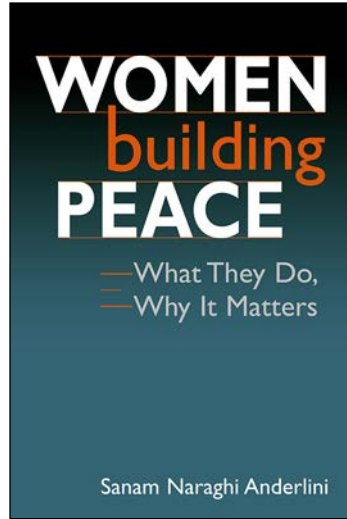


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Women Building Peace:  
What They Do,  
Why It Matters

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini

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## Introduction

I feel compelled to narrate that side of peace which standard textbooks of history and political science tend to ignore—a personal account of one player and the human dimension of an impersonal process. While the fate of nations and the course of global politics are generally perceived in abstractions and sweeping moves, something remains to be said about the view from within.

—Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace* (1995)

New York City, March 2006: Across the street from the imposing United Nations building, on the second floor of the Church Center, known for its snail-paced elevators and myriad peace and justice organizations, pictures and stories of a thousand women hang side by side along the walls of a large meeting room. Collectively, they are the 2005 Nobel Prize nominees of the 1,000 women peace activists' campaign. They come from all walks of life and every corner of the globe. Some are teachers, doctors, lawyers, and environmentalists; others are antimilitarists and peace activists, promoting reconciliation and social justice. Many also devote themselves to women's rights and children's rights. They have given voice to the voiceless—children trapped in child-labor rings, women abused in sex trafficking, the elderly, the maimed, the sick, the disappeared. These 1,000 women are just the tip of the iceberg. For every one recognized, countless others remain unnamed. The breadth of their work is at once overwhelming and simple to understand; they are fighting for rights and equality, security of their people and communities, and dignity. But they remain steadfast in their commitment to nonviolence and coexistence. They are the very essence of peace.

The exhibit came to New York in time for the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meetings and the virtual pilgrimage

of hundreds of women from around the world to the United Nations headquarters. Each year they come to follow the proceedings of the CSW, a typical UN body whose purpose and functions are barely understood outside the confines of the UN system and the organizations that follow it. But like other UN bodies, the CSW has significance. It is the organ within the UN system that follows the status and progress of women worldwide. In 2005, some 3,000 women came to mark the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. Human rights activists, educators, politicians, representatives of civil society organizations, peace activists, they all came to deal with serious issues of life and death. Yet their issues (or, more accurately, their perspective on the key issues facing the world) and their experiences at the front lines of many of the battles—from HIV/AIDS to poverty and war—were barely covered by the mainstream press.

Two parallel universes are at play. In one, women are active, vocal, and present in every sphere. In the other, they have been invisible, with limited roles in the management of power or the direction of their own lives. This book examines how women are striving to bridge the divide. It focuses on the contributions of women to peacebuilding and security, primarily in the context of transnational and civil wars since the end of the Cold War. It draws on international frameworks and explores women's contributions to pressing issues facing the global community, namely the prevention of violent conflict, peace negotiations, and peacebuilding at war's end.

The international community, dominated by multilateral bureaucracies and major industrial countries, has begun to take notice of women but seems incapable of addressing the complex reality of their experiences. The pendulum swings to extremes. On the one hand, women are vulnerable, passive, unable to protect themselves, inevitable victims of physical and sexual abuse, and in need of protection. On the other hand, women are the panacea, the internal bulwark against extremism; their political participation is the solution to all evils—particularly those of religious militancy.

Regardless of the view taken, the political rhetoric, amplified through speeches and policy statements, goes further than any action to support women. Sexual abuse, a known quantity in camps for the internally displaced and refugees, is still not prevented adequately. Peacekeepers, both military and civilian, continue to be implicated (publicly or privately) in the sexual abuse of precisely those populations they are sent to protect. Talk of engaging with women's peace organizations, ensuring their participation in peacebuilding, remains largely talk. The practice is at best ad hoc.

Arguments suggesting that women have a right to be present at forums where their future is discussed still hold little sway. Implicitly and often explicitly, decisionmakers want proof that the inclusion of women in peacemaking or recovery will make a positive difference. Yet, regardless of the proof that is provided and the failures of existing processes, bureaucracies and their technocrats are slow to budge. “Business as usual,” says one former ambassador to the UN, is the root of inertia.

To be fair, the gap between the two worlds is not entirely the fault of the international actors. Veterans of the international women’s movement regard the mainstream with a mix of frustration, disillusionment, and anger. For too long, activists have tried, and the system has not complied. The disdain for existing systems—including the political and diplomatic processes that often result in amnesty for perpetrators of war, the lack of real justice for victims, and the preservation of the ruling elite—has pushed many women away from the formal political arena. Unwilling to give up their beliefs and morals, too many women remain outside the institutions and structures in which decisions are made.

In reality, resolving conflicts and building peace, particularly in situations of internal war, are too complex and messy to be left to any one sector. The international community and those in the formal political sector need to understand the work of women, what impact it has, and what potential it could have if supported and sustained. Women active in peace and security issues also need to engage more fully with the processes that exist. Business as usual will not change unless it is forced to change.

This book is about those women who are working for peace and striving to engage in the formal processes. It is about those who bring new perspectives and commitment to issues of conflict prevention, peacemaking, and reconstruction, and the differences they are making. It is neither a denial nor a dilution of women’s inalienable right to be present and active in decisionmaking that affects their world, countries, communities, and families. Regardless of whether women have a positive or negative impact, they, like men, have a right to participation; it is a given.

This book is not about what rights women should have. The discrimination, obstacles, and exclusion facing women are addressed, and certainly many of the activities or issues that women bring forth relate to women’s inequality, but the book is not primarily about those issues. There are countless articles, reports, and books written on this aspect of the subject. Nor is this book a treatise on how the international community must use peace processes to promote women’s rights. I take that as a given, for three reasons. First, supporting women’s full and active participation in decisionmaking, particularly in countries emerging from conflict, is a

key indicator of a shift away from the status quo that, in many instances, catalyzed the conflict. Second, as 50 percent or more of the population, women are an important resource. Overlooking their capacities and commitment to peacebuilding is an indication of bad planning. Third, respect for and promotion of women's rights are mandated by international law. The problem is implementation or political will, and the lack thereof.

Instead, here I seek to bridge the chasm between the work of women and the efforts of international players. The central question addressed is not so much what peace processes can or should do for women, but what do women do for peace processes, which by definition benefit society as a whole. It is about examining women's actions within the framework and set of priorities already identified by the international community, demonstrating how and why they make a positive difference, and what limits and challenges they still face.

This book does not attempt to deny women's extensive experiences of victimhood and the debilitating effects of war. The direct and deliberate targeting of women, the use of their bodies—through rape, forced impregnation, sexual torture—as literally the front lines of the battlefield, cannot be overlooked. The loss of livelihoods and social networks and the violence, isolation, and hardship that result from forced displacement are overwhelming and extend far into the future for many. Yet, in acknowledging women's experiences of violence, we cannot overlook or ignore their resilience, sense of self-dignity, desire for survival, and struggle to move beyond passive victimhood. In the words of one United Nations officer, "in crisis situations, the women are the best humanitarian workers."<sup>1</sup> They are also among the most committed peacebuilders. We must recognize, respect, and support their efforts.

Discussions about women's participation in peace and security inevitably lead to the question of "which women?" Detractors often point to Margaret Thatcher, Condoleezza Rice, or the new crop of women suicide bombers as the antithesis to the arguments being presented. Women's roles in sustaining war and perpetuating violence are also not in question in this book. Women, like men, can spread fear and mistrust, commit atrocities, and send armies of young men and women to kill and be killed. As politicians, they can be as hawkish as men. I do not suggest that all women are inherently more competent and skilled than men at negotiations or that they are more naturally peace loving. Inevitably, as individuals, both men and women can exert positive and negative influences in war and peacemaking. Clearly, women are not homogeneous. But for every Thatcher or Rice there is an Aung San Suu Kyi, Jody Williams, or Wangari Maathai, women who have waged peace through nonviolence,

the destruction of weapons, and care for the environment. Thus, while we cannot ignore women who take up arms, we cannot brush aside the thousands of women who proactively pursue peace through nonviolent means.

Is this activism a new phenomenon? Yes and no. History has much to say about women's activism in the political sphere, of women calling for peace, prior to and during World War I, or of women being depicted as the wagers of peace—albeit using unorthodox methods—as in the Greek play *Lysistrata*. There is also an implicit and unconscious expectation that women are not naturally violent. Why else is there such shock when young women (or worse, mothers) strap explosives to their bodies and blow themselves up? The same shock is rarely, if ever, expressed about young men or fathers. Yet the expectation that women are less violent or more peaceful than men is rarely translated into an acknowledgment of how women can be effective in promoting peace. On the contrary, a common reason given for the exclusion of women from peace talks is that they were not “waging the war.” To borrow from Carl von Clausewitz, peace negotiations are, in effect, an extension of war by other means. Experience and skills in building trust, alleviating fear, and making compromises—essential ingredients of peace-making—are often ignored when peace or power is up for grabs.

In part, however, contemporary women's peace activism, particularly in its ubiquitous presence across the world, is indeed a new phenomenon: it is intricately tied to the changing nature of warfare, the blurring of lines between battlefield and community, victim and perpetrator, enemy and neighbor. It is both highly localized in nature and increasingly a global movement with its own characteristics, linked to the UN and the system of international conferences and networks that have emerged since the early 1990s. As wars (particularly civil wars) destroy the social taboos and mores that protected women, so women themselves are taking a stand and saying enough is enough.

### **Where the Local Meets the Global**

The United Nations–sponsored Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, had much to do with catalyzing women's activism in peace and security. The focus on women's experiences in war, articulated in Chapter E (Women and Armed Conflict) of the Platform for Action (PFA), was a new addition to the broader agenda of women and development. In 1995, a year after the genocide in Rwanda and the rape camps of Bosnia, the ugly reality of civil war and its impact on women's

lives needed to be addressed head-on. Chapter E does not just dwell on women's victimization. It addresses women's agency in promoting peace and calls for the increased involvement of women in the resolution of conflicts. Such demands seem out of step and time, except for the conference participation of Israeli and Palestinian women, Northern Irish women, survivors of the Rwandan genocide and Bosnian war, and veteran activists from South Africa. These women had experienced war in their homes and their lives but had chosen to resist the violence and work for peace. They had crossed the invisible lines of conflict to embrace the "other" and search for solutions together. In 1995, in Northern Ireland and the Middle East particularly, these women had made strides, mobilizing public support and giving voice to the silent majority that wanted peace.

The conference delegates, both governmental and nongovernmental, who drafted the language of Chapter E could not have known that their words were launching a global revolution—inspiring women to step into the realm of global peace and security, challenging perhaps the last bastion of male-dominated decisionmaking. Beijing and the PFA were a turning point—a call to action and an inspiration for many women experiencing violent conflict firsthand.

In the years that followed, local, national, and international women's activism in peacemaking and security-related issues grew exponentially, with regional and international networks taking shape. The spontaneity and seemingly unrelated and discrete nature of the initiatives that emerged are in part deceptive. How is it that women across the world were standing up to the status quo and saying "enough" to violence and conflict? In reality, it was a convergence of factors. In some instances, as in Liberia and Sierra Leone, women took a stand against the encroachment of war into their daily lives and were later supported by the international community, beginning with a handful of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In other cases, donors—including the Ford Foundation, bilateral aid agencies, and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)—supported women's leadership, recognizing that women were not simply passive victims of war, but rather had specific capacities and potentials for the promotion of peace. Invariably, the support provided by such organizations was internally driven by a handful of visionary and committed women.

As activism in conflict-affected countries evolved at the international level, the demand for formal political inclusion of women's rights in peace and security issues also gathered momentum. In 2000, at the fifth anniversary review conference of the Beijing declaration (Beijing +5), a group of NGOs launched a global appeal for a Security Council resolution



that would formally recognize women's rights to participation in peace and security issues and protection in conflict zones. Forging new partnerships with governments and UN agencies, the NGOs—initially known as the Ad Hoc Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security<sup>2</sup>—reached out to their extensive networks of civil society organizations to generate consensus and a constituency for the resolution. Working with the governments of Bangladesh, Jamaica, Canada, Namibia—all of whom had temporary seats on the Security Council—and eventually the United Kingdom, they built a coalition.

Bangladesh cracked open the door to the Security Council in March 2000. Under the leadership of Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, a formal presidential statement was issued that recognized both women's need for protection and contributions to peacebuilding. Namibia pushed it open even further. In May 2000, the government hosted a high-level seminar, "Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations," and issued a formal plan of action known as the Windhoek Declaration.<sup>3</sup> In subsequent months, as the key pillars of a possible resolution became more concrete, the link between women's peace and security demands and peace support operations (clearly a purview of the Security Council) added weight and helped legitimize the discussions at the council. Finally, on October 31, 2000, under Namibia's presidency, the Security Council passed Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. For the first time in its fifty-year history, the council recognized that women had a right to protection and a role to play in maintaining peace and security. The chamber was filled, and the audience applauded.

This resolution marked a watershed. It provides a critical legal and political framework through which, for the first time in history, women worldwide can claim their space and voice their views on peace and security matters. It also marks a turning point in the relationship between civil society, especially women's organizations, and the international system, particularly the Security Council. Each October, since the passing of 1325, the NGO community has pressed for and succeeded in obtaining a review of progress on the implementation of the resolution's key provisions. Upon the first anniversary, in 2001, the council members expressed surprise. "Other resolutions don't have anniversaries," they said, to which the NGOs replied, "Other resolutions don't have a global constituency."

Perhaps most importantly, 1325 has become a tool for empowering women, enabling them to mobilize on a global scale to assert their demands for a place at the table when issues of war and peace are addressed and resolved. Since 2000, women's advocacy has increased.

A brief overview of activities in early 2007 reveals a wealth of initiatives under way. Among grassroots activists in Nepal and Somalia, international NGOs, bilateral donors, the UN, and academia, attention to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict-affected societies is increasing. The status of female ex-combatants is appearing on the agenda of international policymakers. Women's political participation is being debated in Kabul and Kigali. Transitional justice processes are more amenable to women. The discourse on women in the security sector and in peacekeeping is gaining ground.<sup>4</sup> Traditional activism also continues. From Bogotá to Baghdad, women are on the front lines of providing services, heading households, caring for the sick and the elderly, and sustaining and ensuring the survival of their families. Even in refugee camps, women shoulder the responsibilities of others. Despite the traumas and victimization they experience, particularly where sexual assault of women is a strategy of warfare, they are initiating peacemaking efforts. It is often women who first give voice to civilians silenced by atrocities. And long after international support has ended, women are left to handle the trauma and violence that come home with men whose lives have been devastated by war. Such women provide the continuity that enables families and communities to heal and move forward. Increasingly, they are claiming their place as major stakeholders and active agents in resisting war, building peace, and defining security on their terms.

This book spotlights these women and their experiences. It does not deny the hardship and trauma that come with peace activism. The burn-out rate is high among local and international players. Neither does it deny the ambivalence that women often feel in taking on the new burdens. Working for an end to war is not a choice for many; it is a necessity for survival. Once a crisis is over, many are compelled to return to their daily lives and jobs. Countless others remain committed to the slow and painful work of rebuilding their communities, healing the trauma, and taking a stand in their respective nations' political process.

Perhaps most important, this is not a book about the exceptional few, the "superwomen" of our age. Rather it is about ordinary women—teachers, social workers, doctors, mothers, actors, dancers, lawyers, politicians, fighters—who find themselves caught in extraordinary times and take action to bring normalcy back to their lives.

Just as there is no homogeneity among women at large, there is no single ideology, approach, or even motivation that defines this growing sector, which veteran activist Cora Weiss calls "peace women." Many are intellectuals or academics rooted firmly in antimilitarist feminism. Others are emerging from armed forces—state or opposition groups—

motivated by a desire for equality, justice, and an end to discrimination. As much as they find common ground, they are also challenged by the myriad women who are active at the grassroots, often oblivious to the intellectual discourse of feminism or equality, but driven by the harsh realities of their own existence. As the lines of warfare have become more blurred and civilians have become the primary targets, more women are emerging from grassroots and rural communities to resist the violence. Too many have seen their children kidnapped or killed and found strength in their identities as mothers to speak out. From Sri Lanka to Uganda, they enter the political fray, demanding accountability and justice. Others, in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and elsewhere, themselves both victims and forced perpetrators of violence, are seeking justice and raising their voices. Once free, they take on the mantle of reintegrating former combatants, encouraging trust and reconciliation in communities that barely exist anymore. Of the elite or from the grassroots, educated or not, these women play a transformative role in peacemaking in their societies, through civil society and in official governmental processes.

Although their motivations and ideologies may differ, their vision and demands for the future often converge. Peace is seen as freedom from violence; access to safe housing, employment, and education; equality in the eyes of law and society; the right to property ownership; a return to normalcy. They seek to bring the voices of the marginalized and the unrepresented into the political arena. They advocate a policy of inclusion, equality, freedom, and plurality. They emphasize a holistic notion of peace, defined not just in military security and political terms but also in terms of human security, rooted in a combination of political, economic, personal, community, and environmental factors.<sup>5</sup> In effect, these women—be they antimilitarists, former fighters, the elite, or grassroots actors—come together through their commitment to social justice, fairness, and equality for all.

### **Claiming a Space Within the Policy Discourse<sup>6</sup>**

Within academia, this emerging field of women, peace, and security studies has not found a permanent home yet. A growing body of literature has contributed to the evolution of the discourse on many levels. Ann Tickner, Cynthia Enloe, Betty Reardon, Jacklyn Cock, and others have brought a feminist lens to the study of international relations and the intersections of militarism and peace.<sup>7</sup> Simona Sharoni writing on the Middle East; the works of Sheila Meintjes and Anu Pillay, and Meredith Turshen and

Clotilde Twagiramariya on Africa; Cynthia Cockburn on the Balkans and Cyprus; and Rita Manchanda on South Asia all have contributed to the feminist traditions and have drawn attention to the regional experiences of women in war and peacemaking.<sup>8</sup> Caroline Moser's work as scholar and practitioner has defined new links between gender and political violence. *Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect: Women Speak Out About Conflict* (1995), an edited volume of women's testimonies, has given space to the experiences of ordinary women in war. Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana's *Women and Peacebuilding* (1999), together with my own *Women at the Peacetable: Making a Difference* (2000) and conference reports by International Alert and other NGOs, have drawn specific attention to women's agency and personal experiences in peacemaking. *Women, War, and Peace*, an independent evaluation conducted by Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Elizabeth Rehn for UNIFEM in 2002, together with the UN Secretary-General's study on *Women, Peace, and Security*, have also helped frame much of the debate. A complete literature survey is beyond the scope of this book, particularly given that so much that has contributed to our collective understanding comes from outside the boundaries of academia or traditional texts. International and national NGOs that document the voices and experiences of women at conferences and workshops, alongside the UN and research and policy institutions, are at the forefront of this growing discourse.

The field itself continues to expand. Activists and academics are turning their attention to peacekeeping, disarmament, and broader security sector issues. The discourse about women and transitional justice is evolving, as is that on postconflict governance. The issue of violence against women has also gained significant traction within academia and the activist and policy communities. In effect, the field of women, peace, and security is interdisciplinary, straddling anthropology, security studies, international relations, women's studies, political science, and development economics; it is firmly rooted in the reality of women's lives, which cannot be artificially delineated.

For the purposes of advocacy, the activist community often emphasizes three key issues: participation, protection, and prevention. Participation relates to the need to include women in peace- and security-related decisionmaking at the local, national, and international levels. Protection addresses women's needs and the provision of assistance during and after crises and conflicts. Prevention is discussed broadly with regard to avoiding violence and transforming conflict peacefully, and specifically in terms of stopping violence against women in conflict situations.<sup>9</sup> At a conceptual level, however, this field draws from and is influencing four key areas of discourse related to peace and security: the

human security framework, conflict transformation discourse, humanitarian accountability issues, and women's rights.

### *Human Security*

Articulated in the 1990s by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and adopted by the Canadian government, the human security framework challenges the traditional notion of state-based (and by extension militarized) security. It places people's security first. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, insecurity within state borders—caused by economic decline, bad governance, health epidemics (notably HIV/AIDS), environmental degradation, and the pervasive presence of small arms, criminal activities, and organized crime—became more widely recognized as a threat to the state and its people. Moreover, the increased prominence of nonstate, substate, and transnational actors continues to challenge notions of national and international security. (For a more in-depth discussion of human security, see Chapter 7.)

In 2000, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan distilled and defined human security as “freedom from want and freedom from fear,”<sup>10</sup> addressed through four key components: critical and pervasive threats, human rights, protection, and building on people's strengths.

Critical and pervasive threats are elements within the physical or social environment that could have destructive effects over long periods of time, undermining people's ability to recover from shocks and disasters. For example, economic deprivation, pervasive corruption, and long-term mismanagement of resources, leading to shoddy infrastructure, bad roads, and substandard health care and education, can have an exponential impact on the number of people affected if natural disaster strikes. Similarly, corruption and repression foment anger and increase the vulnerability of young people—oftentimes men—to recruitment by militias. Proponents of human security advocate for attention to the needs of the people and redressing underlying factors that fuel the sense of insecurity in a society.

Human rights are central to the human security discourse. Human rights law comes together with international humanitarian law in the context of armed conflict, environmental security, and other issues. The human security framework also draws attention to the rights of groups that are not specifically addressed in international humanitarian law, notably the elderly, internally displaced persons, the disabled, minorities, and others. Human security also makes human rights (i.e., people's rights) central to state security. Implicitly, the argument is that human rights violations are often catalysts for the emergence of armed opposi-

tion groups that in turn threaten state security. It counters the tendencies of many states to withhold, curtail, or withdraw civil and human rights in the name of state security.

Protection is also a central theme, particularly in the context of emergency situations. Human security advocates argue that people's basic human rights must be protected at all stages of armed conflict and human or natural disasters. They cannot be left until later, after the political deals have been made. Finally, by placing people at the center, the human security paradigm recognizes and encourages the strengths and potential that individuals can use to create positive change.

As noted above and discussed in later chapters, women peace activists are often natural proponents of the human security paradigm, simply because their notion of security is derived from their lived experiences. They know and cope with the consequences of basic insecurity—the lack of education, health care, and sanitation and the fear of violence—but they also draw on their own strengths and position in society to bring greater security for themselves and their dependents.

### *Conflict Transformation*

The conflict transformation or coexistence framework that has emerged and evolved since the late 1980s has also been a key source of influence for the women, peace, and security discourse. In the context of intergroup communal violence or civil war, specialists in this field focus their attention on the need to abolish the cyclical nature of violence. Conflict, they argue, is a natural and often positive expression of social dynamism; the challenge is to avoid the emergence of violence by creating an environment in which conflict can be addressed constructively. The notion of transformation embraces traditional elements of conflict resolution, such as mediation, dialogue, and negotiation. It also goes beyond tradition to draw attention to issues of rights and justice, promoting inclusive decisionmaking and participation, addressing the welfare and survival needs of people, strengthening civil society, encouraging social and economic reconstruction, and promoting reconciliation.

A defining feature of this discourse is the notion that—particularly in the context of civil wars—multiple actors from a cross section of society, nationally and internationally, are needed to bring peace and rebuild the trust and fabric of society. Much of women's peace activism fits into this framework. They live with the consequences of failure and are thus motivated to take action. Many recognize that women—not only as half the population, but also as the sector that tries to maintain elements of peace and normalcy in their homes and communities in the midst of rag-

ing war—have something to offer, whereas political and military leaders' commitment to peace may be less than certain.

As victims of violence and as a cross section of society that experiences exclusion and discrimination systematically, women activists focus their efforts on changing entrenched attitudes and practices by finding their own entry points and building on their social ties. It is not surprising, therefore, that women often work through their socially accepted identities as elderly women and mothers, or their personal affiliations—as daughters, wives, sisters—to engage in informal and behind-the-scenes mediation.

### *Humanitarian Accountability*

A key element of the women, peace, and security discourse arises from basic protection needs in emergency and civil war situations. It draws from and has sought to influence the theory and practice of humanitarian work. In the early 1990s, humanitarian agencies sought to clarify the basic principles on which they conducted their work in emergency and crisis situations. They recognized that their short-term planning, misunderstanding of local dynamics, and lack of coordination at times fueled conflict inadvertently. From the standpoint of women, many projects were criticized for ignoring women's roles and needs. In some instances, interventions caused greater harm to women, for example, by escalating sexual exploitation and abuse. Oftentimes, ignorance of social and gender dynamics led to the perpetuation of discrimination and the abuse of women. Throughout the 1990s, key entities within the humanitarian community developed a range of guidelines and codes of conduct to enable the principles to be implemented effectively. Yet for some time, the "tyranny of the urgent" claim overshadowed demands for gender awareness and sensitivity to women in particular. With interventions by organizations such as the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children in the late 1990s, recognition of the urgency and centrality of women's basic needs gained ground. The issue of protection from and, most important, prevention of violations against women is therefore a key feature of the field of women, peace, and security.

### *Women's Rights*

Clearly, the women, peace, and security discourse is also linked to the world of women's rights activism, which is itself an offshoot and integral aspect of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the home of many of the issues and concepts that re-

main unaddressed. Yet, even though the UDHR takes a holistic approach to human rights, the field of human rights that evolved during the Cold War years was largely limited to political and civil issues. Consequently, violations against women that occurred in homes and communities as a result of cultural and traditional practices were overlooked. This oversight resulted in women's activists' demands for specific attention to women's rights. In 1975, the First World Conference on Women was held in Mexico; it was a catalyst for a global movement that has strengthened and diversified since then. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which emerged in 1979, is seen as the international bill of rights for women. By 2006, 182 states—over 90 percent of the UN's membership—had ratified it. Many countries, including Uganda, South Africa, Brazil, and Australia, have incorporated CEDAW provisions into their constitutions and national legislation.

Twenty years after the Mexico conference, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing set a new milestone. The Platform for Action outlines twelve critical areas concerning women's lives: poverty, education, health care, violence, armed conflict, unequal access to resources, power and decisionmaking structures, lack of mechanisms to promote women effectively, inadequate respect for and promotion of women's human rights, stereotyping and inequality in communications and the media, environmental concerns, and discrimination against the girl-child.

Beijing gave women the opportunity to come together and raise the specter of armed conflict collectively under the framework of women's rights. The ensuing UN-sponsored conferences on women continue to provide activists with the chance to meet and exchange views, to evaluate where they stand, and to draw others into the realm of peace and security. The rubric of women's rights is a comfortable zone, one that provides sustenance and encouragement most naturally. In reality, however, women peace activists are not just women's rights activists. They embrace and embody a complex array of values and approaches emerging from the conceptual frameworks discussed above. Therefore, they face a dual challenge.

On the one hand, there is an ongoing effort to bring the complexity of war and peace and the need for engagement in these issues firmly into the work of traditional women's rights and development actors. On the other hand, even as the fields of human security and conflict transformation claim to promote inclusivity and participation, there is still a tendency for women to be rendered invisible. For women peace activists, this struggle to bring "conflict sensitivity to women's rights" and "women's peace activism and protection needs to conflict and security



people” is in itself a formidable but necessary task. With the former, there is the difficulty of drawing attention to yet another range of issues, much of it outside the domain of women’s traditional activism. With the latter, there is a combined task of bringing visibility and volume to women’s experiences and demonstrating the actual and potential contributions of women that can enhance these fields.

## **The Structure of the Book**

In writing this book, I draw and build upon recent and ongoing research in the field of women, peace, and security, with a close eye on the policies and practices of the international community. Much of the material quoted comes from the findings of the Women Waging Peace Policy Commission, which I directed. The commission produced field-based case studies across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America with a focus on women’s contributions to different pillars of peace and security: (1) conflict prevention; (2) peace negotiations; (3) postconflict disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; (4) governance; and (5) transitional justice. These same five themes make up the chapters of this book. The chapters are put in a particular order for ease of reading, not because the process itself is always linear. I deliberately chose to place women’s activism within the framework of the international policy community to show how women engage in, contribute to, and often make a critical difference to the issues that continue to challenge international actors.

The peace and security world is complex and ever-expanding. There are countless macro- and microfactors to consider, and much lies beyond the scope of this book. The countries, groups, and individuals I mention in many ways characterize and exemplify the nature of women’s activism and approaches across the world. But for every case mentioned, there are others that fit the bill. Much of the discussion focuses on contemporary events that occurred in the course of writing this book. Inevitably, there will be setbacks or progress in the field, within international entities and in the countries mentioned. I have tried to keep up-to-date with events. Where women have had a more profound impact, their experiences are discussed across various chapters.

Chapter 2 addresses conflict prevention practice, with a specific focus on the early prevention of violence and the nonviolent transformation of conflict (not escalation or postconflict resurgence). It offers examples of women’s activism, its effects and limitations, as well as a discussion of how and why information from and about women can enhance conflict early warning processes. It also highlights the ongo-

ing dilemmas that the international community faces in tackling the rise of insecurity within state borders.

Chapter 3 discusses women's mobilization for peace during war and attempts to address the formal negotiation processes. It highlights the strategies and tactics that women adopt to get their voices heard at local, national, and international levels. Drawing on the handful of instances where women made it to the formal negotiations process, it analyzes the qualities they bring to the process and substance of peace talks.

Chapter 4 is an examination of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes as a thin slice of more complex security-related interventions. Reflecting on El Salvador, Sierra Leone, and elsewhere, it draws attention to the challenges that women face in gaining access to such programs. It further explores how women, as civilians and as fighters and supporters of armed groups, contribute to DDR. In doing so, it critiques existing practices that tend to exclude women.

Chapter 5 looks at women's contributions to postconflict governance processes. Drawing on a range of cases, including Rwanda, Cambodia, and Afghanistan, it highlights how women contribute to key aspects of good governance by promoting cooperative working practices, addressing corruption, and representing fresh perspectives in the immediate postwar years.

Chapter 6 delves into the difficult and delicate world of justice and reconciliation. It compares and contrasts women's roles in international criminal tribunals and truth and reconciliation commissions. In highlighting the contributions they make, it also points to significant gaps in the treatment and rehabilitation of victims.

Chapter 7 takes a different turn, presenting a discussion and assessment of the international community—individual countries, the UN system, and others—that are engaged in peace and security efforts worldwide. It examines how the rhetoric on women's inclusion and rights is matched (or unmatched) in reality. It identifies constraints and bottlenecks, normative and institutional factors that have resulted in slow and limited support for and attention to women from the international community.

My goal in addressing these issues through the lens of women's contributions is not to suggest that they alone have all the answers. Nor is it to attribute strength to women's activism in areas where they are struggling and where the tides of today easily wash away the progress of yesterday. Rather it is to bring to light peace activism, as limited or extensive as it may be in each country and under different circumstances, to demonstrate its value and its need for support, resources, and recognition. By looking through the lens of women's experiences, this

book also reveals flaws and gaps in the existing peace and security paradigm. Although it does not pretend to have solutions for the problems that are noted, it raises questions that need to be addressed. It also challenges the institutions and political leaders who bask in the rhetoric of gender equality or Security Council Resolution 1325 but have demonstrated insufficient commitment to overhauling existing practices to ensure its full implementation.

Finally, I would like to pause to address the words *gender* and *women*. Too often the terms are conflated and used interchangeably. This book is first and foremost about women and the transformative nature of women's peace activism. *Gender* will be used specifically in circumstances where the discussions address either the differential needs and experiences of women and men or the links to power and decision-making that affect men and women differently. Throughout the text, I provide definitions of specific terms that have been developed and used by the mainstream global peace and security community.

## Notes

1. Discussion with the author, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2007.

2. The founding members of the working group were International Alert, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Amnesty International, the Hague Appeal for Peace, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. The group has since formalized and grown to twelve members and remains active at the UN level.

3. Windhoek Declaration, available at <http://www.un.org>.

4. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, "2007: Challenges and Opportunities for Implementing 1325," *1325 PeaceWomen's E-news*, issue 85, January 31, 2007, available at <http://www.peacewomen.org/news/1325News/Issue85.pdf>.

5. See Lloyd Axworthy, *Safety for People in a Changing World* (Ottawa: Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999).

6. This section replicates and summarizes parts of Sanam Naraghi Anderlini and Judy El-Bushra, "The Conceptual Framework: Security, Peace, Accountability and Rights," in *Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action* (Washington, DC: International Alert, Hunt Alternatives Fund: 2004), pp. 5–13.

7. The full references are included in the bibliography.

8. The full references are included in the bibliography.

9. Security Council Working Roundtable, background paper, January 27, 2004, available at [http://www.international-alert.org/pdfs/SC\\_roundtable\\_three\\_p.pdf](http://www.international-alert.org/pdfs/SC_roundtable_three_p.pdf).

10. Kofi Annan, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All* (New York: United Nations, 2005).