

**WOMEN'S ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING:  
NICARAGUA, EL SALVADOR, AND GUATEMALA COMPARED**

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## ABSTRACT

Peacebuilding has become increasingly important as a means of preventing continuing hostilities among previously warring factions. Traditional peacebuilding strategies to date have included activities that strive to address challenges related to security, governance, relief, development, and reconciliation with the goal of curbing potential volatile situations from once again becoming full-fledged conflicts. However, peacebuilding strategies or designs have not fully recognized the particular needs of women and have not acknowledged the significance of women's contributions to peacebuilding in war-torn communities. In Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala women responded to this marginalization by initiating unique peacebuilding mechanisms and making space for themselves during the process of rebuilding.

This analysis therefore begins with an analysis of traditional peacebuilding, introducing four areas that have been identified as important during peacebuilding, and outlining some of the concerns, problems and limitations that plague the peacebuilding process in the post-war setting. It then turns to an examination of women's role in peacebuilding in three case studies, namely Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala.

This study is significant because it demonstrates that women have played an integral role in the peacebuilding process in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. While marginalized from traditional peacebuilding processes, women's experiences and knowledge building peace post-conflict have the potential to contribute to an improved and more inclusive peacebuilding design that may result in increased effectiveness for future operations.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AMES	Asociacion de Mujeres en Solidaridad
AMNLAE	Luisa Amanda Espinosa Women's Association
AMPRONAC	Asociacion de Mujeres Nacional Luisa Amanda Espinoza
CONAVIGUA	National Coordinating Committee of Guatemalan Women
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
FMLN	Farabundo Marti de Liberacion Nacional
FSLN	Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional
GAM	Mutual Support Group
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IXCHEN	Centro de La Mujeres
MISP	Minimum Initial Services Package
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NWC	Coalicion Nacional de Mujeres
UN	United Nations
UNAMG	Union National de Mujeres Guatemaltecas
URNG	Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity
WDP	Weapons for Development Program
WUP	Women's Unemployment Project

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

### INTRODUCTION

In a world marred by conflict and violence, peacebuilding is becoming increasingly important as a means of preventing continuing hostilities. Peacebuilding missions and efforts have focused on emphasizing such factors as security and governance to prevent these potentially volatile situations from erupting into full fledged conflicts. This approach, however, has neglected the gendered dimensions of peacebuilding. That is, it does not recognize the particular needs of women during the peacebuilding phase, nor does it acknowledge their role in contributing to effective peacebuilding. It is this gap that this thesis addresses. The objective of this study is to demonstrate that despite the absence of women in the architecture of peacebuilding design, in fact they play an integral role in the peacebuilding process.

Before elaborating further on the content and structure of this thesis, it is first necessary to provide some clarification of the terminologies. Efforts at peacebuilding often are confused with peacekeeping operations. In fact, the term ‘peacebuilding’ is frequently used interchangeably with ‘peacekeeping,’ however, the differences are significant. Peacekeeping refers to direct actions to police conflict areas and prevent war, often through the use of international forces. Peacebuilding, on the other hand, includes post-conflict initiatives to rebuild societies and forestall a return to violence. The peacebuilding process encompasses efforts to achieve sustainable human security<sup>1</sup> through rebuilding institutions and infrastructure. This allows for communication and diplomacy to develop and reinforce societies’ abilities to manage conflicts without

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security defines “human security” as the “vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfillment,” and also states that, “[h]uman security is far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance and access to economic opportunity, education and health care. It is a concept that comprehensively addresses both ‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want.’ See United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, “Human Security,” [www.ochaonline.un.org/home/tabid/2097/default.aspx](http://www.ochaonline.un.org/home/tabid/2097/default.aspx), Date (Accessed February 23, 2010).

resorting to violence.

Design strategies for accomplishing successful peacebuilding in societies which had endured years of conflict focus on five main areas. These are: security, governance, relief and development, reconciliation, and international support.<sup>2</sup> The first, security, entails ending violence, protecting those affected by violence, and enforcing human rights. The second, governance, requires building institutional capacities, transparency, judicial reforms and policy development. The third, relief and development includes building economic, market, and social infrastructures. The fourth, reconciliation addresses the reintegration of displaced persons and refugees, peace education, and trauma support for communities.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, the fifth, international support, must be provided via financial and logistical assistance during these peacebuilding efforts outlined above. Through a focus on the first four of the areas mentioned above (the fifth category of international support is omitted as this study is more local and regional in scope),<sup>4</sup> this thesis will illustrate the contributions of women in peacebuilding. It will draw on case studies from Central America, specifically Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador to illustrate the contributions in concrete terms in each of these areas.

## **THESIS STRUCTURE**

This thesis is organized into four chapters, including the introduction (chapter 1) and the conclusion (chapter 4). The first, chapter one, introduces key terms, the objectives of the study, the structure of the thesis, and the methodology.

The second section, chapter two, is divided into three parts. The first section presents a brief historical overview of peacebuilding. The second proposes an interpretation of peacebuilding and introduces the four themes to which case studies are later applied. The third section outlines concerns, problems, and limitations that plague

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<sup>2</sup> David Last, "Organizing for Effective Peacebuilding," cited in Tom Woodhouse and Oliver Ramsbotham, *Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution* (Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 85; Gareth Evans, "Peacebuilding: Six Golden Rules for Policy Makers," *International Crisis Group*, (2005) [www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3771&l=1](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3771&l=1) (Date Accessed: October 19, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Last, 85.

<sup>4</sup> While there is no doubt that international support is important and women in the case studies have made efforts to garner such support for their initiatives, such analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the actions of international organizations, namely the United Nations, will be discussed briefly in the final chapter of this study.

the peacebuilding process in the post-war setting.

The third section, chapter three, introduces and explores women's role in peacebuilding by examining case studies in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. This chapter is also organized into three parts. The first will provide a brief history, organized thematically, to demonstrate the similarities that exist among the three case studies. The second examines women's role in the four peacebuilding areas introduced in the preceding chapter. This section too is organized thematically and addresses the following themes: the post-conflict reforms in each of the four categories of traditional peacebuilding, the problems associated with those reforms, women's response to these problems and the significance of their response, as well as the recommendations proposed to address these weaknesses and enhance reforms. The final section of this chapter will provide a brief overview of the chapter findings.

The fourth and final chapter, chapter four, will summarize the analysis of women's role in peacebuilding and suggest areas where women could have improved upon their efforts in the case studies. This chapter will also discuss barriers to implementing peacebuilding reforms presented throughout the study. And lastly, the efforts of international organizations in ensuring women's participation in peacebuilding will be presented and assessed in light of the findings.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This thesis uses a qualitative approach, examining data collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary documents referred to include information from United Nations resolutions and statements, and speeches from various peace agencies and non-governmental organizations. Secondary sources include various books, journals, articles, and newspaper articles containing references to the theoretical discussions about women in international relations, peacebuilding initiatives, and relevant case studies.

While research regarding peacebuilding in general was relatively accessible, critiques of traditional peacebuilding appear to be limited to the individual areas (security, governance, relief and development and reconciliation) rather than challenging the theory behind peacebuilding. With regard to resources and information specifically

pertaining to women's role in peacebuilding, there are studies that examine their actions in each area of peacebuilding; however, these resources are often quite broad. Detailed information regarding women's actions in the various organizations and groups they have created to address their concerns in Latin America is somewhat scarce despite the large number of organizations that exist. While these organizations and their efforts are mentioned throughout numerous sources, there remains ample room for continued research into the day-to-day functioning of these groups, their objectives and goals, the activities they pursue, the concerns they have currently, and the challenges they face to name a few.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THESIS**

This thesis is important because it brings together information about women's efforts and contributions to peacebuilding in each of the case studies and provides a critique of traditional peacebuilding in terms of their neglect of the role of women in the process. Furthermore, it suggests that a more inclusive approach to peacebuilding could prove more successful than the practices currently utilized.

## **CHAPTER 2 - PEACEBUILDING**

### **INTRODUCTION**

International peacebuilding operations have grown more important as a response to countries that have experienced civil wars. Such conflicts leave a legacy of social upheavals and violence which if not addressed can ultimately destroy the ability of the societies to progress post-conflict. Thus, peacebuilding works to improve a population's security and quality of life and to ensure that it can and function in a sustainable manner after the conflict. International experience in the past has demonstrated that attempting to institute peace without rebuilding sustainable social, political, and economic institutions in a war-torn country will leave it highly susceptible to future violence.

This chapter serves to broaden the reader's understanding of the complexities of peacebuilding by introducing and explaining how and why peacebuilding missions target certain areas when attempting to build peaceful and sustainable societies. By providing the necessary background for understanding how peacebuilding operates, the inherent difficulties in such processes, and outlining four of the central themes within the current peacebuilding framework, this chapter will provide a useful framework for studying the three case studies examined in chapter three.

The first section of this chapter will present a brief historical overview of peacebuilding. The second proposes an interpretation of peacebuilding and introduces the four themes to which the case studies are later applied. The third section will outline the concerns, problems, and limitations that plague the peacebuilding process in the post-war setting. Lastly, the concluding section will offer a few observations of the peacebuilding process to date before introducing the case studies to be examined in the following chapter.

### **HISTORY OF PEACEBUILDING**

Few global efforts possess such significant promise for improving the quality of

life in post-conflict areas as peacebuilding. It has its roots in peacekeeping, the process whereby the international community, namely the United Nations, sought to keep warring parties at bay. While peacekeeping initially involved only maintaining the peace between warring states, it evolved to also include civil conflicts.<sup>5</sup> However, as the complexities and social repercussions of civil conflicts became apparent, peacekeeping took on a wider range of tasks. These more comprehensive missions to install peace and forestall a return to violence became commonly referred to as ‘peacebuilding.’<sup>6</sup>

In the post-cold war period of the 1990s peacebuilding missions gained prevalence as numerous civil wars raged around the globe accounting for 94 per cent of all armed conflicts during this period.<sup>7</sup> Regarding the civilian loss of life during this period, Roland Paris notes “...an estimated 90 percent of those killed in armed conflicts were civilians.”<sup>8</sup> During this period fourteen peacebuilding missions were deployed by the United Nations to a variety of war-shattered countries, including three in Latin America: Nicaragua in 1989, El Salvador in 1991, and Guatemala in 1997.<sup>9</sup> The peacebuilding field experienced extensive growth and development with these early trial missions with the establishment of implementation frameworks, peacebuilding centers, and the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Despite the fact that it has been almost two decades since peacebuilding missions were first inaugurated current missions are still considered experimental because they are prone to breakdowns and seldom proceed as planned.

Paris offers a discussion of the origins of peacebuilding in *At War’s End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*. He states that prior to the end of the Cold War the United Nations had opted for a lesser role in the domestic politics of countries.<sup>10</sup> However, as

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<sup>5</sup> Tom Keating and Francis K. Abiew “Outside Agents and the Politics of Peacebuilding and Reconciliation,” *International Journal*, Vol. 55, Iss.1 (Winter 1999/2000), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Paris, *At War’s End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*, (Colorado: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Paris compares these statistics to those from the beginning of the twentieth century where “approximately 90 percent of war victims were soldiers.” Paris, *At War’s End...*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>10</sup> Paris provides a four reasons for this, “First, the United Nations Charter...expressly prohibited the organization from intervening in matters “essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.” Second, expanding the role of peacekeepers beyond the relatively limited task of monitoring a cease-fire would have required a more intrusive role for international personnel than the parties to a conflict were normally willing to accept. Third, the permanent members of the Security Council – including the Cold War

conditions changed with the end of the Cold War, the United Nations became more inclined to respond to the “demand’ for new multilateral peace operations.” While some operations still resembled traditional peacekeeping missions (with tasks that included verifying cease-fires and troop movements), other missions were “more complex” and comprised of “less familiar tasks.” For example, the United Nations’ first post-conflict peacebuilding mission in Namibia (1989) consisted of monitoring the conduct of local police, disarming former fighters, and preparing the country for its first democratic election – tasks not traditionally performed by the United Nations. New to the United Nations included supervising democratic elections, assisting in the preparation of new national constitutions, providing human rights training and in one case (Cambodia) temporarily taking over the administration of an entire country.<sup>11</sup>

Paris further notes that the complexities of these peacebuilding missions required that the United Nations partner with other international actors to help countries rebuild post-conflict. These organizations include, but are not limited to, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United Nations Development Program, the Organization of American States, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and various international non-governmental organizations.<sup>12</sup>

Generally, the United Nation’s peacebuilding missions to date were deployed after the signing of formal peace accords or agreements that have warring factions laying down their arms and agreeing to some form of a truce and a strategy for future power sharing, usually the formation of political parties and the contesting of elections. These peace agreements typically mark the formal end of an armed struggle and symbolize the participation of belligerents in a political process.<sup>13</sup> However, Ho-Won Jeong, author of

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enemies, the United States and the Soviet Union – were generally opposed to UN involvement in the domestic affairs of their respective allies and client states....Fourth and finally, even if the Soviets and the Americans saw little threat to their strategic interests, Cold War ideological differences made it impossible for the United Nations to promote any particular model of domestic governance within the borders of individual states. The United States and most of its allies promoted liberal democracy and market-oriented economics, whereas the Soviet bloc championed a different version of democracy – community “people’s democracy – which emphasize public rather than private ownership of the means of production and control of the state by a vanguard communist party on behalf of the working class.” See Paris, *At War’s End...*, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Paris, *At War’s End*, 16-17.

<sup>12</sup> Paris, *At War’s End*, 18-19.

<sup>13</sup> Ho-Won Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Postconflict Societies: Strategy and Process*, 21.

*Peacebuilding in Postconflict Societies: Strategies and Process*, warns that peace agreements do not always satisfy all parties, “[p]eace agreements do not simply mark the end of an old conflict, and sometimes they contain the seeds of their own destruction.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, depending on the particular context, there have been occasions when peacebuilding missions have been allowed to operate before and during peace accord processes.

In the following section, the various components of the peacebuilding framework are examined in order to demonstrate the areas many theorists have highlighted as integral to the success of peacebuilding missions.

## **THE PEACEBUILDING FRAMEWORK**

Simply stated, peacebuilding includes post-conflict initiatives to rebuild societies and forestall a return to violence and conflict situations. However, the process of peacebuilding is rife with complexities and as a comprehensive concept it:

encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict towards more sustainable, peaceful relationships. It simultaneously seeks to enhance relationships between parties and to change the structural conditions that generate conflict. The term thus involves a wide range of activities and functions that both precede and follow formal peace accords.<sup>15</sup>

The complexities inherent in peacebuilding are reflected in the various concerns which these missions must incorporate in their design. In general, peacebuilding missions focus on four main interrelated areas: security, governance, relief and development, and reconciliation.<sup>16</sup> A discussion of the four central areas of concern will reveal the paramouncy of each interrelated process and the inherent challenges within the broader peacebuilding framework.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>15</sup> John Lederach, 1997, 20., cited in Mary Hope Schwoebel and Erin McCandless, “Toward the Theory and Practice of Appreciative Inquiry in Complex Peacebuilding and Development Contexts,” in Cynthia Sampson, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Claudia Liebler and Diana Whitney (eds), *Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding: A Resource for Innovators*, (Washington: Pact Publishers, 2003), 194.

<sup>16</sup> Last, 85; Gareth Evans, “Peacebuilding: Six Golden Rules for Policy Makers,” *International Crisis Group*, (2005), [www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3771&l=1](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3771&l=1), Date Accessed: October 19, 2006.

## *Security*

The first area of importance in the peacebuilding framework is security. Security entails ending violence, protecting those affected by violence, and enforcing human rights. Violence is the single most dangerous spoiler that poses fundamental challenges for peace, therefore, it is essential to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate (DDR) warring factions into civil society. Thus, security measures and DDR initiatives are usually included within peace agreements in the form of military and police reforms.

Demobilizing soldiers and reintegrating them into civilian life is one of the single most important goals of the larger project of peace implementation. As Charles T. Call and William Stanley argue, “reconfiguration of military and police forces after civil wars is central to the stability of any negotiated settlement, as well as to the prospects for long-term consolidation of a democratic framework.”<sup>17</sup> Because ongoing violence will continue to devastate economies, exacerbate underdevelopment, and increase desperation and frustration among immiserated populations, ensuring that there is an effective police force that has the trust of the civilians and is accepted by former combatants is an early priority.<sup>18</sup>

Promoting security involves convincing competing armies to lay down their weapons, demobilize their soldiers, and reconstruct their lives in a more peaceful manner. Usually members of opposing factions are integrated to form a national military merger in an effort to establish a legitimate state monopoly over the use of force in society. This may require rewarding ex-combatants with economic and material benefits for abstaining from violence and their re-entry into society.<sup>19</sup> Demobilization steps are important militarily and symbolically and should be accompanied by monitoring and verification mechanisms to ensure that these initial steps towards stabilization occur.

In addition to military reforms, a strong civilian police force is required to protect the institutions of democracy and act as a counterweight to military strength in areas where atrocities have previously occurred at the hands of the military. Such a force must be provided with appropriate training, educated about their mandate, and have the

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<sup>17</sup> Charles T. Call and William Stanley, “Military and Police Reform after Civil Wars” in John Darby and Roger MacGinty (eds), *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 221.

<sup>18</sup> Stephan John Stedman, “Peace Processes and the Challenges of Violence,” 109.

<sup>19</sup> Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 49.

relevant mechanisms for internal oversight in order that it can operate in such a way that it respects the rule of law and individual rights, and selectively employ the use of force.<sup>20</sup> Within peacekeeping missions, civilian police forces are often initially assisted by international civilian police and peacekeeping forces that monitor the peace and provide the necessary training.

### *Governance*

Governance is another area that has to be addressed within peacebuilding. Long-term security extends beyond reforming military and police forces and is also contingent upon the conversion of warring factions into political parties that can work to manage conflicts in a manner that is conducive of positive change. Peacebuilding operations are susceptible to breakdown when societies have a poor governance framework that exacerbates social fault lines, aggravates divisions and tensions, entrenches conflict, or provides a basis to contest the government.<sup>21</sup> Governance in peacebuilding designs requires the development of institutional capacities such as the judiciary, the electoral system, and other agencies that work to advance policy reforms, enhance transparency, and increase representation and accountability. For example, in many peacebuilding contexts, plans for elections are often outlined, agreed upon and signed into the peace agreements between opposing factions.

Democratic electoral systems are favored by the international institutions that orchestrate peacebuilding missions because they have the potential to affect positive changes in societies where political transitions have been fraught with military coups, revolutions and destructive patterns of violence. The role of an election during peacebuilding is significant for numerous reasons. Non-violent and successful political transitions become a critical test to determine whether new relationships can develop among former adversaries – the party that loses needs tangible, symbolic and even material benefits from their participation in the new governance system in order for it to be embraced by those who do not gain full political power.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, successful

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<sup>20</sup> Call and Stanley, “Military and Police Reform...,” 213.

<sup>21</sup> Kirsti Samuels, “Sustainability and Peacebuilding: A Key Challenge,” *Development in Practice*, Vol.15, No.6 (November 2005), 733.

<sup>22</sup> Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 115.

elections can contribute to national unity and reconciliation by fortifying a renewed political process and reinforcing the termination of armed conflict.<sup>23</sup> Elections become symbolic of the first steps toward establishing a functioning political system and a multiparty democracy where power sharing models are negotiated among former adversaries.

Also critical to effective governance is the role of the judiciary. The literature repeatedly cites the importance of strengthening judicial systems as a necessity for developing democratic institutions. This includes incorporating honest courts with uncorrupted judges and promoting respect for the rule of law. Failure to respond to past and continued violence through a fair judicial system will only impede progress towards justice, accountability and reconciliation.<sup>24</sup> The stability of these systems, however, cannot be achieved without the participation of former adversaries in the democratic political processes and socio-economic reforms.<sup>25</sup>

Strengthening the institutions of governance then is critical to ensuring the establishment of democracy which in turn is essential if future conflicts are to be avoided.

### *Relief and Development*

Relief and development policies are considered an integral part of the broader peacebuilding process because where poverty and inequality endure after internal conflict they serve to undermine peace by breeding further discontent and anger.<sup>26</sup> Civil war devastates livelihoods through the destruction of production capital and displacement of peoples and loss of skilled labour. The relief and development process can be viewed as two stages — the immediate (the relief component) and the longer term (the development aspect).

Immediate humanitarian assistance during peacebuilding is necessary to alleviate the human suffering that accompanies war and violent conflict. Significant portions of populations become uprooted and services that are otherwise used to tend to their suffering are either destroyed or did not previously exist. Staggering statistics verify the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>26</sup> Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 123.

numbers of people killed, injured, displaced and affected by violent conflict in warring societies. The increased needs of these populations is compounded by the reduced capacity of health services which further devastates those disproportionately affected, namely women and children. They frequently fall victim to preventable infections and diseases, develop HIV and AIDS, experience mental health problems, suffer from substance abuse or die in childbirth.<sup>27</sup>

The longer term strategy involves promoting economic growth and development. Reforming and redesigning economic programs and policies is paramount for bringing about stability and equity because social tension is often created by perceived and real imbalances in income and wealth.<sup>28</sup> Violent conflict during civil war effectively halts development by destroying infrastructure and institutions such as the systems of transport, education, agriculture, and communication. It also leaves societies with massive human resource deficits in terms of general education and professional skills as farmers, artisans, and skilled workers are among those conscripted into war and often die as soldiers or flee the country.<sup>29</sup> Although civil wars may come to an end, Stephan John Stedman warns that “if former combatants lack jobs and skills and if weapons are easily available, then violence and crime may increase and rob citizens of their security and their hopes for a robust peace dividend.”<sup>30</sup> Peacebuilding efforts stress that effective development strategies must incorporate the participation of local communities taking into account local capacities and solutions. This will increase the likelihood of more satisfactory developmental outcomes and at the same time empowers communities.

### *Reconciliation*

The final dimension of peacebuilding discussed in this thesis is reconciliation. Where deep social inequalities are common and populations are divided, impoverished, and devastated by war, institutional and policy reforms aimed at repairing and rebuilding corrosive justice systems cannot alone bring about healing. Policies and programs aimed at reconciliation are vital. These generally involve policies which stress compassion,

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<sup>27</sup> Sean Deely, “War, Health and Recovery,” cited in Barakat, *After the Conflict...*, 124-129.

<sup>28</sup> Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 17.

<sup>29</sup> Sultan Barakat, “Seven Pillars for Post-War Reconstruction,” cited in Sultan Barakat, *After the Conflict: Reconstruction and Development in the Aftermath of War*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 266.

<sup>30</sup> Stedman, in Darby and MacGinty, *Contemporary Peacemaking...*, 103.

forgiveness, restitution, psychological and social healing, all of which are designed to help communities live and work together.<sup>31</sup>

Mechanisms for pursuing reconciliation include dialogue between former adversaries, story sharing, compiling records of human rights violations and Truth Commissions. These actions also serve to deter former abusers and provide a lasting legacy and reminder of the atrocities that have occurred. In Sultan Barakat's *Seven Pillars of Post-War Reconstruction*, he states: "The healing of bitter memories and restoration of trust is a delicate, highly complex process that cannot be rushed and which may take generations to achieve."<sup>32</sup>

## LIMITATIONS OF PEACEBUILDING

Given the nascent nature of the peacebuilding field, there are numerous complexities and flaws in the design frameworks that contribute to the inability of sustainable peace relations to persevere. To put the challenges into perspective one need only contemplate the stark reality that Krause and Jutersonke put describe:

About half of all peace support operations (including both peacekeeping and more expansive peacebuilding operations) fail after around five years...Perhaps this is a function of the difficulty of the task of [post-conflict peacebuilding]: a 30-50% success rate might actually be considered high.<sup>33</sup>

This low success rate reflects the inherent complexities that face the process of peacebuilding – a process that is said to be diverse beyond comparison.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the presence of leaders, neighboring countries, and factions opposed to peace are often willing to use violence to undermine the rebuilding process.<sup>35</sup> These 'defectors', also known as 'spoilers,' will require specific attention to mitigate the chances that these

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<sup>31</sup> Last, "Organizing for Effective Peacebuilding," 84.

<sup>32</sup> Barakat, *After the Conflict...*, 255.

<sup>33</sup> Keith Krause and Oliver Jutersonke, "Peace, Security and Development in Post-Conflict Environments," *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 36 (4), (2005), 448–449.

<sup>34</sup> Sampson, et.al., *Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding...*, 381.

<sup>35</sup> Stedman, in Darby and MacGinty, *Contemporary Peacemaking...*, 103-104.

factors will contribute to the breakdown of such an extremely fragile process.<sup>36</sup> Given the inability to control these destabilizing spoilers there are numerous breakdowns in the peace process that effectively contribute to the low success rate of peacebuilding operations.

Not only is peacebuilding complex, but each dimension (Security, Governance, Relief and Development, and Reconciliation) within the peacebuilding framework is comprised of its own complexities. Nonetheless, each is important and essential for the successful rebuilding of war-torn societies. To complicate things further, these dimensions are intertwined; breakdowns in one jeopardize advances in the others. Each aspect within the framework can only be successful when supported by actions to improve and rebuild individual dimensions of the others. For example, security, often a top priority for peacebuilding, is susceptible to breakdown from an impaired governance framework and poor policy decisions. If development issues are not addressed, socio-economic inequalities can result in a relapse to violence and a breakdown of security; if groups are not reconciled, tensions will unravel the social fabric required to sustain peace. Hence, each is part of the broader peacebuilding process and cannot be disentangled from the others.

## CONCLUSION

The peacebuilding literature is rife with recommendations to increase the viability of peacebuilding frameworks which are prone to breakdown. Many of these authors call for more integrated approaches that cut across the traditional boundaries and dimensions of peacebuilding. Robert Ricigliano is one such proponent who believes that integration is more important now than ever: “We are currently at a critical moment in the development of the peacebuilding field.”<sup>37</sup> Ho-Won Jeong also calls for this integrated approach: “Given all the complexities involved in rebuilding societies...it is important to develop a clear understanding of the diverse dimensions of peacebuilding and how

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<sup>36</sup> David Last uses the terms ‘defectors’ and ‘spoilers’ interchangeably to refer to those sources or activities that “[delay or derail] difficult work of rebuilding war-torn societies.” See David Last, “Organizing for Effective Peacebuilding,” cited in Tom Woodhouse and Oliver Ramsbotham, *Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution*, (Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 80.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Ricigliano, “Networks of Effective Action: Implementing an Integrated Approach to Peacebuilding,” *Security Dialogue*, Vol.34, No.4, (2003), 445.

various strategies can be put together to achieve a sustainable peace.”<sup>38</sup> The complications surrounding the high-risk endeavor of peacebuilding requires that coherent approaches to the multiple domains be synchronized to achieve the sustainable human security required for peace. Demobilizing ex-combatants, reintegrating refugees and displaced persons, (re)building civil society institutions, creating conditions for economic and social development, establishing political institutions, and minimizing social and political tensions all contribute to the complexities inherent in the fragile peacebuilding process. Integration is becoming increasingly acknowledged as having the potential to improve peacebuilding because experience has shown that various dimensions within the framework are interrelated; breakdowns in one area have detrimental impacts on the others. Also, given the diversity and contextual variables of post-conflict situations, designs must leave room for flexibility.

This explanation of the four central dimensions of the peacebuilding process and the discussion of some of the inherent complexities surrounding operations to rebuild war-torn societies set the background for an analysis of three case studies. The following chapter examines the role of women in the peacebuilding process in three Latin American countries, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. By investigating the role of women during the peacebuilding process information will be provided from which to analyze where and how women fit into the peacebuilding framework.

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<sup>38</sup> Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 19.

## **CHAPTER 3 – WOMEN’S ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING**

### **INTRODUCTION**

While the preceding chapter provided the historical context of peacebuilding and described the four thematic areas which policies must be addressed in order to rebuild war torn societies, the objective of this chapter is to examine women’s role within each of these areas using three post-conflict states as case studies: Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. What will become evident is that women have played an integral role in peacebuilding, contributing significantly to post-conflict re-building and development in these war-shattered states.

This chapter will be organized into three sections. The first will provide a brief history, organized thematically, to demonstrate the similarities that exist among the three case studies. The second examines women’s role in the four peacebuilding areas of security, governance, relief and development and reconciliation in each of the cases. It too is organized thematically. Discussion of each of these areas addresses the following themes: the post-conflict reforms implemented in each of the four categories addressed by traditional peacebuilding, the problems associated with those reforms, women’s response to these problems and the significance of their response, as well as the recommendations proposed to address these weaknesses and enhance reforms. The final section of this chapter, the conclusion, will provide a brief overview of the chapter.

### **ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT IN CENTRAL AMERICA: NICARAGUA, EL SALVADOR AND GUATEMALA**

Each of the three cases in this study are drawn from Latin America, a region which has been plagued with wars and revolutions. The case studies provided here, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala are no exception. Although they are different in many ways, these three countries share many similarities. As described below, each has been scarred by poverty and exploitation, each has experienced long and violent conflicts (civil wars) between military dictatorships and Marxist revolutionaries, each has

experienced a transition to democracy, and in each of these states women have played a prominent role, both as combatants in the conflicts and as actors who helped to advance the peace.

Centuries-old economic inequalities, where a few control the nation's wealth and the majority live in grinding poverty, have been at the root of much of the conflict in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala.<sup>39</sup> Nicaragua, the largest of the Latin American republics, is one of the regions' poorest. With a population of approximately 5½ million people and widespread underemployment (an estimated 3.6 percent unemployment rate in 2007, increasing to an estimated 5.9 percent unemployment rate in 2009), 48 percent of Nicaraguans live below the poverty line, while the country depends on international economic assistance to meet financial and debt financing obligations.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, El Salvador, the smallest of the Latin American countries, is the most densely populated,<sup>41</sup> with approximately 7 million people<sup>42</sup> and shares many of the same features of poverty. Scarce fertile lands in the region have been a source of much turmoil and conflict, generating only more deprivation<sup>43</sup> where approximately 30 percent of the population lives below the poverty-line (Nicaragua had an estimated 3.6 percent open unemployment rate in 2007, increasing to an estimated 7.9 percent in 2009<sup>44</sup> while in 2008 Nicaragua's underemployment rate was reported to be 46.8 percent).<sup>45</sup> Lastly, with approximately 13 million people, Guatemala has the highest population of all the Latin

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<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that not all employment activities are counted by governing agencies tracking employment activity. Therefore, official unemployment statistics may not capture the unemployment and underemployment realities in Nicaragua, El Salvador or Guatemala.

<sup>40</sup> Nicaragua's underemployment rate was reported to be 46.8 percent in 2008. See Central Intelligence Agency, "Nicaragua," *The World Fact Book*, 2009, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nu.html>, Date Accessed February 27, 2010; Central Intelligence Agency, "Nicaragua," *The World Fact Book*, 2008. [www.cia.gov/library/publicationsthe-world-factbook/geos/nu.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publicationsthe-world-factbook/geos/nu.html), Date Accessed September 28, 2008.

<sup>41</sup> Mitchell A. Seligson, "El Salvador," *Academic American Encyclopedia*, Connecticut: Grolier Incorporated., 100.

<sup>42</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "El Salvador," *The World Fact Book*, 2008. [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nu.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nu.html), Date Accessed September 28, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> Nathan A. Haverstock, "El Salvador," *The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1993, Chicago: World Book Inc., 248.

<sup>44</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "El Salvador," *The World Fact Book*, 2008,; Central Intelligence Agency, "El Salvador," *The World Fact Book*, 2009, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/es.html>, Date Accessed February 27, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> See Central Intelligence Agency, "Nicaragua," *The World Fact Book*, 2009, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nu.html>, Date Accessed February 27, 2010; Central Intelligence Agency, "Nicaragua," *The World Fact Book*, 2008. [www.cia.gov/library/publicationsthe-world-factbook/geos/nu.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publicationsthe-world-factbook/geos/nu.html), Date Accessed September 28, 2008.

American countries and is also one of the poorest.<sup>46</sup> Divided into two main ethnic groups, Indians account for an estimated 45 percent of the population in Guatemala while persons of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry make up the majority with 55 percent of the population.<sup>47</sup> Guatemala's GDP growth is 5.7 percent and an astonishing 56.2 percent of the population is said to be living below the poverty-line (an estimated 3.2 percent unemployment rate in 2005, and while underemployment statistics are not currently available, the Pan American Health Organization stated that Guatemala's unemployment rate was 37 percent in 1998).<sup>48</sup>

In addition to this dramatic economic disparity, each of these countries have also been deeply scarred by brutal civil wars, in which hundreds of thousands have been maimed or killed as military governments, with strong US support, fought to defeat insurgent revolutionary movements espousing a Marxist ideology. In Nicaragua, Marxist guerrillas of the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional (FSLN or the 'Sandinistas') sought to overthrow the Somoza military dictatorship that had been in power since 1937.<sup>49</sup> They only succeeded in 1979, after almost 40 years of dictatorship. Victory was short-lived as they then had to battle the US-funded Contra army. The Contra war, as the conflict was known, ended in 1988 with the signing of the Sapoa Agreement,<sup>50</sup> followed by multiparty elections held in 1990. Likewise, military governments in El Salvador were in power almost continuously since 1931 and persistently responded to political unrest with violent repression.<sup>51</sup> In response,

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<sup>46</sup> Gary S. Elbow, "Guatemala," *The World Bank Encyclopedia*, 1993 Edition., 438.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 436-437.

<sup>48</sup> Pan American Health Organization, *Health in the Americas, 1998 Edition*, Vol.2, Washington: PAHO (1999), 294; Central Intelligence Agency, "Guatemala," *The World Fact Book*, 2008, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gt.html>, Date Accessed February 26, 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Author Unknown, "Nicaragua," *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, 2007. [www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9110104](http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9110104). Date Accessed: August 23, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> The Sapoa Agreement was signed in 1988. Parties to the conflict agreed to such items as a cease-fire, the relocation of contra forces, a general amnesty, and elections, which were later monitored by the United Nations Verification mission for the Nicaraguan Elections (ONUVEN) and the Organization of American States (OAS). See: Carlos Santiso, "Promoting Democratic Governance and Preventing the Recurrence of Conflict: The Role of the United Nations Development Programme in Post-Conflict Peace-Building," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Aug., 2002), 565; Laura Nuzzi O'Shaughnesy and Michael Dodson, "Political Bargaining and Democratic Transitions: A Comparison of Nicaragua and El Salvador," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Feb., 1999), 112.

<sup>51</sup> Seligson, "El Salvador," 101; John A. Booth, "Socioeconomic and Political Roots of National Revolts in Central America," *Latin America Research Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1991), 35.

revolutionary groups countered by aligning themselves to create a revolutionary coalition, the Farabundo Marti de Liberacion Nacional (FLMN), launching an armed rebellion against the Salvadoran regime in 1981.<sup>52</sup> This conflict was ended by a negotiated peace between the military and the guerrillas. Guatemala has also been subject to a long history of armed rule with a military government that heavily repressed labour activists, students, peasant groups, Indians, and opposition parties including Marxist guerilla groups.<sup>53</sup> Although various guerilla groups began struggling against the repressive military dictatorship in the 1960s,<sup>54</sup> it was not until 1982 that a united guerilla force, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), was created to challenge the governing military regime.<sup>55</sup> This conflict was to last until 1996 when, as in El Salvador, peace accords were negotiated between the two factions.<sup>56</sup>

### *Women's Role in the Conflicts*

It should be noted that women were not peripheral to these conflicts. In each of the case studies women were active participants during the conflict, assuming revolutionary and counter-revolutionary combat roles alongside their male counterparts, as well as supportive roles for combatants. According to Ilja Luciak, the “rate of women’s participation in armed combat [in the Nicaraguan FSLN] during the insurrection was the highest of any Latin American revolutionary movement.”<sup>57</sup> Similarly, it is estimated that 40 percent of the Salvadoran FMLN’s membership were women.<sup>58</sup> Female participation in the Guatemalan URNG significantly increased in the

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<sup>52</sup> Paris, “Peacebuilding in Central America...,” 49.

<sup>53</sup> With U.S. assistance, government armies crushed small Marxist guerrilla movements that rose up against regime through repressive terrorism by private and governmental death squads and an aggressive counterinsurgency campaigns. Mark Ruhl, “The Guatemalan Military Since the Peace Accords: The Fate of Reform Under Arzu and Portillo,” *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol.46, No.4 (2005), 57.

<sup>54</sup> Luciak, *After the Revolution...*, 23.

<sup>55</sup> Booth, “Socioeconomic and Political Roots of National Revolts in Central America,” 59.

<sup>56</sup> However, these accords were never implemented as they failed to be ratified in a national referendum.

<sup>57</sup> Ilja A. Luciak, *After the Revolution...*, 16.

<sup>58</sup> Author Unknown, “Gender Profile of the Conflict in El Salvador,” *United Nations Development Fund For Women*, [www.womenwarpeace.org/docs/elsalvador\\_pfv.pdf](http://www.womenwarpeace.org/docs/elsalvador_pfv.pdf), Date Accessed: October 16, 2007; Rae Lesser Blumberg, “Risky Business: What Happens to Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Post-Conflict Societies? Insights from NGO's in El Salvador,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 15, No. 1, *Risks and Rights in the 21st Century: Papers from the Women and Gender in Global Perspectives Program Symposium*, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, October 2000 (Fall, 2001), 163.

1980s, despite the fact that URNG struggles began in the 1960s.<sup>59</sup> It has been suggested that female participation in the URNG was influenced by the FMLN's efforts in El Salvador directly aimed at increasing female participation in the movement. Meanwhile, in Guatemala, it is estimated that women represented around 15 percent of the combatants during the civil war and 25 percent of the political cadres during peace negotiations.<sup>60</sup>

## **WOMEN'S ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING**

Women not only participated during conflict, they have participated in and often times initiated peacebuilding efforts in each of the three countries, contributing in many ways to reconstruction and post-conflict rebuilding processes. Despite this, as Shukria Dini states, "women's peacebuilding initiatives remain invisible to policy-makers and development institutions, as well as to their own societies."<sup>61</sup> It is the objective of the following sections to examine women's role in each of these peacebuilding areas, security, governance, relief and development, and reconciliation.

### **SECURITY**

Violence is the single most dangerous threat to peacebuilding. Therefore, it is important that any peacebuilding efforts bring an end to violence and protect vulnerable populations. The purpose of this section is to explain what traditional peacebuilding says about security reforms post-conflict, outline problems associated with current security policies, demonstrate women's responses to security concerns and the significance of their efforts, and lastly, present reforms and recommendations to strengthen security post-conflict.

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<sup>59</sup> Luciak, *After the Revolution...*, 23.

<sup>60</sup> Ilja A. Luciak, "Joining Forces for Democratic Governance: Women's Alliance-Building for Post-war Reconstruction in Central America," Prepared for delivery at the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Honolulu, Hawaii, February 27 – March 5, 2005, 8.

<sup>61</sup> Nadine Robitaille, "Shukria Dini – Canada," *International Development Research Centre Bulletin*, [www.idrc.ca/en/ev-114798-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-114798-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html), Date Accessed November 2008.

### *Security Reforms in Traditional Peacebuilding*

Current security reforms, usually included within peace agreements, require that previously warring factions be disarmed, demobilized, reintegrated (DDR) into civil society, and that ex-combatants be compensated for their participation. Compensation, or benefits packages could include vocational training, land, agricultural supplies, credit, and employment within new police or security forces, among others, and they are typically used as incentive to encourage ex-combatants to participate in DDR programs and processes. Vanessa Farr notes that such DDR processes are practical as well as symbolic.<sup>62</sup> They are practical because they provide skills for reintegration and serve to rebuild a civilian police force to help implement and protect democracy, act as a counterweight to military strength,<sup>63</sup> and demonstrate a country's commitment to positive change. Training civilian police forces in areas that include the rule of law, human rights, and the selective use of force enables a country to move forward with the goal of attaining general security for all residents. DDR processes have symbolic value because they offer ex-combatants a new identity that is compatible with peaceful development and sustainable growth post-conflict.<sup>64</sup>

### *Problems with Security Reforms in Traditional Peacebuilding*

The difficulties of achieving general security cannot be overemphasized, but when it comes to women, the problems become even more complex as women have their own set of unique challenges related to security reform. However, current security reforms to date do not address these in any significant way. For example, as discussed in the cases below, women ex-combatants are rarely able to participate fully in the various DDR phases for a variety of reasons. Either they are not recognized as combatants, or because of overall gender discrimination, or because of their limited mobility due to their familial responsibilities. In addition, the psychological impact of war also has a unique affect on women's security post-conflict.

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<sup>62</sup> Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2007, 96.

<sup>63</sup> Charles T. Call and William Stanley, "Military and Police Reform after Civil Wars," in John Darby and Roger MacGinty, *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 203.

<sup>64</sup> Anderlini, *Women Building Peace...*, 96.

In Nicaragua, where approximately 30 percent of the FSLN's combat forces were women, the gendered make-up of the FSLN was not disclosed during demobilization.<sup>65</sup> Many reasons have been suggested for this, including a lack of official documentation and the added economic, social and cultural inequalities women experienced because of their gender. For this reason, women were less likely to be considered as full combatants eligible to receive DDR benefits. Hence, women were unable to prove that they were active combatants eligible to receive DDR benefits.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, in El Salvador, although dependants, supporters and displaced persons (groups comprising highly of women) were entitled to benefits under the Salvadoran *Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration* scheme, the majority of women did not actually receive benefits under this program.<sup>67</sup> In general, women were less able, due to family responsibilities and lack of child care support, to travel to areas where DDR packages were being distributed and thus did not receive the benefits owed to them. Also this lack of mobility meant that women were not able to participate in workshops and training sessions offered as part of DDR. For example, during the delivery of benefits in 1996, nearly 29 percent of all Salvadoran households were headed by women, with approximately 80 percent of women parenting children under the age of 12 years.<sup>68</sup> For female ex-combatants, even senior ones, taking advantage of reintegration benefits was not an option, as they felt compelled to return to the private sphere to care for their families.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, they missed-out

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<sup>65</sup> The gendered make-up of the FSLN and other combatant forces throughout Latin America was often difficult to assign a specific number to. Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark assert that it is because of these inequalities as well as the "speed and euphoria surrounding" peace negotiations and reintegration efforts that numbers do not officially reveal women's participation, leaving them invisible subjects during peace negotiations and decisions concerning their country's future. See Caroline O.N. Moser and Fiona C. Clark, "Gender, Conflict, and Building Sustainable Peace: Recent Lessons from Latin America," *Gender and Development*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (November 2001), 34; Anna M. Fernandez Poncela and Bill Steiger, "The Disruptions of Adjustment: Women in Nicaragua," *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Women in Latin America, Part 2 (Winter 1996), 63.

<sup>66</sup> See Author Unknown, "Gender Profile of the Conflict in Nicaragua," *Nations Development Fund For Women*, [www.womenwarpeace.org/docs/nicaragua\\_pfv.pdf](http://www.womenwarpeace.org/docs/nicaragua_pfv.pdf), Date Accessed October 16, 2007; Sanam Naraghi Anderlini and Camille Pampell Conaway, "Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration," in Women Waging Peace, *Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action*, London: Hunt Alternatives Fund and International Alert, 2004, 4; Anderlini, *Women Building Peace*, 103.

<sup>67</sup> Women combatants were included in the original lists of troops entering the United Nations Development Program programs for DDR, but faced discrimination at other stages that prohibited their access to land and credits at the local level. See Author Unknown, "Gender Profile of the Conflict in El Salvador."

<sup>68</sup> Conaway and Martinez, "Adding Value..." 18.

<sup>69</sup> Cultures in Latin America during this period, and even today, are predominately patriarchal.

on valuable training opportunities and benefits as they sacrificed their own ambitions and stepped back into traditional roles.<sup>70</sup> In essence, women voluntarily disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated themselves back into civil society post-conflict.

The return to these traditional patriarchal roles, however, did not mean that women were safe from violence post-conflict. They also had to deal with violence stemming from the psychological and social impacts of war itself. Domestic and sexualized violence continued to occur at astonishingly high rates in post-conflict Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. While the violence can be attributed in part to the entrenched *machista*<sup>71</sup> culture in Latin America, studies have shown that many male ex-combatants find it difficult to cope with the traumas of war and respond by taking their anger and frustrations out on their families.<sup>72</sup> Yet the DDR process lacks adequate provisions for psycho-social and trauma support during reintegration phases and thus the security reforms to date have been ineffective in mitigating the occurrence of violence against women. The reason for this may be related to the experimental nature of these peacebuilding missions which have failed to recognize the significance of providing psycho-social and trauma support during reintegration, or it may be linked to a lack of resources (both human and financial), or both.

### *Responses of Women to the Challenges of Security Reform*

While the formal security reforms have been weak in terms of addressing the security needs specific to women, women themselves have been finding ways to address their concerns and promote their efforts. Many organizations have been active in response to women's inability to benefit from DDR programs as well as their unmet

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>71</sup> While a definition of *machismo* has not yet been agreed upon by scholars and academics, for the purposes of this thesis *machismo* refers to the combination of paternalism, aggression, and the subordination of women in families and society. Various definitions of *machismo* and *machista culture* also include paternal irresponsibility, systemic discrimination of women, discriminatory laws and policies, fetishism of women's bodies, the 'cult of the male' and an idolization of the dominate male-masculinity over the secondary female-femininity. See Ana Criquillon, "The Nicaraguan Women's Movement: Feminist Reflections from Within," in Minor Sinclair, *The New Politics of Survival: Grassroots Movements in Central America*, New York: Monthly Review Press (1995), 220.; Peter Sternberg, "Challenging Machismo: Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health with Nicaraguan Men," *Gender and Development*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (2000), 91.

<sup>72</sup> See Valentine M. Moghadam, "Peacebuilding and Reconstruction with Women: Reflections on Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine," *Development*, Vol.48, No.3 (2005), 67; Anderlini, *Women Building Peace...*, 29.

security concerns. They have publicly made known women's security concerns by drawing attention to their on-going experience of victimization post-conflict. Their efforts are significant, demonstrating the deficiencies of DDR policies and the prevalence of violence and impunity despite the good intentions of current security reforms.

The picture is not entirely grim for women, however, as there have been benefits to their return to the traditional sphere. With reference to Salvadoran women, though they were often unable to participate in DDR programs, Conaway and Martinez note that their return to the private sphere had significant and positive results as it helped to create a more stable environment for male reintegration.<sup>73</sup> They note that post-conflict societies are often ridden with men unskilled in anything other than warfare, who upon their return home from war find that women have learned to live without them.<sup>74</sup> While this realization frequently results in an increased incidence of domestic violence, alcoholism, and drug abuse,<sup>75</sup> Conaway and Martinez nevertheless believed that women's voluntary DDR facilitated the reintegration of men<sup>76</sup> and helped many communities move towards peace. This view is supported by Anderlini's research on women's post-conflict reintegration which found that:

[Upon reflecting] on their experiences a decade later, female ex-combatants in El Salvador at first felt they had made no contribution to the reintegration effort. With more reflection, however, they acknowledged that their sacrifices and willingness to step back into domesticity were

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<sup>73</sup> Conaway and Martinez, "Adding Value...", 4. While the literature is somewhat minimal with regards to women's specific participation in disarmament in these case studies, Farr's findings discuss the Weapons Development Programme pilot project which indicates that women can play a significant role during disarmament. When weapons are not removed after conflict ends and flow freely in community settings the security implications and increased violence that exists have a direct impact on women. The project educates women about the link between security, violence and the availability of weapons and encourages women to assist authorities in accessing and collecting weapons by divulging information about arms trading and delivery routes. Women's support for the project has contributed to its success. Their involvement has resulted in an increased number of weapons collected. The project is an example of how gender mainstreaming can have an impact on peacebuilding processes. See Vanessa Farr, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective to Successful Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Processes," *Women, Men, Peace and Security Disarmament Forum*, 29.

<sup>74</sup> Fernandez Poncela and Steiger, "The Disruptions of Adjustment...", 49-60; Paula Godoy-Paiz, "Women in Guatemala's Metropolitan Area: Violence, Law, and Social Justice," *Studies in Social Justice*, Vol.2, No.1 (2008): Special Issue: Gender and Violence in Guatemala, <http://ojs.uwindsor.ca/ojs/leddy/index.php/SSJ/article/viewRST/667/577>, Date Accessed July 22, 2009, 27-28; MADRE, "Guatemala: Country Overview," [www.madre.org/index.php?s=9&b=22](http://www.madre.org/index.php?s=9&b=22), Date Accessed October 11, 2008;

<sup>75</sup> Anderlini, *Women Building Peace...*, 62.

<sup>76</sup> Conaway and Martinez, "Adding Value...", 4.

critical contributions to the reintegration of the male ex-combatants and in many instances, husbands or partners.<sup>77</sup>

Meanwhile, in Nicaragua, women's efforts centered on making known their unique security concerns. Specifically, their efforts have focused on highlighting the excessive amount of gender-related violence post-conflict. For example, the *Women's Network Against Violence*,<sup>78</sup> an organization formed in 1992 during a national meeting of "Women United in Diversity", coordinated four national commissions dedicated to demystifying abuse and violence against women.<sup>79</sup> The Network, which consists of over 170 local groups and represents approximately 60 religious groups, openly and publicly denounces sexual violence and has been involved in numerous public awareness campaigns such as the *International Day Against Violence Towards Women*. Additionally, the Women's Network Against Violence was instrumental in establishing women's police stations in Nicaragua<sup>80</sup> to provide women with a venue to report gender-specific incidents of violence without fear of discrimination.

The Women's Network Against Violence has further challenged the patriarchal family and social structures that tolerate and even encourage violence against women.<sup>81</sup> For instance, in March of 1995, the Network held meetings with over 500 participants and distributed thousands of leaflets analyzing Nicaraguan legislation and values that legitimized violence against women and dismissed their experience of domestic violence.<sup>82</sup> Specifically, the Network demanded that Law 10, which criminalized rape but

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<sup>77</sup> Anderlini, *Women Building Peace...*, 103.

<sup>78</sup> Cynthia Chavez Metoyer, *Women and the State in Post-Sandinista Nicaragua: Women and Change in the Developing World*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2000). 106-107; Mary Ellsberg, Jerker Liljestrand, Anna Winkvist, "The Nicaraguan Network of Women against Violence: Using Research and Action for Change," *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 5, No.10, The International Women's Health Movement (Nov., 1997), pp. 82-92.

<sup>79</sup> The Women's Network Against Violence's first campaign in 1992 was titled "Breaking the Silence." Their 1994 campaign was titled "I want to live without violence," and in 1995 their campaign was "There are no excuses for violence." In 1996 the Network presented 11 protection and security measures for women to the National Assembly. Other issues that the Network has focused on include: reproductive and sexual rights, health, economics and education. See Wisconsin Coordinating Council on Nicaragua (WCCN), "Directory of Nicaraguan Women's Organizations," [www.wccnica.org/womens\\_organizations.html](http://www.wccnica.org/womens_organizations.html), Date Accessed October 26, 2007.

<sup>80</sup> Metoyer, *Women and the State in Post-Sandinista Nicaragua...*, 106-107.

<sup>81</sup> Ellsberg, "The Nicaraguan Network of Women Against Violence..." 85.

<sup>82</sup> In 1994, a project called the Women and Children's Police Stations (Comisarias de la Mujer y la Ninez) was initiated as a joint endeavour between the police force, the governmental National Women's Institute)

left domestic violence decisions up to civil courts, be reformed. Women in the Network provided epidemiological research, garnered substantial public support through public awareness campaigns, and forged alliances to ensure that domestic violence was on the agenda of political parties,<sup>83</sup> while women lawyers and judges drafted a reform bill that was presented to the National Assembly.<sup>84</sup> The Network was ultimately successful in the Fall of 1996 when Law 230 was passed amending the Nicaraguan Penal Code to include provisions on domestic violence.

The steps taken by Nicaraguan women have been significant in addressing violence against women in the country. Their efforts to demystify gender-specific violence highlight the prevalence of domestic and sexualized violence post-conflict despite security reform initiatives during peacebuilding. While these actions have been met with backlash at times,<sup>85</sup> women persistently challenge the government to protect women from violence and impunity post-conflict and are continuing to work to bring about societal change in attitude when it comes to gender specific violence.

### *Recommendations for Enhancing Security Reforms*

Several recommendations have been put forth to improve the traditional approach to security outlined within peacebuilding. Security reform recommendations advocate the inclusion of a gendered perspective during security reform discussions and decision-making post-conflict, increasing the efficiency of DDR to incorporate women's needs, and defining and addressing security in light of women's specific concerns.

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INIM) and the alternative women's health centres, to improve women's access to treatment and prevention efforts. See Ellsberg, "The Nicaraguan Network of Women Against Violence...", 85.

<sup>83</sup> Women sought reform of Law 10 which criminalized rape but left domestic violence up to civil courts. On September 19, 1996 Law No. 230 was passed, amending the Nicaraguan Penal Code to include provisions on domestic violence. See: Author Unknown, "Domestic Violence Laws of the World, "Nicaragua: Law No. 230 of 19 September 1996, Law on Amendments and Additions to the Penal Code [amends the Penal Code to add provisions on domestic violence]," [www.hsph.harvard.edu/population/domesticviolence/domesticviolence.htm](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/population/domesticviolence/domesticviolence.htm), Date Accessed June 2009.

<sup>84</sup> During the campaign women lawyers and judges drafted a reform bill and presented it to the National Assembly, accompanied by 40,000 supporting signatures. See Ellsberg, "The Nicaraguan Network of Women Against Violence...", 85.

<sup>85</sup> Women's efforts in pursuit of gender equality, the recognition of women's rights, and actions to demystify gender-specific violence and the events of the past have not been without controversy in each of the three case studies. Regarding Nicaraguan women's gender equality efforts, Ilja Luciak states that, male leaders saw "their privileges threatened and a vocal minority [resisted] attempts to institute effective policies that would ensure greater gender equality." See Luciak, "Joining Forces for Democratic Governance," ; Ellsberg, "The Nicaraguan Women of Women Against Violence...", 83.

Generally speaking, recommendations suggest that security should not be determined by military agents alone. Many groups are peripheral to traditional or militarized security concerns and are neglected during military considerations. These groups are disproportionately comprised of women. As combatants, wives, widows and dependents of ex-combatants, women must be explicitly included in security initiatives as they have a vested interest in ending the cycle of violence and building a safer society for their families.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, proponents of women's active involvement in security reform stress the important social role that women have during all stages of DDR. A recent UN study found that:

Women as [the] primary educators of their families and communities need to participate in decision-making on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and other disarmament and non-proliferation education and training efforts. ... Women have an essential role in helping to create the conditions for the cessation of violent conflict, in such activities as monitoring the peace, dealing with trauma among the victims and perpetrators of violence, collecting and destroying weapons and rebuilding societies.<sup>87</sup>

For these reasons, programs and pilot projects that provide further evidence of the value of women's contribution to security reform and DDR should be encouraged, supported, and documented.

While the general mechanisms of security initiatives must be reformed to be more inclusive of women, so too must the specific DDR programs.<sup>88</sup> Conaway and Martinez stress that, "one of the most effective, yet difficult, means to ensure that the needs, concerns and ideas of women—combatants and non-combatants alike—are included in a DDR process is to have women included, and a gender perspective incorporated, in peace

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<sup>86</sup> Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *Women War Peace: An Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building*, Progress of the World's Women, 2002, Volume 1, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 2002, 6.

<sup>87</sup> Author Unknown, "United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education," *United Nations*, General Assembly document, August 30, 2002, United Nations, 2002, [http://ods-ddsny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/456/87/PDF/N0245687.pdf](http://ods-ddsny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/456/87/PDF/N0245687.pdf?OpenElement). cited in Vanessa Farr "The Importance of a Gender Perspective to Successful Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Processes," *Women, Men, Peace and Security Disarmament Forum*, 27.

<sup>88</sup> Farr, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective...", 28.

negotiations.”<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, they argue that current security reforms “neglect the many complex roles that women play during war and peace [and] may lead to a less effective, less informed DDR that does not fully extend to the community level and may not lead to long-term or sustainable peace.”<sup>90</sup>

Incorporating a gendered-perspective in DDR initiatives and including mechanisms similar to those used by the *Weapons for Development Programme* (WDP) pilot project in Albania are useful suggestions.<sup>91</sup> Research completed during the WDP demonstrates that incorporating a gender perspective in disarmament processes combined with non-proliferation education efforts can help officials to locate arms and remove them from circulation. In discussing research and findings, Vanessa Farr also made reference to the WDP’s work in Albania (1998-2002), noting that the project provides an example of how gender mainstreaming can have an impact on peacebuilding processes:

Women’s support for the project contributed to its success, since their involvement increased the number of weapons collected. Women in the pilot project reported an increase in their knowledge of disarmament and therefore their capacity to assist the authorities in accessing and collecting weapons, and commented that they understand disarmament from a more comprehensive perspective, not just as a means to reduce criminality, but also as a means for communities to make political, social and economic progress.... Finally, the beginning of a new culture of resistance to arms proliferation was reported, with women providing a previously unappreciated capacity to support a comprehensive disarmament and peacebuilding process.<sup>92</sup>

The project demonstrates how educating women and incorporating them in efforts towards removing arms post-conflict can help mitigate the incidence of violence and may result in greater overall security.<sup>93</sup>

In order to make DDR initiatives available to women and be more efficient, Farr suggests that women fieldworkers be trained to interview women and identify combatants

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<sup>89</sup> Conaway and Martinez, “Adding Value...,” 6.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> “In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) developed a pilot project aimed at increasing women’s role in the ‘Weapons for Development Programme’ (1998–2002) in the Albanian districts of Gramsch, Elbasan and Diber.” See Farr, “The Importance of a Gender Perspective...,” 29.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

and other participants that should be included in DDR processes.<sup>94</sup> With regard to women's demobilization and reintegration, Farr states that training in economically profitable skills should be offered as soon as possible for populations displaced and living in refugee camps (where the majority are generally women). Moreover, to support women's participation in training initiatives, practical supports for women are necessary during the delivery of benefits. For example, providing childcare assistance would enable women to access benefits and attend training and workshops despite familial responsibilities.<sup>95</sup> Lastly, women's voluntary re-entry into civil society must be recognized and rewarded because of the value of their reintegration to the greater reintegration of all society members post-conflict. Ensuring that benefits packages reach these women demonstrates recognition and appreciation for their reintegration.

While all efforts should be made to support and document the value of women's contribution to security reform, Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf believe that determining what constitutes 'security' should also be examined. Rehn and Sirleaf argue that "[s]ecurity does not just mean the end of war, it means the ability to go about your business safely, in a safe environment, to go to work, to go home, and to travel outside your home knowing that your family is safe and will not be harmed."<sup>96</sup> Women's security concerns are often belittled or ignored post-conflict. Although women have publicly demonstrated their security concerns, greater efforts must be taken to support public education campaigns that seek to demystify sexualized and domestic violence as well as human rights abuses in general.

In addition, as suggested by Rehn and Sirleaf, security measures should include the implementation of community policing<sup>97</sup> as a means to increase women's security post-conflict. They recommend that women be present in all areas of police work, maintaining that their participation in police forces will mean that crimes against women will be taken more seriously. Moreover, police, military and judiciary should be required

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<sup>94</sup> Vanessa Farr, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective...", 32.

<sup>95</sup> Conaway and Martinez, "Adding Value...", 18.

<sup>96</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women War Peace...*, 121.

<sup>97</sup> Community policing requires the collaboration of civil society and the police to identify security risks.

to take gender sensitivity training to ensure women's security concerns are addressed and enforced.<sup>98</sup>

## GOVERNANCE

Another critical component of peacebuilding involves governance. Governance reforms outlined in traditional peacebuilding contain measures to implement democratic institutions, free and fair elections and functioning judicial systems with the goal of increasing transparency, representation and accountability. The purpose of this section is to explain what traditional peacebuilding prescribes with respect to governance reforms, outline problems associated with current governance reform policies, demonstrate women's response to their governance concerns as well as the significance of their efforts, and lastly, present governance reform recommendations that may strengthen reforms outlined in peacebuilding.

### *Governance Reforms in Traditional Peacebuilding*

The traditional peacebuilding framework includes policy and institutional reforms that are intended to promote democratic institutions by increasing participation, representation and accountability in governance. For example, the holding of regular elections is considered the primary method of advancing participatory democracy during peacebuilding. Proponents claim that the stability of governing systems cannot be achieved without the participation of former adversaries in democratic political processes post-conflict.<sup>99</sup> Elections are also used to promote open and fair competition post-conflict because they present the opportunity to resolve conflict non-violently. With the help of international assistance and monitoring, fora for rational debates are encouraged throughout this election process.

Building a legitimate government post-conflict also requires that judicial system reform occurs in tandem with efforts to reinforce participatory decision-making. The literature repeatedly cites the importance of strengthening judicial systems by removing corrupt officials and (re)building institutions intended to protect the public. Failure to

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<sup>98</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women War Peace...*, 121-122.

<sup>99</sup> Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 1.

respond to past and continued violence through a fair judicial system will only impede progress towards justice, accountability, and reconciliation and will jeopardize the entire peacebuilding process.<sup>100</sup> Establishing a working court system and having officials of the system (judges, lawyers and police) who uphold the rule of law are all essential for a functioning judiciary. Judicial reform efforts must also include protecting and enforcing a constitutional structure that defends human rights and provides accountability.

### *Problems with Governance Reforms in Traditional Peacebuilding*

However, promoting good governance in post-conflict societies, that is encouraging increased participation, representation and accountability, is an immensely difficult and complex task. One of the most significant challenges is the integration of marginalized populations, in this case women, into the decision-making processes. Overcoming this challenge is important because when groups are excluded from participation in governance, the resulting decisions do not reflect the concerns of the entire population. While this thesis deals specifically with the issue of women, this problem of group marginalization is not unique to them but is also experienced by others such as the indigenous and rural populations.

Often times, as is the case in many Latin American countries, women's exclusion is embedded in a male-dominated *machista* culture that limits women's participation in decision-making and in politics in general. Not surprisingly, peacebuilding strategies in the region reflect this exclusion. Despite the value of women's actual contributions during the peacebuilding process they remain under-represented in decision-making and rebuilding efforts post-conflict. What is even more problematic is that there has been little effort to include women in these processes.<sup>101</sup> In Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, this oversight has not only limited women's participation in politics, in decision-making, and in areas of civil society, but it has reinforced the culture of impunity that exists with regard to violence against women.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>101</sup> While the value of their participation is now being recognized by some peacebuilding theorists and in some countries.

### *Responses of Women to the Challenges of Governance Reforms*

Despite their ‘formal’ exclusion, women and women’s organizations have contributed in meaningful ways to governance reform in each of these countries. Their actions have centered on three areas: shaping policy direction and parties’ election platforms, encouraging participatory democratic systems, and exploring the culture of impunity within governance and judicial systems. While their efforts have had differing levels of success, women have had a significant impact on governance efforts during post-conflict peacebuilding.

In Nicaragua, the FSLN’s successful victory over the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, resulted in many affiliated organizations experiencing massive growth, including the Luisa Amanda Espinosa Women’s Association (AMNLAE).<sup>102</sup> Created by the FSLN, and operating in 700 communities throughout Nicaragua, AMNLAE’s active membership was comprised of approximately 30,000 women by 1983.<sup>103</sup> While AMNLAE organized women to be politically active in support of the FSLN’s revolutionary efforts, AMNLAE also attempted to integrate women into the reconstruction process after the FSLN took power.<sup>104</sup>

Unfortunately, by the mid-1980s, Polakoff and La Ramee state that AMNLAE and other FSLN party organizations “had become chiefly mechanisms through which party policy was implemented.”<sup>105</sup> The FSLN party leadership’s “response to women’s needs and their willingness to develop policy in a timely fashion to improve the status of women” was mixed.<sup>106</sup> As one past member of AMNLAE states:

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<sup>102</sup> Originally called the Association of Nicaraguan Women Confronting the Nation’s Problem (AMPRONAC), the Asociacion de Mujeres Nacional Luisa Amanda Espinoza (AMNLAE) was created “by and for the party, and not by and for women.” See Erica Polakoff and Pierre La Ramee, “Grass-Roots Organizations,” in Thomas W. Walker, eds., *Nicaragua Without Illusions: Regime Transition and Structural Adjustment in the 1990s*, Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1997, 185; Ewig, “The Strengths and Limits of the NGO Women’s Movement Model: Shaping Nicaragua’s Democratic Institutions,” *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (1990), 80.

<sup>103</sup> Author Unknown, “Gender Profile of the Conflict in Nicaragua.”

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Karen Kampwirth suggests that the women’s movement during this time “was largely as a cheerleader for the Sandinistas...AMNLAE provided support for the male-dominated FSLN, without directly challenging sexual inequality.” See Karen Kampwirth, “Feminism, Antifeminism, and Electoral Politics in Postwar Nicaragua and El Salvador,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 113, No.2m (1998), 265-272; Polakoff and Ramee, “Grass-Roots Organizations,” 185;

<sup>106</sup> Polakoff and La Ramee, “Grass-Roots Organizations,” 191.

The [FSLN] always had the AMNLAE leadership more committed to its membership in the party than to its leadership role for women .... The tasks carried out by AMNLAE placed a higher priority on the party than on women .... The FSLN listened to us, but they never took our demands seriously.<sup>107</sup>

As a result of operating within the male-dominated FSLN, and the limited ability of AMNLAE to convince party leaders to include women's concerns in party platforms and agendas, AMNLAE's membership and participation declined.<sup>108</sup> By the late 1980s AMNLAE experienced internal divides between "those who wanted an organization dedicate to interests defined by its members, including feminist interests, and those who continued to believe that women were best served by defending the FSLN revolution."<sup>109</sup>

Given the FSLN's electoral defeat in 1990, the failure of AMNLAE to operate autonomously, and the internal divisions and challenges AMNLAE members struggled to rectify, the once large organization no longer exists today. Nevertheless, through AMNLAE, many women did gain valuable experience organizing and mobilizing groups and individuals, operating women's centers, and training others to be politically active. For this reason, AMNLAE has been credited with influencing the development of many semi-autonomous and autonomous women's organizations and laying the foundations for the contemporary women's movement in Nicaragua.

For example, Nicaraguan women have gone on to shape the direction of policy and state institutions through the development of policy platforms.<sup>110</sup> The *National Women's Coalition (NWC - Coalición Nacional de Mujeres)*, a group built across ideological boundaries to make women's concerns known during the 1996 elections in

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<sup>107</sup> AMNLAE also struggled to "represent all women and address the diversity in their material conditions of life, social class, ethnicity, and aspirations," and faced criticisms for "having primarily a middle-class orientation and thereby being unable to attend to the needs of rural women, the urban poor, and indigenous women." See Polakoff and La Ramee, "Grass-Roots Organizations," 191.

<sup>108</sup> Polakoff and La Ramee, "Grass-Roots Organizations," 191.

<sup>109</sup> Ewig, "The Strengths and Limits of the NGO..." 82.

<sup>110</sup> Nicaragua, home to one of the most dynamic feminist movements in Latin America, boasts fifty-nine non-governmental organizations dedicated to women and led by women serving a population of approximately four million.

Nicaragua,<sup>111</sup> developed a comprehensive political platform that included demands for women's rights, space in political and socio-economic arenas, and attention to reproductive health services.<sup>112</sup> It also actively promoted youth involvement in the political system by "develop[ing] workshops to train young people to participate in politics in an environment of mutual respect."<sup>113</sup>

Similar to women's efforts in Nicaragua, women's organizations in El Salvador publicly challenged political parties to incorporate women's concerns and demands in their policy platforms during the formal peacebuilding process.<sup>114</sup> For example, the *Women '94 Coalition*, a multi-party alliance of women, formed in January of 1993 (one year before the 1994 elections) with the intention of increasing female voter turnout, electing female candidates, and persuading political parties to address women's demands in their election platforms.<sup>115</sup>

During the election campaign efforts of the Women '94 Coalition argued that a quota be implemented to allocate leadership positions to women. The *Women's Secretariat* division of the Salvadoran FMLN also argued for quotas, demanding that the FMLN implement a 30 percent female quota within the party structure in 1994.<sup>116</sup> While their efforts to convince party leaders to implement a 30 percent quota in 1994 failed, the

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<sup>111</sup> The National Women's Coalition formed as an autonomous women's movement following the 1990 electoral defeat of the Sandinistas. Luciak states that many female Sandinista ex-combatants had played a significant role in the organization's development, opting to put their efforts towards the women's movement rather than continuing their efforts to transform the Sandinista political party from within. Dedicated to collective action and women's solidarity, the NWC provided a common ground for female leaders from the women's movement and political parties to come together to fight for women's rights. See Luciak, "Joining Force for Democratic Governance..." (2005); Metoyer, *Women and the State in Post-Sandinista Nicaragua...*, 102.

<sup>112</sup> Luciak, "Joining Forces for Democratic Governance..." (2005) 2005..

<sup>113</sup> Metoyer, *Women and the State in Post-Sandinista Nicaragua...*,102.

<sup>114</sup> Ilja A. Luciak, "Gender Equality in the Salvadoran Transition," *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 105, Vol.26, No.2 (March 1999), 44.

<sup>115</sup> A number of women's organizations joined forces in 1993 to gain a voice in national politics. The results of this coalition became known as "Women '94." Concertacion de Mujeres por la Pas, la Dignidd, y la Igualdad (The Women's Coalition for Peace, Dignity, and Equality) is credited with initiating this effort. See Kampwirth, "Feminism, Antifeminism, and Electoral Politics..." 11.

<sup>116</sup> Calls for reforms have reportedly been as high as demanding a 50 percent female quota within political parties. Patricia Hipsher notes that such reforms in El Salvador "enjoy the support of some leading conservative female political figures, [such as] Gloria Salguero (ARENA) and First Lady Elizabeth Valderon Sol. Deisi Cheyne." Unfortunately, women were unsuccessful in their attempt to implement the quota within the FMLN in 1994. See Patricia Hipsher, "Right and Left-Women in Post-Revolutionary El Salvador: Feminist Autonomy and Cross-Political Alliance Building for Gender Equality," in Victoria Gonzalez and Karen Kampwirth, *Radical Women in Latin America, Left and Right*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001, 153; Luciak, "Joining Forces for Democratic Governance..." 21.

Secretariat's persistence led party leadership to guarantee women's proportional representation in party structures during the 1995 National Convention.<sup>117</sup> Ilja A. Luciak states that, as a result of these efforts, "women were elected to one-third of the positions on the national decision-making bodies." The Women's Secretariat was again successful in 1997 when demands to implement a 35 percent quota were approved by the party leadership and implemented as part of the candidate selection process.<sup>118</sup> Many women's organizations continue to express hope that the recently elected FMLN government will address the many concerns of women, including reproductive rights, sex education, women's labour, domestic violence, impunity and femicide."<sup>119</sup> Women continue to promote democracy, representation and participation in El Salvador.

Returning to the Women's Coalition, it dedicated the first eight months of its existence to developing a platform of policy issues central to Salvadoran women.<sup>120</sup> It identified violence, health, education, development, land, environment, legislation and political party representation as central policy issues that affected women.<sup>121</sup>

The results of the 1994 and 1997 elections in El Salvador demonstrate that the actions of women and women's organizations within the realm of politics has been relatively successful in promoting gender equity and women's rights. While the FMLN leadership had been exclusively male during the war, Luciak states that female

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<sup>117</sup> Luciak, "Gender Equality and Electoral Politics on the Left...", 42.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> The recent election of the FMLN party and President Mauricio Funes marks the end of two-decades of ARENA party rule. See Sara Skinner, "Women Ask Funes to Create Policies that Guarantee Their Rights," March 24, 2009, <http://thesharefoundation.blogspot.com/2009/03/women-ask-funes-to-create-policies-that.html>, Date Accessed July 14, 2009; Victoria Stanford, "From Genocide to Femicide: Impunity and Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Guatemala," *Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 7, 2008, 104-122; Matthew Lee and Diego Mendez, "Mauricio Funes Installed As El Salvador's First Leftist President," *The Huffington Post*, June 1, 2009, [www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/06/02/mauricio-funes-installed\\_n\\_210225.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/06/02/mauricio-funes-installed_n_210225.html), Date Accessed July 14, 2009.

<sup>120</sup> Karen Kampwirth, "Feminism, Antifeminism, and Electoral Politics...", 1998, 266.

<sup>121</sup> Their final demands included the provision of comprehensive sex education, allowing free and voluntary motherhood through contraception and abortion rights, increasing access to and quality of public hospitals, stabilizing food prices, allocating fifty percent of leadership positions to women, and considering women's interests in the gender division of labour. See Kampwirth, "Feminism, Antifeminism, and Electoral Politics...", 266-267. The work of other prominent feminist organizations in El Salvador, such as *Las Dignas*, *Cemujer*, and *Las Madres Demandantes*, have progressively changed the course of policy direction through debate and have won some important legislative battles: passing a law against intra-familial violence, reforming the family code and toughening the country's child support legislation. Irina Carlota Silber, "Mothers/Fighters/Citizens: Violence and Disillusionment in Post-War El Salvador," *Gender & History*, Vol. 16, No. 3, November 2004, 573.

representation began in 1992 at around 20 percent and increased with each subsequent leadership election until it reached a rate 40 percent female representation in 2005.<sup>122</sup>

For example, in 1994, women constituted less than 11 percent of all seats in Parliament (23.8 percent of these women were FMLN representatives), and 32 of the 262 mayors throughout El Salvador were female.<sup>123</sup> Women had more success at the national level and during parliamentary elections in 1997 where they represented 28.6 percent and 30.1 percent of the substitutes for Parliament. Moreover, women occupied two of the five top positions considered safe on the national list.<sup>124</sup> Reflecting on women's achievements, Luciak states:

[T]he improvement in female candidates' chances of election was not an accident but evidence of the female militants' hard work to persuade their male counterparts to accept gender equality within the party... It was evident that women have been most successful in mobilizing their forces at the national level and for high-profile parliamentary elections. Female leaders also acknowledged that their<sup>125</sup> efforts met with greater success in urban areas than in the countryside.

While women in Nicaragua and El Salvador have had to struggle to make their concerns known during governance reform, women's experience in Guatemala has set the bar for women's inclusion initiatives post-conflict. Specifically, the *National Women's Forum*, established in 1997 through a consultative process during the 1996 Guatemalan Peace Accords in accordance with the goal of overseeing the fulfillment of the Government's commitments to women, has made significant inroads in promoting women's rights and policy concerns.<sup>126</sup> The Forum represents Guatemala's multiethnic

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<sup>122</sup> Luciak, "Joining Forces for Democratic Governance..." (2005), 22.

<sup>123</sup> This level of representation fell from 12 percent to 6 percent in elections at the municipal level in 1997. See Luciak, "Gender Equality in the Salvadoran Transition," 55.

<sup>124</sup> Luciak, "Gender Equality in the Salvadoran Transition," 46-49.

<sup>125</sup> "A main obstacle to increasing the number of women elected to municipal office was many women's expressed reluctance to be nominated...the result of traditional gender relations, which relegated women to the private sphere." Ilja A. Luciak, "Gender Equality and Electoral Politics on the Left: A Comparison of El Salvador and Nicaragua," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Spring, 1998), 50-52.

<sup>126</sup> United Nations, "Guatemala: Presidential Secretariat for Women – An Advisory and Coordinating Body for Public Policies Reply to the Questionnaire on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)," April 2004,

society and gives voice to women from all 23 linguistic groups in the country.<sup>127</sup> The Forum was especially instrumental in mobilizing women in defense of the 1996 Peace Accords which negotiated an end to Guatemala's decades long civil war. According to Sumie Nakaya, it was the actions of Guatemalan women that resulted in women's concerns being addressed in several of the peace accords. For example, the Agreement on Resettlement of the Population Groups Uprooted by the Armed Conflict addressed the need to provide protective measures for women-headed families, widows and orphans affected by the civil war.<sup>128</sup> The recognition of women's concerns and protection needs is important in the Guatemalan context because as of 2000, it was estimated that there were 50,000 widows in the country.<sup>129</sup>

The strategy of the Forum was to conduct surveys amongst Guatemalan women, and to use information from the respondents to determine women's governance and development concerns. The organization then worked to have many of these issues addressed in party platforms and in the political arena in general. The Forum also contributed to the successful passage of important co-ownership legislation between men and women. Prior to their active campaigning the recognition of women's rights to co-ownership of land, property and housing stated that "married women or those in common law relationships were not to be granted independent title of land and housing in Guatemala."<sup>130</sup> New legislation in Guatemala now requires mandatory compliance with joint titling laws and has been championed by many as an example of success in the area of women's rights.<sup>131</sup> The Forum's efforts also helped to create the Presidential Women's

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[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/responses/GUATEMALA-English.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/responses/GUATEMALA-English.pdf), Date Accessed, July 13, 2009, 2.

<sup>127</sup> Author Unknown, "Gender Profile of the Conflict in Guatemala," *United Nations Development Fund For Women*, WomenWarPeace.org, [Available Online] [http://www.womenwarpeace.org/docs/guatemala\\_pfv.pdf](http://www.womenwarpeace.org/docs/guatemala_pfv.pdf), Date Accessed November 2008; Susanne Jonas, *Of Centaurs and Doves: Guatemala's Peace Process*, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000, 140.

<sup>128</sup> United Nations, "The Guatemala Peace Agreements," Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, 1998, 41. And Luciak, *After the Revolution...*, 56.

<sup>129</sup> Author Unknown, "Gender Profile of the Conflict in Guatemala..."

<sup>130</sup> Leilana Farha, "Women's Rights to Land, Property and Housing," *Forced Migration Review, Going Home: Land & Property Issues Feature*, Review 7, Oxford Department of International Development, [www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR07/fmr7.8.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR07/fmr7.8.pdf), Date Accessed, November 14, 2009.

<sup>131</sup> Co-ownership legislation in Guatemala has been championed as "one of the most inspiring examples" of "new opportunities and roles in relation to land, property and housing which may be the germinating seed for structural change and the realization of [women's] rights." And, while women's efforts in this regard have been successful, Hurtig notes that the "idea of co-ownership was so contrary to existing patriarchal ideologies that local-level functionaries had to receive gender-sensitivity training courses before the law

Secretariat, which was involved in the development of a National Policy for Promotion and Advancement of Guatemalan Women and Equal Opportunity Plan 2001-2006.<sup>132</sup>

It should be noted too that aside from mobilizing in support of the Peace Accords and advancing policies in support of women, the Forum operated as a training ground for women to organize and enter positions of political leadership, encouraging their inclusive participation in governance structures in Guatemala.<sup>133</sup> The leadership training offered by these organizations taught women how to assume important decision-making roles in their communities. Despite these efforts, Luz Mendez reports that increasing women's representation at various levels of government in Guatemala has proven challenging. For example, in the 1995, 1999, and 2003 parliamentary elections, women's representation has shown a negative trend decreasing from 13.8 percent, to 11.5 percent, to 8.9 percent respectively.<sup>134</sup> At the municipal level, the number of women elected as Mayors fluctuated during the last three elections falling from 1.2 percent in 1995, to 1 percent in 1999, and then increasing to 2.4 percent in 2003. Mendez states that "even though this last figure is still too low, it marks an important rise in women's access to this elected position."<sup>135</sup>

Ilja Lucia notes that although the Peace Accords were not implemented as the negative vote prevailed in the referendum to ratify them, the Forum has been recognized for having a positive impact on the fight for women's rights in Guatemala.<sup>136</sup> This view was reinforced by Zulema Paz, President of the Women's Commission in the Guatemalan

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was effectively applied." See Janise Hurtig, "Women's Political Lives in Latin America: Reconfiguring Terrains of Theory, History, and Practice," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 40, No.1 (February 2005), 194; Farha, "Women's Rights to Land, Property and Housing," 24.

<sup>132</sup> Luciak, "Joining Forces for Democratic Governance...", 10; United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala – MINUGUA, "Report of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) for the Consultative Group meeting for Guatemala," MINUGUA, January 18, 2002, 12, [www.iadb.org/regions/re2/consultative\\_group/gu/minugua\\_eng.pdf](http://www.iadb.org/regions/re2/consultative_group/gu/minugua_eng.pdf), Date Accessed July 22, 2009.

<sup>133</sup> Author Unknown, "Gender Profile of the Conflict in Guatemala...",

<sup>134</sup> While the actual number of elected women increase, so too did the number of seats in Congress during the 1999 and 2003 elections. Therefore the "relative representation of women decreased." Mendez states that "women continue to be marginalized from elected bodies and high level appointed positions," and believes that "[s]tronger measures are needed to remove the big structural and institutional obstacles for women's full participation in the electoral process and the political sphere as a whole. See Luz Mendez, "Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes in Post-Conflict Countries," *United Nations, Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)*, January 19-22, 2004, 2-5.s

<sup>135</sup> Luz Mendez, "Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes...", 6.

<sup>136</sup> Luciak, "Joining Forces for Democratic Governance...", 9.

Congress, who concurred that progress made in the area of women's rights in Guatemala can mostly be attributed to the Forum's work.<sup>137</sup>

Another area in which women have been active concerns the judicial systems of governance. In each of these countries women continue to be affected by domestic and sexualized violence, and they lack the physical and legal supports to challenge and punish offenders<sup>138</sup> as impunity is prevalent. Impunity within the judicial system can have far reaching social and cultural implications, therefore the pursuit of justice and accountability is extremely important during peacebuilding. Women's groups have been especially active challenging impunity in Guatemala as violence against women is a significant problem in the country. The *Union Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas* (UNAMG), founded on March 8, 1980 after four years of preparatory work,<sup>139</sup> has focused its efforts on unveiling the culture of impunity that exists within governance and judicial systems. Committed to truth, justice, accountability, and women's security, the UNAMG has been openly condemning the disappearance and killing of women and impunity in Guatemala. For example, in 2004 alone a staggering 527 women were violently murdered with only one of these murders resulting in a prosecution.<sup>140</sup> Through public campaigns, women are making known the government's lack of justice and accountability as well as the ignorance of women's concerns post-conflict.

The significance of women's ability to shape policy and election platforms in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala is demonstrated by their ability to collectively organize and make known their demands. Organizing in spite of language barriers, party divisions, ideological differences and events of the past has allowed women to exercise their influence in the political arena. Women's achievements to date should be considered substantial given the challenges of marginalization, discrimination and the inherent division between the various social groups. The symbolic value of these successes for

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Generally women and girls need physical, emotional, and legal support that allows them to leave traumatic pasts and begin to recover, both emotionally and physically. See Author Unknown, "Women, Peace and Security Initiatives: Nicaragua," [Available Online] <http://www.peacewomen.org/campaigns/Nicaragua/Initiatives.html>. Date Accessed October 13, 2008.

<sup>139</sup> As a result of political repression in the mid 1980s, the UNAMG was forced to work from exile in four countries. See National Union of Guatemalan Women (UNAMG), "National Union of Guatemalan Women," <http://www.unamg.es.tl/>, Date Accessed Nov 2, 2009.

<sup>140</sup> Author Unknown, "Gender Profile of the Conflict in Guatemala...,"

women has been noteworthy as each success serves to strengthen women's collective efforts, increasing their confidence and ability to participate in politics and influence policy directions.

Women's efforts in support of participatory democracy have been significant, centering on encouraging political participation and increasing voter turnout through education and promoting activism and leadership. Through their own political activism, training and education initiatives, they have sought to influence the general population, other women and youth by stressing the importance of democratic participation in each of the three countries. Broadly speaking, the promotion of democracy among women's groups has contributed to the development of a new political culture that values the mechanisms of participatory decision-making and conflict resolution rather than influence by violent means. The implications of these efforts have the potential to effect long-term changes that will benefit women of future generations.

Women also challenged the effectiveness of state institutions such as the judiciary. They have pressured governments for action to address impunity and have demanded justice for past abuses. The efforts of UNAMG have been significant in this regard and the value of these actions and others like it have been recognized by Amnesty International which stated that, "Women's organizations have [become] increasingly vocal in calling on the Guatemalan government to end the impunity for killings of women in Guatemala and have criticized the lack of response of government authorities in the face of escalating killings."<sup>141</sup>

### *Recommendations for Enhancing Governance Reforms*

Several recommendations have been put forth to improve the traditional governance approaches outlined within peacebuilding. Generally speaking, recommendations suggest that post-conflict reforms must go beyond implementing 'free and fair' elections to include efforts that increase the level of political participation among even the most marginalized populations. Governance and judicial reforms recommend increased gender-awareness, support for women's participation, and the

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<sup>141</sup> Amnesty International, "Guatemala: Members of Union Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas (UNAMG)," *Amnesty International*, June 2006, [http://www.amnestyinternational.be/doc/IMG/article\\_PDF/article8170.pdf](http://www.amnestyinternational.be/doc/IMG/article_PDF/article8170.pdf), Date Accessed October 13, 2008.

inclusion of women in all levels of policy and decision-making. Many suggest that increasing support for women's political participation will result in heightened awareness of women's concerns among governing institutions.

The recommendations also stress that these governance reforms be emphasized at the onset of peacebuilding efforts. For example, proponents of women's inclusion insist that all efforts be made to make room for women during the transformation from combatant forces to political parties. They suggest that women's active participation in these initial stages of party formation may increase the likelihood that their concerns will be discussed throughout the peacebuilding process. Rehn and Sirleaf state that gender equality must be recognized in all agreements and transitional governance structures and argue that gender quotas (beginning with 30 percent) must be established within national electoral law in order to work towards achieving gender equality.<sup>142</sup> In addition, Rehn and Sirleaf advocate international electoral assistance to achieve gender parity in decision-making positions.<sup>143</sup> Moreover, they argue that women's participation in governance is necessary so that all involved in governance reform can be made aware of the gender-specific concerns that limit women's participation in the public sphere.

Rehn and Sirleaf also recommend that women's organizing efforts be supported and funded so that women's participation in the peace process, in new governments, and in rebuilding judicial and civil infrastructure is enabled. They state that it is necessary to promote, encourage and assist women's committees and groups in forming partnerships so that they may address their policy concerns through participatory democracy. And, in order to help create space for women in politics, they recommend that women's participation be enhanced by providing them with space for women-only gatherings.<sup>144</sup>

Rehn and Sirleaf also argue for monetarily supported gender-awareness campaigns, leadership training, education programs, and workshops that promote democratic participation.<sup>145</sup> Supporting women's abilities to improve and advance their leadership capabilities is necessary if women are to become more active leaders in politics. The learned skills will not only benefit women in the short-term, but will be

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<sup>142</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women War Peace...*, 88.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-87.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 136-137.

passed on to other women and generations. Assistance and training can include improving gender consciousness, critical thinking, and information about lobbying and policy platform development. These skills are necessary to ensure that policy considerations and decisions that may have a negative impact on women are put into words and presented to political parties for consideration and action.

Lastly, because impunity can jeopardize the peacebuilding process, proponents of reform argue that actual and perceived injustice must be addressed and mitigated during governance reform.<sup>146</sup> Impunity diminishes the public's perception of government accountability and can foster suspicion and distrust towards newly forming systems of democracy. Thus the problem needs to be addressed so that, "the society that was affected by the conflict can invest in peace."<sup>147</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf suggest that reform requires more than punishing perpetrators – it requires establishing the rule of law and a just social and political order. Women, often underrepresented in judicial processes, must be consulted about the form, scope and models for seeking accountability. A combination of non-judicial methods, including truth and reconciliation commissions and traditional mechanisms can also play an important role in establishing accountability for crimes against women during war, suggest Rehn and Sirleaf.<sup>148</sup>

## **RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT**

While security and the stability of governing systems is of utmost importance, relief and development policies are also an integral part of the broader peacebuilding process. These policies are aimed at mitigating the influence of 'spoilers', such as poverty, inequality and discontent post-conflict. The purpose of this section is to explain what traditional peacebuilding says about implementing relief and development policies, outline problems associated with current initiatives, demonstrate women's response to their relief and development concerns as well as the significance of their efforts, and lastly, present reforms and recommendations that may strengthen relief and development policies outlined in peacebuilding.

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<sup>146</sup> Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "Toward the Theory and Practice of Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding," in *Positive Approaches to Peacebuilding: A Resource for Innovators*, Edited by Sampson et al., Washington: Pact Publishers, 2003, 18.

<sup>147</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women War Peace...*, 92.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-94.

### *Relief and Development in Traditional Peacebuilding*

Traditional peacebuilding efforts include relief and development initiatives intended to address poverty and inequality as these conditions have the potential to undermine peace and breed discontent and anger post-conflict. Relief policies serve to address the needs of populations suffering from the physical, social and psychological effects of war, mental health problems, preventable infections and diseases, maternal mortality and morbidity, and HIV and AIDS. Meanwhile, development policies (both social and economic) are implemented to assist populations in overcoming poverty, unemployment, educational decline and inequality. This often includes steps to stimulate economic growth and development through investment in human resources and infrastructures. Traditional peacebuilding theorists recognize relief and development policies as necessary first steps towards transforming deep-rooted conflicts and overcoming development challenges.

### *Problems with Relief and Development Reforms in Traditional Peacebuilding*

While traditional relief policies recognize the many problems societies confront post-conflict, the effectiveness of the policies are generally limited because the aid provided to deal with the problems is inadequate. In addition, there is the very high likelihood that aid may not even reach some of the most vulnerable populations. Importantly, when it comes to women, traditional relief and development policies are unable to ease the suffering that women experience. These problems are often closely related to deficiencies in other areas of peacebuilding, including the inability to ensure that women are safe from violence and health-related suffering post-conflict.

As discussed earlier, post-conflict development policies often fail to include women in training programs and workshops despite the fact that women can significantly contribute to community development. And, while development policies espouse the value of education and training for ex-combatants, the ability of women to participate and take advantage of these opportunities is limited due to a variety of factors such as limited mobility due to familial obligations or unawareness of their rights.

For instance, with regard to the *Land Transfer Program* in El Salvador (a land distribution benefits initiative offered during DDR), women's organizations had to intervene on behalf of women to challenge discriminatory limitations within the Program. Nidia Diaz, former FMLN *comandante* recalls that:

In negotiating, when the time came to discuss the concept of beneficiaries, it was understood in our heads that women would participate, but that wasn't [written] specifically. And we had problems because when the lists of beneficiaries were formulated, members of the [negotiating] team did not specifically put down the names of women. It was a very serious problem that we had later because only the men were thought of as beneficiaries, and we had to return to re-do the lists.<sup>149</sup>

### *Responses of Women to the Challenges of Relief and Development Reforms*

In response to the weaknesses of the traditional peacebuilding design when it comes to women and relief and development, many organizations in the three countries, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, have responded by developing programs of their own. They have been active in health services, skills development, education promotion, and in consciousness raising about women's concerns.

In Nicaragua, as in the other cases being studied, women are especially vulnerable when health services are unavailable and face several health risks related to reproduction, including cervical cancer.<sup>150</sup> For example, Nicaragua's maternal mortality rate as of 2008 was 250 per 100,000 live births, which is nearly double the national average. Many maternal deaths have also been attributed to the incidence of illicit abortions.<sup>151</sup> As relief and development strategies made no explicit accommodations for women in these situations, Nicaraguan women themselves created a variety of alternative service-oriented organizations and collectives to provide healthcare post-conflict. Examples range from the larger *Centro de la Mujer (IXCHEN)*, which has been operating since 1989 and is comprised of 27 branch offices,<sup>152</sup> to the smaller *Colectiva Masaya*, which formed in

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<sup>149</sup> Conaway and Martinez, "Adding Value...", 3.

<sup>150</sup> Ewig, 85; Jill Replogle, "Training Traditional Birth Attendants in Guatemala," *The Lancet*, Jan 20-Jan 26, 2007; 369.

<sup>151</sup> MADRE, "Nicaragua, Country Overview – Health and Education," [www.madre.org/index.php?s=9&b=27](http://www.madre.org/index.php?s=9&b=27), Date Accessed October 11, 2008.

<sup>152</sup> Network Comunicación Initiative, "Centro de la Mujer (IXCHEN)," [www.comminit.com/es/node/%2039375/37](http://www.comminit.com/es/node/%2039375/37), Date Accessed November 2, 2009.

1988 and consisted of two-person collectives that provide much needed direct services such as counseling, dispensing birth control, and checking for cervical cancer.<sup>153</sup> Efforts have also included operating mobile health units to provide health care directly to remote communities.

These organizations have done their work too by collaborating directly with various levels of government, national and local, and in so doing have raised awareness of women's health concerns. They have also helped to provide a vision of a viable alternative model for women's health care (as well as the care of disadvantaged populations generally). These efforts have laid necessary groundwork for continued improvements to relief efforts during peacebuilding in general.

As in Nicaragua, women have also taken steps to respond to emergency and basic needs in El Salvador and Guatemala. To give an idea of the scope of the problem, Guatemala has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in Latin America. The Guatemalan public health ministry states that there are 153 deaths per 100,000 live births in Guatemala, while the average maternal mortality rate in Latin America is 94.7 per 100,000 live births.<sup>154</sup> This is considerably higher than the maternal mortality rate in El Salvador, which sat at approximately 71 maternal deaths per 100,000 reported live births between 2000 and 2007.<sup>155</sup>

While the need for women's health care is high among each of the three countries, a lack of available information about women's efforts to organize in response to women's health needs in El Salvador and Guatemala may suggest that less has been done in these two countries when compared to women's efforts in Nicaragua. However, one notable women's organization that has acted in response to women's health needs in Guatemala is the *Asociacion de Mujeres en Solidaridad* (AMES). Among the organization's goals, AMES works to advance women's reproductive and sexual rights and health and offers

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<sup>153</sup> Ewig states that the Colectiva Masaya was formed in 1988 by a group of professional women that belonged to the Confederacion Nacional de Profesionales (CONAPRO), a professional workers' association of the FSLN. She states that Colectiva Masaya was the "first alternative women's NGO's that emerged when tensions between feminists and the FSLN began to surface." Christina Ewig, "The Strengths and Limits of the NGO Women's Movement Model: Shaping Nicaragua's Democratic Institutions," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 34, No.3, (1999), 84-87.

<sup>154</sup> Jill Replogle, "Training Traditional Birth Attendants in Guatemala," 369.

<sup>155</sup> Author Unknown, "El Salvador: At a Glance," UNICEF, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/elsalvador\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/elsalvador_statistics.html), Date Accessed November 21, 2009.

nurse's aid training courses.<sup>156</sup> AMES also operates a health clinic and a mobile clinic to provide health services to women in Guatemala.<sup>157</sup>

The actions of women's organizations have also simultaneously relieved suffering and supported development in post-conflict societies.<sup>158</sup> For instance in Bajo Lempa, El Salvador, a region prone to mudslides and flooding, displaced women and female ex-combatants mobilized to carry out emergency response efforts as required. As well as providing regular aid to community members in the region, these women maintain and mend levies, monitor local industry actions, and lobby government regarding their relief and development concerns.<sup>159</sup> Arnoldo Garcia Cruz, President of the Community Organization for Developing an Economic and Social System in Bajo Lempa, notes these women are "playing a leading role... They are undertaking work in the church, the schools... [and] supporting economic development."<sup>160</sup> Similarly, *Las Dignas*, a prominent Salvadoran women's organization has also worked to meet the relief and development needs of communities post-conflict by rebuilding damaged infrastructure through large and small scale construction projects that have included building roads and bridges. *Las Dignas* was founded in 1990 by female members of the FSLN who believed their goals to be incompatible with the FSLN party's objectives. The organization has since remained an independent and autonomous organization working towards women's development.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Theresa Wolfwood, "Solidarity with Workers in Guatemala," The Barnard-Boecker Centre Foundation (BBCF), 2004, [Available Online] [www.bbcf.ca/\\_articles/guatemala\\_workers/guatemala\\_workers.htm](http://www.bbcf.ca/_articles/guatemala_workers/guatemala_workers.htm), Date Accessed, November 21, 2009; Author Unknown, "Guatemala: Promoting Women's Health," OXFAM Canada, <http://www.oxfam.ca/what-we-do/where-we-work/central-america/partner-profile-ames-asociacion-de-mujeres-en-solidaridad>, Date Accessed, November 21, 2009.

<sup>157</sup> Author Unknown, "Guatemala: Promoting Women's Health."

<sup>158</sup> In the case of El Salvador, Basic Health International's in-country partner is called "Speak@El Salvador". Unfortunately, limited information is available about Speak@El Salvador. BHI offers medical students from the United States clinical experience in El Salvador. Students are required to dedicate a portion of their time to screening for cervical cancer on remote communities, ongoing BHI patient follow-up research, distributing medications, and assisting with vision services. See Author Unknown, "Basic Health international: Basic Health Medical Immersion Course (Spring 2010), Basic Health International, 2008, <http://www.basichealthelsalvador.org/programs.html>, Date Accessed, November 21, 2009; Author Unknown, "Issues in Women's Health in Developing Counties," Global Education Office, Hampshire College, Program Outline for January Term 2009, 2008, <http://www.hampshire.edu/geo/9436.htm>, Date Accessed, November 21, 2009.

<sup>159</sup> Conaway and Martinez, "Adding Value...", 4.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>161</sup> *Las Dignas* also promotes female candidates during elections regardless of their ideology, whereas other women's organizations in El Salvador (namely *Movimiento de Mujeres "Mélida Anaya Montes"* (*Mélida*

In order to address the lack of relief and development in rural Guatemala, women established a branch of *MADRE*.<sup>162</sup> *MADRE* is a non-profit organization that was established in 1983 and is dedicated to advancing human rights, promoting a more equitable sharing of resources and is particularly aimed at improving the situation of women. Among other things, *MADRE* implemented the *Farming for the Future* project in response to the shortage of food in rural areas. This project provides sustenance and a source of income to Mayan women and their families in the Ixil region (an area deeply affected by the civil conflict) by establishing small chicken and pig farms in rural communities. The farms improve diets, generate income, teach farming, technical, and business skills, enable economic self-sufficiency, and have moved rural Mayan indigenous communities out of the cycle of poverty.<sup>163</sup> *MADRE* has also worked with the *Women Workers' Committee* to meet the basic needs of Guatemalans.<sup>164</sup> For example, in Barcenas,<sup>165</sup> the Committee spearheaded one of their first projects installing water filters for a neighbourhood, and providing clean drinking water to an entire community and three schools in the surrounding area.

The above examples from El Salvador and Guatemala demonstrate initiatives in which women's efforts have contributed significantly to both relief and development

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*Anaya Montes Women's Movement, or MAM*), believed that as "women supporting parties on the left of the ideological spectrum they could not support political rivals from the right," regardless of gender. These differences served to divide these women's groups when working cooperatively on projects such as the *Women's Initiative for Equality in Political Participation* between 1994 and 1996. Luciak, "Joining Forces for Democratic Governance..." (2005); Author Unknown, "Gender Profile of the Conflict in El Salvador..."

<sup>162</sup> *MADRE's* was established in 1983 by a group US women who had traveled to Nicaragua "to witness the impact of the US sponsored contra war." These women met with Nicaraguan women who showed them "day care centers, schools and clinics that had been bombed by contras supported by the US government." *MADRE* is a non-profit international organization that acts in numerous countries (including Nicaragua and Haiti) that "works towards a world in which all people enjoy the fullest range of individual and collective human rights; in which resources are shared equitably and sustainably; in which women participate effectively in all aspects of society; and in which people have a meaningful say in decisions that affect their lives." The organization demands rights, resources and results for women worldwide and has been inspired by the efforts of women's committees throughout Nicaragua, whose members' "children had been killed by the Contras or during the fight to overthrow the right-wing Somoza regime." See *MADRE*, "Demanding Rights, Resources & Results for Women Worldwide, [www.madre.org/index.php?video=1](http://www.madre.org/index.php?video=1), Date Accessed October 11, 2008.

<sup>163</sup> *MADRE*, "Farming for the Future," [www.madre.org/index.php?s=2&b=20&p=49](http://www.madre.org/index.php?s=2&b=20&p=49), Date Accessed October 11, 2008.

<sup>164</sup> The Women Workers' Committee was formed in 1997 by a group of *maquila* workers." See *MADRE*, Guatemala: Women Workers' Committee – Muixil," [www.madre.org/index.php?s=2&b=6&p=35](http://www.madre.org/index.php?s=2&b=6&p=35), Date Accessed October 11, 2008.

<sup>165</sup> "Barcenas is a make-shift marginalized urban community on the outskirts of Guatemala City." *Ibid*.

post-conflict. Efforts to repair infrastructure allows for travel and the delivery of services into communities. While the provision of clean drinking water is a basic need of all persons. Without women's actions, it is likely that these populations would remain limited in their development potential because of insufficient access to services that require passable delivery routes (road and bridges).

In Nicaragua, women have also directed their attention towards bettering the lives of women through development initiatives. For example, the *Centro de Mujeres - Xohilt-Acalt Women's Center* in Nicaragua has been promoting women's development since 1990.<sup>166</sup> The Center's main goal has been to encourage broad citizen participation in local development through the formation of non-governmental organizations and is also focused on women's empowerment. The Center specifically aims to "develop [in women] what already exists within them."<sup>167</sup> It tries to achieve this by encouraging women's empowerment and participation through workshops intended to enhance their skill sets. Training is offered in areas of construction, finance, production, administration, clinical services, livestock and veterinary care, sewing, citizen participation, and adult and youth education.<sup>168</sup> Other initiatives inform women about obtaining credit, acquiring land and managing a small business.<sup>169</sup> The Women's Center has also successfully helped numerous women receive scholarships for primary and secondary education. As of May 2001, 33 women were receiving basic education in reading and writing and 133 had received scholarships.<sup>170</sup>

The Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs – Mothers of Matagalpa is another influential women's organization dedicated to promoting women's development in Nicaragua.<sup>171</sup> The Mothers of Matagalpa was formed as a branch of the Sandinistas in 1986 and

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<sup>166</sup> The Centro de Mujeres – Xohilt-Acalt Women's Center is located in Malpaisillo. While the Center began as a mobile clinic delivering sexual and reproductive health services for women in 1990, it has since expanded and broadened its goals which now include women's development and empowerment. Wisconsin Coordinating Council on Nicaragua (WCCN), "Directory of Nicaraguan Women's Organizations," [http://www.wccnica.org/womens\\_organizations.html](http://www.wccnica.org/womens_organizations.html), Date Accessed October 26, 2007.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> In May 2001, 33 women were receiving basic education in reading and writing and 133 had received scholarships. See Wisconsin Coordinating Council on Nicaragua (WCCN), "Directory of Nicaraguan Women's Organizations."

<sup>171</sup> The Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs is comprised of women who lost a son or daughter in the revolution or Contra war.

comprised of women who had lost a son or daughter during the revolution or Contra War.<sup>172</sup> After the Contra war ended in the early 1990s, the Mothers of Matagalpa established organizational autonomy from the Sandinistas and began accepting Contra mothers (Madres de la Resistencia) into the group.<sup>173</sup> This group of mothers has contributed to developing women's consciousness, public speaking, skills, and their ability to participate actively in civil politics. This organization focuses on women's political action towards change and prioritizes self-expression as a means to empowerment.<sup>174</sup> Through discussions, projects and protests, the group teaches women how to communicate their concerns to other members of society. Women who have joined Mothers of Matagalpa have spoken of the empowerment that has accompanied their participation in the group. One person, Doña Nacha described her pre-revolution life as a poor, illiterate woman, isolated from society outside her own class and, more particularly, from people outside of Nicaragua.<sup>175</sup> Speaking of her involvement with the Mothers of Matagalpa, she asserted that, "[t]he committee has served us well, preparing us to meet with people whom we have never seen before, to speak with people.... [Before the revolution] we were very marginalized..."<sup>176</sup> By participating in the Mothers of Matagalpa, women have discovered and developed their role in society to be one of worth, which "for reasons of the past [had] been kept hidden and underdeveloped."<sup>177</sup> Women's development, specifically the development of their capabilities, has also been the focus of another women's organization in Nicaragua, the *Women's Unemployment Project* (WUP). The WUP formed in 1994 in response to trade unions and organizations negotiating without making room for women's particular concerns. The Project operates with the premise that "women's negotiating power must be expanded through education and acquiring skills."<sup>178</sup> Cynthia Chavez Metoyer states that the WUP has promoted the

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<sup>172</sup> While the organization had "over 15,000 members nationwide and operated as a high-profile branch of the Sandinistas," Lorraine Bayard de Volo states that it is "barely mentioned in research on women and the Sandinista revolution." See Lorraine Bayard de Volo, "Analyzing Politics and Change in Women's Organizations: Nicaraguan Mothers' Voice and Identity," *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 5, No.1 (March 2003), 105-107.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>178</sup> Metoyer, *Women and the State in Post-Sandinista Nicaragua*..., 105.

growth of gender consciousness, the development of political identities, and taught women to use their voice as a negotiating tool through increased education, skills and training. The organization has also worked to defend the legal rights of women in Free Trade Zones, challenged maquila operations and educated women about labour rights, as well as about state policy and international laws addressing their rights.<sup>179</sup>

Similarly, Las Dignas in El Salvador has also fought to have women's rights recognized and respected; it has tried to integrate women's groups into networks to strengthen their efforts. Creating networks has bolstered women's organizational activities and improved their capacity to work together. An example of one of these networks is the *Salvadorian Union of Local Women's Organizations*. The Union, which represents women workers and fight for their labour rights, is comprised of 22 member organizations based in poor urban areas and rural communities.<sup>180</sup>

Another women's organization that educates women about their rights is the *National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA)* in Guatemala.<sup>181</sup> Discussing her involvement in CONAVIGUA, one woman spoke of the knowledge she gained about human rights, and women's rights in particular, after participating with CONAVIGUA:

I also was helped by courses that we received in CONAVIGUA about the rights of women, the dignity of women, and the Guatemalan Constitution. I never knew that there were laws, or rights such as the right to work, the right to organize, the right to free expression. But after I received these courses I felt more courage, knowing there are laws which protect these rights. Now whenever anybody tells me that it's not good for me to do what I'm doing, I tell them I have a right to do it. This has helped me a great deal.<sup>182</sup>

The development efforts of these women's organizations have been significant. They have helped many women to understand their rights through education, training,

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 105-106.

<sup>180</sup> Michael Clulow, "Women's Organizations and Local Democracy: Promoting Effective Participation of Women in Central America," *Development*, Vol. 50, No. 1, (2007), 87.

<sup>181</sup> CONAVIGUA was formed in response to women's status post-conflict.

<sup>182</sup> Fermina Lopez, "Guatemalan Indigenous Widows Speak Organize for Life," *Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean: EPICA*, [http://www.epica.org/Library/women/guate\\_indigenous.html](http://www.epica.org/Library/women/guate_indigenous.html). Date Accessed October 11, 2008.

and workshops and have also contributed to the overall socio-economic development of their entire communities by increasing women's capabilities in general. The knowledge women have gained has empowered many of them to actively contribute to community development post-conflict. By publicly demonstrating the importance of women's labour rights and working to make these rights widely known to women, the actions of these organizations have encouraged women to exercise a more informed and active role in helping develop their communities post-conflict.

### *Recommendations for Enhancing Relief and Development Reforms*

When it comes to relief and development, several recommendations have been suggested to improve the design of this component of traditional peacebuilding. Firstly, peacebuilding theorists and critics argue that post-conflict relief and development policies must address the suffering of all marginalized populations and encourage development in general. Reforms also call for changes that will affect women in particular, that will maximize women's individual and collective ability to contribute to relief delivery as well as social and economic development post-conflict.

Secondly, it is essential that those populations in need of relief are identified during the earliest stages of the peacebuilding. Early identification can help ensure that marginalized, rural and remote populations are not neglected during relief efforts. Moreover, because women are highly represented among these groups, these efforts will help ensure that women are provided with much-needed services specific to their reproductive needs. Women in these areas may also be helpful in identifying other groups in need, as they are often left to care for those injured or ill post-conflict.

Thirdly, because many governments lack the human resources necessary to identify these populations and provide relief and health services, it is important that innovative health-delivery models and pilot projects be supported during the peacebuilding process. Supporting travelling health services and workshops may help provide services to marginalized, remote and rural populations. Moreover, supporting community-based initiatives, such as those led by women, may also require that these organizations be provided with the necessary resources, supplies, tools and medicines to allow them to continue to provide much needed relief services whether related to health

delivery or infrastructure repair so that health services can be delivered to communities in need.

Fourthly, it has been suggested that emergency assistance and reconstruction efforts include the provision of psychosocial support and reproductive health services for women affected by conflict.<sup>183</sup> Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Sirleaf propose that the health needs of women who have experienced war-related injuries should be recognized as special health needs. Furthermore, they argue that protection against HIV/AIDS and the provision of reproductive health services should be offered through the implementation of the Minimum Initial Services Package (MISP).<sup>184</sup> Other theorists state that relief reforms should include basic education about sexually transmitted infections, reproductive health, and the dangers of illicit abortions, as well as the immediate provisions of emergency contraception and treatment for sexually transmitted infections among rape survivors to prevent unwanted pregnancies and protect the health of women.<sup>185</sup>

Fifthly, peacebuilding advocates also stress the importance of educating women about their rights and developing their capabilities. According to Vanessa Farr, “social transformation after war requires...harnessing women’s capacity as peacebuilders through training them as...supporters of reintegration.”<sup>186</sup> She states that women should be trained in economically profitable skills, and, in order to take seriously the capacity of women, there must be a focus on the best means to build and use that capacity.<sup>187</sup> Not only will this encourage women’s development, it will facilitate “the smooth flow of DDR processes”<sup>188</sup> as discussed earlier in the security section. Rehn and Sirleaf also stress the importance of developing women’s capabilities, stating that training and education are essential to many of the peacebuilding recommendations they present.<sup>189</sup> In order for peace to be sustained in the long term, women must participate in and benefit

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<sup>183</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women War Peace...*, 19.

<sup>184</sup> As defined by the Interagency Manual on Reproductive Health for Refugees.

<sup>185</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women War Peace...*, 46.

<sup>186</sup> Farr, “The Importance of a Gender Perspective...,” 34.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, 33-34.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

<sup>189</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women War Peace...*, 6.

from development policies and programs.<sup>190</sup> For example, Rehn and Sirleaf argue that women should not only be guaranteed access to land, resources and jobs, but should also be encouraged to pursue their capabilities to their full potential.<sup>191</sup>

Sixthly, many theorists support increased efforts to inform women of their rights during peacebuilding. The most commonly recommended means of achieving this is through education initiatives and workshops focused on women's rights. Public awareness campaigns can also play a role in educating the greater community about women's rights. Moreover, rights education may give individuals and groups the confidence to participate more actively in the public sphere. For this reason it is imperative that access to information about rights be made widely available, specifically to marginalized populations. Encouraging women to address adversity collectively is also important if they are to strengthen their ability to demand respect for their rights. As with previous peacebuilding recommendations, this too will require that women are provided with safe and secure spaces to meet and discuss their rights and concerns.

Finally, while there are many ways in which women's development can be encouraged and improved, practical supports, such as the provision of childcare, must be in place to allow them to participate in programs that increase their capabilities. The benefits of encouraging women's capabilities should also be promoted publicly as having greater benefits for the entire community. This will allow for more women to attend workshops and develop the necessary skills to increase their quality of life. Implementing programs that specifically encourage women's capabilities can serve to foster socio-economic change and development that has the potential to benefit society as a whole.

## RECONCILIATION

Closely intertwined with security, governance, and relief and development, post-conflict reconciliation is fundamental to the broader goals of peacebuilding. Preventing the recurrence of violent conflict through reconciliatory efforts is the most desirable means for resolving past wrongs among divided populations. The purpose of this section is to explain what traditional peacebuilding says about reconciliation reforms, outline

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<sup>190</sup> Author Unknown, "An Examination of Challenges Facing Women..." *International Center for Research on Women*, 1.

<sup>191</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women War Peace...*, 6.

problems associated with current reconciliation policies, demonstrate women's response to their reconciliation concerns as well as the significance of their efforts, and lastly, present reforms and recommendations that may strengthen current reconciliation frameworks outlined in peacebuilding.

### *Reconciliation Reforms in Traditional Peacebuilding*

Reconciliation efforts under current peacebuilding initiatives are carried out through a variety of means, including the use of high-profile truth commissions that document the crimes of the conflict and/or assign responsibility for them, governmental apologies, local peace commissions, and grassroots workshops.<sup>192</sup> Traditional reconciliation efforts also encompass the reintegration of displaced persons and refugees, peace education, and trauma support for communities. The goal is to provide mechanisms for conflict resolution and, of course, to deter future abuses.

While the goal of reconciliation to date has been to help restore moral order through psychosocial healing, for many victims reconciliation is also strongly associated with the pursuit of truth and justice. Truth, mercy, and justice are all important aspects of the reconciliation processes because reconciliation often requires confronting the violence of the past as well as the perpetrators of that violence, and addressing the needs of victims. Reconciliation involves the participation of perpetrators and victims in a process of truth telling, apology, and forgiveness. It is not just a process of addressing problems in the government, flaws with the military, or weaknesses in the judicial system. Rather the process of reconciliation must involve the construction of a new moral order that incorporates political, cultural, psychological, and spiritual strategies.<sup>193</sup>

### *Problems with Reconciliation Reforms in Traditional Peacebuilding*

Reconciliation efforts, like security, governance and relief and development, are also rife with challenges. For instance, women's participation during the formal mechanisms of reconciliation during peacebuilding has been minimal to date. While

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<sup>192</sup> Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 156.

<sup>193</sup> Elizabeth Kiss, "Moral Ambition Within and Beyond Political Constraints: Reflections on Restorative Justice." In *Truth V. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*, ed. Robert Rotberg and Dennis Thompson, cited in Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 156.

women were marginalized from participating in the Salvadoran peace process, including the implementation of the Ad Hoc Commission and the Salvadoran Truth Commission, women were active participants in Guatemala's peace process. The resulting Salvadoran Peace Agreements lack any specific reference to women,<sup>194</sup> while the Guatemalan Peace Accords contain references to women as well as sub-sections devoted to women and their specific needs. Nevertheless, the provisions for women are limited within the context of the nine agreements that comprise the Guatemalan accords. Susan Jonas attributes the omission of a separate Guatemalan accord addressing women's rights to a "longstanding lack of attention to gender issues by both negotiating parties and the late development of the women's movement in Guatemala."<sup>195</sup>

Another major problem with reconciliation efforts to date is the gulf between discovering the truth to appease victims and holding those guilty accountable for their actions. As Rachel Sieder explains:

Government and nongovernmental perspectives on how to address the problem of past violations of human rights have often conflicted: while most transitional regimes have broadly endorsed the view that some kind of truth telling constitutes a valuable contribution to national reconciliation, they have rejected putting those responsible for human rights violations on trial, claiming that this would prejudice the democratic transition.<sup>196</sup>

Seider argues that the traditional commissions of inquiry into past violations of human rights (otherwise known as Truth Commissions), are limited in their ability to provide justice as many of these commissions offer offenders immunity from prosecution<sup>197</sup> in exchange for the truth. For example, in Guatemala, the Commission for Historical

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<sup>194</sup> Women received one direct reference within the Salvadoran Accords regarding a publicity campaign to promote the recruitment of new personnel for the National Civil Police with "[special consideration given] to the recruitment of women." Conversely, the Guatemalan Peace Accords contain references and sub-sections devoted to incorporating women and addressing their specific needs. See Blumberg, 164;

<sup>195</sup> Jonas, *Of Centaurs and Doves...*, 86.

<sup>196</sup> Rachel Sieder, "War, Peace, and the Politics of Memory in Guatemala," in Nigel Biggar, ed., *Burying the Past: Making Peace and Doing Justice after Civil Conflict* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 184.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

Clarification<sup>198</sup> could not name names nor prosecute offenders. Despite the fact that the Salvadoran Truth Commission was able to name individuals guilty of human rights violations,<sup>199</sup> a sweeping amnesty law was hurriedly passed by the right-dominated Legislative Assembly.<sup>200</sup> While uncovering the truth constitutes an important form of sanction in itself, investigations without at least some measure of legal accountability and punishment of those responsible effectively institutionalizes impunity and impedes efforts to strengthen the rule of law.<sup>201</sup> In addition, current reconciliation efforts lack long-term processes for bridging the divide between warring-factions.

### *Responses of Women to the Challenges of Reconciliation Reforms*

When it comes to the reconciliation concerns of women, many organizations have been active in pursuing truth, justice and reconciliation in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Their actions have centered on two areas. First, women have worked to bridge the divide with former adversaries and fostered long-term social transformation. Second, they have supported the implementation of truth and reconciliation commissions as well as ongoing investigations into past events. While their efforts have had differing levels of success, the impact of their actions has been significant during peacebuilding.

Of the three case studies, Nicaragua provides the strongest example of women's reconciliatory actions across the divide. Women from both sides of the conflict have

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<sup>198</sup> The Historical Clarification Commission was established with the signing of an accord (one of the nine agreements signed between 1991 and 1996 that comprised the Guatemalan peace accords, signed between 1991 and 1996) in June of 1994. See Jonas, *Of Centaurs and Doves...*, 45 and 200.

<sup>199</sup> El Salvador Truth Commission (La Comision de la Verdad) was established on April 7, 1991, as part of the peace accords between the Salvadoran Government and the FMLN. See Mike Kay, "The Role of Truth Commissions in the Search for Justice, Reconciliation and Democratisation: The Salvadoran and Honduras Cases," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Volume 29, 698-700.

<sup>200</sup> Many charge the amnesty as being unconstitutional given that the ARENA-dominated Legislative Assembly overrode the opposition parties to pass the law. The Amnesty law was the first law related to the peace process that had not been passed by consensus. See Charles T. Call "Assessing El Salvador's Transition from Civil War to Peace" cited in John Stedman, Donald Rothchild, and Elizabeth M. Cousens, *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, International Peace Academy, Lynne Rienner Publishers: 2002, 404; Richard Stahler-Sholk, "El Salvador's Negotiated Transition: From Low-Intensity Conflict to Low-Intensity Democracy," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 10.

<sup>201</sup> Sieder, "Renegotiating 'Law and Order'...", 184. Whether under international and/or domestic pressures, legal systems have implemented amnesty laws during peacebuilding (with the exclusion of categories of excessive human rights violations including genocide, forced disappearance and torture) intended to avoid excess resistance of former abuses and encourage their participation in the process of recording events of the past. Legal systems in El Salvador and Guatemala passed amnesty laws. See Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 167.

managed to come together to share their common experience of suffering and to foster healing and reconciliation. For example, the aforementioned *Mothers of Matagalpa's Mothers Committee* began accepting Contra mothers into their organization in the early 1990s. Through this organization, mothers on both sides realized that each side experienced similar suffering and this consciousness of their shared pain helped them to develop an understanding of each other. This greatly helped advance reconciliation in Nicaraguan society. One mother described the process as allowing her to “discover that pain can turn into sickness. And many mothers or widows from the other side – against us – suffered the same as us. And so this moved me to help them.”<sup>202</sup> Another woman described the experience of reconciliation, stating:

We began to see how many of them were in pain, as we were. It is true that my husband went to war and died, but their husbands had died in this way too. It was the same pain, and so we agreed we had to diminish this hatred, and we began to work in the organization.<sup>203</sup>

In addition, women in the Committee said that this reconciliatory process helped them realize that they were not to blame for the war as they were not all in agreement with their husbands going to war.

Women's actions also had an impact on long-term social transformation in Nicaragua. For instance, upon realizing the detrimental impact of hatred, women in the Committee worked to socialize their children in ways that helped to ensure that the past hostilities and hatred would not continue by setting a more positive example for their children: “If [the children] see that we are filled with hatred, they'll grow up with the hatred...most important thing is that the children of mothers and widows...love each other, that they play together, that they are never going to have this hatred.”<sup>204</sup> By strengthening social bonds among themselves and fostering relations among their children, women have helped develop the social foundations necessary for previously warring factions to move towards peace.

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<sup>202</sup> Bayard de Volo, “Analyzing Politics and Change in Women's Organizations...,” 107.

<sup>203</sup> Cupples, “Counter-Revolutionary Women...” 12.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

Essentially, women's actions in Nicaragua helped them to re-humanize those who were previously viewed as enemies. Through dialogue and open communication women were able to overcome past acts of violence and draw upon their common experience of loss and suffering. This experience motivated them to reconcile and take steps towards social transformation.<sup>205</sup> Women have identified and made use of their socially significant position as parents – capitalizing on their ability to influence the events of the future by encouraging interaction among their children.

The work of women's organizations have also centered on the pursuit of truth and justice, outlined as essential for reconciliation. For example, women in Guatemala actively demonstrated their support for the implementation of the Historical Clarification Commission.<sup>206</sup> Calling for investigations into past impunity, violence, killings, disappearances, human rights abuses and genocidal acts, the *Mutual Support Group* (GAM)<sup>207</sup> and the National Coordinating Committee of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA)<sup>208</sup> organized public marches in support of the Commission investigations. However, because the Commission could not name names nor hold individuals accountable for their crimes, many have charged that it has entrenched impunity and that the victims still have not been given justice.

CONAVIGUA continues to pressure the Guatemalan government for truth and justice, demanding exhumations of clandestine mass graves where death squads are said to have buried the hundreds of missing Guatemalans.<sup>209</sup> In the Quiche, Chimaltenango, and Verapaces regions of Guatemala, CONAVIGUA facilitated the process of exhumations and inhumations in various departments as part of their ongoing "effort to

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<sup>205</sup> Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 157.

<sup>206</sup> Guatemala's Historical Clarification Commission, comprised of two lawyers, a Mayan woman professor, and one foreign national, was sent up to investigate disappearances, killings, torture, and other abuses in the thirty-six-year internal conflict. See Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 174.

<sup>207</sup> The Mutual Support Group, otherwise known in Guatemala as the Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (GAM), was formed in 1984 by indigenous women that had lost husbands or children. See Author Unknown, "Gender Profile of the Conflict in Guatemala"; Jonas, *Of Centaurs and Doves...*, 28-29.

<sup>208</sup> CONAVIGUA was initiated "to support widows and orphans facing particularly severe economic hardships," and to "respond to the suffering which women have suffered" in Guatemala. See Author Unknown, "Gender Profile of the Conflict in Guatemala"; Fermina Lopez, "Guatemalan Indigenous Widows Speak – Organize for Life," [www.epica.org/Library/women/guate\\_indigenous.html](http://www.epica.org/Library/women/guate_indigenous.html), Date Accessed October 11, 2008.

<sup>209</sup> Peace Brigades International, "Making Space for Peace National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA)," [www.pbi-guatemala.org/413.html](http://www.pbi-guatemala.org/413.html), Date Accessed October 11, 2008.

recover the collective memory of Guatemala's recent history."<sup>210</sup> *Peace Brigades International* notes that this process has provoked "tense situations in small rural communities between victims and their perpetrators, and the women from CONAVIGUA receive threats and intimidation to stop them from continuing this work."<sup>211</sup> Nevertheless, this pursuit of truth and justice has been a strong motivating factor for women's collective action in CONAVIGUA.<sup>212</sup>

These actions have not been without repercussion. As *Peace Brigades International* points out, human rights organizations such as GAM and CONAVIGUA continue to be threatened and harassed for their work against impunity.<sup>213</sup> However, women remain persistent and their efforts are notable for contributing to the documentation of past events. Moreover, because they have been disproportionately victimized and suffer the loss of their loved ones after conflict, the pursuit of truth and justice also carries a high moral value for women.<sup>214</sup> Without their continued efforts, the search for truth and justice may be abandoned and governments and offenders may never be held accountable for their participation in the events of the past.

Guatemala's reconciliatory activities and the establishment of the Commission for Historical Clarification have often been compared to El Salvador's peace process and the Salvadoran Truth Commissions. Having taken many lessons from the success and failures of the United Nations' funded and operated Truth Commission in El Salvador, Guatemala's limited incorporation of women appears quite inclusive when compared to El Salvador's.<sup>215</sup> Unfortunately, the literature on women's specific involvement during

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<sup>210</sup> Peace Brigades International, "Making Space for Peace National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA)," <http://www.pbi-guatemala.org/473.html>, Date Accessed October 11, 2008.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Peace Brigades International is a non-partisan international organization that works to support and promote social movements in Guatemala. Peace Brigade International accompanies GAM and CONAVIGUA, among other groups, in their search for truth. See Peace Brigades International, "Peace Brigades International," <http://www.pbi-guatemala.org/413.html?&L=1%3FL%3D0> Date Accessed October 11, 2008.

<sup>214</sup> Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 182.

<sup>215</sup> For example, in comparing the Guatemalan Peace Accords and the Salvadoran Peace Agreements, women's mention within the context of El Salvador's documents is extremely limited. Rae Lesser Blumberg states that, "women activists of the FMLN expected that their sacrifices and contributions would be recognized in the Peace Accords and that they would gain new rights for all the risks they had undertaken. To their dismay, their agenda was almost completely ignored by both left and right in the forging of the Accords." See United Nations, *The Guatemalan Peace Agreements*, New York: United Nations, 1998; United States Institute of Peace, "Peace Agreements: El Salvador," *Peace Agreements*

the implementation of the Salvadoran Truth Commission is extremely limited. And, while the Commission was intended to contribute to national reconciliation by investigating egregious cases involving human rights abuses and recommending prosecution where necessary,<sup>216</sup> many of these recommendations have yet to be implemented, including the reconciliatory measures.

While the literature is quick to suggest that a lack of international pressure may be contributing to the slow implementation of these measures,<sup>217</sup> there was little mention of women's efforts to address reconciliatory concerns in El Salvador within the literature. It may be the case that women's organizations have either not been active in pressuring government to implement recommendations outlined by the Commission, or have not implemented their own mechanisms of reconciliation. Given that Salvadoran women's organizations have been active in other areas of peacebuilding and that their actions have been well-documented, the omission of studies examining women's contribution to reconciliation in El Salvador may testify to how undervalued their efforts have been.

### *Recommendations for Enhancing Reconciliation Reforms*

When it comes to reconciliation reforms, many recommendations have been presented for improvement. Recommendations focus on the necessity of including all parties to the conflict in the peace process and in the development of initiatives to unravel the truth about crimes committed during the conflict. The recommendations also speak of the need to address issues of amnesty and impunity.

First, proponents of reform recommend that divided factions be encouraged to participate in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts through increased communication and interaction. These groups include persons of different ethnicities, languages, religions, geographical areas, genders, age categories, and socio-economic levels.<sup>218</sup>

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*Digital Collection*, [Available Online] <http://www.usip.org/resources/peace-agreements-el-salvador>, Date Accessed: August 12, 2009.

<sup>216</sup> Tommie Sue Montgomery, "Getting to Peace in El Salvador: The Roles of the United Nations Secretariat and ONUSAL," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 37, No.4 (Winter, 1995), 143.

<sup>217</sup> Kaye, "The Role of Truth Commissions..." 712.

<sup>218</sup> Gay Rosenblum-Kumar, "An Analysis of Strategic Processes for Conflict-Sensitive Reconstruction of Governance and Public Administration, in United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs,

Gender-specific reconciliatory efforts may help open discussions between rival groups. Identifying women leaders on either side of the divide and training them to play a lead role in local, regional and national reconciliatory efforts can be beneficial in moving divided factions towards more peaceful relationships. Encouraging discussions at the local level and providing safe spaces for women's interaction is also vital for advancing cross-divide participation.

Secondly, peacebuilding critics recommended that International Truth and Reconciliation Commission or Special Courts be gender-sensitive and promote women's participation. This will help women feel they are welcome to speak the truth about past events without fear of reprisal.<sup>219</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf argue that these institutions could also be dedicated to unearthing the truth about impunity and violence against women in armed conflict, thereby establishing accountability for crimes against women.<sup>220</sup>

The application of justice is critical during the reconciliation process. In the context of a post-conflict community, there is a need to ensure legal and moral responsibilities with an honest assessment of the existing balance of power.<sup>221</sup> While the implementation of a truth commission is an important step towards promoting justice, reconciliation and democratization, impunity will continue to plague the peace process if deficiencies among judicial systems are not address effectively. Therefore, it is necessary that personnel within judicial institutions be required to take sensitivity training so that they may uphold the rule of law and human rights without discrimination post-conflict. Rehn and Sirleaf also stress the importance and role of non-judicial methods during peacebuilding and state that "a combination of methods may be appropriate in order to ensure that all victims secure redress."<sup>222</sup>

In addition, civil society and governments must be made aware of continued abuses and impunity. Focusing on recording past abuses alone is not sufficient. The prevalence of violence, lack of security, and existence of impunity post-conflict must be brought into the public sphere by organizations working to encourage peace through the

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*Governance and Administration for Peaceful, Sustainable Development*, New York: United Nations Press, 2004, 16.

<sup>219</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women War Peace...*, 19.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Kaye, "The Role of Truth Commissions...", 697.

<sup>222</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women War Peace...*, 94.

delivery of justice. Individuals must feel that they can safely step forward to make known human rights infractions, and be protected from reprisal. Local initiatives to uncover continuing abuses should be undertaken by governments, churches, NGOs, and community groups dedicated to ending impunity as these groups can serve as a venue for recording acts of violence post-conflict. These initiatives should be encouraged in tandem with full, independent and impartial international investigations into past and post-conflict abuses.

Thirdly, because envisioning a new future would not be possible without truth and accountability for past acts, crimes of the past must be acknowledged and punished to prevent future violations.<sup>223</sup> Therefore, while the role and significance of forgiveness has been encouraged as part of reconciliation initiatives in commissions and judicial hearings, the application of amnesty laws should be re-examined. The application of amnesty laws should be limited in time and scope.<sup>224</sup> In other words, amnesty laws should have an ‘expiration-date.’ A period of two-years may provide an acceptable initial expiration period that could be used to pilot the application of the time-sensitive amnesty. For example, amnesty may be granted if an offender readily participates in the process of truth commissions and investigations, admitting to their wrongdoings during the limited amnesty period. However, if an individual is found guilty through investigative mechanisms post-amnesty, that offender shall be held accountable to the full extent of the law for their wrongdoings. The limited amnesty period may serve to bring forward offenders more quickly by encouraging them to come forward prior to the expiration of amnesty. In this way, limited amnesty laws may contribute to gathering historical documentation in a timelier manner, and yet still allow for accountability post-amnesty. And, because amnesty inhibits accountability and contributes to impunity, truth telling should also result in legal sanctions – at least after the period of limited-amnesty.

## CONCLUSION

Traditional peacebuilding focuses on four main areas: security, governance, relief and development and reconciliation. However, reforms in these areas fail to make

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<sup>223</sup> Jeong, *Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies...*, 155.

<sup>224</sup> Although amnesty may be provided during the limited amnesty period, it should be noted that amnesty should never be offered for instances of genocide, torture or as outlined by the United Nations.

room for women, as this chapter has demonstrated drawing from the case studies of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala.

Security measures have failed to incorporate women fully into disarmament, demobilization and reintegration schemes as well as failed to recognize women as victims of ongoing gender-specific violence. Governance measures neglect to outline best practices for women's inclusion in politics and the institutions of governance, as well as fail to provide them with justice for abuses perpetuated against them. Relief measures overlook the inadequacies of health delivery and the resulting impact on women's health while development measures neglect to incorporate and enhance women's capabilities through training and education initiatives. Lastly, reconciliation measures disregard the value of capitalizing on women's similar experiences of suffering as a venue for reconciliation and social transformation.

However, in these post-conflict societies, as discussed in this chapter, women have actively responded, directing their efforts towards addressing voids, problems and inefficiencies with the current reforms. Had women not collectively initiated movements to respond to their concerns, these needs would have arguably been otherwise ignored. As a response to their efforts, many recommendations have been advanced for enhancing peacebuilding post conflict.

## CHAPTER FOUR – CONCLUSION

Peacebuilding has become increasingly important as a means of preventing continuing hostilities in countries emerging from civil war and violent conflict. As such, the post-Cold War period saw extensive activities in this area with UN-sponsored peacebuilding missions and reconstruction initiatives taking place in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. This thesis focused on one region, Latin America, and specifically the countries of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. Each underwent differing levels of peacebuilding in a post-civil war setting in order to prevent potentially volatile situations from erupting into full fledged conflicts

This thesis has been organized in such a way as to provide a discussion of the four central areas addressed in traditional peacebuilding, (security, governance, relief and development and reconciliation), to illustrate how women have been marginalized from the design of peacebuilding, and to examine how women have made room for themselves during peacebuilding efforts in the countries studied. This analysis demonstrates that women have played a central role in the peacebuilding process despite being marginalized from the structural design of peacebuilding. Women have responded to this marginalization by initiating unique peacebuilding mechanisms and making space for themselves during the process of reconstruction. In doing so, they have contributed to the overall process of peacebuilding in each of the three countries.

In Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala women have worked to make known their needs and concerns regarding security, governance, relief and development and reconciliation. They also responded to their own needs during times of conflict, peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction, and in many instances have worked to ensure the needs of other populations are addressed as well. Specifically, women's groups and organizations have worked to demystify gender-specific violence, challenged impunity, demanded justice, organized collectively to make their demands and concerns known in the political arena, played a pivotal role in health delivery and relief efforts,

spearheaded reconstruction and development initiatives, and both supported and contributed to post-conflict reconciliation.

Women have been active in each of the four peacebuilding areas explored in this thesis, focusing their efforts on identifying, responding to, and fostering awareness of women's unique needs and concerns post-conflict. While they experienced differing levels of success within each of these four areas, the challenges they faced and successes they have made were, and continue to be, contingent upon the specific cultural, social, political and economic dynamics in each of the three case studies. While one should be careful not to over-generalize the similarities of women's experience in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala the fact that women have been active in each of the four peacebuilding areas is significant.

In each of the three case studies women responded to their security concerns by identifying ongoing violence (specifically domestic and/or sexual violence) as a gender-specific concern post-conflict. While women had mobilized to denounce domestic and sexual violence, issues related to gender-specific violence and impunity prevail today. And, while women were able to identify and rectify some of the inequalities in traditional DDR strategies, the fact remains that many women 'voluntarily' reintegrated back into civil society without receiving DDR benefits.

With regard to governance, women in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador faced similar challenges related to the prevalence of a traditionally patriarchal culture that resulted in their exclusion from political parties, governance structures and decision-making processes. While this led to an ignorance of women's needs and concerns, women's organizations mobilized to make their demands known. By identifying their needs and concerns, establishing organizations, developing political platforms and lobbying for increased representation, women were able to achieve relative successes and have laid the foundation for continued action that may encourage women's efforts and participation in the future.

Women in the three case studies also identified and responded to their relief and development concerns post-conflict. With a focus on the delivery of emergency and reproductive health service, women provided assistance to many communities, including those rural and remote areas where traditional relief efforts have been limited. In addition, women mobilized to foster development where traditional peacebuilding efforts yielded unequal benefits or were otherwise absent. Encompassing a broad range of activities, women's development initiatives in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala included providing education and training in the areas of human rights, women's rights, literacy, technical skills, gender awareness, women's empowerment, public speaking, leadership and political action.

Lastly, women actively and publicly supported truth and reconciliation commissions as the Guatemalan example illustrates. Women also criticized government inaction regarding impunity and continue to demand exhumations of mass and clandestine graves in an effort to discover the truth about past events. In El Salvador, as was noted in chapter three, women were not included in national truth and reconciliation efforts during peacebuilding. Unfortunately a lack of literature on whether or not women were active in support of the commissions may suggest that they were not as involved. Lastly, in Nicaragua where a truth and reconciliation process did not take place, women's efforts have focused on encouraging the reconciliation of past events with women aligned with opposing factions during the conflict and have begun to recognize the important role in socializing their children in a manner that is conducive to peace rather than hostility.

While this thesis tries to present the accomplishments of women in the area of peacebuilding in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, this is not to imply that significant progress has been made overall. There are many obstacles that still exist, including machismo, societal backlash to women's efforts, the prevalence of violence, and a culture of impunity. The Nicaraguan women's organizations AMNLAE in Nicaragua offers just one example of a well-established women's organization that struggled to accomplish meaningful advancements for women under a male dominated political party structure that ultimately neglected to lend its support to women's

concerns.<sup>225</sup> In spite of these barriers, and perhaps in response to them, women continue to identify and respond to gender-specific needs and concerns in each of these countries.

Despite the significance of their actions, there remain areas where women could improve on their peacebuilding efforts in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. First, women could expand their local experience and knowledge to neighbouring communities where other women have yet to respond to their own needs and concerns. Initiatives may include sharing their experiences and speaking about the women-led programs and projects they have been involved in. These efforts could offer much needed insight and advice to those women that do not know how or where to respond to their own unique situations post-conflict. Broadly speaking, participating in such knowledge exchanges may encourage women in other communities to form collectives, lobby political parties and government institutions, or implement training and assistance programs. Efforts such as these can be mutually beneficial too because they have the potential to result in the development of new or alternative methods for addressing women's needs and/or concerns.<sup>226</sup>

Second, women's groups should continuously work to expand the scope of women's networks post-conflict. Increasing the effectiveness of women's movements post-conflict requires that local level alliances align and form regional and national women's networks so that women can address issues collectively. Interaction among various women's groups is essential if women intend on meeting the challenges of marginalization during peacebuilding.

Lastly, women's initial lack of gender-consciousness in the case studies is cause for concern. Even those women that were active participants in the negotiation of peace agreements and accords in El Salvador and Guatemala overlooked the significance of their gendered-participation. These women-participants were unable to foresee how women ex-combatants (and women as a whole) would be negatively affected by the lack of reference to gender or women in peace agreements and accords. As a result, they failed

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<sup>225</sup> While it is likely that there are other women's organizations that were unsuccessful because of these and other barriers (including funding), such examples are limited within the literature which itself is limited based on the nascent nature of peacebuilding itself.

<sup>226</sup> It should be noted that the benefits of exchanging knowledge or experiences is not limited to neighboring communities or regions within a country. Sharing stories of success, trials and tribulations among women's groups with other countries that are rebuilding post-conflict may also have the potential to inspire peacebuilding-related efforts.

to demand gender specific clauses and provisions be written into the documents to reflect women's needs.<sup>227</sup> While the women's movement was late to develop in El Salvador and Guatemala, the fact that women participants did not understand the importance of their gendered-participation is extremely regrettable. Had they had some sense of gender-consciousness, the resulting agreements and accords may have reflected women's needs and concerns.

Unfortunately, where women lack the knowledge or initiative to address their own concerns post-conflict, there is often no prescribed course of action. Traditional peacebuilding to date does not provide measures for responding to women's specific needs in the post-war setting. It is imperative that reforms be implemented in order to incorporate women as well as mitigate the likelihood that spoilers will jeopardize peacebuilding efforts. Reforming the current framework is of utmost importance so that women can begin to participate more fully in peacebuilding.

Although this thesis has presented numerous recommendations for reform, the barriers that hamper the implementation of these reforms deserve mention. The first barrier lies within the inherent complexity and limited timeframe of peacebuilding operations. Given the monumental task of rebuilding war-torn regions and the nascent nature of peacebuilding operations, these complexities have resulted in numerous problems and oversights within traditional peacebuilding. It is precisely for this reason that current peacebuilding missions are still considered experimental.

The second barrier to implementing peacebuilding reforms is the context-specific nature of each peacebuilding mission or scenario. In any region where peacebuilding initiatives are implemented, there exist numerous context-specific variables that require the development unique policies in response. For this reason, how women are incorporated into peacebuilding on a case-by-case basis will vary depending upon the local context.

Other barriers include a lack of focus on women's education, the prevalence of violence, and insufficient funding. For example, in order to fully participate in decision-

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<sup>227</sup> Of the problems associated with traditional peacebuilding models to date is the lack of provisions for women in both peace agreements and accords. Even where women were involved in the negotiation process, as was the case in El Salvador and Guatemala, gross deficiencies in the final agreements and accords had a negative impact on women ex-combatants ability to access reintegration benefits packages.

making, politics and positions of leadership, girls and women require access to secondary and post-secondary education as well as access to training and capacity-building activities. Without education and training, women will continue to face systematic discrimination and the daunting task of entering the male-dominated political arena will continue to be extremely difficult. Moreover, where violence and impunity continues unabated, women will likely be hesitant to participate in peacebuilding efforts. Lastly, insufficient funding and international support will place continued barriers on implementing recommendations and reforms. The lack of funding and resources available after internationally-supported missions or operations leave a region puts a significant strain on the ability to groups and organizations to maintain the momentum of peacebuilding initiatives. The ability to sustain the momentum of these peacebuilding initiatives is of utmost importance.

It should be noted that the United Nations has recently made attempts to ensure women's participation in peacebuilding as per the critiques and recommendations of many journalists, academics and peacebuilding theorists. As Noeleen Heyser, Executive Director to United Nations Development Fund for Women, said to the United Nations Security Council in 2000:

Without international action, women caught in conflict will have no security of any kind, whatever the definition. And without women's participation, the peace process itself suffers, for there will be neither peace nor development. In your own words [Security Council Members] you have said that women are half of every group and community. They are therefore not half of any form of solution. How can we in all conscience bring war lords to the peace table, but not women?<sup>228</sup>

The United Nations Security Council recognized the need to address women's concerns and include them in peacebuilding with the passing of Resolution 1325 in October of 2000.<sup>229</sup> Resolution 1325 reaffirms the significance of women's needs and concerns as

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<sup>228</sup> Noeleen Heyser, UNIFEM Executive Director's comments to the United Nations Security Council on October 2, 2000. Cited in Henry F. Carey, "'Women and Peace and Security': The Politics of Implementing Gender Sensitivity Norms in Peacekeeping," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 8, No.2, London: F.Cass, 2001, 49.

<sup>229</sup> Chineze J. Onyejekwe, *Women, War, Peace-Building and Reconstruction*, UNESCO, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005, 281.

well as calls for their inclusion in peace process that seek to resolve and prevent conflicts and in peacebuilding.<sup>230</sup>

Comprised of 18 points and mandating gender mainstreaming in all UN activities, Resolution 1325 calls for gender awareness, urges women's informed and active participation in disarmament, requires that states increase women's representation in conflict resolutions and initiatives to support local women's peace initiatives, and insists on women's right to carry out post-conflict reconstruction in an environment free from threat and sexualized violence.<sup>231</sup> Nevertheless, women are still marginalized from participating in peacebuilding processes that continue to be top-down,<sup>232</sup> and there remain challenges to ensuring women's participation at the bargaining table during peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction.<sup>233</sup> For this reason, many have criticized the United Nations, arguing that the implementation of 1325 has been insufficient and calling for increased monitoring of women's integration into peacebuilding.<sup>234</sup>

The peacebuilding activities of the United Nations have certainly not been limited to the passing of Resolution 1325. A United Nations Peacebuilding Commission was created in 2005 with a mandate that includes: marshalling resources and advising on

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<sup>230</sup> Maria Hadjipavlou, "No Permission to Cross: Cypriot Women's Dialogue Across the Divide." *Gender, Place and Culture*, August 2006. Vol.13, No.4, 336.

<sup>231</sup> Farr, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective..." 32; Henry F. Carey, "'Women and Peace and Security': The Politics of Implementing Gender Sensitivity Norms in Peacekeeping," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 8, No.2, London: F.Cass, 2001, 50-52; Maria Hadjipavlou, "No Permission to Cross: Cypriot Women's Dialogue Across the Divide," *Gender, Place and Culture*, August 2006, Vol.13, No.4, 336; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, "United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security," [www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html](http://www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html), Date Accessed October 11, 2006. United Nations Development Fund For Women, "1325 Toolbox," [www.womenwarpeace.org/1325\\_toolbox](http://www.womenwarpeace.org/1325_toolbox) Date Accessed August 27, 2009. United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1325, S/RES/1325 (2000).

<sup>232</sup> For example, when peace was being negotiated in Afghanistan, just thirteen months after 1325 was signed the redoubtable under secretary general for political affairs in the UN (Kieran Prendergast) said, "Women cannot be included in peace negotiations in Afghanistan because the situation is too complex." See Sally Armstrong, "Afghanistan: The Way Forward," Halifax, October 16, 2003, 64; Sirkku K. Hellsten, "Ethics, Rhetoric and Politics of Post-conflict Reconstruction: How Can the Concept of Social Contract Help Us in Understanding How to Make Peace Work?" United Nations University: World Institute for Development Economics Research, November 2006. 17-18.

<sup>233</sup> Hellsten. 17-18.

<sup>234</sup> Onyejekwe, 2005. Others have charged that the resolution has only seen modest progress and has yet to be translated into action, stating that, "[peacebuilding] operations since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 have not lived up to [their] commitment. Gender mainstreaming is rarely explicitly included among the designated functions of transitional authorities or international agencies, other than the general provision to the effect that account be taken of the needs of women as victims of conflict." See: Christine Chinkin and Hilary Charlesworth, "Building Women into Peace: The International Legal Framework," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No.5, (2006), 937-957.

proposed integrated strategies for peacebuilding; ensuring predictable financing and investment over the short, medium, and long-term; and developing best practices for peacebuilding.<sup>235</sup> In addition, the Commission oversees the operations of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, which donates resources to those countries deemed by the Peacebuilding Commission to be in need of financial and other types of recovery assistance.<sup>236</sup> These funds are typically generated through the voluntary contribution of member states, organizations and individuals.

In an effort to support peacebuilding in countries emerging from conflict, the Commission also works to improve approaches to peacebuilding through country specific meetings and working groups on lessons learned to glean insights into the complexities of peacebuilding. One such working group, hosted in 2008, focused on “Gender and Peacebuilding: Enhancing Women’s Participation.” The working group recognized that certain issues, such as gender, cut across the various dimensions of peacebuilding, and identified a gap in research capacity as a primary obstacle to overcoming women’s full participation in peacebuilding.<sup>237</sup> While this reality has come to be quite obvious to scholars currently working to fill these gaps, it does raise the question of how much research will be required before peacebuilding missions and efforts do come to include women throughout all stages of reconstruction.

Roland Paris argues that “any opportunity to increase the effectiveness of future [peacebuilding] operations should be vigorously pursued.”<sup>238</sup> Lessons learned in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala demonstrate that there is much room for improving upon traditional peacebuilding. There is no shortage of reform recommendations that may contribute to increasing the success of peacebuilding

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<sup>235</sup> The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, “Mandate of the Peacebuilding Commission,” <http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/mandate.shtml>, Date Accessed March 17, 2010.

<sup>236</sup> The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund currently supports more than 100 projects in 15 countries. These countries include: Burundi, the Central African Republic, Comoros, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Kenya, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Timor L’este. “Countries that are not on the agenda [Commission] agenda may also receive funding, following a declaration of eligibility by the Secretary-General. See the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, “UN Peacebuilding Fund: Preventing a Relapse Into Violent Conflict,” <http://www.unpb.org/index.shtml>, Date Accessed March 17, 2010.

<sup>237</sup> Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernandez, “Gender and Peacebuilding: Enhancing Women’s Participation,” *United Nations Peacebuilding Commission Working Group On Lessons Learned*, Peacebuilding Commission Working Group On Lessons Learned, Date Accessed March 18, 2010.

<sup>238</sup> Paris, *At War’s End...*, 4.

initiatives. Given the nascent nature of peacebuilding, reforms that incorporate and encourage women's role in peacebuilding should not be discounted.

Continued research into the efforts of women's organizations during post-conflict reconstruction both in Latin America and in other war-torn regions throughout the world will offer useful information and insights into women's capabilities post-conflict. While these organizations and their efforts are mentioned throughout numerous sources, there remains ample room for continued research into the day-to-day functioning of these groups, their objectives and goals, the activities they pursue, the concerns they have currently, and the challenges they face to name a few. This research and its potential for contributing to the success of peacebuilding is much too valuable to ignore.

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