

**BRIEFING NOTE ON GENDER ISSUES**  
**FOR THE SECURITY COUNCIL MISSION**  
**TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO,**  
**BURUNDI AND RWANDA**  
**JUNE 2003**

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda, women and girls have been plagued by violence, loss of loved ones, destruction of communities and untold hardships in a region riddled by internal conflict and war. Mass population displacement is commonplace in these countries and has been so for over a decade. While women and girls bare the brunt of the devastation, they have laboured hard to provide for their families, tried to rebuild communities and contributed to peace processes.

Security Council resolution 1325 adopted in October 2000, calls on “all actors, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective.” Specifically it points out the need to meet the special needs of women and girls during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; to support local women’s peace initiatives and to ensure the protection and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary. The resolution further urges an expanded role for women in United Nations field operations, especially among the military, police, human rights and humanitarian personnel. Finally 1325, in paragraph 15, expresses its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take into account gender considerations and the rights of women, including through the consultation with local and international women’s groups.

In the Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2002/32) of 31 October 2002, “The Security Council undertakes to integrate gender perspectives into the terms of reference of its visits and missions to countries and regions in conflict ... and to include gender specialists in the teams where relevant.” The statement goes on to recognize “the vital role of women in promoting peace ... and encourages ... regular contacts with local women’s groups and networks in order to utilize their knowledge...”

The Mission, therefore, may wish to review these gender issues throughout its assignment and specifically when meeting with representatives of women’s organizations.

1. Is the **impact of the conflict on women and men, boys and girls understood** by the actors and are programmes designed and implemented accordingly? In other words has there been a gender assessment undertaken and used by all actors in the situation?

2. Do **women and men participate equally** in various events and consultations? Does the programme acknowledge the need to have representation by men and women and support women to have equal access and ability to participate fully?
3. Are training and **capacity building programmes targeting women and men** appropriately? Do they recognise the need to increase the skills of women so that they can contribute equally to peace operations?
4. What programmes are in place to **prevent and respond to violence, abuse and exploitation against women and girls**? Do these programmes involve the community, men and women, to respond to and support survivors? Are assistance programmes monitored to prevent exploitation and abuse of women and girls? Do HIV/AIDS programmes target men and women, boys and girls? Follow-up to OIOS report?
5. Are **women's human rights issues considered** in reconstruction and nation building? Are women involved in truth and reconciliation processes? What mechanisms for gender sensitive redress for victims of armed conflict are in place?

## COUNTRY-SPECIFIC GENDER ISSUES

### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

**Violence against women:** Women and girls in the DRC have suffered and continue to suffer countless acts of gender-based violence. They are exposed to systematic rape, sexual slavery, abduction, domestic violence, trafficking, forced prostitution, battering, forced displacement and persistent massacres. The situation is particularly dire in the east for Pygmy women <sup>1</sup>. Prevention and enhanced protection for women and girls is needed. Additionally, the question of impunity is a serious concern for the women of the DRC. How will this be addressed?

**HIV/AIDS:** Rape has been used as a weapon of war and has led to an increase in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst the Congolese population. Since women continue to be raped, their vulnerability to contracting HIV/AIDS has increased.

**Women's capacity building for and participation in elections:** Although women have expressed the desire to participate, due to their lack of capacity, they have requested help to build their capacity, as the DRC has not had elections in 40 years.

Discussions on the **Truth and Reconciliation** process have started. Women are asking to be more involved in the process and participating as members of the commission. They think a solid information campaign should be put in place.

**Peace process and women in the transitional government:** Congolese women participated in the **Inter-Congolese Dialogue** in Sun-City in April 2002 and in the

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<sup>1</sup> Representatives to the UN Forum on Indigenous Issues described the Pygmies as being on the verge of extinction.

technical and bilateral negotiations in Pretoria in November and December 2002. They drew up a memorandum appealing for sustainable peace and have successfully petitioned representatives of the three key players in the peace talks. Congolese women demand participation in the decision-making structures during the transition period (30% of women at decision-making level) and involvement in the work of the Humanitarian, Social and Cultural Commission in the framework of the Sun City Resolutions.

Reaffirm its support to **DPKO's "zero tolerance policy" as regards sexual exploitation of local women and girls by peacekeepers**; support the establishment of a monitoring mechanism for the implementation of **MONUC's Code of Conduct** regarding the "Prohibition of Sexual Abuse and/or Exploitation by Members of the Civilian and Military Components of MONUC" issued on 16 December 2002.

The **recruitment of more women peacekeepers** both as military observers and police. In April 2003 in MONUC, there were only 11 women out of more than 500 Milobs (2 per cent) and 2 female officers out of 50 Civpol or 4 per cent. DPKO should have a more proactive role in implementing recommendations of Resolution 1325 on this matter.

#### **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – GOVERNMENT**

- **Ministre des Affaires Sociales (Minister of Social Affairs)**  
Contact: H. E. Ms. Jeanne Eramba - Ph#: (242-88-02724/98)
- **Marie-Madeleine Kalala** – The only woman earmarked for a ministerial position will be in charge of human rights issues.

#### **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – NGOs**

- **Dynamique des Femmes Politiques de la DRC (Coalition of women in politics)**  
Contact: Véronique KEKUMBA BIBI, Te. 98 11 05 77 or 98 26 30 46
- **Caucus des Femmes**
- **UN/DPKO – Amy Smythe, Senior Gender Adviser, MONUC**

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## **BURUNDI**

**Violence against women:** Gender-based violence is widespread, including rape, forced prostitution and domestic violence. Although statistics are not available, the large numbers of cases that are reported to human rights groups attest to the gravity of the problem. Many incidents of violence against women and girls also go unreported. Wives have the right to charge their husbands with physical abuse, but they rarely do so. Police normally do not intervene in domestic disputes, and the media rarely report incidents of violence against women. No known court cases have dealt with the abuse of women. The Government rarely investigates such cases, and prosecutions are rarer still. In detention, the lack of separation of male and female prisoners is said to make women vulnerable to rape.

**HIV/AIDS:** There are reports that government and rebel soldiers raped women, many in areas in or near the part of Bujumbura, which was taken briefly by rebels after their withdrawal in early March 2001.<sup>2</sup> It is reported that rebels abducted scores of women to provide sexual and domestic services in their camps. The ongoing conflict has forced many women into prostitution, contributing to the growing incidence of HIV/AIDS.

**Displacement:** A large number of civilians have been displaced by the ongoing conflict. The situation of refugee and displaced women and girls is of particular concern. There is a need to give greater assistance to refugee and displaced women and girls and carry out rehabilitative efforts directed at such women and girls; mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes of national and international assistance for displaced people; providing post-trauma counselling, as stipulated in the Arusha Accords, for women who are victims of gender-based violence; and to ensure that relevant personnel are trained to give such assistance.

**Peacebuilding:** The Arusha Accords formed the basis for building lasting peace and granted equal status to women and men, in accordance with CEDAW. The accords recognized the role of women in reconstruction and rehabilitation, and suggested the inclusion of women in all management structures related to reconstruction, the mobilization of women as peace mediators for national reconciliation, the adoption of laws on inheritance rights of women and the rebuilding of houses for homeless women. Reintegration or post-trauma counselling for women victims of violence or those forced into marriage was also considered necessary. Following the creation of the Union of Women of Burundi, women became more aware of the different roles that they could play in society. However, very few women occupy leading positions in the National Assembly, the civil service, the magistracy, or public and private corporations.

## **BURUNDI – GOVERNMENT**

- Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme  
H.E. Ms. Christine Ruhaza - Ph#: (257) 226-901 / 222-431

## **BURUNDI – NGOs**

- Association des Femmes Burundaises pour la Paix - Ph #: 257 223-619
- Programme de Formation des Formation Resolution des Conflicts -  
Marie-Gorett Ndacajisaba, Ph #: 257 21 9310 , 257 21 8409
- Women For Peace Association - Ph # : 257-221 835 / -212 721 / -221 853 / -226 424

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<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2002*, p.40; *To protect the people: the Government-sponsored "self-defense" program in Burundi*, 12/ 2001 (<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/burundi/burundi1201.pdf>)

- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) – Email: [prdmr@cbinf.com](mailto:prdmr@cbinf.com)
  - Collectif des Associations féminines et ONG du Burundi - Catherine Mabobori
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## RWANDA

**Sexual Violence:** During the genocide, systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence were mainly directed at Tutsi women. Hutu extremist propaganda portrayed Tutsi women's sexuality as a means through which Tutsis were trying to dominate and subdue the Hutu majority. In Rwanda, rape and sexual violence carry enormous stigma for victims. As a result, Rwandan women have found reporting these violations difficult.

### **Key areas where Rwandan women have made a difference:**

**Women building peace:** The Federation of African Women's Peace Networks (FERFAP), calls for women's full participation at the highest levels of decision making and peace-building. FEFAP aims to create an institutional framework for women's organizations to engage in peace processes. Rwandan women participated in the Women's Peace Train in August 2002, where women from turbulent countries in Central and Southern Africa passed a torch from Rwanda across several countries to Johannesburg in time for the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Peace Train was meant to send the message to world leaders and warmongers that women want peace in the Great Lakes region.

The Rwandan Minister of Gender and Development, Angeline Muganza, has set up **Women's Committees** in every village to give a voice to women.

Pro-Femme Twese Hamme, an umbrella organization comprised of forty women's NGOs, is mobilizing women to spearhead the **promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance** and non-violence in grassroots activities. Within the national Campaign Action for Peace (CAP), Pro-Femmes launched the Pan-African Conference on Peace, Gender and Development and was presented with the Mandajeet Singh Award for Peace and Non-Violence by UNESCO at this event.

Traditional **Gacaca courts have been set up to compliment the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda**. Judges were elected on the basis of their integrity and honesty. Thirty-five percent of elected judges are women.

Women have taken up the challenge created by the genocide by caring for war orphans, the elderly and wounded and men who await trial in prisons

## CONTACTS

## **RWANDA – GOVERNMENT**

- **Ministry of Gender, Family and Social**

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## **RWANDA – NGOs**

- Association Feminine de Rwanda (ASOFERWA)  
Immaculee Mukarurangwa, President - Ph#: (250) 86394/84413
- Association des Volontaire de la Paix - Ph #: 250 77482
- AVEGA – AGAHOZO - Association of the survivors of the genocide - Ph# /Fax#: 0171 460 0596
- Federation of African Women Peace Networks (FERFAP)  
women's participation in conflict resolution - Ph & Fax#: (250) 72750  
Forum of Rwanda Women's - Dr. Rose Mjkankomeje - Ph #: 250 83975
- Reseau des Femmes Pour Le Rural - Nzambazam Veneranda - Ph #: 250 756 19, 250 774671
- Rwanda Association of Media Women (ARFEM) - Kigali - Ph#: 250 72276
- Rwandan Women Community Development Network - Mary Balikungeri – Tel: 250 77199

## ADDITIONAL GENDER ISSUES TO CONSIDER

### **Political Situations or Political Developments**

- Does the political situation impact women and men differently?
- Are political decisions being made that adversely affect women or men?
- Does action to promote dialogue and nation building involve men and women?
- Do women and men have access to capacity building for peace building and other skills building initiatives?

### **Security and Military Situation**

- Does the security situation affect men and women differently? Are women targets of certain violations? Are systems in place to monitor possible gender inequalities? Are crime statistics sex disaggregated? Are women-friendly security systems in place?
- What role do women play in the various military, rebel, police forces? (% of forces)
- Are women's and men's security issues known and concerns being met?
- Are actions supported to ensure women can be part of military or police services?

### **Humanitarian Situation**

- Is the civilian nature of the refugee situations maintained (issues of small arms)?
- What special systems are in place to ensure protection of refugee women and children?
- Are women and men equally involved in planning/implementing humanitarian response?
- Are there specific programmes to prevent and respond to violence against women? Are needs-based services accessible to both women and men?
- Are programmes building capacity of women and men? Is there equal access to training?
- Are there accountability structures in place to ensure that humanitarian assistance programmes do not exploit or abuse women or men, girls or boys?
- Do women have identification papers and access to registration especially for food?
- Are programmes in place to prevent the recruitment of boys/girls into the armed forces?

### **Human Rights, Justice/Legal Issues/Governance**

- Are women included in transitional governments and planning processes? Are they in decision-making positions? Do constitutional committees ensure gender perspectives?
- Are laws reformed with a gender viewpoint?
- Do election processes involve women and men? Are procedures in place so that men and women vote without discrimination? Are a certain percentage of seats earmarked for men or women or other groups?
- Do criminal courts or truth and reconciliation processes include gender-based crimes?
- Are there efforts to build capacity of women and men so as they can participate fully in legal/justice issues and governance?
- If data on participation in various committees or groups is supported, provide sex disaggregated information.

### **Economic and Social Situation**

- What are the changes for men and women due to the economic situation? Are there changes in the type of work, earning power, access to loans, credit or land, for example.
- Are skills building opportunities available to men and women?
- Are social programmes targeted to women and girls? Are sex-disaggregated indicators for the population (e.g. education, health) known and are programmes addressing inequalities in achievement of acceptable standards and norms.
- Are harmful cultural and traditional practices that affect women differently from men known and programmes in place to change behaviour?

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Security**