

2015

## The Role of Women in International Conflict Resolution

Cassandra K. Shepherd  
*Hamline University School of Law*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/jplp>

 Part of the [International Law Commons](#), [Legal Ethics and Professional Responsibility Commons](#), and the [Sexuality and the Law Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Shepherd, Cassandra K. (2015) "The Role of Women in International Conflict Resolution," *Hamline University's School of Law's Journal of Public Law and Policy*: Vol. 36: Iss. 2, Article 1.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/jplp/vol36/iss2/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Hamline. It has been accepted for inclusion in Hamline University's School of Law's Journal of Public Law and Policy by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Hamline. For more information, please contact [jneilson01@hamline.edu](mailto:jneilson01@hamline.edu).

# THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Cassandra K. Shepherd<sup>1</sup>

*“[L]eveling the playing field—where women and men have equal chances to become socially and politically active, make decisions, and shape policies—is likely to lead over time to more representative, and more inclusive, institutions and policy choices and thus to a better development path.” – The World Bank, 2011<sup>2</sup>*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The international community should better involve women in peace processes to help achieve sustainable peace and more effectively build amicable relationships between entities in conflict. Peace agreements and reconstruction are more sustainable and effective when women are involved in the peace-building process.<sup>3</sup> Bringing women to the peace table improves the quality of agreements reached and enhances the likelihood of implementation because of the unique skill sets and experiences that women possess.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Cassandra Shepherd is a 2014 graduate of Hamline University School of Law. I would like to the editors of the Hamline Journal of Public Law and Policy, specifically Ryann Sparrow, for their help preparing this article for publication. Thank you to the professors and mentors who have critiqued and strengthened by writing over the years, especially Jon Geffen. Thank you to my mother, Chris Schauer, for instilling in me the desire to leave a positive impact on the world. A special thank you goes out to my grandmother, Sandy Schauer, who has impeccable grammar and never lets any improper pronoun usage slip.

<sup>2</sup> *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*, THE WORLD BANK, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1315936222006/Complete-Report.pdf> (last visited Apr. 20, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Laura Kray & Linda Babcock, *Gender in Negotiations: A Motivated Social Cognitive Analysis*, in *Negotiation Theory and Research* 203 (Leigh L. Thompson ed., 2006) (“[E]ven gender differences in negotiation behavior and outcomes that are small in magnitude add up to very large amounts over time because these differences accumulate.”).

<sup>4</sup> Roohia S. Klein, *The Role of Women in Mediation and Conflict Resolution: Lessons from UN Security Council*, 18 WASH. & LEE J. CIVIL RTS. & SOC. JUST. 277, 309 (2012).

Women are disproportionately impacted by war and their experiences are distinct from men;<sup>5</sup> further, although women may carry a heavier burden than men during wartimes, their experiences, views, and skills are often under-valued and under-utilized in the resolution of conflict.<sup>6</sup> As a result, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions throughout the world. In the future, international organizations need to work toward ameliorating this representation imbalance and the organizations need to take gender into account when planning for peace through legal activism that provides for the needs of women.

Historically, controlling parties have ignored or excluded women from the negotiation table, and women often encounter overt discrimination when attempting to influence armed conflict resolution.<sup>7</sup> Sadly, however, in armed conflicts, women (and children) are often the overwhelming victims as rape, sexual slavery, and other forms of sexual violence are used as weapons of war in international conflicts.<sup>8</sup> In addition, there is an overwhelming dependence on women in post-conflict societies due to the deaths of husbands and fathers during conflict, thereby further demonstrating the impact of armed conflicts on women.<sup>9</sup> It is precisely this devastating impact on women and girls that demonstrates the need for peacemakers to include women in the efforts to end war and prevent its reoccurrence. Further, any attempts to redress the harms women experience as a result of armed conflict must include a role for women in the peace processes.

As this article will demonstrate, the cost of excluding women from the political and public service sphere will come at a high price,

---

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 278.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Margaret E. McGuinness, *Women as Architects of Peace: Gender and the Resolution of Armed Conflict*, 15 MICH. ST. J. INT'L L. 63, 68 (2007).

<sup>8</sup> Elisabeth Rehn & Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-Building*, UN WOMEN, [http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/media/publications/unifem/213\\_chapter01.pdf](http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/media/publications/unifem/213_chapter01.pdf) (last visited Apr. 20, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Klein, *supra* note 4, at 281.

impacting not just women but their communities and countries.<sup>10</sup> In Part II, this article will examine the gender distinctions within conflict resolution and why the skills women possess are crucial to lasting peace. The article will briefly examine the different ways in which women can and should be involved in both the informal and formal processes of conflict resolution. Then, the article will demonstrate how the women of Liberia have beautifully exemplified the impact of women coming together in their struggle to bring peace and justice during wartime. Part III of this article will next examine the significance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the impact it has made on conflict resolution processes. In conclusion, Part IV of this article will reflect once again on how war has led to women experiencing extensive devastation without the opportunity to be active participants in the peacemaking process. The skills women bring to the table are arguably subjective. The effectiveness of enforcing women's involvement in the peace process is a separate issue to be explored. This paper only scratches the surface of these issues but despite the complexities of this topic, women need to be a part of the peace process— not because women's involvement is fair, but because it is essential to building long-term, sustainable, and amicable relationships between parties in conflict.

## II. GENDER ROLES IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In recent years, some scholars have advocated for construction of dispute resolution processes centered on gender neutrality.<sup>11</sup> This advocacy stems from the notion that to perform on the same playing field as men, women need to think and act like men.<sup>12</sup> While gender may be a relevant factor for understanding bargaining behavior, emerging science and a growing body of literature challenges the assumption that women and men behave differently in a variety of bargaining and dispute resolution

---

<sup>10</sup> See McGuinness, *supra* note 7, at 64 (arguing that women's inclusion will not only help achieve justice for past harms but will also help establish a sustainable peace that will help prevent harms in the future).

<sup>11</sup> McGuinness, *supra* note 7, at 68.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

contexts.<sup>13</sup> While the feminist understanding of gender as a social category<sup>14</sup> may conflict with the argument for women's participation on the understanding of biologically-determined gender differences, this distinction needs to be embraced rather than ignored. Increasing women's participation in politics and the public sphere is not only just, but also makes economic sense, and the plurality of women's perspectives strengthens national security.<sup>15</sup>

In general, men and women have different conflict management styles.<sup>16</sup> There are essentially five main types of conflict management styles: "competing (satisfying one's own concern at the expense of another's), accommodating (sacrificing one's own concern for the sake of another's), avoiding (neglecting both parties' concerns by postponing a conflict issue), collaborating (attempting to find a solution that satisfies both parties' concerns), and compromising (attempting to find a middle ground, which satisfies only partly both parties' concerns)."<sup>17</sup> Studies have shown that women typically are more likely to use cooperative conflict management styles such as collaborating, compromising, or avoiding, while men are more likely to use competing or avoiding strategies in situations of conflict.<sup>18</sup>

In the context of international conflicts, adopting a collaborative or compromising style, rather than a competitive one, can be of great advantage.<sup>19</sup> Greater collaboration produces more constructive outcomes for the disputing parties,<sup>20</sup> and compromising behavior helps ensure harmonious, lasting relationships; at the same time, holding out for the best possible outcome may burn bridges and

---

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Dianne Otto, *A Sign of "Weakness"? Disrupting Gender Certainties in the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325*, 13 MICH. J. GENDER & L. 113, 131 (2006).

<sup>15</sup> Rangita de Silva Alwis, *Why Women's Leadership is the Cause of Our Time*, 18 UCLA J. INT'L L. & FOREIGN AFF. 87, 95 (2013).

<sup>16</sup> Klein, *supra* note 4, at 294.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at 295.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* at 296.

reduce the chance of reaching an agreement.<sup>21</sup> In the context of international conflict, the focus is on building amicable, long-term relationships, meaning that conflict management style may be an important variable in settling a dispute. For example, although aggression can sometimes prompt a party to make a better offer, this may prevent the parties from reaching an agreement when the best interest of the parties necessitates an agreement.<sup>22</sup>

In the international conflict context, hard bargaining tactics may be socially costly because, often, innocent lives are on the line<sup>23</sup>. As a result, women's typical collaborative approach may be more productive and efficient than men's typical inclination towards hard bargaining tactics.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, given women's actual or perceived aims of maintaining long-term, relational harmony and their sensitivity to interpersonal cues, women are likely to be more successful in delicate conflicts involving future relationships.<sup>25</sup> These gender distinctions need to be recognized and utilized in conflict resolution. Armed conflict is not a gender neutral event; therefore, the dispute resolution process designed to resolve armed conflict should not be neutral toward gender.<sup>26</sup>

#### A. A Woman's Place At The Peace Table

Women have a long history of organizing internationally to achieve global peace and security.<sup>27</sup> These efforts to promote peace often take place outside the formal systems of military decision-making and international dispute resolution.<sup>28</sup> However, if peacemakers are to address, in any meaningful way, many of the

---

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> Catherine Eckel, Angela C.M. de Oliveira, and Phillip J. Grossman, *Gender and Negotiation in the Small: Are Women (Perceived to Be) More Cooperative Than Men?*, 24 NEGOTIATION J. 429, 441 (2008).

<sup>26</sup> McGuinness, *supra* note 7, at 65.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> Otto, *supra* note 14, at 115.

post-conflict issues that strongly affect women, women must literally have a seat at the peace table and a hand in the drafting, interpretation, and application of the rule of law created during the transition into peace. This process begins by first overcoming gender assumptions underlying the design of post-conflict dispute resolution systems and working toward greater inclusion of women in formal and informal processes.<sup>29</sup> Finally, the terms of effective peace resolutions must include meaningful political participation from women, reconciliation processes that provide a means for including women's experience in the histories of conflict, and a role for women in post-conflict community building.

Generally, theories of armed conflict resolution typically separate formal processes from informal processes.<sup>30</sup> The informal process takes place wholly outside formal governmental or intergovernmental institutions and involves negotiations that include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or private citizens.<sup>31</sup> The formal process involves interactions between states or political groups seeking statehood and is aimed at legally-binding results in the form of a cease-fire agreement or a more comprehensive settlement of the conflict.<sup>32</sup>

Women have been involved in the informal peace process as long as war has been a feature of human experience, with these informal processes taking many forms from small group acts to systematic organized events.<sup>33</sup> Women have been advocates outside the formal structure to prevent war before it begins and heal wounds after the war has ended.<sup>34</sup> This form of grassroots advocacy has been instrumental in building relationships and finding mutual understanding across cultures.<sup>35</sup>

The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace demonstrated is one of the most notable examples of the power of women to

---

<sup>29</sup> *Id.* at 126.

<sup>30</sup> McGuinness, *supra* note 7, at 74.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

influence change through the informal process. As explained more in depth in Part II-B below, the First and Second Liberian Civil War cost more than 150,000 lives to the country of Liberia<sup>36</sup> Almost 40% of the combatants engaged in conflict were children,<sup>37</sup> and, as in many conflicts, sexual violence was a weapon employed against many Liberian women.<sup>38</sup>

Women began to unite in hopes of aiding the peace process in Liberia.<sup>39</sup> This movement began as meetings for prayer and worship of both Christian and Muslim women of Monrovia, but grew to a political activist movement, pleading for peace.<sup>40</sup> These resilient women collectively brought an end to the war and restored peace in the region, leading the country to the peaceful democratic elections of 2005 and the first elected woman president of an African state.<sup>41</sup>

While women have historically made a difference through these informal processes, there is a danger that complacency with or an overemphasis on participation in informal processes may be counterproductive to the long-term interests of women.<sup>42</sup> While focusing on informal processes, women lose the opportunity to voice their perspectives within formal processes where permanent and lasting decisions are made.<sup>43</sup> The experiences of women in Liberia have revealed that, despite efforts to advance their cause, the official settings of peace negotiations and the terms of peace agreements fail to listen to women's voices or to acknowledge their contributions.<sup>44</sup> Women need to be represented in formal processes in numbers large enough to create a shift of focus to issues of importance to women, otherwise society will continue to perpetrate the relegation of women

---

<sup>36</sup> Luca Renda, *Ending Civil Wars: The Case of Liberia*, 23 FLETCHER F. WORLD AFF. 59, 59 (1999).

<sup>37</sup> Benedetta Faedi, *What Have Women Got to Do With Peace?: A Gender Analysis of the Laws of War and Peacemaking*, 10 GEO. J. GENDER & L. 37, 53 (2009).

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> *Id.* at 54.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.*

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> McGuinness, *supra* note 7, at 74.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*

<sup>44</sup> Faedi, *supra* note 25, at 59; *see supra* Part III-B.

to informal processes.<sup>45</sup> To prevent this marginalization, an increase in participation of women is needed in a range of formal institutional roles that bear on when and how armed conflict is avoided, shortened, or resolved.<sup>46</sup> Women are instrumental in bringing parties together to the table in the first place. Women's involvement needs to extend beyond the informal processes to ensure true change and enduring peace.

### **B. The Impact Of Women At The Table In Liberia**

To further understand the impact and power of women during times of international conflict, it is beneficial to more thoroughly analyze the role of the women for peace in Liberia. The influence of these women is beautifully depicted in their contributions, spanning from the grassroots to the Presidency. These women took on the warlords and regime of dictator Charles Taylor in the midst of a brutal civil war.<sup>47</sup> While in times of war, women are commonly excluded from the decision-making processes of war and peace;<sup>48</sup> the women of Liberia took this conflict as an opportunity to rise up and make their voices heard.<sup>49</sup> The peace movement, commonly known as the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, started with thousands of local women coming together to pray for peace and their efforts were mobilized to nonviolent protests that brought national attention to the atrocity.<sup>50</sup> The tremendous endeavor of these women to fight against the war and to be actively involved in the peace process culminated in Taylor's exile, the end of the war, and the rise of Africa's first female head of state, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> McGuinness, *supra* note 7, at 77.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*

<sup>47</sup> Marissa Jackson, *Crossing the Bridge: African-Americans and the Necessity of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Human Rights Movement*, 5 HUMAN RIGHTS & GLOBALIZATION L. REV. 56, 81 (2014).

<sup>48</sup> McGuinness, *supra* note 7, at 65.

<sup>49</sup> Jackson, *supra* note 47, at 82.

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*

<sup>51</sup> Jackson, *supra* note 47, at 83.

From 1989 to 1996 and then from 1999 to 2003, Liberia experienced two civil wars that resulted in “at least one third of the country’s pre-war population fle[eing] the country, over one half were internally displaced, [and] nearly two hundred thousand lives were lost.”<sup>52</sup> The First Liberian Civil War was brought about in 1989 when Charles Taylor invaded Liberia from Cote d’Ivoire and Liberia was overcome by rebel forces.<sup>53</sup> Within a few months, Taylor, along with the rebel organization the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), had seized control of most of the country and had besieged the capital of Monrovia.<sup>54</sup> The most powerful warlords of Liberia came together in 1995 and signed a treaty to form a transitional government.<sup>55</sup>

In 1997, despite Taylor’s role in the plunder of the country, 75% of Liberians voted to elect Charles Taylor as president.<sup>56</sup> As President Taylor consolidated power and violently silenced dissent, Liberia continued to crumble.<sup>57</sup> Taylor’s forces, along with the rebel factions, became known for their widespread violence against civilians and their conscription of child soldiers.<sup>58</sup> Child soldiers committed atrocities, raping and murdering people of all ages.<sup>59</sup> “Taylor’s forces were known for recruiting and brainwashing those left orphaned by opposing forces, employing these ‘small boy units’ to participate in mass killings.”<sup>60</sup> Children made up from 10-40% of the fighting forces.<sup>61</sup>

In 1999, the Second Liberian Civil War broke out and brought systematic rape and brutality to an already war-weary

---

<sup>52</sup> Levi Woodward, *Taylor’s Liberia and the U.N.’s Involvement*, 19 N.Y.L. SCH. J. HUM. RTS. 923 (2003).

<sup>53</sup> Jonathan Compton, *The Peril of Imposing the Rule of Law: Lessons from Liberia*, 23 MINN. J. INT’L L. 47, 55 (2014).

<sup>54</sup> Renda, *supra* note 56, at 61.

<sup>55</sup> Compton, *supra* note 32, at 55.

<sup>56</sup> *Id.*

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> Sara Kuipers Cummings, *Liberia’s “New War”: Post-Conflict Strategies for Confronting Rape and Sexual Violence*, 43 ARIZ. ST. L.J. 223, 230 (2011).

<sup>59</sup> *Id.*

<sup>60</sup> *Id.* at 233.

<sup>61</sup> *Id.*

Liberia.<sup>62</sup> Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian human rights activist, responded to this atrocity and mobilized an interreligious coalition of Christian and Muslim women, establishing the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement.<sup>63</sup> Through Gbowee's leadership, thousands of women came together in nonviolent protests, demanding reconciliation and the resuscitation of high-level peace talks.<sup>64</sup>

The women of Liberia became a political force against violence and against their government. In 2003, the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace succeeded in orchestrating a meeting with President Taylor and Gbowee spoke on behalf of the Liberian women.<sup>65</sup> Through this meeting, the women were successful in extracting a promise from Taylor to attend peace talks in Ghana to negotiate with the rebels of various factions.<sup>66</sup>

The pressure of these nonviolent protests succeeded in pushing President Charles Taylor into exile. Gbowee and her fellow activists levied pressure upon Liberia's warring factions for months until they signed the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement in August of 2003, marking the end of the way and the Taylor era.<sup>67</sup> In March 2006, Taylor was turned over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone and indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other considerable violations of international humanitarian law stemming from his role in the rebellion.<sup>68</sup> On May 30, 2012, the Sierra Leone Special Court sentenced Charles Taylor to fifty years in prison following his conviction for aiding and abetting war crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Compton, *supra* note 32, at 55-56.

<sup>63</sup> Jackson, *supra* note 47, at 81.

<sup>64</sup> *Id.* at 82.

<sup>65</sup> *Id.* at 81-82.

<sup>66</sup> *Id.* at 82.

<sup>67</sup> *Id.*

<sup>68</sup> Sherie Gertler, *Legal Aid and International Obligation: Ensuring Access to Justice in the Liberian Context*, 45 COLUM. HUM. RTS. L. REV. 955, 957 (2014).

<sup>69</sup> *Id.* at 956.

In the 2005 presidential election, the country successfully elected Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as Africa's first female head of state.<sup>70</sup> President Johnson Sirleaf faced the significant challenge of rebuilding a formal justice system that had been decimated over the last fourteen years of war.<sup>71</sup> The country of Liberia was left facing significant problems such as high crime rates, a large percentage of the population living below the poverty line, a high incidence of rape of women and girls, and considerable corruption.<sup>72</sup> Despite the poor state of the country, President Johnson Sirleaf rose to the challenge and addressed these issues head on, making combating rape part of her presidential agenda.<sup>73</sup> President Johnson Sirleaf's election brought greater visibility to women in other political offices and greater protection for women through the enactment of legislation amending the national rape laws and increasing the maximum sentence for convicted rapists.<sup>74</sup>

In 2011, Leymah Gbowee, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Yemen-native Tawakkol Karman were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their role in leading the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement that brought an end to the Second Liberian Civil War.<sup>75</sup> The women were recognized "for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work."<sup>76</sup>

Women's leadership in Liberia, from the grassroots to the Presidency, was instrumental to national, rights-based reform and the election of President Johnson Sirleaf. Together these women successfully ended the second Civil War and effectuated the ouster of Liberian's notorious dictator, Charles Taylor.<sup>77</sup> Leymah Gbowee

---

<sup>70</sup> Compton, *supra* note 32, at 56.

<sup>71</sup> *Id.*

<sup>72</sup> Gertler, *supra* note 45, at 956.

<sup>73</sup> Cummings, *supra* note 37, at 224.

<sup>74</sup> Rashida Manjoo, et al., *Gender-Based Violence and Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Areas*, 44 CORNELL INT'L L.J. 11, 30 (2011).

<sup>75</sup> Jackson, *supra* note 47, at 81.

<sup>76</sup> *The Nobel Peace Prize 2011 – Press Release*, NOBEL PRIZE, (Oct. 7, 2011), Nobelprize.org.

<sup>77</sup> Jackson, *supra* note 47, at 81.

and the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement embody a striking example of the direct link between female empowerment and the political and social development of an entire nation.<sup>78</sup>

### III. UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325

Thankfully, there has been some recent worldwide recognition of the potential impact of women in the peace making process. On October 31, 2000, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325.<sup>79</sup> This resolution is significant because it is the first resolution passed by the Security Council that specifically addresses the distinct and disproportionate effects of war on women and their often under-valued and under-utilized contributions to both the prevention and resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of peace and security.<sup>80</sup> Specifically, the Security Council called for the “adoption of a gender perspective in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements; active participation of women in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security; and the support of local women’s peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution.”<sup>81</sup> This resolution reaffirms the need to increase women’s role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.

In passing Resolution 1325, the Security Council recognized that including women in conflict and peace-building processes is not important merely because it is fair, but rather because including women is necessary in order to attain lasting peace and security. A United Nations Department of Public Information report on facts and figures relevant to the adoption of Resolution 1325 states that:

---

<sup>78</sup> See *Liberia: LMDI, Gender Ministry Embark On Campaign Against Rape*, ALL AFRICA (Oct. 25, 2013), <http://allafrica.com/stories/201310250898.html>.

<sup>79</sup> Klein, *supra* note 4, at 282.

<sup>80</sup> S.C.Res 1325 ¶¶ 2, 8(b), 16, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1325 (Oct. 31, 2000).

<sup>81</sup> Press Release, Security Counsel, Security Council, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1325 (2000), Calls for Broad Participation of Women in Peace-Building, Post Conflict Reconstruction, U.N. Press Release SC/6942 (Oct. 31, 2000).

Security Council Resolution 1325 has served as a catalyst for women all over the world to mobilize their efforts to achieve equal participation. Women at the grassroots level in countries as diverse as Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq and Sudan have used this resolution to lobby for their voices to be heard in peace-building processes, in post-conflict elections, and in the re-building of their societies.<sup>82</sup>

Resolution 1325 has been a catalyst for change in these countries because it provides women with a tangible and philosophical basis for demanding their inclusion.

Resolution 1325 frames the need for women's inclusion as a security issue rather than a rights-based issue. It does so by acknowledging that involving women in peace processes brings a more inclusive view, which is more likely to achieve sustainable peace and ensure agreements hold.<sup>83</sup> Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that the promotion of women's participation in peace-keeping and peace-building is necessary because "women know the price of peace well, and are therefore better equipped to prevent and resolve conflict."<sup>84</sup>

However, women are still significantly underrepresented in or entirely absent from peace negotiations. There appears to be a complete disconnect between the pledges made by states to increase women's participation and their translation of this pledge into practice.<sup>85</sup> Although the idea of increasing women's participation in conflict-related decision-making has received considerable formal endorsement, there is no evidence that this endorsement has led to any change in the practice of their exclusion.<sup>86</sup>

While the significance of the unanimous approval of Resolution 1325 cannot be downplayed, failure to build on

---

<sup>82</sup> U.N. Dep't of Pub. Info., Facts and Figures on Women, Peace and Security, U.N. Doc. DPI/2409 (2005).

<sup>83</sup> Christy Fujio, *From Soft to Hard Law: Moving Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security Across the Spectrum*, 9 GEO. J. GENDER & L. 215, 216 (2008).

<sup>84</sup> Chineze J. Onyejekwe, *Women, War, Peace-building and Reconstruction*, 57 INT'L SOC. SCI. J. 279, 280 (2005).

<sup>85</sup> Fujio, *supra* note 83, at 216.

<sup>86</sup> Otto, *supra* note 14, at 129.

Resolution 1325 in future resolutions (by not referring to it or affirming its importance, as well as failing to emphasize commitment to its full implementation) may render Resolution 1325 obsolete.<sup>87</sup> The Security Council has demonstrated inconsistencies in their commitment to the issues embodied in Resolution 1325.<sup>88</sup> Failure to implement the provisions of Resolution 1325 in a systematic or ongoing manner cripples the effectiveness of the Resolution.<sup>89</sup> Although Resolution 1325 is a step in the right direction, much more needs to be done to achieve women's involvement in sustainable international peace processes.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Historical chronicles and modern international law theories have documented the role of women in wartime only by identifying women as victims of rape and other sexual atrocities.<sup>90</sup> Recently, this has changed somewhat, with Resolution 1325 having both a meaningful and symbolic impact on women around the world; this has transformed the image of women from being exclusively victims of war to being active participants as peacemakers, peace-builders, and negotiators. This change recognizes the value women can bring to international conflict resolution. At the same time, however, a framework like Resolution 1325, which encourages involvement of women at all levels for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict and supports local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, is not a leap, but a step in the right direction.<sup>91</sup>

There is measured progress towards including women's issues in peace agreements and protecting women's rights in the new

---

<sup>87</sup> Christy Fuijo, *From Soft to Hard Law: Moving Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security Across the Spectrum*, 9 *Geo. J. Gender & L.* 215, 227 (2008).

<sup>88</sup> *Id.*

<sup>89</sup> *Id.*

<sup>90</sup> Benedetta Fadi, *What Have Women Got to Do With Peace?: A Gender Analysis of the Laws of War and Peacemaking*, 10 *GEO. J. GENDER & L.* 37, 39 (2009).

<sup>91</sup> Klein, *supra* note 4, at 309.

constitutions of post-conflict societies.<sup>92</sup> However, none of this formal progress is possible without the informal efforts of local and international feminist peace and human rights organizations that have inspired and sustained those working in the formal process.<sup>93</sup> Thankfully, Resolution 1325 has made it possible for women engaged in formal decision-making processes to retain a close association with grassroots women's movements.

Despite the advantages of involving women in international conflict resolution, women's participation remains primarily through more informal means.<sup>94</sup> Precisely because armed conflict is not a general neutral, the dispute resolutions designed to resolve armed conflict should therefore not be neutral toward gender.<sup>95</sup> While women need to be present at the negotiation table and their voices need to be heard and considered in the conflict resolution process, we must also remember that when it comes to curing society's ills and working toward the elimination of war and violence – women are not alone. Like the Chinese proverb suggests, *women hold up half the sky, but we must work with those who hold up the other half.*

---

<sup>92</sup> Otto, *supra* note 14, at 174.

<sup>93</sup> *Id.*

<sup>94</sup> Klein, *supra* note 4, at 306.

<sup>95</sup> McGuinness, *supra* note 7, at 65.