Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures: Challenges to and Prospects for Global Empowerment
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Part I: Ensuring Participation and Promoting Empowerment: Facets of an Evolving Struggle

Currently, all societies face challenges in their efforts to provide sustainable options for the younger generation. However, the lack of such options is particularly acute for women and young girls in societies in conflict situations, and in societies transitioning from such situations. There is a growing consensus in the international community that the participation of women in peace and stabilization efforts helps to reduce the incidence of conflicts and hostilities, promotes better access and support for women affected by war, and renders such processes more legitimate. As Michelle Bachelet, the Executive Director of UN Women, noted “the reconstruction process for those territories that are recovering from situations of conflict are based on three pillars: economic recovery, the reestablishment of social cohesion and the recovery of political legitimacy. And women have a great deal to contribute to these three pillars, not only with regard to the issue of rights and social justice but also because, thanks to our participation, the results of the reconstruction of communities are more effective, legitimate and participatory.”

Women’s political participation is a human right whose promotion in a sustained manner can contribute to good governance and to greater opportunities for empowerment. Moreover, greater participation of women in such processes act as an incentive for the younger generation to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to become more actively engaged in transformational initiatives; initiatives that seek to ensure a more inclusive and just social order. In this context, Bachelet reiterated that “We are bound by a common goal – to open the way for women to participate in all decisions affecting not only their own lives, but the development of our world, at the global, regional and local levels. By making full use of half the world's intelligence – the intelligence of women – we improve the chances of finding real and lasting solutions to the challenges that confront us.”

This Report seeks to examine the prospects, as well as some of the key challenges, confronting sustainable empowerment initiatives. It is divided into two sections: the first section will examine the meaning of the right to participate in the international human rights discourse, briefly survey some of the key turning points in the evolution of the international normative framework concerning participation and women’s rights

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issues, and identify some of the major barriers to effective participation. In the second part of the report, some of these issues are analyzed and assessed in the context of three case studies: Kosovo, Liberia and Palestine. All three societies are confronting critical peacebuilding challenges that necessitate the mobilization of their human capital; mobilization that cannot achieve its intended objectives unless premised on the interdependence between sustainability and inclusion.

The Right to Participate

The right to participate can be defined and understood in a variety of ways. The most basic understanding of this right entails the demand to influence the fundamental policies and choices of structures and institutions that can affect one’s well-being.3 It is clearly related to freedom to speech, assembly and association, which constitute channels through which participation can be rendered meaningful and effective. No right can be realized without making those responsible for guaranteeing its fulfillment aware of the demand for such fulfillment.4 This observation is particularly significant in relation to the necessity of awareness raising initiatives.

The most widely acknowledged manifestation of participation is the right to vote. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) stipulates that “everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives;” in addition, it states that “the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of the government” and that “this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections.” A very similar formulation is found in Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which refers, among other things, to the right “to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections.” Though fundamental, the right to vote is clearly not the only way in which people can exercise the right to participate. In its General Comment on Article 25, the Human Rights Committee (HRC), which is the monitoring organ of the ICCPR, noted the importance of other non-formal means for advancing the said right: “Citizens also take part in the conduct of public affairs by exerting influence through public debate and dialogue with their representatives, or through their capacity to organize themselves.”5 In this context, the HRC underscored the aforementioned interrelatedness between the right to participate and other fundamental rights: “This participation is supported by ensuring freedom of expression, assembly and association.”6 More specifically, in its

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4 Ibid, p. 75.

5 Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 25: The Right to participate in public affairs, voting rights & the right of equal access to public service (Art. 25): 07/12/1996. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.7, para 8.

6 Ibid.
reference to the right to freedom of association, the HRC noted that it “is an essential adjunct to the rights protected by article 25.”

This cluster of interrelated rights enables individuals to exercise meaningful participation. However, these rights cannot be exercised in such a way if the individuals concerned do not have the social, economic and cultural resources necessary for their realization. Here it is important to stress that issues such as health, education, and basic economic security, among others, are critical, since they can enhance the capability of individuals to pursue their desired understanding of what participation entails. Conversely, the right of individuals to participate in processes that may affect their development is likewise critical in ensuring the enjoyment of all human rights without discrimination. In addressing this issue in the context of the equal right of men and women to such enjoyment, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the monitoring organ of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), noted that “The right of individuals and groups of individuals to participate in decision-making processes that may affect their development must be an integral component of any policy, programme or activity developed to discharge governmental obligations under Article 3 of the Covenant.”

In a nutshell, the right to participate is related to and dependent upon the existence of other universal rights. In other words, it is not possible to effectively exercise the right to participate, if other rights cannot be realized. It is thus dependent on other rights and enables their meaningful exercise.

**Women and Participation: Some Key Developments**

Women and girls’ efforts to realize the right to participate have been part of a long and arduous struggle towards emancipation. Due to reasons of space, it is not possible to do

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8 It is worth noting here the distinction that Martha Nussbaum draws between capabilities and functioning. In discussing health, she correctly argues that we should distinguish between the capability to be healthy and healthy functioning; “a society might make the first available and also give individuals the freedom not to choose the relevant functioning;” Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development. The Capabilities Approach.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 14.

justice to all the facets of this process; the brief survey below will highlight some of the key events and developments.

The 19th and 20th centuries were characterized by an ongoing global campaign for women’s suffrage. In the late 19th century, transnational women’s organizations began to form for the main purpose of addressing issues of suffrage and equal educational opportunities.¹⁰

The formation of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in the Hague in 1915 can be seen as an example of such early transnational initiatives.¹¹ An international NGO, headquartered in Geneva and with sections in many countries, the WILPF advanced a platform which focused on the pursuit of peace; this included opposition to the war and advancing the goal of disarmament. In addition, the League actively promoted a wide range of human rights, including women’s right to vote. President Wilson is reported to have met with WILPF President Jane Addams,¹² and he incorporated some of the group’s proposed ideas into his own peace proposals. While there was an early and active women’s suffrage movement in the United States with strong transnational links, the country did not lead in the effort to secure for women the right to vote. This distinction belongs to New Zealand, which gave women the right to vote in 1893, followed by Australia in 1902, and Finland in 1906. In the United States, this right was granted on the aftermath of WWI with the adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution (1920), thus enabling twenty six million women of voting age to exercise this long overdue right.¹³

Women’s efforts toward peace and disarmament were also notable throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Cold war era mobilizations, such as the formation of the European Movement of Women against Nuclear Armament, protested the existence and possibility of use of nuclear weapons, while WILF organized seminars for overcoming differences between US and Soviet women.¹⁴ Groups also formed against nuclear

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¹² Jane Addams was the elected President of the Congress and of the International Women’s Committee, the original organization that would later become Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF); Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, "Brief History of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom." [http://www.wilpfinternational.org/AboutUs/index.htm](http://www.wilpfinternational.org/AboutUs/index.htm) (accessed March 29, 2012).
weapons testing in the Pacific region, including the formation of a base camp for protest at Mount Fuji, Japan. Women’s groups also became actively involved in initiatives for peace and reconstruction in Africa, especially in countries such as Angola, Burundi, Somalia and Niger.\textsuperscript{15}

Many initiatives seeking to advance women’s equality were launched on the aftermath of the creation of the United Nations Organization. In its preamble, the United Nations Charter refers to the principle of equality (“equal rights of men and women”) in the context of fundamental rights, dignity and worth.\textsuperscript{16} In some ways, this marks the beginnings of legislative gender equality initiatives, which would shape the discussions and policies in years to come. The \textit{UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)}\textsuperscript{17} was established in 1946\textsuperscript{18}, and continues to be the main global policy-making institution focused exclusively on gender equality and women’s issues. Women activists within the Commission devoted their energies in the preparation of recommendations regarding equality and women’s rights issues and in the pursuit of action through a variety of projects. The Commission remains very active: Annual meetings of Member State representatives focus on current issues and progress evaluations, and continue to issue recommendations to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

**UN Global Decade for Women: World Conferences\textsuperscript{19} and UNSC Resolutions\textsuperscript{20} 21**

An important development in the effort to promote gender equality was the convening of the World Conferences on women’s issues which began in 1975 with the conference in Mexico. This was followed by World Conferences in Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995). The outcomes and recommendations of these conferences are indicative of the progression of women’s issues in the international community.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for the Advancement of Women, "Short History of CEDAW Convention."  \url{http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm} (accessed March 7, 2012).
\textsuperscript{17} CSW is part of the United Nations Economic and Social Council; UN Women, Commission on the Status of Women, "Overview: About the Commission."  \url{http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw} (accessed March 7, 2012).
\textsuperscript{18} The Commission was established as a sub-commission of the Commission on Human Rights; “Overview: About the Commission,” Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} All Reports and Follow-up Reports to World Conferences are available at the UN Women website; UN Women. "Beijing and its Follow-up.”  \url{http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/index.html} (accessed April 1, 2012).
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22 “Beijing and its Follow-up,” supra note 19.
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- Maternal and child healthcare  
- Improvements in education and literacy rates  
- Eliminating discriminatory legislation  
- Improvement necessary in areas of violence and poverty related to: trafficking in women and girls; change in nature of armed conflict; and effects of globalization on economic factors  
- Improvement in decision-making representation in political spheres |
| **UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000)** | - Framed maintenance of international peace and security within women’s issues  
- Focus on gender mainstreaming and protection of women and girls, especially against sexual violence during conflict  
- Increased representation of women at all decision-making levels  
- Gender perspective in all steps of peacekeeping/peacebuilding |
| **Beijing +10 and beyond (2005) (2010)** | - Review of Implementation at the National Level  
- Re-instatement of the 12 areas of concern and obligation of parties to uphold international obligations  
- Special emphasis with regard to women’s rights as human rights; Multi-dimensional obligations |
| **UNSC Resolution 1820 (2008)** | - Prevention and accountability for sexual violence during conflict  
- Training society to avoid stigmatization in perception of women’s roles |
| **UNSC Resolution 1888 and 1889 (2009)** | - Reaffirming the connection between sexual violence during conflict and international peace and security  
- Implementation focus of previous resolutions (1325, 1820) with focus on women’s role during all stages of peace-building |

*Bolded Text- Initiatives related to Participation

During the early 1970s, contending approaches emerged as to the direction and goals of the women’s movement; these approaches were reflective of a growing North-South cleavage. International groups\(^{26}\) began to form around feminist ideology in the 1970s but were led mainly by middle-class white women and shaped by Western investment and ideologies.\(^{27}\) The 1975 UN Women’s Conference in Mexico included global South-specific issues on the international agenda for the first time.\(^{28}\) In the context of participation, it is important to highlight that with an available platform, specificity could be tied to gendered concerns in a novel way, transcending in the process barriers of ethnocentric application. Issues that arose pertained to relevant concerns for women of the South, such as global inequality, and political and developmental shortcomings.\(^{29}\) These efforts also highlighted the necessity of inclusion of women in development, re-directing their role as that of enablers, rather than that of recipients benefiting from development. A development of the 1975 conference, the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women’s Year, combined with the objectives of groups such as CSW and the urging of the General Assembly, were contributing factors to the adoption of a binding treaty regarding discrimination against women.\(^{30}\) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)\(^{31}\) was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979, defining discrimination against women and setting an agenda to combat it. Article 7 refers directly to participation, stating that “State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country,” and ensure for women the right to vote, to participate in the formulation of government policy and implementation, to hold public office, and to participate in non-governmental organizations associated with public and private life. Additional Articles define rights which enable fuller realization of participation, complementing those in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These articles include: Article 10 on equality and non-discrimination in education; Article 12 on non-discrimination in health care, specifically extended to pregnancy and post-natal care; and Article 13 on non-discrimination in other economic and social life such as family benefits, different forms of financial credit, and culture.

The Second World Conference in Copenhagen extended the broad goals of equality, development and peace to more specified areas concentrated on barriers to obtaining


\(^{27}\) “Global Feminism: Transnational Women’s Activism, Organizing and Human Rights,” supra note 10.

\(^{28}\) “Global Feminism: Transnational Women’s Activism, Organizing and Human Rights,” supra note 10.

\(^{29}\) United Nations, World Conference of the International Women’s Year (Mexico City, 1975), supra note 19.

\(^{30}\) “Short History of CEDAW Convention,” supra note 17.

\(^{31}\) Prior to the adoption of CEDAW, the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1967) reflected an emerging consensus among Member States on women’s rights issues.
access to these rights. These included equality in access to education, employment and health services. Some of the barriers identified to these areas included: scarcity of women in decision-making positions, lack of awareness of opportunity among women, and lack of men’s involvement in improving women’s societal roles. The Conference Report states that, “Governments should explicitly state their firm commitment to accord high priority to legislative and other measures for accelerating the equal and full participation of women in economic and social development...”

The Copenhagen Program of Action was additionally characterized by an emphasis on women’s property rights, as well as rights to child custody and nationality. In 1985, the UN’s Third World Conference on Women was held in Nairobi to assess the status of issues pertaining to women at the end of a decade of progress focused on empowerment, realizing that improvement thus far was limited to the benefit of a specific section of women. The most pertinent concerns related to violence against women and the prospects for the enhanced role of women in peace and development. The “Nairobi Forward Looking” Strategies were developed as guidelines toward the future, urging governments to take legislative action aimed at the elimination of discrimination, and the more active involvement of women in peace and development. This conference was also considered as having marked the “birth of global feminism, as 15,000 NGO representatives attended the NGO Forum parallel to the conference. In addition, the role of women in environmental management and development was highlighted at the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development.

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child would also extend the rights affecting participation regarding children, highlighting the specificity of children’s needs, and thus those of girls. Some key provisions of this Convention include the emphasis on non-discrimination; the standard referring to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child. These provisions underscore the centrality of the right to participate and its interrelationship with other rights.

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In June 1993, the World Conference on Human Rights took place in Vienna with the aim to create a common plan pertaining to the strengthening of human rights as a global issue, with an emphasis on the rights of women and girls to complete and equal participation on political, civil, economic, social and cultural platforms, as well as on the elimination of discrimination.\(^{39}\) The importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was highlighted within the Program of Action, with special emphasis on the girl-child, and on the necessity of a protective and harmonious environment.\(^{40}\) This was the first time that the human rights discourse intersected at the global level with sustainability issues in economic, social and political development. Rights were thus extended beyond issues of codification, a development instrumental in the framing of women’s rights as part of the human rights agenda.\(^{41}\) The conclusions of this conference also highlighted the importance attached to the elimination of all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, and the tensions between cultural and religious practice and women’s rights. Last, but not least, the World Conference served as an important platform for the framing of bodily integrity violations, such as murder, rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy, as crimes against humanity.\(^{42}\) In this context, the UN general Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women later that year.

Women’s movements were emerging as key players in global spaces, contributing with their advocacy skills to the ongoing quest for peace and equality. In 1994, at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, women made eloquent arguments for gender-specific rights fulfillment in areas such as health and education, as pre-requisites for policies related to population, reproduction and development.\(^{43}\) The Beijing Platform of Action which came out of the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference, placed emphasis on the removal of barriers to participation and equality-centered initiatives focused on empowerment.\(^{44}\) As one analyst has observed, “gathering information about women’s position in society is essential to furnish the details required to monitor changes in society around equal opportunities, so that women can campaign for improvements in all aspects of their lives.”\(^{45}\)


\(^{40}\) Program of Action; 21 and 49; United Nations General Assembly. World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (Vienna, 1993).

\(^{41}\) “Global Feminism: Transnational Women’s Activism, Organizing and Human Rights,” supra note 10.

\(^{42}\) Vienna Program of Action (1993), para 38; supra note 40. This development was clearly influenced by the conflict in the Former Yugoslavia and the emerging evidence of gross and systematic human rights and humanitarian law violations.

\(^{43}\) World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, supra note 35.


on the “Nairobi Forward-Looking” strategies, Beijing has several implications that relate to the concept of participation. More specifically, goals identified in the Beijing platform include: representation in at least one third of “key positions” and councils, and promotion of active participation at all levels of decision-making.\textsuperscript{46}

The late 1990s also witnessed other key developments, such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention on Homeworkers in 1996, which includes home-workers, the majority of whom are women, within labor statistics and labor inspection systems. This Convention also emphasizes equal treatment for homeworkers in exercising their right “to establish or join organizations of their own choosing and to participate in the activities of such organizations” and provides for their “protection against discrimination in employment and occupation.”\textsuperscript{47} This development was in line with the aims of the Beijing Platform by promoting productive employment, reducing poverty and enforcing international labor and human rights standards. In 1997, the International Coalition for the Women’s Peace Petition, with a majority of its participants from the global South, sought to frame war as unacceptable social behavior akin to apartheid or slavery.\textsuperscript{48} The petition called upon governments to redirect funds from military budgets to programs for peace education as well as health, and employment.

The Beijing Platform for Action has had several follow-up meetings at five-year intervals. These meetings reassessed and reflected on the successes and future implications for women, along the lines of 12 critical areas of concern.\textsuperscript{49} The outcome of the Beijing Plus Five meeting in 2000 consisted of a reaffirmation of the previous goals and implementation of new ones such as: support of men and boys in re-inventing the role of women, increased enrollment of girls in education, literacy improvement, removal of gender discriminatory legislation, and universal health care access with special emphasis on maternal and sexual health.\textsuperscript{50} Other areas that have continued to gain importance include: decision-making opportunities especially during peace keeping, women-specific approaches to HIV/AIDS, issues with migration, access to new technology and focus on violence against women in instances of trafficking and armed conflict. These review sessions have also advanced the recognition of women’s rights as human rights, thus emphasizing the multi-dimensional obligation of upholding the basic rights allotted to each individual by international legislation (especially with regard to the pre-requisites

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} “Post-conflict Reconstruction and Gender Analysis in Kosova,” supra note 45.
\item \textsuperscript{48} “Conflict, Peace-building, Disarmament, Security: Women’s Advocacy for Peace and Disarmament.” supra note 14.
\item \textsuperscript{49} See Chart Above: World Women’s Conferences and UNSC Resolutions.
\item \textsuperscript{50} UN Women, "Five-year Review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing 5) held in the General Assembly, 5–9 June 2000." \url{http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/beijing+5.htm} (accessed March 18, 2012).
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to participation such as health and education). The follow-up Beijing Plus Ten meeting in 2005 focused upon identifying gaps reflected in surveys of achievement of the Platform for Action goals by participating countries. The importance of dialogue and cooperation between governments and NGOs was also highlighted.

Another important development relating to the participatory and protective needs of women and girls centers on the United Nations Security Council’s (UNSC) forays into the role of women in peace and security. With the adoption of Resolution 1325 (2000) the UNSC stressed the importance of women in conflict resolution and prevention and the necessity of participation in peace negotiations, peace-keeping initiatives, and reconstruction in post-conflict societies. The resolution also obliged parties to protect women and girls from gender violence, specifying the necessity of special measures against sexual abuse and rape that are prevalent in armed conflict situations. In 2008, UNSC Resolution (UNSCR) 1820 was adopted, a significant development since it linked sexual violence to the maintenance of international peace and security. More specifically, UNSCR 1820 affirmed that effective steps to prevent and respond to such acts of violence “can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.” This resolution built upon UNSCR 1325 to reiterate the importance of women’s participation in peace-building, initiatives that were reaffirmed by the emphasis on accountability in UNSCR 1820 in 2008 and UNSCR 1888 and 1889 in 2009.

One of the most recent developments in regards to women’s empowerment is the creation of UN Women in 2010. The goal of the merging of four separate bodies of the UN is to pool resources together to ensure greater effectiveness and impact on policy outcomes. Its four main goals include: supporting inter-governmental bodies in policy and global standard formation, helping governments to implement standards, enhancing partnerships with civil groups, and monitoring the UN’s obligations to gender-specific commitments. While it is too early to assess this development, it clearly reflects the international community’s acknowledgment that women’s issues have moved from the periphery to the core of the organization’s activities.

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53 “Report on NGO Strategies to Implement UNSCR 1820,” supra note 25
54 “Report on NGO Strategies to Implement UNSCR 1820,” supra note 25
55 “Report on NGO Strategies to Implement UNSCR 1820,” supra note 25
56 Four Previous Branches: Division of the Advancement of Women, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, UN Development Fund for Women.
Concluding Remarks

There is little doubt that we have advanced a long way since the early days of the struggle to ensure female participation by focusing on the quest to secure the right to vote. Nowadays, there is a plethora of international and local women’s organizations constantly interacting across borders with governmental, intergovernmental, and other non-governmental entities, as well as a variety of institutional platforms from which to launch new campaigns for meaningful participation and sustainable empowerment.

To be sure, for women and girls in many parts of the world these goals remain elusive, and the task of establishing women’s rights as human rights still faces formidable challenges. As our case studies demonstrate, there are several factors that contribute to the ongoing difficulties that women and girls face. These include: patriarchal cultures, which sustain stereotypical views on gender roles with the concomitant adverse effects on educational and economic opportunities for young females; parallel legal systems, in which certain judicial and administrative processes are informed by traditional customs inimical to gender equality, especially in the areas of family and property law, as well as in the area of criminal law (particularly in its response to instances of sexual and gender-based violence); lack of adequate funding for civil society empowerment initiatives; and lack of proper assessment for ongoing empowerment initiatives that could lead to more effective program development. Needless to say, this is by no means an exhaustive list of such challenges to female participation. These difficulties notwithstanding, it is important to note that the interaction between global and local spaces is not unfolding in a normative vacuum; on the contrary, it is increasingly shaped by human rights ideas whose proponents seek to make them relevant in the local context, and, in turn, use the local understanding to inform the ongoing global conversation. It is becoming more and more difficult to insulate such efforts from global attention and this, in itself, is a cause for hope.

Case Study I: KOSOVO

Introduction

The Balkan region has suffered from a recurring history of wars and hostilities, which ceased with the end of the Kosovo war in June of 1999. Kosovo\textsuperscript{58} declared its independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008. Since then, it has been recognized by

\textsuperscript{58} Most place names in this Report are stated in both English and Albanian. However, because it would be cumbersome to refer to “Kosovo/Kosova” throughout the Article in light of the frequency with which I use the term, I will refer solely to “Kosovo” throughout, as is also common practice in the UN and other organizations. This choice is purely a pragmatic one and is not intended to have political or other implications.
91 countries,\(^{59}\) gained membership to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group. Kosovo’s population is estimated at 2.1 million, comprising 92% Albanians and 8% other ethnicities (Serb, Bosniak, Montenegrin, Gorani, Roma, Turk, Ashkali and Egyptian).\(^{60}\) Since 2008, the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX)\(^ {61}\) has been gradually taking over some core responsibilities from the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)\(^ {62}\) for police, judiciary, and customs duties. The context of crowded institutional players and complex social and political realities has made it even more difficult for the newly established Kosovo Government to preserve its presence and credibility within its borders in order to achieve its peace building goals and be recognized as an independent country in the international community.

It is important to note that Kosovo has one of the youngest populations in all of Europe. Over 50% of the population is under the age of 25, and about 21% of the people are between the ages of 15 and 25. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) led Kosovo Human Development Report of 2006 (KHDR 2006) was the foremost policy report that focused on the youth and stressed the problems this group faced following the conflict in 1999. The Report “examined the youth’s future roles in the Kosovo society and ways to strengthen their participation and influence on political and economic developments.”\(^ {63}\) It urges public institutions and authorities to establish

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\(^{60}\) CIA – The World Fact book, [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kv.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kv.html) (accessed February 21, 2012). The Gorani or Goranci are a South Slavic ethnic group inhabiting the Gora region of the Balkans, located at the triangle between Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. The Gorani speak the Gora dialect, which belongs to the Torlak group of South Slavic languages. They are adherents to Islam and have a rich and varied folk culture. In the last census organized during the previous century in the Former Yugoslavia, they defined themselves as Muslims; Gerlachlus Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*. C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2000, p. 27. The Ashkali and Egyptians are Albanian-speaking ethnic minorities (recognized communities) of Kosovo and Albania. Observers consider them Albanized Romanies, but they do not identify themselves as such. Prior to the Kosovo War of 1999, Albanized Roma registered themselves as Albanians. Nowadays, they are divided since they identify with two different groups, though they share Albanian traditions and language. [http://books.google.se/books?id=6C7w6q-VbQC](http://books.google.se/books?id=6C7w6q-VbQC) (accessed April 1, 2012).

\(^{61}\) One of EULEX’s main objectives was to build a map of the strengths and weaknesses in the rule of law area, in each and every part of the various institutions. The map, consisting of a thorough performance assessment of the rule of law system, was finalized in June 2009 leading the mission to the publication of a baseline. Based on the identified weaknesses in the baseline, small and medium scale projects were designed by EULEX advisors, in close partnership with their local counterparts. The primacy for the implementation of these remedial actions always stayed with the local rule of law institutions, so as to ensure their ownership over the Monitoring, Mentoring and Advising (MMA) process outputs. This is probably the most important part of the Mission mandate and where EULEX staff act alongside their Kosovo counterparts in their daily routines and duties. [http://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/en/news/000313.php](http://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/en/news/000313.php) (accessed April 1, 2012).

\(^{62}\) The mandate of UNMIK was established by the Security Council in its resolution 1244 (1999). [http://www.unmikonline.org/Pages/about.aspx](http://www.unmikonline.org/Pages/about.aspx) (accessed on March 30, 2012).

strong relations with young people, so their unique concerns are heard and addressed. KHDR 2006 also includes recommendations on how to increase youth inclusion in monitoring and decision making processes, as well as in the implementation of government policies. More specifically, the Report proposes that government officials, policy makers and donors develop strategies to reform the education and employment sectors. Similarly, KHDR 2006 recommends that all government institutions in Kosovo collaborate in the development of programs designed to increase employment opportunities for young people. Additional recommendations focus on how Kosovo institutions, with the support of the international community, are able to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of government initiatives to improve the lives of young people and what kind of support such institutions might provide.64

The Kosovo Government is responsible for building a better future for the youth. After KHDR 2006, the government improved the youth agenda by coming up with its priorities through the well-known “Platform of the 3 E’s with Education as a key component.” In addition, their commitment has also been reflected in the 2007 budget, whereby the funds for education increased by € 7 million. The Government also made significant steps in furthering youth policy with the drafting of the following three strategies: the Kosovo Youth Action Plan 2007-2010 (KYAP), the Youth Employment Action Plan 2007-2010 (YEAP), and the Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth. The Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth addresses the basic idea of participation and the importance of youth involvement in government. Some of the focal points covered in these frameworks are youth employment, the strengthening of youth Non-Profit Organizations, informal education, youth participation and integration and education and health prevention.66

Despite the abundance of governmental policies and NGOs working on youth and/or women’s empowerment issues, very few initiatives have focused primarily on young females. The role of girls’ participation in the peace building process is an essential component in the development and future stability of the region. Kosovo has received substantial resources to aid its recovery, including resources targeting youth, the creation of fundamental legal and policy foundations, but the topic has not received the necessary attention. This Section will examine some of the initiatives that have attempted to engage Kosovar young girls to participate in their community, taking into account challenges encountered and assessing shortcomings, as well as best practices to help improve the prospects for female empowerment.

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
The Kosovo Approach

KHDR 2006, KYAP 2007-2010, YEAP 2007-2010 in conjunction with the Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth are all early actions and building blocks in youth policy. More recently, as of June 2010, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports drafted the “Kosovo Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2010-2012 (KYAP 2010-2012), which addresses youth participation, education, employment, healthcare, safety, culture, and sport and recreation” matters among young people. KYAP 2010-2012 will build upon existing frameworks by establishing the National Youth Action Council (NYAC), as well as a co-managing council called the InterMinisterial Council.67

The Department of Youth (DoY) is a division within the Kosovo Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport primarily responsible for the following policy sub-areas within youth policy: (a) Youth participation and empowerment; (b) Youth employment; (c) Informal education for youth; (d) Health risks prevention among youth; and (e) Youth integration: crime risks prevention and minority participation. Parallel to governmental initiatives and policies, there are also many NGOs on the ground, which have established projects for young females. These programs serve as a testament of the capacity of the youth in accomplishing great and useful things in post-conflict situations and represent the potential of young people to do more with the appropriate encouragement and tools.68

Immediately following the war in 1999, numerous small NGOs were established for the purposes of helping female victims. Motrat Qiriazi (Qiriazi Sisters) was one of these groups that provided financial support to fifty girls in the Prizren and Mitrovica regions and one in Krushe e Vogel. Funds were allocated to bus fares and accommodations, so that they could attend school. Twenty five girls in the agricultural village of Krushe e Vogel have also been sponsored by being given driving courses to help them operate tractors. Another sixty women and girls completed a six-month professional course in sewing, which trained them in producing hospital sheets and repairing military uniforms for KFOR soldiers.69

The Kosova Women’s Network (KWN) is another acknowledged organization “whose mission is to support, protect and promote the rights and the interests of women and girls throughout Kosovo,” regardless of their political beliefs, religion, age, level of

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68 Ibid.
education, or ability. The Network helps females build their capacity to work effectively on behalf of their communities. Some of KWN's work includes mentoring and network support for Roma and Serbian women’s groups in Kosovo. KWN's mission includes the following: exchange of experience and information, partnership and networking, research, advocacy and service. Since its establishment in 2001, as an informal alliance of female organizations from all over Kosovo, it has grown into a key advocacy network on behalf of Kosovar women at the regional and international level. Representing the interests of more than 80 women’s organizations, KWN is a leader among civil society organizations in Kosovo.

KWN members contribute to changes in their communities by focusing on issues such as education, health, public participation, combating violence against women and human trafficking, economic development and support for people with special needs. They also provide diverse services to women and men in their communities, including: legal aid, counseling, training and information sharing. At bimonthly meetings, KWN member organizations link with stakeholders to explore new ways of cooperation. The network cooperates with local and international media to make female voices heard in regards to pertinent issues and influences governmental decision-making. KWN raises women’s awareness about their legal rights and includes them in identifying their policy priorities.

In addition, the network utilizes its website to empower and promote the successes of their member organizations to the international community and provide information about KWN advocacy campaigns. For example, in February of 2012, KWN released a statement to the press condemning the gender discrimination culture in Kosovo. The statement identified the importance of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) organization, an association that has organized numerous activities that have had considerable impact in addressing important issues and problems in Kosovo’s society. YIHR’s 2011 Report reflected a summary of activities conducted by the Initiative, which were structured into the following programmes: (1) Human Rights Programme; (2) Regional Cooperation and Dealing with the Past Programme; (3) Youth Programme: Education and Activism; and (4) Small Grants Programme. The Small Grants Programme gave a $5,000 grant to support the Women’s Committee for Human Rights Protection in helping girls in the small city of Fushë Kosova. Although KWN produces a series of annual reports, the latest report found was from 2010. Therefore, the website needs to be updated more frequently. Another criticism of the organization is the lack of an

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71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
independent assessment of their activities, which would give the Network a different perspective in identifying and implementing their future objectives and goals.

YIHR in Kosovo with the support of the Balkan Trust for Democracy (BTD) and the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS) recently processed applications for the third generation of the Young Leaders School that was held from February through April 2012, in the capital of Prishtina, Kosovo. The School offers lectures by issue-area specialists, insightful discussions, workshops on specific topics, social and cultural activities, and study visits. The School is part of YIHR Kosovo’s Education Umbrella Program. Its objectives are to develop the critical thinking capacities of the young generation with regard to social, political and cultural concepts. YIHR accomplishes its objectives by providing students with a foundational knowledge on democratic politics and developing practical skills required for the implementation of a progressive agenda in professional life, or in other social activities. The central interest of the School is in providing opportunities for ongoing discussion and learning about important topics to the generation of the “young leaders,” opportunities rarely provided by the formal education system. The program of Young Leaders School consists of 7 modules: (1) Human Rights and Democracy; (2) Rule of Law and Transitional Justice; (3) Participatory Democracy; (4) Stereotypes and Prejudices: Media Influence; (5) Nation, Nationalism and Identity; (6) European Integration: Values; and (7) Academic Writing.\textsuperscript{75}

In terms of rural-based initiatives, there is an Adult Basic Education and Learning for Girls and Women Project managed by MEST with support from UNICEF. The objectives of this project are as follows: train illiterate women in basic literacy, numeracy and other topics relevant to their life; identify girls not attending school and provide support for girls to return to school; develop the framework for future development of Early Childhood Development; and train monitors and facilitators for improving the overall quality of the training. As a result of this program, networks of 130 training centers have been established throughout Kosovo.\textsuperscript{76}

KWN works with approximately 80 members’ associations spread throughout Kosovo. Some of the local partnership organizations working on female youth initiatives are the following: (1) Alma (Association for the Emancipation of Women Pec-Kosovo); (2) The Association for the Education and Family Welfare\textsuperscript{77}; (3) Women’s Association "SARA"; (4) Zana; (5) Lulebora; (6) Education and Family Care in Gjakova; (7) Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (KRCT); (8) Ruka+Ruc; (9) Violete; (10) Women’s Wellness Center; and (11) Women for Women with Disabilities. Some of the different issue areas these organizations focus on are: strengthening capacity of


\textsuperscript{77} Formally known as the Association for the Welfare of Women and the Youth [Albanian translation: ish-Qendra Per Mbrojtjen e Grave Dhe Femijeve (QMGF) – Prishtine] [DEGA Gjakove]
women and girls in the community; enhancing political participation and educational advancements; empowering minority ethnic groups; training in literacy and skills for both urban and rural areas; re-integration of victims of rape during the war; support for non-discrimination in the workplace; protection against violence; family planning; providing contraceptive tools; prevention of HIV/AIDS and drugs; economic empowerment; and re-socialization of trafficking victims. Much of the commendable work that has been completed is limited by the external financial resources and internal staff capacity at the time, which varies from organization to organization. Many of the above organizations need to work together, as well as publish their findings in independent annual reports and provide an assessment as to the efficiency and reach of their projects.

There are many international actors assisting the youth programs in Kosovo. One program funded by the U.S. Department of State and the Cleveland Council on World Affairs is the Kosovo Youth Exchange Program (KYEP), which provides 16 high school students from Kosovo with the opportunity to live and study in the U.S. for the 2012/2013 academic year. Particular goals of the exchange program are as follows: to develop an awareness of how a multi-cultural society can function successfully; become engaged with U.S. culture and improve English language proficiency; strengthen appreciation for and devotion to volunteerism and community service; expand leadership and communication skills and build a foundation of commonalities between people of the U.S. and Kosovo. By the end of the school year, the expected results are empowering students with an increased ability to be leaders of their communities, cultivating their devotion and commitment to volunteerism and community service and developing understanding between Kosovo and American youth.\(^7\) KYEP offers great potential for the Kosovar youth as it provides the means and resources to study abroad. However, the initiative should provide more quantitative data on the gender balance as well as analysis on the way in which it has empowered Kosovo students, especially girls for the future.

The youth of Kosovo face an uncertain future in terms of finding jobs. Kosovo has an estimated 45% unemployment rate. Many Kosovo youth simply leave the country when they find an opportunity, depriving the next generation of people with drive, skills and talent. Another project that is attempting to bridge the youth unemployment deficit is a USAID initiative called Kosovo Private Enterprise Program. The USAID project has created internships in an attempt to improve young peoples’ on-the-job skills, interviewing techniques and contacts with potential employers. More than 650 students from the University of Pristina have participated in four separate internship programs, such as accounting and finance, wood processing, a cross-cutting or interdisciplinary program, and a dairy program. Out of 650 students, approximately 251

were offered jobs. Unfortunately, the program does not provide information as to how many of them were female to properly evaluate its extent of success.

Forum Syd Kosovo Programme is another initiative which began in 2009 and is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency. The program is geared towards improving the youth situation in Kosovo, in conjunction with the aims of the KYAP 2007-2010 focusing on the fulfillment of three out of six areas of intervention: youth participation, formal and informal education, and human security. Recognizing inequalities and discrimination in Kosovo, Forum Syd targets young women and minority groups, as well as works with mainstream youth to challenge stereotypes. It strives to achieve these goals by strengthening and supporting young people to claim their rights, actively increasing participation in decision making processes and improving understanding of informal education and community youth work. The program undertakes these aims through various local initiatives and activities such as: (1) strengthening targeted partner organizations to become member-based organizations, advocating for the rights of young people in order to meet and respond to youth issues and needs and encouraging increased youth participation in decision-making processes; (2) developing community youth work practice following the quality assurance of youth work standards; (3) improving inter-ethnic and cross-community contacts and networking between youth organizations; (4) empowering targeted youth organizations and targeted youth officials to identify needs, develop, participate in and monitor implementation of youth policies at local and national levels; (5) providing courses on leadership and community youth work for the targeted partner organizations and targeted youth officials; (6) establishing a functioning pool of graduating trainers; and (7) promoting the overall youth worker profession in Kosovo.

Challenges to Girls’ Participation

Kosovo’s population is mainly rural, though the last decade has seen a dramatic migration toward urban areas (about 60% of population is considered rural and 40% urban). Because of these demographics, there are two conflicting views (the rural traditional and the urban progressive) in their perceptions of societal gender roles. As a result, challenges related to political, economic and social development during the ongoing transition period are the first and foremost obstacles of the young females, who are the future workers, business owners, parents, citizens and leaders of the country.

81 Ibid.
Lack of participation, however, is not unique to youth, as it is relatively low among the entire population. According to the 2011 UNDP Public Pulse Report II, Kosovo’s participation index is 0.13 (as opposed to 0.24 in November 2010), meaning that the public participation in Kosovo’s political and civic life is very low. Indeed, when broken down by gender, the average participation index seems to be significantly higher for males (0.18) than it is for females (0.07). Despite general progress made in women’s empowerment, such as the president of the country being the first female president, young women still face three main challenges to participation: cultural norms about societal roles, low levels of education, and lack of economic security (including property ownership).

Women and girls are not participating equally and effectively in politics, decision making and society because of the stereotypical views on gender roles. Traditional social views towards women in a male-dominated society contribute to the high-level of domestic abuse and low number of reported cases. It is estimated that 22.7% of women and girls are perceived as subjected to discrimination. A causal factor is the patriarchal culture that does not generally see women and girls as political decision-makers. As a result, women have been denied a seat at the table in crucial negotiations regarding Kosovo’s political status. Thus, the special needs of women following the war have been largely ignored, especially of those who were subjected to rape, and/or suffered the loss of loved ones and significant financial losses.

The patriarchal culture in many areas in Kosovo is a reason that leads to a vicious cycle of low levels of education and economic insecurity. Girls have a higher drop-out rate than boys after the first nine years of schooling, and this rate increases especially in rural areas and among minorities. In the urban setting, young women are significantly improving their educational capacities for the most part. However, there is work discrimination and traditional pressure from the family to get married and start families. These pressures are emphasized especially in rural communities that are often far from schools and lack the resources to support educational endeavors. Consequently, women are three times more likely to be illiterate than men and more likely to be unemployed. Even though Kosovo has reached significant progress, especially considering that it is only four years old, additional work is needed in educating the males and families to respect the role of their mothers, wives, sisters and children.

86 UNDP Public Pulse Report 2, supra note 83.
87 Kosova Women’s Network Annual 2010 Report, supra note 84.
In Kosovo today, there are a number of conflicting parallel judicial systems that claim sole jurisdiction over the province. One system was established by UNMIK following the end of the war, while another is maintained by the government of Serbia, the remnants of the courts that existed before the NATO bombing in 1999. Moreover in 2008, EULEX steadily began to take over the objectives of the former two systems. Additionally, within these legal systems lay a complex set of gender-driven traditional customs that have had an indirect effect in impeding girls’ empowerment initiatives. The mixture of parallel courts and customs presents a transitional justice challenge that is crucial to rebuilding Kosovo's post-conflict society. On one level, the existence of the parallel courts is a demonstration of the ongoing political dispute over sovereignty. Secondly, the parallel courts also “represent an extreme example of the legal pluralism that has developed in the area.”

Finally, the lack of any mutual recognition of judgments has created legal chaos for the people who depend on them. Conflicting judgments have been issued in civil cases, and criminal defendants are subject to prosecution and punishment in both systems. Furthermore, the conflicting situation of crowded institutional players and complex social and political realities have made it even more difficult for women and girls to voice their thoughts and concerns, and improve their overall representation in all aspects of domestic, as well as professional life.

Kosovo has a very high unemployment rate. Unemployment is considerably higher among women, 55%, compared to 39% unemployment among men. Moreover, youth unemployment, 72% in Kosovo, is five times higher than the average within the European Union, a particular cause for concern considering that Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe. Women are employed primarily in agriculture, wholesale/retail trade, education, health, and social work. Many families that suffered the loss of the bread earner in the household, traditionally a male, are left in poverty because of the lack of employment opportunities. Without economic security and financial independence, decision-making power is limited.

Kosovo’s young people and the untapped potential of women are potentially powerful allies in the battle against social exclusion. Young people in particular have more flexible attitudes towards traditional gender and social roles, are more predisposed to link with each other across ethnic, cultural and gender boundaries, and have the greatest stake in Kosovo’s future. The creation of a non-violent, peaceful Kosovo, which values the rule of law and the rights and equality of all, is ultimately in the hands of youth.

90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
Conclusion

While the creation of legal and policy frameworks can be considered as among the major successes of post-war recovery and rehabilitation for the youth, much more is needed. Kosovo young females have significant needs. Increased interventions are needed to reach girls who lack sufficient financial support. Also, given the level of violence in the past and the cultural challenges in Kosovo, much work needs to be done for all young people. Civil society actors are critical in the effort to define and uphold democratic principles, including human rights, gender equality, tolerance and non-violence. This development needs to go beyond the engagement of young people in political party activities, or individualized skills-building to strengthen community-based activism. Education and skills-training for adolescents and young adults that are linked to comprehensive economic recovery and development plans must be prioritized.\footnote{Jane Lowicki, supra note 69.}

In achieving desirable outcomes for young female participation, there must be continued cooperation and coordination between the government and civil society. In addition, mobilization of different initiatives, monitoring of resources available, and assessment reports on the positive and negative impacts are required in order to move forward. Placing young female concerns at the center of addressing the multitude of problems in Kosovo will contribute to stability and the prevention of further rights violations.

Case Study II: LIBERIA

Introduction

Liberia’s history constitutes one of Africa’s most unique cases. The country was created by freed American Slaves in the 1940’s. After a Military Coup in the 1980s, Liberia witnessed consecutive civil wars, which devastated the country and transformed its socio-political agenda.\footnote{The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Liberia to the United Nations. http://www.liberia-un.org (accessed March 1, 2012).} Eight years after the end of the conflict, the country is still in the rebuilding process, but despite a tumultuous past, Liberia has made important strides over the last ten years, particularly with respect to post-conflict peace building; in addition, Liberia has made significant improvements with regards to women’s involvement in all sectors of society. Furthermore, although there were many challenges encountered throughout its pursuit of peace-building, Liberia remains one of Africa’s prime examples for achieving sustainable peace in ways that include participatory roles for women and girls. In 2011, the country received a special award for its accomplishments toward the goal of gender equality.\footnote{Peace Women. “Liberia Wins African Gender Award.” http://www.peacewomen.org/news_article.php?id=2903&type=news (accessed March 3, 2012).} As part of a National
Action Plan (NAP), the Government of Liberia (GoL), along with the UN, civil society organizations and partnering international institutions launched significant inclusive bottom-up approaches to implement UNSC 1325.

Discussions on devising a NAP began in 2007 with the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the Gender Ministry, International Alert and the Liberian Women’s Initiative, and later the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN- INSTRAW). These bodies held local-level dialogues throughout Liberia, allowing rural women to identify their priorities that were then incorporated into the NAP. Additionally, the 1325 Steering Committee, created by the government through the Gender Ministry, ensured that the Plan was all encompassing, covering a number of different priorities and needs and in alignment with already existing policy frameworks in Liberia, in addition to providing insight and accountability.

Realizing that women play a vital role in conflict situations, one of the NAP’s four key pillars mandates that women have an inclusive participatory role in the post-conflict reconstruction of the country. Recently, Liberia has taken its pursuit of gender equity and peace building to the next level, aiming at youth involvement, specifically girls. This section will look at Liberia’s integrated approach to peace building, highlighting its local and national initiatives, and assessing the successes and challenges of its national movement to ensure girls’ participation.

The Liberian Approach: National Initiatives and Key Stakeholders

Liberia is internationally recognized as a leader in women’s rights and empowerment and has made significant strides in that direction. The country’s pioneering feminist government, with a female Head of State, has played an important role in shifting gender roles to include more female involvement. President Johnson-Sirleaf has increased the number of women participating in government, appointed a woman as the head of the police commission, and has launched national initiatives to empower women and young females. A 2002 law, the New Education Law of Liberia, stipulates that the Ministry of Education must institute and design special policies and programs that aim at increasing girls’ educational opportunities. The Ministry’s creation of a

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National Policy on Girls’ Education, together with UNICEF/Liberia, aims at bridging the gender disparity gap in Liberia’s formal education system. Its goals are aimed at ensuring girls’ equal access to education, reducing their dropout rates, enhancing performance through incentives, and increasing enrollment and literacy. The implementation completion of this policy is set for 2015, and is part of a nationwide awareness campaign. It also includes capacity building in schools and learning centers, and the allocation of additional resources to schools to support girls.\textsuperscript{101}

The Ministry of Gender and Development and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) launched another important initiative, the Accelerated Learning Program, in 2005. The ALP was devised to equip young girls with life-skills training, and includes lessons on assertiveness, protection, hygiene and reproductive health. Though this program was not fully implemented nationwide in all schools, the objective behind it was crucial as it demonstrated Liberia’s commitment to progressive gender roles. More importantly, the plan was part of a nation-wide policy initiative to be implemented at a very local level and aimed as personal development and confidence, both vital for exercising agency.\textsuperscript{102}

Female participation in the country’s economic development remains a strategic investment for the Liberian government. Increasing young females’ employment is one of the ways to accomplish this. Under the Joint Program on Youth Employment and Empowerment, the Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG) is a pilot project aimed at doing just this. The program aims at increasing employment rates amongst young females, ages 16-27, over the next three years. The 2010 project began in selected regions, and is supported by a number of stakeholders, including the President, the World Bank as part of its global Adolescent Girls Initiative, the Nike Foundation and the Government of Denmark. The Ministry of Gender Development, in addition to several international organizations, however, is leading the implementation efforts.\textsuperscript{103} As of 2011, 1250 young girls and women were trained in the following areas as part of the EPAG program: business, job skills, hospitality, driving, office/computer skills, professional cleaning/waste management, security guard services and house painting. All of these participants acquired savings accounts at local banks, and 85% of these girls have transitioned to employment.\textsuperscript{104}

In 2010, a bill, the Gender Equity in Politics Act 2010, seeking to increase women’s political participation and representation, was sponsored by the Women Legislative

Caucus and was introduced in the Liberian legislature. Though the bill was later defeated, the introduction of the bill signifies the country’s attempts to change the degree to which women are involved in politics, and, though it was designed for women, it would have set the stage for the girls and young females preparing to enter the field. Women Peace and Security Network Africa (WIPSEN Africa), a women-led pan African organization created in 2006 under Ghanaian law, has continued to host and sponsor conferences, workshops and trainings for young women throughout Africa. In the last three years, WIPSEN has hosted a number of events geared specifically towards raising political awareness among Liberian girls.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

Despite the global efforts of key stakeholders working on Women, Peace and Security issues, there remain some deficiencies in the monitoring dimension of all these initiatives. Overall, most NAPs only rhetorically recognize the importance of establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Liberia’s NAP is amongst the most comprehensive, with specific foci in terms of systematic strategies, time frame reporting, benchmarks and monitoring indicators. There is a provision in the NAP for an interim and final progress report by the end of the implementation phase (2009-2012). In addition, the Civil Society Monitoring Observatory (CSMO) was established to act as a watchdog and produce a shadow monitoring report by 2013. Furthermore, the Gender Ministry established a 1325 Secretariat, whose primary task is to monitor the implementation of 1325.

Currently, the Revised NAP (2011-2015), also referred to as Phase II of the NAP, is being implemented. The decision for a revision came after an assessment in 2010, which revealed that there were still issues that needed to be addressed regarding the prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). According to the text, the purpose of Phase II is to “prevent Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in a systematic and comprehensive manner” and is organized around five new pillars—Psychosocial, Health, Legal/Justice, Protection and Coordination— with additional stakeholders and partners, including governmental and non-governmental.

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Changes in the revised NAP account for monitoring and evaluation deficiencies experienced during Phase I of the Plan. Phase II’s Pillars will be monitored by Pillar leads and the findings will be reported to a GBV Unit and a Taskforce. The GBV Unit will monitor the mechanisms on a quarterly basis, according to the new Plan, and an annual work plan developed from the NAP will be used as the benchmark against which to measure progress. There will also be three evaluation reports, one of which will be done annually, a midterm report and a final report. The findings of the final report will be shared with stakeholders in a policy dialogue to determine how to move forward.

A Bottom up Approach: Peace Huts

Liberia incorporates contemporary gender ideals with traditional conflict resolution approaches in what they call “Peace Huts,” or Palava Huts. Though Peace Huts were not created as a result of 1325, their function is relevant to the post-conflict peace building context, as they constitute a grassroots approach to community mediation that rests heavily on women’s participation.

These Peace Huts provide women with the space to have active roles in society at the local level. These peace huts resurfaced as a means for communities and local women to become involved in addressing SGBV, as well as other issues. Most importantly, they enable and empower the women by providing them with the secure reflective space to discuss their issues. According to the CSM 2011 report, “because they are more vocal on women’s issues, they have sensitized the community on women’s issues and people tend to see them as peace-builders and peacemakers.” Additionally, Peace Huts are regarded as alternatives to the inherently weak justice system that remains an impediment to Liberia’s overall progress.

Highlights: Girl Specific Initiatives in Liberia and the Challenges

The CYE began as a Liberian refugee Center at the Buduburam Refugee Camp in Ghana. The Center recently moved all of its programs to Liberia in 2008, although with budget constraints. The Center’s Women Empowerment Program, designed to help girls and young women search for better alternatives to the typical post-conflict life, (avoiding prostitution and instilling self-reliance) provided the girls with training in tie-dye, sewing, HIV/AIDS and pregnancy education and counseling. Additionally, the girls were given basic education on female circumcision, gender equality and encouraged to stay in school.

109 Ibid.  
Moreover, WISPEN Africa has sponsored a number of seminars and conferences intended to increase political awareness and education in the lives of young women. While these initiatives do signify attempts to increase overall political awareness and involvement, and ultimately empowerment, the lack of follow-up reports or impact evaluations remains the primary shortcoming of these initiatives. For example, WIPSEN’s Liberia National Leadership Conference, Training for Trainers, and its Regional and Sub-Regional Dialogue Conferences, all designed with young female empowerment at the top of the agenda, appear to be promising attempts on behalf of the organization; however, without follow-up assessments to properly evaluate the impact of these projects on the lives of the participating girls, the credibility and validity of these programs remain uncertain.

One WIPSEN Liberia project that appears to have much potential and could be implemented elsewhere is the Young Girl Leadership Seminar and Political Participation seminar, which is designed to “engage young women to participate in the upcoming national election as constitutional right and responsibility”. WIPSEN highlighted that the objective of the seminar was to underscore the importance of young women’s political participation. However, the number of girls who participated in this program and actually voted in the last election remains unknown. Hence, the overall effectiveness is also unknown. That said, other countries wishing to empower girls by raising political awareness on the local and national levels, and attempting to do so through such projects, need to ensure that evaluation mechanisms are in place. Without ascertaining the efficacy of these initiatives, governments and NGOs that invest in these projects run the risk of misusing limited funding, as well as relying on futile methodologies.

Obstacles and Challenges

A Civil Society Monitoring Report from 2011 reveals that despite Liberia’s advances over the years, the country still lags behind when it comes to justice for victims of sexual violence. A list of ongoing problems, including the low rate of prosecution of rape cases, a shortage of social workers in health facilities to support victims of Gender Based Violence, and a high number of rape cases being dismissed, point to shortcomings in the justice system itself. Liberia recognized this weakness and last year launched a monitoring pilot project with Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET). The purpose of the project is to enable follow-ups on SGBV cases handled in court. As part of the monitoring, WIPNET sends two of its members to sit in and follow the court cases, which signifies a major advancement in the way monitoring was previously carried out.

113 According to this CSM report, previous attempts to monitor courts were limited because they were dependent on community members bringing specific cases to light.
Another primary challenge for Liberia and other post-conflict countries that are implementing ways to effectively build peace with the inclusion of women and girls lie in funding. NGOs, in particular, face this challenge head on because of the limited funding available. A number of different solutions have been proposed to strengthen Liberia’s civil society organizations, including government funding. But this remains controversial, with many fearing that this may undermine the independence and credibility of the NGOs.

Additionally, pervasive cultural norms, like female genital circumcision, are often seen as an impediment to female empowerment. The fact that some young girls lack the ability to choose to take part in this practice signifies the existence of severe constraints in exercising agency. When such practices are administered, girls are often immobile for long periods of time, thus hindering their ability to attend school and work. According to the UN Human Right Council, the Government continues to engage the local community in order to determine the best approaches to the issue.¹¹⁴

As mentioned earlier, the slow rate of administering justice for SGBV against women and girls is also an impediment to women’s empowerment and effective peace building overall. Sexual violence can and often does have long-lasting social and psychological effects on victims. The lack of punishment for offenders can also have a psychological impact on the victims who look to the government and the criminal justice system for justice and healing. However, Liberia continues to look for and pursue ways to address this problem.

Lastly, despite the increase in female participation, power is still concentrated at the top and with the elite. Furthermore, initiatives to increase female empowerment and education still remain a privilege for some and not a right for everyone. For example, the plight of rural girls, who are not yet in school despite national plans to increase access to education for young Liberian females, has received scant attention. Many of the initiatives launched by WIPSEN are set up in such a way that only girls who are already in school can reap the corresponding benefits, and do not include girls who are not in school.

Case Study III: PALESTINE

Introduction

Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, there have been continuous tensions between Israel and Palestine. This stems from competing understandings on how to peacefully coexist. Among Israeli and Palestinian populations, there is a widespread belief that both governments have not been making the progress necessary for peace in the region. Israel feels that its security is a stake, while Palestinians feel that they have been denied their right to self-determination. Since Palestinian and Israeli governments do not have a common solution, they have not found an effective means of attaining peace.

The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict has made evident that none of the two governments fully reflect the views of their citizens. With frustration building over the inability to reach a sustainable solution from above, interesting initiatives are emerging from below. Younger generations have developed a new attitude towards a solution that has not been seriously considered before - coexistence. With male-dominated Arab and Jewish cultures, women in Palestine and Israel have had minimal engagement in public affairs. The patriarchal culture has confined women and young females to the private sphere. Many third parties have attempted to bring together Jewish and Arab youth, especially girls, in order to design a more productive solution towards peace. In order to understand the Palestinian progression in female youth participation, it is important to explore the initiatives, the challenges, and the long-term effectiveness of such initiatives.

Creativity for Peace and Seeds of Peace

Two of the most renowned peace initiatives led by third parties are Creativity for Peace and Seeds of Peace:

Creativity for Peace is committed to building peace relations and coexistence in order to create the next generation of female leaders and Peacemakers in Palestine and Israel. According to the Mission Statement, they “nurture understanding and leadership in Palestinian and Israeli adolescent girls and women so that they take on significant roles in their families, communities, and countries that advance peaceful coexistence.”¹¹⁵ The girls from Israel and Palestine meet in a 3-week summer camp in New Mexico where they participate in specific programs:

Facilitated dialogue – The girls participate in hours of dialogue, which helps them to create friendships, build trust, and better understand those on the other side of the

conflict, as well as develop the necessary leadership skills for their own communities. The dialogue helps to shatter stereotypes of the “enemy” and to encourage understanding instead of distrust.\textsuperscript{116}

Art – Every afternoon, an art program is led by professional art therapists in which the girls participate in a number of projects that promote self-expression, alleviation of pain, and cooperation.\textsuperscript{117}

Communication – Once they return home, they maintain and strengthen their friendships through emails and regular gatherings, creating a friendly form of communication uncommon to the region and one that would not have existed otherwise. Furthermore, another program allows former campers to serve as junior counselors to further develop their own leadership skills.\textsuperscript{118}

In addition, Seeds of Peace, another organization, founded in 2003, is dedicated to empowering young leaders from regions of conflict with the leadership skills required to advance reconciliation and coexistence. It now has over 5,000 seeds and educators from Middle Eastern countries, including Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, and Israel.\textsuperscript{119} According to the organization’s website, “Since 1993, Seeds of Peace has set the standard in international peace building by providing exceptional young people and educators from regions of conflict with an otherwise impossible opportunity to meet their historic enemies face-to-face at a camp outside of each of their respective countries.” A typical day in camp consists of 90 minutes of facilitated dialogue between the youth, swimming, collective activities, and meals.\textsuperscript{120} Seeds of Peace has also advanced their program by producing a Charter on Uprooting Hatred and Terror, co-authored by over 120 seeds. This charter serves as a declaration of principles of peace, coexistence, and understanding by which each child is to live when he/she returns home.\textsuperscript{121}

A “Model Schools Initiative” — Seeds of Peace has geared each of its programs towards nurturing an environment of peaceful resolutions, effective communication, tolerance, respect, and civic engagement. Because these concepts must be encouraged particularly among the youth, Seeds of Peace has centered many of its efforts toward teaching tolerance in Israeli and Palestinian schools. The programs carefully selected Palestinian

\textsuperscript{116} Creativity for Peace Programs. \url{http://www.creativityforpeace.com/about/programs.html}, (accessed February 15, 2012).
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Creativity for Peace, FAQ: What happens at the summer camp? \url{http://www.creativityforpeace.com/about/faqs.html} (accessed February 28, 2012).
\textsuperscript{121} Seeds of Peace Charter on Uprooting Hatred and Terror. \url{http://www.seedsofpeace.org/?page_id=1317} (accessed March 2, 2012).
and Israeli educators who are committed to introducing these ideas and methods into their school systems and are committed to spreading these concepts to others. Thus, more educators begin to support incorporating dialogue, peaceful learning environments, respect for the opinions of others, non-violent resolutions to conflict, and civic responsibility into their agendas. In order to equip these educators with the proper skills necessary to create a truly peaceful environment, Seeds of Peace conducts workshops on topics such as communication skills, active learning, mechanisms for coping with and mitigating violence in schools, drama as a tool for self-expression, cross-cultural understanding, leadership and civic engagement, and peer mediation and community service. Through this, the educators develop more practical skills and tools to transform their schools. Although there have not been any external assessments of this program, Seeds of Peace has claimed some success. According to the organization’s website, a Palestinian school principal and participant in the Model Schools Initiative said: “My team and I faced many obstacles, but the workshops gave us ideas to build on our plans ...We were successful. The Prime Minister honored our project, and it is in a book of examples for other schools.”

Assessments

In 2010, Seeds of Peace collaborated with behavioral science researchers at the University Of Chicago Booth School Of Business to evaluate its program. Through surveys, they determined the ninety-four percent of Palestinians and Israelis reported having minimal contact with each other before the camp; of those who reported contact, only very few portrayed it positively. Furthermore, almost all the campers agreed that the most important tools for peace are developing the abilities to listen and understand the others perspective- skills they improved at camp. Ninety three percent of these seeds expressed a desire to continue the endeavor through peace-related action in their communities.

Although many of these programs have been effective in reaching youth and in encouraging political awareness and participation, there are many challenges that have acted as barriers to further success. The main challenges with each of these programs include developing ways to allow the children to feel comfortable in their environments when spending every day for several weeks with people they have always thought of as their enemies. These young women must now openly express their one-sided understandings of each other and must learn to set aside these differences with the common goal of achieving peace. In the process of doing so, many of these girls begin to analyze and assess their views about the other side of the conflict and learn to become more tolerant and understanding. Although these programs are considered successful

in theory, one can question the impact a few weeks of “coexistence” away from home can really have, when the participants return to these war-torn environments. Moreover, under these male-dominated cultures, the involvement of women in politics is a new phenomenon indeed for both Palestinian and Israeli societies.

Another difficulty with the work of these non-profit organizations is securing funding. Both camps are located in the United States and pay for most of the participants’ travel and stay at the camp, including food, activities, and supplies. The funds are collected through donors who support the programs both financially and personally. These donors contribute to the overall success of the program, along with other stakeholders such as the founders, staff, and volunteers. Furthermore, very few of these organizations have the tools to properly evaluate their programs.

Other Initiatives

The Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activism (PYALARA) is a non-profit Palestinian youth organization founded to promote the leadership of Palestinians living in Israel. Through lobbying, activism, media, and informal education, PYALARA strives to inform them of their rights as equal citizens, centered on a discussion of democracy and civic engagement.124

The Wellbeing Program: employs psycho-social counseling and other activities that give youth a better understanding of their communities and advocates changes in the political, psychosocial, and physical wellbeing through local initiatives and the use of the media. According to the organization’s website, “The program approach has yielded positive results in terms of effectively engaging youth in community development and fostering personal and professional growth among youth.”

Goals and short-term results:
1. The Wellbeing program implements an advocacy campaign for the establishment of a school and student insurance program, which resulted in bringing public attention to the subject and an announcement by the Minister of Health that a program will soon be implemented.
2. Several initiatives in the development of a student fund.

Media Program: Through PYALARA’s media program, coupled with the wellbeing program, the students involved have been able to utilize the media as an outlet to express their concerns, while simultaneously advocating change and improving artistic and writing skills.

Print Media: Through collaboration with The Youth Times, a Palestinian youth newspaper, PYALARA encouraged young Palestinians to use the media as a platform to

express key issues of concern. For over six years, hundreds of youth have been trained in the use of the print media as a platform for advocacy and change.

Results:
1. Through a study and subsequent article about the troubles children face in school, the Minister of Higher Education released a statement on the reform of these common concerns.
2. Palestinian youth have been more actively engaged in political, social, economic, and cultural discourse.

Visual media: since Palestinian television is almost entirely focused on the dire political situation, children have no outlet to express themselves and often end up turning away from politics, rather than becoming engaged. As a result, PAYALARA, in cooperation with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), launched a weekly TV show called “allisottak” (speak up) for young Palestinians about their rights and responsibilities. The youth have taken part in every aspect of the production, and have placed particular emphasis on the importance of youth participation. Furthermore, PAYALARA has piloted two other TV shows about life in Palestine and about ways to cope with daily hardships; one of these shows won two awards for ‘best production’.

Results and Challenges

In 2007, PAYALARA conducted a survey of about 200 of its members, volunteers, and other beneficiaries. However, PAYALARA was not satisfied with the results because it felt that they did not adequately credit the successes of the organization, or address its failures. PAYALARA would like to create a more sustainable tool to assess its work by training its own employees to conduct these evaluations. However, in order to do so, PAYALARA would need to secure more funding which would provide the necessary resources to conduct long-term evaluations. Furthermore, PAYALARA realizes the need to develop relationships with other organizations and exchange knowledge and expertise. Thus, boosting resources and developing a stronger network among organizations constitute priority areas for PYALARA.125

Another organization involved in these issues is Baladna, an Arab youth organization, whose mission is “to give Arab youth in Israel a non-partisan, comfortable forum for youth activities and informal education, centering on a discussion of identity. A registered non-profit organization, Baladna aims to strengthen Arab youth's understanding of democracy and gender equality, to foster pluralism and tolerance, and to enable a discussion and debate about Arab Palestinian history, grievances and culture.”126

Baladna’s Youth Leadership Program addresses the challenges faced by Palestinians living in Israel and provides tools to deal with these issues through community awareness and civic engagement.

According to the organization’s annual report, currently there are 11 youth groups in several cities and villages and more than 180 direct and indirect youth participant beneficiaries. In addition, many young people are involved in practical work on the ground dealing with real issues of vital concern to their communities.\(^{127}\)

In addition, *I Speak Clear Arabic*, Baladna’s language campaign, emphasizes the importance of the preservation of the original Arabic language. This is especially important for Palestinian youth living in Israel, who have integrated Hebrew words into Arabic, hence leading to the weakening of Palestinian culture and identity.

Last, but not least, there is Baladna’s *Palestinian Youth Bridging Project*: The bridging project serves as an informal educational initiative centered on the continuing sufferings of the Palestinian people. It includes trips to refugee camps all over Palestine and electronic meetings with youth in Lebanon’s refugee camps.

**Conclusion**

Each one of these organizations includes a dedicated board of directors who have joined their respective organizations to further develop their own interests and take part in what they believe is an important step towards achieving piece and self-determination. Perhaps the most essential stakeholders, however, are the Palestinian and Israeli communities and governments. Each one of these programs aims to change one or more aspects of Palestinian and Israeli societies. PAYALARA, for example targets the media, education, and the attitudes of the youth; Baladna, specifically aims at empowering Palestinians, living as minorities in Israel, through civic engagement. On the other hand, Creativity for Peace and Seeds of Peace, as third parties and outside programs, adopt a more impartial approach to problem solving by encouraging coexistence. Through these initiatives, some of the youth are gradually developing a more comprehensive perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict, while others are working on ways to promote community empowerment.

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