

ANALYSIS OF GENDER DYNAMICS OF ARMED CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

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Abstract

Women suffer disproportionately from violent conflicts including wars. Not only they suffer during these conflicts but their suffering and trauma continues to long much after the conflict or war is over. The actors at conflict at times target women as a strategy of war besides the suffering and hardships which are meted out to them as the by-products of war and conflict situations.

Physical violence appears to be a universal and widespread characteristic of warfare. It is considered as a norm of war in which women suffer severe forms of violence during and after the conflict as an instrument of war. This violence continues even in the refugee camps where women are targeted to physical violence with respect to recent history. Rwanda and Sudan are the examples where women were humiliated and subjected to more rape in the refugee camps as against in the war zone itself.

Physical violence occurs frequently in all phases of armed conflict and sometimes carried out by armed forces, combatant and civilians alike as in the case of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Rwanda. The finding reveals that besides gender-based violence, widowhood is one of the brutal consequences that many women suffer and face in situation of conflict and crisis. Rwanda, Iraq and Afghanistan are identified as countries of widows where approximately 80% of women population comprises of widows. This widowhood instantly changes the social and economic roles for the females. The impact varies widely between different societies. Afghanistan is an appropriate example where widow were deprived of their rights to earn a living or even run their household due to the misunderstood and misinterpreted religious values along with social norms in which women are not allowed to work or go out without accompanying male member of the family.

Introduction

*Gender based violence is a difficult subject to study because of its sensitivity and the silence that surrounds it, but whenever attempts have been made to document GBV it has been found to be extremely “common during armed conflicts and in displaced populations”.*¹

The gender-blind approach of the conflict and reconstruction efforts pose a threat to the safety of the girl-child and women both during and after conflict. The reason for the insensitivity is the stereotypical interpretations of the female needs and vulnerabilities that are largely shaped by social, political, economic, cultural and religious factors. The reason for the insensitivities is largely embedded in the power imbalance of the existing social structures, which are largely reflective of a socio-religious and socio-economic paradigms. These negate equality and strengthen the power imbalances either between nationalities and ethnicities, or between societies and gender. For example, forced displacement and gender-based violence (GBV) are two impacts that are not inevitable outcomes of armed conflict, but rather are deliberate strategies of war used to destabilize families and communities. Physical violence, particularly against women causing physical and physiological harm occurs during and after a conflict. It is used as a social instrument to force women into subordination and to retain unequal power relations between men and women. As a practice, it has been used to distinguish violence that targets individuals or a group of individuals on the basis of their gender from other forms of violence both during the war and in times of peace.

This does not, however, mean that all acts of violence against women are gender-based, or that all victims of sexual violence are female. For example in Kosovo (1998-99) the campaign of genocidal assault and ethnic cleansing waged by the Serb forces was not gender-selective. Several overriding tactics were evident in Serb military strategy and many in the Serb regime played a crucial role in planning and perpetrating the atrocities in Kosovo. On the operational level, the paramilitary forces of Yugoslavia deliberately perpetrated genocide to destroy and cleanse Kosovo of the Albanian muslim community. The strategy applied was quite similar to the Nazi strategy towards Jews during World War II.

¹ IRC, Protecting the Future HIV Prevention, Care and Support Among Displaced and War-Affected Populations (Kumarian Press, 2003), 111.

Within Kosovo itself, the Serbs sought to inflict a decisive military defeat on the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to carry out a mass expulsion of the ethnic-Albanian population to neighbouring countries, to rape and sexually abuse ethnic-Albanian women as a tool to terrorize and humiliate the population, and to destroy houses and property so as to undermine the infrastructure of Kosovo's Albanian society. According to Silvia Chejter every day and everywhere, women were killed in sex-related crimes just for being women. In recent years, women's movements have denounced feticide,² of the female fetuses for being a sexist crime.³ The concept is perhaps a consequence of new approaches and a new understanding of practices that are not new at all. While sexist violence has always been there, the concept of feticide as a sexist crime is more recent. It questions those arguments that tend to "excuse perpetrators and consider them as being crazy or to regard these murders as "crime of passion" or tend to undermine its importance in the case of conflict or war situations, as if these contexts by themselves could be justifying the violation of the most elementary social rules".⁴

Though Gender based violence has been an integral part of the strategy used in armed conflict, it was either condoned or ignored till the recent past. The interconnectivity of the events on the international front⁵ during the twentieth century brought the focus more emphatically towards the entire issue of GBV during and after the armed conflict as well as among refugees and internally displaced persons.

The issue, therefore, continues to be characterized by two important aspects: the issue of impunity and the implementation of human rights mechanisms. The latter should ultimately be part of a new vision that incorporates, along with the human rights framework, the importance of peace, economic and social justice, and security.

² Silvia Chejter, *Femicidios eimpunidad*, and Centro de Enucuentros Culuray Mujer (Gabriela Barcagi-one, 2005), 7.

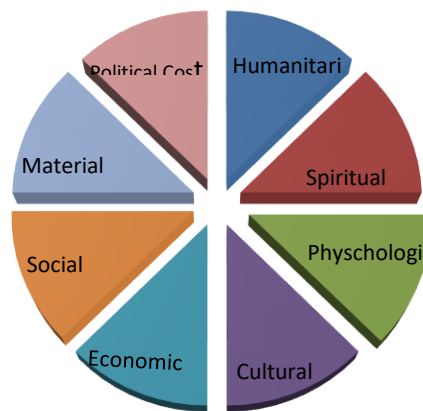
³ For details see Mahowald MB, "Concept of abortion and their relevance to the abortion debate", *Southern Journal of Philosophy* no. 20 (1982): 195-207.

⁴ Ibid, 7.

⁵ London Review of Books, Vol 21, No 11, May 27, 1999. IRIN Report, UN office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. May 2010.

The article primarily focuses on the impact of armed conflict on gender relations in terms of how power dynamics are affected between women and men by the distinct types of disadvantages that armed conflict imposes. Existing analysis of armed conflict and post-conflict resolution are weak in various ways. Some ignore women while others take a gender-blind approach or define the role of women in stereotypical ways. Still others look at women without considering gender relations.

Figure 1



The pie chart illustrating the cost of the conflict

In 1994, Interdisciplinary Research on Root Causes of Human Rights Violations carried out by World Health Organization (WHO) registered 22 high intensity conflict/wars with more than 1,000 deaths in one year (1994), 39 low intensity conflicts (with 100 to 999 political violence victims per year), and 40 serious disputes (less than 100 political victims per year 1995).⁶ This clearly indicates that there continues to be a wide gap between the desire of the global community to establish peace and the ground reality-which is confronted with several types of conflicts threatening global peace. The failure of international institutions in promoting international standards of human rights and their application both for women and conflict behavior is obvious. The intensity of the war, propaganda and reporting, including international media coverage of the

⁶ Luc Reyhler, "1995 Proactive Conflict Prevention: Impact Assessment", *The International Journal of Peace Studies* 3, no. 2 (1998).

Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo conflicts reflect a basic change in the character of war dynamics during and after the conflict. From military engagement primarily between fighting forces to violence that targets, dislocates or otherwise victimizes civilian population undoubtedly received a delayed response from the global community and the United Nations.

Official statistics⁷ show that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of reported crimes against women over the last few decades. Between 1980 and 1990, there was an increase of nearly 74 percent in crimes against women. The National Crime Record Bureau of the US predicted in 1998 that the growth rate of crimes against women would be higher than the population growth rate by 2010. A human rights activist Aditi Panday opines that “violence against women should be viewed as one of the most crucial social mechanisms by which they are forced into a subordinate position. All women, whether they live in the rich North or the poor South, the backward East or the progressive West are subject to violence. This is a deprivation of their fundamental human rights. Any act of gender based violence that results in physical or mental harm or suffering to a woman or the threat of such an act constitutes gender violence”.⁸

Research argument

Conflict in international politics is a situation in which two or more entities interact with each other, pursue incompatible goals, being aware of this incompatibility and claim that they are justified in adopting a particular course of action. Violence is the antithesis of human progress, security and peace. It destroys what has been built leading to death and destruction, and most often causing unspeakable psychological and physical pain to those caught in the conflict.

In conflict situations, violence against women is one of the most direct expressions of the power imbalance existing in most societies between males and females. Violence against women is commonly perceived as an inevitable outcome of war, an individual problem as an isolated incident. According to world bank estimates violence is often a cause of death for women in conflict/war situations, the incidence of violence increases

⁷ The National Crime Record, *Bureau report*, USA, 1998.

⁸ Aditi Panday, “Violation of human rights in social welfare”, *India TV* interview on April 2002.

manifold. Once, hostility ends, it takes years on average, to get back to normality and that too, only when violence does not erupt again.

The changing nature of sociological, psychological and physical dangers caused by conflict are apparent in the male death toll; the sex-ratio imbalance and increased dependency ratio in post-conflict populations. The report⁹ of the UN Special Reporter on Violence against Women has pointed out that such violence has been a widespread and persistent practice over the centuries. The report states that laws drafted in the past few centuries have provided some measures of protection for women during armed conflict and played a significant role in the training of military personnel throughout the world. Until recently, violence against women in armed conflict has been couched in terms of protection and honor reinforcing the stereotypical concept of femininity. The silence that tends to surround physical violence, makes it a particularly difficult human rights violation to be investigated.

The report also observed that the ‘perceived honor of the enemy’ is targeted in the perpetration of physical violence against women. It is often seen as a “perk” for soldiers and an inducement to display courage on the battlefield. Rape is unfortunately accepted as a natural consequence of war.

The change in responsibilities of woman during and after the conflict is a major characteristic of war. For instance, displacement of population has significant gender consequences such as destabilizing community structures and the disability to integrate into new environment. Importantly, this change has been felt by both men and women from varying classes and geographical backgrounds. Unfortunately women constitute the overwhelming majority of the displaced populations.¹⁰ The disintegration of carefully crafted social networks based on trust and reciprocity limit their strategies for coping with duress, as seen in the case of Bosnia, where the lack of gender- disaggregated data impeded conclusive decisions in reviewing economic activity, and also in addressing the vulnerabilities particularly those affecting the female population.

⁹ Radhika Coomarswamy, “Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective”, *Report of Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women* (2003).

¹⁰ IDMC, Internal Displacement Management Council “Internal Displacement, Global Overview of Trend and Developments in 2008”, *Norwegian Refugee Council*; (2009): 13.

The change in patterns of division of labour in conflict or post-conflict situations also has a negative impact on women whereby greater burden and longer work hours for women have been noted. Facing difficulties in managing their time between domestic, productive and community roles places women at a greater risk of physical and emotional fatigue, that affects their health.¹¹ In addition, this can also put women at greater risk of physical harm, as they often have to travel far away from their homes in order to perform their multiple roles. A lack of livelihood opportunities and potential sources of income is one of the most significant impacts of conflict. Other than that, trauma and psychological stress such as fear, helplessness, depression and insomnia are the most common health problems experienced by most women as a result of conflict and are considered direct impacts of conflict.

The lack of access to resources, benefits and jobs, class, age and disablement have also affected their ability to cope with life during or after conflicts. Efforts have been made, however, to decrease dependency and increase self-sufficiency for which employment and income generation have become central to the strategies of international donors. War torn states face multiple challenges in the political, economic and social realm. International donors initiate development plans and aid packages, but usually find it difficult to formulate effective strategies for addressing the challenges of collapsed systems. Addressing the problem of infrastructure and governance through governments is a multi level issue and donors when involved in long term approaches of building capacity, increasing self sufficiency and employment generation, sometimes collude with local elites in managing a simultaneous process of reform and plunder as seen in the case of Rwanda, Afghanistan, Iraq, and in many other post conflict settings. The opportunities for men and women in the labour market are clearly differentiated, as women are usually excluded, for instance from construction-related jobs. Rather, they are encouraged to adopt “traditional” occupations in administrative fields. Horizontal as well as vertical segregation of women in the labour force, also keeps them marginalized from decision-making bodies and spheres of influence. In considering the impact of the heterogeneity of the population prior to the war, not only did different women experience the war differently, their

¹¹ J.E. Talbot, “Psychiatrists and Combat Trauma”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 27, no. 3 (1997): 437. The Report of Special Rapporteur, op cit P.9-12.

pre-war positioning informs the way in which they respond to the consequences of war. For example in Bosnia, for four years, the war was fueled by a politically motivated resurgence of ethno-nationalism which had two major outcomes. First, distrust and fear spread among the population leading to a breakdown in community and personal relations. This was also seen in Rwandan and Kosovan societies. The second consequence was the social and economic changes leading to acute pressures for managing households which put direct stress on women. During the Bosnian war, ethnic cleansing was a gendered process in which women of other ethnicities were raped, both to mar their ethnic purity and to spread fear throughout the community and encourage flight. Though ethnic cleansing was primarily perpetrated by the Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Muslims were also guilty of such crimes, though the scale may have been smaller. Despite the end of war with the conclusion of the Dayton Accords, ethnic cleansing and gender based violence continued throughout the country and was carried out by all three ethnic groups. This made difficult, if not impossible, the task of rebuilding trust and restoring relationships at the interpersonal, community and national levels.

Throughout the war, men and women were trying to come to terms with the consequences of the war, which included redefining gender roles. Bosnian muslims were completely outnumbered. Serbs began to systematically gather local muslims; killed male members of the community; forced them to flee or confined them in temporary concentration camps. The Serbian forces terrorized Muslim families into fleeing their villages by, among other things using rape as a weapon against helpless women.¹² The exigencies of war necessitated an increased reliance on the participation of women in community mobilization and in protecting the household. When the war ended, the vestiges of the conflict prevented men and women from returning to their traditional roles.¹³ The sex ratio imbalance had long term implications for women. According to informal surveys conducted by local authorities, women's share of the total population increased to 55 per cent (from 51 percent pre-war) although

¹² Andrea W. Loren, UN Report, "Bosnian Muslims: Threatened with Extermination", (Dec-Jan 1992-93): 69.

¹³ Helpdesk Research Report: *Conflict and Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women* (UK: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, GSDRC, 2009), 7.

sex ratios may have varied between municipalities¹⁴ though no data is available indicating the exact change in the female-headed households or war widows. The absence of men certainly did increase the economic burden on women besides having its fall-out on housing, agriculture, and access to resources and benefits. Anecdotal accounts¹⁵ suggest that women, particularly those internally displaced, are more likely to be evicted from temporary housing than men. Hence, the gender component of the process may make it more difficult for a woman to mobilize men in the community on her own, particularly in situations where community composition and structure have changed. According to an ILO report¹⁶ prior to the war, women had little involvement in formal community structures, as households were represented by male members at community meetings. The war brought about more active female participation, owing to the absence of men during the war and the necessity of mobilizing all community members for charting out collective survival strategies. However, where women had no prior experience in dealing with local authorities, they were hesitant in filing their requests for pensions and other benefits. This is commonly the case with displaced women who have to deal with officialdom. Another implication of war is that it results in massive population movements owing to widespread fighting. In Bosnia over 200,000 non-combatant Muslims had been systematically killed, approximately, 20,000 became internally displaced persons (IDPs), while another 2,000,000 fled abroad becoming refugees in 25 host countries in Europe, the US, Canada and Australia and other parts of the former republic of Yugoslavia.¹⁷ The middle aged persons of both sexes faced difficulty in finding employment in the war torn economy. A person's ethnic origin either facilitated or hindered access to resources and material support. Again, the breakdown of pre-war community structures and support networks limited the ability of individuals and household, to draw on local human resources. The apathy of the West in helping rectify all these issues has been described as 'the greatest failure of the West since the 1930s.

¹⁴ UNHCR, "Report on Impact of War on Demography", (1996): 10. The report is about demographic imbalances in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the economic downslide of the country.

¹⁵ Amnesty International 2010 Report, "Global Justice Gap Condemns Millions to Abuse": (2010).

¹⁶ ILO Action Programme on Skills and Entrepreneurship Training for countries emerging from Armed Conflict, Geneva, 1997, focus group.

¹⁷ UNHCR Report on IDPs in Bosnia-Herzegovina: (1996).

In conflicts defined by racial, tribal, religious and other divisions, physical violence is used to satisfy the goal of ethnic cleansing and genocide. In some contexts, conflict has resulted in the emergence of fundamentalist and other extremist groups that impose restrictions and punish women who do not follow religious norms as in Afghanistan. In occupied Palestinian territories and in Iraq, conflict has created situations of severe insecurity and economic deprivation and when women ask for necessities they are usually asked for sexual favors in return.

Women and girls are reported to have been forced into prostitution in Kashmir and Afghanistan. Another indirect impact of conflict on women is increased level of domestic violence largely due to frustration, humiliation, joblessness, lack of shelter and basic services.¹⁸

More than twenty three years after the commencement of wars in the former Yugoslavia and almost Twenty Five years after the Rwandan genocide, women are still being victimized by combatants, the government machinery as well as those non-state groups that have covert support of authorities. The multiple post-conflict threats are used to retain or to build characteristics of nation-state largely by using physical violence as a tactic to terrorize and create “Stockholm Syndrome”*. The psychological effects are numerous and victim of Stockholm Syndrome are left with mental anguish that can last a lifetime.

The indiscriminate use of violence against Palestinians since the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1987 resulted in twin threats to the Palestinian women. Rita Giacaman and Penny Johnson examined the gender impact of the first year of the Intifada, where the Israeli military used multiple strategies to suppress the unprecedented political mobilization of Palestinian women. Women were arrested and interrogated not only because of political activism but also to put pressure on their families. Physical harassment and physical violence, in addition to other means of torture and humiliation have been used as weapons against Palestinian women. Since the beginning of the Intifada, the Women’s Organization for Women Political Prisoners (WOFPP) in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, has received

¹⁸ Helpdesk Research Report, 2009, 2.

* Stockholm Syndrome, is a condition which causes hostages to develop a psychological alliance with their captors as a survival strategy during captivity.

numerous complaints of physical violence committed by Israeli military forces against Palestinian women in the occupied territories. Such incidents occur not only during interrogation but also in connection with street patrols and the suppression of demonstrations.¹⁹

The Palestinian uprising indicates a turning point in the political awareness among many women in Israel. The women in Israel have begun to challenge the marginal, passive roles assigned to them in Israeli society and politics. For the first time in the history of the country, women have become organized and taken a clear position against state and military policy. Israeli women have voiced strong dissent against the occupation of Palestinian lands and against the brutal violence inflicted by Israeli soldiers on Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.²⁰

Similarly, ever since the Indian government's crackdown against freedom fighters/militants in the disputed territory of Kashmir began in January 1990, both security forces and militants have used rape as a weapon.²¹ Physical violence is used against women whom the security forces accuse of being militant sympathizers. The significance of rape as a gender-specific form of abuse in Kashmir needs to be understood both in the context of war and the existing patriarchal structures.²² The war-widows do not remarry to ensure social security of their children. Only 8.66 percent of the estimated 10,000 widows in 2003 remarried or intended to remarry. The study reveals that after the death of the male member of a family, the women face three sets of problems. The first set includes emotional stress, sexual harassment and social undesirability. The second set of problems are related to mis-management of home affairs, losing control over children and an inferiority complex, while the third set of problems are associated with physical insecurity, over-burden of work and compulsion

¹⁹ Penney Johnson, Eileen Kuttub, "Where all the Women (and men) are Gone? Reflections on Gender and the Second Palestinian Intifada", *Feminist Review* 169, no. 1 (2001): 21.

²⁰ Tamar Mayer, *Women and the Israeli Occupation: The Politics of Change* (London: Routledge: 1994), 2, 88.

²¹ Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, "Rape in Kashmir: A Crime of War", A Human Rights Watch Short Report 5, no.9: (1993).

²² International Crisis Group, "Learning from the Past", *Asia Report*, no. 70 (2003); "Kashmir: A View from Islamabad", *Asia Report*, no. 68, (2003).

for remarriage.²³ The force of social realities further leads to forced marriages.

Gender discrimination is so widely prevalent, that it substantively influences the dynamics of armed conflict. India's criminal law makes torture a crime and explicitly prescribes punishment for members of the police or other security forces who break the law. The people of Kashmir have faced the terror inflicted by security forces and lived with violence since they took to armed struggle in 1989 to gain *Azadi* (freedom). Indian media in their coverage of the happenings in Kashmir have been describing the uprising as a "law and order situation". In the clamour of reports of increasing violence, allegations and counter allegations, those who live outside Kashmir seem to have lost sight of what is actually happening to the ordinary people of Kashmir, especially women.²⁴

The human right abuses against Kosovan Albanians that got worldwide media coverage during the NATO bombing campaign predated NATO's involvement by at least ten years. In 1989, the Serbian-controlled government in Belgrade suspended the autonomy guaranteed to Kosovo by the 1974 constitution and initiated a crackdown on human rights. The Human Rights Watch reports of 1998-99 and report of other international and domestic human rights organizations,²⁵ reported incidents of torture, and disappearances in Kosovo. Prior to the outbreak of the civil war, cases of rape committed by Serbs were reported to inflict a decisive military defeat on the KLA. Sevdie Ahmeti,²⁶ a human rights activist working for the Pristina based Centre for the Protection of Women and Children, had documented thirty-six incidents of physical violence committed by Serbian police and Yugoslav army soldiers. Similarly the Human Right Watch in the period 1989-1999 conducted research about physical violence both by the KLA and government forces. Evidence collected confirmed that Serbian security forces were guilty of acts of violence. According to a report by Dr. S.D Stein, pregnant women, unborn and newly born babies, elderly and ill people were killed. People were mutilated, skinned or burnt alive. Corpses

²³ Dr. Bashir Ahmed Dabla, *Impact of Conflict Situation on Children and Women in Kashmir*, (SCF: North India), 79.

²⁴ Report on "Gender and Armed Conflict", *Centre for Women*, vol. 1, no. 1, (2006): 2.

²⁵ Dr. S.D Stein Report on the "Violations of Human Rights and Freedom in Kosovo in the Course of 1998.", *Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedom (CDHRF)*: (1999).

²⁶ Sevedic Ahmeti "I Had to Run with Pains." *Colby Magazine*, 2001.

were either not buried, or buried in mass graves. Prior to being executed, women were raped.

On April 13, 1999, the then British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook alleged that Serbian forces had opened a “rape camp” near Djzakovica. This completes the pattern of brutality begun by Milosevic’s forces in Bosnia. Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon made a similar statement about rape camps allegedly set up in Djzakovica.²⁷ NATO officials and NATO member states used the theme of human rights abuses generally and rape specifically, to justify their intervention in Yugoslavia. Human Rights Watch believes that it is critically important to denounce all human rights abuses in any conflict situation. However Human Rights Watch expressed concern that “NATO’s use of rape to bolster support for the war relied on unconfirmed accounts of rape”. Accusations that have little or no basis suggest that those invoking the abuses may have been more concerned with pursuing certain political goals than with ascertaining what happened to individual victims and acting to prevent or remedy the abuse. Historically, when the horror of rape has been invoked to serve political ends, neither the purpose nor the result was to ensure accountability.

The war in the former Yugoslavia was in fact a war against civilians who were subjected to violent and abusive treatment on the basis of nationality. Crimes were committed by all sides, but the brutality of the Serbian military and paramilitary forces remained unmatched. Apparently the policy of ethnic cleansing is meant to rid an area of an enemy ethnic group through murder, forced displacement, deportation, destruction of villages and cultural and religious objects of the enemy ethnic group and mass rape of women.²⁸ Physical violence (rape) has been described as part of the “spoils of war”. However, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, this abuse has been used as a weapon of war against the civilian population. In Bosnia, all parties to the conflict raped civilian women of the “enemy” ethnic group, but the use of rape by Bosnian Serb forces was particularly widespread and designed to further the policy of ethnic-cleansing. By attacking and terrorizing individual women, Serb soldiers and paramilitary forces sent the

²⁷ *Newsline* 3, no. 71, (April 14, 1999) violations were also rampant in Croatia, Kosovo and Bosnia. This was cited by Human Rights Watch Report, 1 March 2000.

²⁸ The data on mass rape of women is not available. Only the narrative account of the rape victim is found in ‘War crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina’ *Helsinki Watch*, 11, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993).

message to the entire community that no one was safe from violence. As a result, entire families and communities fled.²⁹ The atmosphere of terror, heightened by published accounts and collective memories of systematic mass rapes in Bosnia, motivated families to collect their belongings and leave their homes as quickly as possible.

The Existing Paradigm and the Plausible Alternatives of Discourse

Over the last decade there has been significant progress in documenting and publicizing the effects of conflict on women. This is mainly due to the determined and courageous work of women's right activists and advocates. Significant progress has also been made in recognizing acts of violence against women as gross violations or abuses of human rights and international humanitarian laws, which the international community has an obligation to address, since these are viewed as international crimes.

Global campaigns and advocacy by women human rights activists has led to the above-mentioned developments at the local, national and international levels. Though they have often faced great opposition, women have unrelentingly campaigned for justice aimed at making violations against women as crimes and for the need to change the structures of society which marginalize women and make them vulnerable to all kinds of violence and in various situations. Women activists have played a leading role in promoting new visions of security based on the notion of 'human' security, rather than state or military security. The last decade has seen a major change at the global level of international commitment and mechanisms to address violence against women. Yet the shocking scale of continuing violence against women in today's ongoing conflicts, as documented by Amnesty International and other human rights bodies in hot spots such as Afghanistan, Kashmir and Iraq suggests that these efforts are not succeeding in preventing the use of violence against women as a weapon in armed conflict

While reviewing the existing paradigms, a common characteristic of many conflicts at the start of the 21st century is the exploitation of perceived ethnic, religious, cultural or political differences in order to set communities against each other. Few of today's wars are international conflicts fought exclusively between professional national armies. Although

²⁹ The Human Rights Watch Global Report on *Women's Human Rights* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

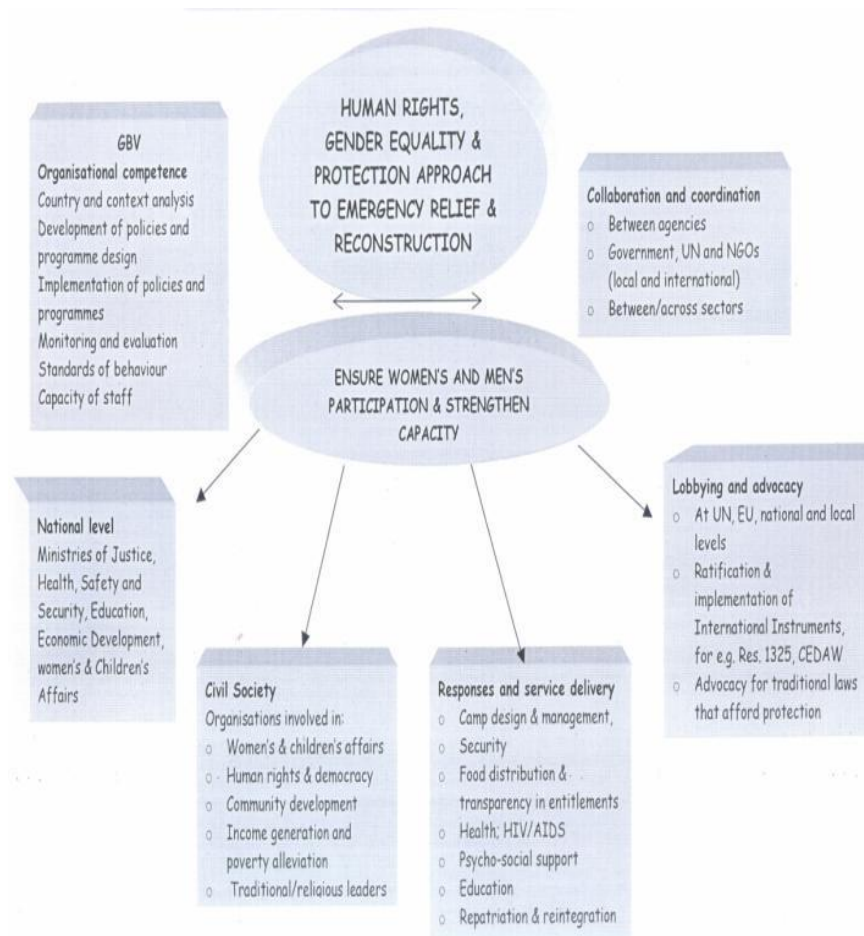
international tensions continue in numerous parts of the world, the majority of conflicts today are internal ones, involving governments and armed groups, or between several competing armed groups. Some of the worst atrocities against women have been committed by “non-state actors”, in particular by armed groups or armies deployed to establish peace. Holding those responsible and accountable can be a formidable challenge. The chain-of-command structure and hierarchy of such groups is not easy to identify. Non-state actors may not recognize any obligations under international humanitarian law in the absence of judicial mechanisms for bringing such criminals to justice particularly in areas under control of these armed groups.

In conclusion, violent conflicts result in systematic and gross human rights violations against those who have already endured social exclusion and discrimination in times of peace due to their gender or ethnic background. Attempting to make changes in social norms which perpetuate gender inequalities while addressing social injustice at the same time is a major challenge. It is particularly difficult to bring about institutional reforms, particularly relating to the judiciary in states that are undergoing violent conflict or are emerging from it. Introducing compensation for gender related crimes through judicial and policy processes could contribute to changing discriminatory social norms, while contributing towards rebuilding communities and achieving sustainable peace.

There is a strong need for international policy to be designed with the objective of providing women human rights activists with practical tools to ensure the implementation of national laws and jurisprudence, particularly in the area of reparations.

International institutions responsible for conflict resolution and crisis management should look seriously into the availability and effectiveness of existing legal measures to identify the barriers and opportunities in national and international law to deter gender related crimes and to ensure reparations if for some reason such crimes do take place.

Framework for Integrated Approach to GBV Programming in Conflict and Post Conflict Situations must be implemented as shown in the chart*



Conclusion

What is needed is that the people in general, and the policy makers in particular, take cognizance of the seriousness of the gender related issue. Concerted efforts, which are passionate to the cause, well directed, goal

* Marry Jennings, Sherry Mclean, *Gender based Violence Study, Consortium of Human Rights, Humanitarian and Development Agencies and Development Cooperation*, (Ireland: JSI Research and Training Institute, July 2005), 13.

oriented, and bound by time lines are badly needed to ensure gender-sensitivity in policy making. Policies made in post-conflict scenarios need to cater for the needs of the affected women in particular, and the rest of them in general. In tackling these needs a number of factors have to be taken into consideration. It requires the adoption of a broad-based holistic approach based on adequate socio-economic data.

Some of the strategic elements of such approach are:

- Understanding of the issue that confront the female population in rehabilitation and reconstruction in the post-conflict period. This implies taking account of the division of labour on the basis of gender and any changes that have occurred in the role of women, which need to be addressed.
- Post-conflict evaluation would help international bodies responsible for peace making and peace keeping to adopt strategies to address women's insecurities under legal cover like UN Resolution 1325, 1880-1888, and change stereotypical roles.
- On the international and domestic fronts, the main challenges are to redirect the focus of the post-conflict reconstruction and momentum on gender equality and participation of women in post conflict scenario and to sensitize the post-conflict legal framework to gender issues. Within these parameters communities must be mobilized and empowered.
- Implementing a broad based multi-dimensional approach requires that several of the development and technical assistance agents and bodies operating in the country cooperate amongst themselves.
- Gender perspectives are being increasingly included in policy making. Some efforts have been made to built a gender equal opportunity structure to ensure what has been described as an "advantage in the adversity of war". It implies either diluting or ending the emphasis in technical assistance on the conventional roles of women.
- It is equally important to proactively tap new opportunities for employment and income-generation by providing the labour market information necessary to guide women and other back ward population groups.
- A conscious efforts has to made to understand how women themselves perceived approach rather than a paternalistic approach.