Gender and Security in Africa

Primer 2 • 2016

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON GOVERNANCE, PEACE AND SECURITY

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Gender and security in Africa by Awino Okech was commissioned by the AWDF and written in 2013. It was published in 2016.

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This publication is one of three primers in a series titled *Feminist perspectives on governance, peace and security.*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Contents

Acronyms

AU	African Union
AU SDGEA	African Union's Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPP	Convention People's Party
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECPF	ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework
FLN	National Liberation Front
GBV	Gender based violence
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MONUC	United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
NGO	Nongovernmental organisation
SEA	Sexual exploitation and abuse
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SOAWR	Solidarity for African Women's Rights
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
UN	United Nations
UNDPKO	United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VAW	Violence Against Women

Gender and Security in Africa

This is the second in a series of three African Women's Development Fund primers entitled *Feminist Perspectives on Governance, Peace and Security*. The primers are intended to:

1. Offer a review of the major debates on women, governance, peace and security in Africa.
2. Review and analyse women's movements' interventions in governance, peace and security.
3. Offer a set of policy and advocacy priorities based on political and practical realities.
4. Benefit women's rights activists, organisations and people in government at the frontline of local and national mobilisation initiatives seeking to enhance women's leadership.
5. Assist in building alliances and structuring support across various institutions working towards enhancing women's political participation.

The focus on governance is informed by AWDF's renewed thematic approach. It is also driven by the fact that women's participation in governance is a key indicator of the general level of democracy in a society.

The AWDF primers

Primer 1: Statecraft and pursuing women's rights in Africa

Primer 2: Gender and security in Africa

Primer 3: Unlocking the doors: feminist insights for inclusion in governance, peace and security

Introduction

Women face different forms of insecurity on a daily basis across the African continent. These are informed by the nature of women's labour, work environment, sexual orientation and failure in service provision by the state, among others.

There are a number of common denominators in the different forms of violence women experience (see diagram). There are various actors (patriarchs, states, militaries, vigilante groups) who, at different moments, have monopoly over violence (sanctioned by societal norms and enabled by physical power, guns, financial resources, state machinery) and propagate violence against women (personal, social, economic, political).

Actors
Patriarchs, states, vigilante groups, thieves, rapists

Monopoly over tools of violence
Structural power, financial resources, weapons, state machinery (militaries, police)

Violence against women
Physical, social, political, economic, psychological

This primer reflects on women's peace activism and gendered security in Africa. It explores the following interlinked questions:

- What factors drive women's peace activism?
- Who are the major actors that women peace activists target?
- What are the key lessons that can be drawn from these interactions?

This primer begins by tracing the evolution of debates and activism on gender and violence. Secondly, it highlights national, regional and international policy frameworks that have emerged out of this activism. Finally, the primer draws on a few peacebuilding initiatives led by women's rights actors across the continent. We hope the lessons highlighted here offer a basis for building alliances and structuring support across various institutions working to enhance women's peace activism.

Debates on Gender and Violence

One of the most vibrant sites of feminist scholarship and activism has been in the area of gender and violence. These debates have been animated by various events and contextual dynamics, which are mapped in this section of the primer.

The immediate post independence era saw a growing women's movement borne out of independence liberation struggles. Women played an important role alongside their male counterparts in recapturing the freedom of African states. For instance, in Algeria, more than 10 000 women fighters were in the National Liberation Front (FLN) serving as combatants, spies, fundraisers, couriers and nurses. In 1951 in Ghana, the Convention People's Party (CPP) selected Leticia Quake, Hanna Cudjoe, Ama Nkrumah and Madam Sohia Doku as propaganda secretaries who travelled around the country conducting political education meetings and recruiting people into the party.

After independence in 1957, these women played an integral role in shaping the policies in Ghana as organisers, politicians and journalists. In 1960, they brought all the women's movements together and consolidated them into the National Council of Ghana Women.[1] The experience of violence by some women during the liberation process also informed the focus on gender violence in post independent nations. South African women's rejection of sexual harassment and gender based stigmatisation are in the trade union movement's records from the early 1980s (Bennett 2010).

As African nation states settled down to the task of building new states, African feminists challenged 'ordinary' violence such as wife beating, sexual abuse of girls and women, and sexual harassment in public and places of work (Bennett 2010: 25). Senegalese Awa Thiam (1978) documents the range of violence that women in parts of West Africa suffered at the hands of husbands, fathers, brothers and families, including female genital cutting, as a dominant and normalised form of violence against women.

In Kenya, the immediate post independence period was characterised by vibrant political debates surrounding the Affiliation Act, which was really a contest over whether independent Kenya should guarantee rights for women (Thomas 2005). Reproduction became the subject of debate and intervention in Kenya because so many people viewed its regulation as central to the construction of political and moral gender order (Thomas 2005: 4).

In the late 1990s, an increasing number of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) provided different forms of support to women survivors of violence. This support included counselling, legal advocacy, new opportunities for economic wellbeing, finding shelter, training law enforcement officials, developing educational materials, driving policy change and conducting research (Bennett 2010: 27).

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1   http://www.workers.org/2010/world/women_africa_0819 [Accessed 03 April 2013]

The term 'gender based violence' (GBV) replaced 'violence against women' (VAW) as the preferred term for violence suffered by women. Gender based violence came to encompass a vast range of potential violations: rape, domestic assault, abduction, trafficking, incest, sexual harassment, beating, and murder of wives and sexual partners (Bennett 2010: 27).

This shift in terminology did not and has not gone unchallenged. Women's rights activists have argued that the term 'violence against women' is preferable for it exposes the failure to address power inequalities between men and women in the public and private sphere (Turrell 2007: 1). International policy frameworks have also distinguished the two terms with the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) noting that GBV and VAW are not the same, thus treating VAW as a 'subcategory' of GBV.

The 1990s also saw major reforms in legal and policy frameworks addressing gender and violence. Legal frameworks are important because they act as a mechanism to regulate citizens' behaviour, as well as providing a basis for state accountability. Legal reform initiatives, led by NGOs, increased the visibility of work on violence against women, with domestic violence acting as an important advocacy entry point. These initiatives focused on, among others, reforming discriminatory legal frameworks, gender awareness training, and the creation of gender desks in police stations.

The 1992 landmark case between Sara Longwe and Intercontinental Hotel in Zambia affirmed the importance of state accountability to international policy frameworks. The Intercontinental Hotel in Lusaka had a policy prohibiting women from entering the hotel on their own. Sara Longwe was denied entry into the hotel bar for this reason and subsequently sued the hotel for unlawful discrimination. The High Court found the hotel's exclusion policy amounted to discrimination, contrary to the Constitution and the CEDAW convention, ratified by Zambia in 1985, which extended its Bill of Rights to cover sex discrimination. The court ordered that the hotel's policy be scrapped (Tamale 2001: 101).

The rising statistics of HIV/AIDS also saw African feminists contributing to HIV/AIDS management evolving from a purely medical perspective to one that understood the role of sociocultural and economic factors in the spread of HIV. Feminists working on the intersection of violence against women and HIV/AIDS emphasised the role of power relations in understanding why new infections were on the rise. They brought to the fore key discussions around physical violence including rape, consent, negotiation for safe sex, and economic disenfranchisement.

The HIV/AIDS debate highlighted the fact that violence towards women was intimately connected to men's access to status, peer bonding and authority (Bennett 2010). Alongside HIV/AIDS activism, sexual and reproductive health rights work expanded. Access to state resources for holistic reproductive health care, the specialised reproductive needs of women in conflict and post conflict situations, and women's exercise of choice over their reproductive capacities have been major pillars.

The distinction between 'culture' and rights has been key to advocacy initiatives on gender and violence, where 'culture' is argued to tolerate, and even encourage,

violence, while 'rights' welcomes gender equality. While useful, this opposition between African 'culture' and 'rights' suggests that the pursuit of women's rights in Africa is shaped by external frameworks (human rights), with no roots or frameworks in our local histories. Yet, the history above on women's organising tells a different story. Religion, morality and tradition have been used to justify the development of new laws to monitor women's dress, limit their movement, and control their sexual and reproductive choices. The use of state approved legislation expands the frontiers for gender and violence activism. The Nigerian example in the panel is illustrative of this.

Indecent dressing Bill

In 2008, Nigerian Senator Eme Ufot Ekaette, the female Chair of the Senate Committee on Women and Youth Affairs, presented 'A Bill for an Act to prohibit and punish public nudity, sexual intimidation and other related offences in Nigeria'. This Bill was popularly known as 'The Indecent Dressing Bill'. The Bill's aim was to reduce the apparent sexual violation and immorality occasioned by women's clothing. In the Bill, public nudity is defined as a 'state of indecent dressing which expose in the public or in the open the breast, belly, waist and lap of a female above the age of 14 years, as well as any part of the body from two inches below the shoulders downwards to the knee'.

The subsequent sections of the Bill then define punishments, which include a prison sentence of three months for public nudity, and three years for sexual intimidation. In prescribing enforcement, the Bill identifies 'the role of religious bodies in moral rejuvenation', proposing active efforts by government bodies to support this (Bakare-Yusuf 2011).
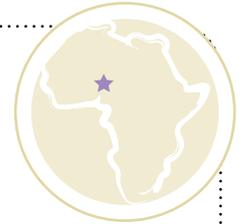
In mapping the evolution of gender and violence work in Africa, there are three key points to take forward:

1. For women, the distinction between 'war' and 'peace' is false. Their experience of violence is not restricted to situations of conflict. The extent of violence may be greater – and appear unique – during armed conflict but it mirrors daily experience of violence against women.

2. The importance of ensuring the visibility of 'daily' forms of violence against women within public policy spaces, as distinct from those which occur in mass based, multipronged armed conflict.

3. The robust movement building work in this area – from the liberation period to latter day organising – demonstrates that women's efforts to counter patriarchy has not been shaped by external or 'Western' processes alone, as is often suggested by states seeking to roll back hard won gains.

Feminist Approaches to (In) Security, Militarisation and Conflict

Increasing debates about men, women, violence and war are part of earlier feminist reflections on the nature of patriarchy. Early discussions about the impact of violent conflict were based on the perception of war as an activity carried out by male armies on faraway battlefields, with minimal impact on citizens (El-Bushra and Piza-Lopez 1993; Hamber et al 2006).

This approach to security is state centered and focuses on the protection of state borders from external threats, or the protection of state authority. Security is therefore viewed as the absence of a threat of violent conflict (Hamber et al 2006: 488). This approach also allows states to monopolise the use of force and limit the participation of civil society in the development of security strategies (Hamber et al 2006: 488).

With growing numbers of internal armed conflicts, it has become clear that the impact on 'ordinary' citizens needs to be better understood (El-Bushra and Piza-Lopez 1993). Human security emerged in 1994 through the United Nations Human Development report to emphasise the place of the individual in discussions about security. A human security approach encourages the interpretation of security threats as related to daily poverty concerns.

Despite the usefulness of the human security framework, not enough attention has been paid to the different forms of violence women negotiate daily: in the home, streets, community, and the state. In adopting a gender mainstreaming approach to human security, little attention has been paid to women specific work, gender inequality in control over resources, power and decision making (Woroniuk 1999).

Nonetheless, the growth of the human security framework has been accompanied by international debates on gender and peacebuilding. This was initially facilitated by the World Women's Conferences and the mobilisation of women's movements and organisations (Purkarthofer 2006). Women's organisations successfully lobbied during the 1993 Human Rights conference in Vienna for the recognition of forced sterilisation, rape by civilians during war, and genital mutilation as human rights violations. Another example of successful lobbying was the optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW provides the option for individual complaints against states if women are deprived of rights guaranteed by it (Purkarthofer 2006).

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) adopted at the Women's Conference included a chapter on 'Women in armed conflicts'. The BPFA demands stronger participation of women in peace processes, reduction in military spending, and the promotion of peaceful means to resolve conflicts

(Platform for Action 1995). Both Beijing +5 (2000) and the Windhoek Declaration or Namibia Plan of Action demanded the 'participation of men and women as equal partners and beneficiaries in all aspects of the peace process' (Windhoek Declaration, 2000). The Windhoek Declaration also included recommendations for the United Nations on how to integrate a gender perspective into peace missions (Purkarthofer 2006).

In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSCR) passed resolution 1325, which built on the Windhoek Declaration. UNSCR 1325 was the result of concerted lobbying efforts by several women's organisations. Viewed as a hallmark resolution, UNSCR 1325 (2000) stresses that women play an important role in peacebuilding and it highlights the necessity of strengthening women's roles in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. The resolution also calls for the implementation of women's human rights and recognises the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective in peacekeeping operations (UNSCR 1325 2000).

Key lessons

With increasing interest in women's peace oriented activities, it is important to assess what these experiences contribute to feminist perspectives on conflict, violence and peace (El-Bushra 2007: 130). One of the main ways women's participation in peacebuilding processes has been secured is through the assertion that women are naturally peaceful and men inherently violent. This is also seen in one of the overarching assumptions in the language and subsequent interpretation of UNSCR 1325, which is that the integration of women and their protection will promote peace. While this has been useful in securing women's participation in conflict resolution spaces, several concerns have been raised about this approach.

When peace builders draw on stereotypes about women's 'natural' capacities and assumed biological traits, they reinforce rather than shift the structures, which justifies women's exclusion from the public sphere based on their special responsibilities and proficiencies as mothers and women (Vincent 2001: 5). While the use of gender stereotypes can be useful, this strategy can also be self defeating if the outcome is that women remain imprisoned in these gender roles.

Drawing on women's 'peaceful nature' silences the diversity of women's experiences during conflict. Research and experience from civil wars across Africa has shown that women taking up arms, supporting guerilla forces and doing work formerly reserved for men dissolve traditional values and thereby undermine prevailing gender norms.

Situations of conflict erode traditional values but do not dismantle sexist beliefs. This explains why traditional gender roles resume so easily and quickly after conflicts (Turshen 2001: 83). Consequently, the power and resources reassigned during post conflict peacebuilding processes have the potential to transform gender relations and dismantle gender hierarchies, or can reinstate and/or enhance existing gender inequalities.

Influencing Policy and Praxis

The growth of international and regional policy frameworks have drawn attention to VAW, as well as encouraged a gender sensitive interpretation of security. The recognition of sexual violence against women as a war crime has been hailed as a major advancement in international law. These frameworks, most notably UNSCR 1325, have also drawn attention to local and national initiatives by women's rights organisations and individuals.

THE ROME STATUTE AND THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

The Rome Statute (1998) marked a decisive step to ensure that addressing massive violations of human rights was the responsibility of the entire international system, and not only of the countries in which they occurred.

There are significant provisions on sexual and gender violence crimes under the Rome Statute. For example, there should be no reference to consent in cases where there was force, threat of force, or a coercive environment. There should be no reference to the prior sexual conduct of a victim. Furthermore, priority is given to the safety and privacy of victims and witnesses, and to appropriate measures taken such as conducting proceedings in camera. Finally, the creation of a trust fund for victims within the ICC is also an important framework for ensuring restorative justice.

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

The United Nations Security Council has, in the last decade, passed a number of resolutions with specific provisions on women, peace and security. There are a series of internal and external dynamics that have motivated these commitments. Internally, UN peacekeeping forces were implicated in crimes against women, most notably in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC). This led to increased internal vigilance. Externally, increasing violence and armed conflict, evidence provided by feminist movements across the continent on the impact of war on the lives of women, and the emergence of human security, have all been contributory factors to policy positions by the UN. This is highlighted next.

UNSCR 1325 (2000) stresses the importance of women's 'equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security'. This includes increased representation of women at all decision making levels. It also requires that all actors involved in peace agreements include the protection of and respect for the human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the police, judiciary and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes.

UNSCR 1820 (2008) demands 'the immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians. It calls for UN assisted justice and security sector reform efforts to consult with women and women led organisations to develop effective mechanisms to protect women and girls from violence, in particular sexual violence.

UNSCR 1888 (2009) calls for new measures to address sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, including investigation and punishment of sexual violence committed by civilians or by military personnel, and legal and judicial reform to ensure justice for survivors of sexual violence.

UNSCR 1889 (2009) urges member states to enhance gender mainstreaming in post conflict recovery processes. This includes funding and programming for women's empowerment activities, and for the creation of concrete strategies in law enforcement and justice to meet women and girls' needs and priorities.

The international focus on rape as a weapon of war has been useful in drawing global attention to the fact that a specific act of violence (rape) within a particular context (war zone) demands international intervention. However, it identifies acts of violence conducted during war as unique and out of the ordinary and those conducted during 'peacetime' as case specific and of a criminal nature. Treated in this way, rape as a weapon of war does not effectively address unequal power relations and the mechanisms used to enforce them.

AFRICAN UNION

At the regional level, the African Union's (AU) gender transformation agenda is expressed in its policy instruments on gender and women's rights on the one hand, and peace and security on the other hand. These instruments are the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (AU SDGEA) (2004) and the AU Gender Policy (2009).

The AU SDGEA was the outcome of a series of preparatory processes by diverse women's formations in Durban, South Africa; Dakar, Senegal; and Maputo, Mozambique. These meetings produced the Durban Declaration, the Dakar Strategy, and the Maputo Declaration respectively. They culminated in The African Women's Contribution to the Declaration on Mainstreaming Gender in the African Union in Addis Ababa, EtOhiopia. The AU SDGEA incorporates many of the issues raised during the preparatory processes.

The Directorate for Women and Gender Development was created in 2000 within the AU Commission to provide leadership in this area. The AU's 2009 gender policy also makes specific contributions in the area of peace and security, including identifying the need to 'promote effective participation of women in peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and security, including reconciliation in post conflict settings'. Through the gender policy, the AU commits to including women in mediation processes, and to work in conjunction with the UN and relevant AU organs to create and manage truth and reconciliation structures that (will) expose violations against women and girls during conflicts. The AU's gender and peace and security architecture is complemented by similar commitments within regional economic communities. The case study of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) is an example.

Solidarity across Africa

Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) is a coalition of 36 civil society organisations across the continent. They work to ensure that the protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa remains on the agenda of policy makers, and to urge all African leaders to safeguard the rights of women through ratification and implementation of the protocol.

The SOAWR coalition works to achieve universal ratification of the AU protocol on the rights of women; popularise the protocol; ensure that the protocol is implemented in all countries, and that it becomes part of domestic law.

Source: www.soawr.org

Great Lakes Region[2]

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) is an intergovernmental organisation of 11 countries in the Great Lakes Region. The ICGLR initiated the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children in 2007. It adopts the definition of sexual violence as developed under the Statutes of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Court (ICC). It also draws on international instruments such as CEDAW and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The protocol is designed to fill the void in most of the member states' legal systems in response to the systemic rape of women and children in the Great Lakes Region. The ICGLR also adopted the model legislation covering prevention and suppression of sexual violence against women and children. The model legislation is the first in the area of protection against sexual violence in conflict and post conflict settings in Africa. The legislation establishes links between sexual violence, trafficking, slavery, genocide and war crimes.

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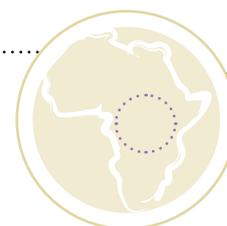
2   The countries are: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia

Women's agency in post conflict reconstruction

International policy frameworks have led to increased commitment to institutional transformation. This has led to differentiating the security needs of women and men in situations of armed conflict. The first all-women formed police unit, comprising 100 Indian women police officers deployed to Monrovia, Liberia in 2007, is a direct result of these efforts.

At the AU there has been a conscious effort to implement parity principles, which has resulted in increased numbers of women within mediation teams. Countries like Namibia, South Africa and Malawi have also made affirmative action provisions for recruitment of women in the security sector (Hendricks, 2011). The case studies highlight some of the ways in which women's movements have contributed to shifting local narratives on gender, violence and transformation.

Women in peace negotiations

The Somali Sixth Clan

Following years of numerous ad hoc peace talks in the 1990s, Djibouti hosted a major reconciliation conference – the 13th such effort – in 2000 in the city of Arta. Unlike previous meetings, all five major clans were in attendance, numbering 2 000 to 3 000 people; among them approximately 100 women. The five clans were the only officially recognised participants and planned to negotiate a distribution of power based on clan identity.

Women leaders recognised their window of opportunity to make an impact on the negotiations and the outcomes of the accord. In May 2000, they jointly agreed to break with clan leadership and began to lobby as a single bloc in support of a women's agenda. Women were recognised as a 'Sixth Clan' at the negotiations and succeeded in including a 10% quota for women in the Transitional National Assembly. Women participated as delegates and observers to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) led negotiations from 2002 to 2004. They succeeded in passing a 12% quota for women in the new National Assembly and a 25% quota in the regional assemblies. These have since then, regrettably, been largely ignored by clan leaders.

Source: UNIFEM (2006)
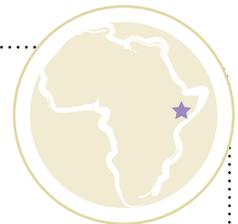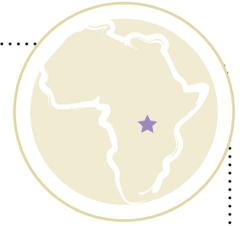
Burundian women's voices

It took almost four years for Burundian women's voices to be heard in the peace process. In the first round of the negotiations, women were absent. Eventually, women were allowed in as observers but with no right to take part in the talks. However, when the negotiations began, women were prevented from entering the negotiating room. A breakthrough was reached when UNIFEM and the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation sponsored the All-Party Burundi's women peace conference held 17–20 July 2000 in Arusha, Tanzania.

As requested, each of the 19 Burundi organisations represented at the peace negotiation sent two women delegates. More than 50 Burundi women and observers participated in the event. The women's proposals were presented at a meeting with former South African President Nelson Mandela, who was designated to replace the late Mwalimu Nyerere as facilitator for the Burundi peace negotiations. Among the steps of action requested were:

- a women's charter to be included in the constitution
- elimination of all laws that discriminated against women
- special measures for women's security
- women's right to land and inheritance
- equal access to education for women and girls
- an end to impunity for gender based war crimes, including domestic violence.

All the women's recommendations were accepted by the 19 parties and were integrated into the final peace accord, with the exception of a clause requesting a 30% quota to promote women's representation at all decision making levels.

Source: Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf (2002)

Women and mediation

Betty Bigombe has been involved in peace negotiations to end the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency since the early nineties. After reading news dispatches of a massacre at a displacement camp in Barlonyo on 21 February 2004, Bigombe took a leave of absence from a World Bank position in Washington. She travelled to Sudan and met with President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who was providing Joseph Kony, leader of the LRA, and his men sanctuary in the southern part of the country.

After seven weeks, Bigombe succeeded in reestablishing ties with one of Kony's chief deputies. She brought representatives of the government and the LRA to the table in 2004, footing the rebels' costly satellite telephone bills as well as her own to stay in contact. She organised meetings in northern Uganda's bush heartland. For the first time, Ugandan government ministers came face to face with Kony's warlords. The ministers of interior and security, with a staff of 30, met with an LRA delegation of 11 commanders at the brigadier level, with Bigombe negotiating ceasefire drafts. The last meeting, scheduled for 20 April 2005, which Kony was due to attend, fell through after Ugandan authorities refused to clear it.

Source: www.peacewomen.org

Militaries and peace support operations

Peacekeepers and peace support operations play an important role in conflict and post conflict environments. The push to have women play a greater role in peacekeeping missions is informed by the increasing humanitarian focus during post conflict reconstruction. Provisions within international policy frameworks, such as BPFA and UNSCR 1325, have also demanded greater vigilance – particularly when peacekeepers are implicated in crimes against women. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) represents one of the few militaries on the African continent that has made significant strides to ensure gender parity.

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCES (SANDF)

Chapter Six of the South Africa Defence White Paper (1996) underscores the principle of equality within the SANDF. It further stipulates that racial and gender representation is fundamental to its legitimacy. In 2011, the SANDF consisted of 23% females. SANDF has increased its entry level recruitment target from 30% to 40%. This would enable the SANDF to create a pool to serve as a feeder system for women's advancement to senior ranks in the future. As a result, the critical 30% mass has not yet been achieved. Debriefs on women's experiences in Peace Support Missions indicates that female peacekeepers experience their deployment as an opportunity to put their military training into practice. They are trusted by the local chiefs and are therefore able to interact with the communities they protect and initiate projects in the communities.

Source: Memela Motumi (October 2011)

The table shows the average percentage of women deployed on peacekeeping missions within the Southern African region per contributing country for the period January 2010 to December 2010.

Country	% of women
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	10%
Malawi	11%
Namibia	43%
South Africa	15%
Tanzania	6%
Zambia	10%
Zimbabwe	24%

Source: Hendricks (2011)

There is limited agreement over the extent to which the military is capable of reform, and whether it makes sense to demand equal representation for women at all levels of the military. Those who say it makes sense argue that women should participate in deciding how the large defence budgets are used. Military violence should not, as a matter of principle, be left to men alone (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2010: 28).

Pathways to Peace

Significant strides have been made in most African countries to create conducive legal frameworks to deal with gender violence. These gains have included training police forces, transforming judiciaries, and setting up shelters and hotlines, to name a few. However, the impact of armed violence on women has led to a heightened focus on situations of war. This has created the potential for blindness to daily acts of violence against women. There are four key lessons to take forward in our efforts to rethink gender and security.

1. It is evident that genuine security requires not only the absence of war, but also the elimination of unjust social relations, including unequal gender relations (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2010). Linking peace with the absence of every type of structural violence is a long term goal that women's movements must strategise towards in their conflict related work.

2. The primary responsibility for providing security lies with the state. Yet its gender blind structures also pose specific potential threats to women and girls. To this end, ongoing security sector reform (SSR) initiatives across the continent are a critical avenue through which a broadened perspective of just security can be pursued. The presence of an AU normative policy framework on security sector reform provides an important entry point for engagement.

3. Within the AU, policy is yet to match practice. The majority of decision makers at the level of the assembly of heads of state and government, the executive council of ministers, and the permanent representatives committee of ambassadors are still overwhelmingly men. While there are increasing numbers of women serving in AU peace operations, for example in Darfur, they do not occupy a significant number of the leadership positions in these missions. Women continue to be excluded from high level peace negotiations and are underrepresented as Special Envoys of AU in conflict situations (Murithi 2009).

4. Women's movements have played an important role in supporting women survivors of violence and in documenting these experiences. These efforts have contributed immensely to informing transformative interpretations on the impact of conflict and security. Consistent and effective consolidation of these experiences remains an essential component of African feminist knowledge production which will shape effective policy and advocacy work.

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PART 2

Overview

This primer, *Gender and Security in Africa*, addresses the critical questions:

- What factors drive women's peace activism?
- Who are the major actors that women peace activists target?
- What are the key lessons that can be drawn from these interactions?

The primer situates violence against women as a starting point for reviewing women's peace activism. It traces women's experience of violence from the period of independence liberation struggles to date. It highlights the continuum of violence and insecurity experienced by African women from peacetime to conflict situations, and the efforts of the indigenous African women's movement to counter the phenomenon of violence against women.

The primer then reviews the range of international and regional instruments and tools that have been adopted to help advance women's contributions to peace processes. It provides illustrations of women's contributions to advancing negotiations and mediation processes in a number of countries including Djibouti, Burundi and northern Uganda. The primer concludes by returning to the question of the structural underpinnings of violence against women. It highlights the need for increased representation of women in policy processes and acknowledges the important contributions of the African women's movement in efforts to combat violence against women.

Discussion guide

We hope the following discussion questions assist in deepening clarity and insights on *Gender and Security in Africa*:

1. Women peace activists in Africa have based their demands for inclusion in peace processes on recognition of their right to participate. What are the main reasons they cite to support this argument?

2. In the face of increasing relapses of conflict, policymakers are increasingly highlighting the importance of women's contributions as necessary for enhancing the sustainability of peace processes. In what ways can women's engagement contribute to solidifying fragile peace dividends?

3. Since Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000, seven additional resolutions have been adopted on women's peace and security (Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242). How has the adoption of more resolutions increased women's participation in peace processes, or enhanced their protection from conflict related violence?

4. Have peace support operations become more responsive to gender considerations since the adoption of Resolution 1325? Which areas of work in peace support operations best provide evidence of this?

5. What kinds of leadership and professional advancement challenges confront women in military and police establishments across Africa?

6. Post conflict environments can be fertile ground to renegotiate power relations through state and institution building reforms. Ironically, local women's movements are often fragmented and weak in the aftermath of conflicts. How can feminist movements enhance support for women in post conflict countries to strengthen their bargaining position to renegotiate power structures as part of post conflict peacebuilding?