

# The Independent Experts' Assessment

on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women  
and the Role of Women in Peace-building

**Women  
War  
Peace**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# WOMEN WAR PEACE



## ***In Modern Conflicts, Women Face New Levels of Brutality – and Fight for Peace***

The victims in today's armed conflicts are far more likely to be civilians than soldiers. Some 70 per cent of the casualties in recent conflicts were non-combatants – most of them women and children.

■ Chantal, a Rwandan woman now living in a United Nations centre for refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, spent five years of her life as a sex slave to mass murderers who also used her as a porter and human shield.

Maria, a community organizer from northern Colombia, received a videotape of a colleague being tortured and killed. "The message was clear: If I continued with my activities, I'd be next."

Asha Hagi Elmi, an activist in Somalia and a delegate to the National Peace Conference in 2000, understood that peace could only come from cross-clan reconciliation, not official negotiations among warlords and faction leaders.

"We lobbied for a quota for women in the future legislature, the Transitional National Assembly. But we faced opposition from the male delegates. 'No man,' they told us, 'would agree to be represented by women.'"

### **"Epidemic of violence"**

These women's stories are but a few of the testimonies presented in a new report on women and armed conflict, *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and the Role of Women in Peace-building* (Progress of the World's Women 2002, Vol. 1). The report concludes that while women have

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always been among wars' victims, in recent conflicts they have been systematically singled out for sexual violence and other atrocities. Where this has occurred, the violence has largely been undocumented and perpetrators have frequently gone unpunished. Moreover, despite the fact that women have fostered numerous initiatives to prevent, stop and recover from war, they rarely have access to political power structures or are included in official peace negotiations as mandated in 2000 by the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

The Independent Experts' Assessment was commissioned by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in close collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in response to Resolution 1325. The Assessment was conducted by Elisabeth Rehn, a former Finnish defence minister, presidential candidate and United Nations human rights investigator, and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a banking executive and a former finance minister and presidential candidate in Liberia.

During visits to 14 war zones in Africa, the Middle East, South America, Asia and Eastern Europe, the Experts found shocking evidence of an "epidemic of violence" against women and girls during recent conflicts. They also found that while women were rarely part of official peace talks or reconstruction efforts, they have played a pivotal role by campaigning and working for peace at the grassroots level, often working across traditional dividing lines and borders.

### **Working for peace and justice**

During armed conflicts, women often experience violence, forced pregnancy, abduction, sexual abuse and slavery. Their bodies have been used as "envelopes" to send messages to the perceived enemy.

"The harm, silence and shame women experience in war is pervasive, but their redress is almost non-existent," the report states.

Women do not enjoy equal status with men in any society and during armed conflict, a pre-existing culture of discrimination is often exacerbated. Even after hostilities end, changes are rarely made to ensure that

women and women's rights are protected.

"We saw the scars, the pain and the humiliation. We heard accounts of rape camps, gang rapes and mutilation, of murder and sexual slavery," the Experts say in the report.

"Yet, time and again, we met women who had survived trauma and found the courage and the will to recommit to life. They were struggling to rebuild their community and remake their lives."

All over the world, the report found, women have challenged militarism and urged reconciliation over retribution. They have opposed the development, testing and proliferation of nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and the small arms trade. They have transformed peace processes on every continent by organizing across political, religious, and ethnic affiliations.

### **An equitable role for women**

In their recommendations, the Experts convey women's call to governments and the international community to help stop violence. The women also demand an equitable presence at peace negotiations as well as in legislatures and in the planning and operation of humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping missions.

The Experts also call on governments and the international community to adopt and vigorously enforce laws aimed at protecting women and ensuring their human rights. They recommend that an international Truth and Reconciliation Commission be set up in order to highlight the plight of female war victims.

The Experts also call for more female candidates in post-conflict elections, the appointment of more women to United Nations peacekeeping and diplomatic posts, and a greater role for women in peacemaking and post-conflict reconstruction activities.

Procedures and mechanisms to investigate, report, prosecute and remedy violence against women in war must be strengthened, the Experts say: "Otherwise the historic refusal to acknowledge and punish crimes against women will continue."



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War  
Peace

### Elisabeth Rehn, Independent Expert

■ Elisabeth Rehn's distinguished career has included serving as Minister of Equality Affairs and Minister of Defence of Finland; Member of the European Parliament; UN Under-Secretary-General; UN Special Rapporteur for the Situation of Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She has also been a candidate for the Finnish presidency.

Ms. Rehn is currently an Advisory Council Member of Intellibridge, a Washington D.C. research firm and a member of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Review Board. She has been a member of the Court of Conciliation and Arbitration of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) since 1994; a member of the International Steering Committee of Engendering the Peace

Process; Chair of the Finnish Association for Education and Training of Women in Crisis Prevention since 1997; and Chair of the World Wildlife Fund, Finland since 2000.

Previously, Ms. Rehn has served as Vice-chair of the Finnish Red Cross, Chair of the Standing Group of the National Committees of UNICEF, Vice-chair of the UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), member of the UNFPA Advisory Committee for Implementation of ICPD decisions and Chair of the Youth Conference of Climate 2000 in The Hague.

Ms. Rehn's early memories of the Soviet invasion of Finland give her a personal understanding of the horrors of war. As Defence Minister, she was a strong advocate for those who wanted to perform civil service rather than compulsory military service. However, says Ms. Rehn, it was in Bosnia as the UN Secretary-General's Special Repre-



sentative that she experienced first hand the gap between the decision-making level and those who are suffering on the ground.

Ms. Rehn has two doctor of science degrees, one in politics and the other in economics (H.C). She has been married for 47 years and has four children.

### Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Independent Expert

■ In a professional life that has spanned over 30 years, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has held a number of prominent positions, including Minister of Finance of Liberia; President of the Liberia Bank for Development and Investment; Vice President of Citicorp, Africa regional office; Vice President of Hong Kong Equator Bank; and Senior Loan Officer of the World Bank. She was one of seven international eminent persons selected by the Organization of African Unity in 1999 to investigate the Rwanda genocide.

Ms. Johnson Sirleaf is currently Chairperson of the Open Society Institute West Africa (OSIWA), part of the Soros Foundation Network. She also consults regularly for the UN Economic Commission for Africa as an External Adviser and is a member of the Advisory Board of the Modern Africa Growth and Investment Company (MAGIC). She is also Senior Adviser and West/Central Africa Representative of Modern Africa Fund Managers (MAFM), which has offices

in Washington D.C. and Johannesburg, and the Chair and CEO of Kormah Investment and Development Corporation (KODIC), a financial and management advisory consultancy firm incorporated in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire. Additionally, she is the founder and key supporter of the community development NGO, Measuagoon, in Liberia.

A presidential candidate in the 1997 Liberia general elections, Ms. Johnson Sirleaf came second in a field of thirteen. Prior to that, she served for five years as Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of UNDP with the rank of Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations. She has represented Liberia on the boards of several international and regional financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

Ms. Johnson Sirleaf has first hand experience of armed conflict. During the 1980 coup d'etat in Liberia she was one of only



four government ministers who escaped assassination, while 13 others were shot and killed.

Ms. Johnson Sirleaf holds a Master of Public Administration degree from Harvard

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War  
Peace**

**DOCUMENTATION**

## Security Council Resolution 1325

The Security Council,

Recalling its resolutions 1261 (1999) of 25 August 1999, 1265 (1999) of 17 September 1999, 1296 (2000) of 19 April 2000 and 1314 (2000) of 11 August 2000, as well as relevant statements of its President and recalling also the statement of its President, to the press on the occasion of the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace of 8 March 2000 (SC/6816),

Recalling also the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/52/231) as well as those contained in the outcome document of the twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the twenty-first century" (A/S-23/10/Rev.1), in particular those concerning women and armed conflict,

Bearing in mind the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the primary responsibility of the Security Council under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security,

Expressing concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements, and recognizing the consequent impact this has on durable peace and reconciliation,

Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution,

Reaffirming also the need to implement fully international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts,

Emphasizing the need for all parties to ensure that mine clearance and mine awareness programmes take into account the special needs of women and girls,

Recognizing the urgent need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and in this regard noting the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations (S/2000/693),

Recognizing also the importance of the recommendation contained in the statement of its President to the press of 8 March 2000 for specialized training for all peacekeeping personnel on the protection, special needs and human rights of women and children in conflict situations,

Recognizing that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and

security, Noting the need to consolidate data on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls,

1. Urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict;

2. Encourages the Secretary-General to implement his strategic plan of action (A/49/587) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes;

3. Urges the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf, and in this regard calls on Member States to provide candidates to the Secretary-General, for inclusion in a regularly updated centralized roster;

4. Further urges the Secretary-General to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel;

5. Expresses its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations and urges the Secretary-General to ensure that, where appropriate, field operations include a gender component;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to provide to Member States training guidelines and materials on the protection, rights and the particular needs of women, as well as on the importance of involving women in all peacekeeping and peace-building measures, invites Member States to incorporate these elements as well as HIV/AIDS awareness training into their national training programmes for military and civilian police personnel in preparation for deployment and further requests the Secretary-General to ensure that civilian personnel of peacekeeping operations receive similar training;

7. Urges Member States to increase their voluntary financial, technical and logistical support for gender-sensitive training efforts, including those undertaken by relevant funds and programmes, inter alia, the United Nations Fund for Women and United Nations Children's Fund, and by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other relevant bodies;

8. Calls on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, inter alia: (a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; (b) Measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements; (c) Measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary;

9. Calls upon all parties to armed conflict to respect fully

international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls as civilians, in particular the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Refugee Convention of 1951 and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the Convention Security Council - 5 - Press Release SC/6942 4213th Meeting (PM) 31 October 2000 on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the two Optional Protocols thereto of 25 May 2000, and to bear in mind the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;

10. Calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict;

11. Emphasizes the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes including those relating to sexual violence against women and girls, and in this regard, stresses the need to exclude these crimes, where feasible from amnesty provisions;

12. Calls upon all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, and to take into account the particular needs of women and girls, including in their design, and recalls its resolution 1208 (1998) of 19 November 1998;

13. Encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants;

14. Reaffirms its readiness, whenever measures are adopted under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, to give consideration to their potential impact on the civilian population, bearing in mind the special needs of women and girls, in order to consider appropriate humanitarian exemptions;

15. Expresses its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take into account gender considerations and the rights of women, including through consultation with local and international women's groups;

16. Invites the Secretary-General to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution, and further invites him to submit a report to the Security Council on the results of this study and to make this available to all Member States of the United Nations;

17. Requests the Secretary-General, where appropriate, to include in his reporting to the Security Council, progress on gender mainstreaming throughout peacekeeping missions and all other aspects relating to women and girls;

18. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter."



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War  
Peace

### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

# During Armed Conflict Women's Bodies Become A Battleground

In today's armed conflicts, more than 70 per cent of the casualties are civilians -- and most of them are women and children. As the Experts' Assessment documents, this is not an accident. Women, especially, are systematically targeted by armed forces, rebel groups and local militia.

Violence against women has reached epidemic proportions in these situations, as women have become the primary targets for those who use terror as a tactic of war.

Women's bodies become a battleground over which opposing forces struggle. They are raped as a way to humiliate the men they are related to, who are often forced to watch the assault.

In societies where ethnicity is inherited through the male line, "enemy" women are raped and forced to bear children.

Women who are already pregnant are forced to miscarry through violent attacks.

Women are kidnapped and used as sexual slaves to service troops, as well as to cook for soldiers and carry their loads from camp to camp. They are purposely infected with HIV/AIDS, a slow, painful murder.

Trafficking and sexual slavery are inextricably linked to conflict. Women are trafficked out of one country into another to be used in forced labour schemes that often include forced sex-work. Women are abducted by armed groups and forced to accompany them on raids, and to provide everything from food to sexual services.

Many sexual slaves are also used for dangerous work like demining contested areas, forced to risk their lives to make a field or a hillside safe for soldiers.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that as many as 2 million women are trafficked across borders annually, many of them coming from or through conflict areas.

According to the Independent Experts, protection and support for women survivors of violence are woefully inadequate. Their access to protection, social services and legal remedies is limited. Survivors of violence need safe places to go for help as well as medical support,

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines such violence as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private."

Forty-five countries have legislation protecting women against domestic violence, but many of these laws are not regularly enforced, especially during periods of conflict.

"People are living through an extraordinary drama here in eastern Congo," a UN official in Goma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo said.

"From Pweto down near the Zambian border right up to Aru, on the Sudan/Uganda border, it's a black hole where no one is safe and where no outsider goes. Women take a risk when they go out to the fields or on a road to a market.

"Any day they can be stripped naked, humiliated and raped in public. Many, many people no longer sleep at home, though sleeping in the bush is equally unsafe. Every night, another village is attacked. It could be any group, no one knows, but they always take women and girls away."

resources and security.

Some work is being done, but much more is needed. In Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Experts met local NGOs who were providing telephone hotlines, shelters, advocacy campaigns and policy research. One group, Medica Zenica, has a mobile clinic that provides obstetrical and gynaecological services to women in remote villages and displaced persons camps. It also trains local institutions in methods of caring for traumatized women. But these *ad hoc* efforts need to become routine and institutionalized.

Law enforcement officials can do more to protect women. Training in Cambodia and Croatia as well as political and legal advocacy in Liberia are aided by UNIFEM's Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women. But here too, further effort is needed by both international and national groups, the Experts write.

States, the Experts continue, must adopt special legislation incorporating human rights, humanitarian and international criminal law into their own legal systems.

Although the existing international legal framework prohibits and criminalizes violence against women, Gay J. McDougall, the former UNSpecial Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, recommends that it "must better reflect the experience of women and the true nature of the harms to them, particularly during armed conflict." She calls for the "further development of the legal framework through consistent, gender-responsive practice."

The UN Human Rights Committee reaffirmed this view by establishing that the right to gender equality is not merely a right to non-discrimination, but one that requires affirmative action.

In March 2000, the Committee called on states to take special measures to protect women from rape, abduction or other forms of gender-based violence. In Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, the Security Council made the same call.



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### Even during post-conflict reconstruction women are at risk.

The Experts met Lam, a 15-year-old Vietnamese girl, in a women's shelter in Phnom Penh. Her grandmother had sold her for \$200 to a brothel owner who was visiting Lam's home village near Ho Chi Minh City. Lam had no idea that she had been sold or that she was expected to become a commercial sex worker until she arrived at a hotel in Phnom Penh with 10 other Vietnamese girls, and a man was brought into her room.

"I hid under the bed, but he pulled me out. The owner was Vietnamese, he gave me food and condoms, but never any money." After about a month, Lam managed to escape and found a police officer who brought her to the Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre (CWCC) where the Experts spoke with her.

In Southeast Asian countries devastated by war and political upheaval, young girls such as Lam are bought for as little as \$50 and sold for up to \$700 to

organizations that ship them to Western developed countries. The ones who are not sent to developed countries are sold to local brothels.

The director of the CWCC told us that Lam's story is not unusual.

Data from the Human Rights Task Force on Cambodia estimates that nationwide, 44 per cent of trafficked children under 18 were sold by intermediaries, 23 per cent by family members, 17 per cent by boyfriends, 6 per cent by an employer and 6 per cent by unknown persons. Typically women are forced to service 20 to 30 men every day. Condoms are rarely available.



### To end violence against women in armed conflict, the Experts call for:

- An international Truth and Reconciliation Commission on violence against women in armed conflict as a step towards ending impunity. This Commission, to be convened by civil society with support from the international community, will fill the historical gap that has left these crimes unrecorded and unaddressed.
- Targeted sanctions against trafficking of women and girls. Those complicit must be held accountable for trafficking women and girls in or through conflict areas. Existing international laws on trafficking must be applied in conflict situations and national legislation should criminalize trafficking with strong punitive measures. Victims of trafficking should be protected from prosecution.
- Domestic violence to be recognized as systematic and widespread in conflict and post-conflict situations and addressed in humanitarian, legal and security responses and training in emergencies and post-conflict reconstruction.
- The United Nations, donors and governments to provide long-term financial support for women survivors of violence through legal, economic, psychosocial and reproductive health services. This should be an essential part of emergency assistance and post-conflict reconstruction.

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**Women  
War  
Peace**

### WOMEN FORCED TO FLEE

# Internally Displaced Women: Whose Responsibility?

**Around the world, 40 million people – an estimated 80 per cent of whom are women and children – have fled their homes because of armed conflict and human rights violations.**

**Some 25 million have been forced to flee but remain within their own nations and are considered “internally displaced persons.” The number of internally displaced is growing.**

**As of 2001, an estimated 13.5 million people were displaced internally in Africa, 4.5 million in Asia and the Pacific, 3.6 million in Europe, 2.2 million in the Americas and 1.5 million in the Middle East.**

**In addition there are 3.9 million refugee and internally displaced Palestinians who live in camps and receive aid from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).**

Armed conflict, political violence, and civil unrest forcibly uproot hundreds of thousands of civilians every year. Communities are being torn apart by the routine tactics of war.

As with all aspects of war, displacement has specific gender dimensions. Women are more likely to end up as displaced persons, and to become the sole caretaker for children.

Women and girls have to learn to cope as heads of household, often in environments where, even in peacetime, a woman on her own has few rights. And having fled their communities, women may find themselves vulnerable to attacks and rape while they are escaping and even when they find refuge. They may become trapped between opposing factions in areas where there is no humanitarian access.

In a hostile environment, without access to basic services, women are expected to provide the necessities for themselves and their families. Unable to do so, many displaced women are being forced to provide sexual services in return for assistance or protection.

Camps for refugees and the displaced can become extremely dangerous places for women. In most camps, there are not enough protection officers or female staff.

“I was an organizer and educator of peasant groups in Magdalena Medio, the heart of the oilfields in northern Colombia. I was in the office when a videotape was delivered. The tape showed a colleague of mine being tortured and killed. The message was clear: If I continued with my activities, I'd be next. I ran to the police and asked for their protection but they told me there was nothing they could do. I was afraid for my life, and for my co-workers. I fled to Bogotá.”

Maria, community organizer

A refugee is a person who, as a result of well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear is unwilling, to avail himself [or herself] of the protection of that country.

1951 Geneva Convention  
on the Status of Refugees, Article I.A.(2)

Internally Displaced Persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of, armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

Guiding Principles  
on Internal Displacement

Domestic violence increases and women and girls face sexual violence and discrimination in the distribution of everything from food to soap to plastic sheeting.

The growing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), who generally do not have access to international aid, has created a “crisis of displacement”. And with no one UN agency mandated to provide for IDPs, coordinating efforts to raise funds for aid programmes become more difficult.

Over the past five years, humanitarian agencies have promoted the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, developed in 1992, and used them as a framework for providing assistance and protection.

In addition, a number of countries with internally displaced populations, including Georgia, Burundi, and Colombia, have indicated their willingness to use the Principles and to adapt national laws to reflect them. Yet, when it comes to the vast majority of the internally displaced, the Guiding Principles are not implemented, and women are left to fend for themselves and their families.

UNHCR has initiated several programmes to address violence against women in recent years. In its Burundian refugee camps inside Tanzania, the agency hired two sexual- and gender-based violence assistants and two Tanzanian lawyers to address cases of violence against women, including domestic violence.

UNHCR is also working with the government of Tanzania to provide better police protection in refugee camps, and has hired an international security liaison officer to conduct training. In Kenya, UNHCR is helping the government to provide mobile courts that travel from camp to camp. The agency has recommended that all humanitarian agencies bring in more female staff to work in camps.

UNIFEM has provided funding to local groups working in camps. In places like East Timor, it has worked with local women's groups to provide rape counseling, and to help repatriate women kidnapped across the border.



## The Independent Experts' Assessment

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and the Role of Women in Peace-building

**Women  
War  
Peace**

**Johanna is a 24-year-old Sierra Leonean living in the Guinean capital of Conakry. She told a typical**

story of life as an urban refugee. She and her 16-year-old brother fled the fighting in Sierra Leone and arrived in Conakry in 1997.

"When we got here, they arrested us, accusing us of being rebels," she said. Johanna and her brother were eventually sent to a refugee camp, but when the camp was attacked by rebels, the two ran away to Conakry again.

"I met a very nice lady who offered me work as a domestic worker and a place to stay. I was glad to have shelter and to be able to earn money to support my brother.

"But then the worst happened: her husband used to come to my bedroom and rape me at night. This went on for four months. I threatened to tell his wife if he did not stop. I did not want to lose my job. He threatened to kill me if I ever told his wife or reported him to the authorities."

Johanna felt she had no choice but to tell his wife that she could no longer work for the family.

She left to live with her brother in a makeshift camp with other refugees, and started selling doughnuts on the street, until one day the police asked to see her permit to sell. "Of course I did not have one, so they took all my money and the doughnuts. I had to start all over again. But I was lucky I was not thrown in jail like what happens to so many other refugees who have no documentation. I was planning to be an accountant before the war broke out. One day when the war is over, I will return to school to fulfill my dream."



### On Refugee and Displaced Women, the Experts call for:

- Strengthening of United Nations field operations for internally displaced women. Protection officers should be deployed immediately if displaced populations are left unprotected.
- Governments to adhere to the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, to ensure protection, assistance and humanitarian access to internally displaced persons within their territory.
- Refugee and internally displaced women to play a key role in camp planning, management and decision-making, so that gender issues are taken into account in all aspects, especially resource distribution, security and protection.
- Women to be involved in all aspects of repatriation and resettlement planning and implementation. Special measures should be put in place to ensure women's security in this process and to ensure voluntary, unhindered repatriation.
- All asylum policies to be reformed to take into account gender-based political persecution. Women, regardless of marital status should be eligible for asylum, and entitled to individual interview and assessment procedures.



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**Women  
War  
Peace**

### WAR AND THE HEALTH OF WOMEN

# In Conflict and Post-conflict Countries, Women Become the Health Providers

Armed conflicts have been major causes of disease, suffering and death for much of human history. The fatalities, injuries and disabilities suffered on the battlefield are direct effects of conflict. But health consequences also arise from the breakdown of services and from population movements.

Diseases spread faster when conflicts cause human and financial resources to be diverted away from public health and other social services. These indirect consequences of war often remain for many years after a conflict ends.

Civilians now account for more 70 per cent of the casualties in armed conflicts. When small arms and landmines are used, women and children are often the most exposed to these dangers, especially if they are responsible for gathering fuel or water.

In some poor countries, maternal mortality is nearly 40 times the rate in the industrialized nations but during a conflict situation, pregnancy and delivery become even more dangerous. The risk is greater because women generally cannot get prenatal support or emergency obstetric care.

The spread of HIV/AIDS is exacerbated during and after armed conflict. The massive movements of populations coupled with increased sexual violence against women create a deadly nexus that allows HIV and other sexually transmitted infections to proliferate.

The international community has recognized the urgency of the AIDS epidemic and the necessity of HIV prevention and treatment in humanitarian response and post-conflict programming. Both Security Council Resolutions 1308 and 1325 specifically cite the special concerns of women.

In conflict and post-conflict situations, women still bear the brunt of the burden of caring for those who are ill. The Independent Experts saw the extraordinary efforts of women whose own health had deteriorated, but who continued to care for their loved ones.

The social responsibility of caring for the ill or disabled adds heavily to the workload of women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

In December 1998, when the civil war in the Republic of the Congo restarted, a third of Brazzaville's population – about a quarter of a million people – fled into the forests. They remained trapped for several months, with no access to international aid.

In May 1999 surveys and data collection from people returning to the capital allowed officials to document the health consequences of the war. Death rates were more than five times what would be considered an emergency.

Earlier studies in the 1980s in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Sudan came up with similar findings: during periods of conflict, the mortality rates of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in each country ranged between 4 and 70 times the rates for non-displaced persons in the same country.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, approximately 42,000 women died in childbirth in 2001.

One mother in 50 dies giving birth in Angola.

In Afghanistan, years of poverty, neglect of health facilities and policies restricting the movement of women were catastrophic for women's health.

Because the country lacks simple delivery and emergency obstetric services, maternal death rates are among the highest in the world.

One woman whose child had been severely disabled by a landmine told the Experts that she spent most of her day caring for her child.

Other women spoke of trying to keep the peace in households where husbands are depressed and drink too much, lashing out at their children. Still others spend hours lining up to get food for their families or, in desperate situations, resort to commercial sex work in order to afford medicine.

A study of economic embargoes in Cuba, Haiti, Iraq, Nicaragua, South Africa and Yugoslavia found that economically vulnerable groups, particularly women and children under five, suffer most from the deterioration in the health sector caused by sanctions.

Many humanitarian agencies would do more for women's health, and for health in general, if they had the staff and resources. Yet health programmes are notoriously underfunded. Each year, when the annual UN Inter-agency Consolidated Appeals are launched for countries in crisis, health programmes receive less than a quarter of the funds requested.

In many post-conflict countries, women have received little help in dealing with the trauma they experienced.

In some countries, NGOs with support from groups like UNIFEM and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and bilateral donors are trying to tackle the problem.

In Rwanda, UNIFEM has supported AVEGA, a self-help organization of widows offering both physical and psychological care. AVEGA has estimated that four out of five women still suffer psychological trauma eight years after the 1994 genocide. Many girls still have nightmares, and insist that they do not want to get married or ever have a sexual relationship.

By providing physical and mental health care, AVEGA is able to help women take the first steps towards rebuilding their lives.



## The Independent Experts' Assessment

on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women  
and the Role of Women in Peace-building

**Women  
War  
Peace**

**At a far corner of the camp, next to a ditch, a young mother of newborn twins sat in front of a make-**

shift hut of twigs and cloth. She looked about 17 years old and was sitting on a straw mat, with her family gathered around her.

She had one tiny baby lying on her legs and another at her left breast. Her right breast was swollen to the size of a basketball. Her eyes teared up and she grimaced with pain when she touched it.

Her husband explained that she had given birth to the twins a week before, just as they arrived in the camp; she now had a breast infection and her milk was contaminated. He said that Lina, a nurse they met among the other displaced people, had told her not to feed with that breast, but when she didn't nurse, the breast was even more painful.

"We need antibiotics," said the husband. "But we have no money and no way to get to the town even if we could buy medicine. There is no transport and they won't let us past the checkpoint."

An aid worker from a Liberian NGO who was accompanying us gave the husband some small bills from his pocket. "I don't know if they can make it through to Monrovia," he told us, "but maybe they can bribe someone."

The situation of the people in that camp in Liberia was among the worst the Independent Experts had seen during their visits to war-affected areas. These were people with nothing. No international or local groups were there to help them. They were not even allowed to go to the city for medical attention. They had absolutely no rights and were at the mercy of a war they did not understand.

### To ensure women's health in conflict situations, the Experts call for:

- Psychosocial support and reproductive health services for women affected by conflict to be an integral part of emergency assistance and post-conflict reconstruction.
- Recognition of the special health needs of women who have experienced war-related injuries, including amputations.
- Special attention to providing adequate food supplies for displaced and war-affected women, girls and families in order to protect health and to prevent the sexual exploitation of women and girls.
- The United Nations, donors and governments to provide long-term financial support for women survivors of violence through legal, economic, psychosocial, and reproductive health services. This should be an essential part of emergency assistance and post-conflict reconstruction.
- Protection against HIV/AIDS and the provision of reproductive health care through the implementation of the Minimum Initial Services Package (MISP) as defined by the Interagency Manual on Reproductive Health for Refugees.
- Immediate provision of emergency contraception and STI treatment for rape survivors to prevent unwanted



## The Independent Experts' Assessment

on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women  
and the Role of Women in Peace-building

### WOMEN AND PEACE-BUILDING

# “Women are half of the community, why are they not half of the solution?”

Women have sacrificed their lives for peace. They have challenged militarism and urged reconciliation over retribution. They have opposed the development, testing and proliferation of nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and the small arms trade. They have contributed to peacebuilding as activists, as community leaders, as survivors of the most cataclysmic horrors of war. They have transformed peace processes on every continent by organizing across political, religious, and ethnic affiliations. But they are rarely supported or rewarded.

“Women are half of the community, why then are they not half of the solution?” asked Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Namibia's Minister of Foreign Affairs when, as President of the Security Council, he supported the passage of Resolution 1325 on Women, peace and security.

Despite their peace-building efforts, women are rarely present at the peace table. It takes fierce determination and intense lobbying for them to be included as participants in transitional governments. Political parties that are building democracy rarely turn to them.

Women's leadership role is most visible in their communities; it is here that they organize to end conflict and develop the skills necessary for peace-building and reconstruction.

“The role of women in the overthrow of the regime was extremely important,” Stasa Zajovic, from the Serbian peace group Women in Black, told the Independent Experts. Women in Black is part of an international network.

For years, Women in Black members stood in silence outside government offices holding placards calling for peace and denouncing the government of Slobodan Milosevic. Stones were thrown at them, they were spat upon, beaten, arrested, yet every week they returned and stood in silent witness.

Women's organizing at the grassroots level often lays the groundwork for organizing across borders – in sub-regions and internationally.

The Mano River Union Women's Network for Peace, which has members from Sierra

“The emergence of women as a political force was a significant factor in achieving the [Northern Ireland] agreement. Women were among the first to express their weariness of the conflict... The two women that made it to the [negotiating] table had a tough time at first. They were treated quite rudely by some of the male politicians...

“Through their own perseverance and talent, by the end of the process they were valued contributors.

“When the agreement included the creation of a new Northern Ireland Assembly, women got elected there too. Overall, in achieving the level of stability now enjoyed, women's involvement at all levels was a very important factor.”

Former U.S. Senator George Mitchell,  
Special Adviser to the Northern Ireland  
peace talks

“History will acknowledge the crucial role of women human rights defenders in building up sane and safe societies... Which values are we betraying when exposing crimes committed in our name by our own governments?

“Certainly not the values that are enshrined in each and every one of our constitutions – values that our governments and armies so often trample. Rather than ‘traitors’, we are the very guardians of these values.”

Marieme Helie-Lucas, Founder,  
Women Living Under Muslim Laws

Leone, Guinea, and Liberia, brings together high-level women from established political networks as well as grassroots women, all searching for a way to end the fighting that has debilitated their three countries.

“Women's networks have been pivotal in the resolution of the conflict in Sierra Leone, and in getting negotiations started between the Mano River countries,” Isha Dyfan, an activist from Sierra Leone, told the Independent Experts. Dyfan is a former member of the Women's Forum, which was created long before the war started in Sierra Leone in 1991. She is now a Programme Director at the International Women's Tribune Center in New York City.

Because the Forum had already brought women together, “we were able to raise our voices and opinions to the highest level. Our national network helped us to reach out regionally and internationally,” said Dyfan. Eventually the Sierra Leonean women became involved in the regional Mano River Union Women's Network for Peace and the continent-wide Federation of African Women's Peace Networks (FERFAP), which was created with support from UNIFEM.

Tradition and cultural practices can present formidable obstacles to the inclusion of women in peace processes or post-war governance unless a formal mechanism is in place. To date, quotas are among the most successful ways to ensure a minimum percentage of women in negotiations as well as in government positions.

Quotas ensured Somali women's participation in their Transitional National Assembly.

In Mozambique, the Organizacao da Mulher Mocambicana, created in 1973, recruits women for decision-making positions, and women now make up 30 per cent of Mozambique's legislative bodies. Similarly, in South Africa, the African National Congress's commitment to a party quota resulted in 29 per cent representation of women in the nation's first parliamentary elections in 1994.

## The Independent Experts' Assessment

on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women  
and the Role of Women in Peace-building

**Women  
War  
Peace**

**On May 2, 2000, 92 Somali women stood outside a huge military tent in the town of Arta, Djibouti.**

The Somali National Peace Conference was about to begin, the fourteenth attempt since 1991 to find a peaceful solution to the civil war. The women had been chosen to be part of delegations representing traditional clans. But their ultimate goal was to break out of clan-based allegiances.

"We knew that peace in our country would come from cross-clan reconciliation, not official negotiations among warlords and faction leaders," one delegate told the Independent Experts during their visit a year later. "So we cared for the wounded, built schools in communities regardless of clan and political affiliations."

At the Conference, the women presented themselves as a "sixth clan" (delegations came from four major clans and a coalition of minor ones) that reached beyond ethnicity to a "vision of gender equality," said Asha Hagi Elmi, a leader of the Sixth Clan Coalition.

"In Arta, we presented 'buranbur' – a special poetic verse sung by women – to show the suffering of women and children during 10 years of civil war," said Ms. Elmi. "We lobbied for a quota for women in the future legislature, the Transitional National Assembly (TNA). But we faced opposition from the male delegates who told us, 'No man would agree to be represented by women.'"

But the women ultimately helped create a National Charter that guaranteed women 25 seats in the 245-member TNA, and protected the human rights of women, children and minorities as well. Although the Charter has not been implemented, as a document it "ranks among the top in the region and the best in the muslim world," said Ms. Elmi.

"In war-torn societies, women often keep societies going. They maintain the social fabric. They replace dislocated social services, and tend to the sick and wounded. As a result, women are often the prime advocates of peace. We must ensure that women are enabled to play a full part in peace negotiations, in peace processes, in peace missions."

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

### On ensuring women's participation in peace-building the Experts call for:

- The Secretary-General, in keeping with his personal commitment, to increase the number of women in senior positions in peace-related functions.
- Gender equality to be recognized in all peace processes, agreements and transitional governance structures. All participating parties involved in peace processes should advocate for gender parity.
- A United Nations Trust Fund for Women's Peace-building. The Fund would leverage the political, financial and technical support needed for women's civil society organizations at all levels.
- UNIFEM to work closely with the United Nations Department of Political Affairs to ensure that gender issues are incorporated in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction.
- Peace negotiations and agreements to have a gender perspective through the full integration of women's concerns and participation.
- The United Nations and donors to invest in women's organizations as a strategy for conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building.



## The Independent Experts' Assessment

on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women  
and the Role of Women in Peace-building

Women  
War  
Peace

ENSURING JUSTICE

# Justice Denied: Impunity Weakens the Foundations of Societies

The Independent Experts' visits to conflict situations confirmed the stark reality that women are being denied justice. With few exceptions, those who commit heinous crimes against women in war are not punished, nor are women granted redress. Worse yet, little is being done to prevent new abuses.

Women often have nowhere to turn: law enforcement agents, military officials, peace-keeping forces or civilian police may be complicit or themselves guilty of these crimes. The failure to prevent and punish such crimes is a betrayal of women on a massive scale, the Experts state.

Increased levels of violence against women continue into the post-conflict period. Criminal activity often thrives in such situations, where law enforcement is generally weak and there is rarely an effective judicial system.

Accountability on the part of states and societies for crimes against women means more than punishing perpetrators. It means establishing the rule of law and a just social and political order. Without this, there can be no lasting peace.

**Impunity weakens the foundation of societies emerging from conflict by legitimizing violence and inequality.** It prolongs instability and injustice and exposes women to the threat of renewed conflict.

Despite the fact that international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law protects women against war-time atrocities, there are limitations. According to Dr. Kelly D. Askin, Director of the International Criminal Justice Institute, "Treaties have been drafted outlawing, in excruciating detail, everything from particular kinds of bullets to the destruction of historical buildings, while maintaining enormous silence or providing only vague provisions on crimes against women."

Ultimately, Askin argues, "provisions are needed in international humanitarian law that take women's experiences of sexual violence as a starting point rather than just a by-product of war."

Women's rights advocates worldwide have slowly and steadily constructed an international

Historically, women have been underrepresented in judicial processes. Only one woman has served as a judge on the International Court of Justice since it was established more than 80 years ago. The 34-member International Law Commission had no women throughout its 55-year history until 2001, when two women were elected. No more than three women have served at any one time among the 14 permanent judges of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and for Rwanda (ICTR).

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) women described their frustrations. One activist told the Independent Experts:

"Large numbers of atrocities have been committed during the war here, but even now there is no justice.

"We cannot go to local authorities, as they have no power. We call for the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission and an international criminal tribunal for the DRC.

"We know those who have committed war crimes and their accomplices. We will testify to ensure that they are brought to justice.

"But the Security Council must accelerate its decisions on the situation in our country."

legal framework to address these grievances. Campaigns to end violence against women took root and gained momentum throughout the 1990s on the agendas of UN World Conferences, from Vienna in 1993 to Cairo in 1994 to the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, which began to recognize the principles for codifying international law on violence against women.

Those principles were later tested and articulated in landmark decisions by the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and ultimately informed the definition of crimes of sexual violence included in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

More than 20 countries have established truth and reconciliation commissions, which often have no legal status but provide a public record of crimes committed by gathering testimony from survivors. Yet for the commissions to serve women, their mandates must reflect the nature of the human rights violations that women suffer. The stigma associated with reporting sexual violators and the issue of witness protection must be addressed.

In East Timor, a combination of methods are being used to attempt to bring perpetrators to account for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed at the time of the August 1999 referendum on independence. But the women of East Timor are not yet convinced these methods will work, according to the Experts. They met Maria, who fled her village as everything she owned burned to the ground. She knew the people who had committed crimes against her community.

"We know who these people are," she told the Experts, "we know them by name, by face and we know that many are still hiding in West Timor. We will not agree to live side-by-side with them in East Timor unless justice is done."

In Kosovo, Cambodia and Rwanda, women's groups are working with judges in community and national courts to sensitize them about gender issues.



## The Independent Experts' Assessment

on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women  
and the Role of Women in Peace-building

### Chantal was living in a UN refugee transit centre in Goma, in the

eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) when the Independent Experts met her. She was anxious to return to her native Rwanda.

At first sight, Chantal could have been any strong, young village woman, a farmer from Rwanda's steep hills, who brought produce to market and carried water and wood for miles. But her face was blank as she described the last five years since her abduction, years which she spent deep in the forests of eastern DRC with a group of Interahamwe militia – some of whom were the "genocidaires" of Rwanda in 1994.

The militia used thousands of women like Chantal, as human shields, porters and sex slaves.

"We ate when we went to villages," Chantal told the Independent Experts. "We carried very heavy loads of what we took from their places. Often there was fighting. Every man raped me."

Most survivors of sexual violence do not talk about

it. Chantal was able to tell her story because she felt no risk of stigma or rejection from her husband, family or community; she had already lost everybody and everything she was attached to. It is unlikely that Chantal will ever see justice done.

She is not likely to receive reparations for the violations she suffered, or to see her violators prosecuted. She probably will not receive adequate medical or psychosocial support. Chantal may have contracted HIV/AIDS from the multiple rapes, but it is unlikely that she will ever be tested. Even if she is tested, and is positive, she will probably not have access to treatment or care.

If Chantal has children, they may be able to go to school, but she herself is not likely to receive any education. If she makes it back home, she will have to struggle to claim the property she lived on, the inheritance due her and the possessions she left behind. The chances are very high that Chantal will be violated again.



### On ensuring justice for victims of violence the Experts call for:

- The Secretary-General to appoint a panel of experts to assess gaps in international and national laws pertaining to the protection of women in conflict and post-conflict situations and their role in peace-building.
- States which are parties to the Statute of the International Criminal Court to undertake national law reform to ensure compatibility, with particular attention given to provisions regarding crimes against women.
- National legal systems to penalize and remedy all forms of violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations. Women's access to justice should be ensured.
- Gender equality in constitutional, legislative and policy reforms. The principle of gender should be integrated into all relevant constitutional clauses.
- Establishment by the United Nations of interim judicial systems capable of dealing with violations against women by their family and society at large.

## The Independent Experts' Assessment

on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women  
and the Role of Women in Peace-building

**Women  
War  
Peace**

### ARMED CONFLICT AND HIV/AIDS

# Armed Conflicts Exacerbate the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has long eclipsed all other health concerns in Africa and is set to do the same in the rest of the developing world. It is likely to be the pre-eminent killer disease for many years to come and has consistently gone beyond even worst-case scenario projections of infection rates.

Gender inequalities are a major driving force behind the AIDS epidemic. Women are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS than men and boys, not only because they are biologically more susceptible to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), but also because they often lack power to negotiate the terms of sexual relations or economic independence. Adolescent girls, relatively powerless to avert abuses such as forced marriage or trafficking, are at greatest risk.

The chaotic and brutal circumstances of armed conflict aggravate all the factors that fuel the HIV/AIDS crisis. The impact on women's health is particularly harmful. The virus spreads faster during conflict and has itself contributed to political instability by leaving governance structures, health systems and communities weakened.

As sexual violence and exploitation have escalated in conflict and post-conflict situations, so has the spread of HIV and other STIs.

STIs themselves greatly increase the risk of infection with HIV.

The mixing of civilians and combatants can also increase the risk of infection. Military forces almost always have higher rates of STI and HIV infection than civilians do. In many conflict settings, the combatants are involved in sexual exploitation of women, including regular relations with sex workers and sexual violence.

Armed conflict impacts all levels of the structures in society that might have helped slow or prevent the spread of HIV.

Conflict destroys the health services that helped protect people against HIV/AIDS or screen blood transfusions. It devastates the education systems that might have been able to teach HIV and gender-based violence prevention. And HIV/AIDS itself contributes to political instability by leaving millions of children orphaned and

Of sub-Saharan Africans 29.4 million HIV-positive people, 58 percent are women.

AIDS Epidemic Update  
UNAIDS, December 2002

Even in settings where HIV prevention programmes are in place and women have attained some level of equality, the onset of war can severely disrupt access to health information, damage health infrastructure and create shortages of supplies STI treatment drugs or condoms.

This lack of services, combined with poverty, can severely limit women's abilities to control their exposure to HIV/AIDS. As one refugee told the Experts:

"I know all about AIDS because we had a big prevention programme back home. Lots of people started using condoms there. But here in this camp, they aren't always available and in the city they are expensive – so what should we do? Sometimes my husband and I are together without protection, even though we know better."

"It seems strange that donors only seem to want to fund governance projects here – courts, elections, tribunals, civil service training, and police training – and no one wants to support HIV prevention. If we don't work on stopping HIV now, there won't be people left to govern."

UN Diplomat,  
Sierra Leone

by killing teachers, health workers and other public servants that help keep society's fabric together.

In many countries, women and girls become easy targets for sexual violence and exploitation in refugee camps. Even simple tasks such as collecting firewood and water outside the camp expose women and girls to the threat of violence and rape.

Some refugees bring STIs with them; others contract them in the camp or in nearby towns. Refugee camps must provide active STI treatment services and HIV prevention programmes, so that all residents, women and men alike, are protected.

In Sierra Leone, UNIFEM and UNAIDS, has deployed a gender and HIV/AIDS specialist to ensure that gender and human rights perspectives are integrated into all country activities to fight the pandemic.

In the country's capital, Freetown, the Women in Crisis Movement has established support for young women forced into the sex trade. The women are provided with literacy, vocational and HIV prevention training, as well as treatment for STIs in participating clinics. However, despite the new skills that the women are learning, until the local economy can provide more jobs or they can establish sustainable businesses, the women are forced to continue to sell sex for food and other necessities.

Even as conflicts subside, difficult economic and social conditions often leave many unemployed and unable to resume their normal community or family lives.

Where AIDS and other diseases are already a problem, women bear the largest burden of care for family members. The responsibility can keep girls from going to school and prevent women's involvement in the work force, thus amplifying their low status and their family's poverty.

HIV is a direct threat to both human and national security since the epidemic undermines economic and social participation at a critical time of rehabilitation and recovery.



## The Independent Experts' Assessment

on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women  
and the Role of Women in Peace-building

**Women  
War  
Peace**

Marie, a tall and quiet woman of twenty-four, lives with her two-year-old and her baby on the

edge of a frontier town in Eastern Congo. It is not a town that many of its residents would choose to live in – it is simply a place they have run to in order to escape fighting elsewhere.

The three-room health post is pockmarked from mortar fire and nearly empty of furniture and supplies. The one trained nurse can provide advice, but little else.

There are no jobs for Marie or her friends and they have no family left to help them, so quite often they resort to selling sex for money, food or even to “buy” protection from rebel leaders.

Marie is embarrassed, but feels she has no choice. “I am only thankful that my mother and father cannot see the way I am living now because they did not raise me to do these things. But what else can I do? There is no one to help. I must take care of my children.”

Marie knows that sex with many partners can be unhealthy but she doesn't know any details and has no access to information about sexually transmitted infections or HIV. Nor does she have access to basic supplies such as condoms or contraceptives to prevent an unwanted pregnancy. She has no power to negotiate protection with the men who come to her hut.

The odds are very much against Marie. Almost 1.3 million adults and children are living with HIV in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In North Kivu, near where Marie lives, a recent study showed infection rates of 54 per cent among adult women, 32 per cent among adult men and 26 per cent among children.



### To prevent the spread of HIV in conflict situations, the Experts call for:

- HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programmes to be implemented during conflict and in post-conflict situations, with care and support provided whenever there is access to affected populations.
- All HIV/AIDS programmes and funding in conflict situations to address the disproportionate disease burden carried by women.
- Vulnerability assessments to be carried out in each humanitarian situation to determine links between conflict, displacement, gender and HIV/AIDS.
- Clear guidelines for HIV/AIDS Prevention in Peacekeeping Operations. Counseling and testing should be provided for all contingent forces and civilian personnel.
- The Global Fund to fight AIDS to make special provisions for support of HIV/AIDS programmes in conflict situations, including in countries without the government capacity to manage the application process.