

**Report on the workshop on  
Conflict Transformation in Africa: African Women's Perspectives**

**Dakar, Gorée Institute, 23-26 May 2000**

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## Preface

The workshop on which this report is based constitutes an important step in the overall assessment of women's contributions to conflict resolution in Africa. Many conferences, seminars and meetings dealing with armed conflicts have been organised at the local, regional and continental levels.

However, the workshop was not just another talking shop. Breaking with the traditional image of women as eternal victims with which the media, in particular, has bombarded the general public, the workshop focused on women as social actors and their involvement in armed conflicts, not only in their search for solutions, but also as interested parties who are actively involved in conflicts as combatants.

The workshop's innovatory approach involved uniting women activists from conflict zones who have borne the brunt of conflicts that have torn their communities and countries apart and who are actively involved in conflict resolution, and women researchers who have conducted research on gender relations and feminism in Africa and who have a more theoretical approach to conflicts, which is equally enlightening.

The workshop enabled the two groups to engage in in-depth and fruitful discussions. The participants recognised that women are mainly involved in restoring peace and safeguarding the cohesion of African communities, but, unfortunately, most of their conflict resolution strategies are ignored. They went on to openly and critically assess their own conflict resolution strategies. They highlighted the trends, strengths and limitations of these strategies as well as the contradictions, which lessen their impact.

The participants concluded that women's activism in creating lasting peace does not always encompass strategies for transforming the rules and social relations which define the power relations between men and women. Furthermore, the marginal participation of women in politics and the absence of a clear ideology on the part of women's peace organisations constitute major obstacles given that creating just and lasting peace, which embodies the concept of human rights, particularly women's rights and gender equality, is primarily a political act. This probably explains women's inability to occupy high-powered positions in decision-making bodies dedicated to conflict resolution and to make them appreciate women's concerns.

The workshop also highlighted the importance of research as an essential tool for helping women to analyse and understand their context in order to develop appropriate conflict resolution strategies. The participants' ideas were the basis for action plans aimed at strengthening the participation of women in conflict transformation in Africa and enabling them to take up their rightful place in decision-making bodies. The participants also formulated a number of recommendations to encourage close links between activists and researchers.

The organisations that initiated this workshop are both involved in protecting human rights in general and women's rights in particular. The Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) is a pan-African women's research institute, based in Dakar, Senegal. AAWORD was created in 1977 with the principal objective of analysing and transforming gender relations and social conditions in Africa. AAWORD, which has carried out research on rural development, reproductive health and economic policies, is currently working on issues relating to women's

health and sexuality, particularly in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as well as on issues relating to citizenship and democracy.

International Alert, which was created in 1985, is a London-based non-governmental organisation dedicated to the just and lasting resolution of violent conflicts. International Alert has worked for several years with women's organisations and networks, operating at the national, regional and international levels, in order to support and strengthen their participation in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction. International Alert specifically helps women's organisations to strengthen their capacities in relation to conflict resolution, political leadership and organisational development.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the UK National Lottery Charity Board (NLCB) and UNIFEM for funding this workshop.

Ndeye Sow, Programme Director, Women and Conflict Transformation, International Alert

Codou Bop, Interim Executive Secretary, AAWORD

## **Introduction**

The media routinely portrays women in situations of armed conflict as victims. However, when we analyse their experiences in conflict situations we see that they are often actively engaged in conflicts. They may bear arms, carry out numerous tasks, which can be dangerous, or encourage men to fight.

Women are also involved in conflict transformation. Their activities, which are mainly carried out within the framework of associations, include the development of survival strategies at community level, the reconstruction of communities that have been devastated by conflict, lobbying belligerents to lay down their weapons, the rehabilitation and social reintegration of combatants and awareness-raising campaigns aimed at promoting women's participation in decision-making processes relating to peace.

However, women's contributions to conflict transformation in Africa are either largely ignored by official policy-making structures, which they therefore cannot influence, or invisible. In general, men and women have different experiences of armed and post-conflict situations. In most cases, only men's more visible life experiences and contributions feature in analyses relating to conflicts and the mechanisms put in place to resolve them.

In order to contribute to the change of perceptions and representations of women in relation to conflicts, International Alert and AAWORD jointly organised a workshop entitled, "Conflict Transformation in Africa: African Women's Perspectives", which took place from 23 to 26 May 2000 at the Gorée Institute in Dakar, Senegal.

### **The Participants**

The workshop brought together 12 women from Burundi, Congo Brazzaville, Liberia, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia and Sudan. Some of these women are involved, either formally or informally, in conflict resolution mechanisms in their respective countries. All of them, however, are activists operating mainly within the framework of women's associations.

The other women were involved in conducting research on women's situation in armed conflicts. In fact, women's experiences and contributions in relation to conflicts and conflict resolution are rarely documented and information relating to their experiences in the field is either lacking or documented mainly by non-African researchers, with the ethnocentric risks that that entails. This is why the Gorée meeting was so important because it provided women activists and researchers from Africa with a golden opportunity to exchange experiences. All the participants agreed on the need to improve the way in which the experiences of activists are institutionalised in order to increase their visibility. Bearing this in mind, the participants planned joint activities, including the formulation of an appropriate conceptual framework aimed at incorporating a gender perspective into conflict management and resolution, which would help activists to develop more pertinent activities for women.

### **Workshop objectives**

This workshop was aimed at:

- Analysing the local strategies used by women and women's organisations in order to reveal their trends, orientations and limitations;
- Analysing the reasons behind women's mobilisation and active involvement in peace processes;
- Questioning the nature and significance of women's conflict resolution practices: do they come within the scope of social change, transforming gender relations or improving the status of women within society? Do they call into question the powers that be or do they, on the contrary, maintain the status quo?
- Identifying the obstacles that hinder women's conflict resolution strategies and prevent their full and equal participation in official conflict resolution mechanisms;
- Discussing the strategies that could help to overcome these obstacles at the community, national, sub-regional and regional levels;
- Discussing the nature of peace and the type of society that women would ultimately like to promote;
- Identifying research questions and the type of research to be conducted;
- Discussing how to use this research and the strategies linking researchers and activists.

### **Workshop methodology**

A participatory approach was used during this workshop, which encouraged all the participants to engage in debate and decision-making.

### **Structure of the report**

This report is divided into four sections. The first section focuses on women's local experiences of conflicts in the countries represented at the workshop. The second section deals with the main themes, which emanated from the discussions. The third section deals with thematic group work and the final section focuses on the action plan formulated by the participants. The annexes contain the additional information relating to the workshop, particularly the full text of the reports.

## Local Conflict Resolution Experiences

The first two days were dedicated to presenting and discussing women's local experiences in relation to conflict resolution. The case studies that were presented enabled the participants to fully appreciate the specificities, differences and similarities in women's experiences.

These case studies are structured around the nature and origins of conflict in the countries represented at the workshop, the reasons for women's mobilisation, the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies that they adopt and their action plans for enhancing the quantitative and qualitative participation of women in conflict transformation. Individual participants, some of whom have lost members of their family, provided moving testimonies highlighting their personal experiences.

The activists took the lead in presenting various papers. These were then further developed by comments from the researchers who were primarily responsible for critically analysing the presentations.

### **Burundi**

#### **By Alice Ntwarante and Marie-Goretti Ndacayisaba**

For the past 30 years and more, Burundi's history has been marked by a series of communal conflicts, which have led to a substantial loss of life. The assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye, three months after the democratic elections in June 1993, plunged the country into political and institutional instability, characterised by a cycle of revenge and repression between the Hutu and Tutsi communities. The human, social and economic consequences have been immeasurable including thousands of disaster-stricken people, including internally displaced people and refugees, of whom 54% are women. In addition, the country's economy has collapsed. The government has nevertheless endeavoured to rehabilitate the disaster-stricken population, reconstruct the country and restore peace.

Women who are the main victims of these conflicts are faced with the problem of how to survive on a daily basis. Others have participated and colluded in these conflicts through their actions, inflammatory language or silence.

Nevertheless, the majority of women yearn for peace and work individually, at community level or within NGOs or associations in order to achieve it.

As a result, numerous women's NGOs have been created including the *Collectif des Associations et ONGS Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB)*, *Réseau Femmes pour la paix et la non-violence* and *Association Femmes pour la Paix*. These organisations are involved in various activities, which include meetings bringing together women from different ethnic backgrounds, brainstorming sessions on the role of women in restoring lasting peace, training of trainers workshops focusing on non-violent conflict resolution and meetings uniting women from the diaspora and those living inside the country in order to discuss strategies aimed at national reconstruction. The Dushirahamwe ('Let's Reconcile') network has succeeded in uniting displaced, regrouped and refugee women to collectively identify the obstacles to peaceful cohabitation.

Other activities have been carried out within the sub-region and internationally, in association with women's organisations from neighbouring countries such as

Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. These organisations have given their support to Burundians. Lobbying the regional and international communities to involve women in the Arusha peace negotiations resulted in six women being invited to participate in the plenary sessions as observers. The idea was to ensure that women achieve the status of full and equal participants in the negotiations and representation up to 30% in the peace agreement implementation process.

In addition to the emergence of a consensus within the opposing forces on peace-related issues, these various initiatives helped to restore inter-ethnic dialogue, despite differences of opinion relating to appropriate strategies. The struggle for peace also highlighted the need to defend other fundamental women's rights and legal clinics have been established to do so.

The major obstacles faced by women in their struggle for peace are of a cultural, economic and political nature, particularly their lack of resources, self-confidence and freedom of thought. A number of activities have been planned to overcome these obstacles.

## **Rwanda**

### **By Marie-Thérèse Mukamulisa and Ancilla Mukarubuga**

Inter-ethnic violence in Rwanda, which is as cyclical as inter-ethnic violence in Burundi, reached a climax with the April 1994 genocide whose humanitarian, political and economic consequences, including exile, displacement and decimated families, made international headlines. Women were the main victims of these conflicts through rape, sexual violence and slavery and HIV/AIDS infection. However, some women, currently in prison, participated in and even encouraged human rights abuses.

The post-genocide era has been characterised by various challenges, namely social reconstruction, legal problems (overpopulated prisons, lack of adequately trained judges), legislative problems (the revision of gender discriminatory legislation, particularly penal, family, nationality and international relations legislation), political problems (women's exclusion from the various processes relating to the Arusha and Lusaka peace negotiations), economic problems (the struggle to combat poverty and social exclusion), social problems (illiteracy). What conflict resolution strategies have women developed in view of the above?

Women's conflict resolution strategies take place within community-based and national associations and NGOs. A coalition of 35 women's organisations, *Profemmes/Twese Hamwe*, has been created and the government has also voiced its intention to involve women in national conflict resolution processes. As a rallying point, *Profemmes/Twese Hamwe* is dedicated to ending all forms of discrimination against women, facilitating inter-ethnic dialogue, promoting the creation of partnerships between the actors involved in women's advancement, strengthening the organisational and institutional capacities of member associations and creating a space in which women can communicate and mobilise around the role of women in society.

The coalition's joint programme focuses on eight priority areas, namely social security, justice, culture, health, power and decision-making, the media, research and education. This programme has enabled the members of the coalition to raise people's awareness in relation to a culture of peace and national reconstruction, the

role of women, the adoption of legislation dealing with matrimonial regimes, inheritance and donations for women's benefit, the provision of support for the women victims of violence (on questions of health and justice), the denunciation of the various forms of violence aimed at women and young girls, which influence the prison sentences handed out by the courts, the decentralisation policy, the "regroupment" policy aimed at changing community behaviour patterns, as well as the holding of an international conference on genocide, peace, gender and development.

However, the impact of these activities has been minimised by a number of serious problems such as the manner in which the consequences of genocide have been managed, the continuing security problems resulting from identity-based conflicts in the sub-region, the absence of a civil society, particularly women's organisations, in conflict resolution mechanisms, a disorganised approach and inadequate communication. This is where the need for a women's platform for action, strong partnerships among women peace activists at the national, sub-regional and international levels, lobbying campaigns, promoting a culture of peace and conducting research on women's peace initiatives stem from.

## **Nigeria**

### **By Lady Ime Essien Udom**

This presentation is based on the following question: how should conflicts and conflict transformation be managed without endangering a society in a context where killing a neighbour equates to conflict resolution and where a culture of dialogue and compromise is a relatively new phenomenon? All attempts at conflict management, resolution and transformation in Africa or elsewhere necessitate a thorough understanding of the historical, political, cultural and socio-economic antecedents of the communities concerned. This means that each conflict situation requires tailor-made management strategies.

Nigeria is a vast country whose history has been marked by several types of conflict ranging from ethnic, religious and economic crises to communal strife. The conflict between the Ife and the Modakeke, for example, is one of Nigeria's oldest intra-ethnic conflicts, which dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The two groups, which resulted from the collapse of the Oyo Empire, clashed over the issue of landownership. All attempts to resolve this conflict have floundered and successive governments have tended to manipulate it for political gain. The current government has asked traditional chiefs to use their authority to restore peace.

Another intra-ethnic conflict is the Niger Delta crisis, which has led to clashes between the Ijaw and the Itsekeri. These two groups live in Nigeria's oil belt, which supplies 98% of the country's foreign exchange revenue. They protested against their marginalisation by the federal government and demanded an equitable distribution of oil revenues, whilst threatening to disrupt oil exploration in this region. The government responded by naming the new local government after one of these groups, but with its headquarters in a village belonging to the other group, which triggered a spate of conflicts. The government has used the crisis to distance the two groups from any claims they may have. It has resorted to window dressing to solve the crisis.

Sharia law, which threatens Nigeria's territorial integrity, constitutes another source of conflict, which evolves constantly. Nigeria's population is comprised of 50% Christians, 40% Muslims and 10% animists.

Muslims, who mostly live in northern Nigeria, have always used Sharia law as a personal law. Muslim courts have been established, which are protected by Nigeria's constitution. However, in 1999 the Governor of Zamfara State in northern Nigeria decided to use the issue of Sharia law as an election campaign strategy by elevating it to a state law. As a result, Sharia law also applied to non-Muslims living in this northern state. This provoked mass protests, followed by pro- and anti-Sharia demonstrations, which degenerated into acts of violence. Other Muslim states decided to follow the example of Zamfara state by adopting Sharia law as a state law. In some states this led to landownership conflicts and in others constitutional crises. In most cases, these conflicts were used to marginalise certain groups on the basis of cultural differences.

What strategies have women used to resolve conflicts and promote a culture of peace? In most communities women play a secondary role and are not involved in decision-making. They are led into situations over which they have no control and are sometimes forced to promote their respective communities' cause in various ways, otherwise they have been killed as in the case of the Ife-Modakeke conflict. Within these two communities women do not generally participate in conflict resolution. Within these patriarchal societies it is the men who assume responsibility for women's issues.

Despite a long tradition of fighting as evidenced by the 1929 Women's War, which mobilised women in eastern Nigeria against the colonial taxation system, the involvement of Nigerian women in organised forms of conflict resolution increased dramatically as a result of the post-Beijing euphoria, which heightened women's awareness of gender equality, particularly in relation to peace and good governance.

In some cases, women's sheer determination has succeeded in restoring peace where men have failed (e.g. the Abiriba crisis). In the case of Sharia law, Muslim women in Nigeria have been faced with a dilemma. On one hand, the indiscriminate application of Sharia law has eroded their constitutional rights, but on the other hand, condemning it would limit their freedom of worship. Their deafening silence on this issue has given Christian women the impression that they are prepared to betray the feminist cause. Religion and culture play an important role in defining the terms of the debate and the concessions that women can make. Women have established mediation groups and carry out awareness-raising activities with religious leaders and youth groups aimed at instilling a culture of peace and tolerance.

In order to maximise the impact of their conflict resolution activities, women should recognise the commonality of their interests and eradicate ethnic, religious, cultural or political differences. These short- or long-term strategies require the creation of women's coalitions for peace. African women should re-examine traditional conflict resolution methods and African governments should, above all, implement the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

**Senegal – the Casamance case**  
**By Seynabou Male Cissé**

The Casamance conflict broke out in 1982. The origins of the conflict are economic (the droughts of 1970-1980, chaotic land distribution, the degeneration in living conditions), political and identity-based (socio-cultural differences between northern and southern Senegal, feelings of frustration prompted by the negation of Diola culture by the national media). The Movement for Democratic Forces in Casamance (MFDC) was created and claimed independence. Various peace talks and agreements failed to restore peace to the region despite the intervention of other sub-regional countries, particularly Guinea-Bissau.

How have women contributed to resolving this conflict? Women from Casamance play an important role in traditional society, particularly as spiritual leaders. When conflicts break out, women, who spiritually prepare combatants for battle, can ask the warring factions to restore peace. However, their intervention is only considered to be legitimate if it is of a social or non-political nature. Women's mobilisation, which is conservative in nature, is only aimed at group survival and cohesion and not at enhancing women's status. It is limited in time and is based on traditional forms of expression (dances, fetishes, marches, appeals to masculinity). Women's mobilisation depends on certain factors such as the seriousness of the problem, challenges to the group's origins and values, the need to support male actors and other traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

Mixed or exclusively women structures for resolving conflicts only began to appear in Senegal in general and in Casamance in particular from 1990 onwards. Several activities have been carried out, the most important being the creation of the *Mouvement des Forces Démocratique de Casamance* (MOFEPAC) in 1993 by the Dakar-based Yewwu Yewwi Association, the organisation of a cultural festival in 1995 by the *Association Culturelle Aguène et Diambogne* (ACAD), which united Joola and Sereer women, the organisation of a peace forum in 1998 by the *Consortium des Organisations Non Gouvernementales pour le Développement* (CONGAD), which brought the crisis in Casamance to national prominence and the support given to internally displaced people and landmine victims by the *Fédération des Groupements de Promotion Féminines*.

However, women remain excluded from official conflict resolution structures. Since 1998, the *Commission Femmes et Développement* (CFD)'s Study and Research Group, which operates under the auspices of the *Association Culturelle d'Aide à la Promotion Educative et Sociale* (ACAPES/Ziguinchor), has worked to fill this gap through various peace-oriented activities involving women. This group, which preaches non-discrimination, brings together traditional as well as non-traditional organisations. In 1999, a *Comité Régional des femmes pour la Paix en Casamance* (CRFPC) was created, which carries out awareness-raising activities with women spirit mediums and religious and political leaders aimed at mobilising women at the national level.

## **Somalia**

### **By the Honourable Asha Gelle Dirié**

Somalia was devastated by a civil war in the 1980s. The consequences - humanitarian (millions of internally displaced people and refugees), economic (an institutionalised war economy controlled by warlords), social and political (instability, chaos) - cannot be quantified.

Somali women were doubly victimised because their fundamental as well as gender-specific rights were violated. Women's peace initiatives were motivated by the desire to end violence (the rape of young girls who were also subjected to other violations, insecurity), social problems (health, education, women heads of household) and economic problems (the looting of natural resources, lack of markets for livestock and marine produce).

An example of women's participation in conflict resolution is the Mudug Region Peace Agreement. This region, which is one of the richest in Somalia, is also one of the regions that was most affected by the civil war. When the peace agreement was signed between the warlords, women from the various clans mobilised to educate the local population about the adverse effects of the civil war and to make women understand that they are the main victims of war by broadcasting appropriate radio programmes. They also mobilised traditional chiefs. Traditional conflict resolution methods have been used to settle disputes between nomadic groups over access to water and grazing lands.

Women's conflict resolution initiatives have also included the promotion of peace education through seminars and informal discussion groups and by targeting traditional groups such as women and youth.

### **Congo Brazzaville** **By Martine Renée Galloy**

Between 1959 and 1999, Congo's political history was marred by periods of violence and instability, the deadliest of which were the civil wars of the so-called "democratic" era. How did women experience these conflicts, what survival strategies did they use, how did they contribute to resolving these conflicts, what forms of expression did they use and what were their strengths and weaknesses? The essence of this report flows from the above questions.

Women experience conflicts in two different ways. On the one hand, women politicians may be marginalised, but the way in which they actively or passively support their ethnic group as well as their silence perpetuate conflicts, which proves that class interests take precedence over gender consciousness. On the other hand, women victims of conflict, who are in the majority, bear the brunt of war.

The violations committed against women such as rape are an extension of the fate that awaits them during peacetime.

How do women contribute to conflict resolution? Congolese women have organised diplomatic and mediation missions. Congolese women mobilised in 1993 during the first civil war and established a management structure called the National Women's Peace Committee. Other activities aimed at restoring peace in Congo were carried out in 1997, 1998 and 1999. However, it is important to note that women's interventions in an area largely dominated by men, are only undertaken as a last resort.

Even though women's contributions have sometimes managed to influence the course of events, they are hampered by the fact that they take place outside official conflict resolution mechanisms and tend to confine themselves to the informal sector from an organisational point of view and in the manner in which they are expressed: peace marches, prayer sessions and peace declarations whose impact cannot always

be gauged, but which are nevertheless significant when one considers that people are either disenchanted with politics or have rejected it altogether.

Conflict management, which embodies power and risk-taking, is not exempt from gender inequalities and the exclusion of women from this field is inextricably linked to their under-representation in the public arena, which upholds the traditional gender division of labour. Furthermore, women's activities are conducted within the framework of civil society whose hierarchical tradition and lack of autonomy vis-à-vis political parties undermines their neutrality. Other issues that need to be tackled include financial independence, media visibility and sub-regional, regional and international partnerships.

## **Sierra Leone**

### **By Jeannette Eno**

Sierra Leone has experienced nine years of war and instability. The origins of this conflict can only be understood by considering the role played by certain actors and the political context at the sub-regional level. The conflict has had serious humanitarian, economic and social consequences – hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people and refugees and women heads of household living in extremely precarious conditions, young girls faced with social isolation as a result of unwanted pregnancies and young girls and boys who have been raped. The main problem relates to the social reintegration of demobilised combatants who have been rejected by their communities because they have contravened their norms and taboos. What strategies have women developed within this context?

Since 1994, women have experienced the problem of influencing government policy within a patriarchal state. Women were excluded from political life and decided to invest their time in professional or welfare organisations and development NGOs. One group, the Sierra Leone Women's Forum (SLWF), which was established during the preparations for the Beijing Conference by a group of university women, initiated the debate on peace. However, its members were undecided about launching the debate on the political stage. Another women's group, the Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace (SLWMP), chose to adopt a more aggressive strategy aimed at promoting political activism. It did so by organising marches and peace debates as well as mobilising women from various backgrounds including traders, nurses, women combatants, teachers and journalists.

In 1995 and 1996, these two groups, supported by other NGOs and associations, actively engaged in the struggle for democracy and the holding of democratic elections, particularly following the Bintumani I and II conferences, but women were still excluded from politics. Internal disputes weakened women's activities in particular and those of civil society in general and led to their exclusion from meetings aimed at hammering out the Lomé Peace Agreement. The failure on the part of the women's movement to sustain the gains it had made stemmed from the absence of an ideological position within the movement and from its conciliatory approach. Added to this was the nature of the debate within the SLWF, particularly on the link between women's activism, the peace process and the reconstruction of the state. The women's movement has proved incapable of fully exploiting the sub-regional nature of the conflict and the role that diamond trafficking has played in the conflict to forge links within the sub-region and the continent as a whole. The women's movement has lacked a political vision and strong individual and organisational leadership capacities.

## **The Democratic Republic of Congo**

### **By Vénantie Nabintu Bisimwa**

In South Kivu, the general public believes that women should be involved in resolving the conflict, which is tearing apart the eastern part of the country, because of their inherently peace-loving nature. This belief is mainly based on the role played by women as reproducers, producers and guardians of peace and tolerance within the private sphere of the family, but conflict management is mainly conducted in the public sphere from which women are excluded. It goes without saying that women's participation in conflict management depends on enhancing their political representation.

Bearing this in mind, the writer set out to critically analyse South Kivu women's conflict resolution experiences, by using a questionnaire-based research study, which was targeted at individuals and discussion groups. The following issues inspired the questionnaire: how have women responded to the war, why have they rejected it, what have they already done to resolve the conflict, how effective have their conflict resolution strategies been, what obstacles have women peace activists encountered and how should they be overcome?

What came out of the research study is that most women are opposed to the war for humanitarian, economic, social and political reasons. Women's involvement in the peace process is more motivated by economic considerations than by the need for a security policy given that the war hampers their economic activities. For example, there has been a dramatic increase in the tax imposed on market stalls and a drying up of trade opportunities with neighbouring countries.

Women get involved in conflicts for different reasons and in different ways by, for example, feeding combatants and providing them with moral support in the form of lucky charms or by joining the rebel movement to protect women's interests.

Women use non-violent methods of resolving conflicts such as general strikes, brainstorming sessions, peace marches and prayer sessions. However, women's conflict resolution activities tend to be ineffective and are hampered by socio-cultural (male dominance), political or economic obstacles. Paradoxically, the debate, which appears to favour women's involvement in conflict resolution, is offset by contradictory practices aimed at excluding them from the corridors of power and decision-making.

## **Sudan**

### **By Durria Mansour El Hussein and Agnès Nyoka Peter**

The Sudanese conflict dates back to the pre-colonial era and also stems from colonial and post-colonial policies, which were characterised by a system of control based on class, race and religion in which racism and Islamic supremacy exacerbated the already hostile and suspicious attitude of people from the south towards the rulers from the north. The conflict is clearly defined by its geo-ethnic, racial and religious characteristics. After a period of separate administration, the British decided to unite the two groups on the eve of independence and to cede power to the Arab and Islamic north, despite protests from the south. Since coming to power, the north has carried out a policy of assimilation and domination towards the south.

The south's resistance was perceived to be a betrayal by the north, which brutally responded by using the state's repressive machinery.

Sudan's conflict, which is the longest in Africa's post-colonial history, has resulted in more than 2,9 million victims, the highest number of internally displaced people (4 million) and refugees (5 million) and thousands of exiles, not to mention the famine and destitution. The main victims of this conflict are women and children who live in refugee camps and conflict zones, which have a high proportion of women-headed households.

In 1994, Sudanese women began to mobilise to find solutions to the conflict. During the Lou Jikany meeting, women recounted their daily trials and tribulations and recited poems urging men to stop the war and solve problems using non-violent methods. Women's meetings took place between 1994 and 1999 during which recommendations were formulated and addressed to the Sudanese People's Defence Front (SPDF) to guarantee the protection of women and children and to police inter-ethnic relations. A recommendation was made to the Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace (SWVP) to organise civic education classes for the Sudanese people.

Since 1994, the Sudanese Women's Association in Nairobi (SWAN), with the support of UNIFEM, the Carter Center and the Netherlands Embassy, has created a conducive environment in which women can discuss problems relating to peace, human rights and development without taking account of ethnic, cultural and religious differences. Also since 1994, Sudanese women from the north and south have been working together to restore peace in Sudan.

In 1998, a series of seminars were organised on the theme of Gender and the Peace Process. In May 1999, Sudanese women participated in the Hague Appeal for Peace, as a united group of women representing the warring parties and civil society.

This awareness-raising exercise also takes place within a research institution focussing on women called AHFAD, which offers training courses on conflict resolution and carries out research on the role of women in resolving conflicts, particularly on their traditional conflict resolution strategies. This institution also promotes a culture of peace by arranging for students to travel to the rural areas to familiarise themselves with various subjects and by mobilising grassroots women to take part in the peace process.

However, there are still many challenges to be overcome such as the equal representation of women in decision-making bodies, the implementation of educational programmes geared towards conflict resolution, the struggle to demilitarise and the effective use of resources. Above all, NGOs and associations would benefit from more democratic and transparent leadership.

## **Liberia**

### **By Etwida Cooper**

The Liberian civil war broke out in 1989 following an attempt to overthrow an oppressive regime. Analysing the Liberian conflict provides a useful insight into the root causes of the conflict as well as future conflict prevention strategies. The causes of Liberia's conflict date back to its development as a nation and include the issue of ethnicity and the abuse of power in the exercise and distribution of state

power, the inept management of national resources, the lack of a political vision and bad governance.

The conflict has resulted in the wanton destruction of Liberia's socio-economic fabric, hundreds of thousands of fatalities and millions of internally displaced people and refugees, most of whom are women. This conflict has been resolved with the help of the sub-region and the rest of the international community.

The international community's response to the crisis focused on three areas: diplomacy initiated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the creation of ECOMOG, the United Nations' political and diplomatic initiatives and the humanitarian aid programme carried out by the United Nations' specialised agencies. However, because of the proliferation of light weapons, the Liberian conflict spilled over into Sierra Leone and could spread to Guinea and the Ivory Coast if it remains unresolved.

How have women contributed to the peace process? Even though they have been excluded from official conflict resolution mechanisms, women have organised themselves as a pressure group since 1994, which has united women from all walks of life. This dynamic group has carried out a wide range of activities – they have fundraised to promote women's participation in peace negotiations, presented petitions to the OAU and ECOWAS through their representatives in Liberia and to the First Ladies of countries involved in the peace keeping force, organised peace marches and prayer sessions, disseminated posters and brochures conveying disarmament and peace messages, called for total disarmament before the creation of a transitional government, organised trips into the forest to persuade the warlords to give up their weapons and broadcasted radio programmes supporting the disarmament process. In exercising their traditional role, women have also contributed to sustaining their families and ensuring the distribution of foodstuffs to refugees and internally displaced people.

However, numerous obstacles have hindered women's conflict resolution activities such as their subordinate role in decision-making bodies and their lack of resources, which require in-depth analysis to promote the participation of women in conflict resolution. Resorting to traditional conflict resolution methods would be a good idea.

## **General discussion**

### **What can we learn from these experiences?**

#### **Types and causes of conflicts**

It is important to understand the nature and causes of conflicts, which have been the subject of lengthy debates, in order to develop appropriate conflict resolution strategies.

The various papers presented at the workshop increased the participants' understanding of local, national and sub-regional conflict situations, which are often misunderstood or distorted by outsiders.

Apart from local specificities, the causes of conflicts are basically the same. It should be noted that conflicts stem from not just one, but several factors of a political, economic and socio-cultural (religion, identity) nature. In-depth conflict analysis should take account of the historical background and level of awareness of the local people and warring parties.

All the local conflict situations presented at the workshop, highlighted the fact that one of the main causes of conflict is the struggle for access to political power and state machinery, which is played out in various ways. Another cause of conflict, which is rejected by belligerents, is the economy exemplified by landownership problems linked to accessing and controlling land (Nigeria, Rwanda, Burundi), the tendency of non-native populations to dispossess locals of their land (Casamance or the Ife-Modakeke conflict in Nigeria), the shortage of arable land coupled with a population explosion (Burundi and Rwanda), the determination of one group to control the production of primary goods and precious minerals (Liberia), diamonds (Sierra Leone), oil (Congo Brazzaville) and diamonds, gold, cobalt and uranium (Democratic Republic of Congo).

The endless destitution of people as a result of structural adjustment policies, which exacerbates class inequalities, generates crises and serves as a excuse for groups hoping to use conflict as a means of satisfying their own demands. Cultural issues, such as identity crises, particularly the promotion of ethnicity, which has led to ethnic cleansing and genocide in Rwanda and Sudan and religious fundamentalism in the form of Sharia law in Sudan and Nigeria, are manipulated by some groups to increase inter-ethnic strife or gain hegemony and can help to ignite or exacerbate conflicts.

#### **Women and conflicts: what role do they play?**

The issue of women's responsibility in causing conflicts has been the subject of heated debate. Is it true to say that men are solely responsible for causing and pursuing conflicts? This Manichean vision does not stand up to scrutiny because most experiences have highlighted the fact that violence is not the sole preserve of men. Using a gender approach to analyse the various stages of conflicts – causes, duration and resolution – undermines the traditional perception and concept of purity, which regards women as victims of conflict. The discussions revealed that contrary to popular belief, which assigns men full responsibility for conflicts, the workshop participants agreed that some women are involved and even collude in causing conflicts.

The Rwanda, Burundi, Congo Brazzaville, Liberia, Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria experiences support this judgment and provide some damning examples of the negative role played by some women in conflicts. We should however qualify these findings by pointing out that they often apply to women who enjoy a particular status within the state machinery. In Rwanda, for example, President Habyarimana wife, who was an influential member of the Akazu, the extremist faction in power, played a major role in the genocide. In Congo Brazzaville, during the 1993-1994 civil war, it was a women member of the "nomenklatura" who was in charge of supplying the militias with foodstuffs, according to the age-old gender division of labour, and who was thus able to accumulate a great deal of wealth. In 1997, during the second civil war of the democratic era, the women head of the President's office, who also happened to be the president of a women's NGO, oversaw heavy arms procurements and organised the recruitment of mercenaries on behalf of the dominant ethnic group.

In general, women who enjoy power refuse to condemn conflicts in order to preserve their status and privileges within a dominant group.

Class interests alone cannot justify women's collusion in conflicts. Women's collusion is quite simply dictated by solidarity and ethnic "consciousness" (identity). In the DRC, for example, women supported combatants by feeding them or giving them moral support through the use of fetishes. The same applies in Casamance where women who are endowed with supernatural powers have been known to prepare combatants spiritually for battle to guarantee them victory through the use of amulets deemed to confer invulnerability. In South Kivu, a woman justified her participation in the rebellion by stating her intention to protect women's interests. In Sierra Leone, Congo Brazzaville and Liberia many young women combatants served at the battlefield and committed as many, if not, more human rights abuses than their male counterparts.

In Nigeria, in the conflict between the Ife and the Modakeke women did not play a minor role. They supported their men, despite personal reservations and participated in the conflict either as combatants or provided the warring parties with food, care and moral support.

The full impact of these political standpoints is felt when we consider the class dimension in our analysis of the role of women in conflicts. While they demonstrate the supremacy of class interests over gender, they above all demonstrate the need for women to develop a feminist consciousness.

### **What are the consequences of armed conflicts on women?**

The consequences of armed conflicts vary according to the stakes and the kind of weapons of mass destruction used by the belligerents, which are in turn determined by access to national resources, such as diamonds in the DRC and Sierra Leone and oil in the Congo and Sudan. In addition, the main victims of armed conflicts, whatever their country of origin, cause or magnitude, are undoubtedly civilian populations, particularly women, children and the elderly. All over the world women have borne the brunt of barbaric acts of violence such as sexual violence (rape, sexual slavery), HIV/AIDS infection resulting from rape as well as mutilation and other forms of torture.

Owing to genocides, most workshop participants have lost part or all of their family, neighbours and community. Problems have therefore arisen relating to family restructuring because conflicts have given rise to a ten-fold increase in the number of women-headed households, particularly in camps that have been set up for refugees or internally displaced people (Sudan, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, DRC, Congo Brazzaville). Some participants also talked about the living conditions in camps and the difficulties faced by women in going back to their countries of origin and/or reintegrating into their communities.

These various conflict situations experienced by women have raised their awareness of the need to involve themselves in peace processes.

### **Women's conflict resolution strategies: driving forces, nature, trends, and limitations**

We need to guard against snap judgements and hurriedly conclude that women would have problems getting involved in conflict resolution mechanisms. The discussions revealed that women's desire to get involved in conflict resolution is often hampered by economic, social, cultural or political factors.

### **What motivates women to get involved in conflict resolution?**

The active role that women play in conflict resolution and transformation was highlighted in all the papers and personal testimonies as well as the disparity between the significance of this role and women's lack of visibility and exclusion from institutional conflict resolution mechanisms. In order to understand the reasons for women's marginalisation, we should first examine the driving forces behind their involvement. If they generally intervene to restore peace and security, on which all cultural, social, economic or political activity depends, what can we learn from these driving forces? Why, exactly, do women get involved in conflict resolution? Following, in no particular order, are a few answers.

### **When group cohesion is threatened, when society is endangered:**

In Senegal, in Casamance's traditional Diola society, mass mobilisation resulted from the following factors: the gravity of the problem, challenges to the group's origins and values, the need to overcome the dearth of male actors and alternative mechanisms. Even if women have encouraged men to go to war, they have also positioned themselves between warring factions to enforce peace. The conflict would then stop and from then onwards nobody had the right to harm women in any way or hit them. Another traditional conflict prevention mechanism was the use of humour.

In order to protest against male behaviour deemed unacceptable in traditional Nigerian society, women stripped naked and marched through the village, which resulted in serious consequences for warring parties.

### **Women's conflict resolution strategies are based on personal interests of a political or economic nature**

This is the case in South Kivu where general strikes took place during which women protested against tax increases on market stalls, reduced trading opportunities between countries bordering the Great Lakes and increases in the cost of basic commodities. This has also happened in Somalia and other countries.

### **Do women get involved in conflict resolution for altruistic reasons?**

This particular question divided the participants into two groups. The first group, which supported the idea of women's inherent pacifism, based its arguments on women's reproductive role and maintained that because women bear children they owe it to themselves to protect life. According to this group, sentimentality (maternal love, a desire to save their children, members of their family, ethnic group or their neighbours) drives women to get involved in conflict resolution, regardless of their ethnic group.

The second group, which was opposed to this idea, came up with examples that demonstrate that women, as social beings, also have specific gender interests and are not only motivated by altruism, as some local experiences have shown.

**Women's conflict resolution strategies: how should they be analysed?**

Women's conflict resolution strategies were critically analysed by the participants who identified their strengths and weaknesses.

**Women get involved in conflict resolution as a final resort:** in most cases, women's initiatives are not geared towards conflict prevention, but are often undertaken as a final resort when all else has failed (Congo-Brazzaville, DRC, Nigeria, Casamance). Women's involvement in conflict resolution would certainly have a psychological impact on the belligerents who would say to themselves, "things must be bad if women have decided to get involved!"

This wait and see attitude on the part of women and women's associations is typical of civil society in general.

**The conservative nature of women's conflict resolution strategies:** with few exceptions, women's conflict resolution strategies are renowned for being conservative in nature, as far as their group's concerned and in relation to their entire community or nation. In fact, women's initiatives generally fall within the established social, economic and political framework, which is geared towards maintaining the status quo, characterised by unequal gender relations. Furthermore, when one group or nation dominates other groups or nations during inter-ethnic or cross-border conflicts, which arose in Rwanda or Sudan, women have blindly sided with their cultural group.

Women are not always geared towards social change or transforming gender relations. They continue, in fact, to perceive their reproductive role as the basis for their activities. We should query their awareness of gender or class relations, the need to transform these relations in order to improve their status in society and exploit the opportunities afforded by the conflict to establish and promote the specifically women claims for social equality.

According to the participants, women's conservative approach to conflict resolution is mainly justified by their relationship to politics. In fact, whether they live in conflict zones or not, women's political representation is insignificant.

As a rule, women do not regard themselves as political actors and their respective communities are even less inclined to do so. What is emphasised is their maternal role.

Furthermore, women's activities tend to focus on social concerns with their main objective being to improve people's living conditions. The obvious tendency is to reproduce the traditional gender division of labour in the area of conflict resolution, in which women's activities are an extension of their domestic role. The same divisions exist in the political arena in most of the countries that were studied such as Burundi, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan, Congo Brazzaville and the DRC.

However, women's tendency to promote their reproductive role can be interpreted as a refusal to identify themselves with the destructive and negative nature of politics that they associate with a man's world. This attitude, which undoubtedly stems from women's desire to protect and distance themselves from such politics, actually represents women's rejection of the grubby aspects of politics.

### **The lack of a political perspective and feminist ideology?**

At first, women do not appear to have a clear political standpoint. The reason for this lies in women's attitude towards conflict. The discussions demonstrated that women's attitudes are mainly influenced by their husbands' attitudes or by the attitudes of men in general. Their lack of freedom of thought and analysis stems from illiteracy in general and political illiteracy in particular and a lack of information or disinformation, which disadvantage the local people in South Kivu and Somalia, for example.

On the whole, women's peace movements appear incapable of appreciating the stakes involved in conflict and recognising that conflicts can bring about either democratic or non-democratic change. This is the case in Sierra Leone where the women's movement failed to exploit the regional dimension of the conflict to formulate appropriate strategies. Organised groups, which have a political agenda, are well placed to influence decision-making processes. By limiting their conflict resolution strategies to the social and humanitarian spheres, or by mainly confining them to women's groups, women miss out on helping to radically change one of the pillars of patriarchal African societies: unequal gender relations.

**The lack of a political strategy:** one of the weaknesses of women's peace movements is the problem of clearly articulating issues relating to conflict resolution and to the political struggle per se, as illustrated by the Sierra Leone case where the two existing women's associations have faltered over the following questions: should women's movements restrict themselves to struggling for peace and reject political activism, or should they, on the contrary, also involve themselves in political activities?

The answers to these questions are sometimes self-evident. In fact, the various local experiences demonstrated that the struggle for peace highlights the complementary nature of women's demands. It is in the heat of battle that women become aware of the need to fight for their fundamental rights in all spheres: economic, political and socio-cultural, to not only participate in official conflict resolution mechanisms, but also to contribute to the creation of a just society governed by the rule of law. It is within this framework that Rwandan women have fought hard to ensure that the Rwandan state and the International Penal Tribunal in Arusha elevate rape to the status of a war crime and penalise it as such.

In fact, women are generally confronted, consciously or subconsciously, with the issue of citizenship and greater political participation, which requires the formulation of appropriate strategies.

**The institutional weakness of a political leadership which does not recognise women's rights:** women's peace initiatives are carried out within the framework of civil society organisations, which are badly organised and sometimes not registered. Most women's associations lack skills, adequate training, a political vision and a clear understanding of women's rights.

**The private versus the public sphere: the informal nature of women's conflict resolution strategies:** women's conflict resolution strategies are relegated to the informal sector because of their nature (organisation of training workshops, networking, humanitarian activities) and because of their modes of expression (marches, peace declarations, church services or prayer sessions), which take place in the margins of institutional conflict resolution mechanisms. Why? Because they do not fall within an ideological framework, which is well thought out and defined.

This state of affairs sustains the eternal gender division of labour, which confines women to the private sphere such as homes, churches and associations, while men control the public sphere, using official mechanisms at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. This lessens the impact of women's initiatives whose lack of visibility is aggravated by ignorance and insufficient media coverage.

**The lack of skills and experience:** the emergence of women in the conflict arena, in its organised form, is a recent phenomenon. Women often lack experience and are not used to high-level political debate. But the examples of Liberia and Burundi demonstrate that they make up for it by their ability to mobilise and organise themselves. In Burundi, for example, women prepared themselves to attend the Arusha peace talks even though they were not invited. Their lobbying enabled them to participate in the negotiations, albeit as observers, but their objective was at least partially achieved since they succeeded in integrating some of their specific concerns into the final peace agreement. Then there is the case of Liberian women who funded a number of women's trips to Lomé and Abidjan to lobby delegates at the peace negotiations in order to make women's voices heard.

Although women's lack of experience in the conflict arena can, in some cases, be a serious handicap and lessen their effectiveness when they take up high-powered positions of responsibility, they do not suffer from apathy and often demonstrate a lot of imagination, wisdom and tenacity in achieving their objectives.

**Women are excluded from institutional frameworks** and national and regional mechanisms where conflict resolution strategies are formulated, which stems from the fundamental problem of women's participation in civic duties and their equal representation in decision-making. Women are involved in marginal activities, which are invisible, informal and ignored. What should be done to promote the effective, quality participation of women in politics?

**Women's lack of material and financial resources** minimises the impact of their conflict resolution strategies. They are reduced to carrying out activities one by one, which undermines their long-term follow-up, while the benefits of an activity are

only felt in the long term. In addition, some associations, which are not properly registered, cannot apply for funding from international or regional institutions.

The problem of fundraising is linked to the traditional problems faced by civil society of generating their own funds. However when required, women mobilise to raise funds and carry out wide-ranging activities.

**The lack of teamwork:** one of the shortcomings of the women's movement is the large variety of initiatives and projects all having the same objectives. Internal disputes and internecine power struggles are commonplace. However, the struggle for peace requires women's associations and NGOs to demonstrate a common vision and approach, which will strengthen them.

### **Women's strategies**

**Solidarity and identity-based challenges:** analysing the issue of solidarity should take account of the local, national or international nature of the conflict when international conflict resolution strategies have been employed. In general, solidarity among women exists at the individual, local, regional and international levels. But in the case of urban warfare, it is common to see people from a neighbourhood that has been pacified or liberated, quietly going about their lives, whilst in the same town, a kilometre away, large numbers of armed gunmen kill in an atmosphere of general indifference.

Depending on the country in question, women have created organisations geared at promoting solidarity or training activities in conflict resolution and peace keeping in the Great Lakes, Sudan or Sierra Leone, for example. In other countries they have formulated and implemented community-based women's peace projects to identify the causes of conflict and eradicate them before conflicts break out as exemplified in the Great Lakes, the DRC, Congo and Sudan.

Although women solidarity, within this context, is mainly aimed at eradicating ethnic or religious barriers, it can be undermined as soon as the identity issue arises, which leads to women expressing loyalty to their ethnic or religious group and to their family or country, even if they are the cause of the conflict. Women are thus faced with a dilemma, torn between defending women's common interests or those of their ethnic or religious group.

**The security of activists involved in conflict resolution initiatives:** The general opinion is that although some women's initiatives, such as marches and prayer sessions, are harmless, the authorities can regard them as being politically motivated and, above all, subversive. Women who pursue these activities can be faced with serious problems, ranging from intimidation to death threats. What strategies can women develop within the context of an upsurge in totalitarian regimes in order to decriminalise their activities so that they are not deemed to be threats to national security? This is an issue that women should explore.

**Relying on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms:** traditional conflict resolution mechanisms exist in all African societies. Some of them are still in existence, play an important role and could be re-examined within the scope of current conflict transformation activities. This applies to the Gacaca and Bashingantahe, which are councils of the elders in Rwanda and Burundi respectively. Although such structures, which have traditionally excluded women, are still very

patriarchal and discriminatory, they could include women, thereby providing them with a space in which to raise their concerns. However, would it be wise for women to promote traditional conflict resolution mechanisms that discriminate against women?

**Ending the culture of impunity:** armed conflicts give rise to all kinds of torture and barbaric acts. What should be done to ensure that people learn to live together again? What should be done to create a framework in which the perpetrators of genocide or other aggressors and their victims can live together again? In a post-conflict situation, what should be done to create a framework in which women can testify without fear of reprisals, which could happen given that genocide perpetrators enjoy freedom and can always exact revenge on their victims? Furthermore, victims and killers are often forced to live together because of over-populated refugee camps or neighbourhoods. It is hard for a women rape victim to live in close proximity with the man who raped her without her harbouring thoughts of revenge.

**Promoting a culture of peace:** promoting a culture of peace mainly hinges on education. Training women to resolve conflicts and maintain peace is advisable.

**The need for democratic and transparent leadership within women's associations:** the Sudanese participants raised the need for democratic and transparent leadership. Women's associations often reproduce the modus operandi of political parties and are therefore a long way from being as democratic as one would expect. Women should bear this in mind if they really want to contribute to the development of alternative governance and to the creation of a democratic society governed by the rule of law.

Following the discussions, the participants agreed on the need to increase the qualitative as well as quantitative participation of women in national politics and decision-making bodies, as a prerequisite for women's increased participation in official conflict resolution mechanisms. This is absolutely essential if, on the one hand, we want to change women's relationship to politics and on the other hand change political practices in general in order to clean up politics, establish equal gender relations and create a state governed by the rule of law.

Another issue that was undoubtedly the subject of heated debate was the formalisation of women's conflict resolution strategies. In fact, in order for women's conflict resolution strategies to be taken into account and institutionalised and in order for these strategies to be effective, they should be articulated more effectively, incorporate the issue of transforming gender relations and include activities aimed not only at consciousness-raising, but also at an acknowledgement of this issue. This process requires a better understanding of women's experiences and in this regard South Africa serves as an example that should inspire other African countries.

The participants advocated gender training for men and women and the development of partnerships through increased networking throughout Africa and the rest of the world in order to lobby politicians more effectively. These social actors should be trained to understand issues relating to national and international politics and their leadership and networking skills should be enhanced so that women are accepted as full and equal participants in peace negotiations organised under the auspices of regional or international institutions like the OAU and the UN.

## Conclusion

This workshop was tasked with analysing the local conflict resolution strategies employed by women and women's organisations in order to:

- Identify their trends, orientations and limitations;
- Study the reasons for, nature and impact of women's mobilisation;
- Identify the obstacles hindering women's involvement in official conflict resolution mechanisms;
- Discuss the strategies required to help women overcome these obstacles;
- And, above all, identify research themes and their applications.

Without being triumphalist, this objective was achieved because examining local experiences and women's conflict transformation strategies in Africa led, in the space of three days, to productive discussions and a better understanding of the perceptions and representations of women in armed conflicts in Africa, particularly in the Great Lakes region, west and central Africa and the Horn of Africa.

The conclusions contained in this report complement those contained in other research studies and reports dealing with the same issue. The conflict resolution arena is also characterised by the same gender relations that exist in other social areas. What has emerged is that women's relatively conservative conflict resolution strategies are not immediately geared towards political and social change. They are mainly based on women's reproductive role and are generally linked to women's associations, which are not immune to the hazards associated with fledgling civil societies in Africa. The nature of women's conflict resolution strategies and the way in which they are expressed confines them to the informal sector and as a result they suffer from a lack of visibility, are misunderstood or ignored. This is one of the reasons why women are excluded from local, national and international conflict resolution mechanisms. However, their exclusion is also due to their marginal representation in politics and decision-making.

In view of the above limitations, can we confidently say that women and women's organisations are not interested in transforming gender relations? Evidently not, because whether it is clearly expressed or not, their gender consciousness is undeniable. It surfaces in the heat of battle and features prominently in the strategies that women use to present themselves as equal and inevitable participants in official conflict resolution mechanisms, as evidenced by the demands for fundamental rights made by women's conflict resolution organisations.

In addition, by bringing together activists and researchers, the Gorée meeting was a golden opportunity not only to share valuable experiences, but also to discuss women's role in conflict transformation in Africa.

In the final analysis, the workshop was only one stage in a process that should continue according to the participants' action and research plans. This is why collective strategies are more meaningful. On the one hand, these strategies should strengthen the relationships forged between activists and researchers in order to improve the quality of documentation and enhance its visibility and, on the other hand, they should help to institutionalise women's conflict resolution strategies, thereby enabling women to be taken into account as well as enabling a significant

increase in the qualitative and quantitative participation of women in official conflict resolution mechanisms in Africa for the sake of lasting peace.

## PRESENTATIONS (in the original language)

### Expérience des femmes dans la résolution des conflits au Burundi

- Alice Ntwarante (Association Femmes pour la Réconciliation et le Développement)
- Marie Goretti Ndacayisaba (Projet de Formation en Genre et Résolution Pacifique des Conflits)

Le thème choisi pour cet atelier est judicieux et vient à point nommé. En effet, la plupart des pays africains connaissent actuellement des guerres et des conflits à travers lesquels un fait commun demeure : les femmes et les enfants sont les plus affectés et les plus meurtris. C'est pourquoi, nous les femmes, sommes interpellées en tant qu'activistes et chercheuses, et devons nous mobiliser afin de bâtir des sociétés africaines paisibles, démocratiques et prospères.

Notre présentation dont l'objectif est de donner un bref aperçu de la situation du Burundi, va s'articuler autour des points suivants:

- Contexte général
- Expérience et stratégies utilisées par les femmes dans la résolution des conflits au Burundi
- Impact des contributions des femmes et leurs organisations
- Défis et perspectives
- Conclusion

#### Contexte général

Depuis plus de 30 ans, l'histoire du Burundi est marquée par des violences inter-ethniques récurrentes qui se traduisent par des tueries fratricides généralisées, entraînant la mort des milliers de personnes.

Bien que le virus de l'ethnisme ait été déjà inoculé dans la société burundaise depuis l'époque coloniale, le Burundi avait survécu aux sirènes du divisionnisme. Il est à noter que des conflits inter-ethniques n'ont jamais cessé de surgir au cours des différentes périodes au Burundi.

En 1993, au mois de juin, pour la première fois dans l'histoire du Burundi, des institutions démocratiquement élues ont été mises en place. Le Président Ndadaye Melchior et certains de ses collaborateurs issus du parti Sahwanya Frodebu, qui avait gagné les élections, sont assassinés trois mois plus tard.

Immédiatement après l'assassinat, on assiste partout dans le pays, au massacre de milliers d'innocents Tutsi, suivis par des actes de vengeance et de repression à l'endroit des Hutu.

Depuis lors, le Burundi traverse une crise sans précédent caractérisée d'une part par des pertes considérables en vies humaines et d'autre part par des destructions de l'environnement, des infrastructures économiques et sociales et des habitations.

L'une des conséquences de cette crise est le déplacement massif à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur du pays, de la population qui a échappé aux massacres violents.

Aujourd'hui, près d'un million de personnes vivent dans des conditions inhumaines, sont menacées par toutes sortes de maladies et sont victimes d'une malnutrition aiguë. Dans cet environnement d'extrême pauvreté aggravée par des hostilités qui perdurent, il existe une nouvelle catégorie de personnes nées avec les événements, à savoir les personnes sinistrées parmi lesquelles les femmes représentent 54 % du total des effectifs.

Sur tous les plans, le Burundi a été sérieusement secoué. Tout s'est dégradé, ce qui a pavé la voie aux actes de vandalisme, de pillage des biens et à la vengeance. Actuellement, le système de valeurs sociales n'a plus d'emprise.

Cependant, face à cette situation, force est de constater que malgré les problèmes d'insécurité rencontrés dans certains milieux, le gouvernement burundais s'emploie à changer les choses en initiant des actions visant la réhabilitation des personnes sinistrées, la reconstruction et la sensibilisation de la population pour une coexistence pacifique.

Force est de constater également, que les femmes qui ne sont pas à l'origine des guerres en sont hélas les principales victimes. Les conséquences économiques des crises ont particulièrement touché les mères dont la préoccupation majeure est la survie de la famille.

Cependant certaines femmes ont pris part aux violences, en actes ou en paroles, et d'autres ont été complices par leur silence. Aujourd'hui encore, la rébellion compte aussi bien des hommes que des femmes.

Toutefois, la majorité des femmes veulent la paix, raison pour laquelle beaucoup d'organisations féminines condamnent celles qui n'ont pas encore entendu la voix maternelle qui les interpelle pour arrêter cette guerre inutile.

En effet, pour résoudre le conflit burundais, il n'existe qu'une seule voie : le dialogue entre les protagonistes. C'est pourquoi depuis juin 1998, un espace s'est créé à Arusha en Tanzanie pour donner à toutes les parties en conflit l'opportunité de crever l'abcès. Aujourd'hui le processus de paix inter-Burundais chemine vers sa fin et heureusement les négociateurs auraient déjà trouvé un consensus sur un nombre important de points. Les Burundais attendent avec impatience la signature d'un accord de paix, lequel conditionne toute mesure de reprise de la coopération internationale.

### Les femmes dans le conflit burundais

De façon générale, les femmes et les enfants constituent la majorité des déplacés, des regroupés, des dispersés et des réfugiés aussi bien à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur du pays. De ce fait, ils sont les plus affectés par la crise et souffrent physiquement, moralement et psychologiquement. Nombreuses sont les femmes qui, suite aux traumatismes de la guerre, se retrouvent dans des centres psychiatriques.

Cependant, malgré leur détresse, les femmes n'ont pas croisé les bras. Toutes catégories confondues, elles se sont levées en tant que mères donnant la vie, pour lancer des messages de paix et de réconciliation. Ainsi furent créés les premières associations qui militent pour la paix. Grâce à leurs qualités séculaires de compassion, de tolérance et de discrétion, les femmes, toutes ethnies confondues, ont posé des actes héroïques des fois même au risque de leur vie.

Au niveau individuel et communautaire:

Dès la première heure de la crise, le tout premier message de paix a été lancé par madame Laurence Ndadaye, veuve du président assassiné. Ce message a réveillé l'instinct maternel les femmes dignes d'être mères ont réagi et commencé à entreprendre des actions de sauvetage.

- Les femmes ont averti les voisins de l'autre ethnie menacée.
- Les femmes ont caché les gens de l'autre ethnie qui tentaient de fuir la machette, souvent au risque de la marginalisation ou de la mort.
- Elles ont allaité des bébés qui venaient de perdre leurs mères.

- Elles ont amené en cachette des vivres et autres effets aux déplacés, le lieu de rencontre privilégié étant la messe ou le marché.
- Elles se sont réconfortées les unes les autres grâce à des visites clandestines.
- Les femmes ont accueilli et pris en charge des orphelins ou des enfants abandonnés.
- Elles ont conservé les biens et le bétail de voisins ayant fui leur domicile, et entretenu leurs champs au moment où les autres rivalisaient de zèle dans le pillage.
- Des associations au niveau des quartiers et communes se sont dressées contre les massacres.

#### Au niveau national

- Les femmes ont lancé un cri d'alarme aux médias pour briser le silence complice des politiciens jusque là spectateurs.
- Elles ont organisé des marches et des manifestations pour sensibiliser l'opinion au retour à la paix.
- Des visites dans les quartiers et dans les écoles de la capitale ont été effectuées par les femmes âgées pour dénoncer les jeunes qui détruisaient et tuaient froidement sans que personne ne puisse les arrêter. Une de ces militantes de la paix s'est retrouvée paralysée parce qu'elle essayait d'arrêter les jeunes qui assommaient quelqu'un en pleine journée. Finalement elle est morte de ses blessures.
- Les femmes parlementaires et cadres de l'Etat ont organisé une journée de réflexion sur le rôle de la femme dans le maintien de la paix. Beaucoup d'associations qui militent pour la paix ont emprunté cette voie et plusieurs activités comme des séminaires ont été entreprises.
- Des organisations comme Femmes pour la paix, le Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB), le Réseau des Femmes pour la Paix et la non-violence, et d'autres ont également tenté d'organiser des cadres de rencontre pour que les femmes de toutes les ethnies puissent donner leurs points de vue sur la situation politique nationale.
- Le CAFOB a organisé beaucoup de journées de réflexion et des séminaires sur le rôle des femmes dans le rétablissement d'une paix durable et a participé activement à la collecte et à la distribution des aides humanitaires aux rescapés vivant dans les camps de déplacés et dans les familles.
- Le CAFOB a pu rassembler d'autres associations membres pour faire le lobbying auprès des hautes autorités et diplomates pour l'arrêt des massacres dans les différents coins du pays.
- D'autres cadres d'échange et de rapprochement sont nés pour permettre aux différentes catégories de femmes de s'exprimer sans faux-fuyants sur le conflit burundais et ses solutions. Parmi ces cadres, l'on peut citer notamment le Projet de Formation des Formatrices en Résolution Pacifique des Conflits qui a essayé de sensibiliser les femmes leaders sur l'analyse du conflit, l'impact du conflit sur les femmes et les approches de construction de la paix. Ces formations ont eu un impact positif car les différentes communautés ethniques et politiques s'acceptent dans leurs différences et ont formé des réseaux solides appelés «DUSHIREHAMWE», qui signifie «Réconcilions Nous» en Kirundi. Le Projet et les Groupes DUSHIREHAMWE ont réussi à ramener ensemble les déplacées, les regroupées et les dispersées pour identifier les obstacles à la cohabitation pacifique.
- Les femmes réfugiées n'ont pas été oubliées, car il y a eu des rencontres entre les femmes de la diaspora et celles de l'intérieur pour dialoguer sur les stratégies de la reconstruction nationale.

#### Au niveau international

Les femmes burundaises ne peuvent pas à elles seules mener jusqu'au bout leur lutte pour la paix. Des efforts ont été conjugués avec d'autres organisations de femmes au niveau régional et international. Les pays voisins spécialement le Rwanda, l'Ouganda et la Tanzanie ont soutenu considérablement les Burundaises.

En outre, les Burundaises ont reçu un soutien de la part de leurs sœurs africaines vivant dans des pays où des conflits sont en cours. Une torche de la paix symbolisant leur visite a été allumée pour témoigner de la joie et de l'espoir des femmes burundaises.

D'autres organisations spécialisées dans la résolution des conflits ont apporté leur pierre à la construction de la paix et ont appuyé les femmes burundaises dans le lobbying auprès de la communauté régionale et internationale, pour qu'elles soient impliquées dans les négociations d'Arusha.

Un résultat important de cette mobilisation est la participation, à titre d'observatrices, de six femmes à l'importante délégation de partis politiques qui négocient le retour de la paix au Burundi. N'étant admises dans les plénières que comme observatrices, il est important de noter que les femmes ne sont pas autorisées à s'y exprimer. Dans la réalité, elles ne participent donc pas à la prise de décision. Les femmes indignées de leur marginalisation dans les négociations ont décidé de porter le problème au niveau du médiateur et de ses proches. Bien que le processus tire à sa fin, elles ont pu, grâce à cette stratégie, organiser des réunions et des journées de réflexion et recueillir des propositions sur les questions clé des négociations mêmes. Ces propositions ont été distribuées aux différentes autorités influentes dans les négociations. Dans toutes les réunions, il est ressorti que les femmes sont déterminées à tout mettre en œuvre pour être impliquées lorsque les accords seront appliqués. Si elles ne sont pas associées, les femmes, qui représentent 52 % de la population du Burundi, risquent de ne pas reconnaître ces Accords.

Aujourd'hui, nous constatons avec joie que les femmes se sentent concernées par ce qui se passe à Arusha, ce qui montre l'existence d'un consensus en leur sein. Une telle attitude montre aussi qu'elles feront preuve de la solidarité et du courage nécessaires pour continuer de faire pression sur les différentes parties en conflit.

La femme burundaise, dans sa mission de recherche de la paix, dispose de moyens limités. Cependant, ces acquis témoignent de sa volonté de bâtir une nation de paix. Loin de l'auto-satisfaction, elle est bien consciente que des efforts énormes doivent être déployés mais reste convaincue qu'elle fait partie des protagonistes.

En conclusion à cette partie, nous disons haut et fort que ce sont les femmes qui ont fait du Burundi ce qu'il est aujourd'hui. Nous sommes incontournables malgré toutes les manœuvres des politiciens burundais qui cherchent à nous marginaliser!

## **Impact des contributions des femmes dans le processus de paix**

### **Impact positif**

- L'engagement des femmes a abouti à la création d'une coalition de forces positives pour reconstruire le pays moralement et socialement. La coalition constitue de ce fait un groupe de pression dont l'objectif à moyen et à long terme est le changement des relations de pouvoir entre hommes et femmes et entre dirigeants et dirigés.

- Les différentes réunions d'échange ont permis aux femmes de cultiver la vérité, la confiance et la vision commune sur des questions hier taboues. Ces actions ont pu se poursuivre jusque dans les communautés de base où les femmes leaders ont pris la relève pour sensibiliser leurs compagnes sur leur rôle dans le processus de paix. Cette synergie a relevé le niveau du leadership féminin sur le plan surtout politique.

- L'implication de la femme burundaise au processus de paix est une réalité mais la participation active et effective dans la prise de décision reste un combat. C'est pourquoi les femmes essaient de se défaire de l'attitude traditionnelle du "parler pour parler" pour passer aux actions et à leur suivi. Dans cet ordre d'idées, le groupe de femmes qui participe aux négociations d'Arusha a pu sensibiliser les plus hautes autorités sur le rôle de la femme durant la crise et la place qui devrait lui revenir dans les instances de prise de décisions.

- Pour valoriser l'information et l'échange d'expériences, un bulletin de liaison a été créé pour mettre à la disposition des femmes des informations crédibles.

- Parallèlement à la question de la paix, celle des droits des femmes a fait l'objet de discussions et de lobbying dans les différents foras nationaux. Des structures spécialisées dans certains domaines et destinées à alléger leurs souffrances morales, physiques et psychologiques sont ouvertes. L'on peut citer la Clinique Juridique ou la Maison des Femmes où les femmes sont écoutées et assistées. Elles ont pu dépasser petit à petit les perceptions sur les différentes appartenances et ont prôné leur militantisme en tant que femmes et mères. Elles ont brisé le silence complice pour dire non aux divisions et à la guerre. Les femmes se sont montrées solidaires et unies pendant les moments les plus difficiles par exemple à Arusha et lorsque des cas de viol ne reçoivent pas l'attention attendue des tribunaux.

- La mobilisation pour la paix a rapproché les différentes catégories de femmes ; intellectuelles et cultivatrices, jeunes et vieilles, riches et pauvres. Les relations ont été améliorées grâce au climat d'entente et de transparence prôné dans les rencontres respectives.

### **Impact négatif**

- La paix et la coexistence pacifique sont deux aspirations essentielles de tous les Burundais. Cependant, des divergences persistent quant aux stratégies à mettre en œuvre pour asseoir une vraie paix. Le concept paix a une connotation différente suivant les groupes d'appartenance. Certains cherchent la paix par les armes, d'autres par le dialogue, d'autres sont indifférents et passifs. Malgré le combat acharné des femmes pour instaurer la paix au Burundi, des divisions à caractère ethnique persistent et font obstacle à leur mobilisation effective pour une cause commune.

- Selon les observateurs, un nombre important de femmes continuent d'ignorer les objectifs du combat du mouvement féminin. Alors que certaines femmes se mobilisent pour la paix en menant un combat d'ordre ethnique ou régional, d'autres le font pour la satisfaction des intérêts d'un groupe d'individus.

- Aussi longtemps que la paix est perçue suivant les groupes d'appartenance, toutes nos actions seront vouées à l'échec ou resteront éphémères.

- Les femmes burundaises sont encore la proie des politiciens qui agissent pour leurs propres intérêts et positions politiques. En effet les femmes sont constamment manipulées par les hommes qui ne prônent que la loi du diviser pour régner.

- La méfiance, la suspicion, le refus de l'autre, la complicité insidieuse, les jalousies et autres défauts sont les maux qui bloquent la participation des femmes. Ils risquent de compromettre les efforts que les femmes ont fournis pour rendre visible leur rôle dans la résolution du conflit.

### **Défis et perspectives pour les femmes**

D'un point de vue social et culturel, les femmes burundaises rencontrent des problèmes à plusieurs niveaux:

- La perception d'elles-mêmes et de leur rôle dans le processus de paix. Les femmes sont peureuses et ne veulent pas apparaître comme des agresseurs. Or, elles devraient d'abord avoir confiance en elle-mêmes et s'employer à redorer leur image par des actions affirmatives. Partant de ces actions affirmatives, elles pourraient contribuer au changement de perception chez les autres.

- La perception de leur rôle par la société, par les hommes surtout, qui perçoivent les femmes comme des incapables, des instruments pour accéder au pouvoir et n'entendent pas leur donner l'occasion de changer ce statut d'infériorité. C'est pourquoi, les sont constamment les adversaires au lieu d'être les partenaires des femmes.

- Dans l'objectif de changer progressivement les relations entre hommes et femmes, les femmes devraient entreprendre des actions plus musclées.

- La division sexuelle du travail et la multiplicité des rôles des femmes alourdissent leur charge de travail et constituent la base des inégalités entre les sexes.

- Le rôle productif des femmes les amène à fournir encore plus d'efforts pour satisfaire leurs besoins personnels et ceux de leur famille. Pour concilier ces rôles, les femmes sont obligées de bien planifier leurs actions dans le temps et dans l'espace.

Au plan économique, les femmes collectivement ou individuellement, sont dépourvues des ressources devant leur permettre de mener à bien leur lutte. Le cas de celles qui participent aux pourparlers d'Arusha en constitue l'exemple le plus flagrant. Une politique volontariste du gouvernement, visant à donner aux femmes les moyens de participer pleinement au processus de paix, s'impose. Le soutien économique et technique de la communauté internationale est indispensable aussi.

L'autonomie sur le plan économique étant devenue une nécessité, les femmes doivent se battre pour, d'une part, mobiliser des fonds, et d'autre part, mener des actions de plaidoyer fondées sur leurs réalisations concrètes.

- Au point de vue politique, dans le passé, les femmes n'ont pas eu à exercer des fonctions politiques. Il ya toujours eu de la discrimination à leur égard, dans ce domaine. Aujourd'hui encore, elles fournissent beaucoup d'efforts pour percer, mais en vain. Le combat pour la participation et la représentation politique des femmes sera long. Pour le gagner, les femmes doivent négocier avec les tenants du pouvoir en avançant des arguments fondés sur des actions honnêtes et solidaires. Il est important d'ores et déjà, de redéfinir la ligne de conduite, en s'appuyant sur le dynamisme déjà manifesté par un nombre important de femmes. De ce point de vue, le cadre national rassembleur sur le point d'être défini va jouer un rôle crucial pour la canalisation des idées et projets susceptibles de contribuer à l'amélioration du statut de la femme.

## Conclusion

La paix au Burundi n'est pas encore totalement établie, le chemin à parcourir reste encore long. Les femmes doivent réaffirmer leur engagement et leur détermination à faire du processus de paix un pari à gagner. A cet effet, elles doivent accepter de cheminer main dans la main, sans faux-fuyants, de dépasser les clivages ethniques et de penser davantage au futur. Elles seront en effet jugées à travers leurs actes et non leurs paroles.

La délégation burundaise interpelle la communauté des Grands Lacs pour la création de liens solides dans l'objectif d'éradiquer le virus de la haine et de la division qui, si l'on y prend pas garde, risque de l'emporter sur la fraternité et la prospérité. Nous exhortons toutes les organisations qui nous témoignent de la sympathie, de redoubler d'efforts pour que le Burundi puisse accoucher du bébé tant

attendu : un Accord de Paix acceptable pour tous les Burundais. C'est le moment ou jamais. Nous encourageons enfin cette initiative visant à réunir des activistes et des chercheuses pour analyser la pratique et non le discours afin de dégager des stratégies plus efficaces en matière de résolution des conflits, tout en espérant que ce n'est pas la dernière.

## **Femmes du Rwanda : Faire face aux défis**

### **Thérèse Mukamulisa (Conseil de concertation des Organisations d'appui aux Initiatives de Base) Ancilla Mukarubuga (Pro. Femmes)**

Situé dans la région des Grands Lacs au centre de l'Afrique, le Rwanda est un petit pays d'une superficie de 26. 338km<sup>2</sup>. Il est situé entre l'Ouganda au nord, la Tanzanie à l'est, le Burundi au sud et la République Démocratique du Congo à l'ouest. La population actuelle est estimée à environ 8 millions d'habitants dont 54% de femmes. Ancienne colonie belge, le Rwanda a accédé à l'indépendance en 1962.

Petit pays inconnu, le Rwanda s'est rendu tristement célèbre par le génocide des Tutsi et les massacres des opposants Hutus en 1994. En effet, en moins de 100 jours, il y a eu plus d'un million de morts, ce qui constitue un record dans les annales de l'histoire.

Les causes du génocide sont multiples, mais on peut citer entre autres, la politique d'exclusion et de division, la culture de l'impunité, l'incitation à la haine ethnique entretenues pendant des décennies. Il faut préciser que la question des fondements de l'idéologie du génocide et des causes qui l'ont facilitée, celle de l'adoption d'une culture démocratique et de la résolution des conflits de manière pacifique, restent toujours d'actualité et que des efforts à tous les niveaux sont en train d'être menés.

Il est indispensable dès lors de penser à une certaine coordination de tous ces efforts, qui devrait faciliter l'organisation d'un débat public sincère et approfondi sur les causes du génocide et les remèdes éventuels à apporter spécifiquement par les femmes rwandaises, afin d'éviter la duplication d'interventions. Les conséquences de ce génocide sont également multiples. La conséquence la plus immédiate découlant de la nature même du génocide, fut la disparition de plus d'un million d'hommes, de femmes et d'enfants. L'autre conséquence fut l'exode d'environ deux millions de Hutus à la suite de la défaite des forces du génocide. Cette population s'est exilée, encadrée par les autorités politiques et militaires.

Les conséquences sociales, économiques, psychologiques et culturelles sont nombreuses:

- le tissu social a été complètement déchiré. Cette déchirure hypothèque le développement du pays et handicape les initiatives d'instauration de la confiance entre rwandais;
- l'appareil judiciaire a presque disparu;
- la population qui a survécu a connu des traumatismes pour la plupart, physiques et/ou moraux.

La conséquence politique la plus dommageable fut la survie de l'idéologie génocidaire dans les pays d'asile, surtout dans les régions frontalières du Rwanda (RDC, Tanzanie et Burundi) où les exilés ont continué les entraînements militaires et ont multiplié les attaques contre la population civile restée dans le pays.

Aujourd'hui, six ans après le génocide, les Rwandais s'attèlent toujours à la gestion et la maîtrise de ces multiples conséquences. Les efforts considérables

émanent tant du Gouvernement que de la Société Civile. Cependant, les défis demeurent.

### Les défis majeurs dans le domaine de la résolution des conflits

Les défis majeurs auxquels le Rwanda est actuellement confronté sont notamment :

- la réhabilitation du tissu social;
- le problème judiciaire créé par la surpopulation carcérale qui s'explique par l'insuffisance des juges correctement formés, d'où la lenteur des jugements des présumés génocidaires. Cette situation engendre l'impatience des rescapés de voir les coupables punis et le désespoir des épouses des prévenus qui passent une partie importante de leur temps à visiter leurs époux et à leur apporter la nourriture , délaissant ainsi leurs activités génératrices de revenus ;
- actuellement 34% des ménages rwandais sont dirigés par des femmes qui, dans la plupart des cas ont perdu tous (ou presque) leurs enfants et qui malgré leur vulnérabilité physique, morale et matérielle doivent prendre en charge d'innombrables orphelins laissés par les proches ou lointains disparus dans le génocide;
- du point de vue législatif, une révision légale de certaines lois discriminatoires à l'égard des femmes s'impose puisque cette discrimination allonge la liste des conflits que vivent les Rwandais en général et les femmes en particulier.  
A titre d'exemple, on pourrait citer parmi les dispositions discriminatoires:
  - dans le Code Pénal, l'adultère de la femme est puni beaucoup plus sévèrement;
  - dans le Code de la Famille, en cas de divorce pour cause d'adultère, la femme doit prouver que l'adultère a été commis dans le lit conjugal;
  - dans le Code de la Nationalité, la femme rwandaise qui épouse un étranger ne peut transférer sa nationalité à son époux, contrairement à l'homme dont l'épouse acquiert automatiquement la nationalité rwandaise;
  - dans la loi régissant les relations diplomatiques et consulaires, l'épouse du diplomate est citée parmi les objets de déménagement;
  - l'absence de la femme rwandaise dans les processus de négociation des Accords de Paix est à déplorer (Accords d'Arusha et de Lusaka). Nous reviendrons sur ce dernier point dans la partie qui va suivre.

### Les initiatives entreprises par les femmes rwandaises

#### **Justification des Initiatives**

Tel que signalé plus haut, beaucoup d'initiatives ont été initiées afin de faire face aux défis susmentionnés. Ces initiatives émanent tant de la société civile que du Gouvernement rwandais. De façon spécifique, le rôle de la femme rwandaise est à souligner dans la mesure où elle s'est fortement impliquée depuis la fin du génocide, dans la recherche des solutions aux divers conflits et à la gestion de leurs conséquences.

Ces initiatives sont justifiées par le contexte d'après génocide qui prévaut dans le pays et qui affecte de façon considérable la femme rwandaise.

Elles se situent tant au niveau du collectif de 35 organisations de femmes appelé «Profemmes/ Twese Hamwe» qu'au niveau d'autres ONG locales féminines ou non. De son côté, le Gouvernement a manifesté la volonté d'impliquer davantage les femmes dans le processus national de résolution des conflits.

En effet, les femmes sont restées longtemps les victimes des conflits dans le déclenchement desquels, elles n'ont pas contribué et dont elles et leurs enfants

subissent les principales conséquences. Pour le cas du génocide au Rwanda, les femmes ont été systématiquement violées parfois avec des objets pointus ou tranchants. Elles ont été soumises aux tortures sexuelles, contaminées au VIH, contraintes à l'esclavage sexuel. Il existe cependant des femmes qui ont participé, assisté fièrement ou même encouragé des atrocités commises sur d'autres femmes. Aujourd'hui bien que certaines d'entre elles aient été arrêtées, par leur faute, d'autres femmes souffrent de la perte de leurs et de leurs biens ou du dépaysement après le retour d'exil.

Amener ces différentes catégories de femmes à s'asseoir autour d'une même table, pour analyser leurs problèmes et adopter des stratégies de gestion dans un esprit de non-violence, est l'une des réussites du collectif Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe « Ensemble, marchons pour la promotion de la Femme ».

Après le génocide qui a été déclenché par des individus animés de sentiments destructeurs, le déchirement a été très profond. L'initiative des associations féminines de se coaliser pour créer les conditions d'un changement indispensable des mentalités, valut au collectif le prix Paadan Jeet Singh de la tolérance et de la non-violence offert par l'UNESCO.

La pauvreté et l'analphabétisme sont d'autres facteurs aggravant la gestion sociale du pays après le génocide. Les statistiques tirées d'une enquête menée par l'UNICEF, World Vision et le Ministère des Affaires Sociales révèlent l'ampleur des problèmes:

- 47, 3% de la population sont analphabètes;
- 53, 7 % des analphabètes sont des femmes;
- 34 % des ménages sont dirigés par des femmes;
- 85 000 familles sont composées d'orphelins vivant seuls;
- 70 % de la population vit sous le seuil de pauvreté;
- 54 % de la population est composée de femmes.

### **Objectifs du Collectif Profemmes TweseHamwe**

- conjuguer les efforts pour opérer des changements indispensables et éradiquer toute forme de discrimination à l'égard des femmes ;
- constituer un cadre de concertation;
- faciliter les échanges entre ses membres et promouvoir le partenariat avec les intervenants en matière de promotion des femmes ;
- renforcer les capacités organisationnelles et institutionnelles des associations membres ;
- constituer un cadre de communication et de mobilisation sur le rôle des femmes dans la société.

### **Détermination des Programmes**

La gestion des conséquences du génocide dans le dépassement des barrières du passé nécessite l'éradication des causes du génocide et des conflits par l'élaboration d'un programme de société. Il devra comprendre:

- un programme commun portant sur l'organisation d'une campagne d'actions multidimensionnelles pour la paix;
- un mécanisme de communication pour consolider les relations horizontales et verticales entre les associations, les membres, le collectif des intervenants;
- une vision commune par le renforcement des capacités des membres et des institutions.

Ce programme sera réalisé autour de huit axe:

#### **a) la sécurité sociale**

- assistance matérielle et psychosociale aux orphelins vivants seuls, aux enfants des centres et familles d'accueil;
- assistance aux rapatriés, aux rescapés du génocide et aux réfugiés (matériel, logement, santé, éducation, micro-projets...);
- organisation d'une conférence panafricaine sur l'égalité, la paix et le développement. Celle-ci s'est tenue du 1 au 3 mars 1997;
- promotion de l'entrepreneuriat féminin par la création des fonds commerciaux d'appui à l'auto promotion des femmes dès 1997 ;
- le projet Rwandan Women's Initiative avec le HCR ;
- constitution de fond de garanties pour les femmes entrepreneurs ;
- Création de petites et moyennes entreprises.

#### **b) Justice**

- Lobby pour la révision des lois telles que:
  - la loi organique portant sur les crimes de génocide en vigueur depuis 1996 ;
  - la loi portant sur le Code de la Famille. Aujourd'hui la fille peut hériter de ses parents au même pied d'égalité que son frère. Le collectif a été très impliqué pour cette révision de loi ;
  - le projet de loi sur les juridictions populaires. La sensibilisation des femmes a déjà commencé (la résolution des conflits par les méthodes traditionnelles GACACA ou Participatory Methods in Conflict Resolution).
- Création de commissions nationales comme celle de l'Unité et Réconciliation confiée à une femme et la Commission des Droits de l'Homme avec trois commissaires dont une femme ;
- Formation de para juristes qui a permis à toutes les associations de ProFemmes de disposer au moins d'un para juriste formé;
- Collaboration avec le TPIR/Violences sexuelles;
- La nomination pour la première fois dans le pays, d'une femme vice-présidente de la cour suprême.

#### **c) Culture**

- programme CAP (Campagne Action pour la Paix), exécuté par toutes les associations de ProFemmes ;
- journées de réflexion et conférences sur la culture de la paix, la tolérance, la cohabitation pacifique, la résolution des conflits, l'unité et la réconciliation ;
- coalition de lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes et 16 jours d'activisme ;
- lutte contre la maltraitance des enfants ;
- camps de solidarité et conscientisation sur les valeurs positives ;
- promotion de la culture de la Mémoire (écrits, recueils, témoignages, dictionnaires des tués pendant le génocide, des génocidaires et des braves gens de 1994, des restes des corps, films).

#### **d) Santé**

- 51, 4 % des associations membres de ProFemmes Twese Hamwe ont des activités dans le domaine de la santé;
- prise en charge des femmes victimes de violence : 6 associations sur 35 très impliquées
- centres de détraumatisation (counselling) ;
- le Hepful Active Listening (HAL) procède en groupes ou individuellement ;
- clinique pour les soins primaires et les références de cas aux institutions spécialisées;

- collaboration avec le projet Femmes Victimes de Violence (FVV) de l'OMS ;
- lutte contre le SIDA par la sensibilisation et le dépistage volontaire dépassant de loin les prévisions. En 1997, il y a eu 1800 dépistages sur 1200 prévus et en 1998, quelque 1013 dépistages sur 900 prévus.

#### **e) Pouvoir et Prise de Décision**

- lobby pour l'accès des femmes aux instances de prise de décision. Sa réussite va influencer l'axe environnement;
- structure organisationnelle des femmes en 1996 avec 99460 femmes leaders à la base ;
- structure des jeunes : les femmes sont représentées à :
  - 39 % au niveau de la cellule ;
  - 32 % au niveau du secteur ;
  - 27 % au niveau de la commune ;
  - 13 % au niveau préfectoral.
- structure administrative de base (mars 1999) avec 30% de femmes élues ;
- influence sur le Parlement : forum des femmes parlementaires très actives en matière de lobbying;
- Unity Club -association des femmes ministres et des épouses des plus hautes autorités;

#### **f) Médias**

- diffusion régulière de messages de paix ;
- couverture des activités et des programmes des associations de promotion de la femme ;
- les campagnes de sensibilisation (radiodiffusées) sur la promotion de la femme et la dénonciation de son exclusion ou de la violence faite contre elle;
- la formation des femmes des médias et des chargées d'IEC (Information, Education et Communication) dans les ministères et les OBGs (organisations d'appui à la base) en général.

#### **g) Recherche**

- les racines de la genèse des conflits par ASOFERWA (Association de Solidarité des Femmes Rwandaises) ;
- les violences faites aux femmes par AVEGA (Association des Rescapés du Génocide/AGAHZO) ;
- le rôle de la femme dans la résolution des conflits par les méthodes traditionnelles SERUKA (Rendre les femmes visibles);
- la femme dans les instances de prise de décision (Réseau des Femmes Oeuvrant pour le Développement Rural).

#### **h) Education**

- réajustement des curricula ;
- journées de réflexion ;
- construction d'écoles et promotion des écoles d'excellence pour filles : 41, 7% des femmes dans l'enseignement supérieur;
- le collectif des associations qui oeuvrent dans le domaine de l'éducation avec une femme à la présidence de ce collectif (Il y a beaucoup d'enfants orphelins pris en charge par ce collectif).

### **Contraintes et réussites**

## **Contraintes**

- le génocide et ses conséquences :
  - perte en ressources humaines
  - déchirement du tissu social;
  - destruction d'infrastructures.
- la pauvreté généralisée des femmes constitue un frein à beaucoup d'activités en matière de prévention et de gestion des conflits ; or tant que la femme ne sera pas économiquement forte, toute initiative entreprise par elle n'aura pas d'impact réel ;
- la culture rwandaise est encore très marquée par les stéréotypes à l'encontre des femmes et elle décourage la libre expression et l'engagement de ces dernières;
- le taux d'alphabétisation de la population en général et des femmes en particulier : souvent les femmes, de par leur ignorance, constituent un obstacle à leur propre épanouissement ;
- la dispersion des initiatives en matière de résolution des conflits réduit l'impact de leurs réalisations;
- l'insuffisance de la communication sur toutes les réalisations des femmes.

## **Réussites**

- la population est aujourd'hui sensibilisée sur la culture de la paix et de la tolérance ;
- le processus de reconstruction nationale après le génocide interpelle tout le monde;
- le rôle de la femme commence à être reconnu par la société;
- la dénonciation des violences faites à la femme et à la petite fille qui influence les sentences rendues par les tribunaux;
- la prise en charge intégrée des femmes victimes de violence (du point de vue santé et justice notamment) ;
- l'adoption d'une législation sur les régimes matrimoniaux, sur les successions et les libéralités qui est actuellement en faveur des femmes ;
- la politique de décentralisation de l'habitat regroupé pour opérer des changements de comportement;
- la tenue d'une conférence internationale sur le génocide et celle des États africains sur la paix, le Genre et le Développement;
- les femmes de plus en plus motivées après ces quelques réussites.

## **Stratégies et recommandations**

Tel qu'il vient d'être signalé, il y a beaucoup d'initiatives émanant des femmes rwandaises tant activistes que chercheuses, mais les obstacles ne manquent pas non plus. Il importe dès lors d'asseoir des stratégies adéquates en vue de lever ces barrières. Il est recommandé de :

- élaborer la plate-forme de concertation et de coordination de toutes les initiatives des femmes rwandaises en matière de résolution des conflits ;
- consolider les mécanismes en place en vue de l'éradication de la pauvreté par l'épargne, le crédit et la promotion de l'entrepreneuriat féminin ;
- accentuer le lobby et le plaidoyer au niveau local, régional et international pour obtenir l'égalité des chances et éradiquer toutes les formes d'exclusion et de violence contre les femmes ;
- renforcer le réseau mondial des femmes pour la paix ;
- poursuivre et renforcer le processus en cours de promotion des valeurs positives de notre culture ;
- continuer les recherches et diffuser les différentes initiatives des femmes pour la paix.

Nous espérons qu'à l'issue de cette réunion, grâce aux échanges des expériences diverses des femmes venues de tous les coins de l'Afrique nous serons mieux édifiées dans le domaine de la résolution des conflits et ne ferons qu'aller de l'avant dans le combat qui nous concerne toutes, nous femmes d'Afrique.

## **The Nigerian Situation**

### **Lady Ime Essien Udom (President African Strategic and Peace Research Group)**

Persistent conflict in Africa, with its accompanying wanton destruction of lives and property, has become a great cause for alarm. Apart from the socio-economic setback for the continent, the less obvious, but more alarming destruction of the rudiments and the very essence of the society, calls for an urgent need to address the situation from all perspectives. It is agreed that conflict is integral to the dynamics of society and even necessary for its growth. The question that needs to be asked however, is how to manage conflict and its transformation in order that it does not destroy the very society that is developing. So far, not much success has been recorded in this respect. African society is still very anachronistic and still equates victory with conquest through physical prowess. The annihilation of a neighboring community is the expected resolution to any conflict. The culture of dialogue and compromise is relatively new, and yet to become an acceptable alternative.

The pluralistic nature of the African society has a lot to do with the incessant conflict situations in the continent. To compound this, however, is the multi faceted nature of the pluralism, which in a country like Nigeria is the bane to conflict resolution efforts thus far.

Any exercise in conflict resolution, management or transformation in Africa, as indeed everywhere, has to indulge in intensive investigation of traditional, historical, political and socio-economic antecedents of the people. It is in unraveling the maze of these interlacing considerations, and understanding the components, that one can evolve a strategy for managing or transforming the conflict. Each conflict situation would require a different strategy for management.

### **Conflict situation in Nigeria**

#### **Introduction**

Nigeria is a (sometimes clumsily) large country. Clumsy in the sense that practically all known causes of conflict abound in the country. As such the country has faced one conflict after the other. However, the very complexity that has generated and sustained these conflicts seems to be the same that is creating a self-managing mechanism for them. This complexity has generated multi-dimensional conflicts that sometimes defy analysis. The complexity has created a volatile potpourri of situations that need just a small disagreement, sometimes totally unrelated, to cause a conflict to ignite.

Nigeria has witnessed ethnic crisis, religious crisis, political crisis, economic crisis as well as communal crisis. There have also been ruler-ship tussles, student crises and labour crises. In all these crisis situations, it is evident that the causes and considerations have been multidimensional. I will take a few examples of such situations.

## **Intra-ethnic Crisis: Ife-Modakeke Crisis**

The Ife-Modakeke crisis is one of the oldest intra-ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. It has been on for over two hundred years and is still claiming lives. It is one of those multidimensional crises with ethnic, communal, political, economic as well as traditional considerations. In fact, it is a typical example of a conflict that has become its own *raison d'être*, forming its own self-empowered, self-fulfilling cycle.

Historically the two groups came to live together, as a result of the collapse of the old Oyo Empire and the subsequent wars of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, which led to some of the refugees settling down at Ife and being referred to as the Modakeke. The town, Ile-Ife is regarded as the aboriginal home of the Yoruba people (Orisun Yoruba), which explains why they were readily accepted and allowed to settle among the Ifes. In the beginning, they were good allies in times of war as they provided military support to the Ifes during the Owu wars of 1825 against the Ijehas. They were given land as a result of this, and many worked for the Ife farmers.

Their relationship soon grew sour as the Modakeke sought to assert rights, which were unacceptable to the Ifes, and subsequent events led to their resettlement in a separate land. This was a great mistake as the refugees now regarded themselves as an entity separate from Ife and sought an identity of their own.

Between 1853 and now, several attempts at peace have been made by the then colonial governments as well as the present military and civilian governments. Whatever peace was attained at any time was short-lived, as both sides had remained resolute in their demands.

Subsequent Governments have, at one time or another, used this situation to score points. One created a separate local government for the Modakeke to reduce the power of the Ooni who were considered anti-government, while another withdrew the council when Modakekes voted against it. One Ooni resettled the Modakeke in a different land because he was married to a Modakeke woman. But presently, the crisis is seen as a conflict over land claimed by the Modakekes as their own and resisted by the Ifes. The current government has come down heavily on the leaders by placing the burden of ensuring peace in their domain on them, in the absence of which no development efforts will be directed at their communities.

## **The Niger Delta Crisis: The Ijaw-Itsekiri Conflict**

These are two tribes that live in the Niger delta of Nigeria. The bulk of crude oil in Nigeria comes from this area and crude oil constitutes about 98% of the total foreign exchange revenue of the country. There have been a lot of protests by the indigenes of this area against their marginalization by the Federal Government, and inequitable distribution of revenue. The protest had assumed such dimensions as to disturb and in some cases close down operations of oil exploration in those parts. The Government and the foreign oil companies are largely unable to contain these protests and unrest.

The government then decided to create a new local government, purportedly to address the demands of the people. They named the new local government after one tribe, but with headquarters in a village belonging to the other tribe. Of course this sparked more violence; the two tribes, who are the two main tribes in the region, engaged themselves in a communal crisis over land claimed by both sides. In the middle of this crisis, the government attempted to move the headquarters and rename it. This worsened the crisis and has sustained the crisis to date. While the two tribes are engaged with each other, the government hopes to divert their attention from the protest over revenue allocation and infrastructural inadequacies.

The present government has used different means of containing the crisis in this region, without much success. It ordered the total destruction of a small village called Odi, killing and maiming and displacing hundreds of people just to fish out the killers of some policemen. This earned them widespread reprimand, even from the international community. The government adjusted the revenue allocation formula to be more favorable to the communities; the effect of this is yet to be seen. It has embarked on infrastructural development of some of the communities. This is seen by some of their critics as 'window dressing'.

### **The Sharia Issue**

The Sharia crisis is another instance when a conflict has passed through several dimensions and ended up with a totally different coloration from its initial look. This conflict has arisen from the introduction of the Sharia law in some states in the northern part of Nigeria. Nigeria is comprised of approximately 50% Christian, 40% Moslem and 10% traditional (and other) religious practitioners. The majority of Moslems are found in the northern part of the country, while there are more Christians in the south. Sharia is the personal law of the Moslems, and in recognition of the multi-religious character of the people, while attempting to maintain the secularity of Nigeria, the Sharia had been practiced as a personal law in the country and the criminal aspects codified into what is known as the Penal Code for Northern Nigeria. Sharia courts had been established and protected by the Nigerian Constitution. This had been the practice until 1999 when the Governor of Zamfara State, one of the northern states decided to use the Sharia issue as a political campaign strategy to win support. He moved for the legislation of the full implementation of the Sharia (including the criminal and social aspects) as a State Law. Implemented in this way, the Sharia law now binds non-Moslems resident in his state. Christians in the country rose up against it. There followed anti-Sharia and pro-Sharia protests which resulted in wide spread violence and repercussions. Other states decided to follow the example of Zamfara state. In some of the areas, the issues got intertwined with the communal crisis -who is a settler and who is an indigene -and in some cases it became a constitutional crisis. In many instances, it was an issue of marginalization of a group on the basis of cultural differences, but they all came in the guise of the Sharia crisis.

It is thought by many that the conflict situations in the country in whatever guise, have been basically directed at addressing inequities caused by unjust revenue and resource allocation and poor management. The clamour for a government of true federalism which translates also to fiscal federalism, to redefine economic as well as political relationships between the different peoples of Nigeria, is hoped to address the inequities perpetuated by unbalanced resource and revenue allocation.

### **Conflict resolution and peace building strategies used by women in Nigeria**

In these crisis situations, as in many crisis situations, Nigerian women and children have carried the burden of their men's folly, whilst not participating in the decision to engage in it in the first place. Because women play a secondary role and are not involved in decision making in most communities, they are not consulted on why these decisions are made but find themselves carried along on the waves of a situation they neither understand nor agree with. In the heat of these situations, the warring factions are deaf to all entreaties. It is when they have burnt themselves out that they are forced to seek solutions elsewhere. It is then that women sometimes manage to be listened to.

In the Ife-Modakeke crisis for example, women have not been left out. They have been drawn in by the situation to support their men, even against their better judgment. Refusal to do so would result in death. So women actively participate as combatants, or carry out supportive activities as cooking for the warriors, nursing them or encouraging them. Women have even been known to lead the warriors, armed with charms, to the battle area.

The long co-existence of both communities has led to intermarriages between them, with children of mixed parentage. But in times of war, loyalties sometimes become dictated by various considerations. There are occasions when women had acted as traitors betraying their husbands, while in some instances such marriages have influenced the stance of their spouses on issues. The marriages of some of the Ife Obas to Modakeke women contributed to the positions taken by such Obas in crisis situations and to the claims of the offspring of such marriages to equal rights as the Ifes.

There has not been much effort by the women of these two communities at resolving this conflict. The extremely bitter and bloody nature of this crisis has cowed the women's urge to intervene. Apart from prayer intercessions, and individually prevailing upon their husbands to give peace a chance, there is not much else they have done. Only in very recent times has there been a formal and deliberate effort by Nigerian women's groups and networks to address this conflict. Women's NGOs in Nigeria are currently getting more and more involved in conflict resolution, given the dimensions conflicts have taken and the potentially crippling effects on society. There have been visits by groups like FIDA-Nigeria (International Federation of Women Lawyers), National Council of Women Societies and eminent women leaders. These interventions have been for advocacy visits to the leaders, taking food and clothing to the displaced people and conflict resolution training for the youth. They have also worked with international humanitarian organizations to distribute food and clothing and rehabilitate the affected people.

### **Motivation for intervention**

The post Beijing euphoria brought a heightened wave of activism amongst Nigerian women towards women's empowerment. More equitable participation in governance has been the clarion call. Women have also been able to draw a link between equitable representation and peace and good governance. This has led to more determined involvement of women in conflict resolution, mediation and prevention.

Increasingly, is the realisation that women bear the burden of crisis and as such are entitled, and indeed duty bound, to be involved in its resolution and committed to peace keeping.

### **Various stages of conflict and the strategies developed and used by women at each stage : lessons learnt**

#### **The "Women's War" of 1929**

In the middle of British colonial rule in Nigeria, and long before the advent of modern day activism, women in the eastern part of the country had set an agenda of action for themselves.

Acting on a rumour of proposed taxation of women and increased taxation of the men, Ibo and Ibibio women mobilized themselves to resist what they believed would bring undue hardship to their families. They started by making overtures to their men to meet with the colonial masters and present the women's positions on the

issue. This failed because the men did not want to lose their newly gained political recognition. (Today, this position has not changed. Women's needs are always considered last. Men are still quick to sacrifice women's needs and rights to protect other gains they believe to be more important).

The women then reached out to other women in the region as far as was possible, given the traditional communication systems then available to them, to mobilize support for a plan to demonstrate against the impending action. They used market fora, passing messages from one market to the other, covering the entire area that was then Eastern Nigeria. They were therefore able to galvanize a mass action of women protesters for a simultaneous action that took the colonial masters by surprise.

The action assumed international dimensions however, because of the event which happened at Opobo (in the Niger Delta region), where the security agents of the District Officer opened fire on the women protesters, killing some of them. The women had no choice but to fight back in order to defend themselves.

A Commission of Inquiry was set up to investigate the causes of the conflict and eventually the proposed taxation was cancelled.

Nigeria, like most of the continent, is a very patriarchal society. Male domination, and women's secondary role in society are the norms. Therefore in most events, it is usual for women to first take their concerns to the men to address. But failing this, the women had to look inwards for resources to address their needs. This action was possible in the eastern region of Nigeria because of the existence of strong traditional women's groups, which over generations exercised powerful roles in enforcing discipline and keeping peace in their communities.

### **The Abiriba Crisis**

A recent incident, which happened in Abiriba, in the Eastern part of Nigeria, reinforces the fact that there is an innate strength in women to be resolute and creative in the face of difficulty and succeed, even where men had failed. There had been continuous strife in town arising from communal disputes and personality clashes among the elders. This led to wanton destruction of lives and property. Various peace moves were made by the government and interested parties, but to no avail. After about two years, the women decided to intervene. They led advocacy teams to the warring factions, pleading for peace, but still to no avail. They then embarked on their traditional method. The queen mother initiated a secret mission. She called out the women to leave their houses on the given date and congregate at an agreed place. Together, the entire population of women in the town marched out to the state capital: a distance that took them the whole day. They camped in front of the governor's office and refused to return until there was peace in the town. It worked.

### **Women and the Sharia Issue**

One conflict situation that has almost broken the ranks of women and indeed questioned the continuous coexistence of the country, has been the conflict arising from the introduction of the Sharia in some states of the northern part of Nigeria. In this instance Moslem women in Nigeria have been called upon to make a choice that they find difficult to do. On the one hand the northern Moslem women recognize the fact that the indiscriminate implementation of the Sharia law will erode their Constitutional rights, but on the other hand, they think that disallowing it is an infringement of their Constitutional right of freedom of worship. The Christian women have not been able to come to terms with this paradox and feel that their Moslem sisters are betraying the struggle for women's empowerment by not coming

out to condemn Sharia, as being inimical to women's empowerment. Nigerian women are yet to find that common ground on which to address this issue. One thing that is clear in all this is that religion and culture play a vital, indeed critical, role in deciding the comfort level and defining the ambience for discussion and the extent to which women are ready to go in the quest for women's empowerment. Women's groups have been involved in the peace process following the Sharia crisis: in the North where the crisis took place, the women's groups have been using mediation strategies, targeting the religious leaders and youth to preach peace and tolerance.

In the East where most of the victims came from, the women's groups are directing their intervention at the mothers to entreat their sons against repercussions, which was the result of the killings and destruction in the North.

### **Strategies which could help remove obstacles**

The Beijing Platform of Action as part of its preamble states thus : "We are convinced that ... women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace "This is a clear recognition that empowerment is a prerequisite for peace. If women are empowered, they can preach and legislate peace and influence policies towards peace. But their strength, which is in their numbers, can only be activated in unity.

There is the need therefore, for women to unite and coalesce for peace. Examples examined above clearly show what concerted efforts can be achieved. Individually, women can achieve little, but collectively they multiply this achievement. This is why Nigerian women have been pushing for the affirmative positions and also pushing for the mainstreaming of gender into the Nigerian Constitution to protect the rights of women.

Women should recognise the commonality of their plight, and in all situations keep this at the forefront of their considerations. Women's agendas should not highlight ethnic, religious, cultural or political differences; but should be building bridges across those differences in order to reach the common goal.

What then should be our plan of action – in the short term and in the long term? My proposition is that in the short term, women should be more involved and concerned about conflict situations, recognizing the immense effect they can have on society. That we take the lead in the reconciliation, fence-mending and bridge-building that has to be embarked upon in all instances. Women need to take the lead in calling for dialogue towards compromise. Women need to divorce themselves from "men's fights", recognizing that their stakes are different and more fundamental than men's.

In the long term, the action plan should include the formation of more coalitions of women towards peace. All women's NGOs need re-prioritize and push peace-building and conflict prevention, management and resolution to the top of their agenda. In this respect more emphasis must be placed on the empowerment of women. The government should be impressed upon to enact the letters of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to provide an environment of peace conducive for development and equality between men and women. It should include designing programmes that would educate women in the ways that their struggle is very different from the men's. That wherever, and whatever station of life women find themselves in, their

plights are similar, and this basis of similarity should supercede all other considerations.

Women's intervention efforts at conflict resolution and peace building in modern day Nigeria have not been proactive. Most times they have been for mere cosmetic effects. There is need for a more defined role and for women to be more involved in the management and resolution of conflict in Nigeria, and in peacekeeping. This they can do if they are committed to the cause and to finding strategies towards better results. Traditional methods of intervention in conflict resolution seem to have been ignored. In days of old, women were very effective in keeping order in the communities. Traditional women institutions in many of the societies had ways of doing this. Women had instruments of order, like the palm frond, the elephant tusk and other traditional paraphernalia, with cultural connotations, with which they imposed discipline. Women have been known to strip naked and march through the streets of the community, a taboo that had very serious consequences on the offenders. These means were used effectively to stop any unacceptable behavior of men. African women need to re-examine these methods and adjust them, where necessary, for use. There is therefore a need to look inwards to traditional and alternative conflict resolution strategies to address the current conflict situation in Nigeria and in the continent. African governments should empower their women to be more fully involved in all spheres of governance.

## **Contexte d'émergence d'un mouvement des femmes pour la paix en Casamance**

### **Seynabou Male-Cissé (ACAPES -Ziguinchor)**

Cette rencontre sur «la Transformation des conflits en Afrique» nous donne l'occasion d'échanger des expériences avec d'autres activistes comme nous et des chercheuses engagées dans ce domaine.

Notre organisation ACAPES-Ziguinchor, créée en 1977, travaille au mieux-être des populations, les plus démunies de la région du sud du Sénégal, la Casamance naturelle. Elle intervient dans les domaines de l'éducation, de l'accompagnement des populations dans diverses activités (santé communautaire, micro-crédit, formation). Les activités des femmes sont conduites par la Commission Femmes et Développement (CFD) qui dispose en son sein d'un groupe d'études et de recherches.

Tirant les enseignements de l'impact de la crise qui sévit dans cette région depuis 18 ans, la CFD est arrivée à la conclusion suivante: «La crise qui sévit dans la région ralentit considérablement les possibilités de promotion des femmes». De cette conclusion est née l'idée de revendiquer le droit pour les femmes d'être impliquées dans la recherche de solutions au conflit qui meurtrit le Sénégal depuis 1982. Mais pour une meilleure clarté du débat, avant d'exposer notre démarche et les perspectives d'actions que nous entrevoyons pour les femmes, nous allons procéder à un bref rappel du contexte géo-humain et de la genèse du conflit. Ensuite, nous examinerons toujours brièvement les réactions des femmes face à la crise armée en Casamance.

### **Le contexte géo-humain et la genèse du conflit**

#### **Présentation géo-humaine**

Le Sénégal, petit pays d'Afrique occidentale (200 000 km<sup>2</sup>, 8 millions d'habitants) présente des particularités :

- il est séparé de sa partie sud, la Casamance, par la République de Gambie
- Cette partie sud peut être considérée comme un cadre géo-humain relativement différent du reste du pays et assez proche des pays limitrophes : Guinée Bissau, Guinée, Gambie, par son climat, son peuplement et en partie par son histoire.

La Casamance naturelle, scindée aujourd'hui en deux régions, celles de Ziguinchor et de Kolda, est limitée à l'ouest par l'Océan Atlantique, au nord par la Gambie, au sud par la Guinée Bissau et à l'est par la région de Tambacounda.

Sa partie ouest dite Casamance maritime ou Basse Casamance, ou encore région de Ziguinchor est caractérisée par un climat humide dit sub-guinéen. Le relief de bas plateaux est fortement entaillé par un réseau hydrographique très dense, organisé autour du fleuve Casamance avec de nombreux petits cours d'eau, appelés «bolongs ». C'est le domaine d'une végétation dense, toujours verte. En allant vers l'est, l'on note un assèchement progressif. Cette originalité physique se double d'un particularisme ethnico-culturel. En effet, même si on peut considérer la Casamance comme un carrefour de peuples et d'ethnies, la Basse Casamance elle, est profondément marquée par l'ethnie Diola qui constitue la majorité de la population.

Si nous convoquons l'Histoire, nous pouvons retenir qu'en 1912, la conquête de cette région est presque terminée. A cette date, elle est divisée en trois cercles et dépend du gouverneur général du Sénégal. Le témoignage de l'ancien colonisateur, la France, par la voix de Jacques CHARPY (1993), intègre la Casamance dans l'ancienne colonie française du Sénégal. Nous noterons cependant que la zone de Ziguinchor n'a été acquise à la France qu'en 1886 après les accords de 1882, avec le Portugal, ancien «propriétaire ».

## Génèse et évolution du conflit

Les particularités physiques, humaines et culturelles, ont donné aux populations, particulièrement aux Diola, le sentiment de constituer une autre nation. Les grandes sécheresses de la fin des années 70 et début 80, la distribution anarchique des terres, la dégradation des conditions de vies, les différenciations socio-culturelles accentuées entre autochtones et populations venues du nord du Sénégal, la négation des cultures locales par les médias nationaux, aboutissent à l'éclatement du conflit en décembre 1982. Des éléments armés se réclamant d'un Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC), exigent l'indépendance de la Casamance.

- La première manifestation : un groupe d'hommes précédés de femmes, armés de flèches et d'arcs, de fusils de traite sortent des bois de la périphérie de Ziguinchor. La répression s'abat, des hommes sont tués, blessés. Nombre de personnes, dont des femmes sont arrêtées. C'était le 26 décembre 1982.

- 1983 : quatre gendarmes sont tués à Diabir dans les bois situés à quelques kilomètres de Ziguinchor où se réunissent des hommes et des femmes du Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance.

- De 1983 à 1990 : c'est une situation de ni-paix ni-guerre, ponctuée de coups d'éclats et d'affrontements sporadiques.

- Juin 1991 : signature des accords de Cachéu garantis par la Guinée Bissau. Élargissement de 350 personnes, vote d'une loi d'amnistie. Mais la paix ne s'installe pas pour autant.

- 1993 : signature des accords de cessez-le feu à Ziguinchor. Rompus après le témoignage de CHARPY, rejeté par le MFDC.

- 1995 : 3 décembre, appel de l'Abbé Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, Secrétaire Général du MFDC chef du mouvement indépendantiste. Des négociations sont prévues le 8 avril 1996 mais des tergiversations de plusieurs ordres entraînent leur échec avant même le début du dialogue. C'est alors l'impasse. L'option militaire est

reprise. Les soldats de l'armée sénégalaise ferment tous les couloirs d'accès à Ziguinchor. Les combattants du Maquis s'installent aux portes de Ziguinchor à Madina Mancagne. L'armée cherche à les en déloger et 25 soldats d'élite sont tués.

- Août 1997 : l'horreur s'installe avec la pose des mines anti-char et anti-personnel. Le MFDC est indexé. Les victimes se comptent par centaines. Les réactions pour la paix se multiplient, qui aboutissent à la poignée de mains historique entre le Président de la République de l'époque Abdou Diouf et le Secrétaire Général du MFDC l'abbé Augustin Diamacoune Senghor.

Les 26, 27 et 28 décembre 1999, des négociations «Gouvernement du Sénégal/MFDC», se déroulent à Banjul (Gambie). Les deux parties réaffirment leur option pour la paix et reconduisent le cessez le feu de 1993.

- janvier 2000, à Ziguinchor, la Mission des Observateurs en Casamance pour la Sur-veillance des Accords de Paix (MOCAP), est mise en place symboliquement devant le Ministre gambien des Affaires Étrangères, le Général Ansoumana Mané de Guinée Bissau, le Général Lamine Cissé, Ministre de l'Intérieur d'alors, représentant le Gouvernement du Sénégal, l'Abbé Diamacoune Senghor, Secrétaire Général du MFDC et des représentants de la société civile.

Les élections en Guinée Bissau et au Sénégal ont provoqué une suspension du processus de rencontres. Il faut noter que la violence s'est de nouveau installée au sud, en dépit des déclarations de bonne volonté du Secrétaire Général du MFDC et du nouveau chef de l'Etat.

Telle est la situation actuelle. On peut s'interroger alors sur ce que les femmes en particulier, ont fait jusque là.

## **Les femmes et la crise armée en Casamance**

Il faut d'abord rappeler que les femmes jouent un rôle important et ont une place centrale dans les sociétés casamançaises, notamment celles de la Basse Casamance.

Sur le plan économique, principales productrices, elles nourrissent la famille. Elles sont qualifiées «d'infatigables productrices ». Dans bon nombre d'institutions villageoises, la parole de la femme n'est pas considérée comme mineure. Dans les assemblées mixtes (lors des jugements collectifs par exemple) comme dans leur propre patrilignage, elles ont autant de poids que les hommes dans la discussion. Dans la société Diola, plutôt horizontale, seule la valeur intrinsèque de l'individu, homme ou femme était importante.

Ainsi une grande partie des fonctions spirituelles revenait aux femmes, qui avaient su convaincre leurs concitoyens de leurs pouvoirs surnaturels. En cas de danger dans la société, de menaces sur le groupe (épidémies, conflits), les femmes s'arrogent certaines prérogatives du temporel. Par exemple en période de conflits, les femmes (qui signalons-le, préparent spirituellement les combattants) peuvent s'interposer entre les belligérants pour exiger la paix. C'est alors l'arrêt de combats car personne n'a le droit de les blesser ou de porter la main sur elles (même s'il s'agit de femmes de l'adversaire).

Plusieurs paramètres semblent intervenir dans la dynamique de mobilisation collective des femmes :

- le degré de gravité du problème ;
- la mise en cause des fondements et des valeurs essentielles du groupe ;
- La nécessité de pallier une défaillance des acteurs (hommes) ou d'autres mécanismes traditionnels de résolution des conflits.

Dans le cadre d'un conflit, les femmes ne semblent percevoir leur intervention comme légitime que lorsque celle-ci est d'ordre social et non politique. Leur mobilisation est de nature essentiellement conservatrice : elle a pour but la survie du

groupe et le maintien de sa cohésion et ne s'est jamais accompagnée jusque là d'une revendication concernant le statut de la femme dans la société. Cette intervention est d'ailleurs limitée dans le temps et recourt à des formes d'expression traditionnelles (danses, fétiches, marches, appel à la virilité des hommes).

Si on se réfère à l'histoire coloniale et même à l'histoire récente (grève des élèves de Ziguinchor en 1980), l'action des femmes a été déterminante dans la résolution de certains conflits mais leur mobilisation a été peu visible durant ce conflit.

Cependant, les femmes du Sénégal en général et de la Casamance en particulier, ont tout de même mené des activités visant à ramener la paix à partir de leurs organisations « modernes » et des organisations mixtes. Les mouvements pour la paix se sont multipliés après 1990.

- Mars 1993 : les femmes se mobilisent et clament leur volonté de voir la paix restaurée lors de la marche organisée par les associations des jeunes (ASC) de Ziguinchor.

-1993 : l'Association «Yeewu-Yewwi » basée à Dakar, initie un mouvement pour la Paix (MOFEPAC) dont une marche de toutes les femmes à Dakar. Mais cette marche sera inter-dite et les autres activités prévues ne se réaliseront pas.

-1995 : le Festival des origines organisé par l'Association culturelle Agouene et Diambogne (ACAD) rassemble des femmes diola et les femmes sérère du Sine pour la recherche de la paix.

-1996 : l'Organisation Nationale des Droits de l'Homme (ONDH) organise un rassemblement à la place Jean Paul II. Les femmes massivement représentées, sont intervenues pour demander l'arrêt des hostilités.

-1997 : avant l'enterrement des soldats tués à Madina Mancagne, des femmes gardiennes des fétiches dans le Bignona rallient la gouvernance de Ziguinchor, font des déclarations à la presse pour qu'on arrête cette guerre. Les épouses des militaires manifestent dans beaucoup de villes du Sénégal (Tambacounda, Thiès, Kolda...) à la mort de 25 soldats et exigent le retour de leurs maris du front.

- Les femmes répondent massivement à l'appel de l'Évêque et de l'Imam de Ziguinchor pour une marche à travers la ville et des prières pour la paix et les victimes de mines.

- La Fédération des Groupements de Promotion Féminine sous la direction de sa présidente, Mme Alimatou Souaré, apporte un soutien moral et matériel aux victimes des mines et aux personnes déplacées.

- Sabelle Diatta, cycliste d'origine casamancaise organise depuis 1998 une randonnée pour la paix Dakar-Ziguinchor.

-1998 : le Consortium des Organisations non Gouvernementales pour le Développement (CONGAD) organise un forum pour la, paix qui a permis la prise en compte de la voix des acteurs de développement à la base, mettant fin à la gestion nombriliste que l'État faisait de cette crise : le CONGAD a permis ainsi de faire de la question casamancaise une question nationale.

## **Perspectives d'actions pour les femmes**

Nous allons pouvoir conclure sur les perspectives d'actions que nous entrevoyons pour les femmes. Le groupe d'études et de recherches de la CFD de ACAPES/Ziguinchor, qui a constaté la marginalisation des femmes, s'est investi depuis octobre 1998 dans la recherche de la paix par l'implication des femmes. En effet, ni du côté de l'État, ni de celui du MFDC, elles n'ont été en aucun moment pleinement associées aux différents cadres de recherche de la paix. Seules trois femmes ont été nommées dans la commission nationale de gestion de la paix. Au niveau régional, elles ne sont ni dans le comité régional, ni dans le comité clérical.

Elles sont certes dans la structure des cadres casamançais mais cette structure a toujours été dirigée par les hommes. Toutes les structures sauf le comité clérical, sont basées à Dakar.

Au niveau régional, les femmes n'avaient pris aucune initiative visant à mettre en place (fédérer) des cadres autonomes de réflexion et d'actions pour la paix.

C'est partant de tout cela, que la CFD de ACAPES/Ziguinchor, par son groupe d'études et de réflexion a entamé des contacts avec les autorités au plus haut niveau de l'État et du MFDC, les organisations de femmes «modernes » et traditionnelles pour les convier à un forum de réflexion sur une appréciation de la situation et dégager des perspectives.

Le Forum des Femmes pour la Paix s'est tenu les 26 et 27 novembre 1999 à l'Alliance Franco-Sénégalaise, grâce à l'appui de la Fondation Friedrich Ebert. Pour la première fois, les organisations traditionnelles, celles regroupant les femmes gardiennes des fétiches et les organisations modernes de femmes (Groupement d'Intérêt économique, Groupement de Promotion féminine, associations) ont communiqué, ont échangé et déterminé les modalités de leur implication.

A l'issue des travaux du Forum, le Comité Régional de Solidarité pour la Paix en Casamance (CRSFPC) est créé et chargé de réaliser le programme d'action élaboré. Ainsi le comité a participé aux assises de Banjul pour les négociations Gouvernement/MFDC. Il a continué un travail de sensibilisation auprès des femmes gardiennes des fétiches. Il a initié différentes rencontres avec l'église, les imams, les autorités de l'État et du MFDC. Le CRSFPC doit mettre en œuvre le programme suivant :

- mettre sur pied un comité national de solidarité des femmes pour la paix en Casamance ;
- élaborer un programme de développement d'une culture de paix et de tolérance
- préparer la tenue de rencontres pour le pardon et la réconciliation;
- travailler à l'intégration et à la responsabilisation des femmes dans toutes les structures et procédures de gestion des conflits;
- impulser un vaste mouvement de retour aux lieux de cultes, particulièrement les fétiches pour des prières et des sacrifices.

Nous pensons qu'en dépit des nouvelles donnees, ce programme reste actuel.

## **The Struggles of Somali Women for Peace**

**Hon. Asha Gelle (Parliamentarian, Puntland, Estate of Somalia)**

### [Geographical description](#)

Somalia lies in the Horn of Africa and has a long coast overlooking the Indian ocean and Gulf of Aden. To its east lies Ethiopia, and to its south lies Kenya. There is no recent and agreed-upon national demographic data for Somalia. In a population census carried out in 1975, Somalis were estimated to number about 8 000 000 people. The old census must today serve as the basis for any intelligent approximation : the population of Somalis (in and outside Somalia) can now be estimated to be about 9-10 000 000 people.

### [Economic status of Somalia before and after the war](#)

The previous military regime which ruled the country for twenty-one years, followed a command socialist economic policy that hampered the dynamics of economic growth. Banks and other financial institutions were nationalized and

managed by the state. Thus conditions were unfavorable for private enterprises and in general the environment was not conducive to free trade and commerce. The national agencies created for purposes such as foreign trade, sat idle. Economic growth fell to negative levels, the credit policy ran out of currency, due to misuse and mismanagement of the public finance.

The government was forced to back away from most of its basic imports and exports, which increased the demand for foreign currency from independent business, the private sector and citizens. The black market further aggravated the value of the Somali shillings, which depreciated sharply. Thus the economy of the country had already switched to an informal one from the 1980s onwards, although the official 'line' was still a state monopoly. The main exports of the country depend on livestock, agriculture products, marine resources, frankincense and skin and hides.

### Post War

During the post-war period, Somalis enjoy free business: the private sector has seized the opportunity of liberalization of trade and the disappearance of restrictions, and as a result plays an important role in catering to the basic needs of the urban and rural populations. It supplied food staples and other consumer goods and provided a wide range of other activities. The private sector also filled the void left by the government in the delivery of social services and supply of urgently needed drugs. As a result, transport and communication enterprise have developed to unanticipated levels.

### Effects of the war on the economy

A harmful war economy has developed and is running parallel to the legal trade of arms, charcoal exportation and wildlife. Expired drugs and food (with the labels changed) are being sold on the black market. Fishing piracy is also on the increase. The natural resource base is being destroyed at a devastating speed. The dumping of toxic materials and wastes by unauthorized vessels, is continuously reported along the coasts. Millions in foreign currency are also spent on khat importation. There is no regulation or enforcement by any authority to curb this devastating economy of war.

### The Role of Somali Women in changing times

The Somali women are greater in number than Somali men, but it is the men who have the power in making decisions for the whole community. Because of age-old Somali social norms and traditions, women have no direct role in the decision making process. Nevertheless, Somali women have always played an important but indirect role in the affairs of the nation, especially when the situation becomes difficult. Their sacrifices throughout generations are well recorded. The Somali women played an unforgettable role in the struggle for independence and they sacrificed a great deal in terms of life and property. They were the vanguard for the awakening of political consciousness of the masses for the national struggle. However, owing to their low level of education, women were excluded from the national politics and the decision-making process of the country after independence. Not a single woman was a member of parliament, councils of the municipalities or in the administrative machinery. Women's role in political parties during the election campaigns was uniquely as supporters and mobilizers. After the first few years of independence, the

educational level of women started to improve slowly but steadily. Few women joined the central government workforce.

Between 1969 to 1990, which was the period of military dictatorship, a certain number of women participated in the government and politics. Even then, only one woman was a member of the central committee of the ruling party, two were members of the People's Assembly and two were deputy ministers for some time. Some women also held positions of heads of departments and deans of colleges. They also participated in the judiciary organs, local governments, and other governmental institutions but with limited power.

During the civil war, two administrations were set up in Somalia : Somalia land (which announced a self-styled government) and Puntland State of Somalia. Up until today, women have held no positions in the central committees of the two administrations, apart from five women parliamentarians in Puntland Somalia. Likewise with the other various political factions currently operating in the country: women are not in the administrations. Women however, play a key political role in mobilizing, financing, linking information and sometimes fighting with their respective clans.

In another respect, women played an important role as peacemakers. Because of their adaptability and resourcefulness, women went to great lengths to ensure that their families were fed and many persevered despite this heavy burden and made great sacrifices. However, while women have broken down considerable barriers to achieve this role, they still face many other obstacles: first, the lack of financial assets, capital, access to credit, as well as experience required to engage in alternative or formal economic activities. Secondly, women who are engaged in an economic activity do this in addition to their work within the household. Many women state that while it is important that they work outside the family, their efforts are not appreciated and there is also no encouragement or physical assistance from spouses at home or in business. This double burden falls on women with serious health consequences.

### **Somali women in a struggle for their human rights**

During the civil war, Somali society experienced difficult circumstances including chaos, insecurity and instability, due to a lack of law and order. In Somalia we do not intend to dwell on the negative consequences caused by the civil war. These are issues that should be discussed in detail in a separate forum. We prefer to focus on how women behaved in these particular circumstances. Effectively, neither men or women experienced their basic rights. However, Somali women face the double violation of their human rights : on the one hand they are victims of abuses and violations inflicted upon them by men. On the other hand, both culture and tradition protect, defend and justify society-based violations and abuses against women, which is even more dangerous.

It is very oppressive and restrictive for Somali women to be victims of double violations and abuses. For that reason, Somali women's NGOs and women activists organized themselves under umbrella organizations throughout the country, to coordinate their efforts towards the empowerment of women. These umbrellas/networks are united and have one goal, which is the empowerment of Somali women. The active Somali networks are Wawa (We Are Women Activists) based in Bossaso, Puntland, Nagaad, Hargaysa, Somaliland ; and COGWO, which is based in Mogadishu.

## **Motivations behind Somali women's activism for peace**

The following are the issues that inspire us to advocate for peace :

- Continuous killings of civilians, children, aged and disabled persons.
- Displacement
- Rape, abuse and killing of young girls and women
- The economic crisis women are faced with
- Lack of education
- Poor health
- Drug addiction among young Somali boys
- Women-headed households existing in difficult circumstances
- Looting and pollution of Somali natural resources
- Lack of market for Somali livestock and marine resources
- Poverty and insecurity
- Ambitious warlords.

## **Examples of Women's Involvement in Conflict Resolution**

### **Case study**

In this presentation I would like to mention two major efforts where women participated in the successful resolution of conflicts. The two cases are as follows :

#### **Peace agreement of Mudug Region**

Mudug region is one of the biggest regions of Somalia and this is where the most severe civil war broke out. The capital town of the region, which is called Galkacyo, has fallen into different hands of warring factions over the period of a couple of months. Thousands of civilians lost their lives during the civil conflict and Galkacyo became a battlefield for a number of years. Finally representatives of the warring sides signed a peace agreement in Mogadishu in July 1993. This agreement ended the large scale, open warfare in Mudug region and succeeded in bringing a truce that still prevails there, despite frequent skirmishes, opportunistic acts of banditry by independent militias, and occasional politically-motivated violence. This fragile peace was sustained by the recognition from ordinary people in the region of the need for peace and stability. There was also a common interest in maintaining a secure environment for the vital «Transclan » trade that links the Mudug region to the rest of Somalia and Ethiopia.

#### **Role of Women**

Women from different districts of the region (from the two warring clans) organized to come together and discuss the negative images of the war. They realized that women are the most vulnerable victims of war, who lose their loved ones (husbands, sons, brothers, uncles, friends, relatives) and then become bread winners. After these discussions, women from different warring clans agreed to unite together.

Radio Galkacyo was established in July 1993. The women contacted and used the radio for regular peace programs. The radio served as an important channel of communication between the parties in conflict and played an equally vital role in maintaining the fragile peace in Mudug. Apart from that, women also mobilized the traditional elders and informal committees to deal with the regular violations that threatened the peace agreement by alerting the peaceful majority on both sides. Traditional methods of conflict management are ideal for resolving nomadic conflicts arising from competition for access to scarce resources of pasture and water.

## **Peace Education**

Women have also participated in resolving conflicts through peace education within the community. They organize seminars and informal discussion meetings on peace and reconciliation. The approaches employed in promoting peace education are :

- a) encouraging women, girls and youth to talk about their experience during periods of conflicts in open discussion,
- b) highlighting the effect of the war on their lives : economic, social, physiological, emotional, the loss of loved ones, friends and the loss of properties,
- c) emphasizing the importance of statehood and government versus the clanhood system,
- d) describing the effects of being refugees and the dispersion of family members in many countries.

From the analysis of the pros and cons, we emphasize the importance of peaceful coexistence of different clans and tribes. As comparative analysis, our program for peace education highlights how many African ethnic groups live in one country and yet manage to live together peacefully. We base our arguments on religious teachings and the prophet's sayings, as moral directives and guiding principles to reject hatred and repudiate violence among brothers and sisters of humankind.

## **Brief Description Concerning the Nature of War in Somalia**

### **The wars in Somalia have followed different stages :**

1. Anti-Dictatorship, started 1978 -continuing now
2. Clanism -failed
3. Grouping (Alliances)-failed
4. Who possesses more militarily power -failed
5. Economic interests war -continuing now

### **Those Who Want Peace and Stability in Somalia Today**

1. The businessmen who were financing the war but failed to make money
2. Educators who were planning the procedures and techniques of the war
3. The women who are mobilising, financing, linking information, taking care of the wounded and sometimes fighting
4. The clan chiefs who are ordering the militias and asking them to restore their dignity
5. Young children, who lost out on education for the last ten years

### **Those Who Don't Want Peace and Stability in Somalia Today**

1. Warlords who have aspirations to be leaders (first man).
2. Militias who mobilised and who have tasted urban life and see it as their right.
3. Hijackers who have seized national properties (ships, factories, fruit farms) and are earning billions of dollars.
4. War criminals who took thousands of lives and burned civilian properties.
5. Brokers (including warlords)who signed contracts with international companies that take marine resources and dump toxic materials.
6. Some business people who illegally export national cultural artefacts, charcoal, wildlife, female animals and who illegally import expired food and drugs, while enjoying unregulated business with the absence of restrictions and taxation.
7. Illiterate, immoral and/or retired leaders who have militia and are forcing them to follow their orders.

8. Neighbours and 'internationals' who are benefiting from our resources and properties without restrictions don't want peace. For example, if you watch the sea at night you may wonder at the many lights from different ships -a sinister but beautiful mobile city.

### **The Role of Civil Society in Somalia**

Civil society has no power: there are no resources and the messages they communicate are not interesting enough. The militia are interested in what, they have houses, farms, cars -you can't easily change them with lectures. They need demobilisation and jobs but the international community has failed to address this problem. They act as if Somalia has one religion, one language. The international community tends to follow the wrong road. They consult with groups that do not actually want peace.

I would like to ask my sisters from Africa : what are the motivations of a group of people if they continually follow the wrong road that has failed in the past? What we need is to not call on warlords and other interest groups every time. We need demobilisation for the militia, capacity building trainings and rehabilitation for those who don't want peace. Then stability will come.

## **Femmes, conflits et paix au Congo**

### **Martine Renée GALLOY (Université Marien Ngouabi, Brazzaville, Congo)**

Au Congo, l'évacuation constante du champ civil et parlementaire, et le recours aux armes comme moyen de règlement du contentieux politique, sont fortement inscrits dans les pratiques politiques. En effet, l'histoire du Congo a été ponctuée, de 1959 à 1999, de périodes d'instabilité et de violence politiques déconcertantes dont les plus virulentes et meurtrières sont, sans nul doute, les guerres civiles de "l'ère démocratique", qui ont embrasé le pays, notamment Brazzaville, sa capitale (1).

La genèse et les conséquences socio-économiques, politiques de ces conflits ont fait l'objet de nombreuses études, qui mettent en exergue leurs caractéristiques les plus notoires, notamment les contentieux pré/post électoraux, la privatisation de la sécurité et son corollaire, la création des milices privées (2, 3), les enjeux identitaires et la fragmentation urbaine (4). Cependant, la dimension genre reste désespérément absente de ces analyses. Tout au plus, l'intérêt des auteurs, s'il existe, demeure-t-il très superficiel. Joseph Tonda (5) fait allusion "aux filles à demi vêtues" rencontrées pendant la guerre à Oyo, le fief de Sassou-Nguesso, dans le Nord du pays. Théophile Obeng, (6) quant à lui, se donne bonne conscience en se réfugiant derrière une formule à l'emporte-pièces : "les Congolais et Congolaises ", comme si cette seule énonciation l'exonérait du devoir de relever les violences spécifiques infligées aux femmes, en tant que genre humain.

Cette situation appelle plusieurs interprétations. Il semble, en effet, que dans un contexte global de confusion et de déstructuration sociale, l'attention se focalise plutôt sur les aspects génériques du conflit, c'est-à-dire la "contradiction principale", évacuant ainsi la dimension genre considérée comme étant une "contradiction secondaire". S'agit-il là d'une attitude pudibonde au regard des violences, surtout sexuelles, subies par les femmes pendant les conflits, au point de se complaire dans un silence complice devant des violations aussi flagrantes des droits humains ? La tentation est cependant grande de penser que cette approche s'inscrit incontestablement dans une logique plus pernicieuse, parfois inconsciente, d'occultation des questions féminines, qui est en fait le reflet des rapports sociaux de genre en temps de paix. Ce point de vue est d'ailleurs corroboré par l'article de

Marie-Odile Pambou (7) qui établit une corrélation entre le viol physique des femmes et leur instrumentalisation dans le domaine politique. Régine Oboa montre, à travers son itinéraire personnel, comment des réfugiées congolaises tentent de reconstruire un espace de vie dans un camp de réfugiés dans la banlieue de Kinshasa (8).

Cet article se propose d'examiner, à partir de notre expérience personnelle, la manière dont les femmes vivent la guerre, leurs stratégies de survie, leur contribution à la résolution des conflits, les diverses formes d'expression utilisées, quelles en sont les forces et les faiblesses et enfin quelle participation peut-on attendre des femmes pour une paix durable au Congo.

## **Femmes et conflits armés**

L'intérêt de ce thème ne réside pas dans une simple description des conséquences des conflits sur les femmes. Il s'agit plutôt d'une lecture plus fine qui consiste à se départir de la vision angélique et manichéenne habituelle, qui pose d'emblée toutes les femmes en victimes des conflits armés, tandis que les hommes sont l'apanage de la cruauté et la barbarie.

L'exemple congolais montre, à ce sujet, que les femmes vivent les situations de conflit armé de manière contrastée, selon leur appartenance de classe, même si en tant que genre humain, elles sont susceptibles de subir le même type de violence. Il ressort également qu'un lien avec un membre, puissant ou non, du groupe dominant suffit à exonérer les femmes concernées des exactions infligées à d'autres femmes de même condition sociale.

Ainsi donc, on distingue deux types de situations. On distingue des femmes, minoritaires, qui tout en étant susceptibles de souffrir des affres de la guerre, sont conjoncturellement dans une position où elles peuvent influencer sur les événements, mais elles privilégient les intérêts du groupe auquel elles appartiennent, tout en sauvegardant les leurs. Les femmes victimes sont les plus nombreuses.

## **Intérêts de classe vs conscience de genre**

Dans un rapport consacré aux femmes et la guerre (9), Amnesty International écrivait, à propos du Rwanda, qu'"Il n'y avait pas que des hommes parmi les bouchers. Des femmes furent, elles aussi, gagnées par la folie collective. D'autres femmes, qui n'avaient pas participé aux décisions et qui n'étaient pas responsables de cruautés, furent torturées et tuées" (10). Cette assertion pourrait s'appliquer également au Congo. Aussi bien en 1959, qu'en 1993, 1997 et en 1998, s'il est vrai que leur représentation dans les sphères de décision était quasi nulle, les femmes liées aux appareils politiques se sont illustrées par leur mutisme et leur soutien tacite ou implicite de la violence.

## **Les femmes de pouvoir**

Les femmes de pouvoir sont impliquées dans les sphères de décision de l'État ou des partis politiques au pouvoir, ou de l'opposition. La guerre favorise l'émergence de réseaux de redistribution, qui se nourrissent du contexte sécuritaire, donc du dérèglement de l'appareil d'État et de la déstructuration de la société, et dont les femmes ne sont pas exclues. Dans ce contexte leurs comportements, contrairement aux idées reçues, abolissent le sacro-saint mythe du pacifisme naturel des femmes, selon lequel parce qu'elles donnent la vie, les femmes sauraient mieux que les hommes en apprécier la valeur. En réalité, ces comportements sont plutôt dictés par des intérêts de classe. En effet, l'on a observé que les femmes de pouvoir s'évertuent à conserver leur statut pour se maintenir dans les réseaux d'alliances patrimoniaux et de captation de prébendes au profit de leurs clan et famille. Ce qui

justifie le refus de dénoncer la guerre et de s'en désolidariser, ce dans le double souci de garder leur position au sein du groupe dominant et de conserver ainsi leurs privilèges. Un exemple des plus notoires, en Afrique, est certainement celui du Rwanda en 1994, où l'épouse du chef de l'État, Mme Habyarimana, était le chef de file de l'Akazu, le groupe des extrémistes conservateurs, et elle a, à ce titre, pris une part active dans l'organisation du génocide.

Au Congo, le conflit de 1993 a été révélateur de ce type d'enjeux et pratiques. En effet, c'est à une femme membre de la "nomenklatura", qu'était dévolue la charge de ravitailler les milices du pouvoir en denrées alimentaires, obéissant ainsi à la sempiternelle division du travail. Cette fonction, quoique le prolongement des tâches domestiques, lui a permis tout de même d'accéder au réseau de redistribution des prébendes et d'accumuler ainsi un important pactole. Dans le même ordre d'idées, en 1997 le directeur de Cabinet du président congolais, Pascal Lissouba, et de surcroît la présidente d'une puissante association féminine, est une femme. L'on aurait pu attendre d'elle une démarcation vis-à-vis de toute politique belliciste. Cependant, des documents confidentiels publiés dans "Libération" fournissent la preuve de son implication dans l'achat d'armes de guerre et le recrutement de mercenaires, au nom des intérêts supérieurs du clan. On pourrait citer à l'envi des exemples qui montrent à suffisance la primauté des intérêts de classe sur la conscience de genre, ce qui pose avec acuité la nécessité de la construction d'une véritable conscience féministe et d'une nouvelle citoyenneté.

### **Les épouses des dignitaires**

Il existe très peu d'études sur cette catégorie de femmes (11). Au Congo, ces femmes arrivées sur le devant de la scène à la faveur d'un lien matrimonial, s'immiscent de plus en plus, en sourdine parfois, dans le jeu politique. Leur activisme, déjà prépondérant pendant la période monopartite, au sein de la section féminine du parti, s'est adapté à la nouvelle donne politique. En effet, à la faveur de la "démocratisation" et la liberté d'association au début des années 1990, la plupart des épouses de dignitaires, notamment des membres du Gouvernement et des responsables des partis, ont créé des fondations et des associations. Elles s'investissent notamment dans le domaine social afin d'aider les déshérités, les femmes, les enfants de la rue et tous les exclus, ce en se substituant souvent aux mécanismes réglementaires de pouvoir. Cependant, leur immixtion dans la vie politique n'a souvent pour motivation réelle que de constituer un véritable "vivier électoral" (12), surtout féminin, dans le but de soutenir leurs époux. En atteste l'activisme exacerbé dont elles font montre à l'approche d'élections, en multipliant des dons à un électorat savamment sélectionné, comme pour faire oublier des bilans souvent très négatifs, particulièrement dans des domaines tels que la lutte contre la pauvreté et les inégalités sociales, les droits des femmes et la protection de l'enfance. En outre, en se vautrant dans la logique de l'ethnicité, elles s'interdisent le rôle fédérateur qu'elles voudraient assumer au niveau national. De même qu'elles sont incapables de jouer un rôle modérateur auprès de leurs époux, dans la mesure où elles s'enferment dans une démarche partisane et exempte de toute autonomie.

Quant aux Premières dames, si leur action a favorisé "la mise en place d'une diplomatie parallèle" entre elles, celle-ci se "caractérise surtout par la solidarité qui les lie les unes aux autres et qui prend tout son sens dans un contexte politique violent" (13). Cependant, cette solidarité ne se manifeste qu'au niveau individuel par le droit d'asile ou d'accueil à des épouses de chefs en difficulté. Or, leur action aurait été plus rémunératrice, si elle s'inscrivait dans une dimension nationale, notamment par la dénonciation de la violence et en exerçant des pressions sur leurs époux.

### **Les courtisanes**

En 1997, grâce aux réseaux de redistribution, la maîtresse d'un Général d'armée a vu sa vie se transformer en conte de fées pendant la guerre. En effet, alors que, comme dans le conte de Bernard Dadié (14), le dénuement et la disette frappent sa communauté, cette femme vit dans un luxe ostentatoire et dans l'opulence qui se traduisent par l'acquisition de biens inaccessibles en période de guerre, la construction d'une villa et l'achat d'une voiture. Cependant, une telle position est tout à fait précaire car un basculement du rapport de forces replace cette catégorie de femmes dans une situation très vulnérable, dans la mesure où leur statut, symbolisant les forces déchues, en fait des cibles tout à fait privilégiées de la vindicte populaire.

### **Les mères des miliciens**

Aussi paradoxal que cela puisse paraître, les mères des miliciens ont tiré profit du "butin de guerre" rapporté par leurs fils, produit du pillage systématique en vigueur, et ce sans le moindre scrupule. Dans certaines familles, les jeunes étaient encouragés à s'enrôler dans les milices pour "faire comme les autres", afin de ramener des biens de consommation à la maison, tandis que certaines mères regrettaient de ne point avoir de fils pour accéder, elles aussi, au butin de guerre. Ces comportements, nul doute imputables à la précarité ambiante, sont tout de même symptomatiques d'un profond malaise social qui pousse à l'incivisme. Des signes précurseurs en étaient déjà perceptibles avant la guerre de 1997 par exemple, à Brazzaville, lors du décollage manqué d'un avion des Lignes aériennes angolaises, l'on a pu assister au pillage effréné, où les blessés et les morts étaient dépouillés et l'aéronef dépecé par les riverains. Comment expliquer, au-delà de la misère, l'abdication de toute conscience civique ?

### **Les femmes victimes**

L'état de la recherche conjugué à l'absence de statistiques fiables ne permettent pas encore de maîtriser cette question dans ses moindres contours. Néanmoins des témoignages recueillis par des journalistes et des associations féminines et des associations des droits de l'homme (15) sur les violences spécifiques subies par les femmes, donnent la mesure de cette tragédie.

### **Du corps de la femme comme métaphore du champ de bataille**

En mars 1993, à l'occasion de la Journée internationale de la femme, Boutros Boutros Ghali, alors Secrétaire Général de l'Organisation des Nations Unies, déclarait : "Si l'on a considérablement progressé dans la formulation et la réalisation des droits de la femme dans nombre de pays, dans d'autres la barbarie a ressurgi. La violence sexuelle systématique contre les femmes a, dans certains cas, servi d'arme de guerre pour dégrader et humilier des populations entières. Le viol est le crime le plus abject contre les femmes ; le viol systématique est une abomination" (16).

Selon Amnesty International, "de nombreuses femmes sont en étau entre le gouvernement de leur pays et l'opposition armée, qui utilisent l'un comme l'autre la violence pour parvenir à leurs fins. Enlèvements, torture, exécutions sommaires : pour les victimes, l'identité des auteurs ne change rien, car la douleur et la souffrance restent les mêmes. Aux quatre coins du monde, des groupes d'opposition armée se livrent aux pires exactions contre des innocents et les femmes ne sont pas épargnées" (17).

Au Congo, en raison du caractère tabou attaché au sexe (en dépit d'une certaine liberté sexuelle), conjugué à la honte et la peur de la stigmatisation qui les frapperait ainsi que leurs familles, les victimes restent souvent muettes sur cette douloureuse expérience. Des associations ont pris l'initiative d'interroger les femmes et il ressort de ces entretiens que la violence sexuelle est la chose la mieux partagée, car les viols ont été perpétrés aussi bien par les forces gouvernementales que par les groupes de l'opposition armée. Cependant, une étude plus fine serait judicieuse, car les violences sexuelles ne sont pas toujours le seul fait des forces adverses, mais résultent aussi de la violence "intracommunautaire" inhérente à la militarisation et au conditionnement des jeunes à l'utilisation de la force.

D'une manière générale, trois types de traitements sont infligés aux femmes et aux fillettes, qui vont de l'inceste forcé au viol, collectif ou non, souvent suivi de l'exécution sommaire de la victime, comme en attestent les témoignages suivants :

"Nous sommes en fin de matinée d'un jour de juillet 1997, les armes se sont tues pour céder la place à quelques jours de trêve, permettant ainsi aux uns et aux autres de circuler, afin d'aller récupérer leurs affaires dans les zones de combat. Tous marchent en colonnes le long des itinéraires balisés, munis de leurs cartes d'identité à présenter aux miliciens à chaque poste de contrôle appelé "bouchon", pour la circonstance. Au bouchon du centre hospitalier Blanche Gomez, une jeune fille, venue de Ouénzé (18), remet sa carte d'identité à un milicien qui la retient et lui ordonne de sortir du rang. Celle-ci obéit, attend, s'impatiente et au bout d'un certain temps réclame ses papiers. Les miliciens, furieux, la déshabillent et la violent sous les yeux de plusieurs personnes, impuissantes. Et après avoir commis leur forfait, ils l'abattent froidement" (19).

Les rescapées sont souvent condamnées du fait de la contagion par le sida : "Sylvie, 15 ans, a subi un viol collectif. Après avoir réussi à s'échapper, elle marche jusqu'à Pointe Noire (20), se cachant la journée et marchant la nuit. Durant cette période, elle se nourrit de tubercules de manioc trouvés dans les champs abandonnés et boit l'eau des ruisseaux. C'est ainsi qu'elle a contracté la dysenterie amibienne. Recueillie et soignée par les religieuses, elle se remet péniblement de cette douloureuse expérience, d'autant plus qu'un test a révélé sa séropositivité."

Dans le contexte de conflit armé, violer et partant, souiller les femmes des adversaires revêt plusieurs connotations. C'est d'abord un rituel. "Le violeur veut détruire ; le viol est un meurtre symbolique (accompagné parfois d'un meurtre réel) et, à travers le corps d'une femme, c'est la Femme qui est tuée. Cette féminité dégradée, concrétisée par un corps providentiellement pénétrable, mais aussi cette féminité menaçante, mystérieuse, irréductible à l'ordre mâle, cette féminité terrifiante, c'est elle qu'il faut tuer. Car les hommes qui nous haïssent sont des hommes qui ont peur de nous (...). Ils tuent la femme en nous mais aussi la féminité en eux, c'est à dire la part d'inconscient que notre exclusion de l'ordre mâle (de la loi du Phallus) nous a fait incarner à leurs yeux." (21)

En outre la femme, en tant que reproductrice de l'espèce, est violée, souillée puis tuée pour atteindre l'adversaire dans ce qui incarne la vertu, du moins dans ses représentations, dans la société traditionnelle. Il s'agit aussi, à travers ces meurtres, de briser la chaîne de reproduction dans le camp adverse, afin de le priver d'héritiers qui perpétueraient le conflit, en se posant plus tard en justiciers de leurs ascendants. C'est aussi amoindrir le poids électoral de l'adversaire en réduisant ses capacités de reproduction. Ce qui justifie les scènes de femmes enceintes éventrées, et de fœtus écrasés, comme en 1959 lors de la première guerre civile congolaise, ou en 1993 à Moutabala, un quartier de Brazzaville.

Pourtier ne pensait pas si bien dire, lorsqu'il qualifiait d'"incivile" la guerre de 1997 entre factions, milices "foulant aux pieds les valeurs d'une civilité urbaine

battue en brèche par une société en perte de repères". (22) Cette incivilité va jusqu'à l'irrespect du sacré. En effet, dans le cadre de leur préparation au combat, les miliciens sont astreints à l'ingurgitation de breuvages censés conférer l'invisibilité, mieux, l'immortalité ; un rituel qui les astreint à l'observance de certains interdits, dont le sexe. Interdit qu'ils enfreignent allègrement dans un contexte où "l'ethos de la consommation / consummation ... est indifférent au sacré et à la parenté". Une femme témoigne, après que son fils, un jeune homme d'une trentaine d'années ait été forcé à la violer : "Mon fils n'ose plus me regarder. Ce n'est pas de sa faute, ce sont les Ninjas (23) qui l'ont obligé à me violer. Pour que j'obéisse, ils m'ont tiré dessus". (24)

Dans cette guerre, les corps des femmes constituent autant de butins qu'une cuisinière ou une machine à laver et le viol n'est plus ni moins que l'expression de la chosification du corps de la femme, relégué au rang de simple objet de consommation. D'ailleurs, la cruauté et la bestialité des miliciens n'ont d'égal que leur désir de revanche sur ces corps, longtemps convoités, ces corps des "Grands" (25), souvent inaccessibles en temps de paix, et livrés sans défense à leur vindicte, de la même manière qu'ils se défou- lent sur les biens des "Grands" (26). Le viol est le "salaire des miliciens" (27), autant que les biens pillés. Ce rapport aux corps des femmes atteint les sommets de l'imaginaire dans la préférence des miliciens pour la Kalashnikov (28), certainement en raison de la taille de son canon, plus gros et plus long, symbolisant ainsi le phallus et dont ils se servent lors de sévices sexuels.

On voit également, à travers ces pratiques, que "le viol n'est pas un simple accident en temps de guerre, une péripétie parmi tant d'autres dans un conflit armé. Son utilisation très fréquente en temps de guerre, traduit bien l'effet particulièrement terrorisant de cette agression sur les femmes, le pouvoir qu'il confère au violeur sur sa victime, le souverain mépris de cette dernière qu'il implique" (29).

Le problème ne réside pas tant dans le moment, ou les circonstances dans lesquelles se produit le viol, mais plutôt dans l'acte lui-même, qui est une atteinte à l'intégrité morale et physique, à la dignité des femmes. En fait, pour reprendre les propos d'Amnesty International, "le recours au viol en temps de guerre est une transposition des inégalités qui sont le lot quotidien des femmes en temps de paix. Tant que les États ne rempliront pas leurs obligations en matière d'égalité des sexes et de lutte contre la discrimination à l'égard des femmes, le viol restera une arme de choix pour l'agresseur" (30).

La lutte contre le viol a mobilisé les femmes sud-africaines qui en ont fait leur cheval de bataille en exigeant de la Commission Vérité et Réconciliation la prise en compte des "violences spécifiques" infligées aux femmes, un point délibérément occulté par celle-ci (31). Cet acte de bravoure a inspiré d'autres Africaines, comme au Rwanda où, après diverses pressions, face aux tergiversations du Gouvernement, les associations féminines ont dû recourir à des méthodes plus musclées en faisant une incursion forcée à l'Assemblée Nationale, obligeant les parlementaires à prendre un texte pénalisant le viol. C'est ainsi que le Tribunal Pénal International pour le Rwanda (32) a enfin retenu le viol comme crime de guerre.

Au Congo, sous l'impulsion des ONG et associations féminines, dès 1998, le Gouvernement a lancé une campagne contre le viol. On a vu fleurir dans Brazzaville des affiches rappelant que "La femme est une personne humaine, la personne humaine est sacrée, donc... ne violez pas" (33). Si l'initiative est louable en soi, il n'en demeure pas moins qu'elle s'enferme dans un discours fortement moralisateur qui n'incite pas les victimes à parler en toute confiance pour exorciser la violence qu'elles portent. Par ailleurs, ce discours se révèle démagogique puisqu'il n'est pas

assorti d'actions, notamment de dispositions pénales à l'encontre des violeurs, comme en atteste l'impunité dont ils jouissent.

### **Les réfugiées et les personnes déplacées**

Selon les Nations Unies, il y aurait aujourd'hui près de 100 millions de personnes déplacées dans le monde. Environ 80 % d'entre elles sont des femmes et des enfants. C'est le cas du Congo où des centaines de milliers de femmes et d'enfants ont trouvé refuge dans les forêts, dans des camps de fortune, ou dans des camps de réfugiés dans les pays voisins, principalement en République Démocratique du Congo, au Gabon et en République centrafricaine. Les conflits successifs de 1993-1994, 1997 ont produit chacun son lot de réfugiés et de personnes déplacées. Lors de la reprise des combats dans le sud de Brazzaville en décembre 1998, près de 200 000 personnes ont fui cette zone, tandis que d'autres sont ballottées d'un quartier de Brazzaville à un autre, au rythme des soubresauts de la crise sécuritaire.

Une des grandes conséquences de la guerre est l'éclatement de la cellule familiale. Les femmes se retrouvent avec leurs enfants, dans le dénuement le plus total. La situation sanitaire et alimentaire, des plus précaires, est responsable du taux de mortalité, surtout infantile, très élevé. Dans les camps de déplacés et de réfugiés se développent des stratégies individuelles de survie. Le recours à la prostitution, sans possibilité de négociation du risque, tant sur le plan de la santé sexuelle que reproductive, en est une des formes les plus courantes. Les femmes échangent leurs faveurs contre la nourriture et/ou la protection d'un soldat ou un gardien du camp.

Dans ce contexte se multiplient également des cas de viols de fillettes et de jeunes filles par des soldats, mais aussi par d'autres réfugiés, compte tenu de la promiscuité ambiante, comme le montre ce témoignage : "La scène se déroule à Loua. Trois camions de Caritas s'y sont arrêtés pour charger une centaine de réfugiés surgis de la forêt. Un des soldats de l'escorte appelle une fillette d'environ 13 ans, en jupe rouge et T. Shirt blanc déchirés. Il lui tend un bidon en plastique jaune et l'envoie chercher de l'eau au puits tout proche, à côté d'une maison incendiée. Puis le soldat suit la fillette ; elle réapparaît dix minutes plus tard, courant, les vêtements arrachés, l'air hagard. Un instant après, le militaire arrive d'un pas tranquille, réajustant son ceinturon sans vergogne" (34).

Cet environnement pourtant hostile peut cependant devenir un lieu de reconstruction d'espaces de vie, de production où les femmes font preuve d'une étonnante ingéniosité et d'esprit d'entreprise. Régine Oboa (35) a pu observer dans le camp de Kinkole, dans la banlieue de Kinshasa en 1997, comment les hommes et surtout les femmes essaient de domestiquer l'adversité en reconstruisant un environnement social chaleureux, par la création d'un marché : "On pouvait se rafraîchir avec de l'eau potable du site dans des gourdes du HCR. Sur un étal étaient exposés des produits de première nécessité (savons en détail, lait en poudre, allumettes, papier hygiénique, sucre, etc. ). D'autres femmes vendaient du charbon pour approvisionner les ménagères du site et d'autres préparaient des plats cuisinés." Ces femmes d'un courage hors du commun parviennent à se constituer un capital de départ, souvent à partir de la vente des produits fournis par le HCR .

Généralement, la situation humanitaire demeure préoccupante, même dans les zones pacifiées. En effet, des familles congolaises entières ont été décimées. L'instauration d'une économie de guerre et les retards endémiques des paiements des salaires ont exacerbé la misère. Le chômage, dû à la destruction des infrastructures économiques, a plongé de nombreuses femmes, mariées ou non, dans une précarité sans précédent, même si quelques unes d'entre elles essaient péniblement d'entreprendre des activités rémunératrices. Les solidarités familiales n'ont pas

résisté à la précarité et ont cessé de servir de relais à la démission de l'État. Malgré leur dynamisme, les femmes n'arrivent plus, dans la plupart des cas, à assurer la survie de leurs familles, du moins ce qu'il en reste.

L'insécurité qui sévit dans les régions du Sud, les plus touchées lors de la reprise des combats en 1998, ne permet plus aux femmes de vaquer aux travaux des champs, laissant augurer non seulement d'une famine imminente dans cette partie du pays, mais aussi de sérieuses difficultés alimentaires dans la capitale dont elles assuraient l'approvisionnement.

Les femmes sont, à n'en point douter, les plus grandes victimes des conflits. Ainsi se pose avec acuité la nécessité de leur plus grande implication dans les mécanismes de gestion et de résolution des conflits.

## **Femmes congolaises et règlement des conflits**

Cette analyse rétrospective se concentre uniquement sur les femmes de Brazzaville, pour deux raisons principales. D'abord parce que les manifestations de violence politique les plus virulentes de la période post-indépendance se sont produites dans cette ville. Ensuite, c'est dans la capitale que l'on trouve une forte concentration non seulement des élites féminines, politiques ou non, mais également l'essentiel du dispositif associatif féminin de toutes obédiences.

### **Un passé de médiation ( 1959, 1966, 1990, 1993, 1997)**

La mémoire collective congolaise retient l'occurrence d'entreprises de bons offices et de médiation initiées par les femmes. Cependant, quelques observations s'imposent à ce sujet. D'abord, l'irruption des femmes dans la sphère, résolument masculine, de règlement et de gestion des conflits survient principalement à des moments cruciaux de l'histoire récente du Congo. Ensuite, l'implication féminine s'inscrit parfois dans une démarche préventive, mais davantage comme ultime recours lorsque tous les mécanismes masculins utilisés se sont soldés par un échec. On mise certainement sur l'effet psychologique de l'initiative : "Même les femmes se sont levées, donc c'est très grave !"

La première expérience, reconnue, dans ce domaine (36), remonte à 1966, sous le régime d'Alphonse Massamba-Débat (37). Cette période de l'histoire du Congo se caractérise notamment par une dérive totalitaire du pouvoir, comme en atteste la vague d'assassinats politiques de 1965, tragique dénouement des luttes pour le pouvoir auxquelles se livrent les entrepreneurs politiques. En 1966, lorsque le Capitaine Marien N'Gouabi, un officier de haut rang de l'Armée congolaise est arrêté, les femmes constituent une délégation pour rencontrer le Chef de l'État afin d'exprimer leur désapprobation. Elles exigent non seulement la libération de cet officier, mais également "que l'on cesse de verser le sang des Congolais" (38). Pour marquer l'événement, une marche pacifique est organisée jusqu'au Camp du Djoué, lieu de détention de l'officier, afin de "voir de leurs propres yeux si celui-ci est encore en vie" (39). Cette initiative est rémunératrice puisque le Capitaine N'Gouabi est libéré quelques jours plus tard. Cependant, sa réussite aurait été improbable, sans le choix d'une démarche unitaire.

## **Femmes et paix: quelques repères**

### **La première guerre civile de l'ère " démocratique " (1993-1994)**

La première guerre civile de 1993-1994 a vu l'émergence, dans sa forme organisée et plurielle, quant à sa composition et à ses modes d'expression, du mouvement pacifiste féminin. En effet, en novembre 1993, alors que tonnent les

canons, ce malgré les Accords de paix de Libreville (40), les femmes tiennent un forum national, prélude à la Conférence Régionale des Nations Unies pour les Femmes de Dakar (1994). Dès le début des travaux, face à l'exacerbation du conflit et à l'enlisement des efforts de paix, des voix s'élèvent afin que la paix soit inscrite en préalable à l'ordre du jour et que les femmes agissent immédiatement afin d'amener la classe politique à mettre un terme aux hostilités. A cet effet, une déclaration de paix est rédigée et diffusée à la radio et à la télévision nationales.

Après le Forum, un consensus se fait autour d'un noyau de femmes, qui organisent un mois plus tard l'historique marche du 16 décembre 1993 qui les conduit jusqu'au Palais présidentiel où une déclaration de paix est lue, ce en présence du Chef de l'État et des responsables des principales formations politiques congolaises. Les femmes exigent notamment le retour au dialogue et la sauvegarde des acquis de la démocratie pluraliste. Ce message se termine par une prière pour la paix. Cependant, cette cérémonie s'achève dans un bain de larmes. De plus, la porteuse du message se traîne à genoux, pour remettre son message au Chef de l'État. Ce qui en amoindrit l'impact aux yeux d'une partie de l'opinion qui voit dans ce geste un signe de soumission inacceptable. Pour elle, la paix ne se quémante pas car après tout le Président de la République est garant de la sécurité des citoyennes et citoyens.

Cette initiative fait néanmoins des émules. Ainsi donc, les femmes du Conseil œcuménique organisent elles aussi une marche. Placée davantage sous le signe religieux, celle-ci regroupe des femmes de toutes obédiences religieuses, dans le but de faire pression sur les acteurs politiques et les ramener à la raison. On note d'ailleurs, aux premières loges, la présence de la Première Dame de cette époque.

Le 22 décembre 1993, un Comité National des Femmes pour la Paix est créé, pour une meilleure coordination des actions des femmes. Courageuses, les membres du bureau prennent le risque, en pleine guerre, de braver les barrages délimitant les zones contrôlées par les diverses factions politiques, afin de rencontrer les chefs de guerre, discuter avec eux et les sensibiliser sur la nécessité du dialogue et d'un règlement pacifique des contentieux politiques. Malheureusement ce Comité, héritier du fonctionnement bureaucratique en vigueur, ne sortira jamais du cadre étriqué de son siège, si ce n'est à travers la participation de ses dirigeantes à des réunions nationales et internationales importantes, agissant toujours en vase clos, faisant de la lutte pour la paix l'affaire des seules membres du bureau. De plus, le Comité ne réussira pas à organiser des campagnes de sensibilisation dans les arrondissements afin de promouvoir la culture de paix, conformément aux missions qu'il s'était assignées.

### **Le 5 juin 1997 : chronique d'une médiation avortée**

Les événements d'Owando, consécutifs à la rixe entre les partisans de l'ancien président Sassou-Nguesso et ceux de l'ancien Premier Ministre, Yhombi-Opango qui avaient causé la mort de plusieurs personnes, commençaient à prendre une tournure préoccupante avec l'expulsion des partisans de l'un ou l'autre camp des localités d'Oyo et d'Owando, fiefs de ces deux chefs de guerre. Situation complexifiée par l'arrivée massive de réfugiés rwandais et zairois fuyant le Zaïre, devant l'avancée inexorable de Kabila et ses troupes.

Etant donné la rapide escalade des actes de violence et conscientes des dérapages qui pouvaient en découler, les femmes congolaises décident de sortir de leur mutisme et de mener, sur une base non-partisane, des actions multiformes afin de préserver ce qu'on appelait alors pompeusement «la dynamique de paix», terminologie consacrée, en référence aux accords de paix signés le 30 janvier 1994, qui avaient mis fin à la guerre civile de 1993-1994. S'y inscrivent également diverses

initiatives engagées dans le but de renforcer la paix au Congo, notamment le Forum national sur la culture de paix, et dont la dernière en date était l'Engagement solennel du 31 mai 1997, par lequel les partis politiques renonçaient à l'utilisation des armes comme moyen de règlement des conflits.

Le contexte se prête merveilleusement à une telle initiative. En effet, à l'issue d'un séminaire organisé par le GERDDES-Congo (41) sur «Les femmes et la politique au Congo», les femmes, désabusées et frustrées par les pratiques phallocratiques des partis politiques, sans exception, s'accordent sur la mise en place d'une structure non-partisane de concertation et de médiation, pour une meilleure prise en main de leurs revendications spécifiques : "Nous voulons nous battre en tant que femmes tout simplement. Nous refusons qu'on nous enferme dans le carcan de "femmes de la mouvance" et "femmes de l'opposition" car de toutes les façons, les balles ne choisissent pas. Elles n'ont pas de couleur politique. Elles tuent sans discernement. Or nous donnons la vie, nous nous devons donc de la protéger et la préserver ", déclarent-elles.

Ainsi donc, la première réunion de ce lobby est fixée au jeudi 5 juin 1997 après-midi, afin d'étudier les modalités d'une médiation entre Sassou-Nguesso et Yhombi. Or, les événements se précipitent et la guerre éclate le 5 juin à l'aube. Mais la réunion se tient quand même, rythmée par les tirs et les crépitements des armes, en l'absence de la majorité des femmes dont les quartiers sont déjà cernés par les miliciens. Une déclaration de paix est rédigée et une marche programmée pour le lendemain matin. Mais la situation s'aggrave dans la nuit avec l'utilisation de l'artillerie lourde, et les femmes se rendent à l'évidence qu'aucune marche n'est envisageable. C'est là qu'interviennent les moyens modernes de communication qui ont permis l'envoi de la déclaration aux responsables des principales formations politiques et aux media, notamment la radio et la télévision nationales pour diffusion. Cette expérience a révélé les avantages d'une démarche unitaire, non-partisane, qui favorise la collaboration entre les femmes car, grâce au climat de confiance ainsi instauré, il était aisé de s'adresser aux unes et aux autres pour obtenir les coordonnées des responsables de leurs partis. Cette fois-ci, les femmes entendaient s'impliquer dans le règlement des conflits en tant que force indépendante de proposition, pour rompre avec le schéma habituel où l'on se satisfait de la présence d'une femme-alibi dans un groupe de médiateurs majoritairement masculin. Leur voix ne fut pas entendue parce qu'une fois de plus, la logique de guerre l'avait emporté sur la raison.

### **Le troisième conflit armé de 1998:**

Après le troisième conflit armé de l'ère " démocratique ", la société civile a organisé en février/mars 2000 un séminaire sur les causes et les conséquences du conflit. A cet effet, plusieurs échanges intercommunautaires ont eu lieu dans le but de ré-instaurer le dialogue, notamment à l'initiative du Comité national des femmes pour la paix, au cours desquels les participants échangent leur expérience de la guerre, leur contribution à l'assainissement de leurs quartiers respectifs. Ces manifestations se sont clôturées par un " bûcher aux armes "(en bois), à l'instar des femmes sud-africaines qui en 1997, dans un admirable élan de patriotisme et de pacifisme, avaient effectué dans les écoles l'autodafé de tous les jouets susceptibles de cultiver l'esprit de violence et de destruction chez les enfants tels que les armes miniatures, afin de stigmatiser la montée de la violence dans leur pays. Outre la mise en circulation d'une pétition en faveur de la paix par le Collectif des ONG et associations pour la paix, des séances de prière sont régulièrement convoquées par les associations et les femmes des confessions religieuses.

## Femmes congolaises et paix: quel bilan ?

### De l'enfermement dans l'informel

L'impact des actions féminines en faveur de la paix est mitigé, ce pour diverses raisons. D'abord du fait qu'elles interviennent souvent tardivement lorsque les parties adverses sont allées trop loin pour reculer. Au mieux, leurs initiatives sont récupérées par les hommes, comme en 1994, lorsqu'ils fondent le Comité Parlementaire Interrégional de la Paix, peu de temps après la création du Comité National des Femmes pour la Paix. Cette institution officielle reçoit mandat du Parlement et du Gouvernement, pour veiller au règlement du conflit armé de 1993 - 1994. On constate à ce sujet que si les lieux de pouvoir se désincarnent et sont voués à la relégation lorsqu'ils sont investis par les femmes, il est d'autant plus frappant de voir qu'ils acquièrent une valeur marchande quand ils deviennent une chasse gardée masculine. Ainsi, le Comité Parlementaire, à forte dominante masculine, va disposer d'une logistique substantielle et se fonctionnariser très rapidement. Quelques membres du Comité National des Femmes pour la Paix sont cooptées et se coupent bientôt de leur base.

Quant aux modes d'expression utilisés par les femmes, tels que les déclarations de paix, les marches et les prières, leur efficacité s'avère limitée, mais ils trouvent cependant un sens dans le contexte congolais. En effet, la convocation du religieux s'inscrit dans un contexte général de regain de foi religieuse, réelle ou circonstancielle. La passerelle entre le sacré et le politique n'est pas un fait nouveau au Congo. L'on se souvient en effet que pendant la transition (42), de même que sous le régime de Lissouba (43), on a assisté à des opérations de charme des politiques envers le clergé. Elles se manifestent par des apparitions des entrepreneurs politiques de haut rang à des lieux de culte ou à des cérémonies religieuses symboliquement marquées, tels qu'un deuil national (44), la messe de Pâques ou de Noël. Ils sont relayés dans cette entreprise par leurs épouses, dont la foi non avérée, se manifeste plutôt par la multiplication de messes et de dons aux pauvres. Les associations féminines ne sont pas en reste qui organisent des messes pour la paix au plus fort de la crise, pour conjurer la menace de guerre, calmer la fureur divine, mais surtout pour obtenir de Dieu l'apaisement des cœurs des belligérants. Ces pratiques s'expliquent par le symbolisme de la religion, incarnation de la pureté, la probité morale, et la neutralité. Le choix d'un homme d'église à la tête de la Conférence Nationale Souveraine du Congo en 1991 participe, de cette logique qui se justifie par un "tel désenchantement généralisé que le politique est non seulement désacralisé, mais totalement discrédité, sinon diabolisé, au travers de la classe politique toutes tendances confondues. La défiance dont celle-ci est l'objet est peut-être à la mesure de la haute idée que cette opinion se fait (encore ?) du sacré " (45).

### Un handicap: l'ancrage dans une tradition de subordination et l'absence de statut de la société civile

Le combat des femmes pour la paix s'inscrit dans la dynamique de la société civile, dont les ONG et associations féminines congolaises constituent la majorité. Il conviendrait de réfléchir sur la définition de la société civile et sur ce que recouvre en réalité ce concept. En effet, la démocratisation s'est traduite au Congo par la création d'une multitude d'ONG et associations par les partis politiques, aussi bien au pouvoir que d'opposition, bien qu'il existe également des associations indépendantes. D'ailleurs, lors d'événements importants ou à la veille d'élections, ces organisations font acte d'allégeance en montant souvent au créneau pour soutenir ouvertement

leurs chefs. Lors des conflits ou de périodes de crise politique, cette allégeance abolit souvent tout esprit critique.

En outre, la société civile, insuffisamment organisée, inconsciente de sa force, est très souvent traversée par les enjeux de pouvoir et d'intérêts personnels ou claniques, qui sapent son action et la décrédibilisent également aux yeux de l'opinion de plus en plus sceptique quant à sa neutralité. De plus, la succession de conflits armés au Congo a plus que jamais affaibli la société civile, tant au plan matériel que politique. En effet, la conjugaison de plusieurs facteurs tels que la déstructuration socio-économique, la destruction de son patrimoine déjà précaire, la mort, le déplacement ou l'exil de certains de ses membres, la restauration autoritaire, ont contribué à l'amointrissement des capacités de mobilisation de la société civile tout en entravant son action. En outre, malgré l'existence d'un dispositif juridique constitué par des textes régionaux et internationaux paraphés par le Gouvernement, et censé garantir non seulement un statut à la société civile, mais aussi sa prise en compte dans les politiques nationales, l'on assiste plutôt à sa marginalisation, pire à son exclusion des sphères de décision. La marginalisation du Collectif des ONG et Associations Congolaises pour la Paix (46) des Accords de Paix de Brazzaville du 29 décembre 1999, signés entre les milices de l'opposition armée et le Gouvernement, participe incontestablement de cette logique.

Quant à l'optique de l'action de la société civile (des femmes), elle ne s'inscrit pas vraiment dans une démarche de rupture véritable, mais plutôt d'accommodation de l'ordre établi, même si les déclarations "réaffirment la nécessité de poursuivre le processus démocratique". Les ONG et associations de femmes pour la paix (et la société civile en général) réagissent face aux situations et semblent incapables de se muer en force autonome de proposition, demeurant ainsi à la remorque des entrepreneurs politiques. Comme le souligne Jackyn Cock à propos de l'Afrique du Sud : "Women seem to be adapting uncritically to existing models of citizenship and struggle" (47).

Il ne serait pas exagéré de dire qu'il y a une sorte d'instrumentalisation de la paix, devenue un fonds de commerce très porteur qui a permis la floraison d'ONG et associations intervenant dans ce domaine, n'ayant parfois d'existence que théorique, et qui brillent par leur absence sur le terrain. Ainsi, chaque jour, se créent des associations pour la paix, surtout à l'étranger, qui organisent le énième séminaire sur "Les causes et les conséquences des conflits armés au Congo". La recherche de visibilité et la mise en avant des intérêts personnels font bien partie des maux qui minent la société civile en pleine crise de croissance, ce au détriment d'une démarche unitaire plus rémunératrice.

### **Privé versus public?**

La gestion des conflits en tant que lieu de pouvoir et d'enjeux n'est pas exempt des inégalités de genre. L'absence des femmes des structures formelles de résolution des conflits est indissociable de leur sous-représentation dans les sphères de pouvoir (48). Il y a en effet une division sexuelle du travail confinant les femmes dans le domaine privé, alors que les hommes gèrent et contrôlent le domaine public. Comme en politique, les femmes congolaises s'investissent dans ce qui relève de l'informel, à travers les marches et les séances de prière et les déclarations de paix, tandis que les hommes gèrent le formel, c'est à dire les mécanismes officiels nationaux, régionaux et internationaux de gestion et règlement des conflits. Des actions de diplomatie souterraine que mènent parfois les femmes, comme en 1966 ou en 1994 sont, dans la plupart des cas, occultées par les media comme pour corroborer le fait que notre Histoire reste une histoire au masculin.

## Pour une transformation des conflits : quelles stratégies pour les femmes congolaises ?

L'arrêt des hostilités ne signifie nullement le retour de la paix au Congo, comme le prouve la difficile application des Accords de Brazzaville du 29 décembre 1999, notamment le ramassage des armes, la démobilisation des miliciens et leur intégration dans l'Armée. D'où l'urgence d'un dialogue national sans exclusive, de tous les acteurs sociaux et politiques, condition sine qua non pour une paix véritable et durable au Congo. Or, l'on s'achemine plutôt vers une "paix des braves", négociée "au cas par cas", et qui permettrait une redistribution du pouvoir entre les divers entrepreneurs politiques, sans possibilité d'alternance démocratique réelle.

Dans le contexte actuel de restauration autoritaire et d'insécurité, de "paix sans la paix", quels types d'actions peuvent développer les femmes congolaises (et la société civile en général) pour contribuer plus efficacement au processus de paix ?

Le retour d'une paix durable au Congo repose incontestablement sur la double exigence politique de la construction de la démocratie et surtout d'un Etat de droit. A cette entreprise se greffe, en outre, la nécessité d'une perspective féministe véritable, non-partisane des citoyennes pour la réappropriation de leur propre destin car, pour reprendre les propos de Jacklyn Cock : "To reconcile equality and difference requires social transformation ; a new kind of citizenship and new forms of political struggle " (49).

Il est important en effet que la société civile devienne autonome et s'impose en tant que véritable force de proposition. Elle doit donc œuvrer pour amener le Gouvernement à reconnaître son statut et à en prendre compte, ce en s'informant et en s'appuyant sur les textes régionaux (OUA) et internationaux (ONU), qui lui reconnaissent un statut. Il serait judicieux d'aider la société civile à établir un nouveau type d'interaction avec les autorités politiques, dans un contexte de restauration autoritaire. Cela lui permettrait de s'impliquer dans les structures formelles de résolution des conflits aux niveaux local, national, sous-régional, régional et international, afin d'y impulser une autre dynamique une autre éthique, nécessaires à l'élaboration d'une nouvelle politique sécuritaire en Afrique. La société civile doit se doter de structures légères, dynamiques, débarrassées des pesanteurs bureaucratiques et fonctionnant démocratiquement.

Etant donné la culture de violence ambiante, son action doit se fonder prioritairement sur l'éducation, afin de former les femmes et les hommes, dans les communautés urbaines et rurales, de toutes les générations, à la réactivation du dialogue intercommunautaire, ce de manière beaucoup plus systématique, avec la possibilité d'évaluer les progrès effectués, à des périodes déterminées, en s'inspirant de l'expérience amorcée par International Alert auprès des femmes des pays des Grands Lacs.

Cependant, une approche préventive serait plus judicieuse, qui consisterait à initier les populations aux méthodes de gestion des conflits telles que les techniques de médiation, les méthodes de résolution des conflits, plus particulièrement comment diagnostiquer les sources de conflits afin de les désamorcer avant qu'ils n'éclatent. Il est entendu qu'un tel travail doit s'assortir de campagnes d'éducation civique axées sur les idéaux de tolérance et de respect des droits humains.

Le rôle des media dans ces actions sera non seulement pour informer les femmes d'Afrique mais aussi celles du reste du monde.

Les problèmes de la paix en Afrique ne peuvent se penser en vase clos, ni de manière partielle. C'est pourquoi une démarche unitaire de l'ensemble de la société civile africaine s'impose. Le Document de la Conférence de Kampala sur la sécurité, la stabilité, le développement et la coopération en Afrique, offre ce cadre. En effet,

ce document, révisé en avril 2000 à Lomé, à l'initiative de l'Africa Leadership Forum, afin d'intégrer le point de vue de la société civile pourrait, à cet effet, constituer une bonne base de réflexion.

Enfin, il faut aussi impliquer les réseaux internationaux de lutte pour la paix pour une action plus globale et plus porteuse, car "... il serait très dangereux et même irresponsable, sous prétexte de responsabilisation, de pousser les Africains à s'enfermer dans des circuits interafricains de gestion des crises et des conflits, qui les couperaient du reste de la communauté internationale. C'est avec l'Europe, qui doit être son partenaire le plus proche, et avec l'ONU, malgré ses immenses imperfections et insuffisances, avec d'autres encore s'il en est qui se sentent concernés, que l'Afrique doit gérer ses conflits, et être sollicitée autant que les autres pour la gestion des conflits des autres régions. En montrant bien que ce continent est membre à part entière de la Communauté internationale" (50).

## NOTES

1 - Lire à ce sujet l'excellent article de YENGO, Patrice : "Un recours endémique à la violence", Congo-Brazzaville : entre guerre et paix, Afrique Contemporaine, 1998, n° 186, avril-juin, p. 33-45.

2 - BAZENGUISSA-GANGA, Rémy : "Les milices politiques dans les affrontements", op cit, p. 46-57

3 - Lire également OSSEBI, Henri : "De la galère à la guerre : jeunes et "cobras" dans les quartiers Nord de Brazzaville", p. 17-33, Les deux Congos dans la guerre, Politique Africaine, n° 72, Karthala, Paris, décembre 1998, p. 17-33.

4 - Lire notamment :

\*MR GALLOY, Marc-Eric GRUENAI "Un conflit prévisible", L'Autre Afrique, n° 1, Juillet-Août 1997

\*GRUENAI, M. E. : "Congo : la fin d'une pseudo-démocratie", Politiques internationales dans la région des Grands Lacs, Politique Africaine, n° 68, Karthala, Paris, décembre 1997, p. 125-133

\*Afrique Contemporaine : Congo-Brazzaville : entre guerre et paix, n° 186, avril-juin 1998

\*Politique Africaine : Les deux Congos dans la guerre, n° 72, Karthala, Paris, décembre 1998.

5 - TONDA, Joseph : La guerre dans le "camp Nord" au Congo-Brazzaville : ethnicité et ethos de la consommation/consumation, Les deux Congos dans la guerre, Politique Africaine, Karthala, Paris, décembre 1998, p. 51-67.

6 - OBENGA, Théophile : L'histoire sanglante du Congo-Brazzaville (1959-1997), Diagnostic d'une mentalité politique africaine, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1998, pp. 367.

7 - PAMBOU, Marie-Odile : "La guerre civile comme révélateur de la violence faite aux femmes", Rupture, n° 11/12, Juin 1998, p. 245-56

8 - Il s'agit du camp de réfugiés de Kinkole, aménagé sous les auspices du Haut Commissariat aux Réfugiés (HCR). Pour plus d'informations, lire : OBOA, Régine : "Réfugiée à Kinshasa", Rupture, n° 11/12, Juin 1998, p. 49-60.

9 - Amnesty International : Les femmes : Une égalité de droit, Paris 1995, pp. 117.

10 - Op. cit. p. 19

11 - Lire à ce sujet l'article d'Alexandra SAGE, consacré aux Premières dames en Afrique : "Premières dames et First Ladies : la femme du chef est-elle le chef du chef?", L'Afrique Politique, Femmes d'Afrique, Paris, Karthala, 1998, p. 45-62

12 - Terme emprunté à Alexandra SAGE, op. cit. p. 54

- 13 - idem p. 50
- 14 - Histoire Kacou Ananzé l'araignée, dans Le Pagne noir.
- 15 - Lire le rapport de l'Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme (OCDH).
- 16 - Cité par Amnesty International op . cit.
- 17 - Amnesty International, 1995, p. 36.
- 18 - Un arrondissement dans les quartiers Nord de Brazzaville
- 19 - Marie-Odile Pambou, Rupture, n° 11/12 juin 1998, p. 245
- 20 - Port sur l'Océan Atlantique et capitale économique du Congo. 517 kilomètres la séparent de Brazzaville, capitale politique du pays.
- 21 - Les Pétroleuses, n° 4, septembre 1975.
- 22 - POURTIER, Roland : 1997 : les raisons d'une guerre "incivile ". ", Congo-Brazzaville : entre guerre et paix, Afrique Contemporaine, n° 186, 1998
- 23 - Milices de l'un des chefs de l'opposition armée, Bernard Koléla
- 24 - "Dieu est mort à Brazzaville ", Le Figaro, samedi 28/ dimanche 29 Août 1999.
- 25 - Terme qui dans le contexte sociologique congolais se réfère aux aînés sociaux, c'est à dire à la classe des nantis.
- 26 - -Joseph TONDA explique dans "La guerre dans le camp Nord au Congo Brazzaville : ethnicité et ethos de la consommation /consumation ", op cit, comment les miliciens prennent leur revanche sur les biens des "Grands ", à travers les pillages
- 27 - Expression empruntée à Joseph Tonda op. cit
- 28 - On raconte à ce sujet qu'ils refusent le P. M. AK (Pistolet mitrailleur), au canon moins imposant.
- 29 - Amnesty International,
- 30 - Amnesty International, op. cit p.
- 31 - Lire à ce sujet l'article de GOLDBLATT, Beth et MEINTJES, Sjeila : "Dealing with the aftermath of sexual violence and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ", Gender and violence, Agenda, n° 36, 1997, Durban.
- 32 - Instance créée par les Nations Unies et chargée de statuer sur les crimes de guerre dans ce pays.
- 33 - Marie-Odile PAMBOU, Rupture, n° 11/12, Juin 1998, p. 246
- 34 - "Dieu est mort à Brazzaville ", Le Figaro, samedi 28 /dimanche 29 août 1999.
- 35 - "Réfugiée à Kinshasa ", Rupture , Juin 1998, p. 49-60
- 36 - M. R. GALLOY " Conversations avec les femmes congolaises engagées dans la politique ", 1996, non publié.
- 37 - Président du Congo sous la IIe République (1963-1968)
- 38 - GALLOY, op. cit.
- 39 - idem
- 40 - Accords de paix signés sous l'égide du Président gabonais, Albert Bongo, et qui étaient sensés mettre un terme à ce conflit.
- 41 - Il s'agit de la section congolaise du Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches sur la Démocratie et le Développement Economique et Social (GERDDES-Afrique), une ONG panafricaine basée à Cotonou (Bénin). Le GERDDES-Afrique qui a joué un rôle important dans les processus démocratiques en Afrique, notamment en imposant l'idée de l'implication de la société civile dans les processus électoraux, notamment à travers l'observation des élections, la formation des agents et observateurs électoraux et la réalisation de campagnes d'éducation civique pour élever la conscience citoyenne des électeurs. Le séminaire du GERDDES-Congo s'inscrivait dans le cadre de son programme pré-électoral, dans le but de promouvoir la

participation des femmes aux élections législatives de 1998, une expérience brutalement interrompue par la guerre.

42 - Période qui va de la fin de la Conférence Nationale Souveraine (Juin 1991) aux premières élections pluralistes (juin 1992). Un gouvernement de transition était alors mis en place, dirigé par André MILONGO, un ancien administrateur de la Banque Mondiale.

43 - Président élu en 1992 et qui perdra le pouvoir en 1997, à l'issue d'une guerre civile qu'il aura lui-même largement contribué à déclencher par ses transgressions répétées des règles du jeu démocratique. Le vainqueur et nouvel homme fort du Congo, Sassou-Nguesso doit sa victoire à l'aide de l'armée angolaise et de ses divers alliés.

44 - Par exemple à la suite de l'accident ferroviaire de Voungouti (1992) qui avait coûté la vie à plus d'une centaine de Congolais.

45 - CONSTANTIN François, COULON Christian : "Religions et démocratie : Introduction à une problématique africaine ", dans Religion et transition démocratique en Afrique, Paris, Karthala, 1997, p. 15-16.

46 - Créée en 1998, au lendemain de la guerre civile de 1997.

47 - COCK, Jacklyn : "The Feminist Challenge to Militarism ", dans Empowering Women for Gender Equity, Agenda, n° 36, p. 28, 1997, p. 28

48 - Le problème d'une représentation plus importante des femmes dans les sphères de décision est réel, comme l'affirment les femmes ayant fait l'expérience du pouvoir. Selon elles, la sous-représentation des femmes constitue un obstacle majeur au Parlement par exemple, où tout vote est conditionné par la loi du nombre.

49 - Agenda, op cit

50 - Préface de Hugo Sada in Mamadou Aliou BARRY : La prévention des conflits en Afrique de l'Ouest, Paris, Karthala, 1997, p. 9.

## **Women's Strategies for peace : Gains and losses in Sierra Leone**

### **Jeannette Eno (Conciliation Resources)**

I would like to thank AAWORD and International Alert for providing me with this opportunity to share some thoughts with you this morning. In some ways I feel it is unfortunate that my sisters or a representative from Sierra Leone (SL) are not here with us. I believe you would have gained some invaluable insights into peace building on the ground and to look at some of the challenges it presents.

Speaking from my organizational role as an intermediary pursuing conflict transformation initiatives, I would say that Conciliation Resources' principal objective in Sierra Leone and elsewhere in the sub-region is to support activities of people and groups working at community and national levels, in their efforts to find innovative solutions to short and long term social, economic and political problems related to armed conflict or communal strife. As Programme Manager for West Africa, my work involves working with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Community-based Organisations (CBOs), women's organisations and ex-combatants from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) as well as from the Civil Defense Forces (CDF), in both Liberia and the Sierra Leone Army (SLA).

I have gained some invaluable insights into Sierra Leonean women's capacity for mobilizing around peace building, the various actions for peace undertaken by women activists and organisations during the phases of the peace process over the past 4 years and the current situation of the Sierra Leone women's movement.

Some critical statistics to note : total population 4.5 million before the war.

Estimated numbers : up to 75, 000 deaths, 100, 000 mutilated victims, 500, 000 refugees, 2 million internally displaced persons.

### **The Context of Sierra Leone's Conflict**

In a short span of time, it is actually quite difficult to analyse the immediate origins of the nine years of SL's conflict in isolation from the part played by other sub-regional and regional actors, particularly Charles Taylor and NPFL (National Patriotic Front of Liberia) and Gaddafi of Libya.

It has been suggested that Taylor did not forgive SL for allowing ECOMOG to use it as its base in 1990, when it intervened in the Liberian war. Gaddafi too had ambitions for becoming Chair of OAU and reportedly provided funds to the Sierra Leone government to host the OAU, in return for President Steven's support to secure his nomination. This support was not forthcoming so Gaddafi, who had already made contact in Sierra Leone, through the funding of Sierra Leonean students, welcomed Sierra Leonean dissidents in Libya, hosting and training them to stage a revolution in Sierra Leone. The first group who went for training left via Ghana in 1987. Taylor met the Sierra Leonean groups in Libya including Foday Sankoh, leader of the RUF.

These dissidents, together with other Sierra Leonean political exiles and economic refugees in Liberia, fought for Taylor's NPFL in return for a promise to help them launch their own revolution. On 2 nd March 1991, a small RUF guerrilla force supported by Taylor with Liberian and Burkinabé mercenaries, officially launched war against Sierra Leone from Liberia. The then spokesperson for the RUF, Foday Sankoh claimed he had started a "people's war " in order to 'liberate' the masses from the corruption and oppression of the APC government of President Momoh.

The APC government was characterized for well over two decades, by a slow but steady decline into political, economic, social and moral bankruptcy. By the late 1980s, young men and women in Sierra Leone, were in a state of crisis, due to decades of mismanagement, corruption and undemocratic governance.

The ready pool of youth, and the relative ease with which they were recruited in the early years into the various armed forces, fed on an existing crisis of blocked educational and employment opportunities for young men and women. Alternative sources of employment could be sought within the diamond districts of Sierra Leone. Since the early 1990s, many Sierra Leonean youth from poorer rural households, have grown up without ever enrolling in school and knowing only war. Deprived of education and training opportunities, health care and income generating activities, their lives have become one of poverty, dependency, dislocation and family separation, all of which have had a dire effect on the entire country.

Before the war, opportunities for women in education, health and employment were limited in comparison to men and were virtually non-existent within some regions of the country. Apart from Freetown and a couple of other urban areas, whole rural communities were cut off (and still are) from basic amenities, water, sanitation, good roads, etc. Therefore, women's ability in these areas to gain access to anything faintly enlightening, just did not happen. Instead, the war and the lure of diamonds provided plausible sources of alternative income.

The impact of the war on women and girls, as victims and combatants, has largely remained invisible to the policy makers. It is unclear as to what provision was made for female ex-combatants within the Disarmament, Demobilisation & Reintegration (DDR) programme. The intention was for ex-combatants to return to their places of origin. In many cases these women and their families could not return to their communities. In the eyes of custom and tradition, they have broken sacred

laws, are regarded as unclean. What will they go back to? And how will they earn a living? Re-integration problems have not been addressed. Girls as well as boys were subjected to rape, torture, killings, forced labour, drugging and combat training. As civilians, women were particularly targeted as a tactic of war. Those who were not abducted, managed to flee to refugee camps, where they endured much hardship. Young women have had no schooling since 1990. Those who are returning to their communities as returnees, are facing situations of extreme poverty and social destitution. With the vast displacement of families during the war, women in both rural and urban settings, are increasingly finding themselves as single heads of households over large numbers of dependents. For the single teenage abductees who have been returned, many are facing pregnancy, childbirth, social isolation, stigma and trauma on their own, at a young and vulnerable age.

What are some of the strategies used by women activists and organisations to actively encourage all sides of the conflict to dialogue and to engage in peaceful negotiations? At various stages of the conflict, the response has been both passive and active depending on the political environment operating within a given time.

As Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff<sup>1</sup> reflects, by 1994 women, particularly in Freetown, found that there were very few channels open to influence government policy in decision making. Within a heavily patriarchal state, the vast majority of Sierra Leonean women were excluded from political participation and thus had no political voice. Much of women's activism centred around welfarist types of organisations within the non-governmental sector such as family planning activities, access to health care, etc. By mid-1994, during the preparation for the Beijing Conference, a group of Sierra Leonean University Women (SLAUW) proposed that women's groups begin to meet regularly for networking, information sharing and collective action on issues of common concern. More and more women's organisations joined the network which came to be known as the Sierra Leone Women's Forum (SLWF). Women began to engage in political discourse, as they sought ways to bring about the end of the war. SLWF and its members were, however, not all united on whether or not to engage directly in political activism. Another women's organisation, Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace (SLWMP) developed a strategy of direct intervention in politics as it felt that the war was of too great a national crisis to be left to the military government. This organisation embarked on a peace campaign using marches, peace debates, radio and mobilizing market traders, nurses, female soldiers, teachers, journalists and women from all levels in society.

By 1995, with increasing international pressure on the NPRC and its inability to defeat the rebels in the North and East, the SLWF and SLWMP began pressurizing the government for a return to civilian rule. Women's organisations led the struggle for democracy in 1995 and 1996, supported by other CSOs, NGOs and CBOs.

A National Consultative Conference was held in August 1995 : Bintumani I. The women's position paper was adopted and the government agreed to elections and handing over to civilian rule. The ensuing violence, with RUF rebels stepping up acts of maiming the hands of victims to prevent them from voting, again brought a response from women. They re-affirmed their commitment to peace and demanded that elections proceed as planned, while peaceful dialogue is sought to negotiate a settlement and insisted women make up 50% of any peace negotiation delegation. In the midst of this, there was a counter campaign by certain members of civil society who wanted peace before elections. A second National Consultative Conference was called Bintumani II and the decision taken to proceed with elections. Elections were held in February which brought Ahmad Tejan Kabbah to head the civilian government. The Abidjan Peace Accord was signed in November 1996. Women's demands were largely ignored. Men from both sides of the conflict were

not willing to include women in a meaningful way as they realized it would mean relinquishing some power.

Within the women's movement, SLWMP disintegrated through internal conflict. Many of the women were not comfortable with being in the political spotlight and for them, the civilian government promising to take responsibility for the peace process was enough. The 1997 coup virtually resulted in the fragmentation of the Sierra Leone women's movement. With some of the leading activists leaving the country, from this moment onwards, women's activism became submerged within the wider civil society movement. The Lomé Peace Agreement (LPA) was signed in July 1999 and was built on the Abidjan peace framework. Flawed processes therefore produced a flawed peace agreement.

The only reference to women within the entire Lomé Peace Agreement reads thus : "Given that women have been particularly victimized during the war, special attention shall be accorded to their needs and potentials in formulating and implementing national rehabilitation, reconstruction and development programmes, to enable them to play a central role in the moral, social and physical reconstruction of Sierra Leone." <sup>2</sup> Why was the women's movement unable to sustain the gains it had made ? Several factors contributed to this :

1. Firstly, there was no ideological position adopted by the collective women's movement, and in taking on successive civilian and military governments, what was their ultimate goal? In some instances, demanding reforms within inheritance laws, property, divorce, calls for the dismantling of patriarchal structures and challenging the very construction upon which our society is based. Therefore the strategies formulated to pursue this agenda are very different to pursuing strategies within an accommodatory framework. Peace building is a political activity and therefore requires political strategy for engagement;

2. The adoption of a political stance calls for vision, informed leadership and solidarity. However, the years of social and political exclusion from the public domain and spheres of public and decision-making processes have rendered the majority of women unable to articulate their needs with confidence, unable to demand equity in social, political and economic situations;

3. The nature of debate within the SLWF did not seem to integrate in sufficient depth the relationships between women's activism, peace building and the collapsed state. How do women fill the political vacuum left by a weak and collapsed state, with no effective local government structures and few remaining traditional authorities ?

4. The sub-regional dimension of the conflict and the role of diamonds has not been sufficiently explored by the women's movement, in order to launch a platform for solidarity across the sub-region and within the wider African women's movement.

5. Women's organisations need to be strengthened and capacities developed for organizational and individual leadership. Skills and knowledge are required to engage in lobbying, advocacy, influencing policy, legal literacy and political participation.

6. Lessons learned from other countries, eg Liberia, Mozambique, Uganda, South Africa, and other countries represented here today. In this respect, Conciliation Resources (CR) publishes a review of international peace initiatives. The next issue in September will feature Sierra Leone and the processes for peace.

## **Conclusion**

There is currently a breakdown of peace with fighting breaking out in parts of the country and with Foday Sankoh in custody. SLWF led a women's march on May 6,

2000, and the signs look promising that women are again taking the initiative. But if there is no attempt to demand and create spaces to challenge and question orthodoxy, and articulate ideology, I fear some of the earlier mistakes will be repeated.

### Footnotes

1 Conciliation Resources, Accord 2000

2 Conciliation Resources, Accord 2000, p 73.

## Analyse critique des expériences de résolution des conflits par les femmes du Sud-Kivu

### Venantie Bisimwa Nabintu (Réseau des Femmes pour la Défense des Droits et de la Paix)

Je suis heureuse de participer à cette rencontre entre activistes et chercheuses impliquées dans des activités visant la transformation des conflits, dans la mesure où moi-même, j'interviens sur ces deux fronts. En effet, étant un cadre universitaire, ce qui me place dans l'élite féminine, j'ai activement milité pour la cause des femmes en vue d'accroître la prise de conscience des femmes sur la nécessité pour elles de s'impliquer davantage dans la gestion de la chose publique. A cet effet, nous nous sommes organisées dans le cadre d'une association dénommée AFECEF.

Les violations des droits des femmes sont courantes dans ma société. Depuis 1996, elles sont aggravées par les guerres et l'occupation du pays par les armées étrangères.

Les organisations de défense des Droits de l'homme du Kivu dénoncent certes les violences faites sur les femmes, mais il s'agit le plus souvent des violences commises par les agents publics notamment les responsables politiques, les militaires.

En revanche, les violences commises au quotidien par les institutions sociales comme la famille, l'école, celles qui sont commises sur le lieu de travail à l'hôpital, ou même dans la rue, sont banalisées. La société les considère comme normales. Pour elle, un mari a le droit de corriger sa femme. La situation des filles est encore plus dramatique. La conséquence de cette situation est l'installation et la légitimation d'une culture de violations de droits.

Une telle culture de la part des gestionnaires politiques favorise l'éclatement des conflits. Pour lutter contre ces faits, un groupe de femmes s'est mobilisé pour mettre en place un Réseau appelé «Réseau des Femmes pour la Défense des Droits et la Paix», qui est un cadre permettant aux femmes qui militent pour la promotion des droits des femmes de renforcer leurs efforts.

Ma société, dans laquelle rares sont ceux qui s'expriment par l'écrit, demeure encore orale. Or la lutte pour une paix réelle pour les femmes, exige une bonne connaissance des problèmes des femmes, d'où la nécessité de mener des recherches.

La présentation que je propose dans ces lignes, est justement le fruit d'une recherche rapide sur les expériences de résolution des conflits par les femmes au Sud-Kivu, à l'est de la RDC.

De plus en plus, l'opinion du Sud-Kivu et de la RDC se prononce en faveur de l'implication des femmes dans la résolution des conflits. Les affirmations du genre «les femmes ont un rôle à jouer dans la résolution de nos conflits» sont courantes.

Elles sont invariablement formulées par les hommes et les femmes, qui estiment que :

- les femmes sont naturellement non violentes;
- les femmes réussissent bien dans la gestion des conflits familiaux;
- les femmes donnent la vie et sont naturellement appelées à la préserver;
- les femmes sont attachées à leurs enfants et à leur mari et n'ont pas d'enthousiasme à les voir partir en guerre;
- les femmes peuvent user de leur douceur pour influencer la décision des hommes;
- les femmes ont les moyens de cultiver chez leurs enfants les valeurs de paix.

Mais il est important de noter que ces caractéristiques présentées comme des atouts, relèvent du rôle de la femme dans la sphère privée. Or la gestion des conflits armés, relève de la gestion de la chose publique. Décider de commencer ou d'arrêter les hostilités est de la compétence des détenteurs du pouvoir public, donc des hommes.

Il est cependant clair que la femme congolaise s'intéresse de plus en plus à la politique, répondant ainsi au vœu de Robert Roelandt qui affirme «qu'il est bien nécessaire que chaque citoyen participe à la vie politique, montre effectivement son intérêt pour le bien commun du pays ». (2)

Toutefois, son intérêt pour la politique demeure encore passif en ce sens qu'elle ne se fixe pas l'objectif d'influer directement sur les décisions. Car, comme le précise bien Robert Roelandt, «Faire la politique c'est agir et non pas seulement parler ». «Pour faire de la bonne politique», ajoute-t-il, «il faut donc agir, d'abord en vue de prendre le pouvoir, puis pour l'exercer de manière responsable à l'échelon de la commune, de la région, de la province ou du pays tout entier. Et dans l'exercice du pouvoir, l'action porte sur l'ensemble des intérêts des citoyens de cette commune, région, province ou pays». (2)

Il s'avère donc clair qu'une des voies et peut être la plus efficace pour les femmes de participer à la gestion des conflits, serait qu'un grand nombre d'entre elles entrent en politique, pour défendre leurs intérêts en tant que groupe, et ceux des familles

## Méthodologie

Nous vivons des conflits armés au Sud-Kivu depuis 1996. Nous nous sommes intéressées aux actions déjà menées par les femmes dans le cadre de la résolution de ces conflits. Nous avons récolté les données à partir d'interviews individuels non structurés, d'échanges au sein de focus-group. Les questions ont porté sur les préoccupations suivantes :

1. Depuis que le conflit armé a éclaté au Sud-Kivu, comment les femmes vivent-elles la situation ?
2. Quelles sont les raisons que les femmes avancent pour rejeter la guerre ?
3. Qu'est-ce que les femmes du Sud-Kivu ont déjà fait pour résoudre ces conflits ?
4. Pensez-vous que les approches de résolution des conflits adoptées par les femmes, peuvent amener les belligérants à cesser la guerre ?
5. Quels sont les obstacles que les femmes rencontrent et qui limitent leurs actions de résolution des conflits ?
6. Comment ont-elles levé ces obstacles ?

Ayant nous-même tantôt participé, tantôt assisté à des actions de résolution de conflits, nous avons pu compléter et/ou vérifié les données. La phase de collecte de données a été suivie par l'analyse du contenu, pour mieux connaître les actions concrètes menées par les femmes dans la résolution des conflits.

C'est une analyse critique qui examine les actions à la lumière de l'objectif qui est de mettre fin à la guerre.

## Analyse du contenu

Il se dégage de l'analyse des données que :

1. Les femmes sont en majorité contre la guerre car elle les empêche de mener leurs activités économiques et d'assurer par conséquent la survie de leur famille. Leur revenu de même que leur niveau de vie baisse et la pauvreté s'installe. La guerre les expose au danger permanent de perdre la vie ou de voir un de leurs proches mourir. L'insécurité qui devient permanente, empêche leurs enfants d'aller régulièrement en classe, ce qui compromet leur avenir.

2. La mobilisation des femmes, remarquée dans les actions visant la paix est plus motivée par la satisfaction des besoins économiques que par l'engagement politique. Nous en voulons pour preuve le succès des "journées ville morte" organisées en février 2000 à Bukavu le lendemain de la proclamation de la décision de l'autorité en place de majorer la taxe sur les étalages au marché urbain de Kadutu. Il était prévu que la taxe passerait de 30.000 à 300.000 Nouveaux Zaires (NZ). Or, plus de 80 % des vendeurs dans ce marché sont des femmes, qui parviennent à réaliser des transactions commerciales sans disposer de capital. Après la "journée ville morte", la taxe n'a jamais plus été majorée.

- Du fait de la guerre, les transactions entre le Sud-Kivu et les pays frontaliers (Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzanie) jadis fructueuses se raréfient. Les approvisionnements en produits manu facturés deviennent difficiles et coûteux. Les milieux ruraux étant envahis par les soldats et les bandes armées, la production agricole est déficitaire. Les denrées alimentaires deviennent rares en ville, d'où l'augmentation des prix. La session de réflexion sur «la femme entrepreneure et la recherche de la paix durable» organisée par l'Association pour l'Entreprenariat féminin avait relevé l'ensemble des difficultés économiques engendrées par la situation de guerre.

- Les femmes qui soutiennent les combattants en les restaurant ou en leur apportant un soutien moral par les fétiches pour qu'ils puissent vaincre la guerre existent, mais on peut les compter sur des doigts de la main.

- Une femme a justifié sa présence dans «la rébellion» pour défendre les intérêts des femmes. D'autres par contre ont refusé des postes proposés par cette même rébellion, pour ne pas apporter leur soutien aux faiseurs de guerre. C'est l'engagement politique qui prime pour ces dernières et pour les chercheuses qui s'approchent des belligérants au risque de leur vie pour comprendre le sens du conflit. Mais leur nombre est très faible.

3. Les actions des femmes pour résoudre un conflit armé sont non violentes. Les femmes se sont beaucoup mobilisées à l'occasion des journées ville morte de février et à l'occasion de la Journée Internationale de la Femme (sans Femmes). Pour dénoncer les violences de la guerre et plaider en faveur de la paix, elles ont passé le 8 mars, journée dédiée aux femmes, sous le signe de la méditation, du deuil et d'intenses prières. Pendant les trois jours suivants, elles ont porté les tenues de deuil. Elles ont aussi adressé une lettre au conseil de sécurité de l'ONU et sollicité la solidarité d'autres femmes, en adressant la même lettre à la Marche Mondiale des Femmes de l'an 2000.

4. Beaucoup d'associations féminines ont déjà organisé des ateliers de réflexion ou des sessions de formation sur la résolution des conflits. D'autres ont mené des études pour comprendre l'origine des conflits au Sud-Kivu et les rôles joués par les femmes. L'AFECEF en a mené une sur «les femmes, conflits et pacification».

5. Les actions des femmes pour la résolution des conflits sont timides et moins engagées. A l'issue des ateliers de réflexion sur la pacification, les femmes prennent généralement des résolutions. Ces dernières demeurent souvent lettre morte. On recommence de nouveaux ateliers sans tenir compte des résolutions déjà prises. C'est ainsi que les actions visant à toucher de façon systématique les belligérants et l'opinion internationale, bien que définies, n'ont pas été menées. S'il est vrai que le refus de payer les taxes ayant conduit à l'organisation des "journées ville morte" de février, visait surtout à éviter de renflouer les caisses des faiseurs de guerre, un grand nombre de femmes y ont participé sans prendre conscience de leur relation avec la résolution des conflits en cours. Les femmes qui se mobilisent volontiers et en masse pour les prières pour la paix, le font moins pour les ateliers de réflexion et encore moins pour les actions qui les mettent en contact avec les belligérants. Par exemple, toute la semaine du 14 au 21 mai, elles ont été très mobilisées dans les processions et les sit-in pour réclamer le retour de l'évêque de Bukavu.

6. Les obstacles limitant les femmes dans leurs actions pour la paix sont d'ordre socio-culturel et politique. Ils ne relèvent pas de l'économique. Les femmes hésitent à s'impliquer dans les actions de résolution des conflits autrement que dans les prières, par peur d'être indexées et partant de risquer les menaces du pouvoir en place. Une autre peur est, en intervenant dans des questions relevant de la sphère considérée comme masculine, d'être considérée comme déviante. Les hommes pèsent de tout leur poids sur la vie des femmes, ce qui limite leurs actions. Sur le lieu du travail, le chef est presque toujours un homme. Il peut la renvoyer de son emploi et la privant ainsi d'un revenu qui n'existe maintenant que pour les privilégiés. L'homme, c'est aussi le mari qui n'accepte pas une femme déviante et qui met en danger la famille.

L'on peut aussi citer les femmes qui profitent de la position de leur mari pour s'enrichir.

Les hommes, qu'il s'agisse du mari ou d'un membre de la famille, influencent souvent la compréhension que les femmes ont des conflits. En effet à cause de leur bas niveau d'instruction, du manque d'information, elles se trouvent généralement dans l'incapacité d'avoir une autonomie de pensée. De ce fait, elles ne comprennent pas les enjeux de la guerre, ne connaissent pas les acteurs et leurs différents rôles dans le conflit. Tout ceci limite les femmes dans la définition des actions de résolution des conflits.

Quant aux «femmes déviantes», on les retrouve davantage dans les organisations non gouvernementales de développement. Les organisations de femmes qui étaient intervenues dans la pacification étaient financées uniquement pour organiser des ateliers de réflexion et d'échanges et non pour le suivi. Ainsi les actions de lobbying et de plaidoyer auprès des belligérants n'ont pas pu être menées, faute de financement. En effet, contrairement aux hommes, les femmes intellectuelles ne se sont impliquées que récemment dans la gestion des organisations non gouvernementales de développement. Elles ont beaucoup de difficultés à accéder aux financements accordés par les bailleurs de fond, à l'instar d'autres organisations animées par les hommes.

## Interprétation

Si les obstacles rencontrés par les femmes dans leurs activités génératrices de revenus, peuvent justifier leur mobilisation dans les actions de résolution des conflits, l'absence de moyens financiers ne devrait pas les empêcher de s'y impliquer. En effet il y a plus d'une dizaine d'années que les salaires de

fonctionnaires ne sont pas régulièrement payés en RDC. Pour joindre les deux bouts, les femmes ont développé une série de mécanismes de survie allant de la débrouillardise à l'entreprise fiable. Elles parviennent tant bien que mal à assurer la survie des familles, pendant que l'homme continue à s'abrutir dans une administration qui ne paie pas ou à vadrouiller dans les villages.

Mais avec la guerre, tous ces mécanismes de survie sont grippés ou mettent en péril la vie de celles qui continuent d'y recourir. Avec la guerre, les responsabilités des femmes se sont accrues de façon dramatique, alors que leurs moyens se réduisent.

Il leur est alors difficile de mener des actions de résolution de conflits et de travailler pour satisfaire les besoins économiques et donc la survie des familles. Même si elles s'engagent, c'est pour une courte durée. Et cette adhésion rencontre momentanément l'approbation de l'homme qui est également concerné par cette survie. Ce n'est donc pas les intérêts des femmes qui sont pris en compte dans cette mobilisation, ni l'amélioration de leur statut et encore moins l'équilibre des rapports entre les sexes.

Les femmes ne remettent donc pas en question la discrimination sexuelle, qui est le problème de fonds.

Dans une étude inédite intitulée "Genre, Conflits et Alternatives de Résolution" nous avons montré que l'intégration du genre à la gestion de la chose publique était une alternative durable à la résolution des conflits en RDC. Cette approche révèle en effet que les actions menées par les femmes influencent très peu les décisions des belligérants.

La mobilisation très engagée des femmes pour réclamer le retour de Mgr. Kataliko, relève plutôt de leur engagement religieux et de leur attachement à une autorité morale. La passivité qui caractérise ces actions s'explique par l'éducation reçue et aussi par la campagne menée par certaines femmes qui n'hésitent pas à dire, je cite : «Nous allons payer les salaires des maris pour que les femmes restent à la maison et s'occupent de leur ménage». Ou encore «Nous les mamans, nous ne devons pas nous occuper de la politique, voyons plutôt la survie de nos enfants». Toute cette campagne pour exclure la femme de la gestion de la chose publique et partant de la gestion des conflits doit interpeller les femmes et les pousser à agir. Sinon, la vision unique pourrait mener la société à la catastrophe.

## Conclusion

Paradoxalement, pendant que les voix s'élèvent pour exiger une plus grande implication des femmes dans la résolution des conflits, on note des comportements contradictoires dans leurs propres rangs pour les empêcher de faire de la politique. Ce paradoxe est compréhensible. Celui qui a toujours bénéficié du privilège de décider seul de la destinée de la majorité, n'est pas prêt à se remettre en cause et en faire de même pour son système. Cette remise en cause est pourtant inévitable, si nous voulons instaurer une société où les droits humains sont respectés et où règne la paix. Telle est la vision que s'est assignée le Réseau des Femmes pour la Défense des Droits et la Paix. Pour concrétiser cette vision il est nécessaire que l'homme et la femme aient la possibilité d'exprimer leurs opinions.

Nous remarquerons que les femmes recherchent en général la paix par les méthodes non violentes. Pour que les femmes soient classées parmi "les personnes universellement respectées, c'est-à-dire les hommes et les femmes qui tentent de ramener la paix par le dialogue ; ceux et celles qui dans les situations difficiles, tentent de favoriser la réconciliation entre les peuples", il faut les aider à mieux définir et cibler leurs actions non violentes.

## Notes

1. Afrique d'espérance, bimestriel de culture et d'information, No. 5 juin-juillet 1999, Cadicec, Kinshasa;
2. «Faut-il faire la Politique » Robert Roelandt in Document pour l'action No. 13, 1963.
3. Venantie Bisimwa et Bosco Muchukiwa -«Genre, Conflits et Alternatives de Résolutions au Sud-Kivu”, inedit, Février 2000.
4. Afrique Espoir No. 1, avril 1998
5. Abeles, Marc - Faire la Politique Autrement, Paris, 1991.

## Liberian Women : Conflict Resolution and Peace Building Strategies

### Etwida Cooper (Liberian Womens Initiatives)

#### The political context

July 26 1847, Liberia proclaimed its independence. The Government of Liberia is structured after that of the United States, consisting of judicial, legislative and executive powers being carried out through the indirect rule system, with power vested by the constitution into these three branches, so as to permit checks and balances upon one another. Alongside this, is the traditional government, patterned after the acephalous or chieftaincy model. However, in December 1989, Liberia entered into a dark period of its history. Civil conflict broke out as a result of an attempt to overthrow an oppressive regime.

Analysis of the variety and complexity of the origins of the civil war provides some useful insights into the problems and into prevention of future conflict. The origins are deeply rooted in the development of Liberia as a nation, and its struggle to overcome destabilizing factors, from both external forces and internal social and political upheavals. Root causes include: ethnic bias and misuse of authority in the exercise and allocation of state power, the inept management of the nation's resources, and the lack of sound policies for effective governance and development. Contributing to the problems were a number of factors, minimizing the importance of popular participation and consensus building in setting and achieving overall national and development goals. These factors accentuated the marginalization of large segments of the population, contributed to social upheaval and jeopardized peace and stability. The more proximate causes of the conflict relate to the brutal and oppressive misrule of the military regime that came to power following the 1980 coup.

Liberia's prolonged seven-year civil war resulted in wide-scale destruction of basic infrastructure, human and material resources, as well as personal properties. An estimated 200, 000 Liberians lost their lives during the war, while close to half of the pre-war population of 2. 5 million was displaced. About 750, 000 sought refuge primarily in the neighboring countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Nigeria. The majority of the displaced and refugee population were women and children who were not positioned technically, financially or otherwise to meet the challenges of involuntary displacement.

Even though our neighbors themselves were not prepared for the sudden large influx of refugees, due to their own economic and political instability and lack of basic structures to provide both protection and humanitarian assistance, they were compelled to grant refuge to large numbers of our population. According to statistics

from the UNHCR, Liberia at one point had the highest percentage of refugees and displaced people in the world (Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Sierra Leone hosting the largest numbers). As the Liberian crisis continued unabated in 1990 and there seemed to be no forthcoming resolution, our neighbors in the sub-region provided troops, utilizing their meager resources to stop the atrocities being committed by Liberians upon themselves.

Given the failure of past attempts to achieve social and economic development in the sub-region and with the proliferation of small arms (easily transported), it was inevitable that the conflict would spill over borders. Our conflict regrettably spilled over into Sierra Leone and if we do not correct that situation, will spill over into Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.

## **The Peace Process**

The Liberian Peace Process encountered serious problems, due to the intransigence of warring factions to disarm, and the rift within the warring factions. Additionally, the emergence of new warring factions, which were not signatories to the Cotonou Accord, worsened the problem. Renewed fighting in parts of Liberia at various intervals, increased the numbers of refugees and internally displaced. The majority of the victims were women, children, the disabled and the elderly.

Attempts to resolve the crisis began in early 1990, with the first peace conference being held in Sierra Leone sponsored by the United States. Subsequent meetings held under the auspices of the West African sub-regional body, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), resulted into the formation and deployment of ECOMOG as a peacekeeping force in Liberia. With the holding of negotiations and meetings in West African capitals and Europe, under the auspices of ECOWAS, the UN and the OAU, several peace accords and agreements (at least 13) were signed. Political breakthroughs, such as the seating of the Liberia National Transitional Government (LNTG), the Transitional Legislative Assembly, and the filling of other portfolios of Government, were finally implemented. Even though the Cotonou Accord, signed in October 1993, stated that disarmament should be concomitant with the political process, the presidential and general elections were set for September 1994. Civil society, spearheaded by the women, agitated against any such action. Disarmament was completed in early 1997 and presidential and general elections were held on July 19, 1997. The present government was sworn in on August 2, 1997.

The international response to the Liberian crisis ran along three tracks :

- a diplomatic and security response from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including a military peacekeeping/monitoring group, ECOMOG;
- political and diplomatic initiatives, bilaterally and through the UN, including an observer mission (UNOMIL) and the establishment of the offices of a Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG);
- a program of humanitarian and other assistance from UN agencies, major donors such as the EU and USAID, and NGOs both to internally affected and refugee populations in neighboring countries.

## **Women in the peace process**

The world as a whole is dominated by males, and so is the case with African societies, of which Liberia is no exception: most tribes adopt patriarchal lines of succession. The priesthood, warrior and chieftain were the three classes of social

leadership in tribal society. Usually, albeit not exclusively, they are filled by males. Despite the above, women have attained status and distinction. In the traditional government, women as paramount chiefs have been instrumental in the extension of the powers of Monrovia into the leeward counties. History further shows that succeeding administrations did give women prominence in government. Women have held portfolios such as Ministries of Commerce, Transportation, Planning and Economic Affairs, Education, Defense and Foreign Affairs.

However, the planning process of Government is influenced by the socio-political culture of Liberia, which is a patron/client system that doesn't formulate policies to affect specific groups. There was no national policy to promote women or enhance their representation in public service, therefore women were expected to play a discretionary role in the peace process. Liberian women though, given the prolonged civil war and the resulting havoc wrought on the nation, were not prepared to take the back burner.

As the Liberian civil war dragged on, and more and more Liberians called for peace through negotiations, disarmament of all warring factions was considered the focus of the entire peace process. Women, who comprise about 50% of the population, began to organize into pressure groups to participate in the call for disarmament and peace.

It should be noted that the process to resolve the Liberian crisis was not an engendered one. Women didn't directly participate in the above negotiations except the Monrovia, All Liberian Conference where their opinions and proposals were highly considered.

Though women were not officially involved as members of delegations, during negotiations and meetings, in order to put forth and articulate their sentiments, the Liberian women galvanized all resources at their disposal to ensure that their voices were heard and their presence felt throughout the negotiations. They presented petitions to the United Nations, the OAU, and the ECOWAS, through their respective representatives in Liberia. To buttress these activities, women also staged peace marches, printed posters and brochures with disarmament and peace slogans. To further drive home their points and ensure disarmament before seating the LNTG, meetings were held with the United Nations Special Representative and other facilitators of the process. Even though all these efforts were made, the LNTG was installed without the disarmament of warring factions, which was in complete disregard of the women's sentiments.

### **Level of participation**

- Organization of the Pressure Group in late January, 1994
- Assembly of women from all walks of life to discuss strategies relating to women's involvement in the peace process (February 3, 1994)
- The first Position Statement, which was related to women's attempts to get involved in the peace process, was publicly read on February 9, 1994. In this, the women documented their demand for full participation at the peace table at every level of the peace negotiations and to be part of any decision-making policies affecting women and children specifically, and the nation as a whole. This document was distributed to Government officials, Ambassadors assigned to Liberia, the International Community, ECOWAS Leaders, the Secretary General of the OAU, the Secretary General of the United Nations, and the European Union. The women stressed that unless their demands were met, they would not cooperate or participate in the government.

- The women demonstrated through the principal streets of Monrovia, in protest over the atrocities and human rights violations that were meted out to unarmed civilians, especially women and children, and threatened to march on the streets of Monrovia without their lappas and skirts if their concerns were not taken seriously.

- The women picketed at the UNOMIL Headquarters and U. S. Embassy, when it was revealed that the UN Representative was involved in the clandestine act of forging a letter and signature of the then Chairman of ECOWAS, in favour of a particular warlord. The women demanded that he be recalled and communicated with the Secretary General of the UN to this effect. They also picketed before government offices, and the headquarters of warring factions. He was recalled.

- The women demonstrated in March, 1995 against the change of the Interim Government to that of a six man council with factions' representations. . The reason for the demonstration was that the change was not the answer to Liberia's problem but that disarmament would be. The Liberian Women Initiative (LWI), the women's peace umbrella organization, sent letters and telexes and even made telephone calls to important inter-national personalities. These included the Secretary General of the United Nations, senators Ted Kennedy and Bob Dole, the First Lady of the U. S. Hilary Clinton, and first ladies of countries that were contributing troops to peace keeping efforts in Liberia.

-The women wrote and hand delivered a friendly letter to individual warlords begging them to put aside their differences, stop the atrocities and work together for peace; appealing to each as mother, sister, daughter and loved one.

- When there seemed to be no progress after the delivery of their first letters to individual warlords, the women wrote a second letter to the warlords requesting an audience. The women pursued the matter by using contacts that were close to each warlord until the meetings materialized.

- The women lobbied the international community to help put an end to the war by explaining in full details the plight of the Liberian people. Letters were sent to the U. S. Government, the American Congressional Black Caucus, Heads of ECOWAS states, the British Parliament, the European Union and all major western countries.

- The women diffused tension and encouraged informal contact among warlords or their representatives and women activists, by conducting a week-long workshop. The workshop took place when the warlords persisted in backing out of promises they had made to the Liberian people and the international community. When the obstacles at the peace table became too difficult for the ECOWAS mediators to handle, the warlords were sent back to Liberia on several occasions to iron out their differences. This workshop in particular broke most of the stalemate among the warring factions, and the outcome of the workshop formed the agenda of the consultative meeting of the ECOWAS delegation held in Liberia a week later.

-In protest against the situation in the country, the women in conjunction with other civic groups organized a "stay at home " action, which was implemented to the letter. Monrovia and its environs were paralyzed as business-houses, shops and markets were closed.

- Women organized a delegation of six members, to make a forced entry at the 1994 Accra Peace Conference on Liberia. This strategic presence and interaction at the conference gave the women high visibility through the foreign print and electronic media.

- Not wanting to concentrate their efforts only in the capital, women arranged to hold meetings in the territories of both the NPFL and Ulimo.

- Women attended peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria in May 1995. At this conference, the women were given the opportunity to address the ECOWAS leaders and explain the plight of the women and children. Many of the heads of states came to know for

the first time the atrocities, the gross human rights violations and sufferings that were taking place in Liberia. Many of the leaders were moved to tears, as that presentation was really an eye opener. The women along with civic leaders, sought audience with the then Chairman of ECOWAS, President Jerry J. Rawlings, and expressed their disagreement with the Accord as it stood. The women were not satisfied with the Cotonou Accord, which stated that disarmament, demobilization and elections should take place concomitantly. Thereafter, several changes were made in the Accord, which then became the Accra Clarifications. As a result of this stance, disarmament took place before elections.

- The women again attended peace talks in Abuja in August 1996 at which time Madam Ruth Sando Perry, a founding member of the Liberian Women Initiative was selected as head of the Council of State. It was during Mrs. Perry's tenure, that disarmament finally took place and general elections were held.

### **Other peace initiatives**

As a means of appealing to the fighters to disarm, women's groups developed a series of radio programmes, consisting of dramas and individual appeals to motivate combatants to disarm and return home. Women braved going into the bushes, carrying items such as soap, batteries, salt to the combatants, in order to convince them to disarm. All these activities were carried out in the various Liberian dialects.

Other programmes geared towards disarmament, included a project designed to purchase guns from combatants. In other related areas, the rehabilitation of female combatants through counseling and other vocational training programmes were also implemented.

While the above activities may be directly peace related, women in traditional roles also contributed toward the peace process. A few of these indirect means were :

. Women risked their lives in search of food and other essential commodities for their families' survival. The men were vulnerable and were being attacked and killed. As a result, many women died in pursuit of food and other basic necessities.

. The distribution of relief supplies to aid in alleviating the plight of refugees and internally displaced.

. Qualified Liberian female nurses and doctors rendered professional services to the sick and wounded. These services were provided indiscriminately to all persons.

. Overall, women's roles were strongest in the religious activities surrounding the peace process. Prayer services led by women were held continuously throughout the entire country, these activities included prayer chains, fasting and praying and meeting with the warring factions through the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee.

As a result of the numerous efforts made by the women, the following were achieved:

- Disarmament and demobilization took place before elections;
- Multi-party elections were held;
- Peace and stability has more or less returned to Liberia.

Despite the efforts made by the women, they were hampered by the fact that they play a perfunctory role in policy-making. To effectively analyze this situation, it is important to understand the overall economic environment which includes the allocation of resources, the prevailing macro-economic and socio-political conditions which have definite influence over government expenditure and attitudes in the delivery of services to women and children.

Inadequate allocation of government resources to women results partially from insufficient funding and insensitivity to gender issues, which is indicative of national planning without inclusion of plans for gender growth and development. As a result of the lack of funding, women are illiterate and poverty stricken.

## Conclusion

Peace negotiations have been traditionally a male dominated field. Liberian women however consistently demonstrated their commitment to using their energies, talents and skills to move their society from war to a lasting culture of peace. They deplore the violent conflict, social disintegration and economic deprivation that continue to disproportionately affect them. Even though they were at first ignored, they remained tenacious in their demand for inclusion in the peace negotiations to resolve the Liberian crisis and were eventually included.

Liberian women's involvement in the peace process varied from survival-oriented activities, to specific actions such as the presentation of position statements, peace marches and radio appeals for cease-fires and disarmament and other women's initiatives both at home and abroad. They have proven themselves to be active and effective agents for peace and reconciliation. They have recognized that there is an urgent need to coordinate efforts to strengthen women's capacity to negotiate, reconcile, mobilize, sensitize and promote peaceful means of conflict resolution by building and supporting networks for:

- Conflict prevention and early warning systems;
- Building a culture of peace.

The women of Liberia continue to play active roles in conflict resolution, healing and reconciliation. However, it is worth noting that the efforts of the women are not being actively supported by Government or other sources. For the women of Liberia, it is important that healing and reconciliation activities are integrated for community acceptance. Liberian women, because of their unique role in both emergency and rehabilitation activities must be helped and encouraged. Though short-term initiatives are encouraging, persistent and long-term actions for reconciliatory efforts must be institutionalized. If not, success gained thus far may be lost.

Some principles that have emerged from the women's efforts are that:

- Cultural heritage, traditions and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms must be taken into consideration for successful conflict resolution and peace building;
- Conflict resolution must be rooted in local realities;
- An effective peace-building strategy involves all segments of society in peace-building activities and must be fundamentally concerned with local concepts of justice;

It is strongly believed that women, individuals and groups, could contribute significantly to conflict prevention, management and resolution by getting involved at the appropriate time to prevent conflict; the appropriate time is defined as the period before actual fighting starts. But if conflict breaks out, they should immediately join other interest groups and work for the resolution of conflict.

In order to ensure that a culture of peace is firmly established in Liberia, women's organizations have organized workshops, seminars and awareness campaigns throughout the political subdivisions of the country. They have held reconciliation meetings and the Liberian Women Initiative has a community-based project called "Women as Bridges to Peace ". The objectives of these campaigns are:

- To advocate for and build the capacities of women to undertake activities for the management and prevention of conflicts;

- To promote pressure group activities for the protection of women and youth, including the displaced and the counseling of women and girls in difficult circumstances;
- To ensure the election and employment of women in higher decision-making positions in the public and private sectors;
- To conduct training in peace building and reconciliation for the establishment of a culture of peace;
- To strengthen the capacities of female heads of households and orphanages for the development of coping skills and economic security of families;
- Establish necessary broad-based networks for advocacy and lobby.

In March 2000, the women of Liberia launched a Peace Campaign and established a Peace Fund to implement peace-building activities. The Liberian women believe that an effective peace building strategy attempts to involve all segments of society in peace building activities and must be rooted in local realities.

### **A position Statement relative to the role and involvement of Women in the Peace Process**

We, the women of Liberia, are the mothers of the land. We feel the joys and sorrows of this land in a special way because we are women. Not only do we represent one half of the population, but we also feel a special sense of responsibility for our children, our husbands and our brothers, who make up the other half of the population. We take care of the society. We soothe the pains. We are the healers and peace-makers.

We call on all women of Liberia at home and abroad, to unite and join our efforts in aiding the peace process in Liberia clear its final hurdle. The struggle for survival as a nation and as a people, is presently at a delicate and crucial stage.

For the past four years, we have been killed, raped, starved to death, misused and abused. We have witnessed the horror of having our children, our husbands, our fathers and other relatives killed and maimed before our very eyes. We have experienced starvation to the point of becoming walking skeletons. We have been stripped of our dignity as human beings! The women have borne all of this victimization with suffering and stoic silence. This silence is not to be construed as weakness or acquiescence.

Women amongst others, have been slaughtered in raids and massacres at the UN Compound, the Lutheran Church, in Vahun, in Fassama, at Carter Camp, in their homes, and at countless other places, to the extent where the name Liberia has come to be associated with mayhem and madness on a mass scale. The use of pregnant women as combatants and the conducting of «battlefield operations » on such women, are cases in point.

The blood of our loved ones who have so sacrificially died, should not be allowed to go in vain. Thousands of our citizens should not continue to starve and die of dangerous diseases, because they cannot be reached due to the passionate greed of a few for power and wealth. Our country should not continue to be held hostage and for ransom by bandits and warlords, who are in pursuit of power. Our population should not remain displaced at home and abroad.

We demand that Liberians take concerted action, to buttress the international endeavors to relieve the Liberian people of this cursed insanity. The warring factions and the IGNU, should place the interests of the Liberian people first, in order to urgently and successfully conclude the ongoing peace talks. Numerous meetings have been convened to bring peace to Liberia. Quite a number of international and African persons and organizations have figured in the peace process in our country.

The Cotonou Accord represents the latest efforts to achieve peace in Liberia thus far. Peace is possible now! We need peace now! We must have peace now!

In view of the mounting concern about the stalemate in the Liberian peace process, and the ultimate responsibility of each citizen for his/her own welfare, we hereby call on all women of Liberia, regardless of their social status or religious affiliation, to firmly adopt the following articles of faith in pursuance of peace in Liberia:

- That the national campaign for disarmament according to the Cotonou Accord, be identified to include the participation of all sectors of the Liberian society, including all religious organizations, schools, the media and all people of goodwill within our borders. Women must take a lead in spearheading this campaign. The UN, UNOMIL must work hand in hand with ECOWAS and the OAU who started and have continued to support the Liberian peace process.

- That all women of Liberia disassociate themselves and refrain from cooperating and participating directly or indirectly with/or in any government seated prior to the commencement of disarmament. In the same vein, we call on women across the length and breadth of our country to disassociate themselves from those parties (be they political or military), calling for the seating of a new government prior to disarmament. A campaign for women to disassociate themselves from such groups and individuals is now hereby launched. In this campaign women will be discouraged from casting their votes in the ensuing general elections in favor of any such parties or persons.

- That the UN, the Member States of the OAU and ECOWAS, and all humanitarian organizations, refuse to participate in or be a part of any attempts to seat any new government prior to disarmament.

- That a national prayer for peace and disarmament be undertaken by all peace loving people in Liberia, that at 12 noon each day all well-meaning Liberians should say a prayer for peace and disarmament and hold services where possible, until peace has been restored to our country. The churches, mosques, prayer groups and women's groups should take the lead in this process.

- That it is our position, that the seating of a new government should not be dependant only on the commencement of disarmament, but should be effected only when the disarmament process is at an irreversible stage as determined by ECOMOG. At the same time, in order to avoid the set-back of a 'stop and go' disarmament process, each step of the process must be carefully planned and executed, according to a timetable that has the full support of all parties, including ECOMOG, the OAU, and the UN. We want real peace! Not the so-called «cosmetic peace».

- That no one person or group should impose himself, herself, or itself upon the Liberian people with the sole aim of exploiting the people. We are tired of being divided. We are one people and we must move forward as one people.

- That the IGNU, NPFL and ULIMO resolve immediately the present stalemate surrounding the Council of State. It is extremely important for the LNTG to be in readiness for seating, in order not to delay the peace process. Let us avoid all dangerous political games intended to further impede the disarmament process. We must be careful not to lose sight of our priority, which is disarmament.

- That in consonance with the Cotonou Accord, appointments to all positions other than those of Cabinet Ministers, be the sole responsibility of the LNTG. We hereby reiterate our demand that the women of Liberia be included in all discussions on matters concerning the State and the welfare of the people. Our lack of representation in the on-going peace process is equivalent to the denial of one of our fundamental rights: the right to be seen, be counted! This absence also deprives

access to the opinion of 50% of its people in solving the problems on which our lives depend. Finally, as an expression in support of and in solidarity with this Statement, we call on all Liberians and non-Liberians within and without these borders, to display on their person the National Colors of Liberia, (red white and blue) from Monday, February 14th to Wednesday, February 16th 1994. Let us together prove that truly :In Union strong, success is sure, we cannot fail !

(Done this 9th day of February A. D. 1994 in the Republic of Liberia, West Africa).

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1 Workshop Programme

#### Tuesday, 23 May 2000 Introductory Session

- 09:00 – 10:30: Opening ceremony conducted by Ndeye Sow and Codou Bop  
Presentation of the participants  
Presentation of the workshop objectives, programme and format followed by a discussion
- 10:30 – 10:45: Coffee break

#### Presentation of Local Conflict Resolution Experiences

- 10:45 – 12:30: **Burundi:** "Expérience des Femmes dans la Résolution du Conflit au Burundi", Presenters – Alice Ntwarante and Gorette Ndacayisaba, Discussant – Martine Galloy (Republic of Congo)
- 12:30 – 14:00: Lunch
- 14:00 – 16:00: **Rwanda:** "Femmes du Rwanda: faire face aux défis", Presenters – Thérèse Mukamulisa and Ancilla Mukarubuga, Discussant – Fatou Sow (Senegal)
- 16:00 – 16:15: Coffee Break
- 16:15 – 18:15: **Nigeria:** "The Nigerian Situation", Presenter – Ime Essien Udom, Discussant – Durria El Hussein (Sudan)
- Senegal:** "Contexte d'émergence d'un mouvement des femmes pour la paix en Casamance", Presenter – Seynabou Male Cissé, Discussant – Vénantie Bisimwa (DRC)

#### Wednesday, 24 May 2000

##### Presentation of Local Conflict Resolution Experiences (Cont.)

Chairperson: Fatou Sow (Senegal)

- 09:00 – 10:30: **Somalia:** "The Struggles of Somali Women for Peace", Presenter – Asha Gelle Dirie, Discussant – Thérèse Mukamulisa (Rwanda)
- Congo Brazzaville: **"Femmes, Conflits et Paix au Congo", Presenter – Martine Galloy, Discussant – Seynabou Male Cissé (Senegal)**
- Sierra Leone:** "Women's Strategies for Peace in Sierra Leone: Gains and Losses", Presenter – Jeannette Eno, Discussant – Ime Essien Udom (Nigeria)

10:30 – 10:45: Coffee Break  
10:45 – 12:30: Chairperson – Ime Essien Udom (Nigeria)

**Democratic Republic of Congo:** “Analyse critique des experiences de resolution des conflits des femmes du Sud-Kivu”, Presenter – Vénantie Bisimwa Nabintu, Discussant – Ndeye Sow (Senegal)

**Sudan:** “Women and Conflict Transformation in the Sudan”, Presenters – Agnes Peter Nyoka and Durria el Hussein, Discussant – Jeannette Eno (Sierra Leone)

**Liberia:** “Liberian Women’s Conflict Resolution and Peace Building Strategies”, Presenter – Etwida Cooper, Discussant – Durria el Hussein (Sudan)

12:30 – 14:00: Lunch

### **Plenary Session: Identification of Working Group Themes**

14:00 – 15:00: Chairpersons – Ndeye Sow and Codou Bop  
15:00 – 16:00: Working Groups  
16:00 – 16:15: Coffee Break  
16:15 – 18:15: Working Groups

### **Thursday, 25 May 2000**

09:00 – 10:30: Working Groups  
10:30 – 10:45: Coffee Break  
10:45 – 12:30: Working Groups  
12:30 – 14:00: Lunch

Free Afternoon

### **Friday, 26 May 2000**

08:30 – 10:30: Working Group Presentations and Discussions

Chairpersons: Jeannette Eno and Martine Galloy

10:30 – 10:45: Coffee Break

10:45 – 12:30: Visit to Gorée Island: Henriette Bathily Museum and the House of Slaves

12:30 – 14:00:	Lunch
14:00 – 18:00:	Discussion and Adoption of Strategies
Chairpersons:	Fatou Sow and Durria El Hussein
Evaluation Session	
Closing Ceremony	
18:45:	Leave Gorée Island
20:30:	Dinner in Dakar at the Gourmandises Africaines Restaurant

## **Annex 2**

### **The List of Themes Emanating from the Country Reports**

#### **The differences between the conflict resolution strategies adopted by men and women**

Men: political and economic power

Women: motherhood/reproductive role

Solidarity at the local, sub-regional and continental levels (with business women)

Scarce resources

Women adopt informal approaches whereas men adopt formal approaches

Women are often excluded from participating in commissions, but are invited to participate in plenary sessions (Burundi peace negotiations in Arusha)

Women's strategies: status quo: what type of society emerges in the wake of conflict?

Ethnicity – belonging/loyalty: position in relation to the clan/solidarity among women belonging to different ethnic groups

#### **The nature of conflicts**

Coexistence between the perpetrators and victims of genocide

Positive values and practices in traditional conflict resolution strategies (which can also be discriminatory)

Sharia law

The marginalisation of local conflicts at the national level

The ability of women's organisations (characterised by social activities as well as the lack of strong leadership and ideology) to get involved in conflict resolution

#### **What changes should women's movements undergo at the local, sub-regional and regional levels?**

Women should be trained to resolve conflicts and maintain peace

Improve women's advocacy/lobbying and networking skills

Improve women's access to regional and international organisations (e.g. the Women's Committee for Peace and Development at the OAU)

#### **What should be done to ensure that women are regarded as important actors in peace negotiations?**

A secure environment should be provided for women's conflict resolution activities, particularly in authoritarian regimes and for the work involved in building solidarity among members of ethnic groups considered to be "enemies".

**Is it possible to resolve conflicts at the local level only (especially in the wake of international conflict resolution strategies); the importance of solidarity**

Women and politics in the conflict transformation process

Analyse the causes of conflict from a gender perspective

The regional and international dimensions of peace processes

The role of women in the development of a culture of peace

The role of women in traditional conflict resolution strategies

**Annex 3  
Working Group Reports**

The main themes emanating from the activists' presentations and the researchers' contributions were classified into three main groups, on which the three working groups based their discussions.

**Group 1**

**Women and politics in the context of conflict transformation**

Members: Asha Gelle Dirie, Ime Essien Udom, Etwida Cooper, Goretta Ndacayisaba

The group began its work with a brief overview of women in politics in the context of conflict transformation. The discussion revolved around four main points: the status of women, the obstacles they encounter, social expectations and required strategies.

**SITUATION**

1) Because women are not interested in political careers, there are few women politicians. In addition, they cannot influence the outcome of political decisions or play a role in conflict transformation.

**OBSTACLES**

**Socio-cultural inhibitions**

Religion

Political considerations

Multiple roles

Mistrust and divisions which favour men

Violence against women

Marriage

Discrimination against girls

**Undereducation**

Illiteracy

Lack of skills/experience

Lack of a feminist consciousness

Women are unaware of their rights

### **Legal Obstacles**

Family code, property law  
Constitutions/laws ignore the gender dimension

### **Economic obstacles**

Poverty  
Women's multiple roles  
Macro-economic policies disregard the gender dimension  
Women's lack of access to credit

### **OBJECTIVES/STRATEGIES**

The loss of socio-cultural inhibitions  
The change in socio-cultural attitudes in favour of women

### **Gender-awareness training**

Change women's mindsets to promote their participation  
Enforce equality and justice for women  
Sanction discrimination  
Encourage networking among women's groups at all levels

### **Women should gain experience to enhance their involvement and effectiveness in conflict transformation**

Training in negotiation and mediation skills and conflict analysis (causes and consequences)  
Enhance women's awareness of the root causes of conflict  
Promote laws that protect women's rights  
Legal education campaigns  
Enable women to become economically independent to improve their status in society

### **Formulate projects aimed at bringing women together**

Income-generating activities  
Lobbying and advocacy at the international level in order to influence macro-economic policies  
Integrate other resources  
Network with Businesswomen

### **SITUATION**

- 2) Women are excluded from political decision-making bodies
- 3) Women do not share a common vision so in conflict situations they rarely present a united front
- 4) Multidisciplinary research

### **OBSTACLES**

#### **Socio-cultural inhibitions**

Women are perceived to be courtesans not leaders  
Women regard as themselves as simply voters, which perpetuates their marginalisation  
Lack of funding

### **OBJECTIVES/STRATEGIES**

Help women to access micro credit

Equal participation of women in decision-making so that they can influence policies  
Lobby for the adoption of a positive discrimination policy  
Training – confidence building, resource mobilisation  
Development of leadership capacities (i.e. leadership training)

**A common vision**, which is clearly defined and acceptable to women and which recognises the plight of women in conflict situations

### **Ongoing gender-awareness training**

Integrating gender into educational programmes  
Information, dissemination of research focusing on women's initiatives

### **Promotion of women leaders/effective and acceptable spokespersons**

Consolidate women's voices relating to national/international issues  
Encourage networking at all levels  
Encourage women to support women candidates  
Build partnerships with men's organisations  
Develop ongoing gender-awareness campaigns  
Collect existing research studies on women's experiences  
Conduct research on traditional methods of mobilising women and building peace  
Gather information on conflict transformation  
Research existing models and methodologies on conflict transformation

## **Group 2**

### **The role of women in conflict situations**

Members: Alice Ntwarante, Vénantie Bisimwa, Fatou Sow, Liz Egan

In getting to grips with the theme, the group agreed to deal only with the involvement of women in armed conflicts.

## **General analysis of the behaviour of women in armed conflicts**

### **a) Women victims of armed conflicts**

Women victims of armed conflicts regards themselves and are regarded as those who bear the brunt of war.

### **b) Women as active participants in armed conflicts**

In general, even though women are not responsible for starting conflicts, they find themselves involved in conflicts in which they assume sensitive and invisible roles, through a series of activities. Eyewitness accounts and research have identified that women assume the following roles during conflicts:

- They get involved in the recruitment of combatants by encouraging and allowing their children to join armed forces or armed gangs;
- They feed and care for combatants
- They assume a magical and religious role by providing combatants with moral and spiritual support through superstitious practices. Some of them are present during conflicts and shout to frighten their enemies;
- As educators, women transmit messages, gestures and attitudes of hate to their children.

### **c) The Passive Woman**

As an accomplice, the passive woman may or may not be involved in causing conflicts, but she does not condemn them out of loyalty to her husband, ethnic group and religion. Women do not distinguish between these various dimensions, which they can experience at the same time and to varying degrees. Their social environment explains this duality. The instigators of conflicts can easily influence women to participate in conflicts by manipulating their feelings in relation to their ethnic group, maternal instinct, religion and marital ties. Furthermore, because of the informal nature of their involvement in conflicts they have few responsibilities. They act through their husbands and/or sons.

While women's marginal involvement in conflicts absolves them from assuming responsibility for the consequences of their actions, it does not guarantee that their activities will be effective. Problems arise when women try to raise issues relating to conflicts. They tend to limit themselves to issues affecting women, who are discriminated against as a group, without considering the other issues that affect them as members of society. Such a shortsighted attitude seriously restricts their political participation and engagement. Women's participation in politics also depends on their availability, which is hampered by their domestic responsibilities and their subordination in relation to their husbands. These two constraints are significant given the fact that women only acquire status within their communities if they are married and if they are economically dependent on their husbands.

### **Orientations**

In order to develop appropriate strategies aimed at involving women in conflict management, it is important to understand the context and the environment in which women's different social classes and socio-professional categories develop. This first step is essential to promote lasting solidarity among women.

- Strengthening women's conflict analysis skills in order for them to embrace the challenges produced by conflicts and to understand their behaviour when they occur is essential. One of the ways to encourage women's involvement in official management structures is training. During the post-conflict period, women should demand that mechanisms are put in place, geared towards educating girls to a high level. In order to take up this challenge, they should mobilise to participate in official decision-making structures.

- Women leaders should take the initiative and use every opportunity to get involved in official structures. It is important to collect and publish official statistics to raise the awareness of local, national and international opinion on the disparities and inequalities between the participation of men and women in official structures.

- Women's organisations should organise exchange trips, on the one hand bringing together women who live in countries where conflicts are taking place and those who have fled these conflicts and on the other hand bringing together women from different countries who are nevertheless involved in the same conflicts. Women's economic and financial dependence is a genuine obstacle to their official participation, which means that projects should be developed to enable them to significantly increase their income. Raising funds for women's organisations should help to achieve this goal. Mobilising funds for women's aid organisations and those aimed at improving the status of women will not only enable them to carry out activities that are visible at local, national and international levels, but will also help them to make the most of their activities. Women's formal involvement depends on

strengthening their capacities at this level in various areas relating to their work and particularly in relation to organisational management.

In order to respond to this need, International Alert and AAWORD should develop a regular training programme. Research will, on the one hand, make it possible to identify and respond to training needs and, on the other hand, publicise women's activities. Since research is materially and intellectually demanding, research methodology training, whilst improving the quality of women's research publications, can promote women's interest in research.

### **Group 3**

#### **Women's involvement in conflict transformation and the promotion of a culture of peace**

Members: Durria El Hussein, Martine Renée Galloy, Agnès Nyoka Peter, Ancilla Mukarubuga, Seynabou Male Cissé, Ndeye Sow

The group discussion began with a debate on the meaning of the term, "conflict transformation" to ensure that everybody in the group understood the theme in the same way. It relates to the way in which women should participate in conflict resolution and particularly relates to the strategies they should adopt in order to have a positive impact on conflicts. The group then went on to identify sub-themes and reviewed those identified by the workshop. For each sub-theme, the group identified the obstacles to the participation of women in conflict transformation and then put forward appropriate strategies, recommendations and research questions to overcome these obstacles.

The following sub-themes were regarded as being relevant:

- The difference between the conflict resolution strategies adopted by men and women. Women participate in an informal way whereas men participate in a formal way. At the Burundi peace negotiations in Arusha, women were excluded from technical commissions, but they were invited to participate in the plenary sessions as observers;
- Solidarity among women at the local, national, sub-regional and regional levels;
- Coexistence between genocide perpetrators (or other aggressors) and the victims of genocide
- Lack of resources
- Positive values and practices relating to traditional conflict resolution strategies (which are also discriminatory)
- The capacity of women's organisations to intervene in conflict resolution.
- What changes should women's organisations undergo at the local, national, sub-regional and regional levels?;
- Advocacy/lobbying/networking training
- Women's access to sub-regional organisations
- What should be done to ensure that women are regarded as actors in peace negotiations?
- Is it possible to resolve conflicts only at the local level?

#### **The difference between the conflict resolution strategies adopted by men and women**

In reality, the difference between the strategies adopted by men and women stems from various factors, which are linked to gender inequalities. These factors are of a

socio-cultural, political and economic nature. At the socio-cultural level, the sexist education that women receive affects their perception of themselves and their perception/representation of the world. This not only explains their lack of confidence but also their reluctance to participate in political activities and their acceptance of the secondary roles to which they are relegated. In addition, because women have been excluded for so long from the political arena, they have come to believe that it is the preserve of men.

This attitude is coupled with a lack of interest in public affairs because of the way in which they are conducted, particularly in Africa where they are characterised by violence, the lack of democracy and bad governance. The extremely high rate of illiteracy hampers women's activities in that they often do not understand the causes of and risks involved in conflicts.

Economic constraints, which disproportionately affect women, are also a barrier. In fact, most women care for children and ensure the well-being of their families by farming and establishing businesses. They thus have very little time to invest in other activities. In addition, women's activities tend to be confined to a limited geographical area and their scarce resources do not always permit them to widen their scope.

Women are also confronted with the problem of legal recognition. In certain countries, it is extremely difficult for women's associations to register with the Department of Home Affairs. This lack of legal status limits the access of women's organisations to funding and as a result their members progressively lose interest. Women's exclusion from decision-making bodies and their under-representation in the political domain causes their activities to be ineffective and lessens their impact. However, numerical inferiority is not a cause for apathy and women's alternative participation in politics, on the quantitative as well as qualitative planes, needs to be addressed.

### **Women solidarity at the local, sub-regional and regional levels**

With few exceptions, solidarity is often mismanaged for a number of reasons:

- power is exercised in women's NGOs and associations where class interests clash and identity-related problems, particularly ethnicity, arise, which does not promote teamwork;
- women's lack of access to communication and information compounds their ignorance and ineffectiveness;
- lack of funding is another factor that hampers women solidarity, especially at grassroots level, by preventing women from getting together.

### **Strategies**

- in order to overcome geographical and others obstacles, a conducive networking environment should be created;
- one of the weaknesses of women's NGOs and associations is their tendency to favour urban women elites. Grassroots women therefore need to be involved in conflict transformation, particularly given the fact that they are in the majority.

### **Coexistence between the perpetrators and victims of genocide**

Reconciliation is an important aspect of the post-conflict period. It is a process that stems from equitable justice. In order for reconciliation to be possible, leaders should ensure that criminals are penalised so that victims can enjoy their rights. The

issue of justice is a precondition for peace. Justice should lead to not just moral, but also material compensation. The issue of mechanisms is crucial. In Sudan, for example, a reconciliation and forgiveness structure was implemented, which has resulted in violators remaining in the community and even though their crimes have been forgiven, they have not been forgotten. The mind preserves memories of barbaric acts to such an extent that people are opposed to the principle of reconciliation without sanctions.

In Rwanda, the mechanisms that enabled women to testify without pressure being brought to bear on them failed – most judges are men and women who testify suffer intimidation and threats of reprisals. Another issue relates to reinstating the gacaca system of justice.

### **Strategies**

- women should influence decision-makers and society so that justice is done;
- the establishment of mechanisms aimed at ensuring justice is essential because peace cannot be restored without the people who committed the crimes being punished. This initiative should also incorporate women's rights;
- traditional conflict resolution methods such as the gacaca system in Rwanda should be revamped by ridding them of their conservative and patriarchal characteristics.

### **Positive values and practices relating to traditional conflict resolution strategies**

Traditional communication mechanisms such as poetry and song, in Casamance and the Horn of Africa, for example, have been neglected. However, these songs and poems focus on qualities such as male bravery and virility. How can women be encouraged to use their talents to promote peace? Women played a role in traditional mechanisms and means of expression. Today, these strategies have been trivialised or misused. The local populations themselves are not allowed to make use of them. The same applies to women fetishists in Casamance. The non-recognition of crimes that have been committed, even by women, constitutes an obstacle to coexistence. In Rwanda, rape cases are dealt with in modern law courts and not by traditional courts. One traditional form of justice for rape was as follows: a woman who had been raped who could not testify recounted her experience to relatives and friends who then testified on her behalf. The gacaca, a traditional arbitration structure cannot deal with problems as serious as genocide and rape, which has forced women to resort to modern legal systems.

Identity problems have a major impact on the issue of coexistence. Therefore, women should be helped to overcome these problems.

### **Strategies**

- In-depth research should be carried out on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms;
- Information relating to traditional conflict resolution mechanisms should be recorded for future reference;
- Inter-ethnic dialogue should be promoted because it enables different people to appreciate the similarities between their specific experiences;
- Joint qualitative research projects on obstacles to dialogue should be undertaken;
- Research should encourage debate on sensitive issues: why do women exonerate their ethnic group from the crimes it has committed?;

- Conduct research on the problems of identity and their impact on women's involvement in conflict resolution.

### **Women's exclusion from decision-making bodies**

We should think about the kinds of activities that need to be carried out at different levels.

#### **With public authorities**

Forging links with leaders is a major problem for women. The authorities should support women's activities and initiatives.

#### **At the local level**

- Approach the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Develop links with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in your country. Lobby for the inclusion of women in delegations tasked with negotiating peace;
- Encourage governments to ratify the decisions reached at regional and international conferences;
- Work with the Regional Integration Ministry.

#### **With regional and international organisations**

- Compile a register of sub-regional and regional organisations in order to work with them (OAU – Women's Committee for Development and Peace): what have they achieved? How do we consolidate these achievements? How should we go about working with the Committee?)
- Compile a register of international ministries and organisations which work with women;
- Fundraising: how do we approach the donors?;
- Solidarity at the regional and international levels should be fostered to internationalise women's activities and enhance their impact (activities carried out in one country can have an impact on what happens in another country);
- Women should demonstrate more pragmatism;
- A demonstration should be organised against the exclusion of African women from national, sub-regional, regional and international decision-making bodies aimed at resolving conflicts.

#### **Can some conflicts be resolved at the local level only?**

Some conflicts can be resolved at the local level only, but given the present-day ramifications and complexities of conflict, this approach is inappropriate - an international approach is required instead.

#### **Strategies**

Facilitate networking to foster solidarity at the national, sub-regional, regional and international levels.

#### **Provide women with training to enhance their lobbying, advocacy and networking skills**

- Train women to manage conflicts and create networks; restructure women's associations to ensure that they function democratically;
- Leadership training: organise roundtables for elite and grassroots women to tap their skills and experience and to develop strategies aimed at creating alliances between activists and researchers;

- The problems experienced by women who live in conflict zones: conduct research on women's organisations in conflict zones to understand their nature and problems and to put forward recommendations aimed at strengthening their capacities;
- Demand action-oriented research.

### **Women's contribution to a culture of peace**

Building a culture of peace hinges on education because the ideals of tolerance, respect for human rights and democracy should be instilled in children from an early age. In Africa, a large number of young people are left to their own devices and faced with unemployment problems. They are easy prey for unscrupulous politicians who drag them into armed conflicts. Educating them and raising their awareness of the consequences of war and the need for communities to live in harmony is essential.

### **Strategies**

- Incorporate a culture of peace into school programmes;
- Target churches and traditional associations;
- Encourage them to broadcast peace-related programmes;
- Conduct research on unemployed youth to improve the effectiveness of peace education.

### **Recommendations proposed by the three working groups**

- International conventions aimed at women should be implemented without reservations;
- Comparative research on the successes and failures of youth programmes should be conducted;
- Strategies to encourage women to take stand for public office should be adopted;
- Links should be forged with grassroots women's organisations;
- Support should be provided for training programmes on democracy/civic rights;
- Action-oriented research should be conducted on the obstacles to women's political mobilisation;
- Facilitate networking among women's organisation's by improving their access to communication tools;
- Increase women's material resources to enable them to find the time to carry out their activities;
- Increase women's mobilisation and commitment through projects aimed at improving living conditions and reducing poverty;
- Lobby African research institutions to integrate a gender perspective into their research methodology;
- Disseminate the workshop report to African research institutions;
- Conduct research on the impact of armed conflicts on women's economic situation;
- Gather information on all the research carried out on women and conflict in Africa (AAWORD)
- Conduct research on women's economic power in conflict situations
- Women and politics: what are the alternatives?

## **Annex 4**

### **Strategies and follow-up**

The brainstorming sessions held by the three groups enabled them to formulate a number of strategies and establish implementation and follow-up mechanisms.

These strategies were aimed at:

fundamentally changing institutions, people, attitudes, legislative instruments and social contexts;

developing and implementing new approaches to transform crisis situations and move from conflict to peace;

identifying, through research, tangible and achievable research topics, which can be applied to the real world and which involve activists and researchers.

The strategies that were formulated fall into two main categories: research and training. For each category, the duration of the activities and the institutions that would be responsible for implementing and monitoring them were stipulated.

#### **Research**

##### **Short term**

Send AAWORD research projects on women and conflict, which have already been carried out (International Alert).

##### **Medium term**

Create a research group on women and armed conflicts, hosted by AAWORD;  
Conduct research on the obstacles and constraints hampering the work of regional committees dealing with women's issues.

##### **Long term**

Collect information on the plight of women in Africa's various conflict zones.

#### **Training**

##### **Medium/long term (cont.)**

Akina Mama, AAWORD and International Alert should provide leadership, conflict resolution and gender training for the participants and other members of their respective organisations, according to their areas of expertise;

AAWORD, International Alert, Akina Mama, ProFemmes, Conseil de Concertation des Organisations d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base (CCOAI B), GREFFELS and Conciliation Resources should create an informal network to disseminate information, build solidarity and exchange experiences.

## **Annex 5**

### **Workshop evaluation**

The workshop evaluation covered the following areas: logistical preparations, the content of the workshop, documentation and recreational activities. Nine questionnaires were analysed.

#### **Logistical preparations:**

##### **Accommodation**

Five out of nine participants thought that the accommodation was excellent, two participants thought that it was satisfactory and two participants thought that it was

unsatisfactory. The last two participants who were accommodated in a house that was in the process of being renovated complained about the location of the toilets and the presence of dangerous insects.

### **Food**

While all the participants thought that the food was excellent, two participants suggested that a wider range of Senegalese food and more fresh fruit and vegetables should have been offered.

### **Arrival and transportation**

All the participants were impressed with the excellent arrival and transportation arrangements.

### **The workshop**

Assessment of the workshop methodology

The choice of the participatory method: five participants thought that it was very appropriate and four participants thought that it was appropriate because it promoted the sharing of experiences and enabled the participants to express themselves either in the plenary sessions or in the working groups.

The importance of bringing activists and researchers together: one participant thought that this initiative was appropriate and eight participants thought that it was very appropriate and emphasised the importance of the mutual learning experience. Field experiences should also inspire research, which should then help to enhance the activists' practical work.

### **The number of days set aside for the workshop**

One participant thought that not enough time had been set aside for the workshop.

### **Assessment of the content of the workshop**

The session dedicated to local conflict transformation experiences: all the participants thought that this session was very relevant and according to one participant it enabled them to compare and learn new experiences, which could be useful. For some participants, this session was the highlight of the entire workshop.

### **The session dedicated to identifying the main themes**

Two participants thought that it was relevant and seven participants thought that it was very relevant.

**The group work and discussions** were relevant for one participant and very relevant for eight participants.

### **The session dedicated to strategies and follow-up**

**Two participants thought that this session was relevant and seven participants thought that it was very relevant. For some participants this session was difficult because they were expected to get to grips with concrete issues and demonstrate commitment. The activists and researchers agreed to develop effective strategies and committed themselves to doing so. They came up with a number of**

## **practical activities with realistic timeframes and clear lines of responsibility.**

### **Assessment of the workshop facilitation**

Five participants thought that the facilitation of the various sessions was effective and four participants thought that it was very effective.

### **Assessment of the effectiveness of the documents provided by AAWORD and International Alert**

Five participants thought that the documents they were given were very informative and three participants thought that they were informative. One participant did not answer the question. One participant, no doubt a French-speaker, complained that the documents that were handed out were in English and asked for more documents in French.

### **Assessment of the proposed recreational visits and activities**

One participant thought that they were interesting and the other eight participants thought that they were very interesting. In fact, they enabled the participants to discover a historical Senegalese and African monument. It was suggested that more time should have been set aside for recreational activities, especially given the historical location of the workshop, and that films and television programmes should have been shown in the evenings.

## **Annex 6**

### **Evaluation Form**

#### I. Logistics

##### 1) Accommodation

Unsatisfactory

Satisfactory

Excellent

Comments and suggestions

##### 2) Food

Unacceptable

Acceptable

Excellent

Comments and suggestions

##### 3) Arrival and transportation

Inadequate

Adequate

Excellent

Comments and suggestions

#### II. The Workshop

##### 1) Do you think that the participatory method was?

Inappropriate

Appropriate

Very appropriate

Comments and suggestions

2) Do you think that bringing together activists and researchers was?

Inappropriate

Appropriate

Very appropriate

Comments and suggestions

3) Do you think that the time set aside for the workshop was?

Insufficient

Sufficient

Comments and suggestions

4) The session dedicated to local conflict transformation experiences was?

Irrelevant

Relevant

Very relevant

Comments and suggestions

5) The session dedicated to identifying the main themes was

Irrelevant

Relevant

Very relevant

Comments and suggestions

6) The group work and discussions were

Irrelevant

Relevant

Very relevant

Comments and suggestions

7) The sessions dedicated to strategies and follow-up were

Irrelevant

Relevant

Very relevant

Comments and suggestions

8) What did you think of the workshop facilitation

Ineffective

Effective

Very effective

Comments and suggestions

9) Do you think that the documents provided by AAWORD and International Alert were

Uninformative

Informative

Very informative

Comments and suggestions

10) What did you think of the proposed recreational visits and activities?

Uninteresting

Interesting

Very interesting  
Comments and suggestions

## Annex 7

### Biographies

#### **Agnès Nyoka Peter (Sudan)**

Agnès Nyoka Peter is the Secretary of the Sudanese Women's Association in Nairobi (SWAN) and the President of the Sudanese Women's Christian Mission for Peace.

Agnès is currently involved in training women in advocacy, lobbying, negotiation and mediation techniques, preventive diplomacy, post-trauma counselling, conflict resolution and management, women's leadership, political empowerment, gender-awareness and feminism.

Agnès has a Bachelor's degree in Community Development, but she is more involved in the training of trainers and hopes to learn more about it from AAWORD and International Alert by participating in their conferences, workshops and seminars and by sharing experiences with other African women in conflict situations, particularly in relation to monitoring the participation of women in conflict resolution and peace building. Agnès believes it is important to get involved in research programmes with the support of AAWORD and International Alert.

#### **Jeannette R.A. Eno (Sierra Leone)**

Jeannette Eno is the West Africa Programme Director at Conciliation Resources, which is a London-based NGO working in the field of conflict resolution.

Jeannette Eno, who is originally from Sierra Leone, has a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Social Anthropology from Hull University as well as a Master's degree in Rural Development from Reading University. She has worked for more than fifteen years as an administrator, consultant and trainer in public as well as private institutions in the UK and Africa. Her areas of expertise are change management, project development and management, project development and evaluation, the evaluation of organisational capacity, gender planning, fund-raising and marketing and leadership skills training for African women. In the area of organisational development, she has developed models for managing organisational change.

Jeannette has conducted numerous studies on women, training and leadership in Africa, the Caribbean and Asia. She is also a member of a group of experienced trainers at the African Women's Leadership Institute in Kampala, Uganda.

As the President of Akina Mama wa Afrika, a renowned African Women's NGO based in London and Kampala, she is involved, in association with the UNDP, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Department for International Development (DfID), Comic Relief and other regional and international NGOs, in formulating, planning and implementing projects to promote women's leadership in a number of African countries. Her field experience extends to countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, Uganda, Malawi, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe.

#### **Vénantie Bisimwa Nabintu (DRC)**

Vénantie who was born in Bukaire to practising Roman Catholic is one of eight children, four of whom are girls. Her primary and secondary school education in

Bukaire was materially and intellectually straightforward. In 1974, she obtained a diploma in Biology and Chemistry at Alfajiri College, a renowned educational institution in Bukaire, which demanded excellent performances from its women students. Vénantie also has a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Anthropology, with an Industrial and Urban Sociology option from Lubumbashi University.

Vénantie, who is a hard worker, learnt from her parents that education is an ideal, which she has successfully pursued. She began her career as a teacher in a social education institute in Kinshasa. She then worked at the Zairean University Press (ZUP) where, during an eight-year period, she was a literary assistant, the manuscripts and reference library manager and finally the head of the book promotion and distribution unit. In 1989, she got involved in development projects, firstly in a multilateral cooperation project aimed at rural development and then in a development NGO as the Executive Secretary.

Her particular interest in the advancement of women led to her creating women's associations, particularly the *Association des Femmes Cadres pour l'épanouissement integral de la Femme*, AFECF and the *Réseau des Femmes pour la Défense des Droits et la Paix* (RFDP). Although she works as a volunteer for a number of development NGOs, she nevertheless earns her living by working as a technical assistant at USAID.

Apart from her NGO activities, Vénantie has three children – one girl and two boys – and is married to a Forestry Commissioner at Kahuzi Buga National Park and is therefore interested in nature conservation. A researcher himself, her husband encourages her to conduct research because he firmly believes that it is the key to the success of the feminist struggle.

### **Durria Mansour El Hussein (Sudan)**

Durria, who is a lecturer at Ahfad University for Women, is involved in several professional organisations. She is a member of: the Executive Committee of the Babiker Badri Scientific Association for Women's Studies, in charge of the Law and Peace section; the Sudanese Family Planning Association; the Legal Aid Organisation; the Sudanese Women's Initiative as well as being the Secretary of the TB Patients Friends Association.

Durria is also a member of the following international organisations: Gender, Science and Technology (GASAT) and the Third World Organisation for Women Scientists (TWOWS).

Her training experience covers the following periods:

1997: basic skills training in conflict resolution (Ahfad University in association with the Eastern Mennonite University, Omdurman, Sudan)

1998: training sessions on "Conflict Transformation and Development", "the Role and Practice of Mediation", "Fundamental Conflict Transformation and Peace Building", "The Development of a Training Workshop on Conflict Resolution and Peace Building", "Violent and Non-Violent Conflict Resolution". The Eastern Mennonite University in the US state of Virginia offered these courses in 1998.

Durria has also facilitated various workshops on conflict resolution and peace building and has developed a training manual on "Basic Conflict Resolution Skills"

and participated in the development of a manual entitled "Leadership Training for Rural Women". She coordinates a project on "The Advancement of Women, the Law and the Development of Training Manuals" hosted by Babiker Badri Scientific Association for Women's Studies and funded by CIDA-Kenya.

### **Seynabou Male Cissé (Senegal)**

Seynabou Male is the holder of a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Geography. She is a founding member of Acapes Ziguinchor. Seynabou Male is a development activist but especially of peace. In fact, she has spent several years working for a women's group, which continues to seek solutions to the conflict that has devastated Casamance for the past eighteen years. This group has managed to mobilise an increasing number of women to get involved in conflict resolution in Casamance, not only through its awareness-raising activities, but also through its research on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

### **Fatou Sow (Senegal)**

Fatou Sow, who is a tenured Sociology professor, is a researcher at the *Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire* (IFAN) at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar and at the *Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS) in Paris. She teaches sociology and gender at Dakar University and in several Western universities. Fatou, who is a pioneer of gender mainstreaming in social science research in Africa, has also published a number of research articles on feminism, gender, women circumcision and the gendered state.

**Liz Egan** is the Programme officer of the Women's peace Programme at International Alert, which she joined in 1999 after three years in Rwanda working for Trocaire, an Irish Development NGO and the EU on a number of projects relating to human rights and justice. Liz has a law degree from University College Dublin. After her law studies, she worked for the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights in New York before returning to Dublin to pursue development studies at the Development Studies Centre in Kimmage, Dublin.

### **Ancilla Mukarubuga (Rwanda)**

Ancilla spent seventeen years as a primary and secondary school teacher. She then worked for NGOs and is currently in charge of the education programme at the *Fondation Barakabaho*, which is a Rwandan NGO. Ancilla is an active member of women's groups in Rwanda. She was the President of the *Association des Veuves du Génocide Agahozo* (AVEGA) and President of the Culture and Peace Commission within ProFemmes/Twese Hamwe. Her areas of expertise focus on violence against women, the educational needs of girls, HIV/AIDS, a culture of peace and children in armed conflict situations. Ancilla, who is a widow, has two children and has adopted two orphans.

### **Thérèse Mukamulisa (Rwanda)**

Thérèse, who is a lawyer, has a law degree from the National University of Rwanda. She then furthered her law studies at Moncton University in the state of New Brunswick in Canada. She is a member of the Constitutional and Legal Commission, which is responsible for formulating a new constitution for Rwanda. She was formerly the Executive Secretary for a coalition of Rwandan development NGOs, *Conseil de Concertation des Organisations d'Appui à la Base* (CCOAIB). She spent 1995 as visiting Professor of Comparative Law at the National University of Rwanda. Thérèse is a founding member of several associations for the advancement of

women, in particular, and human rights in general. She has organised and participated in national and international seminars and conferences on human rights and development, particularly rural development.

### **Alice Ntwarante (Burundi)**

Alice is a lawyer, widow and mother of two children. After working for a finance company (la Caisse de Mobilisation des Financements), she is currently employed as the Administrative and Financial Director at the Hydraulic and Rural Energy Sources headquarters in the Department for Community and Handicrafts Development. This cheerful and determined woman successfully juggles her professional career and political activism – she is a non-permanent member of the Constitutional Court; a member of SAHWANYA FRODEBU (Burundian Front for Democracy)'s Executive Committee; a founding member of and legal representative for *Femmes pour la Réconciliation Nationale et le Développement* (FERENADE) and a member of the Women's Group of Observers at the Arusha Peace Talks.

### **Marie-Goretti Ndacayisaba (Burundi)**

Marie-Goretti is married with five children, two of whom are adopted. She is a trained social worker, specialising in adult education. She is also a fieldworker who has gained considerable experience, since 1985, working with grassroots women's organisations.

Marie-Goretti is currently the head of the Training of Trainers Project for Non-Violent Conflict Resolution. This project, which began in 1996, is dedicated to strengthening the capacities of Burundian women in an attempt to promote peace building and conflict transformation in Burundi.

Marie-Goretti also works with other organisations devoted to resolving conflicts and restoring peace and is actively involved in promoting gender equality and eradicating human rights abuses in general and violence against women in particular.

### **Martine Renée Galloy (Congo-Brazzaville)**

Martine is a Congolese academic who has a PhD in English Studies from the University of Paris III, Sorbonne Nouvelle. From 1982 to 1997, she taught in the Department of Modern Languages at the Marien Ngouabi University in Brazzaville.

She has also worked as a Public Relations Attaché at the Ministry of Commerce (1982-1984) and at the Cultural Affairs Department in the President's Office (1993-1994).

From 1994-1997, Martine was the President of GERDDES-Congo, which is the Congolese section of GERDDES-Africa (Study and Research Group on Democracy and Economic and Social Development in Africa), a pan-African NGO based in Cotonou, Benin, before the civil war forced her to seek refuge in France where she is currently living. Her research interests focus on women's representation in African literature and on the "women and power" binomial, particularly women and politics.

Her involvement in electoral processes as an international observer led her to write a paper on "Women and Electoral Processes in Africa". She is also working on, "Women's Role in Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution". As a former member of the Women's Consultative Group for the Africa region at the International Planned Parenthood Federation and a former member of the Congolese Association

for the Well-Being of the Family, Martine is also interested in sexual and reproductive health problems.

**Codou Bop (Senegal)**

Codou Bop is a trained journalist. After teaching in the *Centre d'Etudes et des techniques des Sciences de l'Information* at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, she worked for several international organisations, including the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the Population Council.

**Ndeye Sow (Senegal)**

Ndeye, who is a historian by profession, was AAWORD's Executive Secretary from 1989 to 1992. She is currently working for International Alert in London where she heads the Women's Peace Programme, which covers the Great Lakes region of Africa and Nigeria. Ndeye is a researcher and activist in various fields, notably gender studies and conflict resolution. She is particularly interested in integrating gender into the theory and practice of conflict management, conflict resolution and peace.

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