

Chapter 10: Reconstruction

We entered through a small wooden doorway into the dimly lit room. There was no electricity. Slowly our eyes adjusted and we could make out the faces of 15 women sitting in a half-circle around the room. At first no one spoke. In the amplified silence we heard the buzzing of flies and outside the sound of uninterrupted hammering, as local villagers worked to rebuild their homes on the ruins of Liquica, East Timor.

One by one the women introduced themselves and began to tell us their stories. As each woman spoke the others sat quietly, arms folded in their laps. They described what happened in April 1999, when pro-Indonesia militia attacked the church in the centre of Licquica. Townspeople had taken refuge in the church, believing it was a safe haven. The militia found them there. They slaughtered the men and raped the women. Those who survived escaped to the capital, Dili, or to the mountains. One woman told us that she knew the killer of her husband who was hiding in a camp in West Timor. He was from one of the 'specialized units' of the Indonesian national army – some specialized in rape, others in murder or burning villages or disposing of the dead. The women never learned what happened to the bodies of their husbands killed in the church.

The stories were shockingly familiar: rape, pillage, mutilation, torture, death. The women showed no agitation when they spoke of the horror and violence they had endured. But if they showed no anger, neither were they resigned. They had come together in a conscious and determined act of survival. These women of Licquica had returned to their village 18 months before and formed a cooperative. Together they built the small communal house we were seated in, and use it to meet regularly, to organize community events, to make handicrafts and to sell produce. They share the workload and the profits. Several were farming small plots of land. They had succeeded in forming a tight unit that meets their immediate survival needs and provides social support. The women accomplished all this without outside support, resources or training. It was painfully obvious that, with assistance and guidance, with proper skills and tools, they could achieve much more.

Three months earlier we had visited the Balkans where women were struggling to claim their share of the resources being channeled for post-conflict reconstruction. Vesna, an activist from Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina, told us, "Woman has grown in wartime because she has carried the burden while the men were away fighting. She will therefore not settle for less now, after the war." But the reality is that women in countries emerging from conflict in – in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, East Timor and Sierra Leone – have not been given equal opportunities to work or take part in community and political life. Instead they have been marginalized, left to scrape together small earnings from cottage industries and to sell handmade items, the products of their domestic life.

Vesna told us how pleased she had been, initially, when she qualified for a small business loan. She worked single-handedly to build her own tailoring business but in the end was frustrated by the experience. "In order to receive a small credit of around US\$100, women are expected to work day and night," she told us. "Those conditions drive women into the black market where they are exploited. If they are not smart enough to bribe the right people, they will find themselves under arrest."

In Guatemala, we learned of similar frustrations. Niluz, who lived in a small village, told us that the economic benefits for women included in the peace agreement had been ignored while many of the policies that had been implemented were detrimental. Like the women of Bosnia, Niluz understood the implications very well: "The war was fought off women's backs and now the country is being rebuilt with their sweat," she said bitterly.

Women carry the burden of domestic work, and during conflict their unpaid labour becomes even more complex and demanding. Water, health care, transportation and other public services are hit first and hardest by war. Without these services, women are left to fend for themselves. They may spend hours hunting for firewood and carrying water. Very often they take on additional roles and responsibilities, performing 'men's' work as well as their own. They farm land even though they cannot legally possess it. They build homes they are not entitled to own. When schools are closed or destroyed, they teach their children at home. They care for the sick and wounded. During the Taliban regime, women in Afghanistan drew maps to help each other locate community services, ran clandestine schools for girls, provided health care for women and set up home-based work to support their families.

Even after peace is declared, women are threatened by militarization and the culture of violence that persists in post-conflict situations. The collapse of governments and social fragmentation leave women exposed to physical attack and exploitation. But the devastation is lucrative for some. In many conflict situations warlords and profiteers create separate economies that thrive on the breakdown of social and economic order. They inflate the price of food and other necessities, sell arms and seize land, or steal humanitarian aid. They market diamonds, timber, gold and other natural resources, and illegal drugs. And they traffic girls and women. In North and South Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), militias attacked villages and abducted women to be forced labourers in mines. In Rwanda land and property were seized during the genocide. Illicit profit-making can come to dominate post-war economies, where instability creates a lawless environment. Secretary-General Kofi Annan pointed to the mounting international concern over this issue: "Despite the devastation that conflict brings, there are many who profit from the chaos and lack of accountability, and who may have little or no interest in stopping the conflict and much interest in prolonging it."¹

But even in war economies, women find ways to cope. Their skills and capacities, which have been almost totally neglected, are one of the greatest untapped resources for stabilizing and rebuilding community life. After the genocide in Rwanda, village women created the Duhozanye Association – which translates, 'Let's Console Each Other'. The association's founder and President told us how it began:

"After the genocide, the widows decided to get together. There were 310 of us ... At the first gathering it was mostly crying and some talking. We told each other what happened to us. Little by little we got accustomed to the situation – crying wasn't the solution. We thought of activities to do. We thought about getting lodging and getting houses ... A group of four or five would build for one, then go to another to build a shelter for her. If it was too difficult we would go to the local authorities and ask them to help build the house. In Rwanda women are not allowed to go on the roof. That is the man's job. At first we'd go out at night to repair our houses, so no one would see us. But

then someone found out and gave us pants to wear. Then we decided it did not matter if anyone laughed. We went out during the day.”²

Restoring community life after conflict is a long process that brings together a broad range of political, economic and social issues, many addressed elsewhere in this report. This chapter will focus on several specific areas.

Transitional Aid

In making a transition from war to peace, resources matter. Reconstruction provides a rare opportunity for women not only to help shape emerging political, economic and social structures, but to benefit from the large amount of funds pooled by bilateral and multilateral donors. How these resources affect women’s lives will depend on many factors: the volume of aid, the channels for its distribution, the timing, its intended purpose and the conditions attached to it. Although women may benefit broadly from the positive forces of reconstruction, there is no doubt in our minds that the vast majority of aid for reconstruction and peace-building is not being directed to women. They certainly will not receive their fair share without deliberate planning and we see little evidence that this planning is taking place.

In Somalia members of women’s groups told us that they were frustrated by the lack of international assistance. One woman spoke out frankly: "No one cares about us. The Somali Aid Coordination Body does nothing for women. The United Nations and the European Union are not interested in women’s issues either. We are not invited to contribute to the donor discussions and decisions on reconstruction projects. How can we organize ourselves and be expected to participate in reconstruction and decision-making if we have no support?"

For women to benefit equitably from transitional aid, specific policy and programme strategies are needed. Data must be broken out by gender, so that those developing a transitional assistance plan can understand how it will affect women. Gender expertise must be available, and there must be follow-up, monitoring and reporting. We do not know of a single transitional plan that meets even one of these requirements.

Although the 2002 Needs Assessment for Afghanistan, prepared by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, made important gestures to improving women’s status, it did not include women or gender issues as a specific sector. Only .07 per cent of funds were requested for women-specific projects in the \$1.7 billion UN-sponsored Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for 2002.³ We understand that this should not be taken as the only indicator to measure how reconstruction benefits women; there is no question that women will benefit from funds and programmes in other sectors. But the fact that gender remains one of the least funded sectors in a country where women’s inequality was so central to the conflict is wholly unacceptable.

Similar data emerges from other transition plans. The World Bank Reconstruction and Development Programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina has no gender analysis and mentions women only once in the micro-credit section.⁴ The World Bank Group Transitional Support Strategy for Kosovo does not mention gender or women at all. Nor did the UN’s Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Consolidated Budget for 2001, except for one gender-training project costing \$31,000, or approximately .006 per cent of the total

budget of \$467 million. No money is committed to supporting this project after the initial funding.⁵ In East Timor's draft national budget, the Office of Equality was given only 6 permanent staff out of a total of nearly 15,000 civil servants, and a budget of less than half of one per cent – to \$38,000 – of a total budget of approximately \$77 million.⁶

"It is really amazing," said one Kosovar women working as a secretary in UNMIK, "that the international community cared only about Kosovar women when they were being raped – and then only as some sort of exciting story. We see now that they really don't give a damn about us. What we see here are men, men, men from Europe and America and even Asia, listening to men, men, men from Kosovo. Sometimes they have to be politically correct so they include a woman on a committee or they add a paragraph to a report. But when it comes to real involvement in the planning for the future of this country, our men tell the foreign men to ignore our ideas. And they are happy to do so – under the notion of 'cultural sensitivity.' Why is it politically incorrect to ignore the concerns of Serbs or other minorities, but 'culturally sensitive' to ignore the concerns of women? I wish someone would explain this to me!"

Women miss out even before the spoils of peace are divided. Aid intended for reconstruction that has been vetted through humanitarian or emergency channels rarely takes account of women. Although the UN called for a gender perspective to be mainstreamed in humanitarian activities and policies by the year 2000, only 1.4 per cent of humanitarian funds raised for 2001 were specific to women or gender. Women were designated beneficiaries in only 21 per cent of the entire \$2.2 billion appeal. Even more telling is the April 2002 External Review of the Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeals. The study, nearly 80 pages in length, makes no mention of gender except briefly in the context of the group's own working mechanism to support gender mainstreaming.

Moreover, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (IASC) – the group of agencies that are involved in humanitarian situations – does not include UNIFEM and only recently admitted the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as a member after a difficult negotiation. While the IASC has acknowledged that there is a need for greater involvement of UNFPA, UNIFEM and UNAIDS when decisions are being made that affect women in emergency situations, currently the agencies most concerned with women's issues have little input into many of the humanitarian policies developed by the UN. A staff member from UNFPA who travelled to East Timor to provide basic supplies for safe birthing was asked by one staff person from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) why UNFPA was involved. "This is an emergency situation," he was told. "We are concerned with food and shelter right now. It is not time for what you do." The UNFPA staffer had to point out that even in emergency situations, women were still pregnant and delivering and that victims of sexual violence need immediate treatment.

Consolidated Appeal Projects (CAPs) that focus on more subtle needs, such as women's vocational training, have rarely been funded by donors. One interpretation for this is that donors prefer to support higher priority concerns such as food and shelter. This is, of course, true – but sadly, even basic food, shelter and protection needs are not fully supported in the CAPs. In 2002 the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR faced acute funding crises and had to cut programmes in many countries, leaving people without basic support. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has been grossly underfunded for agricultural rehabilitation, as well.

This has seriously affected women – the simple lack of food has led to sexual exploitation of women and girls in countries such as Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia. The provision of food is a basic necessity – no other investments can pay off if people do not have enough food.

Interestingly, international donors have been more receptive to the idea of establishing what is known as ‘women’s machinery’ – depending on the structure of the government, this could mean a Ministry for Women’s Affairs, an office, or a bureau in the executive office. Women’s machineries are considered a strategic way to bring a gender perspective into all aspects of government and processes of constitutional, legislative, policy and judicial reforms. However, while donors are willing to help these offices get up and running, they are often reluctant to take on the recurring costs. Donor support is critical for a women’s machinery to function, but it can also create a dependence on external funding. If donors support a women’s ministry, it is often less likely to be given priority in the national budget.

Understanding how donors and governments give priority to women in their budgets is often referred to as ‘gender budget analysis’. Assessing the budget priorities of transitional assistance plans and national budgets from a gender perspective is one way to see how women will benefit from available resources. Gender budget analysis looks at direct allocations to women and the way in which other expenditures or priorities will have an impact on women’s lives. It looks at specifics within and across sectors – spending on education versus spending on the military, or spending on commercial versus domestic water use. It also looks at how each budget line will affect women: Will there be jobs and training for women in new public construction projects? Will new taxes fall more heavily on women than on men? Gender budget analysis is also an important training tool for women because it looks at the process of creating a budget. It allows them to understand governance in a wholly new, hands-on way. It gives women a stake in setting the priorities for reconstruction. In South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda, women have used gender budget analysis as a way to hold their governments accountable for delivering on their pledges for gender equality, for health care spending and for the delivery of water. In Peru 40 municipalities included a gender perspective in their development planning, thanks to gender budget analysis.⁷

Can micro-credit make a difference?

Not only are women excluded from reconstruction funds and programmes, they rarely benefit from business opportunities generated by those funds. While international and regional businesses are profiting from large-scale contracts, women are more likely to be offered micro-credit – small loans for start-up businesses – which is being hailed as a way to overcome the feminization of poverty.

In some cases micro-credit has helped women, especially when it is designed with a very careful understanding of the local context. In Rwanda micro-credit programmes for displaced and widowed women were among the first kinds of assistance made available during reconstruction. The loans helped support activities such as agriculture, animal farming and home-based enterprises. They strengthened business networks among women and increased their self-esteem. Micro-finance has also been linked with education in innovative ways. ‘Credit with Education’ programmes combine lending with

training in public health or vocational and business skills. These programmes include everything from family planning to HIV/AIDS prevention to literacy and nutrition. Many Rwandan women told us that these programmes had literally saved their lives. In Uganda the Foundation for Credit and Community Assistance offers village banking along with micro-credit and education.

But micro-credit is no panacea. Lucretia, the training officer of a local non-governmental organization (NGO) in DRC, does not think much of traditional micro-credit programmes. "We have been visited by a number of international groups who say they want to help us – and it seems as if they all have the same Bible – micro-credit! They come and say that they can provide a little money to get materials for women to make baskets and sell them. I always ask – who do you think will buy these baskets? No one here has any money. Some people haven't seen a bank note in two years! And it isn't as if we are getting a planeload of tourists every day. If we lend a woman money, how will she pay it back? I know that micro-credit can work in places like Bangladesh, but they have an economy there. People have jobs can buy things. We would love to be like Bangladesh. But we are more like hell, I am sorry to say. Some of these agencies can't see the difference."

There is a small but growing body of literature that indicates women are falling into a 'micro-finance ghetto.' Small loans limit them to small purchases, such as a sewing machine or one or two farm animals. These purchases can generate immediate income but, without larger loans, the businesses cannot grow. And the persistent cultural bias that perceives women as supplementary wage-earners, rather than as entrepreneurs, often keeps them stalled at the level of household and cottage industries. In Bangladesh, where micro-credit has been heralded as a success, women have found that a small increase in income from a home-based business may come at the expense of much heavier workloads and repayment pressures. In some instances women have been charged interest rates as high as 20 per cent. In another instance a study of four micro-credit programmes, showed that 39 per cent of the women interviewed had little or no control over their loans, and that their male family members actually controlled the money. It is important to put this in context however: As Helen Todd, from CASHPOR, a network of micro-credit programmes, said in an interview at the Micro-Credit Summit, "Thirty-nine per cent having little or no control means that 61 per cent have partial or full control. That is a lot better than the kind of powerlessness with which these women begin."⁸

Ultimately, micro-credit programmes must address the root causes of women's poverty. Otherwise, rather than break the cycle of poverty that locks women into the domestic sector and out of larger financial markets, micro-credit can actually reinforce women's marginalization, as Mary, an entrepreneur, told us in Liberia: "Why is it that it is only men's companies that get the contracts for these World Bank and other projects? Because they have the connections and because they are more established. Well, of course they are more established! But if we can't win contracts, how can we become established? It seems like the deck is always stacked against us. Men have made this war and men are profiting from this war. I guess we are supposed to just pick up the pieces."

Women need to be equipped to operate within the broader economy. But in order to take advantage of larger opportunities, women need to learn non-traditional skills and new technologies. They also need access to financial markets and institutions. Some groups have already begun looking at strategies that can make a difference, such as better

networking and information-sharing, and access to larger loans and to financial infrastructure as well as to technology and lower insurance and interest rates.

Strengthening public services

Everywhere we visited, whether in the midst of conflict or after peace agreements were signed, we met women spending hours of unpaid labour to provide basic necessities such as water, fuel and food for themselves and their families. In the DRC we met displaced women from the hills and forests of Masisi and Walikali outside Goma. They were able to earn a little income by carrying loads of firewood to sell, but many who were pregnant suffered miscarriages because of the physical strain of carrying heavy loads of wood on their back. In Somalia some of the women we spoke to had to walk for three or four days to fetch 20 litres of water becoming easy prey for bandits and rapists.

In mountainous Rwanda we visited widows living on a hilltop laced with soil erosion who told us how they struggled to collect water. A woman in her late sixties, who lost her husband and children in the genocide, said: "Look at me, I am an old lady. I cannot go down to get water and walk up again. I therefore have to ask a neighbour's child to fetch water for me. When the child is not available, I have to look for money in order to buy water. I do not work, where do I get the money from?"

Women also provide health care at home. During conflict and emergencies, when public health services are not available, nursing the sick and injured puts an enormous strain on women. In nearly 40 per cent of households surveyed in the occupied Palestinian territories, women on average were found to dedicate 10 hours a day to caring for injured family members. In many countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, women are at the centre of the growing HIV/AIDS crisis and have become virtual slaves in a care economy that deprives them of their mobility, and their right to work and go to school. The impact of HIV/AIDS is compounded by poverty and the destruction of social and health systems during armed conflict. It is no coincidence that 13 of the 17 countries with over 100,000 children orphaned by AIDS are extremely poor countries and either in conflict or threatened by conflict.⁹

In a visit to a clinic in Bas Congo, DRC, we were astounded to see a list of fees on the door. In an attempt at 'cost recovery' – so heavily emphasized in structural adjustment programmes – the Ministry of Health has had to establish fees for health services such as antenatal care, immunizations and family planning. In a country virtually without a health budget, these fees are supposed to help pay the salaries of those who work in the clinics. But very few people can pay the fees, which means that many are going without services. It also means that health workers are going without salaries – which has led in turn to an increase in fees. The situation is untenable. We heard of cases where families tried to pay bills with radios or chickens.

Because of the DRC's debt situation, and because of the donor distrust, government ministries are receiving limited direct financial support. The fledgling government cannot pay salaries and basic services are lacking even in the most prosperous areas, such as Bas Congo and Kinshasa. In war-torn regions the situation is even more desperate, but donors and the international assistance community still speak about 'sustainability', 'cost recovery' and 'breaking dependence'. How can such a destitute population pay for services? How can services be sustainable when there is no

infrastructure and the economy is in shambles? Sustainability is an excellent goal, but it is still a dream in the DRC. First, there has to be peace and people have to get on their feet again.

In Sierra Leone a remarkable woman named Juliana has established a programme for young women forced to sell sex to survive, which offers literacy and vocational training combined with treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The 'Woman in Crisis' project has provided sorely needed moral support for hundreds of destitute women, but many told us that in the evening, after they attend their training, they still have to prostitute themselves to get enough food to eat. Others sell their bodies to be able to pay for transportation to the drop-in centre. Juliana is hoping to add a lunch programme and get a bus to bring women there. Cheap public transportation could help the women tremendously. If they could get one meal a day for their children and themselves, they could avoid the dangerous sexual interactions they have each evening. But basic services are not on the agenda. As one UN officer said:

"Donors seem to think that now that there is peace in this country, everything is fine. They have all jumped on the fad of supporting 'governance' – the Special Court, the Peace and Reconciliation Commission, the training of police, even the reconstruction of the houses of the traditional chiefs – but no one seems very interested in supporting basic services such as health, sanitation, clean blood supply, education. The UN agencies here and the NGOs are trying—but our budgets are so small that we can't make a dent. I wonder if the donor community realizes that if people don't get some basic needs met, this peace will not hold. It costs \$2 million a day to maintain the peacekeeping force here – a fraction of that should have been spent earlier to educate people, to develop the economy and provide jobs so that the poor didn't feel so oppressed and forgotten. Development could have prevented this war. Only development now will ensure the peace."

Restoring basic public services will lessen burdens on women. But reconstruction efforts of the past decades have neglected, by design, that essential task. Instead, aid for reconstruction has stuck to a rigid framework that requires public sector downsizing, reduced government and the expansion of a free-market economy.¹⁰ This has had negative effects on women and the entire peace process. In East Timor these policies led international lenders to demand a reduction in state agricultural assistance, which severely limited opportunities for women to advance from subsistence to larger-scale farming, and accelerated the trend from national self-sufficiency to dependence on agricultural imports. In an agricultural economy, with so much money being spent to import food, the transitional government quickly needed additional donor funds.¹¹

Women are the most affected by structural adjustment policies that reduce government's ability to provide health care, education, water, transportation, energy, housing and sanitation.¹² While seemingly gender-neutral, every policy decision made in these sectors will drastically affect women's lives since they are precisely the sectors in which women provide the majority of their unpaid labour. The privatization of electricity, water and land is particularly devastating for women, who generally do not have the means to purchase land¹³ and are unable to afford market rates for electricity and water. We met women in Sierra Leone who spent days in the forest without tools, breaking

firewood off with their bare hands and carrying it out on their backs. Some who came back empty-handed were beaten by their husbands.

In many rural communities, water is a life and death issue, yet a private owner sells water only to those who can pay for it. Giving priority to commercial rather than domestic needs for water can deepen the spiralling poverty of women and their families, who will have even less access to this precious resource. Currently private corporations own or operate water systems globally that bring in about \$200 billion a year. But this accounts for the water use of only 7 per cent of the world's population, leaving an enormous potential market to be privatized at great profit.¹⁴ Despite the perilous price increases that have already put safe water beyond the reach of poor women in many developing countries, many international institutions promote the privatization of water.

In general, the rush to privatize public services, which has dominated recent macroeconomic approaches and is often the basis for international loans, has created new grievances in post-conflict societies. When a government sells public resources and services to private investors, those resources – and the profits they generate – become concentrated in the hands of a few investors, typically the same people who benefited from pre-existing inequalities. Decisions about where, and to whom, water or electricity should go are made on a purely cost/profit basis.¹⁵ Priority must be given to strengthening public services during reconstruction. This is the only way to create a space for women to play an active role in rebuilding their communities.

Land and Livelihood

"I work this land every day. I know each and every hill and rock and tree as well as I know my own children. How dare anyone tell me that this land has to belong to my dead husband's brother now?" Janet in Liberia asked us. "This land feeds my family. What if he wants to sell it? How will we survive? How can anyone think that this is fair? I will fight for my land even if I have to die. Because if I lose this land my whole family will die."

For many women in countries emerging from conflict, agriculture is their primary source of income and food. Access to land also provides access to critical resources such as water, forest products and property to graze livestock. Most important, having access to land means having a place to call home. Yet in many countries women don't have the right to own or inherit property. They may have lived on communal land before the conflict, but the destruction of community structures and land seizure by warlords, combatants or local merchants can leave women homeless and impoverished.

In Rwanda the government needed to deal with the staggering number of landless female heads of households after the genocide. A gender desk was established in Parliament supported by UNIFEM in collaboration with the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, and reviewed laws that discriminated against women. The desk successfully argued that women should be given the right to inherit property from their parents or husbands and that widows should be able to reclaim property from male relatives of their deceased husbands. While the process was successful in institutionalizing support for women's rights, the new law has been difficult to implement at the local level. Traditionalists are loathe to alter centuries-old customs, and Rwandan

women's rights activists warn that, without a nation-wide education campaign to inform women about their new rights, the law will not be implemented.

Even in countries where women have traditionally been allowed to own land, transactions are likely to be negotiated by men. That means that when land is available for purchase widows and single women who are without a male relative may be unable to obtain credit, capital and other necessary resources. In Cambodia the indifference of local authorities and the low social status of widows have created enormous obstacles to gaining possession of land. In Bosnia and Guatemala women can inherit property from their spouses, but other family members can and often do prevent widows from claiming their inheritance. In Peru, where widows comprise 26 per cent of displaced families in specially designated *zonas de repoblamiento* or resettlement areas, they report that men control the access to fertile land.

Employment

In post-conflict situations, a shortage of male labour caused by deaths in conflict – as high as a third or more of working-age men in some areas¹⁶ – encourages and sometimes forces women to seek employment outside the home, often for the first time in their lives. Women typically find work based on their domestic skills, such as cooking, sewing and hairdressing, or they end up in the so-called unprotected sector, where they may be harassed and forced to work at the whim of an employer. Some may hire themselves out as day labourers on plantations or farms. Others start small-scale gardens to have something to take to market. In Sudan women have been imprisoned for illegally brewing and selling liquor.¹⁷ And, as became clear to us in our travels, the paid work most available to women is prostitution. In Pakistan Afghan women refugees, who couldn't even walk outside their home in Afghanistan without a male escort, are now reduced to roaming the streets for clients. Many have succumbed to drug addiction.¹⁸

If women manage to find legal jobs, the terms and conditions are usually discriminatory, with less pay than men receive and longer working hours.¹⁹ Even where women have traditionally worked outside the home, as in the Balkans, they suffer employment discrimination and shoulder the double burden of caring for families while holding down a full-time job. Large state-owned manufacturing industries, which were traditionally dominated by women, have been closed down, leaving women jobless. The UN Mission's ombudspersons in Sarajevo and Banja Luka told us that the majority of workplace discrimination complaints there come from women. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has responded by providing free legal advice for women employees on workers' rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with training for women to participate in political bargaining and decision-making.

All over the world, regardless of their daytime struggle, at day's end women go home to their household responsibilities. Those we met in all of our visits continue to cook, wash clothes and care for children despite the hours spent on agricultural work and in other jobs. Many women, searching for paid employment, turn to small businesses and self-help projects – risky ventures, especially in post-conflict economies. In Africa, for example, traditional industries run by women, including small-scale agriculture, food processing, textiles and weaving, are bankrupted by cheap imports that flood the market as a result of trade liberalization. This liberalization was supposed to attract foreign

investment, but if and when it comes, the new jobs it offers are likely to be low-paying, with long-hours and poor working conditions. It is important to examine the policies promoted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to ensure a gender perspective is present in all areas. Privatization policies should take into account the care economy of women, and in the case of public employment, policies should not create a situation in which women are the first to be let go because of spending reductions.

In the face of these enormous challenges, some women – many more than we could have imagined – have overcome the obstacles and created thriving, successful work projects that provide income for themselves and their neighbours. And, in some cases, women are creating new role models. In Somalia we met women making and selling bricks. In Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana UNIFEM provided Liberian refugee women with skills training in non-traditional sectors like construction and brick-making. These women have built their own houses, schools, dormitories and even women's centres in the refugee camps. In East Timor women, trained as *tais* or ceremonial cloth weavers, received very low wages for their many hours of work. Now, with support from UNIFEM, they are forming a regional collaboration to focus on a more strategic and market-oriented approach to cottage industries, which are expected to be a significant source of export earnings.

The International Labour Organization (ILO), through its INFOCUS programme, has developed an extremely practical set of interventions which can help women to develop cooperative ventures and to get the skills which are appropriate to the local situation. UNFPA has helped Eritrean deportees from Ethiopia re-establish a sanitary towel factory. A multitude of NGOs, including the Chamber of Commerce, have supported efforts to empower women entrepreneurs – but there are too few of these efforts. In order for projects like these to succeed and for women to enter the paid workforce with a modicum of success, they need what women the world over need: basic social support, including child-care; legal protection against workplace discrimination; access to jobs with adequate pay; and wage parity. In post-conflict situations, they also need jobs in civil service, construction and other sectors where employment is most abundant. The UN has a unique ability to play a lead role in this. With more developed skills and better access to decision-makers, women could share in and contribute to economic growth and reconstruction.

Education and Training

Investing in 'human capital' is generally not a priority of transitional aid. Yet for most countries emerging from conflict, and certainly among the women we met, rebuilding the education system is a key priority. On every continent, in rural and urban areas, and across all affiliations, women pleaded for education – for themselves and for their daughters. The displaced women we met in Colombia, the farmers in Central Africa and the prostitutes in Cambodia all saw education and training as their key to economic independence and their full participation in political and decision-making processes. Women should not serve as 'decoration' they told us, but must be supported to "make a difference in their country's future." Somali women wanted education to help them understand their rights, voice their problems and identify their priorities. Every woman

we met in Rwanda saw access to land and education as the bridge to her own future and the future of her children.

This came as no surprise. After all, even in non-conflict situations, women and girls have less access to education than men and boys. Of the more than 110 million children not in school, two thirds are girls. Of the world's nearly 960 million illiterate adults, two thirds are women.²⁰ In Somalia women speak of a 'lost generation' who never had a chance to go to school because their education was interrupted by ten years of war. Today it is estimated 87 per cent of Somali women are illiterate.

The focus of education during reconstruction is almost wholly directed at primary school children. Women are more than ready to sacrifice their own schooling so their children can attend class even though they know that better skills and education are precisely what they themselves need. Women are eager for education and information that will equip them to start businesses and find better jobs. In Rwanda we met Jane, a widow with five children of her own, who had adopted 20 more children orphaned by war, "It is hard to take care of 25 children by myself," she told us. "I have no education and I am not employed. But what can I do? These children have no parents. Somehow I have to feed and clothe them, and send them to school."

Women should not have to choose between their own education and their family's survival. In Eritrea the WFP and the National Union of Eritrean Women (NEUW) launched a pilot programme to help illiterate women learn to read and write. The Food for Training programme offers oil, cereals, salt and pulses each month to women, and some men, who attend two hours of literacy lessons each day. The food parcel is intended to compensate women for the time they would otherwise spend preparing food for their families. WFP and NEUW also plan to offer food for women who attend vocational training courses.²¹

In Costa Rica UNHCR provided support for refugee women from El Salvador and Nicaragua who chose not to repatriate. Women were hired to staff UNHCR offices and to help organize workshops that focused on human rights and gender issues as well as literacy. One literacy project had flexible hours and provided childcare. It also trained participants to become literacy instructors.²² In Bosnia and Herzegovina Medica-Zenica has established an education centre for traumatized women and girls whose education was interrupted during the war. They are offered individual counselling and the opportunity to complete their high school education or a vocational skills-training course.

But these are not the norm. Typically, training for women during post-conflict reconstruction supports occupations that are the least prestigious and most poorly paid. They emphasize domestic functions, such as sewing, knitting and cooking, and rarely take into account skills that women may have learned during conflict.²³ The women we met in Somalia told us, "Our country took the step directly from the Middle Ages to the IT-age and we want to be a part of it. Give us the training." Women in the DRC asked for computers and technical training. If women do not obtain marketable skills or education, poverty is likely to be increasingly feminized and they will be even more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking.

To increase women's participation in post-conflict economies, particularly in the formal sector, education and vocational skills training need to be geared towards long-term, sustainable employment. That means teaching women more than basic literacy. In fact, many countries combine workshops on entrepreneurship, gender equality, human

rights and peace education with literacy classes. Some countries emerging from conflict are starting to recognize the need for women trained at secondary and university levels, so they can qualify for jobs as government workers and professionals in the new economy. Education and job training can be tailored to existing and potential employment and economic opportunities, as the ILO has pointed out and as women's centres supported by UNIFEM in Afghanistan have illustrated. These centres will bring women out of their homes and provide training in a variety of areas with a goal to linking women to employment opportunities.

Men alone cannot rebuild war-torn societies. Too often women are given new roles and responsibilities when emergency relief is underway and then excluded once the structures of governance are re-established. As countries emerge from the rubble of war, women must be equal partners in rebuilding. Supporting women's participation in reconstruction means giving women access to the rooms where decisions are made.

Those rooms tend to be reserved for two groups of people: those with private capital and those with political power. When we met with Winnie Byanyima, a Ugandan parliamentarian, she gave us her assessment: "Women see that private interests are shaping the situation of conflict. We need to think creatively about what women can do to leverage the interlocking of private interests and political interests."

International financial institutions, donors and the United Nations can help ensure that gender equality is a part of governance programmes and economic reforms. When funding reconstruction – building roads, and supplying transportation systems, power, telecommunications, housing, water and sanitation – these institutions can insist on policy and structural reforms that are responsive to women's needs and can create entry points for their participation.

Post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building must support a society's transition while also addressing root causes of conflict. This process – neither strictly humanitarian nor developmental in character, but an amalgam of both – cannot take place without involving women. There is no doubt in our minds that reconstruction and peace-building require specific strategies to support women, and that women can be engaged in all phases of the transition to a peacetime economy. Indeed, investing in women may be one of the most effective means for real, sustainable development and peace-building.

On Reconstruction the Experts call for:

- 1. Gender budget analysis of humanitarian assistance and post-conflict reconstruction** to ensure that women benefit directly from resources mobilized through multilateral and bilateral donors, including the Consolidated Appeals Process, the Bretton Woods Institutions and donor conferences.
- 2. Establishment of macroeconomic policies in post-conflict reconstruction that prioritize the public provision of food, water, sanitation, health and energy, the key sectors in which women provide unpaid labour.** Special attention should be paid to the consequences for women of decentralization policies.
- 3. A lead organization to be designated within the United Nations for women's education and training in conflict and post-conflict situations.** This lead organization, together with UNESCO, UNHCR and UNICEF, should ensure that all education programmes for displaced persons provide for women as well as girls.
- 4. The World Bank, bi-lateral donors, UNDP and all other relevant UN departments, funds and agencies to integrate gender analysis in needs assessments for post-conflict reconstruction** and throughout the planning, design, implementation of and reporting on programmes.
- 5. International organizations and governments to introduce affirmative measures** that give local women priority in recruitment during emergencies and post-conflict reconstruction.
- 6. Affirmative measures to be adopted to guarantee women's socio-economic rights** including employment, property ownership and inheritance and access to UN and public sector procurement in post-conflict reconstruction.
- 7. The International Labour Organization (ILO) to expand vocational and skills training for women in post-conflict situations including in non-traditional, public and private sectors,** in a manner that is sustainable and responsive to the local and national economy.