WOMEN'S POLITICAL AND LEGAL EMPOWERMENT
AND POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING

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ABSTRACT

Women’s contributions to peace negotiations and post-conflict peacebuilding are too often overlooked, undocumented and anecdotal. Is international peace, security and democracy enhanced when women are active participants in all aspects of peace processes including post-conflict governance and reconstruction, and if so, how can women’s involvement in such processes be ensured? Can political and legal empowerment of women help promote women’s involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding? More specifically, can we demonstrate with concrete examples that when women are legally and politically empowered the chances and positive impact of their involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding are higher? This thesis will analyze three case studies where women’s involvement in the peacebuilding process contributed to lasting peace. What were the key components that contributed to women’s involvement in those cases and could these be replicated?

To answer those questions, this thesis will draw on the extensive literature about women in war and peace. This thesis will also compare three case studies (Tunisia, Liberia and Northern Ireland) where women were significantly involved in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts with positive results. For each case study, the thesis will analyze what particular political or legal frameworks contributed to successful results in women’s
involvement and how/if such involvement was a significant element of good governance, legitimacy and peace in those countries. This thesis will also compare the similarities/differences in these particular legal or political frameworks to try to determine what positive trends can be identified and if they could be replicated in other situations to promote women’s involvement in post-peacebuilding.

This thesis will show that some of the key components of a successful framework to promote women’s involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding are women’s equal access to education and equal rights, community building through women’s civil rights and religious groups, women’s participation in politics, and international and regional organizations support and assistance to women’s groups. It will also demonstrate how such key components can produce positive women’s engagement, how they contribute to good governance, legitimacy and the consolidation of peace, and how they could be replicated in countries in conflict.
DEDICATION

To my wonderful husband, grandmother and parents.
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INTRODUCTION

It is important to underscore an overriding fact: women are not just victims of conflict – they are agents of peace and agents of change.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton
Georgetown University, Gaston Hall
Inaugural Nation Action Plan Academy Launch, December 3, 2014

We live in an increasingly unstable world, where human values such as human rights, rule of law, freedom of expression and freedom of conscience, equality and justice are constantly being challenged. The world also seems a long way from achieving sustainable peace and security suggesting that the status quo of how international organizations and countries have approached peace and conflict resolutions must be changed. In a world still largely dominated by men in many ways, women’s contributions to peace negotiations, peacebuilding and security, as well as the issue of women’s political participation itself, too often remain anecdotal. Very few women are engaged in formal peace processes or are active participants in reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts. Indeed, of 24 peace processes since 1992, women represented only 2.5% of the signatories, 3.2% of the mediators and only 7.6% of the negotiators.¹ However, women are disproportionately part of the uncounted number of casualties in wars and play an obvious and crucial role in maintaining the very existence of societies being torn by conflict, but unfortunately their voices are too rarely heard and, perhaps subsequently and inevitably, women’s rights are too

often left out of the discussions led by men on how to repair the damage committed against these very same societies. Can international peace, security and democracy be enhanced when women are active participants in all aspects of national life and when women’s rights are respected at all levels? And, if we go further, can the participation of women in society not only be a good sought out for the inherent value of promoting equality but also for the utilitarian potential of being a necessary precondition for a nation to address its traumas?

Through this thesis, we will address the necessity for a more equal and just post-conflict peacebuilding, where human values especially such as gender equality, inclusion of women and justice at all levels of post-conflict peacebuilding should be promoted. These human values will be highlighted in each case study, by reviewing how, despite many challenges, they were defended by civil rights movements and women, and how they were further incorporated in post-conflict legal and constitutional documents in some cases.

This thesis will also touch upon societal, educational, religious, historical, political and cultural aspects that may impact the involvement of women in post-conflict peacebuilding and the importance and correlation of all those aspects to comprehend how women manage to find a place in the peacebuilding process. Each conflict situation is different in itself and can only be understood by taking into account all these aspects that form a particular society. The peculiar shape of a nation is like a recipe, where each of the above-referenced aspects comes in with specific importance, degree, at a particular time, in a particular environment, to create a particular context. Throughout the case studies, we will show how each of those aspects had greater importance over the others to create a positive framework for women’s inclusion in post-conflict peacebuilding.
As we will see in Chapter One, even if the international legal framework exists, even if it seems evident that fifty percent or more of the population should be considered a valuable resource for peacebuilding, the political will to involve women in peacebuilding processes, and hence for more gender equality in that sphere, is too often lacking. Indeed, on October 31, 2000, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325, which for the first time recognized that not only women should be protected but further created the standard that they also have a role to play in peacebuilding and security.\textsuperscript{2} However, this Resolution, like a few related ones that followed, is rarely implemented. One may argue that when women’s role in such peace processes is actually implemented, the benefits become evident. Indeed, there are prominent examples of societies that went through major political transitions or civil wars and illustrate the practical differences that can result from women’s participation.

One example of such a transition is Tunisia; Chapter Two will analyze the role of women during Tunisia’s revolution, and in the rather successful democratization process that followed, especially in the context of a much less successful Arab Spring in other Arab countries. In other words, rather than the common international demand to see women’s rights and inclusion as the outcome of a process that very often doesn’t include them, does Tunisia’s inclusion of women in multiple levels of society already provide an indicator for a more successful transition to representative government? A few years after the events known as the Jasmine Revolution and the adoption of a new Constitution in Tunisia that,


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even if not perfect by international standards, guarantees some fundamental women’s rights, we can ask whether “the Tunisian model for democratic transition [has] succeeded in placing Tunisia on the path of democracy? And what are the principal features of this model that make it successful?”

So far, no other Arab country that took part in the Arab Spring has had the same success as Tunisia on any level, and women’s rights have been left out or remain difficult to implement. Chapter Two will analyze the role of women in the democratization process and whether their involvement may have contributed to Tunisia’s (so far) successful transition from autocracy towards a more representative egalitarian system. This analysis will especially be taken in the context of the other Arab Spring nations, which are in various states of disarray with some in complete civil war, others under brutal lockdown by their regime, and others struggling to implement real change in new political systems as various power brokers vie for influence.

Another example of effective women’s participation in peacebuilding processes that we will study in Chapter Three is Liberia. In 2003, Liberia ended a long and bloody civil war, which lasted for eleven years, from 1989 through 1996 and from 1999 through 2003, with a fragile peace in between. As we will see in this Chapter, through the activism and determination of the women’s movements, Liberian women’s contributions to ending the civil war and establishing an enduring peace were significant and form an interesting case study of what happens when sustained grassroots women’s efforts are involved in a country’s attempts to transition from conflict to peace. Indeed, Liberian women were

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instrumental in ending the civil war in Liberia through their utilization of nonviolent means. Of course, as we will see, "all women are not natural peacemakers; some women are aggressive combatants" and Liberia was no exception. However, what is quite fascinating is how the Liberian women’s peace movements were fundamentally nonviolent and yet so effective. The women in Liberia were facing many of the same challenges women face in violent conflicts throughout Africa and the rest of the world but somehow they pushed for a positive resolution and a lasting peace. How did Liberian women contribute to the cessation of the civil war and ensure it would not recur? What tools and strategies did they use? How did they mobilize so many women to participate and how did they manage to be so self-organized? This thesis will focus on the truly characteristic role and participation of Liberian women in ending the civil war and preventing any recurrence, as well as in ensuring an effective transition to a democratic system.

Chapter Four will study the role of women in the conflict of Northern Ireland, as grassroots peace activists, for instance by bringing each side of the community together, but also as legislators for peacebuilding. The Northern Ireland conflict, commonly known under the name the "Troubles," lasted for several decades until the execution of a peace agreement called the Good Friday Agreement or the Belfast Agreement in 1998. We will analyze how the women of Northern Ireland overcame a very strong cultural prejudice against the participation of women in the public sphere in a society dominated by men, and how, despite the challenges they faced, what tactics and strategies were used by the women to be heard and be active participants in the peacebuilding process. We will see that women

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acted as mediators and facilitators between the two sides of this conflict, Protestant unionists and the Catholics nationalists, by promoting dialogues and communication. The involvement of women in the peace treaty negotiations will also be reviewed, including what contributions were made by the women to the peace process, for instance in terms of human rights issues. We will also see what resulted from women’s involvement for Northern Ireland, for instance in terms of more progressive legislation on gender equality, employment equity and social welfare, as well as some of the shortcomings.

In the final Chapter Five, we will draw some conclusions from the successes of the case studies and will analyze the key ingredients or entry points that promoted women’s involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding, for instance equal education and legal rights, grassroots and political participation and international, regional and local networks’ support. We will also explain why and how women’s involvement can be an important component of a more sustainable peace because of the added value that women bring to the peacebuilding debate. Finally, we will discuss if some of the elements of success in the three case studies could be replicated or what could further be done to promote women’s involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding.
CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S ROLE AND INVOLVEMENT IN POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING PROCESSES AND WHY INCLUSION OF WOMEN MATTERS

When sleeping women wake, mountains move.

Chinese proverb

Women's involvement in peacebuilding often starts before the onset of conflict. For instance, in Sri Lanka in October 1984, feminist activists formed the Women for Peace movement to try to stop the conflict between the government and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam. In October 1991, the Women in Black movement in Serbia launched an antiwar campaign in the former Yugoslavia. In Burundi in 1995, women such as Sabine Sabimbona and Agnes Nindorera tried to warn against the ethnic manipulations and propaganda of the government.¹ These are not exceptions, but perhaps reflect a realization by women that they and their broader interests in society are most at risk in competition with male-dominated groups for power. However, too often women are neither at the table that makes war nor the table that attempts to negotiate peace, but operate on the margins of politics and power, having a very limited influence. The machinery of conflict, including the propaganda that often accompanies it, too often closes any space for women's rhetoric, or for any dialogue with women for that matter.²

But with some additional support, women could have a much broader impact on peacebuilding processes. For instance, in South Africa, women played a crucial role in the

² Ibid., 35-36.
anti-apartheid movement and subsequently in the peace process that drew up a new constitution for a democratic country. The United Nations and the South Africans quickly noted the impact that women had on bringing peace to communities by being part of every mechanism and committee that was addressing the change the nation was undergoing. A United Nations observer recounted that “women were what made the committee effective” and that “with men it was war at all-time [but]... the women were keen to get peaceful resolution...”\textsuperscript{3}. In South Africa, women’s inclusion in local peace committees clearly made a difference in the transition process. It is unfortunate that examples such as South Africa are not more widespread.

Misogyny and sexism can certainly provide some explanation as to why women are not more involved at the peace table, as well as the fact that women rarely hold crucial high-level positions that can have an effective impact on the decision-making process. For instance, women are rarely defense ministers or chief of staffs of the army.\textsuperscript{4} The local cultures provide different excuses for the absence of women in this process. Some claim that peace talks are no venue for gender equality or women’s issues, implying that women only care about those issues. There is also sometimes skepticism as to women’s abilities to engage in peacebuilding talks.\textsuperscript{5}

So, what can change the dynamic towards a more systemic inclusion of women in the post-conflict debate? And what are the existing tools at women’s and civil societies’

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 41-43.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 58.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 61.
disposal to ensure women’s involvement in peacebuilding processes? Why are those tools insufficient and what legal and/or political framework can promote women’s involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding?

_The International Legal Framework: U.N. Resolution 1325 and Shortcomings_

On October 2000, the United Nations passed Security Council Resolution 1325 (U.N. Resolution 1325), which calls for all actors to involve women in the “prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction.” U.N. Resolution 1325 is considered to be a historic milestone because, for the first time, the United Nations dealt with gender and women’s roles in conflict and post-conflicts in a Security Council resolution. For purposes of this thesis, the relevant paragraph of U.N. Resolution 1325, stressing the importance of including more women in decision-making peace processes, reads as follows:

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

U.N. Resolution 1325, as well as the six related Security Council Resolutions that followed (UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106 and 2122), apply to all countries wherever it can be used and picked up by civil society. It echoes the demands from women who want to be included in the shaping of their societies, who want to be part of their countries’ reconstruction and who want to have their needs and concerns heard. These United Nations

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resolutions are rooted in the firm belief that women’s inclusion in peace processes will contribute to a more sustainable peace.

However, since U.N. Resolution 1325 was passed, only marginal progress in integrating women in formal peace processes has been accomplished. A study undertaken in 2008 found that out of 33 peace negotiations only 4% of participants were women.\(^8\) Even the United Nations, which has arguably been the greatest promoter of gender equality, has failed to implement in its practice those values it is promoting to the world. For example, no Secretary General (and no female Secretary General has yet been elected) had ever appointed a woman to be the chief mediator of a peace process until recently, on March 2013, with the appointment of former Irish president Mary Robinson as the first mediator at the United Nations (for the Africa’s Great Lakes region).\(^9\) More remains to be done to fully include women at the peace table. Furthermore, as of the end of 2014, only 47 countries have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) to implement U.N. Resolution 1325, which represents fewer that 25 percent of the United Nations member countries.\(^10\) NAPs outline “a policy or course of action that a country plans to follow in order to fulfill objectives and reach goals pertaining to specific national or global matters.”\(^11\) The first

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1325 NAPS were implemented in Western Europe with Scandinavia, Denmark being the first country to implement a 1325 NAP. Ivory Coast was the first developing country to adopt a 1325 NAP, followed by other sub-Saharan African countries.\(^{12}\) Besides NAPS, other strategies have also emerged to implement U.N. Resolution 1325. For instance, some countries, such as Cambodia in 2012, are developing national strategies to implement some elements of U.N. Resolution 1325, such as action plans on violence against women. However, some of the issues with such individual strategies are the lack of comprehensiveness and narrow initiatives.\(^{13}\) Whether countries adopt NPAs or individual national policies to implement U.N. Resolution 1325, accountability measures and adequate resources must be put in place, and this starts with a political will that is too often lacking.

**What is Missing and How Women’s Involvement Could be Increased**

As the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security advocates, “the international community must also bear its share of the responsibility in the implementation of women, peace and security obligations […] and the responsibilities of Member States, regional organizations, and the United Nations in implementing this agenda cannot be overstated”\(^{14}\). All these actors must be involved to create a real chance of successful

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\(^{12}\) Ibid.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.

implementation, each must ensure appropriate support to women and civil society to allow for a favorable framework for U.N. Resolution 1325, including creating enough political will. Creating political will oftentimes comes from within and cannot be imposed from the outside. This takes time and several factors can make a difference, such as, as we will see with the example of Tunisia, education of girls and women equally with men, freedom of association and organization for women’s civil rights and grassroots associations, etc. A favorable political climate to women’s inclusion may also imply a favorable justice and legislative system where women’s rights are fairly represented. Other factors can also come into play, such as the role of religion in local communities as we will see with the example of Liberia, or the importance of political participation as we will see with the example of Northern Ireland.

Empowering women helps make a more secure world. There is a strong link between state security and women’s security. The more women are treated well in a country, the more peaceful and democratic it generally is. And conversely, the less women’s rights are preserved, the more likely a country will generally have a conflict.¹⁵ Not only are women’s rights important to be preserved, but women’s voices must also be heard. For instance, in the rise of many forms of extremism and related violence, women can act in many respects as religious models, as mothers, as community members, etc. Our international peacebuilding structures were not designed for the new post-Cold War conflicts, which are more internal and where women’s roles are even more crucial. Civil society, non-

governmental organizations and the United Nations should work together on adapting the existing peacebuilding structures to our world’s current needs.

*Why Including both Genders to the Peace Table Matters and the Role of Men in Including Women in Post-Conflict Resolutions*

It is also crucial in this process to integrate men. As we will see, similarly to the Tunisia model, young men should be educated with the understanding that men and women are equal and that women are equal participants in civil, political, and economic spheres of society. Men, in whatever cultural or national context, have to be involved in a discussion on what it means to be a “man” within an egalitarian world and create role models that are not only the typical stereotypes that we currently know. It is fine for men to show weaknesses and cry, it is fine for men to ask for women’s help, it is fine for men to be supported by women, it is fine for men to take care of the children, etc. Those men should be viewed as role models as well, not only the dominant cultural stereotype of men carrying guns. Unfortunately, because of the gender roles created by society, and the traditional stereotypes of men as family providers and women as child raisers, any lack of income or resources (and the social recognition that comes with it) can lead men to become violent and participate in armed conflicts. According to the World Health Organization “men are three to six times more likely than women to commit homicide and males of all ages represent 80 percent of homicide victims”\(^{16}\). However, although men are usually seen as the ones perpetrating the violence in conflict zones, research shows that men are not inherently

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Men are too often the victims of a hyper-masculinity created around violent conflicts. Since gender is a social construct, rather than biologically determined, definitions of “men” and “women” can be shaped by culture.

Focusing on men’s perspectives is also an important component of women’s empowerment and peacebuilding. For instance, any training organizations can provide to women on women’s empowerment in countries like Afghanistan will have little effects, or worse damaging effects (e.g., domestic violence), if her husband does not receive similar training. Hence, non-governmental organizations such as Promundo, Women for Women International, and CARE are working on programs that “combine psychological support for men based on a group therapy model with education sessions on positive norms change and preventing SGBV.” Other programs focus on changing community norms, developing healthier and more non-violent male identities, but it would be important as well to find concrete ways for men to see women as allies in peacebuilding efforts and sensitize men in women’s rights and equality in some countries or communities. Programs should find a way in some counties to engage men in women’s economic empowerment so that they get accustomed to a second income and women working. As a consequence, men could become used to sharing caregiving and households tasks and inverse gender stereotypes that lead to the ideas in some countries that women’s roles are limited to the home and not the public space.

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
Any peace must be structured in a way that there is no recurrence of war or conflict, and certainly integrating women fully in the peacebuilding process is a main step to ascertain a long standing peace. It is the civil society bottom up and not government top down that can help shape a longstanding peace where women’s rights are respected.

This exclusion of women both within countries in change and international organizations attempting to involve themselves in that change can be a driver of conflict, so any peace process that is not inclusive is destined to fail. As former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on February 26, 2014 during the Advancing Women in Peace Awards Ceremony: “When women are excluded and marginalized, we all suffer: We miss out on their experience, their knowledge, their skills, their talents but when women and girls have the chance to participate fully alongside men and boys in making peace, in growing the economy, in political life, in every facet of existence, then we all benefit.”

Many countries, such as South Africa, Northern Ireland or the Philippines, have demonstrated that women’s participation in a peacebuilding process can be a determining factor for successful democratic transitions.\(^{20}\) Counterexamples of peacebuilding processes that did not sufficiently include women and which are still struggling to make a fuller transition to democracy are for instance Algeria in 1990/91, Iraq and the Palestine Authority in 2006. It is crucial to institutionalize women’s rights and gender equality in society, to allow fully for a penetration of these values into civil society, and for women’s rights groups to develop and mature to be able to influence peacebuilding and democratization processes.

Our world signs peace agreements but pots of chaos are left and the real issues are too often not being addressed, which lead to the resurgence of conflicts and violence. There is something to be said for a peacebuilding process that includes representatives of more than half of the population.

It is important also to recognize the importance of men in women’s empowerment. Women’s empowerment must include men in the process. It is for the benefit of women, men and peace to engage all parties as allies in promoting a more balanced, peaceful and equal world. As we will see in the three case studies that follows, inclusiveness of men and women at all level of society and at all stages of a conflict resolution is crucial to ensure a sustainable peace.
CHAPTER TWO

FIRST CASE STUDY: WOMEN’S ROLES IN TUNISIA’S TRANSITION/DEMOCRATIC PROCESS POST-ARAB SPRING AND JASMINE REVOLUTION

This chapter will analyze the role of women in Tunisia’s democratic transition process within the context of the Arab Spring. The so-called “Arab Spring” has come to refer to the attempts by the publics of multiple Arab countries either to force reform of their existing (autocratic) political systems or actually to change those political systems and replace them with more inclusive and representative systems. These attempts started in Tunisia, but quickly spread to Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria. Less coherent demands for change followed in countries throughout the Arab world. That is beyond the scope of this thesis, but what this thesis can analyze is to what extent the most successful revolution so far in the Arab world, the Tunisian revolution, has benefited from the inclusion of women, especially in post-revolution politics and how women have been an integral part of the new democratization process in Tunisia. We will try to better comprehend why Tunisia was so different in this respect, as compared to the other Arab Spring nations, and how its peculiar historical context also influenced the democratization process in Tunisia.

As Katrin Bennhold points out, “there is another source of Tunisian wisdom that may hold inspiration for at least half the populations across North Africa and the Middle East: a long tradition of women’s rights that goes well beyond anything else in the region.”

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Indeed, Tunisia was ranked as first by Freedom House in a comparative survey of Arab countries for women’s rights\(^2\). Through the example of the post-Jasmine Revolution, this chapter will try to analyze what women can do for peace processes; how, despite the challenges they face, their involvement in a peace process can make a positive difference; and what are the lessons learned from the Jasmine Revolution and the role of women that unfolded.

**Historical Background and Women’s Status in Tunisia before the Jasmine Revolution**

Within the Arab world, Tunisia has a long tradition of respect for women’s rights. In a poll conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in 2013, Tunisia was ranked 6 out of 22 Arab states for women’s rights.\(^3\) Indeed, after its independence from France in 1956, Tunisia initiated reforms of its family law, which led to the adoption of the progressive Code of Personal Status (CPS) in 1956.\(^4\) Habib Bourguiba was Tunisia’s first president after the country’s independence from France, and its founding father, having led the political fight for freedom for years at great personal cost. His vision of the state was a nationalist and secularist one, where all citizens had a role to play, including women.\(^5\) This might seem unusual today in the context of the Middle East, but the 1950s were a different

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\(^4\) Charrad and Zarrugh, “The Arab Spring and Women’s Rights in Tunisia.”

time with traditional societies frozen in time by colonial structures competing with international political discourses led by debates on socialism, democracy, and anti-colonial and anti-imperialism liberation struggles. This was Habib Bourguiba’s era as well as that of his compatriots in Tunisia and throughout North Africa and much of the Middle East (excluding Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf). Habib Bourguiba was the main instigator of the improvement of the status and rights of women, first as prime minister, with the CPS and after he came to power in 1957. Indeed, with the CPS he instituted the legal framework for the equality of men and women in Tunisia. One of the political reasons behind the CPS was to “generate a new form of allegiance in which individual allegiances went to the nation-state.” As such, the development of a state feminism clearly followed a political agenda, which ensured women’s support to the government. This new conception of citizenship, and the individual rights that came with it, benefited Tunisian women. The new CPS included major changes to family law, including the abolition of polygamy, the right to divorce for men and women, and increased women’s rights in custody of children. Perhaps most importantly, the CPS transformed the educational opportunities for boys and girls while introducing women to the national work and political force. The CPS permitted family planning and required both girls and boys to attend school

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6 Ibid., 169-193.

7 Charrad and Zarrugh, “The Arab Spring and Women’s Rights in Tunisia.”


9 Charrad and Zarrugh, “The Arab Spring and Women’s Rights in Tunisia.”
beginning at age six.10 Women were also granted the right to work and therefore the right to gain some economic freedom.11 Furthermore, in 1957 women were granted the right to vote and in 1959, the Tunisian constitution provided that “women [were] full citizens with complete legal equality and civic duties, with the full right to exercise their political, economic and social rights.”12 This had practical applications as well. As an example of the movement that followed, in 1968, the first female was appointed to the bench.13 Critically, Tunisia interpreted Islamic law in a manner consistent with the political values of equality that it was promoting allowing a bridge between traditional cultural attitudes and the new state values.14 The Tunisian government also attempted to entrench itself firmly within an international framework, ratifying many conventions on women’s rights, for instance the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Women in 1968 and the Convention on Eradication of All Forms of Discriminations against Women in 1985.15 One nuance, however, is that even if Tunisia’s state feminism improved women’s rights, it did not necessarily change the social structure that allows discrimination against women when the state weakens. However, it provided a basis of fundamental


12 Ibid.


15 Ibid.
women’s rights in Tunisia under which generations to come learned to live and accept as a necessity. Indeed, girls and women (and boys and men) grew up with this cultural understanding and framework.

These large societal effects remained in place even after Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali (“Ben Ali”) seized power in a constitutional coup in 1987. Although introducing a more traditional autocratic strongman political system, rejecting basic western tenants of representative government, he nevertheless continued the trend in women’s rights reforms. For example, the minimum age of marriage for women was raised from fifteen to eighteen years old in 2007, and women’s right to alimony was also expanded in the 2000s. Many women’s groups were established, however within the constraint of needing to provide political support to the regime. For instance, Ben Ali’s wife headed the largest women’s organization (l’Union Nationale de la Femme Tunisienne). However, for the autocrat Ben Ali, guaranteeing women’s rights was also a façade of westernization to avoid having to move towards a more genuine democratization and citizens’ participation process. These fundamental changes over several generations, including an educational, political, and legal framework for women’s participation in a less patriarchal system, have outlasted both Bourguiba and Ben Ali. Although women’s empowerment in Tunisia is still an ongoing battle, for instance in terms of political representation, the country has come a long way, especially compared to some of its neighboring Arab Spring nations such as Egypt and

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16 Charrad and Zarrugh, “The Arab Spring and Women’s Rights in Tunisia.”

Libya. In that context, what were women’s roles in the Jasmine revolution, and how did they manage to maintain their rights for the most part in the Tunisian constitution-making process?

The Jasmine Revolution was ignited by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi on December 17, 2010. It prompted a wind of rebellion in other Arab countries, including Libya and Egypt, now known as the Arab Spring.\(^{18}\) Although the local media were silent about the protests and demonstrations that followed, some foreign media such as France 24 and Al Jazeera aired images of brutality against the demonstrators by the police in Sidi Bouzid.\(^{19}\) Interestingly, the protest had initially started for socioeconomic reasons, but after the death of Mohammed Bouazizi on January 2, 2011, it spread all over the country as a protest against the regime of Ben Ali. On January 14, 2011, the Tunisians protestors were on the streets and forced Ben Ali to step down. Ben Ali, in the absence of support from the army, was forced to flee Tunisia for Saudi Arabia.\(^{20}\)

Despite the fact that men are usually the main participants in revolutions or conflicts, the involvement of Tunisia’s women’s during the Jasmine Revolution was significant, as protesters and demonstrators from all segments of the population. Women were on the streets, as well as blogging and tweeting.


\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.
*Women’s Legal and Political Empowerment Post-Jasmine Revolution*

Because of their active participation during the Jasmine Revolution, Tunisian’s women were able to be part of the discourse and keep politics focused on gender equality, for instance within the National Constituent Assembly (NCA). Indeed, the “Islamist party Ennahda acquired the largest number of seats in the assembly and boasted 42 female candidates of a total of 49 total women elected to the 217-member NCA”\(^{21}\). Women were also able to have a concrete influence over the drafting of the new Constitution. Adopted on January 26, 2014, the new Constitution provides for equality between men and women, after some heated debates about the notion of women being “complementary” to men,\(^{22}\) which was later abandoned in the final version of the Constitution. Indeed, the new Constitution includes articles ensuring equality between men and women. For instance, article 37 of the Constitution requires the State to guarantee the representation of women in elected assemblies, article 40 of the Constitution provides for equal rights in the work environment, article 46 of the Constitution provides for the protection of women’s acquired rights and the state’s engagement to take measures to eradicate violence against women.\(^{23}\)

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\(^{21}\) Charrad and Zarrugh, “The Arab Spring and Women’s Rights in Tunisia.”

\(^{22}\) Ibid.

Also, as stressed by Sana Ben Achour, a women’s rights activist, the new Constitution is the first in the Arab world to give women the right to run for president.\(^{24}\)

Even if the new Constitution is a great step for women in Tunisia, it is still not a panacea, and in some areas of the law, for instance in inheritance, women still receive unequal treatment. Since the Constitution is silent on the matter of inheritance, traditional jurisprudence in Tunisia is expected to dominate in which women receive only half of what is usually passed to men.\(^{25}\) In a fundamentally patriarchal culture, the road to complete equality still has to be lived and culture changed in some respects. At least the new Constitution builds on what Tunisia under Bourguiba started decades ago: integrating women’s equal rights into people’s mindsets and the country’s legal framework. By rooting such rights legally, it helps to further root such rights into the culture as well. But vigilance is always needed and there is still much to do to ensure that women’s rights in Tunisia continue to expand and that political pressures are not used to retract any of the hard fought rights Tunisian women, and perhaps by example, other women have gained.

What is interesting about Tunisia is how some values from its colonial past endured up to this day and how Bourguiba’s influence in terms of women’s rights still lives on in developments today. Women’s empowerment, as Tunisia’s example shows, starts with equal rights for women to be educated and work. Once a country educates women and


allows them an opportunity to be financially independent, and once men are used to having a second source of income in their homes, avoiding women’s voices in a conflict situation is much more difficult.

**Women’s Empowerment in Tunisia: Lessons Learned and Status of Women’s Rights**

The status of women’s rights in Tunisia, as compared to other Arab Spring countries, for instance Egypt and Libya, has come a long way even if there is still much to do.

Let’s first take the example of Egypt for the sake of comparison. Egyptian women were actively engaged in the revolution and were present in the protests in Tahrir Square that led to the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011. We could all see on television as the events unfolded, that women were on the streets alongside with men. Since then, Egypt’s transition has not unfolded well for women. According to a poll dated November 2013 by Thomson Reuters Foundation, Egypt is now the worst Arab state for women’s rights among the 22 Arab states polled.26 So what happened to women’s rights in Egypt?

Women were at the heart of civil society movements during the revolution and were pushing for the rights of all Egyptians. For instance, in 2010 a law mandating a quota of 64 new seats in the House for women was passed, which was a major increase from before the revolution27. However, this quota was abolished when the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces

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Forces later gained control.\textsuperscript{28} Furthermore, the 2012 Constitution actually constricted women’s rights instead of building on past successes. Indeed, the 1971 Constitution “included a provision requiring the state to treat women and men equally in political, social, cultural, and economic spheres”\textsuperscript{29} This provision was enforced with the caveat that such treatment not violates Shari’a law, which is not necessarily defined. When women requested that the caveat be suppressed in the 2012 Constitution, the entire provision on equality was deleted and now women were “discussed in the Constitution as a particular group only in the context of their responsibilities to the family.”\textsuperscript{30}

Yet another Constitution was drafted and adopted in January 2014, granting several women’s rights that had been deleted in the 2012 Constitution. For instance, under Article 6 of the 2014 Constitution, an Egyptian woman married to a foreigner can now bestow her citizenship to her children, which was not the case before.\textsuperscript{31} Furthermore, Article 11 provides, among others rights, for (i) the achievement of equality between women and men in all their civil and political rights and their economic, social and cultural rights, (ii) women’s right to hold public office and be represented, as well as their appointment to judicial bodies and authorities, without discrimination, and (iii) an obligation for the state to protect women against all forms of violence.\textsuperscript{32} However, the 2014 Constitution does not

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 11.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
include explicit quotas for women in parliament and also offers very limited guarantees to protect these rights from the government, especially in the context of extensive military powers given by the same Constitution.\footnote{Ibid.} It is still to be seen how this Constitution will be implemented, especially within the context of terrible acts of violence against women being reported in Egypt on a daily basis, especially against women participating in the public arena.

Similarly, in Libya, women were active participants in the demonstrations against Muammar Gaddafi’s regime that started in Benghazi in February 2011, as well as in the logistical support to the opposition. In the 2012 parliamentary election that followed, 33 women out of a total 200-members were elected to the General National Congress, which was a great step for female political participation in Libya. However, more recently, women’s rights have been severely challenged in Libya. For instance, in February 2013, Libya’s Supreme Court lifted restrictions on polygamy, and in April 2013 the government suspended issuing marriage licenses for Libyan women marrying foreigners.\footnote{Human Rights Watch (May 26, 2013), accessed December 5, 2014, \url{http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/26/libya-seize-chance-protect-women-s-rights}.} In their daily lives, women suffer from physical harassment, as well as challenges in the work environment (such as career promotion, equal pay and opportunities) along with domestic abuse and the pressure for taking care of the children.\footnote{Adela Suliman, “International Women’s Day in Libya: a Foreign Perspective,” \textit{Libya Herald} (February 8, 2014), accessed December 5, 2014, \url{http://www.libyaherald.com/2014/03/08/opinion-international-womens-day-in-libya-a-foreign-perspective/#axzz3L3w5VCmv}.} And even though women hold some seats in the government, they are struggling to hold on to their seats that may have been
opportunistically apportioned in the early days of the Revolution. As Libyan writer Aicha Almagrabi says, “Libyan women were handed over as spoils of war” and their situation has degraded since the revolution.\textsuperscript{36} With a democratic process in a stalemate and increased violence against lawmakers, judges, prosecutors, journalists, and activists, the future of not only women’s rights but democracy seems unclear for Libya. The international community should refocus its attention on Libya before its government institutions fully collapse, which can only be a premonition for an even grimmer future for women’s rights.\textsuperscript{37}

So what are the lessons learned from women’s empowerment in Tunisia and their role post-Jasmine revolution?

Tunisia has been hailed by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry as “a model for others in the region and around the world.”\textsuperscript{38} What are the lessons learned from Tunisia in terms of women’s empowerment, and how has this impacted their involvement in the Jasmine’s Revolution and the democratization process? Was the level of women’s empowerment prior to the Revolution a determining factor for stabilization, peace and democratization in Tunisia? It is difficult to comprehend fully why Tunisia has managed so far to complete a rather successful democratic transition and why Egypt, Libya and other Arab countries have

\textsuperscript{36} Karlos Zurutuza, “Libyan women were handed over as spoils of war,” \textit{Inter Press Service} (December 19, 2013), accessed December 5, 2014, \url{http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/12/qa-libyan-women-handed-spoils-war/}.


so far failed. Were women’s rights not as culturally and socially integrated in Egypt and
Libya as they were in Tunisia? So are there any lessons learned from the Tunisian model
that can be applied to other Arab states – or to other states in general? Can the Tunisian
model be used to argue that granting women equal rights is a key component for stability,
peacebuilding, security and democracy?

As we have seen, there is a long tradition in Tunisia of women’s education and
financial empowerment. In Tunisia, women play an important socioeconomic role and the
men have grown accustomed to the women also providing financially for the family. The
financial inclusion of women is important to foster a strong economy, and in turn a strong
economy is a key element of stability and peace. As Fatma Bouvet de la Maisonneuve
asserts “the men and women marching for democracy … were all the children and
grandchildren of women who had grown up with an education and a sense of their rights
[and]… [i]t’s no coincidence that the revolution first started in Tunisia, where we have a
high level of education, a sizeable middle class and a greater degree of gender equality …
We had all the ingredients of democracy but not democracy itself. That just couldn’t last.”39
As such, women’s empowerment can be claimed as an ingredient of democracy and peaceful
state building processes, despite an otherwise oppressive history of autocracy and potentially
countervailing religious forces. Can this success be replicated in other post-conflict
situations, especially in Arab countries and “as a woman in Tunis proclaimed: “if we women

in Tunisia can write our Constitution, who’s to say that Egypt and Libya and Syria and Palestine won’t be next?\textsuperscript{40}

It is important to look at Tunisia as an example where women were not seen as victims but as leaders and replicate this in other countries in conflict. After Ben Ali’s regime collapsed, women’s rights organizations, which had been long active in Tunisia, mobilized to ensure a transition where women were included.\textsuperscript{41} Tunisia also avoided following the Egyptian path in part because its main political actors preferred negotiations and compromise instead of violence with a broad band of the political spectrum from leftist nationalist to moderate Islamist. For instance, Ennahda (the moderate Islamist party which won the first free elections after the Revolution) agreed to resign from government in the fall of 2013 rather than risk plunging the country into another round of civil strife.\textsuperscript{42} Yet, that same spectrum of forces, often at odds with each other, nevertheless have generally stood together against Salafist forces which challenged the very underpinnings of an egalitarian and democratic society.

However, can Tunisia be considered a model to follow and emulate? After its colonial past, Tunisia has evolved into a homogeneous nation state with a high level of collective consciousness. Tunisia also possesses several necessary components to establish a stable democracy, such as “social cohesion, an educated middle class, a legacy of authentic non-governmental civic and professional organizations … a tradition of secularism and

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} Moghadam, “Modernizing women and democratization after the Arab Spring,” 137-142.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
concern with women’s rights...”43 Looking at how the other Arab Spring revolutions unfolded, Tunisia may be more of an exception than an exemplar to easily emulate, as it may be difficult to find all the ingredients of this recipe elsewhere to recreate the successful and inclusive democratization process in Tunisia. One may say that if the secular party in Egypt had had a better program of action, if the Muslim Brotherhood had adopted Ennahdha’s inclusive approach, if the military had not intervened in the political process, and if women’s rights issues had been taken seriously, Egypt could have accomplished this democratic transition successfully as well.

Of course, much is still to be done. For instance, one important area where women should be more present in Tunisia is the judicial field. To overcome discrimination, some formal quotas should be considered for female judges. Women’s presence in the judiciary could enhance impartiality and foster equality in the judicial sphere, which guarantees the fair enforcement of women’s rights. Another area where women’s presence could be reinforced is the religious sphere. In order to counter interpretations of Islam, which question or negate some women’s rights, women religious scholars should be trained and educated to promote an Islam consistent with equality, confirming within its own cultural matrix that women’s rights are not un-Islamic, and to the contrary, are a requirement of the religion. Elements of Tunisia’s success exist in many other countries but perhaps the unique combination of those elements has created a catalyst for change that allows women to be actors in that change.

CHAPTER THREE

SECOND CASE STUDY: WOMEN’S ROLE IN LIBERIA
IN ENDING THE CIVIL WAR AND PROMOTING RECONSTRUCTION AND
LASTING PEACE

Liberia is also an interesting case study as it allows us to compare the results of two attempts at negotiating a peace – the first without fully integrating women and the rest of civil society in the peace negotiations and transition process (1997) and a second in which women and the rest of civil society were integral members of the peace negotiations and transition process (2003). The first attempt led to a very fragile peace, which quickly degenerated into a renewal of the civil war while the second has resulted in an extended period of peace. Liberian women were also able to unite Christians and Muslims against a common enemy: war. This is all the more remarkable when considering sectarian strife currently taking place in Nigeria and the Central African Republic. Together, Christian and Muslim women formed a force for peace, which was the single word at the heart of the movement. The Liberian women were relentless, courageous and determined and they stood up against the men responsible for the savage violence in order to end the civil war.

More specifically, we will review and describe the tools and strategies the Liberian women’s activist movements used to bring peace to Liberia and how they got involved at many stages and levels of the conflict as peace advocates, as grassroots organizers, as religious leaders, as mothers and spouses, and later on as electoral forces, and how they contributed in improving the status of women in Liberia and their political roles along the way. We will then analyze the key peacebuilding lessons that can be taken away from Liberian women’s activist movements, especially the power of networks; religious
networks as well as local, regional and international activist networks. Finally, we will analyze why participation of women in all aspects of a peace process, is so important, and what women bring to the peace process, as the Liberia example demonstrates.

*Historical Background and Context of the Last Two Civil Wars and Women’s Involvement in the Peace Process*

Liberia was created in 1847 after the repatriation of freed slaves from America and was never colonized by Europeans, contrary to most of the African continent. From 1847 to 1980, the country was led by Americo-Liberians, which created an oligarchy and major inequalities between the indigenous population and the Americo-Liberian population. In April 1980, a coup d’état took place orchestrated by Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe, not of Americo-Liberian descent, after which followed a campaign to eliminate his opponents.¹ In 1989, a civil war broke out when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) invaded the country, assassinated Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe and took control of most of the country.² Unrest followed between the NPFL led by Charles Taylor, of Americo-Liberian descent, and the proponents of the former President Doe, until the execution of the Abuja Peace Agreement in 1996.³

The first Liberian civil war had been a bloody fight and the transition was poorly handled. Indeed, even though Charles Taylor won the elections that followed, many


² Ibid.

³ Ibid.
believed that it was because of fear that more violence would occur if he lost.\(^4\) Charles Taylor and his political party gained total control of the government, and corruption, unlawful killings, human rights abuses, lawlessness and insecurity increased.\(^5\) As a consequence, resurgence of violence started again in 1999-2000 when an anti-Taylor group, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), invaded Liberia from Guinea. Violence and clashes, especially in the northern part of Liberia, raged for the next three years. In early 2003, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), also an anti-Taylor group, took control of a majority of the country, while Charles Taylor remained in power.\(^6\) By then, it is estimated that 200,000 individuals had died in the conflict, many had been displaced and forced to flee their homes, young boys had been recruited as child soldiers and countless women had been raped.\(^7\)

The second Liberia civil war was marked by increased violence against civilians, including sexual violence, looting of homes and businesses and population displacement.\(^8\) Thanks to national and international pressure, and as we will see the determining role of the Liberian women, Charles Taylor was forced to attend peace talks in Accra, Ghana,


\(^6\) Ibid.


\(^8\) Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University, “Ending Liberia’s Second Civil War: Religious Women as Peacemakers.”
which led to his resignation on August 11, 2003 and his exile to Nigeria. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was finally signed on August 18, 2003.\textsuperscript{9} Charles Taylor was later charged with war crimes by the International Criminal Court.\textsuperscript{10} Subsequently, he ended up being judged by the International Criminal Court in the Hague where he was found guilty of aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Liberian women suffered tremendously during both civil wars. They were victims of rape and mutilation, they lost their children to the rebels to be child soldiers, and they had to take care of the elderly and children in extremely difficult situations with no clean water, poor housing and lack of food. By the 1990s, their lives were so dire that they started to mobilize against the violence, the chaos and the injustices in their country.\textsuperscript{11} Interestingly, although the women had been the major victims of the conflict, as is the case in many conflicts, they decided to challenge the gender stereotypes and transformed themselves as a group and as individuals to actors on behalf of peace. Various women’s organizations were created at every levels of society. Some women’s organizations, such as the Mano River Union Peace Network and the Liberian Women’s Initiative (LWI), which gathered women of Liberia who formed part of the elite, provided some humanitarian assistance (e.g., food, shelters and psychological counseling), which helped


\textsuperscript{11} Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University, “Ending Liberia’s Second Civil War: Religious Women as Peacemakers.”
the women’s movements to build roots in the communities and gain credibility. The LWI also put pressure on the warlords to stop fighting and “eventually four hundred women showed up for a mass meeting and [...] demonstrated and built public support and legitimacy.”

However, although the participation of the women’s grassroots movements had been important during the first civil war, they were scarcely represented and engaged in the first peace talks and the peace process that followed. For instance, women were not very much involved in the disarmament, demobilization and reconciliation (DDR) process that followed the Abuja Peace Agreement. Civil society was also not a part of the first civil war peace negotiations and the focus of these negotiations and the peace agreement was mainly on combatants. Even though women’s contributions to ending the first civil war, relative to others in the African continent, were significant, they were not sufficiently extensive to ensure a lasting peace, especially with respect to the DDR process.

On the contrary, as we will see, the women’s movements were deeply involved in the second peace talks, having their requests heard, and they were also deeply involved in the DDR process that followed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Indeed, civil society, through the lead of women, asserted itself as a major participant in ending the second civil war by bringing the concerns of noncombatants to the peace table, forcing a peace agreement and monitoring the transition to a democratic government and a lasting peace. Women’s involvement during the second civil war culminated in 2003, when as the movie

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“Pray the Devil Back to Hell” relates, the peace movement Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, led by the social activist Leymah Gbowee (2011 Nobel Peace Laureate), organized the Christian and Muslim women of Monrovia, Liberia’s capital, to set up peace meetings, sit-ins and nonviolent protests. As Leymah Gbowee explains in the movie, the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace realized that Charles Taylor was using religion as a channel to spread his political message and propaganda, so the women’s movement decided to fight the president on his own battleground. The women in that movement who were Christians engaged their priests (Christians in 2003 represented about 40% of the population), and women who were Muslims engaged their imams (Muslims in 2003 represented about 20% of the population). The women’s movement used the indiscriminate aspect of war to mobilize both religious communities, and a message along those lines: “Can the bullet pick and choose, does the bullet know Christians from Muslims?”

As the movie further depicts, women of the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace would dress in white to symbolize peace and sing and pray for peace, holding banners with slogans such as “the women of Liberia want peace now”, “we are tired of running, we want peace”. By April 2003, between 2000 to 3000 women were gathering

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13 Pray the Devil Back to Hell, directed by Abigail Disney, DVD (Fork Films, LLC, 2008).

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.
daily at the fish market on Monrovia, where they were collectively praying, singing, dancing for peace and chanting their slogan “We want Peace, no more War!”18 The fish market was a very strategic location, visible from Charles Taylor’s residence, so each day, Charles Taylor’s would see the women protesting as he was passing in his motorcade.19

The women’s movements also encouraged women to have a “sex strike” to force the men to peace, by using the radio and media to spread the message.20 Slowly, the women’s movements gained momentum and they started to be taken seriously, not only by the population but also by the politicians. Finally, after about a year of protests, Charles Taylor decided to meet with the women’s movements, hear their demands and attend peace talks in Accra, Ghana but “challenged [the women’s movements] to find the rebel leaders”.21 To convince the rebels also to come to the peace talks, the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace traveled to a hotel in Sierra Leone where the rebel leaders were gathered. They lined up in the streets and sat in front of the hotel to convince them to attend the peace talks in Accra.22 The women of the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace then coordinated meetings between the rebels and Charles Taylor and as such

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20 Pray the Devil Back to Hell.


“earned a reputation as objective intermediaries”\textsuperscript{23} and the corresponding legitimacy as actors for peace.

Although it could be argued that the role of women was reduced to mere observers, protestors or conveyors of demands for peace, the movie \textit{Pray the Devil Back to Hell} documents the determining impact of the women during the peace talks.\textsuperscript{24} Indeed, as we will see, women ensured that the men kept negotiating until a peace agreement was concluded.\textsuperscript{25} At one point during the peace talks, the men on each side of the peace table, unable to reach a peace agreement, decided to leave the peace talks. The women, for all practical purposes acting in civil disobedience, surrounded the building where the negotiations were taking place and forced the men to continue the peace talks. Some warlords tried to get out and the women pushed them back, the women also blocked the hall so that the men could not exit.\textsuperscript{26} Some guards tried to arrest the women in the building with no success. When they tried to do so, Leymah Gbowee and other women famously threatened to remove their clothes, which would have shamed the men under Liberian culture, and the guards backed down. Consequently, the peace talks resumed until a final peace agreement was reached.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{23} Bekoe and Parajon, “Women’s Role in Liberia’s Reconstruction.”

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Pray the Devil Back to Hell}.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{27} Navarro, “Liberian Women Act to End Civil War, 2003.”
As the women’s movement was gaining more and more momentum, during the peace talks in Accra, the chief mediator of the peace talks agreed to hear the women’s pleas for peace and to take into account their demands in the peace negotiations. The demands were essentially as follows: “(i) an immediate ceasefire, (ii) no warring faction leadership in the transitional government, (iii) immediate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, including of female combatants, (iv) deployment of peacekeepers and (v) elections as soon as possible.”

After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed, women continued to be involved and were carefully monitoring the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Over the next two years after the execution of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, women, especially the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, were instrumental in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process and in assisting the transition government in preparing elections, registering voters and setting up polling stations. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was the first in Liberia to “include gender-specific policies, including the participation of women in government,” which would be taken into account by the new government. Women’s participation in the transition process, as well as inclusive requirements in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement all contributed to the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

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30 Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University, “Ending Liberia’s Second Civil War: Religious Women as Peacemakers.”
on November 23, 2005, as the first female president of Liberia as well as the first in the African continent, and still the current president of Liberia. It was also on that same day that the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace officially concluded its mass action for peace and the women ended their gatherings and protests at the fish market in Monrovia, where they had been demonstrating for months on a daily basis.31

Women voted in large numbers in 2005 and are now significantly involved in politics in Liberia.32 Some authors argue that women’s participation was helped by the influence that women had created at different levels and spheres of society, and also by the fact that they had experience in peacebuilding as well as a good female candidate for president.33 What can explain such successful influence in bringing a lasting peace in Liberia? What were the factors that contributed to their success and what lessons for effective peacebuilding can we learn from the women of Liberia?

Lessons for Peacebuilding: Women Actors at the Domestic, Regional and International Levels and the Powerful Role of Networks

One of the lessons for peacebuilding that we can take away from the Liberian women’s movements and their extraordinary and effective involvement in bringing peace in Liberia is their use of networks to serve their cause for peace. The religious network was particularly effective as we will discuss. They also managed to bring together local, regional and international activist networks of women interested in their cause.


32 Bekoe and Parajon, “Women’s Role in Liberia’s Reconstruction.”

One of the main characteristics of the Liberian women’s roles in ending the civil war was the effective collaboration of local women from different religions. We will also see how religion, and its deep roots in Liberian’s society, helped to promote peace, end the civil war and prevent recurrence of conflict. The importance of religion, especially of Christianity in Liberia, has some historical and cultural roots. Christianity was first brought to the country by the founders of Liberia, the America Colonization Society, and following their arrival, major US-based churches established branches in Liberia.\(^{34}\) Furthermore, there is a popular belief in Liberia, that due to the dominant role of Christianity in politics, Liberia is a Christian state.\(^{35}\) As a consequence, the role of religion was crucial in the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace’s movement, which understood its influence over Christian politicians. The women’s movement pressured priests and other religious leaders to express their concerns to politicians, and Charles Taylor agreed to hear out Leymah Gbowee from the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement because of the influence of his religious advisors.\(^{36}\)

Even Leymah Gbowee gives religion significant importance in her own personal actions, and said that “she awoke from a dream in which God spoke to her, telling her to gather the women of Liberia and pray for peace.”\(^{37}\) As she began to gather Christian

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\(^{34}\) Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University, “Ending Liberia’s Second Civil War: Religious Women as Peacemakers.”

\(^{35}\) Ibid.


\(^{37}\) Ibid.
women, hold dialogues and healing meetings about peace, the movement reached the Muslim community of Liberia as well. Both Christian and Muslim women used religion as a tool to gain credibility in a male-dominated culture.\(^{38}\) It was a nonviolent weapon that they quickly realized could have great impact.

The importance of religion in the women’s peace movement continued even after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed. For instance, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, when she was elected president, made sure to appoint Muslim and Christian women as part of her government. Those women, although from different faiths, had united in war towards the same mission for peace and would now work together to build a sustainable peace. As such, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and her team understood the importance of keeping this sense of unity in peace and in God in the reconciliation process as well.\(^{39}\)

Religion also played an important role in the healing process post-war. Forgiveness was a crucial element of the country’s reconstruction. For instance, through her work with rehabilitating child soldiers, Leymah Gbowee “was able to see perpetrators of extreme violence such as rape and murder as human beings who were victims of war like she was.”\(^{40}\) Also, the women cultivated empathy as part of the healing process, which also assisted in building a lasting peace. Interestingly, the indigenous spirituality, although not used by the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace to end the conflict, was also used as a tool in the reconciliation process. For example, one successful approach was the use of the

\(^{38}\) Ibid.

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.
traditional family or community place, called *Palava huts*, to settle disputes as a way to improve community dialogue.\(^4\)\(^1\) Also, elders of indigenous councils were made part of some reconciliation processes.\(^4\)\(^2\)

Therefore, collaboration of all faiths or indigenous spiritual practices proved to be crucial factors in the non-recurrence of conflict in Liberia. One of the reasons this collaboration was so successful is probably that the spiritual ethics of non-violence resonated similarly in different faiths and people could unite around a common belief and understanding. Women showed that faith or spirituality could motivate people to mobilize and heal communities around a greater force than themselves.

Another tool that the women’s movements used was the power of peace movement networks, notably the Women in Peacebuilding Program (WIPNET) and the Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET). Not only were the women’s networks successful in ending the civil war but they also contributed to preventing a recurrence of conflict. Interestingly, outreach to the international community was a tactic used by the women from the two ends of the spectrum: from the local community to the international community and from the international community to the local community.\(^4\)\(^3\)

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEPE), a regional women’s network based in Ghana, worked to help the women of West Africa, especially Liberia, establish WIPNET in 2001 with the purpose of using women’s numerical strength and

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\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Ibid.

ability to mobilize to “ensure that they could play a central role in formal peace processes and decision-making in the region.” To do so, WIPNET held workshops in mediation and conflict resolution because it realized that women needed to be trained in peace-building to be taken seriously and get organized efficiently. WIPNET also provided assistance to women in rural areas to empower them and help them oppose violence. WIPNET also started the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace campaign, led by Leymah Gbowee, which was designed to be apolitical and having one goal only: bringing peace to Liberia. Leymah Gbowee was active in the Lutheran Church and the campaign started with appealing to the churches, as we have seen, and then rallied the mosques, to unite against Charles Taylor’s regime, oppression and the rebels’ violence.

At the time, civil liberties were very limited and protesters risked being sent to jail as political prisoners or being killed or tortured; there were also limited means of communications or information, with barely any access to television or the internet. The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace campaign however, managed to find a voice, with the women identifying themselves as “sisters”, “mothers”, and “wives” - all valued female roles in Liberia. Their activism and message was focused on peace, they were

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45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.
fundamentally nonviolent and believed in the power of prayer. WIPNET was also a decisive force during the peace talks, by meeting with all actors of the conflict and with the mediators, but also by organizing forums alongside the peace talks regarding the progress of the peace talks. Even at the peace talks, two members of WIPNET represented the women at the political and security committee meeting. Some also argue that "WIPNET’s involvement with the rebel leaders was instrumental in moving the disarmament process forward."

Indeed, when the civil war ended, WIPNET continued to be active in the transition period before the elections for the president. Women of the WIPNET network were key participants in the reconstruction effort and present in the communities, e.g., in disarmament campaigns. For instance, they “entered cantonments, engaged with fighters, and collected and destroyed AK-47s.” They also assisted with the elections process, by registering voters and making sure more women were voting and participating in politics.

The success of the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace campaign transcended Liberia to reach other nations in West Africa. For instance, in 2007, WIPNET organized nonviolence activism trainings for women in Sierra Leone and later in 2011 invited a group

49 Ibid.


51 Ibid.

52 Bekoe and Parajon, “Women’s Role in Liberia’s Reconstruction.”


54 “How the women of Liberia fought for peace and won.”
of West African women as observers for the 2011 elections in Liberia.\textsuperscript{55} In 2000, the Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET) was also established as a regional movement to regroup women activists from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea and lobby the international community from the elites to the grassroots.\textsuperscript{56} Their mission was to end the wars in the region but also to prevent any recurrence. Thanks to its connections with the local communities and its roots on the ground, MARWOPNET was a decisive partner of the United Nations in preventing civil war recurrence in Sierra Leone and Liberia and promoting a peace discourse in the public in Guinea.\textsuperscript{57} For instance, MARWOPNET provided training in different trades, which helped integrate women into the Liberian economy, and as such assisted in empowering women and creating more gender equality.\textsuperscript{58}

The women of Liberia also understood the importance of using international networks and leveraged the assistance of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the U.N. Resolution 1325. The U.N. Resolution 1325 intent is to move women from being victims to becoming participants in society and to promote women’s involvement in the “prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction.”\textsuperscript{59} U.N. Resolution 1325 was used by Liberian civil society as a legal basis

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} Anderlini, \textit{Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters}, 70.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 198-199.

\textsuperscript{58} Bekoe and Parajon, “Women’s Role in Liberia’s Reconstruction.”

\textsuperscript{59} United Nations, “Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security.”
for women’s involvement in the peace process. Furthermore, UNIFEM provided many training and workshops to women of Liberia on political engagement and participation. It also monitored the implementation of the peace process and as such served as an accountability and oversight body. Women also used the international communities to raise funds for their activities and “funds were raised by establishing or employing international connections.”

As we have seen, cooperation among local, regional and international women actors and networks was crucial in ending the civil war and ensuring a sustainable peace. We will analyze in the next section why including women in peace processes can promote peace, and what women, as the example of Liberia shows, can effectively bring to the peace process.

Women’s Empowerment as a Driver for Peace in Liberia: Why Including Women in Peace Processes Matters and What Contributions Women Make

The Liberian example shows the importance of including women in peace processes, and how much of an impact on peace such inclusion can make. Too often, women have to fight to have this simple right of inclusion, whereas including them from the onset at all levels of peace processes would make a positive impact for sustainable peace. According to Leymah Gbowee “peace is a process not an event”61, and as such a long and sustained intervention of women to contribute to maintaining peace is needed. Their voices must be heard, not only as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, religious

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61 *Pray the Devil Back to Hell.*
community leaders, but also as educated and engaged citizens and civic participants of their countries. To allow for women to be empowered and active participants of civil society, women’s rights must be established, protected and enforced, and women must be educated. There is a strong link between women’s rights and women’s security and sustainable peace and security in a country.  

Also, women bring a different discourse to the peace negotiations table. They are more inclined to include issues such as “education, health care, employment, human rights and land rights as integral to debates on ‘peace and security’, which can be explained by the fact they are so deeply rooted in all aspects of the community.”  

Too often, these important factors are not taken into account by a male audience.

The Liberia example also demonstrates that women can serve as “agents and instigators of a different form of resistance,” where nonviolent means are used instead of violence. They used systematic approaches and strategies and relied on nonviolent tactics, which gained momentum among the noncombatant population of Liberia, which was also the primary victim of the civil war.

Consider the opposite example where women attempt to participate as combatants on the same field as men. As Erica Chenoweth and Adria Lawrence point out, even in those cases where women have sometimes been involved in violent campaigns (e.g., Sri

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62 "The Women Stats Project."

63 Porter, Peacebuilding: Women in International Perspective, 34.

64 Erica Chenoweth and Adria Lawrence, Rethinking Violence, States and Non-State Actors in Conflict (The MIT Press, 2010), 250.
Lanka or Pakistan), these cases are usually exceptions to the rule. Furthermore, despite such women’s involvement, and a gender role change to combatant, it does not often modify the traditional role of women in patriarchal ideologies and does not bring women more “political or organizational influence”.

Instead, and in contrast, nonviolent resistance campaigns are usually more accessible to women as less physically prohibitive than violent resistance campaigns. They also can potentially mobilize a large part of the victimized population since these campaigns have less moral barriers than violent campaigns. They also bring greater legitimacy to women as political leaders and acceptance of women as equals to men. In Liberia, to the inhumane and violent conditions they faced, women respond by becoming politically active, by becoming an agent of change and by moving from the “private to the public sphere”.

Furthermore, women managed to mobilize, as we have seen thanks to religion and powerful networks, but another fundamental element was necessary for the population to follow them, which is trust. According to Nobel Laureate Oscar Arias, “[b]uilding trust is

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65 Ibid., 254.
66 Kaufman and Williams, Women and War, Gender Identity and Activism in Times of Conflict, 133.
67 Chenoweth and Lawrence, Rethinking Violence, States and Non-State Actors in Conflict, 254.
68 Ibid., 256.
69 Kaufman and Williams, Women and War, Gender Identity and Activism in Times of Conflict, 134.
70 Ibid., 127.
perhaps the most difficult but also the most essential job of a peace maker”. Trust is established in part by sincerity, honesty and lack of corruption. The women of Liberia were sincere and honest in their peace efforts and for the most part could not have been bought with a few dollars. They also had a true humanitarian objective, were part of the community when it needed assistance, by providing food, care for elderly people and children, etc. This sincerity and honesty helped them build the respect and legitimacy of their constituencies and as such they earn a right to be listened to by the politicians in charge.

The role of gender as a force for creating coalitions was also particularly interesting in the Liberia case. Women used their gender as a positive factor to move from victims to agents of change. They participated in sex strikes, rallied the women in their communities and used that momentum to also rally religious establishments and consequently men in their communities. They showed the power of including and engaging all parties, women and men, in promoting peace. The women’s movement was not only effective in the capital Monrovia, but also in rural areas. For instance, to organize the “sex strikes,” the women in rural areas would “set aside a separate space where they sat each day and the men could not come” and “made their refusal religious, saying that they wouldn’t have sex until [they] saw God’s face for peace.”

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72 Ibid., 80-81.

Another important factor that made the women’s movements so successful was solidarity among women and among the women’s movements. As we have seen, religion was acting as a bonding seal among the women, but their solidarity extended beyond that. The women’s movements were working together and helping each other. For instance, the members of MARWOPNET, the more elite group, represented the interests of the Liberian women as observers during the peace talks in Accra, and made sure the women’s demands would be heard. Meanwhile, the members of WIPNET were standing outside the peace talks in protest. Each group would feed each other information and “collaborate on daily press releases saying ‘this is what the women think’.”

Including women in peace processes not only significantly increases the chances for finding peace, as the Liberia example shows, but it also contributes to increased women’s rights which in turn help to foster a sustainable peace. Indeed, Liberian women’s peace and security have significantly increased since the end of the civil war. Women’s significant participation in ending the conflict also paved the way for more women’s active participation in civil society and the government. Women have been requesting equal participation in government and, as a result, the first women president was elected. For example, as of 2012, women held “31 percent of top ministerial posts, 29 percent of the Deputy Minister positions, and 25 percent of the Assistant Minister posts.”

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74 Ibid.,156.


76 Ibid.
participation in governance keeps rising (for instance in 2006 only 22% of women had top ministerial positions).\textsuperscript{77} Liberia is also one of the few countries in the world to send a female ambassador to the United Nations. And of course, the fact that a woman serves as president of the country represents a true progress for the women of Liberia and Africa.

With respect to the legal framework for women, the Liberian Constitution now provides that “all persons, regardless of ethnic background, race, sex, creed, place of origin or political opinion” shall enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms.\textsuperscript{78} Furthermore, a National Gender Policy and further legislation have been adopted to extend inheritance rights of women and to protect women against sexual based violence.\textsuperscript{79} For instance, Liberia enacted the Liberia Rape Law in 2005, which for the first time made rape illegal and punishable in the country.

It is therefore important for women’s rights and gender equality to be ensured as part of a peace process for a sustainable peace. If those rights and values are profoundly incorporated in civil society, chances for a successful democratic transition and lasting peace are much higher. So, if including women in peace processes seems to be crucial, one may wonder “where are the women” in other conflicts and peace processes? There are a few main reasons for their absence. First, peace negotiations usually involve military and political leaders, and since too few women are in these positions, they are \textit{ipso facto}

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
not included at the negotiation table. In those cases, like the example of Liberia, women have to make their way and work outside the formal process to have a voice. Second, women too often lack the proper training and education to know how to participate or feel legitimate at a male-dominated peace table. Therefore, it is important that women contribute to peace processes on a more systematic basis, from the onset and during the conflict, through grassroots and civil society participations, during the peace negotiations, to ensure that theirs demands are being included in the peace agreement, and after the peace agreement has been signed to ensure their rights are protected, their demands are respected and to assist in the DDR process if their help is needed. To be able to do so, women must be educated, trained and included as full participants at every stage and level of civil society. As the Liberia example shows, a country which ignores the women’s perspective has generally more chances to see a recurrence of conflict, and vice versa the potential for peace of a country is much greater if the women are full participants in a peace process.

Of course, there is also still much to do for a sustainable peace and development in Liberia, which is currently ranked 174 out of 187 in the Human Development Index of the United Nations. Even if Liberia has come a long way since 2003, the country still suffers from violence and criminal activities, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence,

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80 Kaufman and Williams, Women and War, Gender Identity and Activism in Times of Conflict, 129.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
pervasive poverty as high as 83 percent, as well as high maternal mortality and low education/literacy rates.\textsuperscript{84} Liberia is also ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world and freedom of the press, although much better than under Charles Taylor, has been questioned.\textsuperscript{85} Furthermore, gender discrimination persists. For instance only 41\% of the women in Liberia are literate, as compared to 69\% of men.\textsuperscript{86} A certain number of measures could contribute to ensuring women’s equal rights and participation in leadership positions. For instance, more training for women on policy advocacy, transition from grassroots to development and politics, as well as more basic education and life skills training for women could help Liberia.\textsuperscript{87} It is also crucial to empower the women of Liberia economically and provide them with equal access to opportunities as men, as well as socially deconstructing some of the gender stereotypes common in Liberian society.\textsuperscript{88} The international community has also contributed in terms of women’s empowerment in Liberia. Indeed, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), established by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1509 in 2003,\textsuperscript{89} includes in its mandate, among other tasks, to “support the


\textsuperscript{85} Johnny Dwyer, “The New Iron Lady,” \textit{Foreign Policy Magazine} (October 2, 2013), accessed December 5, 2014, \url{http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/10/02/interview_sirleaf_liberia}.


\textsuperscript{87} Bekoe and Parajon, “Women’s Role in Liberia’s Reconstruction.”

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.

participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, including in decision-making roles in post-conflict governance institutions, appointed and elected in Liberia. UNMIL’s presence since the end of the conflict has certainly helped women’s empowerment in Liberia. More generally, UNMIL has also contributed to Liberia’s reconstruction (e.g., by providing infrastructure assistance or security assistance, etc.). However, one may wonder what will happen to the country when UNMIL leaves Liberia for good. Indeed, UNMIL is scheduled to decrease the peacekeepers currently in Liberia from over 8,000 to 3,750 by 2015. Will Liberia be able to stand on its own feet and sustain peace? At least we can count on Liberian women to do their best to make sure it does.

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CHAPTER FOUR
THIRD CASE STUDY: NORTHERN IRELAND AND WOMEN’S PLACE AT THE PEACE TABLE

At the time of the Irish “Troubles,” the world was inspired by the involvement of the women of Northern Ireland and their quest for peace. In a traditional society, where historically women rarely had any public role, their involvement and participation in the resolution of the conflict by taking part of the political discourse and peace negotiations were quite remarkable. As we will see, the role of women in protesting against violence, in demanding peace and the inclusion of human rights matters in the peace process negotiations and the peace agreement was significant. Similarly to the case study of Liberia, many women acted as mediators and facilitated dialogues between key members of the Protestant unionists and the Catholics nationalists. Through human and social interactions, through cross-religion exchanges and sharing, women’s groups of Northern Ireland contributed to peace community building at the grassroots level and then through their participation, although modest, at the peace table, they contributed to a more sustainable peace for the country. In this case study, we will analyze how, despite the cultural challenges they faced, the women of Northern Ireland became involved in the peace process and in the peace treaty negotiations and what factors contributed to their involvement. Furthermore, despite a successful women’s involvement in the peace process, we will also look at the current status and future of women’s rights and political involvement in Northern Ireland, and how, even if some progress has been achieved in terms of women equality in political participation, and women have obtained some related
legal rights, the road to full gender equality, including in political participation and representation in Northern Ireland still lies ahead.

**Historical Context - The “Troubles” and Decades of Conflict**

Northern Ireland encountered decades of internal political conflicts, which as we will see ended with the execution of the “Belfast Agreement,” also known as the “Good Friday Agreement” on 1998, which created a power-sharing mechanism between Protestants, mostly descendants of Scottish and English settlers, and Catholics.\(^1\) This power-sharing arrangement was implemented in 2007 between the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Fein.\(^2\) Northern Ireland has now become a successful example of peace and reconciliation, but the road to such success was a complex one where every layer of civil society had to contribute to peace, including women, whose roles had historically been limited to those of the housewife. Although the details of the “Troubles” is outside of the subject of this thesis, we will provide a short overview to better understand the historical context of the women’s involvement in the peace process.

In short, the period called the “Troubles” extended through decades from 1966 through 2003 and claimed the lives of 3,703 people, while 40,000 other people were severely wounded.\(^3\) For over four decades political stalemate endured between the Protestant “loyalists”, favoring the Union with the United Kingdom, and the Catholic

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\(^3\) Ibid.
“nationalists”, favoring a united Ireland. The protests started in the 1960s with the nationalists in Northern Ireland demonstrating and taking the streets against discrimination, for instance in employment and housing allocation. At that time, new activist names, which would then become famous, such as Gerry Adams, started to appear.\(^4\) Civil rights movements involving the nationalists and the unionists emerged and violent demonstrations followed to the point that the British army was deployed in August 1969.\(^5\) In the 1970s, the violence escalated with targeted shootings from the nationalist Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the unionist Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).\(^6\) In 1974, a first attempt at a peace agreement was made with the Sunningdale Agreement, then a second attempts followed with the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. It is interesting to point out that none of the majority of Northern Irish parties, nor Sinn Fein (the political wing of the IRA), nor any women, were at the negotiating table for these agreements, which would later fail.\(^7\)

It was not until 1996, and years of trying to resolve this conflict through political settlement, that multi-party talks really begun, which led to the execution of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.\(^8\) This peace agreement called for a power-sharing structure


\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) Ibid.

\(^8\) Ibid.
with unionists and nationalists sharing power in a Northern Ireland Assembly and an Executive Committee.\(^9\) The peace process also included, thanks in part, as we will see, to women’s involvement in the process, decommissioning of paramilitary groups weapons, addressing human rights issues, proceeding with demilitarization by the United Kingdom, as well as dealing with the status of prisoners and ceasefires.\(^{10}\)

However, due to instability of the devolved government in Northern Ireland, the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement has proven challenging. This inability to fully implement this peace agreement led to sectarian violence and the suspension of the Belfast government and the reinstatement of British direct rule on October 14, 2002.\(^{11}\) Finally, after years of political turmoil, on March 7, 2007, the Democratic Unionist and Sinn Fein both largely won the elections, and on March 26, 2007, both sides announced a deal and the re-establishment of a power-sharing government.\(^{12}\) As a result, policing and justice affairs where ultimately transferred by London back to Belfast for the first time in 38 years on March 9, 2010.\(^{13}\) With this major last accomplishment, many are in the view that the Good Friday Agreement implementation has been completed, while others believe that more progress needs to be made in terms of human rights and equality and to deal with

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10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.
a legacy of violence in the country. This is especially true in terms of equal participation of men and women in the political life of the country, as we will see. Although some progress was made, women still came out of the Good Friday Agreement still largely underrepresented, with just 18 seats out of 108 in the 2003 and 2007 elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly. However, women’s contributions to the peace process and political representations were in themselves a breakthrough for Northern Ireland.

*Women’s Political Involvement and Legal Empowerment Before and During the Peace Process*

The contributions of women during the peace process should be considered and interpreted within Northern Ireland’s particular cultural and societal context for women. In Northern Ireland, women’s representation in politics and institutions has historically been poor. For instance, since Northern Ireland’s existence, only three women were elected as MPs to Westminster and from 1920 through 1972, only nine women were elected and twenty selected to be members of the Northern Ireland’s Stormont Parliament. In this difficult cultural and societal context, how can we then explain women’s involvement in the political process, especially in the 1990s, which led to their involvement in the Northern Ireland peace process? One answer may be by looking at women’s groups’ involvement at the community and local levels. Even though women in Northern Ireland were poorly represented, they were actually quite involved in grassroots politics at local

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14 Ibid.

and community levels, through civil rights movements and campaigns for women’s and other human rights.

Some initiatives also provided some opportunities for women to voice their concerns. For instance, in 1992, a new initiative was created, under the name of the “Opsahl Commission,” to hear the views and potential solutions to the conflict from the people of Northern Ireland. This was an opportunity for women in Northern Ireland to be involved and the report concluded that women’s involvement in the political life was a positive aspect in the context of the political arena.\(^{16}\) Women also had the opportunity during this thirteen-month Opsahl Commission initiative to voice their frustration and concerns regarding their exclusion from politics. Following this initiative, debates and discussions about women’s involvement in politics started to grow at the local, regional and international level. As a result, several women’s organizations, which would later be an entry point to the peace negotiations, became particularly active, such as the Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform (NIWEP) and the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWCI).\(^{17}\) By 1994-1995, the underrepresentation of Northern Ireland women in politics had become part of the political discourse and many women’s movements made it a central part of their campaigns.\(^{18}\) Many important conferences to promote women’s participation in politics and in the peace process were held around that time, and the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition (NIWC) was created. Even though initially these

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 76-77.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 77.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
initiatives had little effect on changing the existing dynamic,\(^9\) the NWIC was nevertheless successful at entering the political debate. Some of its effective campaign strategies were, for instance, hanging up posters requesting people to “Wave Goodbye to Dinosaurs,” giving leaflets asking voters to “Give Women your Vote,”, as well as telling the voters what women will bring to the peace talks.\(^{20}\) The NIWC also took the approach of concentrating on core rights and values that it wanted to defend, such as equality, human rights and women’s inclusion in political participation and it ran its campaign on that political platform.\(^{21}\)

In the election of May 30, 1996, the NWIC was “ranked the ninth most popular party out of 24, which gave it two Forum members and a team at the Multi-Party Talks”.\(^{22}\) As such, by winning some seats at the elections, the NIWC also won a place at the peace negotiations table. However, despite this accomplishment, the societal and cultural misogynist context was still overly present. In many occasions, some chauvinist and sexist members of the main Unionist parties were verbally harassing NIWC members when they were addressing the Forum, and their attitude had become a way to undermine powerful women leaders.\(^{23}\) For example, in May 1996, Peter Robinson of the Democratic Unionist Party made the following remark during the peace talks: “women should leave politics and

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 78.


\(^{21}\) Ibid.

\(^{22}\) Brown et al., “Women and Constitutional Change in Scotland and Northern Ireland,” 78.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 78-79.
leadership alone." As another example, Seamus Mallon, from the Social Democratic and Labour Party also said during the 1996 elections that women’s coalitions: “must be a cult so they will grow into each other and disappear.” In other instances, the men would “moo” as the women were entering the civic forum, “ridiculing the ladies’ coalition and at times bursting into the song ‘Stand by Your Man.’” These examples show how, despite social progress, mentalities and culture unfortunately can take time to evolve.

Nevertheless, the work of women activists paid off, and although still marginal, a total of 14 women (13%) were elected at the Northern Ireland Assembly following the June 1998 elections, and two women became ministers. Furthermore, the Good Friday Agreement contained a declaration of women’s rights to participate in politics and the “Northern Ireland Assembly promoted more family-friendly working practices.” The Good Friday Agreement also established the Equality Commission, which purpose, although controversial, was to improve the status of minorities or marginalized civil society groups, such as women. Indeed, the Northern Ireland Act of 1998 “established in Section 75 ‘gender’ as one of nine areas of equality to be promoted by public authorities. This has

24 Kilmurray and McWilliams, “Struggling for Peace: How Women in Northern Ireland Challenged the Status Quo.”

25 Ibid.


28 Ibid., 80.

resulted in the establishment of a Human Rights Commission and equality safeguards such as the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, instruments which have led to progressive legislation on same-sex civil unions, employment equity and social welfare.”

These accomplishments can be credited to the women who were involved in the peace process and who made sure that some important human values were incorporated in the agenda. Indeed, during the peace process talks, the NIWC was successful in including topics such as “integrated education, release and reintegration of political prisoners, victims’ rights, mixed housing, and community development”, which would have otherwise been neglected. Also, it was important for the NIWC to advocate for issues and human values that would “leave the group’s fingerprints on the final peace agreement.” Legal scholars have also pointed out that without the women’s group involvement, the “much-needed “social services justice” (care for victims, education, health and well-being)” would have been absent from the post-conflict debate.

How did the NIWC, in such a difficult context, manage to get women’s voices heard? As we have mentioned, the grassroots and civil society work of the women of

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32 Kilmurray and McWilliams, “Struggling for Peace: How Women in Northern Ireland Challenged the Status Quo.”

33 Ibid.
Northern Ireland was critical. For instance, women civil society leaders gathered the needed signatures needed for the NIWC to exist as a party. And, when the NIWC won two seats at the Forum that gave the NIWC access to the peace table.\textsuperscript{34} This would not have been possible without the work of women civil society, as well as some support from the local and international community. For instance, local and international NGOs provided space for meetings, as well as financed training events and conferences for the NIWC members.\textsuperscript{35} Furthermore, in order to have a direct impact on the peace negotiations, the NIWC installed offices outside of the peace negotiations location, and also in an effort for inclusiveness, the NIWC set up a civic forum comprised of civic representatives, such as trade unions.\textsuperscript{36} The NIWC members also built relationships with international facilitators during the peace talks, such as Martha Pope, who had been Chief of Staff for U.S. Senator George Mitchell.\textsuperscript{37} They also built relationships within Britain and Ireland, for instance with Marjorie "Mo" Mowlan who was later appointed as British secretary of Northern Ireland, who then became an important figure of the peace process.\textsuperscript{38} The NIWC also built relationships with ad hoc experts, for instance in the area of human rights, cross-border economics, voting rights, in order to get the technical expertise the members needed.\textsuperscript{39} In

\textsuperscript{34} Inclusive Security Report, "Nine Models for Inclusion of Civil Society in Peace Processes."

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{37} Kilmurray and McWilliams, "Struggling for Peace: How Women in Northern Ireland Challenged the Status Quo."

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
addition, the NIWC built relationships with community-based groups, which allowed to understand better and advance some of its constituents’ needs and priorities.⁴⁰

As we have seen, women in Northern Ireland “mobilized to place gender within reform agendas, to promote women’s political representation and to influence constitutional changes.”⁴¹ Not only did they fight for women’s values such as gender equality and women’s inclusion but also for human values, such as social justice, victims’ rights, integrated education, community development, etc. In that sense, the political representation of women in Northern Ireland encompassed a symbolic meaning (to get women elected) and a substantive meaning (to get women’s interests and concerns taken into account in the legislative process).⁴² So, within that context, what are some of the lessons we can take away from the Northern Ireland’s women remarkable accomplishments in the peace process?

*Women’s Empowerment in Northern Ireland: Lessons Learned and Status of Women’s Rights*

The culture of Northern Ireland historically did not leave much place for women in the public arena since both Catholic and Protestant cultures in that country limited the role of women to household tasks, therefore leaving the public space, and hence the political space, to men. In this much gendered culture, women had to struggle to get access to the public space, get their voices heard and more women’s legal rights passed and enforced.

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⁴⁰ Ibid.
⁴² Ibid.
As we have seen, notably through grassroots activism and women’s organizations, women in Northern Ireland were able to claim the public space and participate in the peace talks that led to the Good Friday Agreement. The role of the NIWC in providing a gendered lens to the post-conflict debate was critical to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the realities of the conflict and security.\(^{43}\) Not only did the NIWC try to include a social justice agenda in the peace talks and the peace agreement, but it also tried to integrate this agenda in the country’s culture.

The women of the NIWC chose inclusiveness and the party included unionists and nationalists, as well as women who did not define themselves from any of those categories.\(^{44}\) As such the women’s group and political party acted as a bridge between divided communities. The NIWC was also very effective at mobilizing the public to vote for the Good Friday Agreement, to continue the peace talks and acting as mediator during the negotiations.\(^{45}\)

The NIWC members were also able to adjust to their misogynist cultural environment and the discrimination they faced. For instance, they decided to shame and publicly name the men who had verbally mistreated them during debates, which proved effective.\(^{46}\)

\(^{43}\) Kilmurray and McWilliams, “Struggling for Peace: How Women in Northern Ireland Challenged the Status Quo.”

\(^{44}\) Fearon, “Women Building Peace – Northern Ireland.”

\(^{45}\) Anderlini, Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters, 83.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 34-35.
The involvement of women in the Northern Ireland peace process is yet another example that a gendered approach to post-conflict peacebuilding can be a determining factor in achieving a sustainable peace. However, there is still much to do in Northern Ireland for women’s equal rights and Northern Ireland has not completely succeeded in addressing women’s demands for equal rights and inclusion. For instance, equal pay for women in the workplace remains an issue, as “full-time workers receive an average of £385.5 while males receive £438.8 per week.”  

Domestic and sexual violence, like in many post-conflicts areas of the world, still exists, abortion is still illegal and women also remain marginalized from the political life. Although the NIWC has been dismantled, many of its supporters continue to promote women’s involvement and participation in Northern Ireland’s political life.

The women’s group also promoted dialogue, exchange and communication and women “were expected to acknowledge differences upfront, rather than ‘be polite’ and leave them outside the door.”  

The NIWC was also mindful of the various views and opinions of its members during the peace talks and alternatively ensured that both nationalists and loyalists were present at the negotiating table.

Surprisingly however, the U.K. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, part of the global U.N. Resolution 1325 initiative, does not include Northern


48 Kilmurray and McWilliams, “Struggling for Peace: How Women in Northern Ireland Challenged the Status Quo.”


50 Ibid.
Ireland. Therefore, other independent initiatives are being promoted, such as the creation of a Strategic Guide and Toolkit for Women, Peace and Security: Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, whose purpose is to ‘domesticate’ the international women, peace and security agenda. The Guide suggests a three-prong approach: (i) raising awareness of women’s issues, (ii) transferring knowledge and meaning of certain terms such as the example of ‘gender perspective’, and (iii) outlining a framework to assist political leaders to implement some of the women related provisions of the Good Friday Agreement. This Guide and related project seeks to provide some tools to promote full and equal participation of women in politics, the peace process, local government, decision-making, etc. Time will tell the effectiveness of the initiative, however it is regrettable that U.N Resolution 1325 is not being implemented in Northern Ireland. Indeed, “women remain marginalized in political and public life in Northern Ireland, which reveals the need for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the region to provide an essential framework for improving gender equality and creating a sustainable peace.” Even if there has been a strong civil society movement from women to raise awareness about the need to implement U.N. Resolution 1325 in Northern Ireland, and even if the Irish government recognizes the importance of women’s inclusion in peace processes, “within the new post-conflict

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52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Hoewer, “UNSCR 1325 in Northern Ireland: Opportunities, Challenges and Complexities.”
political setting ‘finding accommodation with opponents’ takes priority over feminist concerns in everyday Northern Irish politics.” 55 Despite the progress made much remains to be done to overcome some of the legacies of public space dominated by men to allow for equal participation and involvement of women in the public and political sphere in Northern Ireland.

55 Ibid.
CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS: WHAT CAN PROMOTE WOMEN’S INVOLVEMENT IN POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING, HOW WOMEN’S INVOLVEMENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE AND REPLICABILITY

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

What can the women of Tunisia, Liberia and Northern Ireland, and so many others we have not had the opportunity to talk about in this thesis, teach us about their successes in post-conflict peacebuilding? How, despite the obstacles and the challenges, did their voices get heard and their involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding have a positive impact on peace? Although not every woman can join together and build bridges, and not every woman considers that the presence of women in peace processes is a necessity, we have shown in this thesis that a small group of committed women can make a difference in changing the gendered narrative in post-conflict peacebuilding and in raising awareness in women’s rights issues. And, as Sanam Anderlini points out “if nothing else, the demands by women have helped broaden the discourse and debate around the purpose and substance of peace talks.”1

In this final Chapter, we will review our findings about: (i) the key ingredients or entry points that promoted women’s involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding in our three case studies, (ii) why women’s involvement, although not sufficient by itself, can be a crucial element for a more sustainable peace, and (iii) how some of the findings could

1 Anderlini, Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters, 88.
possibly be replicated and what could further be done to promote women’s involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding.

**What are some Key Ingredients that Promote Women’s Involvement in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding?**

We have analyzed three different case studies of women’s involvement in post-conflict situations, tried to understand the context that led to women’s involvement, as well as how they got involved in the peace process and what contributions they made. What are some of the initial conclusions we can draw from the case studies of Tunisia, Liberia and Northern Ireland?

*Equal education and legal rights.* In a world where women’s rights and women’s empowerment seem to be constant and ongoing battles, especially in the Arab world, we have seen that Tunisia stands out as an exception. Despite decades of autocracy, Tunisia has managed to go through a relatively peaceful democratization process, and to maintain and reinforce women’s fundamental rights. Time will tell if this new democracy is on solid ground for the long term. With respect to comprehending women’s role post-Jasmine Revolution, we have seen that fundamental women’s rights have been part of society for decades with the reforms accomplished by Tunisia’s post-colonial governments. As such, women’s rights groups integrated in civil society were able to influence the political elites at critical times. Legal structures were created to implement higher levels of equality throughout the political system. The religious tradition was interpreted in a manner consistent with the goals of greater egalitarianism. Furthermore, thanks to a fairly egalitarian education system that allowed girls to receive an education and as a result for women to be economically empowered, female examples in various political, judicial, artistic, academic,
business and government positions created a new paradigm of "normal." Secularist and moderate Islamist forces alike incorporated women as a norm into their parties and electoral lists. The rest opposed those parties that fundamentally rejected the concept of egalitarianism within a representative government framework. As such, women’s participation at different levels of society and in the democratic transition process was in part facilitated by an existing fairly equal education system and legal rights guaranteeing some women’s rights and protection.

*Grassroots activism, political participation and international, regional and local networks.* As Leymah Gbowee so beautifully says in her book, "[p]eople who have lived through a terrible conflict may be hungry and desperate, but they are not stupid. They often have very good ideas about how peace can evolve, and they need to be asked." The women of Liberia had a very good idea about how to make peace in their country, although they were not asked but they acted and made sure their voices and opinions would be heard, and as such, partly through their grassroots experience, they contributed greatly to a lasting peace in Liberia. Furthermore, "[t]he profound impact women had on the conclusion of Liberia’s civil war and its ensuring reconciliation is just one example of why there is such an urgent need for a critical, gendered understanding of women’s involvement in matters of war and peace." The women of Liberia understood that a sustainable peace had to come from within, that they had to get to the roots of their culture, country and hearts of their citizens to stop

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2 Gbowee, *Mighty be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer and Sex Changed a Nation at War,* 171.

the violence. Women’s involvement and participation along many dimensions, as well as their undeterred commitment for peace created the change and a necessary condition for rebuilding a more peaceful and stable country. Their achievements were accomplished through the assistance of powerful women’s civil rights movements. The same can be said about Northern Ireland and Tunisia. In Liberia, women’s involvement in the peace process was also supported by local, regional and international organizations and networks, and these powerful networks had a significant influence over politicians and leaders.

Political participation and activism was also a determining factor in women’s involvement in the peace process in Northern Ireland. Indeed, women in Northern Ireland, both Catholic and Protestant created a political party, the NIWC, which gave them a platform to be included in the peace talks, but also to incorporate in the peace agreement issues such as human rights, victims’ rights and reconciliation and women’s participation in the political life. Creating a political party was pushed by necessity, when in 1996, US Senator George Mitchell took up the task of mediating the peace talks and proposed that “admission to the all-party talks would be via elections, with the top ten parties gaining seats at the negotiations.” At first, the NIWC, which emanated from a network of women, and was created out of risk to be marginalized if not a political participant, had no resources but its constituency was strong enough to allow it to come in ninth place at the elections.

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5 Ibid.
Community building, trust and communication. Some psychologists have demonstrated the difference in communication styles between males and females, and for instance showed that women, in a conflict situation, more generally tend to focus on areas of commonality instead of differences to solve a conflict, and tend to propose and look for compromises more often than men. Indeed, there seems to be crucial differences between men and women’s social behavior and the female brain being more hard-wired for empathy that the male brain. In Northern Ireland for instance, some women also had the ability to empathize with people, such as Mo Mowlam, and as such were able to relate very rapidly with the issues faced by the communities they were talking to. Empathy also contributed to mass public mobilization, which was also helpful for the women of Northern Ireland to make their demands for peace heard. The women of Northern Ireland, Liberia and Tunisia also had the ability to build trust, and thus respect, which earned then support. For instance, for Mary Brownell, “women’s sincerity and honesty earned them the support of a wide cross section of Liberian society and the respect of the international community and faction leaders.” But this is also how the NIWC handled its communication efforts and strategy that made a difference and its ability to build trust. As Sanam Anderlini points out, the “NIWC’s willingness to speak to all sides, extremists among Catholics and Protestants, won them deep trust” and their commitment to bringing peace brought respect throughout

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6 Ibid., 81.
7 Ibid., 82.
8 Ibid., 83.
9 Ibid., 81.
the peace talks\textsuperscript{10}. Both in Northern Ireland and Liberia, women used their religious communities as a vehicle for peace, not for dissensions and divisions. They cultivated human values such as solidarity, honesty and forgiveness to bridge gaps between estranged communities.

\textit{How Women’s Involvement in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Makes a Difference}

Women’s contributions to the peace table and the peace process are many and have been exemplified in this thesis through our case studies. Women’s experience of war and conflict does not only translate in power struggles and deaths on the battlefield, but also in disruption of daily life (e.g., schooling for children being interrupted, food and basic necessities being missing, disease spreading, etc.). Because, in part, of their different experience to war and conflict, we have seen that women can bring a different approach and dynamic, different skills and concerns that conversely bring up different agendas and issues that may otherwise be omitted from the peacebuilding debate.

As the examples of Liberia and Northern Ireland show, women can lead the way to reconciliation and foster alliances and collaboration among estranged communities. As we have seen in Northern Ireland, the women’s groups brought the Catholics and the Protestants together, and in Liberia, through religious communities’ involvement, the women’s groups brought Muslims and Catholics together.

Women can also be conduits between the negotiators and their constituencies and as such bring legitimacy by their participation by conveying what is acceptable or not to

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 80.
the communities.\textsuperscript{11} We have seen this clearly in Liberia, but here is another example from South Africa:

In South Africa, for example, the ANC’s Women’s League mobilized its popular base and reached out to women across the political and civil society spectrum. In 1992, women held the first public cross-party meeting of South Africans and formed the Women’s National Coalition. As the negotiations progressed, they fanned out across the country, consulting some 3 million women about the economic, social, political, legislative, and security issues. At the end, they emerged with a twelve point agenda known as the Women’s Charter. They drew on this vast constituency to assert their right to participate on an equal footing and in equal numbers (50 percent) in the negotiations process.\textsuperscript{12}

Women can also promote human rights and social justice in peace treaty agendas, make sure that the victim’s demands are taken into account, as well as push for legislation promoting equal rights and progressive values. For instance, in Northern Ireland, the NIWC advocated for human rights, inclusion and equality, which is so needed in post-conflict situations. Indeed, violence, insecurity and conflict can resurface if such important matters are absent from any peace process. In Tunisia, women made sure that the new Constitution adopted on January 26, 2014 included gender equality articles, for instance in terms of political representation and participation as well as in the employment environment, and articles for the protection of women’s rights (e.g., to eradicate violence against women).

As such, and by addressing social justice issues, women can contribute in addressing some underlying causes of conflicts. For instance, in Guatemala after the civil

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 79.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
war and throughout the peace negotiations, women’s movements ensure that profound issues that had led to the conflict were also being addressed:

The women’s movement, in particular, brought up such issues as access to land, credits, and other productive resources; health programs; equal opportunities for training and education; the right to a paid job; elimination of legal discrimination; penalties for sexual harassment; the creation of spaces and institutions for the defense of the rights of indigenous people; and the mechanism to promote the political participation of women.¹³

Women also tend to make sure their priorities are in line with the priorities and the needs of their countries, probably due to the fact that their grassroots connections allow them to understand deeply what those priorities and needs are:

In Cambodia […] where corruption is a key concern, women not only are the symbols of anticorruption but also are among the leading anticorruption activists through their work in civil society organizations. In Rwanda, where reconciliation has been the focus, women in government and civil society have been at the forefront of the issue. In Afghanistan, they are engaged in education, health work, and development issues. Across Latin America and South Africa, where defense and national security were among the sensitive issues, they engaged directly.¹⁴

Therefore, women’s contributions to post-conflict peacebuilding can be summarized in their ability to cross bridges and bring populations in conflicts together, to favor inclusiveness rather than exclusion, to bring to the peace process agenda issues otherwise sometimes left out of the discussions, and to deeply understand the priorities and needs for their country for a more sustainable peace.

¹³ Ibid., 78.

¹⁴ Ibid., 141-142.
How can these Successes be Replicated and What can be Done to Assist Women to get Involved in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

As Kaufman and Williams rightfully point out, "[i]f peace is to succeed and be sustained, women must be involved in the process of building it." 15 Women must also work within their local constraints, find their own solutions to their country’s social and environmental problems. There cannot be a “one size fits all” in women’s empowerment and peacebuilding. Therefore, replicating any of the successes we have seen in Tunisia, Liberia and Northern Ireland can be a daunting task, as women’s participation is often a local cultural matter and to be interpreted within a particular historical context.

However, we could argue that some of the key ingredients or entry points that contributed to some successes in the case studies could be replicated in conflict situation to promote women’s involvement in peacebuilding processes. Every effort should be made by countries in conflict situations to include women in the whole peace process, at every levels of civil society, to increase the probability of sustainable peace. As such, the countries which have encountered some success in that respect should be looked at as examples.

It also seems obvious, from the case studies, that investing in women at the grassroots level can pay off. In Northern Ireland, for instance, women “have been instrumental in doing much of the work of the community level needed to transform the culture (cycle) of violence necessary for the country to move beyond the conflict…” 16

15 Kaufman and Williams, Women and War, Gender Identity and Activism in Times of Conflict, 130.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from the Liberia example. As such, women’s involvement in communities should be encouraged by nations.

Furthermore, equal education of men and women, as the Tunisia example shows, can be a strong element to promote women’s involvement in transition and peace processes. When girls are educated and benefit from equal rights, society and cultural norms become used to such gender equality, women also gain the opportunity to be economically empowered and acquire knowledge and experience. All these elements can contribute to women’s participation in the public space, and hence in post-conflict peace building and reinforce women’s rights by promoting progressive legislation.

The involvement of the regional and international community, like in the Liberia example, can also provide assistance to women’s participation in post-conflict peacebuilding. For instance, the international or regional community and networks can provide training and financial assistance to women’s groups, like they did in Liberia. Furthermore, mediators should also be able to place conditions to peace talks, such as the representation of women in peace talks. Of course, there are challenges but international agencies, such as the United Nations, which accept that women are necessary participants in peacebuilding efforts, must promote women’s participation not only through various assistance programs but also through internalization of such values within its own organizational structure. Sending men to lecture women on the need for women to be part of an inclusive peacebuilding effort may not have the same value as the actual example of women as peacebuilders on the international stage. However, the international community,
especially the U.N., despite its limitations, should keep pushing for the implementation of U.N. Resolution 1325 on a global scale as Sanam Anderlini argues:

The UN can and should set the tone and standard of practice, and it can prompt and encourage member states to comply and adhere to higher standards and principles of human rights and equality. Yet it remains constrained if its members are unwilling to take ownership of these principles, to root them in their own national legislation, discourse, policies, and leadership on the international stage.17

Therefore, the United Nations and the international community should continue and more systematically provide support to women’s groups, both financially and logistically, to promote women’s participation in civil society, in politics and hence in post-conflict peacebuilding. At least the international legal norms around that issue are becoming more compelling and widely spread and are helping raising awareness on a global level.

Politicians, heads of state, legislators, etc. should also push for laws providing for equal rights for women, and protection against domestic and sexual violence. The more women are involved in politics and in post-conflict peacebuilding, the more such agendas may be pushed. For instance, the enactment of the Liberian Rape Law was permitted because of pressures from women’s groups. Similarly in Rwanda, some women’s groups lobbied to revise a discriminatory law prohibiting women from inheriting land from male relatives and promote more gender equality in the law:

The Rwanda Family Code (1988) was revised in 2008 to meet the principle of gender equality. [...] The Inheritance and Marital Property Law (N° 22/99), which granted equal rights to women and men in terms of succession, entered into force in 1999. The Constitution of Rwanda, adopted in 2003, established under Article 185 the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) to monitor the compliance of policies, programmes and projects with fundamental principles of gender equality, along

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17 Anderlini, Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters, 199.
with state budgets, international agreements, and issues such as gender-based violence (GBV) and injustice. The National Land Policy and the Organic Land Law, introduced in 2004 and 2005 respectively, included clear provisions with a mandate for gender equality in land rights and set out a context in which all land should be registered and rights gained under different means of access to land should be considered equal.\(^{18}\)

Ensuring women’s equal rights, such as in land ownership, but also in employment, marriage, divorce, inheritance is also a crucial element for women’s empowerment. As the Tunisia’s case study exemplifies, a legal system that provides equal rights for men and women can contribute to women’s empowerment, including economic empowerment. Such women’s empowerment can be a factor for women’s involvement in public debate and can ensure women’s rights are maintained and protected in transition or conflict periods. Therefore, a conscious effort should be made by states to include gender equality provisions in the legal frameworks, in the constitutions and in the formal law, as well as to ensure legal enforcement of such provisions.

CONCLUSION

Peace starts within each one of us. When we have inner peace, we can be at peace with those around us.

The Dalai Lama

Despite wars, conflicts and violence, we have seen that the women of Tunisia, Liberia and Northern Ireland were able to build bridges and coalitions for peace in their communities, to become involved at different stages of the transition or post-conflict peacebuilding and made valuable contributions along the way. Through their resilience and hard work, they pushed for dialogue and inclusion in peace processes, peace agreements and/or legislations or constitutions. Women have shown that including another narrative coming from a different perspective can lead to a better and sustainable peace. Furthermore, women’s inclusion and participation in peace processes can be an important component of a lasting peace and the establishment of a democratic system, based on fundamental principles such as justice and equality. Although hard to quantify, and although certainly not the only crucial element to consider for a sustainable peace, we have seen that women’s involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding can have a positive impact for a more sustainable peace and should be promoted.

Billions of dollars are spent to make war but so few to make peace. This thesis has shown that sustainable peace has more chances of success with the involvement of women in post-conflict resolution. How can we change the status quo and encourage, support and promote willing men and women to work together towards sustainable peace? How can we empower and include women in post-conflict peacebuilding on a more systematic
basis? Certainly the answers are complex and this thesis has modestly endeavored to bring some answers to those questions, to show what key ingredients could be extracted from successful stories and potentially used in post-conflict situations.

One of the highlights of our findings is the importance of equality in education and opportunities for girls and women, as we have seen in Tunisia for instance, which brings equal opportunity and can promote women’s economic, political and legal empowerment. Women’s access to financial resources, as well as equal rights at every level of civil society can enhance their opportunities for political participation and public engagement.

Furthermore, local, regional and international organizations and networks should encourage and financially and/or logistically support women’s capacity building. This is important to educate women in leadership and other technical skills, so that they can bring even more meaningful contributions to the peace table. Training programs should also target men and male politicians and should focus on the need to promote gender equality, women’s empowerment and equal opportunities for women.

Women’s organizations should also be supported inasmuch as they serve as a nurturing place for women to grow their political skills and influence. The international, regional and local organizations and actors should also provide assistance to those women who want to be involved in their communities, in politics and in peacebuilding processes. As we have seen for example in Northern Ireland, these women’s organizations also serve as stepping stones for women who want to later engage in politics in their country and/or form a political party. They give women a communication platform to raise awareness about their gendered vision of peace, their leadership and the values they want to defend
and include in a peace process. These women's organizations are also often an entry point to push for legal reforms in human and women's rights issues.

As we have seen, there have been some positive developments with U.N. Resolution 1325 and other international policies to provide a legal framework to promote women's involvement in the decision-making process post-conflict. Progress has been made in some countries and some women have attained a more prominent political role in their countries' institutions, for instance in Liberia. However, much is still to be done in terms of full implementation of the U.N. Resolution 1325, as we have seen for example in Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, difficult cultural environments with strong patriarchal structures promote gender inequality and discrimination against women. Even in the 21st century, gender equality needs to be fought for constantly because, as for every civil rights fight, the battle must not stop until it is won.
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