriculture, but given that Maasai means of production has changed so much to rely more and more on subsistence farming, Maasai communities neighbouring the Gusii now engage in *Risaga*, with inter-

ethnic groups of women of faith. When sharing her life story on organizing *Risaga* in the aftermath of violence, a participant stressed the importance of shared work in promoting shared lives for peaceful co-existence:

“I organize *risaga* from time to time, where I invite relatives for the communal digging of the farm that I lease from the Maasai friends. My relatives convene at my home and then we walk together with our hoes to the shamba. We do the communal farming at least twice a year, mostly for weeding and harvesting. We start very early in the morning before dawn, and finish by mid-day. After the *risanga*, we celebrate by eating and drinking together. The Maasai family friends have always been supportive when I do *risaga* at the farm. Because it is in their farm, they have agreed that I cook and brew the beer in their home and we hold the celebration and share the meal at their *boma* [Maasai homestead]. This is not unique to me. There are so many Gusii families that lease farm in Maasai land and that do *Risaga*, because the Maasai land is big and sharing the labour helps us be able to manage it. So if we do it on my farm today, tomorrow we would do it in a different farm. These days, some of the Maasai practice farming and they use *Risaga* as well. And both the Maasai and Gusii invite not only relatives but also friends from each other’s ethnic community” (LS – GF: 01, Interviewed 04/09/2010).

Although *Risaga* was a cultural mechanism of shared lives, faith undergirded and anchored its very existence. The labour networks utilized religious practices such as prayer, spiritual; rituals and song. Before the women embarked in agricultural labour, they would pray together for physical strength, food security and spiritual sustenance. They would bless their farms and one another, praying for bonded friendships and the sharing of self. They sung spiritual songs and told faith stories as they laboured together. Faith was the baseline of their shared labour, the very



essence of their collaboration and collegiality that traversed the broader violence and enmity between the Gusii and Maasai society.

Closely related to Risaga was Gusii ceremony called *Ribina*, a common Gusii cultural and spiritual ritual of prayer for rain and thanksgiving for good harvest, a good year and the kind deeds of one another. With the protracted conflict, the women of faith found new ways to engage in *Ribina*, reaching out beyond Gusii women to the Maasai, and incorporating religious practices. In telling her life story, another woman recalled her personal experience following the fighting in 2004-2005 where she utilized indigenous spiritual festivities during *Ribina* to celebrate livelihoods as a means to restore shared relationships and lives.

“I organized *Ribina* to bring us together and pray for a good year and good harvest which we had not had. The day of the *Ribina*, women, men, children, neighbours, family, and friends came together in my homestead. I invited Maasai friends. We sat together eating and chatting. Then we danced *Ribina* in open air, forming circles with the inner ring facing the outer ring. We danced round and round and round, the left hand placed on the breast while the right hand was tangled in a grasp with the partner in front of us. We sung different Kisii songs, but there was a climax when we sung one song and everyone stopped and jumped very high – the Maasai people are culturally good at jumping high and nobody would beat them at that. After we stopped jumping, we found our step and began the dancing in circles again. Then we drank and ate together with the Maasai. For the first time in a long time, we felt like one large family again.” (LS – GF: 03, Interviewed 04/09/2010)

This ritual incorporated song, dance and sharing of food. Participants noted that women of faith used this ceremony innovatively, even when they had not had a good harvest or a good year, to promote shared relationships and break barriers and opportunities to peace. Within the power of culture, *Ribena* allowed Gusii

women of faith the autonomy and freedom to engage both Gusii and Maasai communities in shared multi-cultural and spiritual activities that helped form transformative relations in everyday lives.

Both *Risaga and Ribena* were based on principles of reciprocity; the women exchanged labour, food, culture, songs, dances, relationships and values. These practices allowed the women of faith to engage in peacebuilding in a cultural idiom, within which faith played a major role in their efforts to transform conflict and promote peace. Faith undergirded and anchored their activities, and they made it internal to the culture, celebrating both spiritual and cultural aspects of sharing and relationship building. They created safe spaces within *Risaga* and *Ribina* cultural spaces to have intimate conversations in small groups in public spaces on each other's farms or within the home as they shared meals and drinks with kin, friends and non-kin acquaintances. The women of faith engaged with others in genuine partnership and community to address common threats to peace through a convening that felt comfortable and was culturally acceptable. They did not act in isolation, exclusive from the societal affairs. Instead, they brought together men and women and focused on core issues of shared livelihoods that were both a source of conflict, as well as the means for survival. With such everyday practices of sharing, the women maintained normalcy and bonded at the interpersonal levels, and symbolically promoted relations within the broader Maasai/Gusii societies. This created the common ground for continuities of peacebuilding.

### **Building kinship ties: pathways to peace**

More than half of the participants (29 out of 55) thought that women advanced shared lives through building kinship ties. According to the participants, intermarriages between the Maasai and Gusii are rare, but when they happened, they were viewed as legitimate relationships. This was even in situations where women had been abducted during combat. During two of the women only focus group discussions, almost all participants (17 out of 20) said that women who found themselves in such relationships had served as bridges, building kinship

ties across ethnic divides, and doing so because of faith which enabled them to transcend the hopelessness of their situations. Two former warriors who had fought in various battles between the Gusii and Maasai shared that there was a deep belief that kinship ties were to be respected even in war. As one former warrior put it,

“If I came face to face with a Gusii warrior who was a *semo* [kin by marriage], I cannot fight with him, and neither would he fight with me. We lay our swords and walk away from one another.” KI – GFW: 01, Interviewed 19/08/2010

Most participants (35 out of 55) suggested that women were responsible for creating and maintaining good kinship and marital relations. It was not possible to establish whether this was practical in cases where marriages were forced or through abduction. Participants seemed to suggest that kinship relations were respected. As one chief put it:

“Once such a relationship has been established, the Maasai and Gusii keep their kinship ties strong and any relations created by marriage become family relations.” (KI – GLC: 03, Interviewed 28/08/2010)

Women in both communities had a great responsibility of maintaining kinship relations through visitations, sharing of food, coordinating celebrations such as birth and naming ceremonies, as well as engaging in joint extended family spiritual events such as Christmas celebrations for Christians. With the threat of violence, women try to maintain such practices so that families do not disintegrate and kinship ties do not perish.

## **Water: establishing non-confrontational relations by sharing natural resources**

Participants noted that women in the two communities are charged with the responsibilities of conducting care roles including drawing water, cooking, and caring for the educational and health needs of children and communities. In war time, these roles must still be played. Most participants in the focus group discussions (32 out of 40) shared that women of faith employ their faith to gain courage to engage in care roles and share the resources such as water in the midst of violence and threats to their own lives. The participants suggested that some women of faith use the opportunity that the sharing of these resources creates to promote peace and build non-confrontational relations with other women from the “enemy” ethnic groups. In a life story session with one of the participants, she shared that:

“When we meet with the Gusii women at the river drawing water to sustain our lives, we perform some rituals to bless our water, the source of our existence, and then raise rhetoric questions to one another: What are we fighting for? Don’t we have the same source of water to share from? Are we not sharing the same sun and rain that the almighty has provided? Why are we doing this? Where is our shared humanity? Then we just shake our heads and know that we each have a responsibility to end the violence.” (LS – MF: 04, Interviewed 20/08/2010)

I travelled with the participant to Shololo water point located in Maasai land to draw water and observed the interaction between Maasai and Gusii women at the river. The women muted greeting to one another in spiritual forms such as ‘*May our ancestral spirits guide and protect you and your progeny,*’ ‘*Be blessed and kept by the almighty Lord,*’ and ‘*May you arise every morning.*’ They spoke of the pain of war in parables, and blessed the water they shared as a source of peace and connection. The participant bent down on the stream to draw the water with her calabash, and before she could fill her *mtungi* [water pot], she drank the water

in her calabash and spit some of it out to the land asking for ancestral blessings (O – LS: MF 04, observed 20/08/2010). The participant explained that the water point was not only a place to draw water, but it was seen as a place of spiritual significance connecting people irrespective of their religious or ethnic beliefs to one source of life – water (LS – MF: 04, Interviewed 20/08/2010).

Participants noted that sometimes the conflict was so tense that women had to be escorted by men or warriors to the water points to draw water. Even then, women of faith sought for opportunities to promote peace, reciting prayers of protection and chanting peace proscriptions of their religious faiths.

### **Reciprocal sharing: a faith practice internal to culture**

In summary, most participants (38 out of 55) stated that women of faith conducted shared activities and maintained relations in volatile contexts of high risks and insecurities. They thought that the women of faith had an overarching vision for peace and that by maintaining shared lives and relations, their reciprocal actions catalysed and led to violence prevention. As a participant put it:

“Whether there is fighting going on or not, we don’t like to be separated or to be displaced. We understand that where there is community, there is peace. But we cannot do this if we did not have spiritual faith, which enables us to see the humanity of others despite everything. So for us women, our goals are always to share with one another; Maasai share and Gusii share. It is reciprocal: I receive and I give anything small I have. We give ourselves away. It is our everyday way of life.” (LS – MF: 02, Interviewed 21/08/2010).

Such a vision for peace was based on the principal of reciprocal sharing, a faith practice that was internal to culture. Women acting to convene shared lives and relations acted within a religious-cultural idiom, re-creating widely accepted spaces and practices to promote peace. Among the Gusii and Maasai cultures, sharing was considered a virtue and anyone who did not share basic needs such

as water and food was shunned by the community. What was spectacular about this reciprocal sharing as a model for peacebuilding was that the women acted in faith to extend sharing to non-kin members, considered “the enemy” within a context of brutal violence. Such sharing provided a fundamental basis on which to build transformative relations for peacebuilding. The reciprocal sharing did not diminish the differences between the Gusii and Maasai but rather celebrated them, providing a safety net and a window for reducing the violent effects of the conflict. Ultimately, the engagement of shared lives underpinned most of the social interactions and relations of the Gusii and Maasai communities. The relationships that were established appealed to a friendship based on vulnerability and the need for one another, but are also to the transformative relations envisioned as a social commitment for individuals to lasting peace fulfilled through sustained shared lives.

### ***WOMEN’S FAITH-BASED SECURITY AND PROTECTION SERVICES***

I found that women were motivated by their faith to play significant roles in providing security and protection services. According to most participants (36 out of 55), Gusii and Maasai women played significant roles in providing security and protection by: a) providing early warning and violence prevention measures; b) securing homes from atrocious violence; c) ensuring protective care for children, the elderly, the injured and the infirm; and d) establishing protective infrastructure and systems through women of faith networks and organizations.

In this section, I discuss how Maasai and Gusii women of faith transcend demeaning perceptions and transform gendered roles of care as they play their security and protective roles. The approach they take in doing their security and care roles is rooted in and inspired by their religious faith. They rely on divine influence, a power full of faith to protect not only children and vulnerable adults, but also men. Generally, for both communities, security and protective roles were seen as men’s roles. As already indicated, both the Gusii and Maasai communities believed in the notion of “violent-man-as-protector”, which

inadvertently made invisible the roles that women played as protectors. Because of this general belief that men were the sole providers of security and protection in Gusii and Maasai societies, the roles women may play in this area remained invisible, unrecognized and undervalued. In addition, women's roles as protectors were domesticated, and therefore did not receive the status they deserved.

### **Early warning and violence prevention: women warriors at homes**

I found that women's most prominent roles included providing security and protection in the in homes. Participants noted that over the past two decades, the conflict had extended to homesteads where women and children were disproportionately and adversely impacted. Participants suggested three major forms of violence escalation in the home during the conflict: 1) women and girls were targeted for physical and sexual violence in their homes by warriors, criminals or even family members; 2) houses would be burned down by the enemies forcing women to evacuate family members in their households; and 3) livestock raiders would attack homes to carry away livestock and other property, and sometimes to abduct young women.

Women, girls and children were targeted for physical and sexual violence in their homes by warriors, criminals or even family members. Livestock raiders would attack homes to carry away livestock and other property, and sometimes to abduct young women. As a woman indicated during the focus group discussions, security at home was a major challenge,

“Fighting targets our homes, and happens at our doorsteps. Our houses are burnt, our children raped, our food reservoirs destroyed, our livestock raided. Home is not a safe zone – We are constantly mourning, or hiding under a tree, or in the cow shed. It is sad.” FG - MF: 02, interviewed 27/07/2010

Participants expressed concern that the home remained invisible as a battleground hotspot perhaps because it was often viewed as a secure space.

Women had to constantly watch for intruders, livestock raiders or attackers with no help from men (who would be in battlefields or in hiding) or from the state. During a women only focus group discussion, one participant shared:

“We [women] have become warriors at home, but nobody understands. We don’t get much help from the police or others in preventing the violence at our homes and protecting our children, especially our daughters, which makes me so sad” (FG - GF: 01, Interviewed 26/07/2010).

Violence in homes was reported to have increased exponentially over the past five decades. Although raids and fighting were reported to have increased, they did not increase at nearly the rate that violence in the homes did. The figure below represents data from participants in focus group discussions of mixed groups representing the sharp increase in the level of violence at homes in comparison to violent raids, violent fighting and colonial or state violence on a scale of 0 to 5.

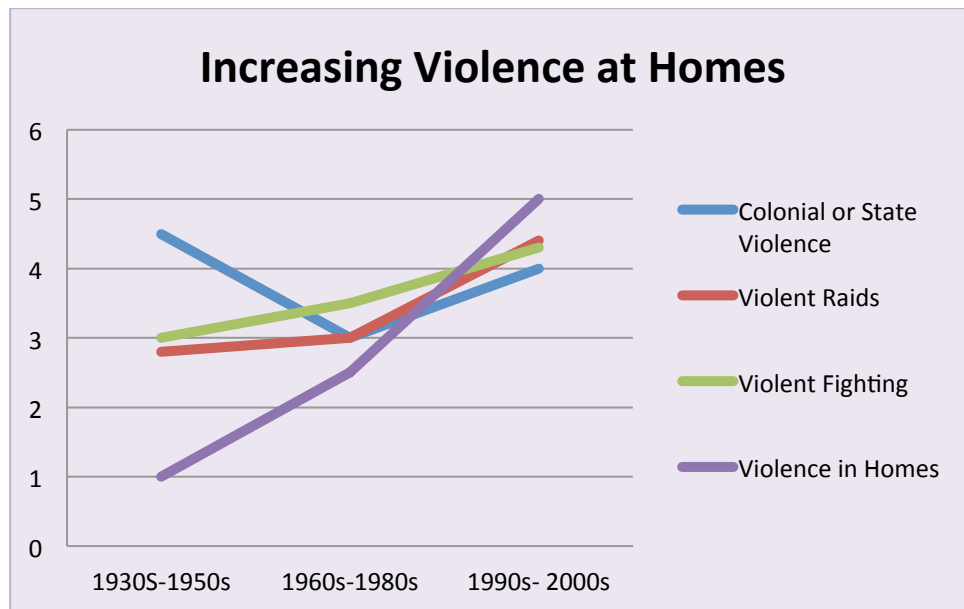


Figure 5: Levels of violence in the homes compared to other forms of violence in a ratio of 0-5 (FG – mixed groups: Interviewed 28 and 29 July 2010).



As providers of security and protection within the home, women's roles differed from the forms of direct combat in the name of protection that men engaged in. Rather than use violence and weapons such as the small arms that male warriors bore in battle, the women fought their wars with words, their bodies and their voices, appealing to the social and moral conscious of the enemy or attackers. They confronted warriors with religious texts or sayings, prayers and persuaded them to change their ways.

In addition to their significant roles in the battlefields and at home, Gusii and Maasai mothers played significant roles during warrior formation and when fighting took place in providing moral support and blessings to their sons. The Maasai focus group discussed that for Maasai communities, being a mother of a Maasai warrior conferred a special status to women. Often the mothers accompanied their sons for the Moran initiation ceremonies and presented them with pendants to wear throughout the initiation period. The sons would return these pendants to the mothers once they completed the Moran training and the mothers would wear these pendants as a sign of status of mothering Moran. At the *Eunoto* elder ceremony, mothers would shave their sons' heads to mark their passage to senior warriors, a stage of transition to the council of elders. Once the warriors marry they join the council of elders - a position of authority in the community and here women were said not to have a role as mothers (FG – MG: M, interviewed 29/07/2010). Gusii Focus Group discussions noted that warriors revered mothers whom they said provided food and moral support to them during the initiation period and during battle. The participants suggested that there was such deep respect for mothers that an insult to one's mother was a cause for war (FG – MG: G, interviewed 28/07/2010).

Participants shared that women often played central roles in offering indigenous religious convocations to the spirits and ancestors or engaging in Christian prayers to bless their sons, husbands and other men as they went to war and came back. In the focus group discussions participants gave examples of cases where Maasai *Laibon* (Prophets) bless warriors, Gusii *Moragori* (sorcerers)

provide prophecies on impending war and forecast the winners and Maasai women use collar beaded necklaces as a symbol of their religious and cultural beliefs to bless warriors. One Maasai woman in the focus group discussions reported that from her personal experience whenever her son went to war, she would take off her collar beaded necklace and place it on him as a symbol of blessing before battle. Then she would place it aside and fast and pray until he returned home safely.

Participants noted that the conflict was a display of religious and cultural beliefs and shared meanings. Warriors adorned themselves with symbols of religious significance often provided by their mothers including rosaries, crosses, artwork, beads, swords and spears. Women constructed little altars or sacred spaces at the battlegrounds or homesteads where they prayed for courage and strength to win battles. It was said to be a battle in faith. Given the high levels of insecurity, women were motivated by their faith to take courage and constantly watch for intruders, livestock raiders or attackers and warn of impending danger.

But women's roles in early warning and conflict prevention were not without challenge. Participants noted that women's roles were often concealed and disparaged as fearful. During one of the mixed focus group discussions, a male participant attempted to belittle women's roles in early warning and violence prevention claiming they were based on emotions of fear that served no purpose. A female participant refuted such a claim asking rhetorically,

“Screams of fear? Is that what you think it is all about?” (FG - GF: 21, Interviewed 28/07/2010)

Most participants in this focus group (7 out of 10) seemed to suggest that women's screaming served a greater purpose in early warning alerting the community of imminent or immediate danger, and mobilizing practical action for safety. One woman narrated her life story to suggest that women's screams for peace were intentional, emotional and often paid off,

“I screamed a lot during the *Battle of Konangare*. My screams were all mournful cries for peace, urging my son not to go to battle, to stop the bloodshed. It paid off. My son did not leave that gate. He laid down his sword right before my eyes. And that day *chikurate* suffocated the universe – over 10 young men were slaughtered in battle.” (LS – GF: 01, Interviewed 04/08/2010).

Another challenge for women utilizing their voice for early warning and prevention related to the lack of support from security forces, men and any other groups providing security and protection. Security forces did not only fail to protect women, they also perpetrated violence against them, girls and the community. As noted by participants, often there was no help from the police with providing security and protection in battles fought at the home front.

We don’t get much help from the police or others in preventing the violence at our homes and protecting our children, especially our daughters” (FG - GF: 01, Interviewed 26/07/2010).

Neither was there much support from men, who were viewed as the protectors and providers of security in gendered roles and norms. Therefore, the realities and lived experiences of women were so that they were forced to provide security and protection needs for themselves and their families and communities. As one of a participant shared put it,

“People are used to the idea that only men can protect the home, ..... as a single mother, I have to confront warriors or other violent men and stop them from burning my house or abducting my daughters.” LS – GF: 03, interviewed 04/09/2010

During fighting, most women were single *de jure* as war widows or through natural death, or *de facto* due to men being away in battlefields, hideouts or migrated for security reasons. As protectors, participants reported that women would stand on

the way as human barricades to stop warriors from burning homes; they confronted violent men physically and through the battle of words and demanded a show of their humanity. One woman in the focus group discussions suggested that women were motivated by faith to carry out such protection roles:

“Most men were away fighting, or hiding away from the violence, leaving women with children and the elderly to take care. So we women played a major role in protection. Only by faith were we able to protect children, the elderly, and in some instances, men who were hiding and fearing for their own safety.” (FG - MF: 26, interviewed 29/07/2010).

The general perception however was that battles were fought in the battlefields, away from home. This perception domesticated women’s roles in security and protection and made them invisible and unrecognized. That their roles in war are not recognized is based on social constructions of feminine identity as basically unable to defend, and therefore the conceptualization of protection and security as a male affair. Women’s defensive fighting at home is invisible because protection is considered a job for men. But men would have abandoned this job during war for warrior jobs in the battlefield, or some would be in hiding to safeguard their own security.

Despite these limitations, women played key roles in early warning and violence prevention in the home. According to a male key informant, women effectively carried out early warning roles:

“Women are trusted to alert the community whenever there is a first indication of violence, and to confirm when peacebuilding is possible. Historically women have played important roles in violence prevention. They are the ones who visit market places and water joints and indicate whether it is safe, before anyone else can step out.” KI – MRL:10, interviewed 16,08/2011)

### **Emergency response: evacuation in faith**

Participants also shared that women evacuated family members at the site of impending danger. During a key informant interview, one woman recounted her burden of protective care during conflict, which she carried out successfully and single-handedly motivated by her faith:

“I was left all alone with my 5 very young children and my sick mother-in-law. I had to ensure that the children were safe, whether we were in the house or outside in a hideout – perhaps at the banana plantation where several families spent most of our time hiding. We delivered my sister-in-law Joyce’s baby by the banana plantation because we could not get to the clinic. It was my first time to deliver a child by myself. And then I had to find food and water for those at home, and for the fighters. I say fighters because when men are fighting, we find food for all of the warriors, not just one’s husband.

As the fighting grew worse, and homes were being set on fire, I had to evacuate everyone to a faraway homestead of my sister who is married in *Nyaribari*. The journey from home with all the children, my sister in-law and her infant, and my sick mother in-law was a difficult one. But we made it, by faith. I have witnessed so many women live only by faith during the conflict. Whether we are praying quietly, or reciting prayers together aloud, or singing songs of hope and faith, our journeys during conflict and our paths to peace are truly those of faith“ (KI – GWFL:05, interviewed 12/08/2010).

Participants in the focus group discussions shared that whenever there was an emergency, the community generally depended on women to find protective measures such as identifying networks with members of their extended families including their own sisters, aunts, mothers or grandmothers where they take children away from the violence. This in itself was said to be an act of faith not

only due to the imminent security risks involved in the evacuation of families, but also in the added burden to families that are already poor to care for additional members. Participants said that this was a religious practice to help the needy and to share whatever little that others had with those in need. They reported that women effectively coordinated with their familial kin to ensure that the children received care away from home, and in the absence of their parents. Some of these children were able to attend school and do other activities with their cousins and extended family members, including prayer and spiritual worship. The participants noted though that often this caused a lot of economic strains on extended families that live in poverty.

The participants noted that it was not always that women relocated their children and placed them within their family networks. Women were sometimes forced to care for children in extreme emergency situations. They also noted that very young children who were still breastfeeding would remain with their mothers, who carried them along as they navigated violent war environments. The participants noted that during such periods, women were encouraged by their faith and provided spiritual, psychosocial support and essential needs to children in times of violence. They shielded them from day to day violence, provided meals under difficult circumstances, and encouraged them through prayer in moments of extreme stress and uncertainty.

### **Care for children, the injured and the infirm**

Majority of the participants (46 out of 55 participants) suggested that women's protective roles were significant in safeguarding the safety and wellbeing of children, elderly, pregnant women, disabled persons, warriors, and livestock. The overall care model of women of faith was said to focus on physical safety as well as social, emotional, spiritual wellbeing.

The participants said that women also had to protect and care for injured fighters cleaning their wounds, getting them to the hospitals and counselling them. Women were also said to attend to most war casualties, and often delivered new-

born children in extremely complicated emergency situations where hospitals and clinics were difficult to access due to the fighting. A key informant who had served as a health worker reported that pregnant women were at the greatest danger of death of themselves or the infant during the conflict, and some of them who survived would suffer longer-term obscured birth-related effects including fistula. These pregnant women would also lack access to health facilities, food or other essential needs (KI – GHW: 07, interviewed 25/08/2010).

Participants (31 out of 55) said that often women's strategies for conflict prevention emerged out of necessity for basic needs and livelihoods. Participants said that exchange of food was one of the most basic spiritual practice, particularly when this was extended to one perceived as an enemy. It took an act of faith on the part of the receiver as well, to accept such a gift in trust that it was not intended to harm or kill. In relating her life story, a participant recalled a time in 1992 when all they had eaten for months at her Maasai boma<sup>1</sup> was milk and blood, too afraid to go outside and find other food. With faith and courage, the participant decided to reach out to her Gusii neighbour to exchange her milk and blood with a banana and corn flour.

“There was violence everywhere. No one could go to the market at Nyangusu or Kilgoris to get vegetables or maize or bananas from the Kisii women traders. But that day I was sick of the violence and the effects on our health. So I just got up, placed my guard on my head half full with milk and begun to walk towards Peninah's homestead. My boma is on lowland, and to get to Peninah's home, I needed to go up the hill. There was nowhere to hide. Everyone would see me. I placed the guard on my head and had my hands to my side. I walked steadily, muttering prayers every step I took. When I got halfway, Peninah was out of her homestead, a banana on her head, walking towards me. We walked, as if united in our

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<sup>1</sup> A boma is a Maasai homestead that typically would have three to four families living together in a circular dwelling.

steps. By the time we exchanged the milk and banana almost at the peak of the hill, children and other women were beginning to peep outside from their homesteads. By evening that day, we knew we had created a space for safety. Children played outside for the first time in months, and women met at the rivers to draw water. It is just simple steps of faith.” (LS – MF: 02, interviewed 21/08/2010)

More than half of the participants (33 out of 55) suggested that women of faith were highly trusted and effective in using simple but important tools to prevent violence, such as sharing labour or food and engaging spiritual and cultural beliefs. As suggested by a woman in the focus group discussions, women also used their own creativity and influence as mothers to influence younger men not to go to fight because fighting would not help. The woman gave an example of a simple act of persuading the chinkororo warriors to prevent violence through her words when blessing food once she had delivered it to the warriors in the battlefield:

‘When I took the porridge [food] to chinkororo at the battlefield, I prayed – that is all I could do because we are not allowed to speak at all – we just place the food there and turn back. So I remember one time I prayed so loudly; *Lord bless these warriors and give them wisdom that only comes from you. As you nourish them with this meal, give them the strength not to be killed or to kill, may they not shed blood or hurt anyone. With this meal, bring us peace and understanding. Only you can give us that, so that we can get to our normal life and do risaga and ribina, giving praise to you always.* When I finished the prayer, the deep voices of the warriors said a loud ‘amen’, and I could see as if suddenly they were exhausted with the fighting. That night, the head of chinkororo sent word to the Maasai that they were ready to negotiate. I believe my prayer and



the prayers of many other women touched them.’ (FG - GF: 11, Interviewed 26/07/2010)

According to the discussions of the participants in the focus groups, women’s early warning, protection and violence prevention efforts were motivated by their faith, but not limited to faith alone. Their roles on protection and violence prevention tended to centre around food, prayer and sharing of common humanity, which offered creative means of drawing people together, decreasing underlying risk factors and increasing resilience for peace.

### **Women of faith networks**

Another key finding of the study is that women of faith networks were central to building peace. Most participants (38 out of 55) suggested that although women played minimal roles in formal religious organization, they were considered the “backbone” of faith. Often the women acted through informal organizations and faith-based networks. Such networks of women of faith spanned religious relations and traversed ethnic borders to bring together women of different clans and ethnic communities (KI – GRL: 09, interviewed 02/08/2011). The participants suggested that women of faith acted so well as a unit, whether as an army of praying indigenous bead-making mothers within the institution of the family, or as a collective network arising out of already established relations in a given Church such as “Dorcas” and “Mama Mkatoliki, or as leaders of a formal faith-based health clinic that provided protective care and security.

One of the emergency basic needs identified by the participants was access to health services and health-care-saving response to the dying and injured. Within the context of the conflict, only two health clinics were available within the vicinity. One of those was St. Joseph’s Mission Hospital of Kilgoris, a faith-based healthcare institution.

I found that St. Joseph’s Mission Hospital in Kilgoris played a major role in responding to conflict-related medical needs. St. Joseph’s mission hospital is a

health facility that has provided treatment, operation, emergency response and referral services for the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities for over five decades. The health facility started operating as a dispensary in 1963. It was founded and led by the congregation of the Little Sisters of St. Joseph, Dutch religious nuns who came to Kilgoris as missionaries. These women of faith were dedicated to serving the injured, sick and infirm in wartime as well as in peacetime through dedicated active ministry. At the moment of the research, the hospital was run by local people and currently serves the entire Narok County [with an estimated population of 850,000 according to the 2009 census]. Although the hospital is located in Maasai land, the ethnic communities it serves within this catchment area include the Gusii, Maasai and Kuria. It offered health-care services and pastoral care to individuals from both the Gusii and Maasai ethnic communities during and after the conflict.

According to the participants, the hospital was never shut down during conflict. The reasons for keeping the hospital open included the fact that warriors relied on it for survival following injuries, and that it had gained reputation as a neutral service provider that was grounded in faith (MG –FG: G, interviewed 28/07/2010; MG –FG: M, interviewed 29/07/2010). It may also be that this institution was not closed down during violence escalation due to its faith and gender identity: having been founded and run by religious women may have been perceived as less threatening and more caring. There was no doubt that St. Joseph’s hospital had a unique marketing positioning and identity that had gained trust in the community.

Below is information on the roles of St, Joseph’s Hospital Kilgoris in medical and religious response, based on a key informant interview a participant who served as a nurse at this hospital.

During the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai, the hospital records indicate that between 60 to 200 casualties are received daily. I was working here in 2004 and I have never forgotten. Bodies of people injured, dying or dead were placed everywhere – on beds,

tables, countertops, floors, everywhere! There was blood all over and groans of pain and the smell of blood filled the air. Sometimes we could also receive pregnant women for childbirth, some would be still births because they had undergone delayed labour or suffered some form of violence. It was not a place to be.

We worked together with doctors and other nurses and volunteers to conduct surgeries night and day to remove arrow heads or spears lodged in people's bodies. At night we used lanterns for lighting, and sometimes when we had diesel, we had the generator only light the operating room for emergencies only. There was no main electricity or water supply. But we had a lot of volunteers, and young women who were training to be nurses at Oloosagaram also helped. I had graduated from Oloosagaram myself.

We worked closely with families of the injured, predominantly women. They brought food, water and helped with the care and support of the injured. Those who cared for the sick or injured in the hospitals were 99% women.

Nurses also took part in guiding the patients on the importance of peace. We prayed a lot, always prayer was our anchor. (KI – MHW: 08, interviewed 28/08/2010).

The hospital also provided referral to cases that we were unable to handle or care we could not provide onsite. The hospital not only gave emergency and medical care but also provided food and accommodation even for the caregivers. The hospital would also invite spiritual leaders to preach and teach the need for peace. It is important to note that engaging religion publicly and in medical institutions is widely accepted and expected among the Gusii and Maasai, particularly during the final days of one's life. So, it is not unusual that the key informant speaks of prayer and religious services within the hospital. These were

based on need. But both health and spiritual needs can be elusive and overwhelming during conflict and emergencies. The Sisters of St. Joseph strategically had begun the Oloosagaram nursing school, which not only helped the community youth to train for two years in nursing, but also provided a pool of volunteers who served the St. Joseph's Hospital. Apparently the training at this nursing school prepared nurses to take up practical tasks while on training as nurse trainees to volunteer and deal with emergencies in great numbers. But it also imbued the faith-based mission and ethos of St. Joseph's Hospital ingrained in religious beliefs. The name of the hospital and the mission statement that was publicly displayed in the hospital and nursing school proclaimed publicly the dual core mission of the hospital: a combination of medical and religious response. Their ethos was to extend healing ministry ingrained in health practices as well as in their religious beliefs and values. They operated on an ethos of faith, providing spiritual ministry as healing for those injured. Their service integrated community networks of women to provide care where there were limited resources. They created a form of institutional family that provided compassionate services in a spirit of empathy, love and concern.

I also examined a secular hospital that provided emergency healthcare services to the Gusii and Maasai. Akemo Valley Hospital was located in Gusii land in Nyangusu area, but also served both Gusii and Maasai communities. Although it was not within the scope of this study to conduct a comparative analysis between the faith-based health systems and the secular ones, there were important differences that I would like to highlight in this discussion. Akemo valley was founded by an individual doctor and his wife, who was a nurse. Although the couple had religious faith, the mission of their hospital was founded on their medical practices. It therefore did not reflect a combination of medical and religious response as that of St. Joseph's Kilgoris Hospital. Akemo valley Hospital, like St. Joseph's Kilgoris Hospital, cared deeply for its patients and provided emergency and on-going care. However, there was no prevalence of faith ministry in its mission statement or in the roles of its workers as expressed by the participant who served as a nurse at Akemo Valley Hospital. The hospital

associates at St. Joseph's Hospital actively promoted faith such as prayer alongside medical responses. They considered beliefs and emotional connection to faith as intrinsic to medical healing and care. So working as a nurse at St. Joseph's hospital utilized an individual's professional medical skills as well as complimented their moral faith values of prayer and building communities of healing, compassion and hope. It allows for

Another example of a women of faith organization that provided protective care and security was an indigenous Maasai women of faith bead-making network. The participants in the women-only Maasai focus group discussed that this network which was affiliated to the Maasai traditional religion came together to make Maasai beads, and in the process to promote peace (FG – WO: MF, interviewed 27/07/2010). These women of faith acted to prevent violence utilizing their African traditional cultural and spiritual beliefs and taboos relating to their roles as mothers. The participants reported that there was a widely held belief that before warriors went to battle, mothers' blessings were inevitable. The Maasai women would bless their sons before battle by taking off their collar beads and placing them on their necks for a few seconds as they prayed and blessed them. Then they would place them aside until the warriors would come back home from the battle, and a similar ritual would be repeated. The women coordinated amongst themselves across their community not to offer this blessing to their warrior sons as a means to force them not to go to battle or else they would be defeated. The focus group stated that the women also engaged in coordinated prayer across their *boma* homesteads, which would have three to four families living together in a circular dwelling. Maasai women would coordinate traditional prayers across 20 to 40 *bomas* at any given time period. The prayers as discussed in the focus group were structured to commence at three am every day, before the men went to battle, and before the women performed their chores such as milking the cows. The prayers focused on healing the atmosphere from the violence it had endured, lighting the world with peace, and petitioning for physical and spiritual needs and guidance from ancestors and holy spirits. The women would face in a given direction towards their holy mountain and pray

loudly each on their own but united in the content of the prayer. The participants in the focus group discussions were convinced that these efforts helped to prevent violence as they combined spiritual appeals for peace with practical disapproval of the violence where women refused to bless their sons before going to battle. (FG – MF, interviewed 27/07/2010).

Another women of faith network that was utilized for security and protection was the Catholic Women's group called *Mama Mkatoliki*. During a key informant interview, a male priest suggested that *Mama Mkatoliki*, a more formally-structured women of faith network affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church promoted peacebuilding activities through cooperation and interdependency:

“We could not have prevented the violence we witnessed in Nyangusu and Kilgoris in the 1990s to present time if it was not for the practical examples of cooperation and interdependency that women of faith demonstrate in church, in the communities and in their own families. The *Mama Mkatoliki* is a perfect example of how the women have organized themselves into shared relationships through the Catholic Women Association that transcends their ethnic differences. And when we have crises, the *Mama Mkatoliki* women of faith are here in the church, distributing food, helping the wounded, supporting traumatized children and speaking of reconciliation. Men have their group too that is barely active—they have a lot to learn from the *Mama Mkatoliki*”, a women's network that is truly the backbone of the church” (KI – GRL: 09, interviewed 02/08/2011).

Humanitarian assistance from the Catholic Church through Ngong Diocese Justice and Peace Commission were also said to have been channelled through the women of faith groups.

A similar women of faith group was one named Dorcas affiliated to the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Dorcas was founded by a group of women in Michigan USA in the late eighteenth century with the aim of making garments and supplying food to needy families. Dorcas was a community-based network of primarily Kikuyu women (and very few Maasai women) that was engaged in helping people to meet physical, material and spiritual needs. Dorcas in Nyanjiru and Kilgoris area is linked to its national network and was said to be effective in meeting emergency needs of the people with support from the Seventh Day Adventist emergency humanitarian agency called ADRA – Adventist Development and Relief Agency ( FG – WO: GF: Interviewed 17/07/2010).

Participants suggested that women of faith also participated in mixed groups such as the Friends Peace Teams of the Quakers Church, which responded to peacebuilding needs at the local level. The Quakers Church in Kenya also known as Friends coordinated humanitarian response with women locally.

The participants suggested that even in situations of societal displacement where no churches or other physical religious structures were visible, groups of women of faith organized themselves (under trees, in hideouts, in homes, by the river, anywhere) to promote peace. These organizations of women of faith worked in a coordinated manner, utilizing local faith-based or non-faith structures including kinship structures or sometimes creating new ones for action.

Although it was well understood even among men and clergy that these organizations of women of faith were fundamental to the survival of the churches and religious institutions, were not recognized as formal structures within the religious institutions. Some of these women of faith networks were formally structured and linked to the religious structures, but only informally. The Mama Mkatoliki women of faith network for example had a formal structure with elected officials at the local, regional and national levels. The Catholic Church recognized this group and depended on their infrastructure and leadership to implement all their church-related initiatives including fundraising, and to provide lay ministry (KI

– GRL: 09, interviewed 02/08/2011). Similarly, Dorcas, a women of faith network of the Seventh Day Adventists that provided community services to the needy was recognized as central to providing community-based services. Despite their central roles, the women of faith networks were labelled “women’s ministry” informally mirroring women’s community and family roles as caregivers, mothers, nurses, teachers, and subsistence farmers. There was no evidence to suggest that they were connected with other civil society or national bodies, or recognized as formal institutions that promoted peacebuilding. The participants also suggested that women of faith networks did not contribute much to the formal decisions of their religious institutions, did not have access to information and official communication and had little control of financial or material assets of religious institutions.

Despite this invisibility and relegation to the periphery, participants suggested that these women of faith organizations and networks provided incredible leadership and services to the community, mobilized human capital that conducted almost all the faith-based outreach and community engagement work. They ministered to the sick and cared for the needy. They responded to emergency needs of the most vulnerable such as the elderly, sick, widowed or orphaned. They also supported the care activities such as organizing prayers and rituals during violent conflict and in its aftermath.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

I have demonstrated in this study that Maasai and Gusii women of faith variously struggle to deploy religious resources to promote peacebuilding. The study reveals that for women of faith to deploy religious resources for peacebuilding, they must negotiate different and unequal gender claims, positioning and conditions. Indeed, the study has demonstrated that religious resources are gendered and not simply available for women of faith to deploy. Rather peacebuilding is a socio-political process through which the women of faith tenaciously position themselves to find voice, legitimacy and agency to deploy religious resources for peace.

The principal burden of women of faith it seems is that they cannot escape from violence, exclusion and *gender-based othering* – the delegitimizing claims of women as insignificant others (as discussed in empirical findings chapter 3 pages 96 to 137). Their roles are influenced, structured and affected by complex forms of structural violence such as rape, institutionalized exclusion from warrior formations and peacebuilding councils of elders, and socio-behavioural norms and regulatory limitations to land and property rights/claims that pose practical security threats and structural barriers for women in peacebuilding. Within such contexts, civic engagement and political participation seems contradictory of expected behaviours of women in general, and is considered socially and religiously incompatible with the values, motivations and capabilities of women of faith. Therefore, I have argued that in order to explore how women of faith deploy religious resources for peacebuilding, it is necessary to examine the complex, violent and unequal conditions and positions within which women act.

Understanding the arenas of hegemonic masculinity, power, dominance and subordination in conflict and peace helps offer insight into gendered complexities of peacebuilding. I would also argue that without civic engagement and political participation of women of faith, it would be difficult for peacebuilding to address historical, systemic and structural factors of women's exclusion and gender

inequalities, including lack of ownership of assets such as land and livestock, inequity, gender-based othering and lower positioning and statuses.

As discussed in the empirical chapter 4, (pages 138-199), Maasai and Gusii deploy religious faith as an identity, motivation, and legitimating moral authority and voice in peacebuilding, despite the gendered barriers they face. Four modes have become apparent where women deploy religious resources in various ways: as an identity, a motivator, a form of empowerment and a resource. These modes are represented in table 10 below.

How Maasai and Gusii women of faith deploy religious resources	
As an identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religion as an identity is a resource that women deploy to legitimize their social actions (where their gender identity as women and their status and standing would be a barrier)</li> <li>• Religious identity is a resource that offers moral authority and voice/agency to women</li> </ul>
As a motivator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religion as a motivator strengthens women to take action despite barriers, and when all seems hopeless</li> </ul>
As a form of empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religion offers an alternative platform that is empowering to women</li> <li>• Religion as empowerment is unquestioned power – connects women to spiritual/divine power that is considered inviolable – a power full of faith</li> </ul>
As a resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious resources include moral values, religious beliefs and practices, religious motivation and agency, spiritual relationships and religious-social action</li> </ul>
Table 10: How women of faith deploy religious resources for peace	

Religion is deployed by women of faith not only as a resource but also as an identity, a motivator and a source of empowerment and agency that enables them

to serve in spaces and roles that would otherwise be unavailable for women. The peacebuilding efforts of women of faith are distinctive in the sense that they play their peacebuilding roles in a religious idiom, as aspects of faith become apparent through their manner of conducting their activities and the way they frame their peacebuilding. Their roles transcend religious identities and spaces, forcing collisions of faith and gender for peace.

The deployment of religious resources for peacebuilding is therefore complex and gendered process. To effectively advance the participation of women of faith in peacebuilding would require transformative approaches to prevent and respond to and even reverse gender-based othering and the indignities of gendered violence, as well as transform institutional and structural forms of violence and inequalities that discourage and delegitimize the status of women of faith as religious actors in peacebuilding. It is not enough to say that religion is a resource for peacebuilding without critically understanding the complex inter-relations between religion and gender, and the barriers and opportunities that may exist for women and men to deploy such resources for peace. My study provides an analytical model to address the missing links on how deploying religious resources intersects with gendered barriers and opportunities in peacebuilding (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Analytical gender-aware model on women of faith in peacebuilding

My analytical model helps shed light on the relevance of faith and gender to peacebuilding and implications for religion in the largely secularized contemporary debates on gender and peace. It also offers insight into how peacebuilding roles of women of faith intersect with gendered relations and multiple identities. The concept on gender-based othering can contribute to new understandings of the conditions in the conflict context and peacebuilding arena influencing the roles of women of faith in peacebuilding and the gender-based barriers and opportunities that they face. While the analytical model includes peacebuilding roles relating to prayer as action, spiritual rituals of healing and reconciliation, faith services and sharing, women of faith may engage in other types of action to promote peacebuilding. Their peacebuilding roles may be dialectic, survivalist or relational. They may simultaneously carve out faith or alternative spaces within shared experiences to engage in conversational dialogues on peace, joint prayer, rituals of healing, sharing of urgent survival needs such as food and water, and building friendships and relations across ethnic divides. While women in general may

advance peace in these forms, women of faith draw from their religious bases, motivations, resources, identities and modes to do so.

Overall, I have argued that women of faith are agents in peacebuilding, capable of overcoming barriers, and negotiating and influencing peacebuilding outcomes in their own voices. Women of faith can be supported to take advantage of the gendered and faith opportunities presented within particular places and spaces to engage in more visible and public leadership peacebuilding roles. Often spatial encounters within social-religious spaces and physical geographies are gendered and determined by unequal gender norms and relations. But this is not the only reality for women and men in conflict contexts. Sometimes, spatial encounters limit men, thereby offering women opportunities to make claims to faith within place and space for peacebuilding. As we have seen, with the limitations for an ethnic male religious clergy or spiritual elder to conduct a funeral service in a volatile geographical space and place, women of faith lead a transformative conflict-related burial and funeral rituals that are open and innovative, unlike the more strictly structured male-led religious service of so called formal prayer. Indeed women of faith can build peace in particular spaces and places by transforming physical and social geographies, and where possible creating and/or participating in transcendent spatial encounters for healing and reconciliation.

I have shown that peacebuilding from the perspectives of women of faith goes beyond the material (like the return of lost material assets such as livestock and land); it includes the interlinking of psychological, social, political and spiritual spatial encounters. It includes a re-awakening that seeks deeper inner spatial encounters with broken hearts, bodies, minds and spirits. It focuses on attitudinal transformation as well as personal and collective healing, predominantly invoking “we” in reference to the individual’s need of belonging and personhood that is tied to collective healing and the hope for interdependency. It focuses on repeated actions of care and concern for others, building human relations in difficult and atrociously violent circumstances. Through varied spatial encounters, women of faith create faith spaces within cultural spaces to have intimate conversations in

small groups, in public spaces on each other's farms or within the home as they share meals and drinks with kin, friends and non-kin acquaintances. With such everyday practices of sharing, the women maintain normalcy and bond at the interpersonal levels, and symbolically promote relations within the broader Maasai/Gusii societies. The women also seeks to establish transcendent relations and balance with nature, the environment, with the dead, with divine spirits and with God—Enkai/Engoro. These approaches by women of faith offer models to peace that can be further explored, developed and supported.

My study has also demonstrated that women deploy faith identity as a religious resource, which offers them legitimacy, moral authority and voice in carrying out peacebuilding roles. Conflict context may offers complex and dynamic ways through which women's (and men's) multiple identities are constructed, forged and contested. My study demonstrates how women are actively engaged in deliberating and negotiating different claims to their faith identities for peacebuilding. In particular spaces and places such as public funerals, they forge faith identity with which they can leverage a different kind of power and voice to transcend gender-based othering and violence and build peace. Religious identity as a resource provides deep motivation for the women to keep on working for peace. Hence, the women continuously construct and deliberate their faith identity in public dialogues for peace, utilizing particular religious discourses, language, spaces, faith/spiritual relations, or moments such as violent death. Realizing that different elements define them, including motherhood, the women form alliances of gender and faith identities that provide powerful influences and enable them to withstand or in some instances transcend barriers of exclusion, violence and gender-based othering. My study also asserts that faith identity allows women to integrate religious relations, beliefs/scriptures/teachings, ideologies and language into their peacebuilding roles. Faith identity can serve as an armour, protecting women from potentially atrocious limitations and positioning them to forcefully articulate and disseminate their visions for peace. Within a context that is saturated with violence, subordination and exclusion of women, faith identity gives them legitimacy and radically positions them to play

peacebuilding roles. In most instances, faith is the only acceptable identity and mechanism for the women to find their voice, take action and create visions of peace rooted in religious experience. This in-depth analysis offers a fundamental insight into understanding the relevance of faith and gender to peacebuilding and addressing implications for religion in the largely secularized contemporary debates on gender and peace. Peacebuilding approaches that apply a gender and faith lens could explore when and how women of faith leverage faith identities for peace. And how women's and men's faith identities are contested, negotiated, formed, affirmed and even re-constructed in war and peace. It may be that faith identity is the baseline for women's peacebuilding actions that provides a safe position for women to challenge gendered limitations, and to even warp gender identity and transcend its prescriptions.

In addition, my study has shown that women deploy religious resources as a form of power and spiritual agency to promote peacebuilding. With such faith power, the women exercise social control, enabling them to directly or indirectly reject hegemonic masculinity and gender-based othering and the violent power it espouses. This type of faith power that women of faith employ is in sharp contrast to hegemonic masculinity and gender-based othering, which is built on fear, shame, false bravery, violent protection, combativeness and violence. Women's faith power emerges from and mobilizes around vulnerabilities that violent conflict produces such as human suffering and death and advocates instead for a code of conduct based on values such as human wellbeing, hope, sharing, and community—all of which in this context are considered faith values. Through actions such as prayer and rituals of mourning and healing, the women have power to bring sober-mindedness on the realities of war – lamenting about the burdens of killing, rape, and displacement – and fearlessly condemning such acts as falling short of humanity and the ideal spiritual morality that proscribes violence. This notion of faith power can contribute to a deeper understanding of women's agency which emerges in this study as a disposition of influence, and a type of attitude that governs the peacebuilding roles women of faith play within unequal, violent and exclusionary circumstances. The faith power stands and

even collides with cultural norms as women claim religion to actively assert their voice. The women make claims to faith-based representational power—representing the divine, God or spirit – which is not merely symbolic representation of power from high above. Faith power is the basis for how women of faith value and establish meaningful actions for peace. With this power, the women do not get intimidated in fear, but speak on with courage and resolution. With faith, they employ religious sanctions against violence, and regulate the violent behaviour of men in their families and in society. Faith helps them go through gender-based risks and barriers, and sometimes removes them as the women of faith encounter themselves a new. Faith may be the basis of their power to act as agents of peace.

I note however that although faith power precedes and engenders women's agency and peacebuilding roles in this context, their actions are often in conformity with their gender roles. Even with and through faith, the women cannot participate in certain male dominated peacebuilding roles such as those relating to land disputes and livestock raids. Their peacebuilding interventions are unable to tackle gender discriminatory norms and transform unequal land and property rights, or to challenge the culture of violence manifest in rape and gender-based violence, and in gender-based othering. It is as if the women must always battle in faith through every role, fighting to redeem themselves and overcome gender-based societal norms. Although women of faith in this study demonstrate considerable power, voice and influence, their inferior status as women (insignificant others) is an overlapping disadvantage. The notion of a power full of faith therefore implies critical gender analysis of power and powerlessness as they intersect and inter-relate with women's multiple identities. Often, studies raise the question on powerlessness as it relates to women as victims of war or as subjugated religious objects. My study confirms gender aware approaches that emphasize women's agency (Gilligan, 1982; Moser, 2001; Hodgson, 2005), and argues for gender-aware analysis of the forms of faith power (or powerlessness) women have or experience in any given conflict or peacebuilding context. How do women experience and utilize different forms of faith power arising from their



heterogeneous composition, their diversity of religious beliefs, their faith-based relations, their multiple identities as well as individual agency? Women's peacebuilding roles may be located within unequal social systems where they have to keep the rules and regulations emerging from institutional bargaining and unequal gender statuses and positioning. But faith can also offer women agency: the capacity to bargain and transform gendered barriers and find faith power and voice to promote peacebuilding.

This study has also shown that women of faith can successfully construct and achieve peacebuilding through discourses of prayer as faith-based mechanisms for action. The realization of women's disposition of faith and power utilizes prayer as action that is foundational to their peacebuilding roles. Again, because women are faced with gender-based violence and generally considered insignificant others with social norms that govern their mobility and speech, their prayer is an act of courage and bravery not less valuable than a military peacebuilding security force. It is also a state of being; an attitude that actively challenges and negotiates gendered barriers. The women of faith utilize prayer in a non-conventional manner to draw attention to the realities of the conflict situation; the different forms of violence and the wounding, suffering and indignity the fighting has caused to everyone in the community. Prayer reinforces women's religious identity and power to play their roles in peacebuilding. In addition, prayer gives the women language, voice and moral authority to lead communal peacebuilding activities that involve men and children (some of which they would have no socio-cultural legitimacy to lead). The women's prayer roles are practiced both in the private and in the public. Hence, my study has demonstrated that with and through religious prayer, women of faith can trespass social and cultural norms that limit their authority, freedom of expression and speech to demand for and take action. When used effectively in situations of ethnic divide and violence, religious prayer can provide the structure for the women of faith to forge inter-ethnic relations and bridge the divides across different cultural practices based on shared religious beliefs. Gender-aware analysis of women's peacebuilding roles could benefit from examining the typologies of women's prayers in conflict and

peace, specifically the forms of discourses, values and ideologies that women of faith advance through prayer. What are the socio-spiritual relations of prayer, and how do women deploy such relations? The goal is not to assume that prayer would always have a positive role or outcome, but to study how its various elements and typologies may motivate, empower and enable women to advance trajectories of peace.

Although the realization of protection and security is a complex process, this study has established that women of faith play varied roles in this field, focusing on risk reduction, violence prevention and urgent response. As discussed in chapter 2, often security and protection is constructed through violent discourses of conflict and peace as male dominance and aggression (Johnson, 2005) – what I refer to in this study as violent-man-as-protector. In contrast, my study has shown that women are the primary providers of early warning and violence prevention measures. They are uniquely positioned as early responders, providing early warning alerting the community of imminent or immediate danger, and mobilizing practical action for safety. In doing so, the women utilize religious language and moral proscriptions against violence to secure homes from atrocious violence. Using their gendered roles of care, the women of faith assure protective care for children, the elderly, the injured and the infirm. In addition, even though the conflict is devastating, the women manage to establish women of faith networks, organizations that provide protective infrastructure and systems to safeguard the safety and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable adults, including emergency evacuations and placement within extended families. Indeed, this study has confirmed that women of faith are agents of peacebuilding, but their roles and the organizations they have established are largely invisible and underutilized. If peacebuilding were to effectively engage women of faith, approaches could embrace new concepts on security and protection, and leverage women of faith networks as pipelines and structure through which emergency protection and peacebuilding services can be delivered to communities that need those most. Peacebuilding processes can also build the institutional capacities of women of faith networks so that they have access to and control of information, official

communication, and financial or material assets needed to offer services in conflict contexts, protect the most vulnerable, provide much needed intelligence and transform peacebuilding situations.

In addition to contributions to peacebuilding practice, the results of this study may offer relevant contributions to policy on gender and peacebuilding as represented in the global policy commitment to support women's roles in peacebuilding under United Nations Resolution 1325 (United Nations, 2000). This resolution is viewed as a tool for women's empowerment in peacebuilding processes, and advocates for women's participation and mobilization as a means to render peacebuilding more effective. The findings of this study offer insights to how women's peacebuilding roles may be impacted due to their multiple gender identities including religious identities. Empowerment may mean different things to different women, and in this case women of faith draw their power from the religious resources they deploy for peacebuilding. Such spiritual agency of women of faith has received very little attention in peacebuilding policy and practice. The findings of this study illuminate how women of faith deploy religious resources for peacebuilding, and the gendered barriers and opportunities that affect their participation. The insights and concepts emerging from the study could indeed inform policy on women, peace and security.

My study did not explore in greater detail forms of structural violence embedded in the practice of Female Genital Mutilation and its social construction of femininity (and masculinity). Empirical findings suggest that male circumcision plays a major role in producing and reproducing hegemonic warrior manhood identities for both the Gusii and Maasai, and in the institutionalization of male-only peacebuilding mechanisms such as councils of elders and village border peace committees. However, Female Genital Mutilation, which is practiced among the Gusii and Maasai, was barely referenced as essential in preparing young women to play supportive roles as wives and mothers. Although this topic did not present itself much in the findings of this study, I believe that exploring whether and how power,

positioning and representation may be articulated within the social relations of female genital mutilation would generate interesting debates on faith, gender and peacebuilding. This kind of analysis would be valuable focus for future studies.

The use of the case study of the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya could also be of significant contribution. There is little written about these two communities in relation to the nature of the conflict, the gendered barriers and opportunities for women of faith in peacebuilding, and how religious resources are deployed by women of faith for peacebuilding. Considering the turmoil, violence and wide presence of contemporary religious extremism, ethno-religious atrocities and gender-based violence arising from militant groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria or Islamic state militants like ISIS or ISIL in Iraq and Syria, other case studies may obviously reveal varied fundamental insights on new (and old) threats, barriers, and opportunities women of faith may be faced with in their efforts to deploy religious resources for peacebuilding. But barriers and opportunities must not be only for women of faith to battle or accord; rather they should provide a great chance to deeply transform the trajectories of religion, gender and peace in ways that can galvanize the voices, representation and participation of women of faith as agents in peacebuilding. A paradigm shift in peacebuilding research, policy and practice is yet to happen to explore the extent to which religious resources can be deployed to traverse unequal gender structures, identities and relations. Therefore the task of examining the roles of women of faith as agents of peace is a complex, sometimes political undertaking. Rather than define women's agency in peacebuilding through mere description of their activities, a gender-aware analysis provides critical frames and lenses to examine processes, socio-cultural or religious structures, relationships, entitlements and resources. Such faith and gender-aware peacebuilding would help create deeper insights into who women of faith are, their varied experiences, the forms of faith power they may employ and how religious resources can engender their participation to positively impact peacebuilding research, policy and practice.

## APPENDICES

### Interview guide

<b>Interview Guide</b>	
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief introduction - of research team, participants, and research goals</li> <li>• Informed consent</li> <li>• Confidentiality and Anonymity</li> <li>• Data uses: for purposes of the research as consented above</li> </ul>
Background to the conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious, political, socio-cultural, economic context and issues;</li> <li>• What was conflict about? Where did it take place? How did it start? When did it take place? Which do you consider worst conflict and why? How did it turn out? Where were you when it happened? What did you do? Who else did what?</li> <li>• How did the conflict affect different groups; men, women, children, families, community.</li> <li>• In your view, what were the major causes of the conflicts? Who are the main actors?</li> <li>• What forms of violence took place, where and how did they take place</li> <li>• What is the current status of the conflict?</li> <li>• What would you consider the major barriers and opportunities to peace? Why?</li> </ul>
Roles of women of faith in peacebuilding and how they deploy religious resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where did individuals or families turn to for help during the conflict?</li> <li>• How and why was the violence ended?</li> <li>• What is the meaning of peacebuilding from your experience?</li> <li>• What religious resources are available for peacebuilding?</li> <li>• Who are women of faith? What roles did women of faith play in peacebuilding?</li> <li>• How did women of faith deploy religious resources for</li> </ul>

	<p>peacebuilding? How effective? Why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were there any barriers and opportunities that women of faith faced in their peacebuilding roles? How were the barriers overcome, if at all? How did women of faith utilize opportunities for peacebuilding, if at all?</li> </ul>
<p>Additional comments, thoughts</p>	<p>Any other comments</p>
<p>Interview guide with open-ended questions and subject areas</p>	

## Participant coding

CODING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS	
<b>FOCUS GROUPS = FG</b>	
<i>FG – WO = Focus Group Women only</i>	
GF = Gusii Female	FG - GF:01, 03, 05, 07, 09, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19
MF = Maasai Female	FG - MF:02, 04, 06, 08, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20
<i>Mixed Groups</i>	
FG – MG: G = FG Mixed Group Gusii	
FG –MG: M = FG Mixed Group Maasai	
GF = Focus Group Gusii Female	FG - GF: 21, 23, 25, 27, 29
MF = Focus Group Maasai Female	FG - MF: 22, 24, 26, 28, 30
MM = Focus Group Gusii Male	FG – GM: 31, 33, 35, 37, 39
GM = Focus Group Maasai Male	FG – MM: 32, 34, 36, 38, 40
<b>KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS = KI</b>	
GFW = Gusii Former Warrior	KI – GFW: 01
MFW = Maasai Former Warrior	KI – MFW:02
GLC = Gusii Local Chief	KI – GLC:03
MCE= Maasai Clan Elder	KI – MCE:04
GWFL – Gusii Woman Faith Leader	KI – GWFL:05
MWFL – Maasai Woman Faith Leader	KI – MWFL:06
GHW = Gusii Health Worker	KI – GHW:07
MHW = Maasai Health Worker	KI – MHW:08
GRL = Gusii Religious Leader Priest	KI – GRL:09
MRL = Maasai Religious Leader Priest	KI – MRL:10
MSL = Maasai Spiritual Leader	KI – MSL:11

<b>LIFE STORIES = LS</b>	
GF = Gusii Female	LS – GF:01, 03
MF = Maasai Female	LS – MF:02, 04
<b>OBSERVATION = O</b>	
CS – Church Service	O – CS:01
MCP = Cultural rite of passage	O – CP:02
RN: LS = Life Story Maasai Female	O – LS: MF 04

Fieldwork was conducted over a period of 10 weeks between July 22 to September 6, 2010 and July 25 to August 31, 2011.



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