

Gender, conflict and development
Volume II: Case studies: Cambodia; Rwanda;
Kosovo; Algeria; Somalia; Guatemala and Eritrea

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INTRODUCTION¹

This report was commissioned by the Netherlands Special Programme on WID, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) of the Netherlands as a background paper for a conference on gender, conflict and development organised by Vrouwenberaad Ontwikkelingssamenwerking to be held in Amsterdam in January 1996.² Vrouwenberaad Ontwikkelingssamenwerking set up a project group at the beginning of 1995 to work on the issue of gender, conflict and development as a result of their concern of the lack of a gender perspective in work on conflict. Vrouwenberaad Ontwikkelingssamenwerking held a workshop on gender, conflict and development at the Forth World Conference on Women, NGO Forum in September 1995. This, and the forthcoming conference in Amsterdam form part of their ongoing work on the subject. This report was prepared by BRIDGE (briefings on development and gender) at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex and is based on a review of published and unpublished literature, as well as on information from agencies operational in conflict areas. Volume I provides an overview of issues of gender, conflict and development, drawing selectively on case study material. Volume II (this report) provides the full case studies of conflict situations in Cambodia, Rwanda, Kosovo, Algeria, Somalia, Guatemala, and Eritrea.

The case studies are selected on the basis of the analytical framework of four different phases of a conflict (see Volume I).³ The cases corresponding to each phase are:

- pre-conflict Kosovo
- conflict Somalia and Algeria
- peace process Guatemala
- post conflict Eritrea
- all phases Cambodia and Rwanda

¹ Bridget Byrne, Research Assistant, BRIDGE, drafted the case study on Rwanda; Rachel Marcus, Research Assistant, BRIDGE, drafted the case studies on Cambodia, Guatemala and Eritrea and Tanya Power-Stevens, Research Assistant, BRIDGE, drafted the case studies on Kosovo, Somalia and Algeria. Both volumes were drafted under the supervision of Sally Baden, who also edited and revised the drafts. Individuals and organisations who provided information and gave interviews in association with this report are listed in the appendices following each case study.

²Vrouwenberaad Ontwikkelingssamenwerking is a network of gender experts in international co-operation in the Netherlands which presently includes 35 member organisations ranging from development co-operation organisations to education and research-based institutes.

³The terms of reference for the report are attached in Appendix I of Volume I.

CAMBODIA

by

RACHEL MARCUS

CAMBODIA

ABBREVIATIONS

BLDP	Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party
CDRI	Cambodian Development Research Institute
CGDK	Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CWA	Cambodian Women's Association
CWDA	Cambodian Women's Development Association
EIU	Economist Insurance Unit
FUNCINPEC	<i>Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendent, Neutre, Pacifique et Coopératif</i>
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency
KPNLF	Kampuchean People's National Liberation Front
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea
SOC	State of Cambodia
UNBRO	United Nations Border Relief Operation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority for Cambodia

1. BACKGROUND

Conflict in Cambodia has occurred in the form of a civil war, running from the early 1960s to the present day, with between one and three armies resisting the different governments of the day. Cambodia has also experienced international conflict when the bombing, looting and massacres of the US-Vietnam war spilled over Vietnam's borders into eastern and southern Cambodia from the late 1960s onwards and particularly between 1970-75. Thirdly, Cambodia spent three years under the Khmer Rouge, a notoriously authoritarian and repressive regime, which caused the deaths of approximately one million people by hard labour, starvation and execution between 1975 and early 1979. Despite the UN presence in 1992-3 and internationally supervised elections in 1993, civil war continues along the Thai-Cambodia border, and occasionally in Khmer Rouge strongholds elsewhere in the country. Human rights violations also continue under the present government and may be becoming more widespread.

It is particularly difficult to apply a 'phases of conflict' framework to Cambodia. Broadly, however, pre-conflict refers to pre-1963 although some areas did not experience conflict until after this date; conflict from 1963 to the present day, including the Khmer Rouge period, though varying in intensity between different parts of the country; the peace process years to those of the Supreme National Council and UNTAC, eighteen months in 1992-3; and post-conflict to the post-UNTAC period, whilst recognising there are areas in which conflict continues and that much of the country was *de facto* in a post-conflict period after the ousting of the Khmer Rouge administration in 1979.

Cambodian women have been eligible to vote since 1954 when Cambodia became independent from France. The country has had a government apparatus dedicated to improving women's position since the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge 1979. However, in the post-war period, national political representation of women has declined and local-level representation has not improved. The very small budget dedicated to the Secretariat for Women's Affairs and the small number of women representatives in government suggest that gender issues are not well institutionalised in national-level planning and policy-making. There are now approximately 18 NGOs dealing with women's and human rights, which actively lobby on gender issues (Secretariat for Women's Affairs, 1995:69).

2. POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

Cambodia has experienced civil war since 1963, when the first disaffected leftists fled from Phnom Penh to form a guerrilla resistance - later known as the Khmer Rouge in the jungles of north-east Cambodia (Jean, 1993; EIU, 1995). During the late 1960s and especially from 1970-75, the US-Vietnam war 'spilled over' into Cambodia, causing terror, and considerable loss of life and assets in the rural areas, fuelling peasant support for the Khmer Rouge. In 1970, the incumbent government of Prince Sihanouk was overthrown in a US-backed coup by Lon Nol, and many royalists fled the country and formed a resistance army based in Thailand. During this time, Khmer Rouge forces were taking more and more territory in the north and north-west and eventually overthrew Lon Nol's government in Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975. Supporters of Lon Nol's regime formed a third resistance group in exile - the Kampuchean People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF).

The Khmer Rouge regime - known as Democratic Kampuchea - lasted from 1975 to early 1979 and is infamous for the genocide and state of terror it imposed on the Cambodian population. In addition to starvation, forced labour and widespread torture and execution, huge population transfers were enforced from the cities and more populated areas to Khmer Rouge strongholds and less populated areas. The Khmer Rouge regime also attacked the Vietnamese border, in an attempt to recover land which had once belonged to Cambodia. On 8 January 1979, Vietnamese forces overthrew the Khmer Rouge and installed the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK)/ State of Cambodia (SOC) regime which was to last until 1991. The PRK government, headed by Hun Sen, was not recognised by the United Nations. The remnants of the Khmer Rouge fled to Thailand. From there and from remaining strongholds within Cambodia they continue to conduct guerrilla attacks. The Khmer Rouge was the main partner in the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), which occupied Cambodia's seat at the United Nations and was supported and armed by Khmer Rouge allies in China and Thailand.⁴ Operating from bases in Thailand, all three resistance groups carried out attacks on the PRK government, to which government troops retaliated.

In 1988-9, the Jakarta Informal Series of talks were held, paving the way for the Paris Peace Accords of 1991. It was agreed to set up a UN body to oversee a cease-fire to demobilise 70 percent of government forces and all resistance forces and to guarantee that the elections to be held were free and fair. As a result of the Paris Peace Accords, an interim government, the Supreme National Council⁵ was formed, which coexisted with the United Nations Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC) from January 1993 until the elections in May 1993. Prince Sihanouk, who had returned from exile, was appointed the leader of the Supreme National Council.

In 1992, over 22,000 peacekeeping troops, administrators and electoral registration officers, comprising the United Nations Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC) arrived in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge, which still controlled about 15 percent of Cambodia's

⁴ The CDGK was composed of the Khmer Rouge, the principal party, Sihanoukists and supporters of the KPNLF.

⁵ This was a coalition made up of the Cambodia People's Party (CPP) (the party of the Hun Sen government), the KNPLF, FUNCINPEC (the party of the Sihanoukists) and the Khmer Rouge.

territory, progressively withdrew from the UN peace plan and refused to disarm. Thus it was proved impossible to effectively disarm the other forces and has resulted in the release of

‘thousands of men accustomed to violence (and no doubt in easy reach of arms) into civilian society when land and employment opportunities, as well as law and order services are few and far between’ (Utting, 1994:24).

Twenty parties took part in Cambodia’s general election in May 1993, of which the most significant were the *Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendent, Neutre, Pacifique et Coopératif* (FUNCINPEC), the party of Sihanoukists, the Cambodia People’s Party (CPP), the party of the ruling Phnom Penh government and the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP) which emerged from the KPLNF. The Khmer Rouge boycotted and threatened to disrupt the elections but despite this 90 percent of the eligible population voted (Human Rights Watch-Asia, 1995). FUNCINPEC and the CPP were the overwhelming winners and a coalition government was formed. The UN withdrew after the election. Prince Sihanouk was reinstalled as king and a new Constitution came into force on 21 September 1993. Present-day aspects of conflict and insecurity in Cambodia are outlined below.

3 GENDER ISSUES IN THE CAMBODIAN CONFLICT

3.1. Political, legal and human rights issues

The major issues cross-cutting the phases of conflict are: human rights issues, in particular gendered human rights abuses and gender and ethnic issues in political representation. These latter particularly apply to the post-1993 state.

3.1.1 *Human Rights Issues*

Killings

The Khmer Rouge regime of 1975-9 is notorious for the scale of human rights abuses committed. These have been documented in Mysliwiec (1988) and several other accounts. Ledgerwood (1990) characterises this period as one of reversals, an attempt to destroy existing hierarchies in Cambodian society and to replace them with allegiance to the state. Urban, educated people and ethnic minorities were particular targets for re-education and were more likely to be shot for perceived non-compliance than rural 'base' people. Whilst no gender-disaggregated mortality statistics are available for this period, the present-day population structure demonstrates that many more men died than women (see Section 2.2). This also relates to the greater participation of men than women as combatants in the Khmer Rouge and other resistance armies. No statistics on the relative numbers of male or female combatants are available.

No information is available concerning human rights abuses during the PRK and transitional periods. In non-contested areas, this was a time of peace and reconstruction. Human Rights Watch - Asia (1995) has documented attacks on civilians by the Khmer Rouge in currently disputed areas. Beatings, killings and kidnapping of civilians, including of young girls, remains common (*ibid.*). Scorched earth tactics and the destruction of houses, trees, stock and other local assets are still causing internal displacement, for example in Battambang Province in a dry season offensive earlier this year (Martha Walsh, personal communication). Loss of assets in this manner may particularly affect female-headed households lacking adult male labour.

Human Rights Watch - Asia (1995) documents a return to the rule of law in the post-conflict period with private prosecutions being made. No information is available on the nature of such cases or on the numbers or kinds of prosecutions being brought by women and men. Although there is a UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Cambodia and human rights organisations investigate violations, there is little call for war crimes tribunals or the punishment of violators of human rights, due to a widespread perception that the legal apparatus is too corrupt and susceptible to political influence for this to be a meaningful process (Martha Walsh, personal communication).

Sexual and domestic violence

Women were subject to rape by Khmer Rouge officials during the 1975-9 period and this continues in the present-day contested areas. Rape and pillage are also frequently committed by the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (Human Rights Watch-Asia, 1995). Women in the border refugee camps, which were operational between 1980-93, complained of the lack of security and their vulnerability to sexual violence, particularly at night, when all day-time law enforcement agents went home. In addition to the trauma of rape, women and girls in the camps were also at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS (Contact, 1995:2), particularly from soldiers returning to the camps during the wet season. This vulnerability to sexual abuse continues in displaced person settlements within Cambodia (*ibid.*). Mollica and Jalbert, psychologists who carried out a study of the psychological problems and needs of refugees, observe that:

‘the Khmer community has suffered a degree of sexual violence unprecedented in modern Khmer history. All respondents indicated that rape and sexual violence were commonly practised under the Khmer Rouge, frequently occurred during the escape experience into Thailand and now constitute a significant problem in Site 2’ (1989:39) cited in Arnvig (1994:39).

Seeds of Peace Newsletter (1994:16) suggests that three-quarters of Khmer women face domestic violence, i.e. battering. Women activists interviewed in the newsletter suggest that this represents an increase in violence over the pre-war period and relates to the economic crisis facing much of Cambodian society, as men vent their frustration on women. The easy availability of weapons since the outbreak of war and the fact that many women have lost parents, to whom they traditionally would have turned for support, act to increase the intensity of violence and women's vulnerability (Zimmerman, 1994: v,128-9). There is some anecdotal evidence that the highest rates of domestic violence occur close to areas of intense military conflict (Martha Walsh, personal communication).

3.1.2 Gender and ethnic issues and the Cambodian state

The drafting of the Kingdom of Cambodia constitution, during the UNTAC period, involved a consultative process with women of all socio-economic classes and from all parts of the country, supported by UNIFEM (Martha Walsh, personal communication). The reconstruction of the country during the transitional period thus provided an opportunity for Khmer women to further their rights and interests. The Constitution now mandates specific attention to rural women, guarantees that housework and work outside the home are equal in value and that women cannot be dismissed from employment because of pregnancy. In practice, the majority of these provisions remain 'paper rights' (Mackay, 1995).

However, this Constitution only assigns legal rights to 'Khmer citizens of both sexes' (MRG, 1995:26), leaving the constitutional position of ethnic Vietnamese and Chinese Cambodian women and men less secure.⁶ These two groups are defined as 'residents', rather than citizens. This worsening of the legal position of those defined as non-Cambodians rests upon long-term hostilities between Cambodia and Vietnam. These have been exacerbated both by the

⁶ Khmer citizens are defined as encompassing the Cham and hill tribes (MRG, 1995).

racism of the Khmer Rouge regime and by the insecurity of the post-PRK years. Attacks on ethnic Vietnamese people, both by the Khmer Rouge and by civilians, continued throughout the UNTAC period and are still taking place.⁷ Despite widespread anti-Vietnamese sentiment, there is some protest by Cambodian human rights NGOs over the diminished legal rights of non-Khmer Cambodians (Geiger, 1994).

During the UNTAC period, women's groups such as Khemara and mixed groups such as the Ponleu Khmer Coalition were active in encouraging women to register and to vote in the 1993 general election (Seeds of Peace Newsletter, 1994:14), the first election for over twenty years. However, political representation of women has declined since the general election. During the PRK/SOC period (1979-91), women's political representation was at its peak with women occupying 21 of the 117 seats in the National Assembly and five women in the 31-member Central Committee. Since the May 1993 elections, only six seats in the National Assembly of 120 are filled by women (Mackay 1995) and no women ministers (Secretariat for Women's Affairs, 1995:18).

This may mean that there is limited impetus to push for gender-sensitive legislation in parliament and that there is scope for certain bills, such as the draft women's law, which outlawed domestic violence to be watered down (Heng, 1995:3). The Ministry for Women of the PRK/SOC years, previously headed by the President of the Women's Association, has been abolished and a Secretariat for Women's Affairs created. This is headed by a man who appears to be supportive of gender issues and recently promulgated the draft women's law. However, the Secretariat received only 0.12 percent of the national budget in 1994 (Boua, 1994:19), suggesting that gender issues remain a low priority. At district and provincial level, there are no recorded women representatives (Leiper, 1995:17). Women constitute approximately 0.5 percent of village chiefs (Mehta, 1993). This may have negative implications for women in the handling of local disputes, domestic violence and land claims.

During the PRK/SOC years, the Cambodian Women's Association (CWA), a mass organisation of the socialist government was formed to explain government policies to women throughout the country and to gain their support. In 1985, it began cooperation with the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), an Australian NGO, on a mother and health and nutrition programme. Its mass base allowed the programme to reach almost all women in Cambodia. This shifted the organisation's focus away from political issues towards welfare provision. CWA has cooperated with several international NGOs and UNICEF on programmes for women (Sonnois, 1990:53-6). At present, the Phnom Penh branch has become an NGO with foreign funding, and has changed its name to the Cambodian Women Development Association (CWDA). CWDA is particularly involved with HIV/AIDS and family planning work, also run projects in literacy, skills training, health education and childcare. At provincial level, most officials have been absorbed into the Secretariat for Women's Affairs and at the district level, into the health department. At commune and village level, the CWA has mostly been disbanded, except where there are development projects, working with women (Brigitte Sonois, personal communication).

⁷ In 1993, approximately 30,000 Vietnamese who resided at the Tonle Sap lake in Central Cambodia were forced to flee to Vietnam in the wake of a Khmer Rouge massacre (MRG, 1995:25). However, termed Cambodians by the Vietnamese authorities, they were not allowed to enter Vietnam. Cambodia, however, refused to let them return, claiming that they were non-citizens.

A recent press law makes defamation of the government or administrative organs a criminal offence (Human Rights Watch-Asia, 1995:163). This may have implications for women's organisations protesting government policies or for example, the non-implementation of women's constitutional rights.

3.2 Demographic and health issues

3.2.1 *Demographic structure*

The major demographic issue relating to the Cambodian conflict is the gender imbalance in the population aged over 15, resulting from the deaths of more men than women in combat, and more killings of men than women during the Khmer Rouge period. The last census of the Cambodian population was carried out in 1962, before the onset of conflict. While no records exist, anecdotal evidence suggests that birth rates may have fallen during the Khmer Rouge regime, due to malnutrition (Ledgerwood, 1990). In 1981, the PRK encouraged village administrators to resume the keeping of records of the local population. On the basis of these, the population in PRK areas was estimated at 6.7 million in 1981, 7.9 million in 1987 and 8.8 million in 1992 (EIU 1995: 11). During this period crude birth and death rates were monitored using hospital records.

Two baby booms occurred: the first in the early 1980s as the population began to feel more secure under the PRK government (Boua, 1982; EIU 1995:11) and as government policy promoted high fertility to recover from the Khmer Rouge years (Secretariat for Women's Affairs, 1995:53); the second, evident from UNTAC records in 1992-3, when the crude birth rate soared to 4.9 percent from an average of 2.6-8 percent in the late 1980s and early 1990s (EIU, 1995:12). This may relate to the expectations of Cambodians that UNTAC would secure peace, to the lack of family planning services in Cambodia, and to the high rates of infant and child mortality (120 deaths per 1000 live births and 83 per 1000 respectively) (EIU, 1995:12). Rising birth rates are likely to increase women's domestic workload and increase pressure on overstretched health and educational services.

The greater numbers of deaths of men compared to women in the conflict years has led to a very skewed population structure: Table 1 indicates the sex ratio in different age groups. Table 2 demonstrates the high percentage of female-headed households throughout the country, particularly in Phnom Penh (29.4 percent of all households), which has serious implications for poverty and livelihoods (see section 3). The imbalance in the sex ratios is greater in rural than urban areas with 89.2 men per 100 women in rural areas compared with 94.4 and 94.5 in Phnom Penh and other towns respectively. The percentage of divorced and widowed women (17.3 percent) is considerably higher than that of divorced men and widowers (2.7 percent) (Ronnas, 1995:15), indicating the greater mortality of men during the conflict but also the much greater chances of remarriage for a lone man than a lone woman. This has implications both in terms of livelihood strategies and in terms of the psychological well-being of women and men (see section 2.6).

Under Khmer Rouge rule, major population shifts from urban to rural areas and between provinces were enforced. Ongoing conflict from the late 1960s gave rise to large-scale internal displacement, as people moved to avoid war zones, and, overall, 360,000 refugees fled to Thailand. There are an estimated 100,000 displaced persons in Cambodia today

(Panhavichetr, 1994:57). No statistical information is available on the gender breakdown of internally displaced persons or refugees, although both are thought to be overwhelmingly female (Martha Walsh, personal communication).

Table 1: Age and Gender Structure of the Cambodian Population, end 1992

Age group	Total population (millions)	Males per 100 females
Under 5 years	2.0	100.5
5-14 years	2.8	100.0
15-64 years	4.6	82.0
65+	0.3	50.0
Total	9.7	90.5

Source: EIU (1995:12) compiled from UNTAC and Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) figures

Table 2: Demographic Structure of the Cambodian Population, 1993

	Phnom Penh	Other towns	Rural	Total (extrapolated)
Average household size (persons)	6.2	6.1	5.4	5.5
Percentage female-headed households	29.4	20.8	20.1	20.8
Gender distribution, men per 1000 women	94.4	94.5	89.2	89.9
Age distribution				
-under 15	39.2	42.5	44.8	44.2
- 15-64	57.5	54.3	51.0	51.8
- over 65	3.2	3.1	4.2	4.0

Source: compiled from Ronnas (1995:15), using data from Royal Government of Cambodia Ministry of Planning/National Institute of Statistics Socio-economic survey (1994: ix-xi, 56-57)

3.2.2 Disability

There are an estimated 350,000 disabled people in Cambodia, or 0.04 percent of the population, one of the highest proportions in the world. Most disabilities are a direct result of land mine injuries, through which approximately 500 people are killed or injured each month in the most heavily mined areas (Davies, 1994:21). Despite attempts to ban mining and mine clearance activities co-ordinated by the Cambodia Mine Action Center, new mines are still being laid in disputed areas. The majority of mine accidents occur whilst farming or cutting grasses or wood. Ironically, the lack of usable land in heavily mined areas is forcing people to depend more on the sale of cut wood, grass and bamboo and thus to risk disability and death (*ibid*:56). Davies (*op. cit.*) argues that whilst such activities are not strongly gender-typed, men perform them more often than women, and are thus at greater risk of mine accidents. However, there is clearly also a significant risk for women, particularly in female-headed

households, or where husbands or older children who might otherwise undertake such work, are themselves disabled

Statistics for Rattanak Mondul district - the most heavily mined area in western Cambodia - suggest that the overwhelming majority of mine accidents affect men (Davies, 1994: 21). In two surveys, women constituted only 5.6 percent and 8.7 percent of amputees and 74 percent of people with mine injuries were men aged 16-35. Davies considers that this accurately reflects the proportion of women suffering mine injuries and is not the result of women's injuries being afforded lesser priority (*ibid.*). High rates of disability may result in a reduction of the birth rate, given the limited chances of marriage for a disabled person, male or female (*ibid.*).

Both women and men report psychological trauma in coming to terms with the loss of a limb and in many cases increased hardship. Disability is not accepted in much of Cambodian society and there is considerable evidence of desertion of spouses who have become disabled. Men may be more likely to desert their disabled wives than able-bodied women are to leave disabled husbands. Such women are expected to become both breadwinner and carer (Panhavichetr, 1994:57), although there are known cases of women deserting disabled husbands. Deserted, disabled women in urban areas may be particularly socially and economically vulnerable; in rural areas there may be more possibility for disabled people to assist in domestic-based tasks and support from kin may be greater (Davies, 1994:116-7).

Women may be less likely than men to get prosthetic limbs because of feelings of shame in being fitted by a male prosthetics technician. In the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)'s Battambang workshop, women and children constitute only 4 percent of patients. More female technicians would help to redress this problem. The opportunity costs for both women and men of having a prosthetic limb fitted are high, as the process can take from two weeks to several months (Davies, 1994:103). However, the difficulties for women may be greater in that typically they are responsible for childcare and may not be able to make arrangements for their children for such long time periods.

3.2.3 HIV/AIDS

Since the arrival of UNTAC in 1992, the rate of HIV/AIDS is estimated to have increased ten-fold (Kahane, 1995:2). At least 150 UNTAC soldiers were known to be seropositive; many UN member states failed to provide HIV/AIDS education for their peacekeeping troops.

The stationing of the peacekeeping forces also saw an enormous increase in the number of commercial sex workers in Phnom Penh, from 6,000 in 1992 to 20,000 in the following year (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1993:16). This reflects both the demand from foreign personnel but also one of the few viable strategies available to women who have lost other assets and means of making a livelihood during the war. Their lack of economic bargaining power may mean that insisting on condoms is a luxury that sex workers cannot afford (Baden, 1992; Marcus, 1993). By 1992, 10 percent of female sex workers in Phnom Penh and 38 percent of female sex workers in Sihanoukville, a south coast port with strong links to Thailand were HIV positive. Dr Phalla of the National AIDS Committee estimates that 20 percent of sexually active men (i.e. 400,000 people) regularly visit sex

workers but do not use condoms (Kahane, 1995:2). Clearly, the non-use of condoms is putting both sex workers, their clients and the wives of their clients at risk of HIV infection.

There is some evidence of young girls being sold to soldiers and of rural parents selling young daughters to brothel keepers in Phnom Penh and Thailand. Dhamayietra Peace Centre Newsletter (n.d.) suggests that 20-30 girls aged 12-14 are kidnapped each month and trafficked to Bangkok.

3.3. Economic issues

The major economic effects of the conflict have been:

- an increase in economic insecurity, especially for certain vulnerable categories, including the majority of female-headed households and disabled people;
- the destruction of assets, leading people to undertake more risky alternative livelihood strategies, such as sex work or cutting grasses and bamboo in mined areas;
- a change in gender divisions of labour, due to demographic change and a high incidence of female household headship.

Poverty is widely believed to have increased since the war; there is evidence of increasing rural and urban social differentiation (Sonnois, 1990; Mackay, 1995). It is unclear whether gender differentials in poverty have increased.

3.3.1 *Changes in the gender division of labour*

In the pre-war period, as now, Cambodia was a predominantly agrarian society. Table 3 illustrates that throughout the country, there is a concentration of women in agriculture and an under-representation of women in other sectors in comparison to the overall proportion of the population engaged in those activities. Pre-war data is not available for comparison.

Table 3: Structure of the Cambodian labour force

	Phnom Penh	Other towns	Rural	Total (extrapolated)
Employed % (over 10)	46.7	51.6	61.9	59.8
Employed % (women)	41.1	46.0	61.8	58.9
Distribution by sector				
- % in agriculture	12.2	30.3	85.7	77.8
- % in industry	14.0	6.1	2.9	3.7
- % in services	74.0	63.6	11.4	18.6
Distribution by sector - women				
- % in agriculture	16.8	32.1	89.2	82.1
- % in industry	11.6	4.7	2.3	2.9
- % in services	71.6	63.4	8.6	15.2

Source: Ronnas (1995: 26, compiled from Ministry of Planning/National Statistics Report on the Socio-economic survey 1994: 53-57)

The traditional rural gender division of labour allocated certain rice farming tasks - such as transplanting and harvesting - to women and ploughing and harrowing to men. Household duties, such as childcare, cooking, cleaning and the provisioning of water and fuel were women's tasks (Ebihara, 1974). During the Khmer Rouge years, women and men were expected to carry out the same labouring tasks and in 1977-9 in particular, much cooking and childcare was collectivised. This did not necessarily represent a welcome reduction in women's workload. Rather, it served to weaken family trust, interdependency and support structures. This relates to the ban on the private possession of food, which was punishable by death and led many people to hoard and hide any extra food they could find from family members. This legacy of mistrust continues in many families with negative implications for rural production as a cooperative enterprise (Mysliwicz, 1988; Mackay 1995).

In certain rural areas, there are very high numbers of female-headed households, particularly among returnee and internally displaced populations. Geiger (1994) found that in returnee villages in Battambang province, whilst on average 24 percent of households were female headed, in one village 76 percent of all households were female-headed. This lack of male support increases the work and psychological burdens of women who are now completely responsible for the well-being of their families (Mysliwicz, 1988; Mackay, 1995). Where women have to perform all agricultural tasks, and carry out other formerly male activities, such as house building and repairs, this has had implications for gender identities. Mysliwicz (1988:58) based on observations by Boua (1982) comments that:

‘this transition has not been easy for most women, who feared that taking up traditionally male functions would make them less ‘feminine’ and reduce their chances of remarrying in a society with few men’.

In general, in male-headed families, there has been little redistribution of domestic work and this remains a woman's task. Mackay (1995) however, met some families in Phnom Penh where men were taking on more domestic work because their wives were working outside the home especially in families where the husband was disabled and stayed at home and the family's main income source was the wife's earnings. Childcare is a problematic issue, particularly for urban women who need to work outside the home but who lack relatives to care for their children (Mackay, 1995). Many women are, however, reluctant to leave their children with non-family members (Sonnois, 1990).

Demographic gender imbalance was recognised as a problem in the immediate post-Pol Pot years. The PRK regime set up Krom Samaki, or ‘solidarity groups’, of 10-15 families, working communal land and families' small private plots, by pooling labour, farm tools and animals (Mysliwicz, 1988:28-29). This system enabled households lacking these assets and/or labour to continue rice production and was thus extremely beneficial to female-headed households, though disliked by better-off households (Ledgerwood, 1990). Krom Samaki groups were phased out from 1986 onwards as market reforms began and land was decollectivised. Pre-war labour markets have re-established themselves in places, with women facing disadvantageous terms. For one day's hire of a man for ploughing, a woman may have to give two days' weeding (Thorn, 1990:26). Such difficulties in obtaining sufficient labour to work the land, combined with a lack of extended family structures to assist with childcare, has resulted in some female-headed households selling their land and moving to the cities, particularly Phnom Penh (Mackay, 1995). The continuing importance of

root crops such as cassava and sweet potatoes (EIU, 1995:19), requiring a lesser labour input than rice, may be an indication of the labour shortages facing many farming families.

3.3.2 Control and ownership of assets

The collectivisation of land under the Khmer Rouge and then its redistribution towards the end of the PRK government in effect represented a radical land reform (Ronnas, 1995). Women have always been able to own and inherit and pass on land (Ebihara, 1974) and this has not changed in the post-war period. However, village officials in charge of land distribution have often given poorer land to returnees (Geiger, 1994). It may be that women without male support are in a worse position to negotiate for good quality land. Widows and single women without male relatives may also be less able to withstand pressure from moneylenders and landowners, if they are renting land and cannot pay and therefore more likely to lose land (Mehta, 1993:18) than those with male relatives.

In contested areas, a current Khmer Rouge tactic is to destroy land in villages, through mine-laying or burning, leading to internal displacement. This is creating localised land shortages, resulting in migration to urban areas. The Khmer Rouge have also been logging forest areas in the north illegally and exporting the logs to Thailand. This has serious negative environmental effects and through flooding, or siltation, may render presently productive resources unusable e.g. fishing stocks in Tonle Sap lake (Davies, 1995). At present, the gender implications of this asset depletion are not clear.

3.3.3 Urban employment and self-employment

During the Lon Nol years almost two million people migrated to Phnom Penh and the other cities to escape the war in the countryside (Shawcross, 1986:318). After the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge in 1979 and towards the end of the PRK regime, this migration continued. Phnom Penh grew substantially during the UNTAC period, as many people perceived new opportunities with the influx of foreign funds. Also, as refugees have returned to Cambodia, many have moved away from their first points of settlement (Geiger, 1994) and, on not finding relatives, or being able to work the land, have moved to cities. This has resulted in a substantial growth in the urban informal sector, with potential opportunities and constraints for women and men. Mehta (1993) suggests that women may be concentrated in less lucrative areas of the informal economy, such as the sale of cigarettes, petrol and cooked food and retailing, rather than wholesale, often with disadvantageous arrangements.

Women comprised 70 percent of state factory labour during the PRK period. On privatisation, from the late 1980s onwards, many lost their jobs. In the public sector wages are so low that working two or three jobs is very common, for both women and men (Mackay, 1995).

3.3.4 Prices and markets

Ongoing conflict has caused severe disruption to markets. The Khmer Rouge regime attempted to create a cashless economy and during the PRK years, wages and prices were fixed at a low level (EIU, 1995), though this was progressively relaxed as market reforms were introduced from 1986, leading to higher prices. A Cambodia Development Research

Institute (CDRI) market survey for 1993 found widespread variation in the price of basic commodities. Apart from Phnom Penh, where prices tended to be higher, there were no other clear regional patterns (Ronnas, 1995:29). This variation relates in part to poor infrastructure; rehabilitation of physical infrastructure, particularly roads is a major focus of donor assistance.

The UN presence in Cambodia had extremely inflationary effects on the economy (Utting, 1994; EIU, 1995). Over five months in 1992, the consumer price index showed a tenfold increase; the price of rice increased by 250 percent and that of fish by 550 percent (Arnvig, 1994:147, citing UNCTAD and CDRI statistics). Land values also increased enormously, leading to speculation and significant rent increases for residents of Phnom Penh. Arnvig (1994:148) argues that there have been differential effects of inflation in different sectors and that people with a dollar income, working for UNTAC or the private sector, were much less affected than those earning *riels* (local currency), who were either self-employed or state employees. Women were more likely to be earning *riels* than dollars (*ibid.*).

3.4 Social welfare and social organisation

3.4.1 Interpersonal relationships and social support networks

Many observers comment that Cambodian social networks and family structures have broken down, or at least been seriously impaired, by decades of conflict and particularly by the Khmer Rouge regime. Many interpersonal relationships outside the home are coloured by suspicion of the political loyalties of colleagues who were formerly allied with another faction (Martha Walsh, personal communication).

One Khmer woman told Mysliwicz (1988:59):

‘Relationships have changed very much; families used to be intact and supportive. Husbands and wives were loyal to each other. The men now are not good. They are deceitful and corrupt. they say one thing and do another. We can no longer trust each other’.

Desertion of spouses is reportedly much more common since the end of the conflict (Davies, 1994; Mackay, 1995). During the Khmer Rouge period, many people were forced to marry spouses chosen for them by the administration. This policy aimed to expand the arenas of power of the Khmer Rouge and to break down the traditional power of parents in arranging and consenting to their children's marriages. After the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge, the PRK government made it possible to annul marriages and many men, in particular, chose to do so, often at the behest of their parents who wanted to reassert their control. Many women, whose marriage prospects are reduced if they are not virgins and by the gender imbalance in the population, would have preferred to remain in such marriages (Mysliwicz, 1988), rather than to face the stigma of being divorced.

Single elderly people, usually female, without surviving kin ties are among the most vulnerable (Geiger, 1994:200). The setting of young people against old during the Khmer Rouge regime may also have weakened the ethic of support for elderly people. Some elderly

people, especially women, have gone to live close to Buddhist temples, in order to receive charity but do not live in the temples in order to preserve their dignity and independence.

With the growth of cities, in particular Phnom Penh, and the current economic crisis, social support networks provide an inadequate safety net for growing sectors of the population. These include those with no relatives and those whose marriage prospects are low, for economic reasons (men), due to disability (women and men); or because they have already been married (women). This is evidenced by the rise in begging (Davies, 1994; Mackay, 1995), prostitution, and the number of street children (Childhope/UNICEF, 1992 cited in Arnvig, 1994). Poverty alleviation programmes focusing on marginalised groups may form some sort of social safety net, but coverage is patchy.

3.4.2 Refugee and returnee social support networks

Among refugee groups, there is evidence both of breakdown of social structures, and of new support structures being constituted. Geiger (1994: 197) cites a study of Site 2, the largest refugee camp on the Thai border, which revealed ‘a high degree of responsibility and care-taking of for others in their community such as the elderly, sick, disabled and orphaned children’ Mollica *et al.* (1990:64). Thorn (1990:25) similarly notes that relatives would pool rations in order to make them go further. However, she further observes that many people did not expect support from their relatives and were ashamed to ask for it. A considerable number of women felt unable to attend training classes because of childcare constraints. This confirms Reynell's research cited in Mysliwiec (1988) that many refugees felt that former social support networks had completely broken down.

Geiger (1994) observes that no provision was made for returnees to repatriate in the family or inter-family support groups which had evolved in the camps. Whilst this allowed families and support groups to split up, to get maximum assistance as separate households and to travel to different parts of Cambodia to ascertain the best place to settle, it also meant that they were unable to rely on these important support mechanisms. Generally the returnees who were happiest and least poor, were those who were able to return to villages where members of their families lived, or there were other community support structures. Given their economic and social problems on returning to Cambodia, overall, two thirds of female-headed households felt that their lives were better in the camps, in comparison with two thirds of the general population who felt that life in Cambodia was better (Geiger, 1994: 200).

3.4.3 Access to health and education services

Cambodia's health services were inadequate before the war and many facilities were destroyed during the conflict. Existing services are particularly burdened by the destruction of sanitation infrastructure during the war and by poor hygiene within hospitals, leading to high rates of reinfection. Cambodia's health indicators are the poorest in south-east Asia. Average life expectancy in 1992 was 51 years and the infant mortality rate, 116/1000 live births, with a mortality rate for under-fives of 181/1000 (UNDP, 1995:159-169).⁸ Given the problems of record-keeping, particularly in a post-war environment, these figures may be somewhat

⁸ The comparable rates for Vietnam were 42/1000 and 48/1000 respectively. Gender disaggregated mortality figures are not available.

unreliable. Health services are not free, reducing access for much of the population. Women returnees, who have primary responsibility for childcare and who previously had access to cheap, good quality provision in the camps, find the loss of access to health care on their return to Cambodia a particular problem (Geiger, 1994:200).

In general, girls' access to education has improved since the pre-war period, when most girls did not attend school but were instructed in home-making and agricultural work by their mothers (Ebihara, 1974). During the Khmer Rouge period, schools were abolished; all learning was to be through work experience (Mysliwiec, 1988). Information is not available on the relative enrolment rates of girls and boys, or the attendance of adult men and women at non-formal education classes during the PRK years. However, Mackay (1995:42) states that the PRK government tried to equalise male and female school enrolment. Today girls constitute 45 percent of students in the first year of primary school, but they have higher drop-out rates than boys. Thus, they constitute only 33 percent of fifth grade students. However gendered enrolment and drop-out rates vary widely across the country, with girls constituting 79 percent of first grade students in Svay Rieng but only 17 percent in Battambang. Drop-out rates of boys and girls are highest in the eastern provinces - possibly due to child labour in agriculture - and lowest in Phnom Penh (Ronnas, 1995:59).

Where families can only afford to educate some of their children, it is often boys who will be educated in preference to girls. Ledgerwood (1992) suggests that there is a return to the pre-war pattern of keeping girls at home after puberty. Girls are particularly valued for their contribution to housework, which is leading to greater numbers of adoptions of girls than boys from orphanages (Mackay, 1995). Often girls' secondary school enrolment is hampered by a lack of accommodation, as many schools are too far from villages to travel on a daily basis (Sonnois, 1990).

In UNHCR and UNBRO border camps in 1988, 43 percent of primary school pupils were girls. However, with higher drop-out rates for girls than boys by fifth grade, 66 percent of pupils were boys and 34 percent girls (UNICEF, 1990: 168).⁹ The higher drop-out rate of girls than boys is often due to mothers keeping them home to assist with childcare. No secondary schooling was allowed by the Thai authorities who deemed that no long-term development assistance could take place (Thorn, 1990).

3.5 Socio-cultural and ideological issues

In Khmer culture, there is a long-standing association of women with peace and docility, and of men with conflict and violence (Ledgerwood, 1990) which may have been exacerbated by the war. Whilst women have joined armed guerrilla movements and carried ammunition from the border camps to forces within Cambodia, the majority of guerrillas, in all factions, have been men. The state army has always conscripted men only. There is no information about women (or men) encouraging their sons to become soldiers; indeed some anecdotal evidence suggests that both mothers and fathers have tried to find ways for their sons to avoid the draft - normally by payment of a bribe, an option not open to poorer families. Khmer Rouge propaganda promotes attacks on ethnic Vietnamese women and children, on the grounds that women bear children who can grow up to be soldiers (Human Rights Watch - Asia, 1995:31).

⁹ No statistics are available for other camps (i.e. those controlled by different resistance factions).

There are common elements in the conception of virtuous womanhood described by rural women in 1959-60 (Ebihara, 1974) and that related by rural refugee women in the camps visited by Thorn (1990) in 1989. However, the changes in economic structure and livelihood patterns and the propaganda of the PRK period promoting an image of a patriotic, active socialist woman (Ledgerwood, 1992) have undoubtedly led to changes in gender identities. This has not been an easy transition for many women, who feel that they have become 'masculine' and fear that their marriage prospects are thereby lowered.

In refugee camps, women may have felt a particular responsibility to socialise their children in Khmer values and experienced particular stress at the difficulty in doing so. One woman in the Khmer Rouge-controlled Site 8 camp told Mysliwicz (1988:102) that children born in the camps

'don't know what Kampuchea is and what it means to be Khmer. They have no identity. They have never seen a mango growing on a tree or know how to plant rice. Many don't know what it is to have a grandfather or grandmother. They don't know what it is to have land or the freedom to move about. All they know is life in a closed camp, and all they have to look forward to is going to fight, because that is the only option open to them and the only thing they will know how to do'.

No testimonies are available from non-Khmer women or men to reflect changes in gender identities through the conflict years. As early as 1963, ethnic Vietnamese girls in parts of Cambodia were adopting Cambodian dress in order to be less conspicuous (MRG, 1995:20). During the Khmer Rouge time, Cham women who normally wore their hair long were forced to cut their hair short, like adult Khmer women (Kiernan, 1990:64). The traditional Cham sarong was banned and like other peasants, Cham men and women were forced to wear black pajamas (*ibid.*).

3.6 Personal/psychological

Expatriates who visited Cambodia in the early 1980s observe that the Khmer Rouge years were so traumatic for most of the population that many Cambodians were depressed, could not concentrate, found it hard to work and wanted to tell their experiences to anybody willing to listen (Mysliwicz, 1988; Mackay 1995). Boua (1982), a Cambodian woman who had fled to Australia (cited in Mysliwicz, 1988:59) observed that:

'in Kampuchea today (1981) one often hears widows talking obsessively about their husbands, who were killed by Pol Pot forces. They talk about memories of earlier, happier days, about the dreadful Pol Pot period, about the abduction and killing of their husbands. It seems that, tragically, many women will never forget the moment when their husbands were taken away or were shot or clubbed to death. These traumatic experiences haunt them and some women will never recover.

Many women complain about how inefficient they are compared to earlier days, and bosses complain about their absent-minded and day-dreaming female employees.¹⁰ A peasant widow said ‘ I do not know what I am doing or thinking every day, sometimes I forget about the pot of rice on the stove and leave it there to burn’ (*ibid*). A Phnom Penh woman who lost her husband during the Khmer Rouge time, said ‘I have friends but no one to whom I can say what I really feel’ (cited in Mysliwicz, 1988:60).

Reynell (1988) cited in Mysliwicz (1988:104) observed that in the camps

‘visible signs of psychological stress are widespread. Children have low levels of concentration and find it difficult to absorb much information. There are women for whom camp life has become unbearable a, who walk out of the house leaving their children, and others retreat into themselves, shunning social contact. Anxiety is high with people sharing their worries as to when the next shelling will take place....’

For women, there were also added fears of rape. Some Buddhist temples have been willing to perform cleansing ceremonies for women who have been raped, to help them regain their sense of self-esteem (Arnvig, 1994:155-6).

Whilst Ebihara (1974) maintains that there was space in traditional rural Cambodian society for unmarried women, the prospect of remaining unmarried and childless in contemporary Cambodia is felt very keenly by many women (Panhavichetr, 1994). Also, whilst in rural areas such as that described by Ebihara, there may have been relatives with whom an unmarried woman could live, in present-day urban Cambodia, women may depend on having children for support in their old age. It is unclear whether this change is a result of the war. Polygyny is increasing, particularly in urban areas (Mackay, 1995), although many older women are extremely opposed to polygyny and want it outlawed (Martha Walsh, personal communication). This may relate both to the stigma of sharing a husband and the reduction in control of property and assets.

¹⁰ This may include an element of gender-typing of women employees by their bosses as less able to cope with their traumatic pasts than male employees.

4. GENDER ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

After 1982, when the humanitarian emergency following the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge was deemed to be over, no major aid agencies except for UNICEF operated in Cambodia due to an embargo on aid to the Hun Sen government. A few NGOs, such as Oxfam and Australia's International Women's Development Agency ran small-scale programmes, focusing on agricultural development, water and sanitation and health. Most external support went to the camps, arguably fuelling the conflict. In 1979-82, \$300 million was used for relief and development for the 370,000 people in the camps. A similar amount was spent on the 5.7 million people remaining inside Cambodia. Significant bilateral assistance was donated by eastern bloc countries, Vietnam and India between 1982-91 (Secretariat for Women's Affairs, 1995:68).

4.1. United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO)

The UN Border Relief Operation (UNBRO) was charged with providing rations for adequate nutrition to the 370,000 refugees in camps on the Thai-Cambodian border in operation from 1980-93. Two-thirds of the camp population were unemployed and, whilst a parallel economy thrived, it was insufficient as a basis of livelihood for the majority of the population. Income-generating schemes often failed to reach the poorest sectors of the camp population (Baden, 1989:9), provided skills training for products with an insufficient market (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1993) and in general were unable to solve the economic problems faced by such a large number of people. Although women did work and receive training in the camps (Thorn, 1990), particularly those working for NGOs (Martha Walsh, personal communication), in three camps, including the largest, Site 2, men were specifically preferred for work, as rations were distributed through women (Baden, 1989: 9).

Due to concerns about corruption and the resale of food to the military, in 1986 direct distribution of food rations was replaced with distribution of rations to women and girls over eight years, in one camp on a trial basis. This system was later replicated in two other camps (Baden, 1989:8). Whilst well-intentioned, this system discriminated against single men and families with few boys. Many people dressed boys as girls and grew their hair long, to try to increase their rations. In response to this, distribution officials examined the genitals of children receiving rations until this practice was banned by UNBRO (*ibid.*). Overall, at least 30 percent of households were estimated to be receiving insufficient rations through this distribution system and this increased to 53 percent in the wet season when many soldiers returned to their families in the camps (*ibid.*:10). This illustrates that targeting women to receive rations and in particular, channelling rations through young girls and not boys, did not necessarily act to increase social equity and to reduce malnutrition, in large part because of inadequate consideration of the demography of the camps. The system was subsequently modified to take account of some of the above anomalies.

4.2 UNTAC

In 1992, UNTAC peace-keeping forces, election monitors and administrative workers arrived in Cambodia for a period of 18 months. UNTAC's presence had serious effects on the economy and was disliked by many Cambodians for the high-handed behaviour of much of the staff.

4.2.1. Employment

Most of UNTAC's recruitment came from men serving in military units and in general 'UNTAC did not consider it suitable for women to be involved in military activity' (Arnvig, 1994:149). None of the top ten UNTAC positions, nor their deputies were filled by women (*ibid.*). Only 10-15 percent of the 6,000 Cambodians employed by UNTAC in November 1992 were women (UNIFEM, 1993 cited by Arnvig, 1994:149); thus relatively few women benefited from the high, stable dollar incomes paid by UNTAC.

The paucity of employment of women by UNTAC also meant that they missed out in training and human resource development opportunities in areas such as administration, computer literacy and foreign languages (*ibid.*). Redd Barna (1993) cited in Arnvig (1994:149) notes that women with advanced education were mostly placed in stereotypically female jobs such as tea-making, book-keeping or typing. At the other end of the scale, poor women who sought work crushing stones for UNTAC road building projects were paid \$0.50 per day, compared with \$1 per day paid to men doing construction work (Arnvig, 1994:148).

4.2.2. Sexual harassment

During the peace process, male UNTAC personnel created such a problem of sexual harassment of Cambodian women and of female UNTAC staff, that complaints were made to Yasushi Akashi, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Phnom Penh. 170 people signed an open letter to him, calling for measures to redress sexual harassment, an advisory committee on gender issues to be set up and the dissemination of a code of conduct for UNTAC personnel (Open letter to Yasushi Akashi, reprinted in Arnvig, 1994:179-182). As a result UNTAC agreed to set up an office to handle complaints of sexual harassment, to enforce a code of conduct among UNTAC personnel and to provide education about sexually transmitted diseases (Colm, 1992:1).

4.3 Internationally funded and co-ordinated development programmes

There has been an influx of multi- and bi-lateral and NGO development agencies into Cambodia since the start of the peace process and particularly since the signing of the Paris Accords in 1991. Approaches to gender in some of these programmes are examined below.

4.3.1. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP has a large development programme in Cambodia, the operational arm of which is known as CAREERE. Initially CAREERE relied on UNIFEM to give proposed projects a gender audit. In late 1993, CAREERE took on a gender specialist to institutionalise gender analysis in its work (Martha Walsh, personal communication).

4.3.2. United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM).¹¹

UNIFEM organised a consultative process on the proposed Constitution, with the result that many women's concerns were incorporated into the Constitution. UNIFEM works with women/gender-oriented NGOs and has worked largely with Khemara, the first Cambodian NGO, whose main focus is gender-sensitive development. Khemara works mainly with disadvantaged female-headed households in Phnom Penh, initially by promoting craftwork and assisting with marketing. These projects were extremely successful during the UNTAC period, as the market for such projects was so greatly expanded. The international NGO and multilateral agency presence continues to provide a market. Khemara, which has received considerable foreign funding, to the point where it has had to turn it down, also run courses on assertiveness training and leadership skills for poor women, and this is now one of its major foci.

4.3.3 International non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Since 1990, numerous international NGOs have started operations in Cambodia. The majority of NGO development work focuses on agriculture, income-generation, water and sanitation and health development. Female-headed households have been identified in various poverty assessments as extremely vulnerable and initially most development work with women targeted this group. However, by 1993, various agencies had broadened the scope of their work to include other poor families. See Appendix 1 for an example of changing approaches to gender in Oxfam's work in Cambodia. Mehta (1993:46,77) concludes that:

'numerous international agencies and NGOs continue to target women-headed households with economic programmes and some services while leaving unaddressed the issue of women's role and position in the larger community and dynamics within the community which serve to create and maintain women's vulnerable position gender based thinking has not yet taken root within NGOs'.

¹¹ This section is based on personal communications with Martha Walsh.

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TIME LINE

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	KEY PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES	POLICY APPROACH	GENDER COMMENTS
1979-1981	End of Pol Pot regime. People on the move. Famine. Trade and Aid Embargo. Bilateral Aid from Soviet Block.	Food Aid. Emergency supply of agri. tools, seeds. Infrastructure building (jute factory, Phnom Penh waterworks).	Emergency relief campaign in UK. Emergency relief in Cambodia.	Food Aid not gender neutral. Agri. tools to men as assumption that they are farmers. No gender awareness within Oxfam as an institution.
1982-1985	Strong Government control of activities. No free contact between Cambodians and foreigners.	Infra-structure development (ferries, Bailey bridges). Spare parts for trucks. Rural Water Programme	Oxfam lead agency in absence of UN multi-lateral and western bi-lateral aid organisations.	Government control implied male control. Thus women's different needs not addressed in policies, and distribution structures. Oxfam used images of women and children for funding raising but no analysis.
1986-1989	Vietnamese army pulls out. Economic liberalisation initiated. Fewer restrictions on travel. Direct access to technical ministries.	Infrastructure work (major irrigation canals). Rural drinking water programme (drilling wells). Emergency aid to displaced persons. Technical training college. Evaluation of Oxfam programme.	Campaigning internationally for peace. Emergency support continues. Enhancing technical skills of Khmer personnel. Advocacy work: <u>Punishing the Poor</u> published in 1988. Consolidation of field office continues: material aid.	With Viet troop pull withdrawal, many women prostitutes unemployed. Young men conscripted. Villages lost able bodied men. Oxfam counterparts mostly men. Oxfam staff join gender workshop and staff gender forum.
1989-1991	Major fighting. End of Soviet aid. Internal displacement of people. Floods. October 1991 Peace Accord signed. UN agencies establish multi-lateral aid.	RDWP Emergency relief to displaced people. Irrigation programme in Takeo. Support to local NGO- Khemara. Funding of Health Unlimited and other agencies.	Increased advocacy internationally. Oxfam's political stand questioned in UK. Sale of <u>Punishing the Poor</u> stopped in 1991. Employment of Khmer staff.	Women IDP's different needs not recognised. During floods women and children left homes first. Women-headed households unable to salvage belongings - worse hit.
1992	UNTAC arrives. Preparation for election. Return of refugees. UNHCR programme of rehabilitation. Sporadic fighting. Unstable economy. Influx of multi- and bi-lateral aid and aid personnel.	Operational community dev. programme. Evaluation of internally displaced people programmes. First strategic planning by Oxfam Cambodia. Rural water programme evaluation. Funding of new local NGOs. Khmer staff expanded.	Oxfam moving out of high profile lead agency role. Longer term strategising. Community development initiated. Gender perspective introduced.	UNTAC men's behaviour gives rise to outcry among NGO and other women. Rise in prostitution. STI on the increase. HIV/AIDS cases detected. Men gain more employment in international organisations.

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	KEY PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES	POLICY APPROACH	GENDER COMMENTS
1993	UNTAC remains. Brief emergency periods. Elections. Rehabilitation of refugees ends. Sporadic fighting. Aid flow increases. Inflation.	Oxfam Cambodia does II strategic plan. Evaluation of irrigation project. Introduction of water-use education. Funding of local and international NGOs. Gender training.	Initial introduction of a 'programme strategy'. Focus on community dev. perspective in programme. Focus on funding and support role. Plan to indigenise programme in long term. Building of gender perspective.	Inflation affects small traders, mostly women. Also women as providers of food for the family are affected. Public discussion on women's right to vote leads to formations of women's rights groups to influence constitution.

RWANDA

by

Bridget Byrne

RWANDA

ABBREVIATIONS

UNHDA	United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs
MRND	National Revolutionary Movement for Development
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
UN	United Nations
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Women's Fund
AFWIC	African Women in Crisis Umbrella Programme

1. INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Rwanda, the genocide and the international response to it have provoked considerable controversy and debate. As with most conflict situations, the context of the Rwandan conflict is tied up with regional, as well as international politics. In particular, the debate has focused on questions of the different international response required for genocide as opposed to conflict situations and the possible contradictions in providing humanitarian aid to perpetrators of genocide.

Gender issues have also been at the forefront of attention in the Rwandan situation. Women's participation in the genocide has shattered the myth that women are incapable of such brutal acts. In addition, with men as the major casualties of the conflict and genocide, the focus has turned to women who will have to play a primary role in rebuilding their own and their families' lives.

The challenges of reconstruction amid such devastation are immense and are greatly hampered by the continuing political crisis and tension. Women in Rwanda, particularly female heads, of households face severe constraints posed by their lack of legal and actual access to resources and educational and social disadvantage.

2. POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

2.1 Political representation and ethnic division

2.1.1 Pre-conflict Rwanda and the roots of the conflict

Rwanda has been termed as an ethnic - or tribal - conflict. However, this implies that ethnic divisions are somehow fixed and inevitable, rather than the result of political and economic factors as well as ethnic background. In the pre-colonial era, there were three groups which made up the Banyarwanda people: the Tutsi, Hutu and Twa. Whilst the relationship between the three groups remains one of controversy, they are generally seen as different groups within one people, sharing the same language, culture and land, rather than as distinct tribes. In pre-colonial times, the groups were roughly organised into occupational categories, dominated by the cattle chiefs who were all Tutsi (African Rights, 1994: 3-4). There was a gradual destruction of the lineage system, within which women had some rights to land and labour and its replacement with vertical clientage relationships giving women no formal access to economic or political power. However, a tiny elite of Tutsi women did act as managers for their husbands, administering land, going to war as war chiefs and holding courts in their husband's stead (Jefremovas, 1991: 380).

The Belgium administration, which assumed control of Rwanda after the First World War, institutionalised and hierarchised the unequal relationships between the groups, transforming the Tutsis into an elite group. The criterion for belonging to the Tutsi group was defined by the colonial powers as ownership of at least ten cows, with 15 percent of the Rwandan population being defined as such in the 1933-4 census. Ethnicity passed legally through the male lineage. Thus membership of an 'ethnic' group, as recorded on identity cards, was defined by economic criterion and was equated with political power:

'The fact that all the government- imposed chiefs were Tutsi - and empowered to exploit and abuse the Hutu - meant that 'Tutsi' came to be equated with arbitrary administrative power, and 'Hutu' with powerlessness. This collective subordination undermined existing clan ties, and created a new sense of pan-Hutu identity'.

(Africa Rights, 1994: 6)

In political struggles, both before and after independence in 1962, there were periodic massacres of Tutsis (1959, 1963, 1967, 1973) leaving tens of thousands dead and forcing many more to flee to neighbouring countries (Physicians for Human Rights, 1994: 6-7; African Rights, 1994). However, the power that ethnicity accorded was gender specific:

'For men, ethnicity still conditions access to resources such as high level government jobs, education and land. However, for most peasants and most women, both Hutu and Tutsi, the privileges accorded by ethnicity are meaningless. It is still a minority within the elite group which profits from the ethnic affiliations. For women, the ethnic affiliation of the men in their lives is far more important than their own ethnicity.'

(Jefremovas, 1991: 392)

The Hutu governments that replaced Tutsi rule in post-independence Rwanda sought to replace Tutsi domination with a Hutu elite. In 1973, Major-General Juvénal Habyarimana launched a coup-d'état and established a single ruling party, the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND). Under a quota system, Hutus from Northern Rwanda were preferred, with army, diplomatic and parliamentary positions reserved for Hutus from the north-west. Women of all ethnic and geographical groups were excluded from power, except for a few prominent women, notably the president's wife Agathe Habyarimana. In 1990, women made up 17 percent of the National Council for Development and 13 percent of magistrates. However, in the same year, there were no women *Préfets* and no women *Bourgmestres*¹² (UNICEF, 1992: 78).

For much of the 1980s, north-south divisions had more political significance than Hutu/Tutsi divisions. However, towards the end of the 1980s, Habyarimana began to forge a pan-Hutu political platform, encouraging attacks on Tutsis (Physicians for Human Rights, 1994: 7).

¹²Rwanda is divided up into 11 prefectures (headed by *Préfets*), 145 communes (run by *Bourgmestres*, or mayors), 1,450 sectors (led by councillors), and 8,500 'cellules'. The préfets and bourgmestres are both named by the President on the proposal of the Minister of the Interior. (UNICEF, 1988: 3, UNICEF, 1992: 78)

2.1.2 *The conflict*

Tutsi refugees in Uganda, Zaire and Burundi who found themselves persecuted or unwelcome in their countries of refuge and refused citizenship in Rwanda, formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in an attempt to win entry to the country by military victory. Within the RPF, women have held important positions, partly due to the presence of women with high levels of education within the Tutsi refugee population. In 1990, the RPF invaded Rwanda, initiating an ongoing conflict which, interspersed with peace talks and cease-fires, continued until Habyarimana was killed, most likely by extremists within his own government in April 1994 (Physician for Human Rights, 1994). The invasions came at the same time that the government was under pressure to democratise and was facing economic crisis and donor-supported/enforced austerity measures, due to the drastic fall in world coffee prices (Physician for Human Rights, 1994: 7). The government responded to the threats from the RPF with wide scale arrests of Tutsis and Hutus critical of the government and with other human rights abuses.

2.1.3 *The peace process*

Under pressures to bring an end to the war from opposition parties, Tanzania, the Organisation of African Unity and donors such as the US and Belgium, Habyarimana entered into negotiations with the RPF in July 1992. The Arusha Peace Accords, ending the war between the RPF and the Rwandan army, were signed in August 1993 and provided the basis for power sharing between the former single party (MRND), the internal opposition parties and the RPF. UN Peacekeeping forces would oversee the establishment of an interim transitional government. However, the interim parliament had not been established by April 6 1994, when Habyarimana's plane crashed, triggering the start of the genocide (Newbury, 1995).

The Arusha Accord, rather than laying the grounds for peace, served to increase political tensions within Rwanda as the hard-liners in the government felt that too much had been conceded to the RPF. There was disquiet over the agreement that the government army and the RPF would be merged, causing demobilisation of large numbers of Rwandan government soldiers. There was also concern over the prospect of the return of Tutsi refugees. The government did little to dispel these worries (Newbury, 1995).

2.1.4 *The genocide*

The shooting down of the presidential plane on its return from peace talks with the RPF in Burundi marked the beginning of a highly-organised genocide which left over one million people dead and two to three million living in refugee camps. This constituted almost half of the Rwandan population. The genocide was organised through the government administrative system of prefectures and sub-prefectures and enforced through the use of the army, the Presidential Guard and the gendarmerie and the militias or *interahamwe* ('those who attack together'). However, there was a concerted attempt to involve as much of the Hutu population as possible in the massacres. This was partly due to the fact that Tutsis were not readily

identifiable by their features or identity cards¹³ and thus neighbours were required to identify Tutsis through their knowledge of lineage. There was also a desire to include all Hutus in complicity for the massacres. Ethnic distrust had been fostered in recent years through the use of the media and anti-Tutsi propaganda. Physical threats were also used to involve ordinary citizens, including both peasants and professionals such as teachers, doctors and priests, in the massacre.

Women's participation in the genocide

One aspect of the genocide in Rwanda which has caught the world's attention is the participation of women. African Rights traces this back to the massacres in 1973 in which women were involved in the violence (African Rights, 1995: 9). Some of the women who had gained prominent positions in Rwanda were involved in the violence in 1994. Prominent female politicians, including members of Habyarimana's family and of his government, such as the Minister of Women's Affairs, local government administrators, female journalists, nuns, teachers and nurses all used their varied positions of authority to support, incite and carry out violence (*ibid.*). Among the vast majority of Rwandan women who did not hold these positions of authority, there were also those who willingly - or under threat of death themselves - became involved in the killing. Children also were encouraged and/or forced to kill, often members of their own families (*ibid.*). Other men and women risked and lost their lives protecting Tutsis from the genocide, through hiding friends and strangers, or using their positions as administrators or policemen to try to protect people against the killers. Some communities also set up communal patrols to try to resist the extremist forces (African Rights, 1994: xii).

2.1.5 Uneasy peace

The victory of the RPF in July 1994 brought an end to the genocide but the RPF was left with the challenge of governing a country which had virtually no civil administrative infrastructure remaining, particularly as the previous administration were largely complicit in the genocide.

There are still considerable tensions in Rwanda, with Hutu rebels staging frequent attacks on villages. In September 1995 alone, UN military observers say the Hutus made 50 attacks, including ambushing Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) units, mining roads and sabotaging electricity pylons and water pipes. Whilst it seems unlikely that these forces will be able to seriously threaten the government, the instability the attacks cause encourages hard-line individuals in the government to clamp down on dissenting voices. More moderate voices within the cabinet, in particular, moderate Hutus who had formed a coalition with the RPF have been removed, or resigned from office.

¹³Many Tutsis, through political connections or bribes had obtained identity cards identifying them as Hutu.

3. GENDER DIMENSIONS OF THE RWANDAN CONFLICT

3. 1 Political, legal and human rights issues

3.1.1 Political issues

RPF attempts to establish a government are hampered by lack of resources and of administrative capacity, given that the RPF was largely a military organisation. Whilst there may be a desire to replace the centralised and hierarchical administrative system of the former regime, which was characterised by political patronage and corruption, the RPF has no alternative model of civil infrastructure to put in its place (African Rights, 1994: 639).

Women took part in the fighting on the side of the RPF and some have gained important posts in the new government. For example, the major of Kigali is a woman who has played an important role within the RPF. Both the Ministries for Rehabilitation and for Women are headed by women. Whilst these women undoubtedly represent an elite, there is evidence that their prominent position within the RPF may ensure that the specific gender concerns, for example concerning land and other legal rights, will gain more exposure as a result of their presence.

3.1.2 Legal Issues

In the pre-conflict period, women had very circumscribed legal rights. Women could vote but their husbands consent was required for them to engage in commerce, register a business, buy land, act as a witness, or undertake court action. Women could open bank accounts but husbands had the right to withdraw money from their wives' accounts. The position of widows and their rights to use their husband's land (which they cannot sell) was dependent on the willingness of their sons to protect them and defend their right to usufruct.¹⁴ A woman without a son has few legal and social avenues of recourse. In the pre-conflict period, it was not uncommon for a young widow to be driven from her husband's land by his kin, often losing property acquired by her outside the marriage, because all conjugal property is considered to belong to her husband (Jefremovas, 1991: 383). In pre-genocide Rwanda, a large number (42 percent) of people in cohabiting unions had not been officially married through civil or traditional ceremonies (UNICEF, 1992: 63). In this situation, women are likely to have a much less secure claim on their partner's resources and support.

During the conflict, many farmers were forced off their land. Disputes over land use were one motivating factor for the genocide. In the aftermath of the genocide, there is great concern about the lack of property rights of widows and the possibility of widows being forced off farms, or unable to return. As property passes through the male members of the household, widows who do not have male sons risk losing their property to their deceased husband's relatives. According to a report for the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, the Ministry of Rehabilitation has requested help to support advocates for widows

¹⁴The ending of the clan system of land ownership in the run up to and during colonialisation resulted in women losing the limited control over land that they had. In the clan lineage system, land was passed through the mother, thus giving women some influence. Ethnicity and land inheritance, however passes through the father (Lindsey Hilsum, personal communication).

to uphold their rights (O'Neill, 1995: 3). UNICEF is in the process of reviewing Rwandan law with the Ministry for Women's Affairs to see how it discriminates against women (Lindsey Hilsum, personal communication). However, whatever its conclusions, it is not clear whether the government will be prepared to change the property laws to give women full property rights. The ownership of land is a particularly contentious issue in Rwanda, with land shortages used as one of the reasons for excluding Tutsi refugees before the conflict. Thus it seems unlikely that this issue will be easily resolved.

Polygamy is officially illegal in Rwanda but de facto polygamy may be on the increase given the shortage of men and the economic, legal and social importance for women of a male protector in the form of a father or husband. It has been noted in refugee camps that young girls commonly partner with older men as second wives, in order to obtain better food or more clothes (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1995: 10). During the early stages of the genocide, some Tutsi women were 'taken as wives' by Hutu killers. Those that were not subsequently killed are likely to have great problems in being accepted back into their families and social networks.

3.1.3 Human rights abuses

In the period 1990 to 1994, there were widespread abuses of human rights in Rwanda, including imprisonments and summary extra judicial executions and massacres of Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Amnesty International estimates that between October 1990 and April 1994 there were over 2,300 cases of extrajudicial execution by members of the security forces and militia, as well as torture (Physician for Human Rights, 1994: 8). Men, due to their prominence in public life, are likely to have suffered more directly from these violations of human rights whilst women will also have suffered from the imprisonment and killing of their husbands and fathers due to emotional, economic and legal dependence on them.

It is internationally recognised that acts of genocide occurred in Rwanda in 1994, thus constituting an extreme violation of human rights abuses. Whilst it is likely that more men than women died in the genocide, many of those women who survived suffered rape and sexual abuse (African Rights, 1994: ix).

The impact of the involvement of women in the genocide on gender relations and the gendered distribution of political power is difficult to determine. Societal perception that women are not capable of committing such acts of cruelty and torture as were involved in the genocide may have resulted in guilty women being given protection and evading imprisonment. There are currently approximately 1,000 women in prisons awaiting trial for participation in the genocide¹⁵ as compared to approximately 48,000 men.¹⁶ There are 200 children, mostly boys under 14 charged with genocide.¹⁷ However, it would also seem likely that more men were involved in the killing, especially given men's dominance of the armed forces and militia and of other positions of authority.

¹⁵*The Observer*, 27/08/95: 15

¹⁶*The Irish Times*, 06/07/95: 9

¹⁷*The Independent*, 23/08/95: 2,3

The United Nations Security Council has established an international tribunal to prosecute those responsible for the genocide and other violations of international humanitarian law. It has also established a Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda with human rights field officers carrying out investigations into human rights violations and monitoring the current human rights situation. At the beginning of 1995, there were only 74 field officers and six consultants, as compared to the 147 officers that were agreed (UNDHA, 1995: 17). There is clearly a need for justice in response to such serious crimes and in order for the processes of reconciliation to begin. However, given the social disruption which Rwanda has suffered, with many professionals, including those in the legal profession, either killed or implicated in the killings there are many obstacles to justice and reconciliation. The judiciary in Rwanda had largely followed the President's bidding and there are estimates that up to 90 percent of the judiciary participated in the genocide (International Alert, 1995). There are concerns about the conditions of the genocide suspects in seriously overcrowded prisons.

There are also concerns over the conduct of the armed forces of the government. These problems are partly a result of the difficulties of changing a guerrilla army to a regular army and are complicated by the nature of the genocide in Rwanda where the soldiers are returning to villages where their families may have been killed. Since the end of the war, the Tutsi-dominated RPA has doubled to almost 50,000 men, who receive no salary from the government and human rights groups report up to ten civilians killed every day at the hands of soldiers (*The Daily Telegraph*, 1995). The army is cracking down on suspected sympathisers of the Hutu rebels, imprisoning around 700 people per week and there are reports of army abuses and massacres and claims that up to 300,000 people have been killed by the RPF. In this context, the fear of persecution, killing or arrest continues to deter the voluntary return home of refugees (James Fairhead, personal communication).

3.1.4 Refugee issues

There are large numbers of Rwandan refugees in neighbouring countries and displaced people within Rwanda. 1.9 million refugees fled Rwanda between April 1994 and the beginning of 1995. Whilst there are no disaggregated figures on the total refugee populations, it seems likely that there are more women than men as men were more likely to be killed in the fighting (*The Daily Telegraph*, 1995). The provision of humanitarian relief and the protection of human rights is severely compromised in many refugee camps by the dominance of Hutu extremist militias using the camps as military bases. Women are particularly vulnerable to the lack of security in the camps with frequent rapes and attacks on women as well as general intimidation of the refugee population (Moran, 1994: 1).

There are also reports of Tanzanian soldiers attacking groups of refugees and raping women and girls who have attempted to go to Tanzania after the border between Tanzania and Rwanda and Burundi was closed in March 1995 (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1995: 9).

There is a great deal of fear concerning the circumstances of repatriation to Rwanda, with refugees unsure about what they will face if they return voluntarily to Rwanda (O'Neill, 1995: 6).

3.2. Demographic and health issues

There have been major demographic shifts in Rwanda as a result of the conflict and genocide. Between 1990 and 1994, around 600,000 Rwandans were displaced from the north to the south by the RPF invasion. The effect of this large displacement of the population was compounded in 1993 by the arrival of around 300,000 Burundian refugees. As a result of these movements, in a population which had stood at 7.16 million in 1991, there were up to a million displaced people, mostly Hutus, who provided fertile recruiting ground for the militias. The genocide itself is estimated to have killed at least one million Rwandans and have resulted in approximately three million people seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Another shift in population has been the return of around one million Tutsi refugees who had fled Rwanda since the 1950s (James Fairhead, personal communication).

It is clear that the demographic changes in Rwanda are complex and they are, as yet, not disaggregated by gender. However, the first preliminary government study of four prefectures found that women greatly predominate in the population and that 31 percent of women were widowed. There also appear to be imbalances in the child population, with girls heavily outnumbering boys in refugee camps. UNICEF estimate that there are 10,000 orphaned or unaccompanied children, as well as many households headed by young people (O'Neill, 1995: 3).

Before the conflict and genocide, the vast majority of the Rwandan population (94.5 percent) lived in rural areas. The urban population had 110 men for every 100 women with 121 men for every 100 women in Kigali. Conversely, women outnumbered men in the rural population. This was due to the lack of employment opportunities for women in urban areas and their responsibilities for growing food for household consumption. Urban growth had been slow in pre-conflict Rwanda as a result of the restrictions on movement imposed by the government and the fact that permission was needed in order to take up a job in the towns. Large numbers of the rural population have been displaced in Rwanda and it is not yet clear what the final impact of this will be on the distribution of the population or on the sex ratio in rural and urban areas.

In 1990 prior to the conflict, Rwanda had a fertility rate of 8.4, which was higher than all surrounding countries (UNICEF, 1992: 15). However, it also had very high levels of infant and maternal mortality.¹⁸ The high level of fertility was partly due to the lack of provision of and access to family planning but also to the high social and cultural value placed on having children. In 1990, the Rwandan Government adopted a national population policy with the objective of reducing fertility to four children per woman by the year 2,000 (UNICEF, 1992: 44). This policy was somewhat controversial in the context of the growing politicisation of ethnicity. Family planning is likely to continue to be controversial in the aftermath of the genocide. There is some evidence that birth rates are increasing, at least in the refugee camps. This may be the result of new marriages after the conflict, or of men taking second wives (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1995: 11).

¹⁸In 1992, Rwanda had an infant mortality rate of 111 deaths per 1,000 live births, higher than the Sub-Saharan African average of 101. The maternal mortality rate in Rwanda was the same as the Sub-Saharan average of 700 deaths per 100,000 live births (1988) (UNDP, 1994)

Women who were raped and abused have need of both psychological and medical care. It is estimated that there are currently at least 2,000 women in Rwanda who are about to give birth to babies as a result of rape. Many other women have suffered severe sexual mutilation. Sexual abuse will have social as well as medical consequences for women, affecting their ability to marry and possibly leading to social ostracism.

Epidemics such as cholera have caused serious health problems as a result of the social dislocation in Rwanda, particularly in refugee camps. In refugee camps, the epidemics have largely been dealt with and camps now have better levels of medical care and water supply. The situation in the refugee camps is often superior to that faced by many of the indigenous population near the camps in Zaire and Tanzania (O'Neill, 1995: 3). However, within Rwanda itself, much of the health system and infrastructure has been destroyed leaving severe problems for those in and returning to Rwanda (UNDHA, 1994: 31). Women and girls in Rwanda have always been responsible for the collection of water, firewood and the hygiene of their households. In conditions of shortage and poor supply, a major part of women's day is consumed with providing water so that they are often exposed to water-borne diseases. As women, particularly those who head and maintain households, find that they have to take on more responsibility and work in the absence of male adults, it is likely that conditions of sanitation and hygiene will worsen.

3.3. Economic Issues

In pre-conflict Rwanda, 98 percent of women were involved in agriculture and they formed 54 percent of the agricultural labour force. Women tended to control the production of crops for consumption whilst men produced crops for sale. Men usually were responsible for heavier work such as clearing land and women undertook most other agricultural tasks with or without the assistance of men. Whilst this division of labour was not totally fixed, women tended to undertake the majority of agricultural tasks, particularly as the need for men's primary role in clearing new land diminished with the reduction of virgin territories (IBRD, 1993: 1-4).

Despite this, women had negligible land rights and limited equipment and tools and were largely neglected by agricultural extension services. Women had to have their husband's permission before applying for credit and in the years before the conflict, only 13 percent of formal loans were made to women, with most women relying on informal credit.

As a result of their control of cash crop production, men had a far greater access to cash income than women. They also had greater employment opportunities. Women have no formal claim on men's incomes and in some cases even give some of the income they have made from selling surplus food crops to their husbands. However, in pre-conflict Rwanda, men were expected to pay children's school fees and taxes (IBRD, 1993: 3).

Women do not have the right to own or inherit land in Rwanda. They gain rights of usufruct from their husbands. Husbands decide on the distribution of the land and thus tend to reserve the better land, closer to the home for cash crop production, forcing women to work on less fertile peripheral lands. Land has become an intensely political subject, particularly with

refugees exiled before 1994, hoping to regain control over land.¹⁹ In this context and given women's limited land rights, it is very difficult for women-headed households to assert their claims to land. It is clear that many widows have moved to urban areas, due to lack of land to farm but also because they can no longer bear to stay in villages where traumatic events occurred such as the loss of their entire family. Employment opportunities appear to be limited in Rwanda. Petty commerce is one option available to women but it yields low returns, particularly as women have little, if any, capital to invest in their businesses. For the few who have higher levels of education, speak English or French and have office skills, there is a growth in employment opportunities due to the increasing number of jobs in NGOs and donor agencies. Those who have been able to find this sort of relatively well-paid employment are likely to have to support a large number of dependants (Lindsey Hilsum, personal communication).

Prior to 1994, agriculture had been adversely affected by the recurrent conflict in Rwanda, with many people forced to leave their farms. However, the fighting and genocide in 1994 decimated many farms, with food stocks and livestock destroyed and fields abandoned. The resulting food deficit is thought to affect farms with less than 0.7 hectares most severely. As this is below the average of 1.2 hectares per family, it is likely that those most affected will be female-headed households. There has only been limited recovery since the end of the fighting, with those who have returned or settled on the land cultivating only half of the usual area on average (UNDHA, 1994: 9).

The environmental base of Rwanda was also seriously affected by the years of conflict and severe fighting of 1994. Forestry plantations, natural forests and parks, pasture zones, lakes and cultivated land have all suffered from neglect and devastation. Sixteen thousand hectares of land have been destroyed as a result of fighting in the years 1990-94, particularly affecting the supply of wood for fuel and construction (UNDHA, 1994: 10). This has important gender implications as women and girls are responsible for the collection of firewood and the acute shortages result in long hours of foraging for wood. It is likely that wood shortages will also affect nutritional levels with fewer meals being cooked.

Following the conflict in Rwanda, there is a real threat that women, and in particular widows, will lose what limited rights they had over land. Those women that do retain or gain access to land are likely to face labour shortages, particularly of male labour at the same time as they face increases in their domestic workload due to shortages of firewood and poor water supply.

3.4. Social welfare and social organisation

3.4.1 *Health*

Before the conflict, Rwanda had one of the densest health networks in Africa with 34 hospitals and 188 health centres. Eighty percent of the population had some form of health facility within five kilometres of their home. However, access was constrained by the need to pay for treatment (Physicians for Human Rights, 1994: 30). There was also a wide network of traditional healers (estimated to number around 10,000) who were more accessible to low

¹⁹The RPF had agreed that refugees who have been out of the country for more than ten years do not have land rights. However, this remains a controversial subject.

income groups as they accept credit and payments in kind. Women, who tend to have less access to cash than men and female-headed households were likely to rely more on home and traditional remedies than modern health care. Before the genocide, it was estimated that only ten percent of births took place in hospital, contributing to the high levels of maternal mortality (UNICEF, 1992: 16, 42).

During the genocide, hospitals and health centres were targeted. Prominent and educated Tutsis and moderate Hutus were the first to be targeted in the genocide and many doctors and other medical staff were killed. When those who had been wounded in the massacres sought medical attention, the killers pursued them and others who sought refuge in hospitals. Patients were routinely pulled out of hospital to be killed. In Kigali in particular, hospitals were also caught in the cross-fire between government and RPF troops (Physicians for Human Rights, 1994; African Rights, 1994).

By the end of the conflict, few, if any, of the health centres were open as the staff had been killed or fled and the centres looted by the *interahamwe*, or taken over by displaced people. Hospitals were functioning at decreased capacity and in many cases are dependent on expatriate staff. An estimated 50 percent of the country's former health personnel have fled or were killed (UNDHA, 1994: 10). The complicity of many medical staff who participated in the genocide, or allowed it to be carried out in their hospitals, has serious implications for the future of the health service in Rwanda and the level of trust it commands (African Rights, 1994: 565). Even before the genocide, problems of staff attitude had been highlighted by UNICEF, particularly in treatment and advice given to poor women which served to alienate patients and put them off seeking medical help (UNICEF, 1992: 46).

The collapse of the national health system, in the context of large numbers of casualties and a breakdown in the sanitary system, has caused a rapid deterioration in the health of large portions of the population. As a result of the fighting, large parts of the country have no electricity or functioning water pumping stations. Many spring water sources in rural areas are no longer safe due to shallow graves and widespread sanitation problems caused by high-density concentrations of displaced populations. There have been serious outbreaks of diseases such as dysentery, malaria, measles and meningitis, causing increased rates of morbidity and mortality. National vaccination programmes and programmes to combat AIDS and tuberculosis have been halted due to the conflict. Women are particularly at risk of HIV infection, due to the high levels of sexual violence and rape that they have experienced. They are also in need of reproductive health services which are currently not available (UNDHA, 1994: 10).

In addition to their own health needs, women will have to provide physical and emotional support to their relatives and dependants, leading to an increased strain on their already overburdened work loads.

3.4.2 Education

Before the conflict in Rwanda, female enrolment made up 50 percent of total primary enrolment. At secondary level, this fell to 40 percent and in higher education only 18 percent of those attending were women. There tended to be a perception in Rwanda that it was not worth investing in girls education as the parents lost their daughters when they married. Girls may also have been kept out of school in order to care for younger siblings or assist their

mothers with domestic tasks. Within schools, girls were discouraged from studying science and maths and the perception that women had were not capable of achieving at school was held fairly widely, even among teachers (UNICEF, 1992: 35).

The education system was severely damaged during the conflict in Rwanda with school structures destroyed and equipment and materials damaged or looted. Large numbers of trained teachers were killed, fled the country or became internally displaced. The new government reopened 1,500 primary schools throughout the country in September 1994 but there remain acute shortages of teachers and materials. Most of the pupils who return to school have undergone extremely traumatic experiences and will require considerable psychological and social support (UNDHA, 1994: 13). Educational culture in Rwanda has been damaged by the use of schools as an arena for killing and the participation of educational professionals in the genocide.

'More than any other profession, academics, teachers, school inspectors and the directors of schools, including primary schools, participated actively in the genocide. Throughout Rwanda, they helped to organise the killing squads and took a lead role in the hunt for victims and in carrying out the massacres. In some cases, teachers murdered children who attended their own schools, or even learned in their own classes.'
(African Rights, 1995: 196)

Schools could be an important arena for teaching ethnic tolerance and introducing a culture which places less significance on ethnicity. In the post-conflict situation there is likely to be a gender imbalance in the school population, or at least in the school age population as more boys were killed in the genocide than girls. Therefore, schools will be important for the ways in which they adapt teaching to deal with changing gender relations and teach girls skills to enable them to support themselves and their families.

3.4.3 Social organisation

In Rwandan society before the conflict, there were important social networks which provided community support and resources as well as credit. There were many NGOs, including women's organisations, often based around the Catholic Church.²⁰ Kin networks also provided support. During the conflict, these networks were almost totally broken up as community members fled or were killed.

As the rehabilitation process begins, it is very difficult for individuals to rebuild their social networks. Some of those who have fled may return to their home villages but many will not, through fear of reprisals for their part, actual or alleged, in the genocide, or because of the distress they associate with the area and the fact that they have lost everything they had in the village, including their families and social networks. Refugees who had been exiled before 1990 are also returning and hoping to settle down but may come in small groups and will not necessarily have contacts in the areas in which they settle. There are a large number of female-headed households who find themselves without the support of adult males and who may even find that male kin (such as brothers-in-law) are seeking to dispossess them of their

²⁰In 1991, 65 percent of the population were estimated to be Catholic, 25 percent adherent of traditional African religions, nine percent Protestant and one percent Muslim (IBRD, 1993: 1).

land. Women and girls who have given birth to the children of the perpetrators of the genocide, as a result of rape, may find that they and their children are social outcasts (Lindsey Hilsun, personal communication).

Almost every form of social institution, from the Church, to schools to the lowest administrative level has been tainted by its involvement in genocide. In this context, it is very difficult for NGOs and church based groups to reform themselves and continue functioning. Nevertheless, the social importance of the Church is likely to continue. There are new types of network growing up as a result of the genocide. One example of this is the rise in widows groups. A national organisation of widows groups has been established in which women who have lost their husbands as a result of the genocide attempt to give each other emotional support and also obtain grants from NGOs and donor agencies for projects, such as income generation or house building.

The process of rebuilding and forming new social networks in Rwanda is fraught with difficulties and at a very early stage. However, it is possible that in some ways women have an advantage in that they are able to build new networks more rapidly than men. This can be seen in the growth of widows groups which range from a few women who have something in common (for instance that they are all Hutu women who had Tutsi husbands who were killed) and therefore decide to live together with their children to provide mutual support, to larger groups which form part of the national network. However, it should not be assumed that women are automatically able and willing to give each other mutual support. Women, as well as men, are divided along ethnic, economic and social lines. In addition, in a time of scarce resources and demographic imbalance, there is the potential for increased competition between women over men and the resources they control.

3.5 Socio-cultural ideological

Gender ideologies in Rwanda, as in many parts of Africa, are the result of a complex fusion of the ideals and images of men and women in pre-colonial culture and colonial culture. The pre-colonial culture was in itself a mixture of the various cultural traditions of the different groups. Colonial culture was heavily influenced by the teachings of the Catholic Church with emphasis on motherhood as a feminine ideal.

Jefremovas (1991: 376) identifies the three stereotypes of women in pre-conflict Rwanda as being 'loose women, virtuous wives or timid virgins'. She argues that these stereotypes were used by both men and women to interpret, manipulate, validate or negate control over labour, resources and surplus. For instance, women would emphasise that they were 'good wives' in order to try to retain control over their income, as it is a husband's right to withdraw money from their wives' account without permission, but they may be dissuaded from doing so if they feel that their wives are virtuous. Similarly, single women may try to remain in their father's favour by acting out the role of the virtuous virgin:

'Virginity or the public show of chastity is very important. Bearing an illegitimate child classifies a women as a *femme libre* and removes any familial responsibility to provide for her and protect her. It also carries considerable social stigma and often condemns a woman to a life of prostitution.' (Jefremovas, 1991: 383)

Women in Rwanda are not always seen as purely benevolent forces, however. Like men, they were suspected of being witches or poisoners in a culture of suspicion and witch hunts (James Fairhead, personal communication).

The conflict in Rwanda witnessed women behaving in ways which did not conform to those stereotypes. From the women who fought in the RPF, there comes an image of strong, tough women who fight. A more extreme case was of those women who participated in the genocide, inciting men to murder, ordering men to commit murder or killing themselves, violating the ideals of womanhood and motherhood that were held in Rwanda (as in most parts of the world). Both Rwandan men and women have expressed themselves as profoundly shocked that women - and especially mothers, those who had given life to their children - were capable of murder.

Changing gender relations as a result of the shifts in economic status of both men and women and the effects of demographic shifts are likely to have an impact on both male and female behaviour and gender ideologies. These are, however, very difficult to predict.

In the years running up to the genocide, as a result of the conflict and the large displacements of population, it would seem that there were shifts in the conceptualisation of male ideals as part of the process of militarisation. Many of those displaced by the RPF and those who were refugees from Burundi were young men who left without access to land, found other roles to play, joining in militias and adopting more 'macho' masculine identities.

The widespread nature of the genocide is an indication of the success that the Hutu extremists had in involving the whole population, through force or manipulation, in the murder of Tutsis and Hutu moderates. This was the product of propaganda and accentuation of ethnic divisions over a number of years. Clearly, the re-socialisation of society and of children in particular is crucial if Rwanda is to recover from the effects of the genocide and the militarisation of society. Women, in their position as mothers socialising their children will have an important role to play, particularly in situations where fathers are dead or absent.

3.6. Personal/psychological

Almost all Rwandans have undergone a level of trauma which is almost unique in its depth. In a study by UNICEF of children near Kigali, two thirds of the children had witnessed massacres, one in five had witnessed rape and sexual abuse and more than half of those questioned had seen family members being killed (*The Independent*, 23/08/95: 2,3).

One gender-specific element of this trauma is the effect on the large number of women who have given birth as a result of being raped during the conflict. Whilst no statistics are available on the number of rapes, partly due to the extremely sensitive nature of the subject, it appears that rape was conducted on an incredibly wide scale, forming an almost uniform part of the genocidal actions. The extent and implications of the rapes were not recognised in time for safe abortions to be offered to victims of rape, although, this option may not have been acceptable for many. As a result, there are reports of many abandoned babies and of women and young girls giving birth in secret and leaving their babies to die. These women and girls are likely to suffer from the ongoing negative psychological as well as social effects of this experience for a considerable time (Lindsey Hilsum, personal communication).

The official policy of the government is that children born of the rapes are Rwandan and should therefore be treated well. However, as they will be born and brought up among communities which were virtually destroyed by their fathers, there is the likelihood of considerable social stigma for both them and their mothers.

Trauma manifests itself in many different ways, including apathy, lack of concentration and aggressive mood swings. The effects on both men and women is a considerable constraint on the process of rebuilding their lives and society. There are many accounts of both men and women who have lost the will to live and to provide for their children.

4. GENDER ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

The Rwandan government has worked with the UNDP, the World Bank, inter-governmental organisations such as the European Union and other donors to define a framework for future rehabilitation of Government institutions and the productive sector to ensure recovery. The UN consolidated inter-agency appeal for persons affected by the crisis in Rwanda, which was drawn up at the end of 1994, contained an appeal for US\$ 208 million to meet the most urgent measures outlined in priority sectors of: food aid and nutrition; logistics; agriculture; health; water and sanitation; education; children in especially difficult circumstances; emergency support to government structures; repatriation; human rights and coordination and contingency planning. In the description of the priority areas, no reference is made to gender concerns, although clearly all the above-mentioned areas have gender implications. Women are only referred to on the section dealing with children in especially difficult circumstances. Few of the project proposals outlined in the appeal mention gender concerns, those that mention women adopt a welfarist approach. (UNDHA, 1995)

There are a large number of NGOs working in Rwanda, many of whom appear to have been established solely to respond to the crisis. The government has had an uneasy relationship with some of these NGOs, particularly those who have not gone through the official process of registration. An approved list of NGOs has been drawn up, whilst others have been asked to cease operating.

The policies followed by international agencies and NGOs will be crucial in determining to what extent women retain or gain control over resources. International agencies and NGOs have provided seeds and hoes to many farmers. However it is not clear whether these inputs were provided to men or women. If women do not have access to seeds and equipment, this will have serious implications for food security and may lead to a further weakening of their bargaining position within the household. However, if women's important role in agriculture is recognised and their claims to land and resources supported, their bargaining positions within households could be improved (UNDHA, 1994: 9).

The Norwegian People's Aid which is funding a project to rebuild one thousand houses for widows in Kigali Rural. As part of this project, an agreement will be drawn up with the local authority, the widow and the family of her husband to ensure that the property is legally owned by the widow and that the family will not reclaim it after rehabilitation. This clarification of the legal situation is crucial for widows. (Christian Aid, 1995)

The WHO plans to re-establish national programmes for the prevention of malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhoeal and acute respiratory infections and AIDS, as well as establishing programmes for the prevention of epidemics. UNICEF is working to rebuild the primary level health sector. UNIFEM's African Women in Crisis Umbrella Programme (AFWIC) initiated a reproductive health and trauma-management pilot programme which will be expanded. This programme is targeted particularly at returnee and displaced women as well as selected women's groups, providing training and counselling to women and girls (UNDHA, 1994: 98).

There are a number of programmes designed to give socio-psychological support to traumatised individuals, particularly children and victims of rape. The extent to which these

programmes are successful in offering help will depend on how well they are adapted to the culturally-specific situation of Rwanda. It is possible that other forms of emotional support, such as the widows self-help groups will have more success in helping people cope with trauma than Western counselling practices.

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KOSOVO

by

TANYA POWER-STEVENSON

KOSOVO

ABBREVIATIONS

SPRY	Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia
LDK	Democratic League of Kosovo
CSCE	Conference in Security and Co-operation in Europe
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

1 HISTORY

Kosovo province lies in the south of the Republic of Serbia, bordering Albania. Its population of approximately two million is made up of between 85 and 90 percent ethnic Albanians. The remainder are mainly Serbian. A province of importance to two separate ethnic groupings, Kosovo is seen by Serbs as the heartland of the medieval Serbian kingdom, where many of the greatest monuments of the Serbian Orthodox Church are located, and for Albanians, the centre of Albanian national revivalism and the founding of the League of Prizren in 1878. Under the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) constitution of 1974, Kosovo was granted considerable autonomy, including its own government and parliament, constitutional court, supreme court and representatives in all federal institutions. Kosovo, although rich in natural resources, is economically underdeveloped and suffered from the highest unemployment in SFRY. Belgrade's acquiescence to decentralised decision-making in the 1970s, fuelled Kosovo's latent claims for republic status. The longevity of the Kosovo issue, and the raising of expectations among ethnic Albanians for republic status, has meant the two groups have become increasingly polarised. In 1981, nationalist unrest among ethnic Albanians, exacerbated by economic problems and the failures of economic and political policies of SFRY led to mass demonstrations in support of secession from Serbia and full republic status within the Yugoslav federation. The demonstrations were suppressed with bloodshed and widespread arrests.²¹

Under the leadership of Slobodan Milosovic, the League of Communists of Serbia committed itself to regaining Serbian control of Kosovo. Milosovic was instrumental in inciting Serb nationalism as a counter balance to Albanian nationalism in Kosovo. In March 1989, under considerable pressure from Serbia,²² the Kosovoan parliament approved constitutional changes limiting its autonomy. Violence erupted, 24 people were killed, several hundred were wounded, almost a thousand were imprisoned and purges against ethnic Albanians took place (Amnesty International 1994i:4).

Violence intensified in 1990 following the parliament of Kosovo's declaration of independence from the Republic of Serbia. In July 1990, the Serbian parliament suspended the Kosovoan parliament and government and adopted a new constitution which deprived Kosovo of its remaining autonomy. The break-up of the SFRY led to the creation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia comprising of the republics of Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo. In response to this, leaders of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), the main ethnic Albanian political party demanded full independence. As war broke out in the former Yugoslavia, the focus of conflict was in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, territories of more strategic importance to Serbs and with larger Serbian populations. As a result Kosovo has to date escaped the worst of the conflict.

The province of Kosovo has been described by many as a police state. Serbia has attempted to alter the demographic make-up of Kosovo by sacking ethnic Albanians from their jobs, evicting them from their homes and terrorising them, while simultaneously encouraging

²¹ Between 1981 and 1988, more than 1,750, ethnic Albanians were sentenced to up to 15 years' imprisonment for nationalist activities, and a further 7,000 were sentenced to 60 days' imprisonment for minor political offences (Amnesty International 1994i:3).

²² Tanks were stationed outside the parliament at the time.

Serbian migration into Kosovo. In 1993, the scope and nature of the violence increased dramatically (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki [HRW/H] 1993). Ibrahim Rugova, President of the parallel parliament which operates in Kosovo, has maintained a policy of peaceful resistance.²³ He has said that 'the normality of despotism and injustice, a fact of life in Kosovo for many years, has taken root like an evil cancerous ulcer' (Dammann 1994). In July 1993 the Conference in Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) mission was expelled from Kosovo and both its and the UN Special Rapporteur on Yugoslavia have been refused permission by the Yugoslav government to base monitoring missions of any duration in Kosovo. Subsequently, Kosovo has been a province characterised by low-intensity conflict and human rights abuses perpetrated by the Serbian dominated police and security forces against the ethnic Albanian civilian majority.

In the US brokered peace talks in Ohio November 1995, the focus was confined to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Kosovo was been included in the negotiations nor has it been invited to the signing of the treaty. A delegation of American Albanians picketed the talks in Ohio, but there was no formal representation. The US state department has stated its wish to deal with the Bosnian issue first and foremost, and the FRY have stated that the issue of Kosovo is an internal one which they will address. It seems likely that a formal Kosovoan delegation will attend the London and Paris conferences at the end of 1995, but they will not participate in any negotiations nor the signing of a peace treaty. It is still uncertain whether a peace will actually be reached. The possibility of sustained peace is equally uncertain with all parties seemingly unhappy with the terms of the agreement. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that Kosovo will not tolerate continued exclusion which raises the question as to their future course of action.

The situation in Kosovo can be considered as a low-intensity conflict, or in the run-up to conflict due to the escalation of violence and lack of peace in the former Yugoslavia. At present, Kosovo continues to escape the worst of Serbia's military might, but that is not a guarantee that it will continue to do so in the future.

²³ He is of the opinion that the Serbs would be happy if Albanians reciprocated violently, 'but it would all be over in a few hours. The Serbian army has modern weapons.' (Guardian 4/2/94)

2 GENDER DIMENSIONS OF THE CONFLICT

Since Kosovo is not an independent state, there is no consolidated data on which to base an assessment of gender inequality and differences. Such data as there is indicates a high illiteracy rate. In 1988, 72.6 percent of women were illiterate. Girls are well represented in primary education, but there is a high drop-out rate for them in secondary education. In 1971 women accounted for 17.6 percent of the total official workforce, by 1981 that figure had dropped to 7.6 percent. It is estimated that during the late 1980s, 25 percent of the total active population were unemployed and seeking work, the majority of them men. Among women there is low recorded labour force participation and a high birth rate. Between 1921 and 1981, Kosovans share of the total population of Yugoslavia rose from 3.5 percent to 7.1 percent. The average family size in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, is 5.1 members, compared to 2.6 members in Serbia. According to a poll in the 1970's, 91 percent of women did not use any contraceptive devices, a figure that is unlikely to have changed during the 1980s (BBC SWB 10/11/88).

This section looks at the consequences of the current situation in Kosovo for gender relations in the following dimensions: political, legal and human rights; demographic and health; economic; social welfare and social organisation; socio-cultural and ideological; and psychological.

2. 1 Political, legal and human rights

The LDK claims to have 600,000 members or sympathisers in Kosovo. With an adult population of approximately one million, it is the largest Albanian political party in Kosovo (HRW/H 1993:48). Members of the LDK are frequent targets of police harassment, beatings and arrest. Those involved in the parallel government and parliament run by the LDK are particular targets. With the central committee of the LDK comprising of only eight women of a total of 55 (Hoppe 1994:661), and men more prominent in political life, they tend to be the targets for police harassment. If arrested on political grounds, Albanians are charged with violating the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia.

The LDK has close links with the Albanian population and is open to delegations visiting to discuss areas of development in Kosovo, including delegations from women's organisations. Such delegations are not confined to meeting with the Women's Forum of the LDK for their discussions on women's issues. The women's group Motrat Qiriazii, in the Has region (an isolated region in western Kosovo), secured funds from the LDK to rebuild a school in Has so as to increase educational opportunities for local children, particularly girls who are underrepresented in enrolment figures. Motrat Qiriazii, are also discussing the issue of asking the President to address more women's issues in Kosovo, including the tradition of selling girls into marriage. The focus is currently on educating people about the issue, later it may include legislation against practices detrimental to women.

Since 1990, the police and military have comprised 100 percent Serbs (HRW/H 1993:95) and have waged a campaign of violence against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.²⁴ During 1993, Serb police and some security units embarked on a campaign of raids on specific houses and whole villages which continues to the present day, under the pretext of weapons searches. A total of 3,553 households were raided in 1994, 1,559 more than 1993 (Kosovo Communication Bulletin [KCB] #238, 1995). The raids have taken place in homes of targeted individuals, usually because of their political affiliations, or have targeted whole villages predominantly in the northern areas where Kosovo borders Albania. During the raids, people have been arrested and even more have been beaten. The vast majority of those beaten, often in front of their families, have been men. When women have been beaten, it seems that it is because the men sought are absent from the family home. Reports have, where it is mentioned, stated that police have used 'vulgar and insulting language' towards women (AI 1994ii). Both men and women are confronted with racist language and violence, for women it is often sexist as well. Amnesty outlines 14 case studies in its 1994 report 'Police violence in Kosovo - the victims'. The following is the only account given by a woman.

'On 31 July 1994, police carried out an arms search at the home of Faik Haxha in Brajina. His wife, Shukrije was at home at the time, but her husband and sons were out. According to a statement she gave to a local human rights activist on 1 August, three police officers came into her home and began to search for arms, turning everything upside down. "When they didn't find a gun, they said to me, 'Give us the gun or we'll kill you.' They didn't kill me, but they left my back, thighs, and arms covered in bruises. They also put a rifle-butt between my legs, but they didn't injure me...It's better that they beat me than my sons...It didn't last for more than 20-35 minutes; two or three times I felt dizzy from their blows, but I didn't lose consciousness, nor did I swear at them. I wasn't frightened, but I kept telling them we didn't have a gun. We don't have enough money for bread, much less a gun! They, however, swore at me and insulted me and when they left they said they would be back for the gun."

In 1994, 84 families were evicted from their homes (KCB #203, 1995). During raids police also confiscated identity cards of men, leaving them confined to their villages and unable to work as a result.

Given prior warning of a police raid, young men in particular try to hide due to increasing numbers of abductions after which men are forcibly conscripted into the Serbian army. Thus, the majority of Albanians directly affected by human rights abuses in Kosovo are men of 'fighting' age. However, some of the most recent reports from Kosovo are describing how police are abducting women and holding them hostage in order 'flush out' wanted husbands and sons (AI 1994i). In 1994, ten women were taken hostage (KCB #203, 1995). In September 1995 alone, three women were taken hostage when their husbands could not be found by the police (KCB #238, 1995). Increasingly, women are being targeted as an indirect way of attacking men.

Serbs have taken over the judiciary in Kosovo as well as the police and security forces. Several low-level courts and district attorneys offices have been suspended and Albanian judges and attorneys dismissed and replaced with Serbians. A few Albanians who are considered to be 'honest' remain on the bench, and they are likely to be more zealous than

²⁴ The expulsion of CSCE from Kosovo, and the denial of access of human rights organisations means that the Council on Human Rights and Freedoms ('the Council'), an Albanian human rights organisation, is the major source of documentation on human rights abuses in Kosovo. There are more than 5,700 'reported' incidents of police abuse in 1992, 1,400 arrests between 1992 and September 1993 and 2,500 houses raided in the period June to September 1993 (HRW/H 1993:1).

their Serbian counterparts in their judgements against fellow Albanians (HRW/H 1993:61). There have been numerous political arrests and trials since the first major nationalist demonstrations in 1981. In the first seven months of 1994, 85 Albanians had received prison sentences of up to ten years (AI 1994i).²⁵

2.2 Demographic and Health

Since it dissolved Kosovo's parliament and government and took control of the province, the Serbian government has implemented programmes and policies to alter the demographic make-up of Kosovo. According to Dr. Alush A. Gashi, dismissed professor of anatomy at the University of Kosovo: 'The Serbian regime is working to achieve its goal: ethnic cleansing without open war, but with daily police brutality' (Hartman 1993).

The current demographic make-up of Kosovo is 90 percent ethnic Albanian, approximately seven percent Serbian and small communities of Montenegrins and Turks. Kosovo has a young population with 52 percent under the age of 19 years (HRW/H 1993:132) and one of the highest birth rates in Europe. However, economic hardship, malnutrition, poor medical supplies and lack of trust in Serb medical personnel, means that these rates are rising.

2.2.1 *Demography*

The most recent attempts by the Serbian government to increase the proportion of Serbs in Kosovo have been combined with the need to resettle in Kosovo Serbian refugees from lost territory in southern Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Plans were announced in Belgrade in 1995 to settle 16,000 of the estimated 200,000 Serbs who fled Croatia in Kosovo (AP 15/8/95). However, in August 1995, a group of some 300 Serbs protested resettlement in Kosovo when they arrived in Pristina, without their assent, having been told when they boarded trains in Belgrade that they were going to towns in central Serbia. So far, Serbian authorities have placed 1,813 Serbian refugees in Kosovo, mostly women, children and the elderly (AP 17/8/95). The resettlement of Serbs in Kosovo is likely to increase tension in Kosovo, not least because Serbs are increasingly displaying their unwillingness to be settled in Kosovo. In addition, since the majority of those resettled are women, children and the elderly, this is likely to put pressure on welfare provision and social networks, and Serbian government resources.

There have been two waves of Albanian exodus from Kosovo. The earlier wave consisted of political activists and younger men, avoiding conscription into the Serbian army. The later wave followed the dismantling and collapse of the Kosovoan economy and was comprised mainly of men seeking work in Europe in order to support their families with remittances. The result has been an increase in the number of female-headed households, a relatively new phenomena in Kosovo and also of separated households, with one or more members working abroad. However, many of the families with absent guest workers are not receiving remittances because of the economic situation, and lack of opportunities abroad.²⁶ In a general climate of hostility towards refugees, particularly economic refugees, internationally,

²⁵ Since there is no mention of women in the reporting of this issue, it is assumed that these were all men since Amnesty usually state if women were involved.

²⁶ Graham Ennis, Free Bosnia Campaign, personal communication.

Kosovans are finding it increasingly difficult to leave Kosovo and are resorting to illegal immigration abroad.²⁷ In August 1993, German police stopped 47 ethnic Albanians from Kosovo trying to enter the country illegally from the Czech Republic. The exhausted and hungry group, which included 12 women, had been travelling for 12 days. Twelve months earlier, an Austrian group gave temporary refuge to almost 100 Albanian children, accompanied by 11 teachers and members of the Women's Forum of the LDK (Reuters 13/8/92). The incident was also aimed to raise international awareness to the plight of Kosovans.

Villages being targeted with raids in border towns of northern Kosovo are almost entirely inhabited by ethnic Albanians. On the pretext of weapons searches, these raids are one element of a programme to force Albanians out of their homes in order to relocate Serbians in former Albanian areas. The fear and terror that such raids have created, along with direct threats of death from police if homes are not vacated within a given period, have led to internal displacement. Over the last ten years, more than 200 Albanian families have abandoned the village of Vermik, approximately five kilometres from the Albanian border, after consistent pressure from Serbian occupying forces (BBC SWB 20/3/95). It is not uncommon for rural Albanian families to have up to seven children, and their relocation into shared homes of friends and family leads to extremely cramped conditions. There also seems to be a shoot-to-kill policy against Albanians along border regions. In the Gjakova border region, a number of Albanian men have been shot dead on Albanian soil whilst grazing their goats (Ledgard 1993, HRW/H 1993).

2.2.2 Health

The health of Albanians is deteriorating dramatically in this period of run-up to conflict. Sanitation is a problem in Kosovo: only 46 percent of the population drink tap water and 28.9 percent of households are linked to sewage systems (HRW/H 1993:134). Even those that do have water are cut off because they cannot pay the bills. Women are responsible for resource provisions in the household and if they do not have water supplies to the house they must collect water from the nearest well or streams. If women are lucky, this will only necessitate a 30 minute walk, as is the case for women in Gorozkup.

Overcrowding and extreme economic hardship combined have meant a resurgence of tuberculosis, typhus, polio, meningitis and lice carried diseases, particularly among children. Epidemics are on the increase, particularly haemorrhage fever epidemic, also known as 'black death'. During the first half of 1995, there were 87 recorded cases of haemorrhage and mice fever (KCB #234, 1995). In a clinic in a small town in northern Kosovo, Dr. Kransniqi said there were 20 new cases of tuberculosis every week. This is probably an underestimate because shame prevents many Albanians going for diagnosis since TB is linked to poverty. Ninety-nine percent of cases of TB are contained within the Albanian community which reflects the different standards of living experienced by the Serb and Albanian communities in Kosovo.

²⁷ Dammann, in Kosovo early 1994, met with a ten year-old. He had just visited his best friend who was leaving Kosovo with his family. His parents had paid a sizeable sum to a haulage company who promised to smuggle them illegally into Germany.

In the hospitals there are shortages of medical supplies and in particular incubators. Where facilities exist, Serbian patients are given priority in receiving them. One woman who gave birth in the state run hospital in Pristina said she had gone because she was afraid to give birth at home, but had no money to go to a private clinic.²⁸ However at the hospital, 'there were no painkillers at all and no oxygen. No blankets or sheets. I brought my own blanket. I saw a Serbian woman next to me with an electric heater, blankets and painkillers, but the nurse told me she had orders not to let Albanian women have those things' (Friend 1993).

In the first six months of 1995, 437 of the 3,314 babies born in the state run maternity clinic in Pristina, where there are no Albanian doctors working, died (BBC SWB 5/10/95). During the same period, 16 mothers have died in the clinic, compared with 14 in the whole of 1994. The Kosovoan newspaper, *Bujku* (Farmer), states that women are being used as the subjects of medical experimentation by Serbian doctors, in particular they are being trained on by unqualified Serbian doctors. Reports indicate a number of unnecessary hysterectomies and sterilisations without consent at Pristina state clinic. Furthermore, woman also state they have given birth to healthy babies, only to be told later that they are dead or in serious ill health (KCB #235, 214, 1995). These reports support claims that the 1990 Belgrade Resolution on the Renewal of the Population has an anti-natalist policy towards Albanian women while Serbian women, including those in Kosovo, are subject to a pro-natalist policy through nationalist propaganda which popularises the ideal family with three children.²⁹ Thus, there is a great deal of fear and suspicion surrounding the Serbian doctors who run the clinics³⁰ and Albanian women prefer to give birth at home, often in unsafe conditions. Kosovo does not have a tradition of birth attendants, rather the mother-in-law assumes this position. Wisdom is not always passed on through the generations and women's groups are trying to implement a programme of midwifery training to provide safer conditions for women to give birth in.

In 1992, it was estimated that 86 percent of women in Kosovo give birth without any professional help. Now it is probably higher (Field 1992). Many used to go to Dakovica hospital, 80 kilometres outside Pristina, which is staffed by Albanians but sanctions have meant that few can afford the petrol. Harsh economic conditions and unemployment, combined with sanctions has meant that many can no longer afford health insurance. Albanian women have no access to prenatal care, and are likely to suffer malnutrition during pregnancy. Although Serb law allows the provision of private health care, permits to operate are issued selectively. A number of clinics and practices operate illegally, on a voluntary basis, providing services free for those unable to pay. However, Albanian staff providing these services are subject to arrest and imprisonment.

The infant mortality rate has assumed alarming proportions in Kosovo, the combined result of severe economic conditions, the lack of medical supplies and anti-natalist policies.

²⁸ The cost of giving birth at a private Albanian clinic is DM100 (£40) (Dammann 1994). In 1993, the average factory wage was DM35 (£14) a month (Durant 1993).

²⁹ Propaganda includes citing natural punishments for women who do not have children, such as breast cancer, and the giving of medals to women who have four or more children.

³⁰ 'When Isa Gashi, rushed his wife, Nora into Pristina's Serbian-run state hospital, he was stopped in his tracks by the sight in reception. "On the left was an election poster of Akran, in the centre a bigger one of Seselj and on the right a picture of Milosovic. While I was there, a Serbian nurse kissed Akran, leaving lipstick on his lips. I felt rigid with fear"' (Friend 1993). Akran is the *nom de guerre* of Zeljko Raznatovic, notorious war criminal of Bosnia-Herzegovina, wanted by Interpol in 42 countries and elected Serbian MP for Pristina.

According to statistics for 1995, the infant mortality rate is 17 percent (BBC SWB 5/10/95). In 1990, the infant mortality rate was six percent (KCB #235, 1995). The lack of vaccines has led to an increase in the infant mortality rate. In 1990, the vaccination programme inoculated 90 percent of children. Two years later this figure dropped to 50 percent. Children are particularly affected by polio and TB due to the lack of vaccinations available. Between 1983 and 1990, there were no cases of polio in Kosovo. Between 1990 and 1993, there were 20 cases (HRW/H 1993:133). There are no gender-specific figures on morbidity in Kosovo. Women are more likely than men to suffer from poverty related diseases because they give scarce food to their children, and also because of the effects of multiple pregnancies under conditions of malnutrition and scarce medical supplies.

2.3. Economic

Since 1992, Kosovo has suffered from a double embargo: that of the United States against the rump of Yugoslavia; and that of the Serbs against Kosovo. The former has led to major shortages of petrol and medical supplies which are exacerbated by Serbian policies in Kosovo. The Serbian government from Belgrade, has implemented a policy of harassment and fiscal controls to curtail Albanian economic activity in Kosovo. In 1990, the Labour Relations in Special Circumstances Law was passed making it official policy to employ non-Albanians in Kosovo. This law was abolished in March 1993; but with little effect since the 112-115, 000 Albanians who had already been forced out of their jobs (as estimated by the Kosovoan Helsinki Committee) were not reinstated. Indeed, few are willing to reapply for their jobs because of the hostile environments in which they are forced to work.

In response, Albanians have established a parallel economy and workforce. The economy is severely restricted by Serbian legislation and control, and the effect of international sanctions against FRY. Education and health services are provided 'illegally' by professionals who receive remuneration from the LDK. The illegal status of workers means they are subject to harassment and arrest. Salaries can be intermittent as they are based on the voluntary tax contributions made by Albanians working overseas. Salaries are paid in relation to the needs of the worker.

Raids have taken place on commercial establishments during which liquid assets, especially hard currency, are confiscated.³¹ During September 1995, DM150,000 was seized from Albanian citizens and private businesses (KCB #238, 1995). Perhaps the Serbian policy with widest repercussions is the dismissal of thousands of ethnic Albanians from their jobs. In the period, March to September 1990, 3,400 police were dismissed, and many more resigned in protest against these policies and the requirement to sign pledges of allegiance to Serbia. The army, security and police forces in Kosovo are now totally Serbian in character. By the end of 1993, almost all Albanian journalists were unemployed or working as stringers for foreign news agencies, or the single Albanian newspaper in print, *Bajku* (Farmer). Most are working 'illegally' since they refuse to be accredited by the Yugoslav Ministry of Information as required by law.

The LDK estimate that 70 percent of employed Albanians have been dismissed from their jobs (HRW/H 1993:109). In response to the mass dismissals, the Alliance of Independent

³¹ Jewellers have found themselves to be regular targets of such raids.

Trade Unions of Kosovo was formed in 1990. It consists of 22 unions with more than 260,000 members and estimates that 127,000 Albanians have been dismissed (KCB #215, 1995). In Kosovo, the combined policies from Belgrade have crippled mining, construction and textile industries. Government employees have been purged - including: doctors, school teachers, university professors, telephone operators and journalists.

Since women were prominent in many of the state supported professions, such as teaching and nursing, they have suffered due to anti-Albanian legislation. Before the mass dismissals, women in Kosovo accounted for 12 percent of the working population. Now they are just three percent.³² These figures are official reflecting the numbers of women in paid employment. They do not take into account the 'invisible' and often unpaid work that women do in Kosovo. During 1991 and 1992, primary and secondary schools were closed in Kosovo. In response, the Association of Albanian Teachers was established along with a parallel education system. Many teachers, and university professors now teach classes in their homes, with little remuneration and under constant fear of 'discovery'. All Albanians who are employed, including those overseas, are requested to make a voluntary contribution of three percent of their salary for education and services run by the parallel government. In this manner, 18,700 teachers are 'self-financed' monthly (HRW/H 1993:115).³³

The effects of these policies are an estimated 60,000 families living below the poverty line (HRW/H 1993:110). A large proportion of these families are female-headed households and families with physically and mentally disabled members. Without a welfare system, many are reliant on solidarity funds from Albanian organisations collected privately, local welfare organisations, especially the Mother Theresa Humanitarian Association, or remittances from overseas. The economic conditions have led to a burgeoning of the informal sector which is dominated by men and children, particularly boys selling cigarettes and washing car windscreens. Women traditionally work in the home, often supporting the business that their male relatives run, and this has not altered. If the conflict escalates, women may be forced out of the home, and assume roles in petty trading, selling the goods they make at home. If they do, security will be an important issue for them to address, as Serb security forces continuously raid market places, destroy produce and beat traders.

2.4. Social welfare and organisations

The lack of a welfare system in Kosovo has increased the burdens of voluntary organisations in providing these services. Women's burdens of caring for the family have increased to meet the gaps in the services that such organisations provide. The largest operating social welfare organisation in Kosovo is the Mother Theresa Humanitarian Association which provided provisions and medicine to 57,353 families, comprising a total of 373,939 individuals, in 1994 (KCB #215, 1995).³⁴ At a Mother Theresa clinic in Pristina, situated in a house with only five rooms, up to 500 children and adults are treated every day by some 41 doctors and 24 nurses who give their time free (Dammann 1994). A Mother Theresa outpatient clinic in Decan was closed down in March 1995 by the police under the pretext that it had not been

³² Correspondence from Kosovo, 30/11/95.

³³ It is estimated that 22,000 Albanian teachers do not receive payment from the state.

³⁴ In January and February 1995, the Mother Theresa Association helped 26,778 families with an average of 6.5 members. This is an increase of 20 per cent when compared with figures from the previous year.

registered with the Serbian authorities. Dr. Baton Tahir Sylaj was arrested and police carried out registration of all medical supplies donated by *Medicines sans Frontiers*. The same day another of Mother Theresa's clinics was shut down in Junik and patient records were confiscated (KCB #212, 1995). Serbian officials interfere with deliveries of humanitarian aid, causing delays by checking documentation and conducting searches. Often some or all of the supplies are confiscated.

The LDK also run a welfare system offering monthly payment to Kosovans. Argon, 45, dismissed from his factory job in 1990 and suffering from tuberculosis, survives with his family on a diet of bread and water 'with occasional cheese' bought with LDK welfare payments (Durant 1993).

Unlike Bosnia, there very few women-focused welfare or support organisations operating in Kosovo. A major women's organisation is Motrat Qiriazii, established in 1995 under the sponsorship of Oxfam. The aim of the group is specifically for women to 'examine ideological parameters of their lives' (Motrat Qiriazii Leaflet). A central focus of their work is education, literacy, increasing the opportunities of children who are deprived educational services due to the current situation, and particularly in breaking attitudes which prevent girls from receiving education. The group based its projects in Has to counter oppressive patriarchal traditions there, including the practice of promising girls in marriage before they finish primary school. In 1994 there were only 12 girls from Has enrolled in secondary education. After community meetings and individual visits to homes, this rose in 1995 to 25 girls.³⁵ The group also supports skills training, particularly sewing courses. Although traditional, and thus meeting notions of a 'legitimate' skill for women, sewing can offer women some income opportunities and does enable them to reduce household expenditure.³⁶

Women are involved in protesting against Serb oppression in specific ways. Women from Kosovo went to Belgrade for the Women in Black conference which convened September 1995. Communication channels are open with women from other regions of the former Yugoslavia for the exchange of information, and a wider regional support network is available. In addition, women prepared a paper for Beijing and held a workshop on Kosovo at the Beijing conference, entitled, 'Women in the prevention and solution of conflict' (KCB #234, 1995). Women have petitioned the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for education and work, in opposition to the reduction of schooling and employment opportunities for young Albanians. Women held a protest rally in Pristina in March 1995. The aim was to draw attention to the plight of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and they called on the international community to undertake concrete steps to protect Albanians, particularly Albanian women (BBC SWB 20/3/95). Women have not received any special protection from the Serbian police during demonstrations. During a demonstration demanding the reopening of schools and the university in the town of Pec, in 1992, a 16 year-old school girl had her ear ripped off by police (Doder 1992).

³⁵ Correspondence from Motrat Qiriaz 6/12/95. Motrat Qiriazii highlight the case of Nasibe whose mother was criticised by local women for sending her to secondary school. The women's group publicly supported Nasibe and her mother in community meetings, and as a result Nasibe is enrolled in medical studies and is going to be the first woman doctor from Has for several years.

³⁶ Motrat Qiriazii currently give sewing classes to 150 women in the Has region.

The LDK, with the support of the population, created a parallel education and health system, supported by voluntary contributions from ethnic Albanians at home and abroad. Approximately 25,000 students go to underground universities and thousands more attend underground schools. At the beginning of the 1995 school year, there were more than 273,000 students in primary classes with 15,780 teaching staff, and 57,000 students in secondary classes with 4,300 teaching staff within the Albanian-language education system run independently from the Serbian regime's imposed curriculum (KCB #234, 1995). The figures reflect a large drop-out rate between primary and secondary level education, with the majority of drop-outs being girls who are kept at home to share increased burdens of providing household provisions. Twenty-two primary schools and all secondary schools operate in houses and other makeshift classes. The conditions are cramped, resources limited and locations regularly change to avoid detection by the police. Nonetheless, students graduate with certificates which, for some, offer the opportunity to pursue further studies abroad.

2.5. Socio-cultural and ideological

Since 1990, the Serbian government has been conducting a policy of silent ethnic cleansing of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and an onslaught on Albanian culture. According to Djilas, 'Albanians are looked upon as the "blacks of Yugoslavia"' (Costa 19987:87). Propaganda, such as the leaflets dropped to encourage Serbian women in Kosovo to disassociate themselves from Albanians, have further polarised the two communities and increased hatred and suspicion. In Belgrade Serbian women have mobilised and held demonstrations to protest against alleged ethnic Albanian cleansing against Serbs. The religious divisions between the Muslim Albanians and Orthodox Serbs are an element of this,³⁷ but at the current time they are seen as one element of the cultural repression.

Serbia is accused of operating an apartheid system in Kosovo, discriminating against ethnic Albanians and their culture. The closing of schools, imposing a Serbian-based national curriculum and the requirement of Albanian teachers to sign loyalty oaths to the government of Serbia or face dismissal, are part of a wider policy to silence Albanian cultural education. There remains just one Albanian-language newspaper, and two television broadcasts of news in Albanian a day.

As a result of the cultural repression Albanian Kosovans are acutely aware of their culture. Women are particularly looking at some of the implications of the patriarchal systems on gender relations. Motrat Qiriazhi aims to challenge customs whilst preserving some traditions. One custom they are interested in is that of the selling and betrothing of young girls. Motrat Qiriazhi have held a number of workshops on this particular issue and have been instrumental in facilitating a change of ideas among women in the Has region. In their most recent bulletin they included the story of a woman on a bus with her daughter. A man jokingly asked her how much he would have to pay for the girl, but the woman replied, she was not for sale

³⁷ Amnesty document the case of an 18 year old boy was arrested on a bus by Serb security forces and taken to a police station where he was tortured. He was tied to a radiator and a police officer cut a cross on his chest with the Cyrillic 'S'. The cross and four S's stand for the Serbian motto, 'Only unity save the Serb' (AI 1994i)

since she would be continuing her education. 'What do you think we do all day at these meetings? Sit around and not discuss issues?'³⁸

2.6. Psychological

According to Special Rapporteur Tadeuz Mazowiecki's tenth periodic report on human rights in the former Yugoslavia, February 1995, in Kosovo, 'the vast majority of the population live in constant fear' (KCB #206, 1995). Talking about conditions in northern Kosovo, near the Albanian border, an ethnic Albanian said, 'we are like rabbits. The Serbs stand on the edge of the road and take shots at us' (HRW/H 1993:3). Over the last two years, fear of the inevitability of war in Kosovo and the reality of Serb actions on the ground, have created a collective psychosis among ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. Listening to radio and television news broadcasts have become an obsession for Albanians as every day and every change is important (Friend 1992).

Ethnic Albanians live in extended families in Kosovo and so the results of police raids and brutality perpetrated against one member of a family is almost invariably witnessed by others. Children have learnt that their parents are unable to protect them against armed police raiding their homes. More recently they have to come to fear such raids taking place when fathers and older brothers are not at home because they may be taken hostage, a fear that women are also now experiencing. With over half the population under the age of 15 years, the psychological repercussions of these acts are likely to last a long time.

Many children and young adults are experiencing boredom with the lack of, or reduced access to, educational services. They are also concerned about their futures and about what opportunities will be available to them if they are unable to complete their studies. Individuals are politicised at an early age and exposed to nationalist ideologies. A schoolboy from an underground school in Pristina told a reporter:

'We don't care about Mercedes or big bucks anymore. All we want is our freedom. We will fight, we are ready to die. We know that 70 percent of us might die, but it is the only way. We know the West is not interested in justice here' (Ledgard 1993).

Many men are already suffering stress and stress related-diseases as a result of their dismissals from work, and the resulting inability to support their families. Women also fear Serbian government sanctioned rape. Although there has as yet been no systematic rape of Albanian women in Kosovo, women are not immune to the news of mass rape campaigns against their Muslim sisters close by. Police officers are aware of this fear and are capitalising on it, particularly during house raids. There has been one nationally reported case, in February 1995, of a Serbian policeman raping an Albanian woman of 19. He had entered the home looking for her husband who had escaped from custody four days earlier. When he could not be found the policeman took the woman out to look for him and then raped her twice in the woods (KCB #208, 1995).

Documentation on rapes perpetrated by the Serbian security forces do not include any reference to the traumas for women. As yet, support networks for rape survivors do not exist

³⁸ Motrat Qiriazhi bulletin November 1995

in Kosovo as they do in other regions of the former Yugoslavia. Combined with the stigma attached to rape in Kosovo, women are mostly compelled to work through their trauma alone.

3. GENDER ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

Kosovo has waged a campaign of 'passive resistance' since 1990, but there are no guarantees that the nature of the conflict will not change. To ensure the current situation of low intensity conflict in Kosovo does not escalate to a fully blown conflict, President Rugova has called for Kosovo to become an international protectorate with the deployment of UN troops.

However, the current history of UN peacekeeping forces is not very positive, not least in the territories of the former Yugoslavia. If, following defeats in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, Serbia turned its attention to Kosovo, the resultant conflict is not likely to be contained within Kosovoan borders. Dr. Sali Berisha, president of Albania, has stated that he wants to prevent armed conflict in Kosovo, but if there is massive ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, 'we will react as one nation' (KCB #221, 1995). In addition to Albania, Macedonia, with 23 percent of its population could be drawn in.

In 1994, the General Assembly passed Resolution 49/204 concerning Kosovo condemning discrimination and human rights violations against Albanian Kosovans. It demands an end to all human rights violations, that all discriminatory legislation be revoked, the establishment of democratic institutions, the reopening of cultural and scientific institutions and co-operation from FRY with the Special Rapporteur on former Yugoslavia. It also encourages increased humanitarian aid for Kosovo. It does not recognise Kosovo's claims to independence and national sovereignty but it does recognise the need for the aspirations of ethnic Albanians to be recognised so as to avoid conflict.

International attention on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia seems to be firmly rooted in Bosnia-Herzegovina and as a result, there are only a few international organisations operating in Kosovo. Oxfam UK have a sub-office focusing on water and sanitation, which is an enormous problem beyond the financial capabilities of the parallel government. The International Red Cross, with the agreement of Serbian authorities and Albanian leaders, opened an office in Kosovo to distribute humanitarian assistance to all vulnerable individuals, irrespective of ethnic origin (Durant 1993). This is a relief-based programme with no gender-specific elements. The largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Kosovo, is America which to date has given \$15 million in food, medicines and medical equipment, clothes and other humanitarian assistance, much of which has been distributed through the Mother Theresa network.

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ALGERIA

by

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ALGERIA

ABBREVIATIONS

EFF	Extended Fund Facility
FFS	<i>Front des Forces Socialistes</i> , Socialist Front
FIS	<i>Front Islamique du Salut</i> , Salvation Front
FLN	<i>Front de Liberation Nationale</i> , National Liberation Front Islamic
GIA	<i>Group Islamique Arme</i> , Armed Islamic Group
HCE	<i>Haute Comite' d'Etat</i> , High State Committee
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MPR	<i>Mouvement pour la Republique</i> , Republic Movement
OJAL	<i>L'Organisation des Jeunes Algerians Libres</i> , Organisation of Free Young Algerians
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

1. INTRODUCTION

In Algeria the current crisis is one of internal civil strife, between the ruling National Liberation Front (*Front de Liberation Nationale*, FLN) and armed Islamist groups. Within a global context Algeria represents one of a number of countries world-wide which is characterised by increased Islamification.³⁹ The spiralling level of violence within Algeria since 1992 is unprecedented in its post-independence history. In 1991, Algeria looked to be on the way to achieving the freest political life in the Arab world following moves towards political liberalisation. However, in 1992 the elections were cancelled when the Islamic Salvation Front (*Front Islamique du Salut*, FIS) looked set to win, and there has been a state of emergency ever since. The much weakened Algerian state continues repressive actions, including tight control of the media and sweeping crackdowns on Islamists, employing imprisonment without trial, torture and execution. Islamist groups, particularly the Armed Islamic Group (*Group Islamique Arme*, GIA), continue to target specific sections of the community, including professionals, women and most recently the families of police and army personnel. A suicide bomb attack two days before *Ramadan*, January 1995, outside central police station Algiers, left 38 dead and 256 wounded (MEI 1995).

The Islamist response to the crisis in Algeria is a moral crusade which includes the reinstatement of a conservative model of the family and gender relations. As a result much of Algeria's violence is uniquely gender specific. Both men and women in Algeria have been targeted and killed because they are journalists, secularists and leftists, but women have also been killed simply because they are women. Symbolically, if not numerically, women are in the forefront of the conflict, trapped in a frenzied logic of competitive extremism (Hirst 1995). Women are the stake and symbol for the future course in Algeria.

1.1 Historical background to the crisis

The present crisis in Algeria is commonly dated to January 1992 when a military backed coup took place following the overwhelming success of the FIS in the first round of the December 1991 national elections, marking a significant increase in the level of violence. Others, however, talk about the conflict being well into its seventh year, dating from the October 1988 riots, and thus already a protracted affair (Roberts 1995:247).

For the purposes of this paper, Algeria is placed within the historical period of currently being in a state of conflict. The period from the late 1980s to the cancellation of the elections is considered to be a pre-conflict period, characterised by low intensity armed violence. Nonetheless, it should be noted that many, particularly Algerian feminists, are concerned that if the Islamists were to win power that the current level of conflict could be considered minor in comparison with the gender violence they believe would result.

³⁹ In this paper the more neutral terms Islamist and Islamification will be used as opposed to fundamentalist and fundamentalism, but recognising there is much debate concerning the terminology. Many, including Algerian women, argue that the term Islamist implies there is something unique to the Muslim movement, whilst using the term fundamentalist puts the phenomenon in the context of similar movements within other religions. (See Bennoune 1992, 1995) As a result a number of quotes by Algerian women in this paper use the term fundamentalist.

The FLN has led Algeria since independence in 1962. It was successful during the war of independence in part due to its ability to unite Algerians under a nationalist banner. Since independence, it has governed Algeria as a one-party state, effectively forcing all forms of opposition outside the formal political arena. With little or no room for official political opposition, Islamist groups became a vehicle for political dissent, the only organised and coherent voice to articulate discontent. As Islamist groups increased their strength the government made some attempts to co-opt them in the formal political spheres, and has to some extent been forced to react to the Islamist agenda.

Islamist groups are clearly perpetrating acts of violence⁴⁰ but the FLN are perceived to have created the conditions in which such groups operate. Many, including Algerian feminist writers, and critics of both the government and Islamists, view the violence, particularly the gender-specific violence, as “the logical conclusion of the ideologies of the political wing of the Algerian fundamentalist movement and the irresponsible policies and corruption of successive Algerian governments which helped spawn that movement” (Bennoune 1995:193). Between independence and the introduction of pluralism in the late 1980s, Algeria has been a one-party state.

In 1988 massive riots took place in Algeria in response to economic stagnation, the sudden decline in oil prices in 1986 having added to problems created by foreign debt. They were the first expression of mass discontent since independence in 1962. The riots were also a display of discontent with the repression and corruption of the ruling FLN. The government’s immediate response to the riots was to suppress them with killings and torture. Shortly afterwards, and in response to the obvious political discontent of many Algerians, the FLN began instituting a process of political liberalisation promoting political pluralism. A new constitution was adopted in February 1989, which in turn led to new legislation and the end of the FLN’s monopoly of power. Bennoune (1995), states that, rather than responding to the predominantly socio-economic demands of the rioters, particularly falling living standards, the government chose to deflect attention away from its own culpability and charges of corruption with political reforms. Legislation in 1989 on the Freedom of Association led to the legalisation of numerous parties and organisations including organisations making up the feminist movement and the previously banned FIS.

The FIS made significant gains in municipal elections held in June and July 1991. These were followed by the first round of the National Assembly elections held 26 December 1991, in which the FIS won 47.54% of the votes cast, representing 189 of the 231 seats (Human Rights Watch 1994:11). Only two other parties, the FLN and the Socialist Forces Front (*Front des Forces Socialistes*, FFS) survived to the second round.⁴¹ Allegations of fraud and misconduct, aimed at the FIS, were made and in January 1992 the elections were cancelled. The next day President Benjedid was ousted by a military-backed group from within governing circles, citing the need to protect public order.

⁴⁰ It should be noted that the state has been extremely repressive and carried out sweeping arrests of alleged Islamists, and numerous reports catalogue human rights abuses and torture by the regime. In addition, there are also claims that the regime is behind a significant amount of violence presumed to be Islamist sponsored in order to discredit the Islamist movements.

⁴¹ The FLN won 23.52% of the votes cast representing 15 of the 231 seats.
The FFS won 7.45% of the votes cast representing 25 of the 231 seats.

Violence increased dramatically following the cancellation of the elections in 1992. Algerian government figures released in August 1994, count 10,000 dead (Human Rights Watch 1995). Unofficially, many claim the figure could be as high as 50,000. 1994 marked a significant rise in the level of violence, particularly towards women.

In January 1995, the second round of the Rome Accords, also known as the Sant' Egidio peace formula, took place. Although the Algerian government has rejected the formula worked out by opposition groups, the American government is pushing for negotiations between the state and Islamist groups. Elections held on 16 November 1995 gave President Zeroul a significant enough margin to legitimise his policies, and those of the largely discredited military-backed regime, without boosting the standing of the opposition. However, Zeroul's success at the polls further reduces the chances of the Rome Accords representing a peace process, and thus a break from the current impasse.

2 GENDER DIMENSIONS OF THE CONFLICT.

2.1 Pre-conflict Gender Relations

Gender relations in Algeria are characterised by a conservative model of family life based on Islamic principles. Islamist violence against those who openly challenge this has entrenched current gender relations whilst simultaneously eradicating any alternatives.

During the war of independence, 1955-1962, women were active in the resistance against occupying colonialist French troops. For many this represented a change in gender relations, a challenge to orthodox views on women's roles, but one that was built on in post-independence Algeria. Others, however, point out that the roles women played during the war were rarely fighting ones, with the exception of Djamila Bouhired and Hassiba Ben Bouali, but essentially 'feminine' and inherently conformed to gender relations of the time, such as nursing and support staff. 'Even in the hardest times of struggle, women were oppressed, confined to tasks that would not disturb the social order in the future' (Lucus, cited Cooke 1987:18). Furthermore, women did not have an active role in the decision-making processes linked to the independence struggle. From the struggle emerged an active nationalist consciousness, but women's issues were seen as secondary to nationalist interests and criticised as anti-nationalist. Cooke, (1989), suggests that women neither recognised the challenges they were making to gender relations during the struggle, nor capitalised on them in the early post-independence years. Conversely, Algerian literature written by men during, and shortly after, the war was filled with trepidation about a new world overshadowed by the spectre of radical change. According to Cooke and her analysis of Algerian literature of the war of independence, the result was the re-imposition of neo-traditional demands as a part of national self-assertion after 1962. 'They (men) encountered no resistance and quickly patched up their tattered egos. The moment was lost' (Cooke 1989:20).

Despite the retrenchment of gender relations in post-independence Algeria, women made notable advances in some areas. In the field of education, women's illiteracy was significantly reduced. Adult literacy in Algeria is 60 per cent, and the gap between male and female illiteracy has been reduced from only 28 literate women for every 100 literate men in 1970, to 66 women per hundred men in 1992 (UNDP 1994:144). The creation of an Algerian schooling system as opposed to the French system was beneficial to both boys and girls, but particularly girls who were now more likely to receive a formal education. There is however a large drop-out rate for girls after they have completed their primary education. Gains were particularly limited in employment, where women account for four per cent of the total labour force (UNDP 1994:162),⁴² and in access to political decision-making.

The gender consequences of the current situation in Algeria are outlined in the following dimensions: political, legal and human rights; demographic and health; economic; social welfare and social organisation; socio-cultural and ideological; and psychological.

⁴² Note, the labour force only accounts for 24 per cent of the total population (UNDP 1994:162).

2.2 Political, legal and human rights

2.2.1 *Politics*

In February 1992, the five man, army sponsored collective presidency, the High State Committee (*Haute Comite' d'Etat*, HCE), declared a 12 month state of emergency which was renewed a year later and still remains in effect today. Under emergency powers the government re-imposed strict controls of the media, and increased its powers of arrest and detention without trial. The conflict and state of emergency has pushed some organisations underground, including the now banned FIS. Much of the women's movement which operates underground publishing articles, mainly in French, in response to the crisis, while trying to maintain contact outside an Algeria which is becoming increasingly isolated (Bennoune 1995).

In post-independence Algeria women's participation in formal politics has been limited. In local elections it has been low, and decreasing steadily. In 1967, women won 99 of the 10,852 seats in the communal elections. Low participation was reduced to zero participation in the first free local elections since independence held in 1990. Domination of the political arena by Islamists and the threats of violence against women, ensured not a single woman was elected at the local level (Tlemcani 1992:76). In the government before the cancelled elections of 1991, seven of the 295 seats were held by women (Tlemcani 19992). In the presidential elections of November 1995, there were four candidates, all men.⁴³ The question arises as to whether a pluralistic, multi-party system in Algeria will offer women politicians any further opportunities or not.

The women's movement has not had to fight for the right to vote in Algeria, as this was enshrined in all state constitutions, but they have had to fight for the law to apply equally to men and women. Men have been able to vote on behalf of wives and since 1970, for all female members of their extended family (Hayef 1995). The FLN has consistently denied women in Algeria a political voice. In 1968 the Women's Union, along with the FLN's youth wing, the Peasants' and Workers' Unions, was formally integrated into the FLN, thus closing a significant forum for women (Knauss 1992).

The centralisation of power in the hands of the state, consolidated by state of emergency powers, has effectively restricted civil society. The openness enjoyed by women's organisations benefiting from political liberalisation in the late 1980's is being eroded by the conflict. In addition, successes of feminist organisations have been limited. Opposition by feminist organisations to a new Personal Code being introduced in the 1970's led to it being postponed, but did not prevent a more restrictive version being introduced in 1984. Neither has the women's movement addressed problems affecting the overwhelming majority of Algerian women, nor gained support from secluded women (Tlemcani 1992:77). The character of the women's movement does not seem to have been affected by the crisis, with women's demonstrations before and during it, being distinctly urban and professional in character (Knauss 1992). In contrast, the Islamist movement is much more likely to draw

⁴³ The candidates were: Zeroul, unelected president, chosen by the HCE in 1994; Nanah, head of Hamas, Algeria's legal Islamist movement; Boukrouh, moderate Islamist intellectual and founder of the Algerian Renewal Party in 1989; and Saadi, head of the Berber Cultural Movement.

support from the poorer segments of female Algerian society. For Islamist women there does seem to have been an increase in Islamist women's organisations. Their emphasis is almost entirely on charitable activities, thus they are able to operate with fewer threats, if not total freedom.

Women supporters of the FIS have stated that the higher status assigned to 'feminine knowledge', and spatial segregation, as promoted by the Islamist movement, works to women's advantage. Women's study groups and 'cells' exist in which women debate every subject. This has also allowed Islamist women to develop networks and power independently from men (Slyomovics 1995:12).⁴⁴ Nonetheless, women are conspicuously absent from the formal political arena. Abstention in the first round of voting for the Legislative elections of 1991, was 30 per cent, of which women accounted for three-quarters, the majority of whom were poorly educated or illiterate women (Hayef 1995:25). Hayef, suggests there are two reasons for this. Firstly, after single-party politics since independence, pluralism is a new concept which has not encouraged increased participation. Secondly, the period of any real freedom of political debate was very brief, only two years, before political based violence erupted. Women, already excluded from political life were unable to take advantage of new opportunities created by liberalisation before the opportunities disappeared.

Women are active in the opposition movement against the Islamists. Khalida Messaoudi is a prominent leader of the Republic Movement (*Mouvement pour la République* MPR) despite threats against her and being injured by a grenade thrown during an opposition demonstration. Algerian feminists claim at the grassroots level women are active in decision-making processes. With the lack of consolidated advances in political, legal and social status of women after the war of independence, women currently recognise the importance of their role in decision-making structures so as to affect the final outcome of the conflict. This is highlighted by Algerian academic Melika Mehdid. 'We know we will come out of this crisis sooner or later, our biggest concern is how women come out of it. We must be vigilant and ensure women are not pushed back into the kitchen as happened after independence.'⁴⁵

In 1993, *Rassemblement Femmes Democats* was established in direct response to the rising tide of Islamist violence. It was the joining together of a number of women's groups, to actively fight fundamentalism in Algeria. They have organised a number of demonstrations and organised mock trials of FIS leaders at the International Women's Day conference in Algiers March 1995. They are not a feminist organisation, but are increasingly open to feminist ideas, particularly with the pervasive abductions and rapes that have been occurring during the last few years.

According to Algerian women involved in the women's movement, there have been visible changes during the last two to three years. Unlike any other time in its history, the movement has acted autonomously. According to Sakina B.⁴⁶, this is a direct result of the brutality meted out to young women in the systematic abduction of women for temporary marriages with Islamist fighters. Within the movement, it is young women who have become more

⁴⁴ Feminists and women activists challenge this emphasising the fact that study groups operating in mosques are monitored by men (Slyomovics 1995). Indeed, mosques are far from safe havens for independent thought. *Imams*, (prayer leaders), whose sermons do not 'toe the Islamist line' have been shot.

⁴⁵Conversation 10 November 1995.

⁴⁶ An Algerian woman who due to Islamist threats, prefers to be known only as Sakina B.

radical in their views, and whilst numerically these women may not be representative of Algerian society, symbolically they are not unrepresentative.

2.2.2 *Legal and Human Rights*

Under the state of emergency, in place since 1992, arrests, detentions, torture and means of oppression have intensified. Some 9000 suspected FIS supporters were arrested in 1992 alone and sent to detention camps, mainly in the remote southern desert (Human Rights Watch 1994:18). Some women have been detained, both as suspected FIS supporters but also because they are wives of FIS supporters. Human rights observers state that there have been grave human rights violations, not only in the detention of Islamists, but also with regard to torture in prisons. Data on torture, along with that on those tried and sentenced in the special courts is not gender disaggregated, but since young men make up the ranks of the armed Islamist movement, it is men who are suffering directly from torture at the hands of the government. The indirect impact of the mass arrests is an increase in Islamist female-headed households and pressures on family livelihoods. With the strict controls on women's freedoms, particularly in urban Islamist strongholds, women are forced to look to Islamist charities, and to male relatives for support, thus increasing their dependency.

In the Algerian conflict both men and women have been killed for their political and religious affiliations and for their professions: journalists; academics; young men completing their military service; and recently bankers who fail to implement Islamist banking practices. Teachers and schools have also been a major target of the GIA. 600 schools and 30 institutions of higher education have been razed to the ground by the GIA (MEI 1995).

Women have been targeted because they are wives, daughters and sisters of security personnel in Algeria. The suicide bomb attack in January 1995 targeted the families of policemen and was a response to the government's failure to release women imprisoned as Islamist collaborators. Women whose husbands have been killed have been threatened if they report the deaths to the authorities, or identify the killers (Bennoune 1995). Conversely, Bennoune suggests that men are now being targeted because of the political affiliations of their wives. For example the husband of Leila Asloui, a former judge and government minister who resigned in protest at government policies relating to Islamists, and was assassinated in his office (Bennoune 1995:192).

In addition to being targeted because of their professions, their political affiliations or those of spouses, women are also targeted because they are women. This gives the Algerian conflict a unique gender element. Women's behaviour, dress and conduct becoming the focus of the Islamist agenda. A slogan which appeared during Ramadan 1994 warned, 'O you woman who wears the *jilbab* (full robes), May you be blessed by God. O you who wears the *hijab* (head scarf), May God put you on the straight road. O you who expose yourself, the gun is for you' (Bennoune 1995:187).

Women have been killed for not wearing the veil but two women have been also been killed by the Organisation of Free Young Algerians, (*L'Organisation des Jeunes Algeriens Libres* OJAL), claiming to represent the secular FLN, because they were wearing the veil (Slyomovics 1995). Women's college and university dormitories have been besieged by FIS militants who threatened women residents and prevented them from entering or leaving. A

press release written by a group of women residents at the University of Blida stated, 'These fundamentalists, sure of their strength and egged on by the authorities' silence, have taken the place of those who represent law and have started to apply their own laws' (Papers from the Algerian Women's Movement, cited Bennoune 1995:195).

Both men and women have died violent deaths at the hands of Islamists, having had their throats cut, their bodies often left in the streets to serve as a warning to others. However, women have often been raped and tortured first. In November 1994 the bodies of Saida (15) and her sister, Zoulikha (21), were found on the roadside in Blida. They had been gang raped, had their finger and toenails ripped out and their throats cut. They had been punished for refusing to consent to a temporary marriage with armed Islamists. Their mother, who had attempted to protect her daughters, was found 20 days later in a mass grave, raped and killed in the same manner (Bennoune 1995:186). Women are suffering greatly before they are killed and many young Algerian women express a desire to carry poison to take their own lives in case they are captured. 'I thought of buying poison so I can kill myself if taken by them (Islamists) alive, so all they get is a corpse. I am losing my hair from nerves' (Bennoune 1995:185).

Since early 1994 the GIA have also conducted a programme of abducting women with the aim of forcing them into temporary pleasure marriages with fighters. Women who have refused, have been held against their will, often forced to clean and cook for militant groups, raped and in some cases murdered. This is a grave violation of the code of honour in Algeria, and according to Kapil (1995:5), 'indicates the extent to which Algerian society is coming apart at the seams'.

Despite the new constitution, which claims equality for Algerian men and women, judicial procedures continue to discriminate against women. In 1989, the longest sentence given to a group of Islamists who firebombed the home of a divorced woman killing her seven-year old, disabled son, who they saw hiding under the bed, was ten years. A woman who killed her violent husband at roughly the time was sentenced to death. The death sentence was eventually commuted after pressure from women's organisations (Bennoune 1994:33). It can be concluded that although the government is determined to crack down on Islamist activities, domestic violence and women's rights are either not on their agenda, or secondary to national interests.

2.3 Demographics and health

It is unofficially estimated that 50,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the insurrection. In March 1995, the government launched its biggest offensive against the Islamists, killing as many as 2,800 Islamist fighters, mainly belonging to the GIA. From the beginning of 1994 to the March offensive, security forces reported there were approximately 8,677 civilian victims of terrorism, including 6,338 fatalities (International Country Risk Guide 1995).⁴⁷ The violence of the government has been targeted at Islamist supporters who are mainly men aged between 20 and 30 years. According to *Liberte*, the violence of the last three years has created 140,000 orphans⁴⁸ and 10,000 widows (*ibid.*). This has serious

⁴⁷ This does not include civilians killed by the security forces.

⁴⁸ Note, in Muslim societies, a child without a father is considered an orphan.

consequences for the family structure and has led to an increase in female-headed households in Algeria. (See socio-cultural section on reactions to female-headed households.) This is likely to have an impact on the sex ratio in Algeria and may lead to pro-natalist policies in the future.

The most frequent target of Islamists are skilled workers, with a total of 1,800 assassinations and 96 woundings in 1994 alone (*ibid.*).⁴⁹ The effect of targeting and killing professionals has been an exodus of thousands more from Algeria, and a vacuum now exists in the professional sphere. Many have headed to France where they have families, but this has led to a tightening of immigration controls and asylum granting procedures there. In addition, the closing of many European embassies in Algeria due to the attacks on foreign workers has made it increasingly difficult for Algerians to obtain visas to travel.

Acquiring asylum status is notoriously difficult for women as gender-specific violence is rarely recognised. In North America Algerian women have been applying for asylum with mixed results (Bennoune 1995). UNHCR note they have had no applications for asylum based on alleged support of the FIS (UNHCR 1993). However, the wife and family of Abbasi Madani, leader of the FIS who was imprisoned after the elections, released, re-imprisoned in 1995, and currently under house arrest, were granted leave to stay in Germany as political asylum seekers (EIU 1995:17). Those without the option to leave the country are joining a large community of internal refugees. An increasing proportion of internal refugees are women, seeking safe haven in other smaller cities throughout Algeria where the Islamist hold is less strong. (Bennoune 1995:190).

2.4 Economic

Economic and political issues are intertwined as the major antecedents of the crisis in Algeria. Democratic legitimacy was forfeited after the cancellation of the elections in 1992, but even before that, the state was forced to bow to external pressure to reschedule debts and implement IMF and World Bank austerity measures which were depriving it of nationalist legitimacy in the economic sphere (Roberts 1995). As the conflict has escalated, the state has proved its inability to relieve its population of economic distress and provide security. A new Extended Fund Facility (EFF) was agreed in May 1995 bringing \$1.8 billion into the country from abroad. However, the conflict is already estimated to have cost \$2 billion in material damage (EIU 1995:5), and although figures are not available, military spending has increased as the government attempts to contain the Islamists.

In the economic sphere, the Islamists have targeted the professional middle classes - who are least likely to be supporters of the Islamist movement - with little consideration of the economic implications. Indeed, the Islamists' economic policy in Algeria is non-existent. The FIS analysis of the economic problems was summed up in the election slogan, 'Our crisis is a crisis of faith and morals' (Bennoune 1995:194). Thus the focus is on 'secular' professionals and working women.

⁴⁹ Ascherson the total figure for skilled workers since 1992 is more than 4,000, and breaks down the figures as follows: white-collar workers 2,207; school teachers 101; 'liberal professions' 670; civil servants 689; journalists 21; businessmen 350, and concludes, 'somebody is trying to turn (Algerian) society into a vegetable, by destroying its brains' (Independent 12/3/1995).

In 1984 the government estimated that 245,000 women were in paid employment, less than one per cent of the total population (Knauss 1992:166). Women currently account for 4.2 per cent of Algeria's paid work force (Slyomovics 1995:13). These figures are official figures based on formal paid employment and do not take account of the less visible work women do. Nonetheless, this number has probably fallen under the pressure from Islamists against women working outside of the home as a solution to high male unemployment. This is especially prevalent among 15 to 24 year-old males, and further job losses expected with the restructuring of public companies and government service industries, as a condition of the EFF. Conversely, it is likely that 'invisible' female employment will increase. Firstly, due to economic necessity and pressure on livelihoods, and secondly because home based employment is 'acceptable' within the Islamist agenda.

When men's work makes them targets for attack, it is most often because of their professional and middle-class status. Women, however, are being targeted because they are working, and therefore, it affects more than the middle classes alone. One of the first working women to be killed was 21 year old Karima Belhadj. A secretary at a police station who supported her entire family of eight, she was shot on her way home from work in April 1993. A woman journalist commented on the killing, "We thought at the beginning that women would be okay, but when they killed a woman secretary in a police station, we realised we were wrong. Women are afraid. No-one is safe" (Bennoune 1995:186). Ironically, women have also been killed for working in *hammams* (public baths), as hairdressers or fortune tellers, all of which are considered traditional roles for women.

Working women have also been threatened unless they adhere to modest codes of dress and conduct. Women teachers have been specifically targeted to wear the *hijab*, and all teachers are required to follow an Islamist curriculum in schools and stop teaching gymnastics to girls. Women are still teaching but they, and their families, remain under constant threat.⁵⁰ In hospitals women doctors are increasingly finding that they are only permitted to treat women patients (Bennoune 1995). Male doctors may find that women will not see them, but they are not expressly forbidden to examine and treat female patients.

2.5 Social welfare and organisations

Government services have been severely cut back in Algeria since the introduction of structural adjustment policies in the late 1980s. With the onslaught of the current crisis and increased military expenditure by the state, they have been cut further. The state supported health care system is now almost non-existent, and Algerians are forced to pay for private health care where it is available. Similarly, education is mainly private now. The gender

⁵⁰A woman school inspector received the following threat in 1994:

'For [Miss X], School Inspector, If you do not solve the problems of Muslims which you have created before the end of Ramadan, you will have your throat cut like all the tyrants and sinners. The conditions on you are: 1)wearing the *hijab* permanently after the first day of Ramadan, 2)asking forgiveness from the Muslims that you have made suffer in your behaviour as a tyrant, 3)we are watching you and we know where you live. We are not afraid of the police or gendarmes but we will cut your throat before the end of Ramadan. If you do not (meet these conditions) before the end of Ramadan, you are responsible. We warned you before cutting your throat.' [Signed] The Islamic Group of el Harrache, Head of the Group Azedine, Long Live Islam, Long Live the GIA, the armed struggle for an Islamic state in Algeria (Bennoune 1995:191).

consequences of this are that restricted economic funds, combined with son preference, means that girls are less likely to receive medical care or a formal education. Although figures are not available, it is recognised in Algeria that during the most recent years of the conflict the drop-out rate for girls has increased substantially.⁵¹

Since independence women in Algeria have made significant gains in reproductive health. Official statistics state that in the period 1985-92, 51 per cent of women used contraceptives (UNDP 1994:174). This has been the result of a successful government health and education programme aimed to reduce the birth rate in Algeria. Since the crisis this has not significantly changed. Contraception use has fallen, due more to the lack of available supplies than to any ideological shift. The Islamists tried to introduce a policy of 'one year, one child', but this had only limited success, mainly within Islamist family units and in rural areas where women were more isolated.⁵²

A number of organisations have taken over social welfare in Algeria as state services have contracted. Perhaps the biggest organisations are Islamist ones which operate out of the mosques. They offer charitable assistance to families, particularly female-headed households where husbands are in prison for Islamist activities. The support is often clandestine as it confers Islamist sympathy on the family, and therefore, signals guilt by association to the government. The government, despite limited resources, also offers some welfare provisions to the new female-headed households which have appeared because of terrorist violence. The support is less to do with an ideological commitment to women than to the political imperative of maintaining and increasing support (Melika Mehdid).

A large number of local women's associations are still operating in Algeria.⁵³ Despite the official status of these organisations, and their welfare oriented policies, they remain under constant threat from Islamist groups.⁵⁴

2.6 Socio-cultural and ideological

Rising Islamification in Algeria represents an ideological attack on the secular, socialist state and society. The Islamist agenda, forcibly imposed on Algerian lifestyles, through violent means, has led to changes in gender relations. In the main part they have attempted to create a retrenchment of 'traditional' gender relations, and a reversal of gains made by women in challenging them.

The central desire of Algerian Islamists is the creation of an Islamist state ruled by *sharia* (Islamic law), to replace the secular socialist one. Thus, Islam is viewed as encompassing all aspects of life, public and private. However, the practical details of how this state would

⁵¹ Personal communication with Algerian Sakina B.

⁵² Personal communication with Algerian Sakina B.

⁵³ Perhaps the most prominent are: *Association de Femmes Victimes de Terrorisme*; and *SOS Femmes en Detresse*, both providing support networks for women; and *Mouvement Feminist Algerian des Solidarite avec les Femmes*, which is particularly active in rural Algeria promoting literacy and vocational training skills for women supporting their families.

⁵⁴ President of *Movement Feminism Algeria*, Ms Benhailees, has received death threats from the Armed Islamic Group (*Group Islamique Arme GIA*) who also attempted to kidnap her daughter, a university student (conversation with Fatima Zenasni 10 November 1995).

come about and what it would look like are lacking, and focus is on concrete moral matters, particularly those pertaining to women and the family. Until the creation of an Islamist state, Islamist groups enforce morality and modify people's behaviour, particularly that of women, and also, as the GIA have shown, using violent means. Islamist groups show a high degree of intolerance to non-Muslims and those who do not share their views. In Algeria, some Berbers have been attacked as apostates, but more Algerians have been killed simply because they oppose Islamist views. The message of the Islamists is spread primarily through the mosques, but education, especially in where such a large proportion of the populations under 16, is an equally effective means, especially if, like Algeria, an Islamist curriculum can be imposed.

During the mid 1980s the government attempted to co-opt the Islamist sentiment in Algeria. One of the ways of doing this was to commission the building of new mosques. Paradoxically, this became one of the means by which Islamist support spread. Under Algerian law, a mosque comes under official control once it is completed, but a large number were never completed and thus acted as powerful centres for Islamist mobilisation. In the early 1980s there were 2,000 unofficial mosques, and by 1990, it was estimated that, out of the 10,000 mosques in Algeria, 8,000 fell outside of official control (Joffe 1995). This gave Islamists an important, and secure, outlet for their political and social message.

The most visible change has been the increase in women wearing the *hijab*. Fisk (1995), estimated at the conference he attended for international women's day in 1995, only five per cent of the women were wearing veils. This was a brave demonstration of solidarity given the communiqué issued by Islamist groups in March 1994 which stated all women who appeared on the streets without their heads covered risked death (Bennoune 1992). The conference, like much of the women's movement, is concerned less with feminism, than survival. Many women are daily doing battle by not wearing veil, whilst others have adopted the veil, often resenting being forced to conform out of fear. 'None of us wants to wear the veil, but fear is stronger than our convictions or our will to be free. Fear is all around us. Our parents, our brothers are unanimous; "wear the veil and stay alive. This will pass."' (Slyomovics 1995:10). In contrast, the view of Islamist women, is that the veil has in fact forced a rearrangement of the male public sphere to make room for women, offering protection and escape from traditional roles of wife and mother. However, these views find little support amongst the FIS leadership who insist on spatial segregation even if women are veiled, and there are no attempts to reorganise the domestic space, which continues to be governed along patriarchal lines.

FIS leader, Ali Ben Hadj, stated in a widely quoted interview in 1989,

'the natural place of expression for women is in the home. If she must go out, there are conditions: not to be near men and that her work is located in an exclusively feminine milieu. In our institutions and universities is it admissible to authorise mixing? It is contrary to Islamic morality. It is necessary to separate girls and boys and consecrate establishments for each sex... In a real Islamic society, the woman is not destined to work and the head of state must provide her with remuneration.. In this way, she will not leave her home and consecrate herself to the education of men. The woman is a producer of men, she produces no material goods but this essential thing which is Muslim' (Slyomovics 1995:11).

Further restrictions and bans imposed by Islamists are distorting the meaning of everyday life. Affecting both men and women is the ban on the *hammam* which has grave consequences for

hygiene given the majority of Algerians live in overcrowded housing and often are too poor to install water tanks (Chaumeil 1995). However, for women, the *hammam* offered a respite from everyday life, a legitimate place for women to meet outside of the home, whilst purifying themselves.

Increasing numbers of female-headed households are appearing in Algeria due to the conflict. Despite the fact that they are emerging because of Islamist violence and sweeping government arrests of Islamists, female-headed households are deemed socially unacceptable by Islamists, and thus targeted for attack. The lack of acceptance of female-headed households suggests widows, divorcees and their children should not live alone but be incorporated into extended family units. However, the urban housing shortages constitute one of the main failures of the old socialist regime and the incorporation of nuclear family groupings into extended ones means overcrowding.

Many women have reported gang rapes by armed men to the police and given interviews with newspapers, giving accounts of months of captivity and repeated rapes by armed men. Reports of kidnappings and rapes have been so recurrent that in 'a totally unprecedented move for a society where sexuality remains a taboo subject for discussion, three young women between the ages of 15 and 28 who had survived similar ordeals, appeared with their fathers on national Algerian television on 22 December 1994, to speak about their experiences' (Bennoune 1995:189).⁵⁵ Whilst recognition, in itself, of systematic rapes may aid healing and facilitate women's organisations which are working to provide support and counselling to women, it has not promoted changes in norms about sexuality in Algerian. It seems that there was extreme pressure on women to participate in the state-controlled television broadcast, the aim of which was to publicly discredit the Islamists rather than directly support women.

Some social changes which are occurring during this period of conflict in Algeria may have longer term consequences for gender relations, particularly if they are capitalised on by women's organisations. The average age of the women's movement's membership is falling. Young women are becoming increasingly politicised as a direct response to the violence they see around them, and this is manifesting itself in family relations. Although official statistics are not available, Algerian women state there has been a marked increase in divorce in the last two years.⁵⁶ While all women are targets of FIS rhetoric, none are more reviled than the feminists. They are often called *hizb Franca* (the party of France) supporters in an attempt to discredit them by association them with the brutal colonial past (Bennoune 1992:36).

⁵⁵ 'Fifteen-year-old Khadidja told a shocked Algerian public of being kidnapped at gun point from her parents' home, in front of her family, kept in a "safe house" for several weeks where she was forced to cook and clean for "God's warriors" and repeatedly raped' (Bennoune 1995:189).

⁵⁶ Conversation with Algerian woman who preferred to be identified only as Sakina B.

2.7 Psychological

It is difficult to assess the psychological impacts of the violence in Algeria due to the current status of the conflict and the lack of data emerging. However, there is undoubtedly stress and trauma associated with the shifts in gender ideologies and the new roles that women are being forced to take on. This is likely to affect both those who embrace the conservative, Islamist role of women in the home, and those who reject it.

The escalation in violence since 1994 has increased the already pervasive sense of powerlessness among Algerian women. 'The general climate of terrorist violence against women has produced its desired effect: a widespread psychosis and insecurity among the female population at large' (Bennoune 1995:190). Whether targeted for attack specifically or not, all women are living under extreme emotional stress. Working women such as the school inspector referred to earlier stated she had been forced to alter her work schedule significantly, and only have limited contact with her family (Bennoune 1995:191). Women with the means to leave the country, are having to make the difficult decision, whether it is better to stay and risk being killed, or leave and live. Women who stay are finding they have become prisoners in their own homes. A university lecturer in Oran said;

'We lead a dull life. Work, home, with nothing extra because we must be shut in inside one's home. Even the rare cultural events at the university are gone, at least they used to allow us to see each other...In fact, everything is ruined in Algeria: political life, social life, and even family life. Terrorism has installed itself at every level, even in the family unit' (Slyomovics 1995:12).

The level of violence has meant that almost every woman, particularly in Oran and Algiers, knows someone who has been killed and many have actually witnessed the deaths, unable to intervene. A male journalist described the impact of an killing on his wife.

'My wife was there (when Abderraham Cherbou, a journalist was killed). They put a bag over his head and attacked him with a knife. He still had the bread he had bought in his hand. He tried to run away with the blood spurting from his throat. This is how my wife saw him and she is touched by this for life. He died 20 minutes later from loss of blood (Bennoune 1995:192).

In many cases victims have been killed in front of their families or left in the streets as a warning to others. A woman speaking at 1995's International Women's Day conference in Algiers described how her husband had been kidnapped in front of her and then, later, she had opened her front door to be presented with his head on a stick (Fisk 1995). With more men than women killed, women are suffering from bereavement and loss, and traditional forms of mourning such as funeral processions have become dangerous as mourners of Islamist victims themselves become targeted.

3. GENDER ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

In the West there is mounting concern, that the crisis in Algeria will have a domino effect, with the defeat of democracy and violence spilling outside of Algeria, and triggering an exodus of refugees. France has called for a crackdown Islamists in Europe and detained 26 FIS supporters in August 1995. Conversely the US is urging the government to begin dialogue with Islamist groups. These somewhat conflicting positions have promoted further polarisation between the FLN and GIA, with the GIA resenting France's support for the FLN, and the FLN convinced that the US supports the GIA and its position on the Rome Accords.

The government looks set to continue its current policies and avoid negotiation with the Islamists. In other countries where Islamists have been co-opted by governing regimes, there have been trade-offs, mainly in the field of education and social welfare, thus affecting women and children. In Algeria, there are few areas left for such trade-offs, if such negotiation were to take place in the future. The Islamists have already successfully Islamicised the education curriculum, the Personal Code introduced in 1984 was more repressive than earlier drafts which women's organisations effectively opposed, and the judiciary is dominated by *sharia* law.

Algerian women are concerned at the lack of priority given to the gender-specific violence in Algeria. They call on France to make good its promises of solidarity and support of Algerian women, particularly in granting temporary asylum. It is essential, they conclude, that France prioritises women's rights in its formation of policy towards Algeria. Journalist Zazi Sadou stated;

'Kidnappings, rape, torture, assassinations, "dishonour", flight, exile, permanent fear of reprisals, nightmares, hopes and futures broken....Here is a sample of what the soldiers of the Islamic State offer women and their families, only five years before the dawn of the 21st century' (cited Bennoune 1995:193).

Grass roots women's organisations are consolidating their positions in Algeria, and new ones are emerging in direct response to the conflict. In the majority of cases they are focusing on health, education and welfare, but nascent feminist based organisations are emerging. They are finding little support among international development agencies in the field, mainly due to Islamist threats against aid agencies and limited support from other women's groups and feminist organisations internationally.

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SOMALIA

by

TANYA POWER-STEVENSON

SOMALIA

ABBREVIATIONS

CHW	Child health worker
MCH	Mother and Child Health
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SNM	Somali National Movement
SRC	Supreme Revolutionary Council
TBA	Traditional birth attendants
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNOSOM	UN Operation in Somalia
USC	United Somali Congress
WFP	World Food Programme

1. BACKGROUND

For the past five years there has been civil war and famine in Somalia,⁵⁷ the results of which have been catastrophic. The conflict 'is a result of a mixture of factors that include the legacies of European colonialism, a schismatic kinship system, the contradictions between a centralised state and a pastoral culture, east-west cold war politics and militarisation, underdevelopment, the lack of power sharing, corruption and human rights violations' (Bradbury 1994:114). Following the Ogaden war with Ethiopia, a period of relative stability existed in Somalia, until the fall of Sayid Barre in 1991. Since then, Somalia has broken into a number of semi-autonomous regions represented by politico-military clan factions vying for political power and control of natural resources. With the intensification of violence in 1992, which threatened the stability of the Horn of Africa and the impending human disaster due to widespread famine, the international community launched a major humanitarian intervention. It was to be the first of a new style of UN intervention, placing human rights and humanitarian relief at the forefront of the agenda. It was also, arguably, the least successful,⁵⁸ and its repercussions for future interventions are as yet unknown. In the meantime, the vast majority of victims of the violence in Somalia and the conflict-induced famine, are civilians, of whom many are women.

Social relations in Somali society are based around kinship and a pastoral way of life. They are patriarchal and a rigid sexual division of labour exists. The breakdown of Somali society and infrastructure as a result of the conflict has led to increased participation or visibility of women in the economic arena, in petty trading and has led to a shift in attitudes towards greater respect for women's workload and the constraints they face. For some women this has been reflected in changes in their conjugal relationships. However, recognition of women's increased burdens and respect towards them for meeting them does not necessarily imply progressive change in gender relations. Simultaneously, there has been a rise in traditional and conservative attitudes towards women, linked to, but not exclusively the result of, rising Islamic influence in Somalia.

1. 1 Political history of the conflict

Somalia is currently in a period of conflict. Fighting began in the late 1980s and was mainly confined to the north. The fighting gradually spread south to the capital Mogadishu and conflict engulfed the whole country in January 1991, with the overthrow of Sayid Barre and his regime.⁵⁹

Somalia was created by the union of Italian Somalia and the British Somaliland Protectorate, and gained independence in 1960. The main legacy of colonial rule was a centralised system of government which the military, under General Mohamad Sayid Barre, seized in 1969, after nine years of democratic elections and amid accusations of corruption. Barre adopted an anti-tribalist policy of 'Scientific Socialism' advocating popular participation through local

⁵⁷ Unless otherwise stated, Somalia refers to the territories of the Somali Democratic Republic, including the self-declared Republic of Somaliland of the north-west territory.

⁵⁸ According to Africa Rights (1994) Somalia during 1991-93 was the apogee of humanitarianism unbound and Somalia became, quite explicitly, a guinea pig for humanitarian intervention in the new world order.

⁵⁹ Thus, the pre-conflict period could be identified as late 1989 to early 1991.

councils and worker committees. However, the model failed to undermine traditional Somali value systems, particularly the clan system which forms the basis of Somali society, and created 'a serious disjuncture between moral authority and coercive authority' (Sanatar, cited in Bradbury 1994:115) which undermined Barre's regime.

The country is divided along clan lines.⁶⁰ Speaking in an interview with Africa Watch, a Somali refugee said, 'One's clan used to be essentially an address...[now] it has become literally a matter of life and death, both for the individual and the group' (Africa Watch 1993:4). Under Barre, people were persecuted due to their clan affiliations, especially those belonging to the clans of the north-west territories, in an attempt to eradicate the clan based nature of society. In the current conflict this clan-based persecution has intensified.

The disintegration of Somalia and reassertion of self-determination, is highlighted by the declaration in May 1991, by the Somali National Movement (SNM),⁶¹ of the independence of the northern regions to form the Republic of Somaliland. Throughout much of 1991 and the first half of 1992, Somaliland was a haven of peace in comparison with the prevailing conflict in the south. However, widespread devastation in the north, shortages of every commodity and the lack of international recognition for the new republic, created strains and sporadic violence escalated (EIU 1992).

The conflict is dominated by two main militias and violence is perpetrated by men. Few of the traditional 'rules of engagement' have been adhered to during the current conflict, such as the confinement of fighting to men. The code of honour under which women and children are protected has been abandoned and women and children, particularly those in minority clans, have been massacred (El Bushra 1993).

The protracted political impasse has created a vacuum in the civil authority and government in Somalia. Humanitarian agencies were committed to working in Somalia but their efforts have been curtailed by the lack of a secure environment. Presently in Somalia, there is little international presence and most activity is located in the relative calm of Somaliland. This is in part linked to the withdrawal of UN troops from Somalia in March 1995. There no longer exists a formal government. The country is ruled by competing militias identified by one of the six clans which make up Somali society. In Mogadishu, Aydeed, leader of the SNM, is in direct competition with Ali Mahdi, defector from the SMN and leader of the Somali Salvation Alliance, for control of the South. The relatively stable Somaliland is governed by President Abdul Rahman Ahmned Ali Tour who makes claims to his election by democratic processes. Women are neither involved directly in the fighting in Somalia, nor in the militia-based governing bodies.⁶²

⁶⁰ There are six major clan families in Somalia. Four are pastoral: the Darod (who number over one million); the *Hawiye* (dominant in Mogadishu); the *Isaaq* (predominant in the north); the *Dir* (who subdivide into the *Gadabursi* and the *'Iise*). The two largely agricultural clans are the Digil and the Rahanwayn (EIU 1992:36).

⁶¹ The SNM is the main political party in northern Somalia which has waged a guerrilla war against Barre's regime since 1981. Attacks on northern towns in May 1988, were the overt starting point of the civil war in Somalia (Bradbury 1994).

⁶² On June 1995 Aydeed announced his new 'government' made up of 60 members, none of whom are women (EIU 1992 and personal correspondence).

1.2 Pre-conflict gender relations

Gender relations in pre-conflict Somalia were characterised by patriarchal, patrilineal, exogenous social systems only. Men were permitted to establish autonomous productive and reproductive units (households) and women rarely constituted legal persons in their own right (Kapteijns 1994). Somalia is a predominantly Muslim country, Islam having been absorbed from coastal Persian and Arab immigrants and traders in the 13th century. Islam was a dominant force in pre-conflict Somalia and interpretations of it were specific to Somali cultural society rather than any import of 'fundamentalist' interpretations. However, there were major differentials between governmental legislation and customary practice which governed women's lives and gender relations.

Under Barre, a number of international conventions were adopted relating to the rights of women, including the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms to Discrimination Against Women, but none have been signed or ratified. Article six of the 1979 constitution, entitles all citizens to equal rights and duties regardless of sex, religion, origin or language (World Bank 1994). In addition, the government recognised the need to increase women's participation for the acceleration of socio-economic development in post-colonial Somalia. Legislation passed by Barre's Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) granted equal inheritance rights to women, made wage discrimination based on sex unlawful, entitled women to maternity leave with half pay and broadened women's educational opportunities. Women played no role in the formal or informal political spheres in pre-conflict Somalia and in reality formal legislation had little bearing on the vast majority of women's lives.

In pre-conflict Somalia, 76 per cent of the labour force were involved in agriculture (UNDP 1995) in which there existed a rigid sexual division of labour. Men were responsible for the security of farms and protection from looting and women were responsible for livestock, except camels, subsistence farming and providing for the family. Women accounted for 86 per cent of subsistence farmers in pre-conflict Somalia (McFearson 1989). Official figures for women's involvement in the economy fail to illuminate the large numbers of women involved in small scale trading, particularly in garden produce, which was vital to household livelihoods. Women were also responsible for collecting firewood and water, which could require trekking for days during drought periods, as well as for building and maintenance. Female-headed households were a feature of Somalia in this period, firstly because Somalia was an exporter of labour to the Arab Gulf states and secondly as a result of the Ogaden war with Ethiopia.

Despite the establishment of numerous primary schools, some secondary schools and a university, UNDP (1995) estimates that Somali literacy was only 27 per cent in 1992. High female drop-out rates, especially after primary education, lead to a significant gap between women's and men's literacy rates. Government health services were concentrated in urban areas where they served approximately ten per cent of the population⁶³ and, according to World Bank figures, women made up 20 per cent of physicians in Somalia. However, with professional services limited to the main urban areas, in pre-conflict Somalia women were the main providers of informal health care in rural areas. The major health issues for Somali

⁶³ 74 per cent of doctors, 64 per cent of midwives and 39 per cent of professional nurses were located in the capital city of Mogadishu before the collapse of the government (World Bank 1994).

women were linked to multiple child births, from a young age, with close birth spacing and poor nutrition. In addition, female genital mutilation is almost universal in Somalia, with most women infibulated before the age of eight.

2. GENDER DIMENSIONS OF THE CONFLICT

Changes in gender relations in Somalia as a result of the conflict are outlined in the following dimensions: political, legal and human rights; demography and health; economic; social welfare and organisation; socio-cultural and ideological; and psychological.

2.1 Political, legal and human rights

2.1.1 *The political arena*

At the national level, the SNA and SSA are vying for political power. Theoretically, Ali Mahdi Mohamed, nominated in January 1991 by his faction of the United Somali Congress (USC), and sworn in with the support of the southern factions, is head of state. However, he is in competition with Aydeed who was elected 'interim president' in June 1995 by his faction in the USC (EIU 1995:29). There are no women in any official positions within these political affiliations. Now that the UN has withdrawn from Somalia, the militias are attempting to consolidate their authority and control. The militias are strongest in the absence of peace, when the violence subsides their usefulness to the community is eroded.

Reconciliation conferences which took place in Somaliland during 1992, have remained male-dominated activities in which women did not take a direct role. According to Farah (1993), northern Somali women enthusiastically support local forums but this support is confined to providing traditional domestic services. In the south, where the UN have facilitated high profile peace conferences, women have been present. However, women's presence does not necessarily represent participation.

Somalia in the current conflict, does not have a viable national government, disciplined armed force, police force or judiciary. At the end of 1993, there were 53 district councils out of a possible 81 districts and eight regional councils out of a possible 15. None of these district or regional councils were in the north west territories (UN 1995). Thus, at the local level, Somalia is now a collection of 'town-states where decision-making is a delicate balance between traditional authorities, merchants and politico-militia figures. The conflict has been described as a generational power struggle, between younger 'anarchists' and older 'traditionalists'. Nonetheless, Prendergast (1995) suggests that for every elder disempowered, another elder is empowered, supporting the notion that as the conflict continues, elders are gaining influence. This is of particular importance in resolving the conflict as many argue that only traditional forms of conflict resolution have any chance of success. However, elders are men and their consolidation in positions of power further obscures women's participation in decision-making processes at the community level.

Women have been active in street demonstrations, particularly in support of Aydeed.⁶⁴ Women held a demonstration for peace on international women's day in March 1995. Slogans during the march included, 'Somali women want peace not war' (Reuters 8/3/95). Two separate and simultaneous marches took place in north and south Mogadishu in support of the two main factions, SNA and SSA. There is evidence to suggest that women are manipulated in the demonstrations, as they have, willingly or unwillingly, provided cover for Aydeed's armed militia to attack aid convoys and UN soldiers in Mogadishu.

2.1.2 Human rights abuses

The human rights abuses in Somalia amount to clan cleansing. Minority clans and those without military strength have suffered the most in the civil war. If there is to be any justice during peace and reconciliation in Somalia, then responsibility must lie with the warlords who have repeatedly reoriented and reinvented their positions to take advantage of developments in the political process.

Gender-specific human rights abuses which occurred during the conflict took the form of rape and forced marriages. In Somalia, rape became a weapon to punish rival ethnic factions. Given the total breakdown of the government and social order, inter-clan based rape occurred, and continues to occur, with impunity. Most at risk were women who lack the protection of powerful clan structures, or who belong to ethnic minorities. In particular, they are refugee and displaced women and girls living in camps in Kenya and Somalia.⁶⁵ A UN health officer in Somalia recounted the story of a woman who

‘...was looking for firewood when she was raped by 16 men. She couldn't walk and was left for two days until she was discovered. This was November 1994... She lives in BP1, one of the displaced camps in Baidoa. She is Hariin, as are most of the women in the displaced camps. Subclan fighting devastated the Hariin, especially at the hands of the Hadamo subclan of the Rahanweyne’ (Human Rights Watch 1995:27).

A 20 year old, pregnant Somali woman in Dagahaley camp told how two men entered the shelter she and her husband were sleeping in and looted the few possessions they had. Then:

'They took me to the bush outside. They asked me what clan I was then told me to remove my clothes. Both men raped me - each twice' (Human Rights Watch 1995:127).

In 1993, the UNHCR documented 300 rape cases, two thirds of which took place in refugee camps in Kenya, and they estimate the actual figure could be as much as ten times higher (Human Rights Watch 1995:120). Refugees can claim only minimal protection and women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence at the hands of other ethnic groups, fellow refugees and those who are supposed to offer security.⁶⁶ Dislocation and violence has

⁶⁴ A huge demonstration by women was held in Mogadishu in May 1995 in support of Aydeed, organised by the women's wing of the SNA (AP 20/5/95).

⁶⁵ UNHCR state that 80 per cent of Somalis in camps in Kenya in 1993 were women and children (HRW 1995:12).

⁶⁶ Seven women were reported raped by Kenyan police between January and August 1993 (HRW 1995:120).

destroyed many family and social structures along with norms and taboos which usually would have proscribed sexual violence against women. Indeed, it is often the anger, uncertainty and helplessness of male refugees unable to assume their traditionally dominant roles, which translates into violent behaviour towards women.

In the majority of cases women and girls were violently attacked by unknown bandits who entered the compounds at night, or on the outskirts of the refugee camps as they herded goats or collected firewood. Somali women as old as 50 and girls as young as four have been subjected to sexual violence, most have been gang-raped at gun point, robbed, beaten and in some cases killed. For those women who have been infibulated, rape is excruciatingly painful and the physical injuries are increased as a result of having the vaginal openings torn or cut open by the attackers. Abortion is illegal in Kenya and Somalia. Women who become pregnant by their attackers are forced therefore to either carry the child full-term, or resort to traditional, but unsafe methods of abortion.

UNHCR have introduced security measures at Somali refugee camps in Kenya. They have begun to give priority to the resettlement of rape survivors in safer camps. Fences around the camps have reduced the number of night-time raids. This does not, however, offer any protection to girls who have to herd goats and fetch water and firewood outside the camp's compounds. In general the international community has been slow to recognise rape as a weapon of war. Although the UN intervention in Somalia was human rights led, there was no specific mention of the rapes which were occurring, nor of any measures to stop them. In fact, UN soldiers have been accused of human rights violations in Somalia, operating outside their mandate and killing civilians. This has led Canada to initiate proceedings against its UN soldiers who were alleged to have perpetrated human rights abuses whilst on duty in Somalia.

2.1.3 *Legal rights*

Somalia's judicial system has collapsed in the same way as its political system. The UN tried to support the Somali judicial system with UN-funded police and prison officers. By the end of 1994 there were 8,500 policemen in Mogadishu, but they are described as the militias in uniform (Prendergast 1995:271). Any justice that is secured in Somalia is based on traditional justice governed by community elders. This is a form of negotiation between parties which includes *dayeh* (blood money). In Somalia the *dayeh* for a woman is often only half that of a man,⁶⁷ and women rarely receive *dayeh* payments. Like the bride price, the payment is made between male members of the two families involved, not directly to the women concerned.

The negotiation system only works when the families involved have equal status and power. A woman's family can request *dayeh* for rape, but most of the ethnic raping has been against woman from minority clans and subclans. The Bantu have been particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, 'but social status dictates the level of recompense; it is not a process of equals. The Bantus can't take advantage of this process' (Human Rights watch 1995:29).

An emerging judicial system is *sharia* (Islamic law), which has been introduced in north Mogadishu, Luuq and the whole of the Gedo region. Based on local Islamic courts, there is

⁶⁷ If a pregnant woman is killed, or a foetus dies, then the *dayeh* for the foetus is that of a grown man.

increasing support for *huduud* ordinances. These include the amputation of limbs for thieves and stoning to death for rapists. Many Somalis, especially women who often lack male protection, see the introduction of *sharia* as a means of curtailing the widespread looting and robbery and subsequent lack of justice. Amnesty International (1995), report that one woman and 12 men have had limbs amputated for theft, a rapist was stoned to death, and there were over 160 floggings in 1994.

The embrace of *sharia* by Somali society is reflective of the complete lack of law and order. Women see the Islamic courts as offering some protection in the form of deterrent. However, *sharia* has several elements to it, many of which are detrimental to women⁶⁸ and women are not permitted a role in the interpretation or implementation of it. There is the belief that certain elements of *sharia*, such as dress codes and banning *khat* (a mild drug) chewing, would be strongly resisted by Somali society. Nonetheless, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which *sharia* can be embraced selectively. In addition, the Islamic courts are unofficial and therefore unregulated, and there are reports of personal vendettas, and local power battles, being fought out in court over trumped up charges (AI 1995).

2.2 Demographic and health

2.2.1 *Demographic make-up of Somalia in conflict*

The clan is a group who are descended from a common ancestor and claim priority to a certain piece of land and its resources (El Bushra 1993). These affiliations have intensified during the conflict and many have returned to their clan lands for security reasons. By the end of 1993, there were an estimated 1.7 million displaced Somalis as a result of the current conflict (UN 1995). A quarter million have moved to Mogadishu, and a further 60, 000 to the major towns of Kismayo and Baidoa (UN 1995:15).⁶⁹ These include female-headed households and minority clans who moved to the cities in search of a security and food aid.

In 1991 there were 500,000 Somali refugees living in camps in Kenya (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 1993:1). The fluidity of the refugee population and poor organisation meant there was little sense of order in the camps in the early 1990s. The refugees were seen by the Kenyan government as an added burden and a further source of insecurity. In January 1993, the Kenyan government wanted to forcibly repatriate refugees to Somalia, a move which the UN prevented. There has been some voluntary repatriation recently. Mainly men have returned to reclaim and prepare land, which has further increased the number of female-headed households in the refugee camps.

Estimates of the numbers killed during the conflict are between a quarter to a half a million Somalis (Prendergast 1995:265). The vast majority killed are men engaged in the fighting and at the hands of extra-judicial executions. Women have been killed in clan based massacres, the occurrence of which has risen during the last two years of the conflict, but their numbers are relatively low. In other situations they have been killed because of their

⁶⁸ For example, unequal inheritance laws, whereby women inherit half that of men, the right to divorce without assent by men and custody rights whereby children almost always go to their father once they reach puberty, and if they do stay with their mother, then she must stay single or automatically lose custody.

⁶⁹ According to UNICEF 4.5 million people were displaced by the war by 1992 (EIU 1992:38).

assigned roles. For example, as providers of food for the family, women have been forced to queue for food and have been caught in the cross-fire of militias looting food on delivery (El Bushra 1993). Also they have been killed after they have been raped by militias (Human Rights Watch 1995). In response to the former, they requested the distribution by international agencies of cooked food, which is less attractive to militias.

It is difficult to accurately quantify the numbers of deaths as a result of the war-induced famines. World Food Programme estimates that in the second half of 1992, half the population of south central Somalia - half a million people - perished as a result of famine (Prendergast 1994:67). According to UN estimates, approximately 4.5 million, half the total population of Somalia, are currently faced with starvation (UN 1995:1).

2.2.2 Health

There have been further changes in the demographic make-up of Somali society linked to health. Toole and Waldman estimate that the crude death rate among internally displaced persons is between 12 and 25 times higher than the baseline for non displaced persons. In Bardera, 38 per cent of the mainly displaced population, suffer from malnutrition, and at the Maternal and Child Health centre, the maternal death rate is the third highest in the world (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 1993:2). In the displaced population of Mogadishu, Save the Children Fund UK (SCF) found 85 per cent of households had no children under 12 months, and nearly a third of all households had no children under five years (Prendergast 1994:68). Similarly, during a vaccination campaign, UNICEF found only 10-20 children in villages where there should have been 80-100 (*ibid.*). In 1989, before the conflict, 45 per cent of the total population was under 15 years (EIU 1993:37). The above data suggests that this is falling, primarily due to famine, and possibly because women are less willing to have children during the conflict situation. However, in 1990, the fertility rate in Somalia was 7 children per woman (UNDP 1995:187), which may re-establish itself in a period of peace and rehabilitation, as Somalis return to their pastoral lifestyles.

The lack of a central government and the provision services has increased the burden on women to provide these services, particularly in rural areas. International agencies were able to increase health programmes when personnel were offered protection from the militias, but the withdrawal of UN forces has led to the collapse of many of these. In Bardera camp in Kenya there were a number of health training programmes, traditional birth attendants (TBA) and child health worker (CHW) programmes (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 1993).⁷⁰

Women have suffered health related effects of rape. Stigma prevents women from seeing a doctor after they have been raped, unless they have sustained other serious injuries in which case they rarely reveal to the doctor that they were raped. Therefore, sexually transmitted diseases and the incidence of HIV are likely to increase. The risk of HIV infection is increased as a direct result of the tearing and opening of infibulated vaginas in rape.

⁷⁰American Rescue Committee found in Bardera men expressed an interest and enrolled in the CHW programme, a profession traditionally regarded as feminine in Somalia (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 1993). There are no figures as to how many men this involves and it is therefore difficult to draw any conclusions regarding the implications for gender relations.

2.3 Economic

The lack of security has been a constant constraint to any increase in production and trade in Somalia. Larger businesses controlled by men have flourished and now control the profitable trade in arms, food and drugs (El Bushra 1993). At the other end of the spectrum, there has been a growth of women petty traders. This is one of the significant aspects of the Somali war in terms of its affect on gender relations. Before the conflict women in Somalia were involved in petty trading. The conflict raised the importance of this activity for women. Moreover, it has reduced their 'invisibility', and there has been an increased level of respect for the important role women are playing in meeting the economic burdens of supporting the family. This is an area which women need to capitalise on in the future if they are to increase their voice in decision-making.

Recognition by women of the necessity of petty trading has also led to some co-operation, including that between women from different clans which will be important in future periods of peace and reconciliation. Women have pooled their resources and strengths, increasing the potential of their livelihood strategies. Women with some education assist illiterate women and groups have established small co-operatives. In many cases women are forced to hire men, often relatives, to protect their stores, sleep in shops and warehouses, activities which are socially precluded for women (Bennett et al 1995).

The famines and droughts, particularly during 1992 are directly linked to the conflict. The conflict led to the destruction of normal economic relations and the collapse of market relations. The food economy has been replaced with a lucrative arms economy and as a result the military strength of the militias enabled them to hold the country to ransom. Looting has traditionally been a feature of Somali society, but it was always controlled by traditional social structures. During the conflict, as the social structures broke down, looting and the violence associated with it, increased. Looting became widespread at the local level between clans, thus eroding family livelihoods. The most vulnerable were the minority clans, and small households, particularly female-headed ones. It was looting of international humanitarian assistance which was most publicised..

Fifty per cent of the Somali population are nomadic pastoralists. Approximately 28 per cent are settled farmers and the balance of the population is urban, concentrated in the southern region (EIU 1992:38). Both agricultural and pastoral activity, particularly the latter, are characterised by rigid divisions of labour in Somalia. Agricultural activity has reduced significantly as a result of the conflict, with large amounts of agricultural land returning to bush. Where Somalis have not moved to the towns, insecurity prevents them from planting new crops. This has also been a factor reducing the attractiveness for aid agencies to support agriculture and provide seeds. Gender division of labour are rigid in Somalia, but they are not fixed. Female-headed households, if they return to farming, will have to address the issue of protection, previously the responsibility of men. If they rely on the services of male relatives, this will reinforce current gender divisions of labour, if not it may lead to a shift in relations.

Ethnic minorities have suffered the most in the economic sphere. A third to half of the Bantu population in Somalia have been killed or displaced. Without land men and women are

forced to hire themselves out as day labourers on plantations. Average salaries for such work are between 5,000 and 20,000 Somali Shillings (\$1-\$4) (Prendergast 1995:270).

In contrast to the south, the food economy in Somaliland is becoming stronger and stabilising. This is of particular importance because forecasts indicate widespread scarcity of food between February and June 1996.⁷¹ Breakdowns in trading of food lead to increased food prices and subsequent increases in the burdens of women to obtain food.

2.4 Social welfare and social organisation

The complete lack of centralised government services, has meant that new social networks have had to be established to provide social welfare in Somalia. The majority of these have been shaped around traditional clan and subclan groupings. Displacement of large numbers of Somalis has required the forging of new social attachments within old clan networks. Within the clans women have established new social networks, particularly pooling resources and labour. Women, have also made links and co-operated across clan divisions in a manner that men have been unable, or unwilling to, particularly in economic activity. Such social contacts have positive implications for peace.

In April 1993, a Baidoa women's organisation established a co-operative to create employment for women in the town. It consisted of 65 women participating in training and income-generating activities. Most of the members have children and 40 per cent are widows. Their main means of survival is through local trading; for example the collection and sale of firewood. In Baidoa, collection of firewood often requires a dangerous and time-consuming walk outside the town of up to 15 kilometres. This group also offers support to the increasing number of women who have survived rape and sexual violence, particularly those in the refugee camps in Baidoa.

Very few children are receiving any formal education in Somalia, and both boys and girls are suffering equally from the lack of services. There are some Koranic schools in the major towns, teaching a Koranic based curriculum mainly to boys. The religious teachers at these schools are Somalis, but there are claims that funding is coming from outside the country, particularly Sudan suggesting the possible introduction of 'Sudanese' interpretations of Islam.

⁷¹ Communication with Save the Children UK December 1995.

2.5 Socio-cultural and ideological

'The evocative power of kinship as the axiomatic natural basis for a social co-operation, and as the ultimate guarantee of personal and collective security is deeply rooted in Somali society... "Our kinsman right or wrong" is the basic motto of Somali social life. As the foundation of social co-operation, kinship enters into all transactions between and amongst individuals. There is no significant area of Somali social activity where the influence of kinship is absent' (I M Lewis cited Farah 1993:10).

The clan system, always strong in Somalia society has strengthened during the conflict. In some cases individuals have changed clan affiliation to protect themselves, particularly those in minority subclans. The segregation of society along clan lines has resulted in the breaking of friendships and social networks, and has had a significant impact on women.

Somali society is exogamous. When a woman marries she moves to, and becomes the property of, her husband and his tribe. Women do, however, retain links and property rights with their birth tribe, although the latter is governed by *sharia* and a patrilineal ideology under which community property, camels and land, become lineage wealth. Levirate practices are common in Somalia, and the increased in female-headed households as a result of the conflict, and the imperative need of households for protection, may lead to an increase in the practice. The need for access to scarce resources, has traditionally resulted in marriages between clans. During the conflict this has created both a difficult, and special, position for women.

The dual kinship role of women has been extremely distressing as women are married to, and became the mothers of, foes in the conflict. Women have been accused of having divided loyalties and passing information to their natal clans. Conversely, their dual kinship offers a unique opportunity for women to have communication between two belligerent clans. Thus, women can act as clan ambassadors. In Somaliland, women acting in this role have facilitated solution to clan disputes. However, their role is confined to facilitating, and passing messages from clan elders, they do not participate in the decision-making processes concerning mediation. Furthermore, in numerical terms the role of clan ambassador relates to very few women and is probably confined to Somaliland. There is a Somali proverb, 'The stains of blood should be cleansed with a fertile virgin woman'. Women are often exchanged to seal peace settlements between clans. The exchange of women represents trust between the clans that each will be responsible for the young women, who will also perform a reproductive role to replace lives lost in the conflict.

There have always been female-headed households in Somalia, due to the out migration of males to the Arab world. Since the conflict there has been an increase in the numbers, and the burdens of women's responsibility within them has risen significantly. The fact that women's coping strategies have been successful, especially in the economic sphere, has led to a new level of respect in Somalia towards women. Women talking to international agencies, and human rights organisations claim that they have more balanced relationships with their husbands because of their increased responsibilities in subsistence livelihood strategies. At present, this is not translated into any advances in decision-making outside of the family, nor in the legal status of women. It is too early to ascertain whether women will be able to

capitalise on these gains and avert a potential backlash in peacetime, similar to that which is currently occurring in Eritrea.

Despite the increased role and visibility women have in economic activity, in general, the conflict has led to a greater loss of mobility for women than for men. The threat and fear of rape in particular has reduced mobility and a number of women have adopted Islamic dress codes as a form of protection. This is also related to an increase in conservative attitudes towards women especially with the influx of foreign troops. A Somali woman perceived to be too friendly with French troops was stripped, beaten and imprisoned by the community and rescued by a women's organisation (El Bushra 1993). The extent to which Islamic traditions and interpretations pervade Somali society, will in part be dependent on the extent to which Somali society is open to the introduction of *sharia* as from of legal recourse during the conflict.

Rape in Somalia has a negative stigma attached to it. A woman's virginity is highly prized and guarded possession before marriage, and the chances for a single woman rape survivor to marry are significantly reduced. In refugee camps, families have asked UNHCR to send their daughters to new camps because of the social stigma of dishonour attached to the family. Married women who have been raped, have also been ostracised by their husbands and family. A woman living in Liboi camp, told Human Rights Watch (1993) how, after she was raped by three men in front of her children at gun point, she was thrown out of the family compound by her husband. He also took the few belongings she had, her valuable ration card, and refused to allow her to see her children.

As the opportunities for meeting needs in Somalia decreased, some women in the main cities have resorted to prostitution as a livelihood strategy. The introduction of *sharia* in Somalia means the dangers facing women prostitutes, who are already stigmatised, will increase.

2.6 Psychological

The Somali conflict is a civil war, and the targeting of civilians has destroyed much of the social fabric of Somali life and subsequently coping strategies. Women as the main providers of subsistence have suffered greatly from the increased difficulties in meeting this role. Sabbah from Somaliland said,

'We are always worried about how to feed our children and look after them for we have become their mothers and fathers. We feel crushed by personal problems that appear bigger than those of Somaliland' (Bennett et al 1995:56).

In the refugee camps women have fared better in addressing the psychological effects of displacement and loneliness, mainly through informal social networks. Conversely they have also been subjected to gender-specific violence. Women have to cope with the constant threat of rape, rape of daughters, particularly at risk when they leave refugee camps to collect firewood and tend goats, and the trauma of being gang raped by armed militia. Women have been disempowered psychologically by the presence of young armed men and boys on the streets. There is no information from Somalia to suggest that there are organisations offering counselling or support to women in these circumstances. This implies that if women are overcoming trauma, they are relying on informal, less visible support mechanisms. It is

possible that within refugee camps there is a greater sense of unity which helps to overcome loneliness resulting from displacement and bereavement.

Women have also suffered psychologically from their dual kinship. The lack of current statistical data means it is impossible to ascertain whether there has been an increase in divorce rates in Somalia since the outbreak of the conflict. Before the conflict on average women marry 2.5 times (Nitri 1993:74). Nevertheless, the stress that women suffer and divided loyalties undoubtedly affect their marital relationships, such pressures are unlikely to be alleviated by patriarchal conjugal roles.

Unlike neighbouring Eritrea, there is no evidence to suggest that there has been any education on rights surrounding the issue of female genital mutilation in Somalia during the conflict. Infibulation and clitirodectomy, which are practised throughout Somalia, represent the transition of a girl to adulthood and nubility. An important *rites of passage* in Somali society, the trauma of genital mutilation is reduced by preparing special foods and gifts for the girl. However, this is reduced during the conflict due to the lack of resources to prepare the celebrations.

In general there is a lack of confidence in the security of the country which has reduced the wishes of Somalis to return to their pastoral lifestyle. Looting and robbery with impunity is not conducive to agricultural farming and harvesting. Although the last two years have seen bumper crops comparative to previous years during the conflict, this does not reflect a major return to pastoral life. Insecurity is a primary concern to female-headed households, and in the refugee camps women have stated they are unwilling to return to farms and villages and prefer to go to the towns when they leave the camps.

3 GENDER ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

At the outbreak of major conflict in 1991 to early 1992, Somalia was neglected by the international community, barring a few NGOs. The UN became involved with the issues of humanitarian efforts in Somalia at the end of 1991. The political aspects of the intervention were to press for peace and national reconciliation. However, the concentration of aid resources in cities, especially Bardera and Mogadishu, fuelled competition and was a stimulus to increased conflict (ActionAid 1993). In March 1992, there was agreement on a cease-fire, and in April 1992, Security Council Resolution 751 established a UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), in agreement with the two main factions. It was to consist of unarmed monitors to oversee the cease-fire and offer protection to humanitarian assistance. However, the conflict escalated and within four months the UN realised UNOSOM needed to readapt to promote national reconciliation and avert starvation and drought in areas affected by conflict. By October 1992, the situation had deteriorated dramatically, and operations by the UN and international NGOs were characterised by looting, extortion and blackmail. UNOSOM's mandate was further expanded in Security Council resolution 794 (1992), authorising the use of 'all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for relief operations in Somalia' (UN 1995:6).⁷²

Somalia was testing ground for NGOs accommodation to violence. It was the first time that many agencies hired armed guards. 'International charities probably paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to factional leaders such as Aydeed, and played a critical role in enabling them to maintain their militias' (African Rights 1994:19).

Under the auspices of the UN a national reconciliation conference was held in January 1993. The 14 Somali political movements which participated agreed to a cease-fire. UNOSOM II was established in March 1993 with the emphasis on monitoring the cease-fire and repatriation, with a priority to disarming the militias. UNOSOM II soldiers came under attack from the militias who feared attempts to disarm them. In June 1993, 25 Pakistani soldiers were killed, and 54 wounded. After the debacle of trying to capture Aydeed, leader of the Somali National Alliance (SNA), UNOSOM II's mandate was revised and its presence in Somalia was reduced. A phased withdrawal took place between November 1994 and March 1995, when the last of UNOSOM soldiers left Somalia.

Now that the international community has withdrawn, Somalia will be forced to address the conflict, and its economic survival, without the lucrative arms trade. There is some, but not much international NGO activity in Somalia and UNICEF and WFP have presence in Somalia. The majority is confined to Somaliland, which is politically and militarily more stable. Oxfam are working to improve water resources by building small reservoirs for water catchment. They are expanding this programme to a second area. SCF are working to support President Egal and his government which has been operating since 1993, in health, education and agriculture. In health the focus is on MCH clinics, in education it is physical

⁷² One of the chief objections to the idea of NGOs supporting a military intervention was that, once an organisation has advocated the presence of military force, it must be prepared to support what that force then does (African Rights 1994:19).

rehabilitation of schools and teacher training, and in agriculture, supplying seeds and tools. They are also facilitating the governments monitoring of the food economy in Somaliland.

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GUATEMALA

by

RACHEL MARCUS

GUATEMALA

ABBREVIATIONS

CAFOD	Catholic Association for Overseas Development
CCPPs	Permanent Commissions
CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERJ	Council of Ethnic Communities 'Runumel Junam'
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIAM	
CIIR	Catholic Institute of International Relations
COMAR	The Mexican Commission for Aid to Refugees
CONAVIGUA	National Coordination Committee of Guatemalan Widows
CPRs	Communities of Population in Resistance
CUC	Committee for Peasant Unity
EGP	Guerrilla Army of the Poor
EIU	Economist Insurance Unit
FAR	Rebel Armed Forces
GAM	Mutual Support Group
GDP	gross domestic product
MINUGUA	UN Commission to Guatemala
OMR	Organisation of Women in Resistance
ONAM	National Office for Women
OPRA	Revolutionary Organisation of the People in Armies
PACs	Self-Defence Patrols
PAN	National Action Party
PGT	Communist Party of Guatemala
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
URNG	la Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca

1. BACKGROUND

Guatemala has experienced on-going, low-level civil war since the early 1960s. This case study concentrates on the peace process, from the mid-1980s to the present with some background information on the conflict years, starting in 1962 but concentrated in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Civil war continues: violence by the security forces and less frequently the guerrillas remains a threat to civilians throughout the country. Whilst repression of the intensity of the period 1981-3 has not been repeated, human rights violations, particularly by the army or associated organs continue, such as the massacre of ten returnees in Alta Verapaz in October 1995 (Caribbean and Central America Report, 9 November 1995). The Human Rights Ombudsman's Office reported 517 verified human rights violations between January and March 1995 (Central America Human Rights Committee, 1995).

At the heart of the conflict lie issues of race and class: the control of the Guatemalan state by the elite *ladino*⁷³ minority and the exclusion from power and economic and social development of the indigenous Maya and poor *ladino* majority (Warren, 1993; Kruijt, n.d.). The state used violence for social control and in the 1970s and 1980s, its counterinsurgency efforts amounted to full-blown onslaughts on suspected subversives and, later, on whole indigenous communities allegedly sympathetic to the guerrillas. It is clear that beyond their alleged political affiliation, indigenous Maya people were targeted because of their ethnicity, in what Menchú (1984) has called genocide.

Whilst more men than women have died in the conflict, due to forced military conscription of young men and the greater number of men than women in guerrilla forces, women and men have both suffered and continue to face state violence. Women have been affected both directly as subjects of repression and as the wives, partners, daughters and mothers of men who have been killed or disappeared. This experience has been the driving force for women's prominent participation in grassroots women's and human rights organisations.

Despite the long-standing repression of grassroots organisations, the peace and human rights movement, which has a strong rural as well as urban base, is a significant and vibrant force in Guatemalan politics and society and in the peace process. In particular, these movements are demanding real democratisation, an end to the power of the military and social and economic reform. Two women's organisations are also involved in negotiating the return of Guatemalan refugees from Mexico and returned members of refugee organisations are active in lobbying peace negotiations. The fundamental goal of the popular movements in the peace process is the demilitarisation of Guatemalan society. Women's organisations hope that the resulting reconstitution of state and society will enable women to maintain gains they have made by organising in exile and will create space for other, emergent feminist demands.

⁷³ *Ladino* is the Guatemalan term for a person descended both from the indigenous people of the Americas and from Europeans, speaking Spanish as a first language.

2. POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE GUATEMALAN CONFLICT

Guatemala became independent in 1821. Throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Guatemala was ruled by a series of dictatorships, broken in 1944, by the overthrow of the army and the election of Juan José Arévalo (Smith-Ayala, 1991:23). The years of 1944 -54, saw two elected governments and during this time social and agrarian reforms were gradually implemented. An attempt by the Arbenz government to nationalise some of the land of a US-owned corporation, United Fruit, sparked a CIA-backed coup, which returned Guatemala to military rule and land distributed under the Arbenz reform was returned to its original owners (Smith-Ayala, 1991:24). Guatemala is now infamous for the most uneven distribution of land in Latin America. According to a 1982 USAID study, 78.3 percent of farms were under 3.5 hectares and occupied 10.5 per cent of the land area. Less than one percent of farms were over 2500 hectares but these accounted for 21.7 percent of the land area (Economist Intelligence Unit, 1995:25). From 1954-85, Guatemala was ruled by a series of generals. 'Demands for political and economic reform were kept in check by a campaign of state-sponsored violence, including the use of army-linked death squads, which escalated under General Lucas García (1978-82)' (CIIR, 1993:5).

In 1962, the first guerrilla army, the *Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes* (FAR - the Rebel Armed Forces) was formed but was defeated in the eastern highlands by the army by the end of the 1960s. The lack of political space for peaceful protest, in conjunction with growing poverty and landlessness, spurred the rise of a new armed opposition in the 1970s and 1980s, comprised of three groups: *el Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres* (EGP - the Guerrilla Army of the Poor); *la Organización Revolucionaria del Pueblo en Armas* (OPRA - the Revolutionary Organisation of the People in Arms); and *el Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo* (PGT - the Communist Party of Guatemala).

In 1982, these three groups and the revitalised FAR formed *la Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG), a united guerrilla force. In contrast to the FAR, which had a mainly middle-class base, the new guerrilla movements sought support among Maya communities from the start, particularly the highland Mam, Ixil and K'iché people and later the Kekchí people of east-central Guatemala (Wilson, 1995:208). Most guerrilla activity has taken place in these areas, as well as in San Marcos and Escuintla departments in western Guatemala and in the Petén forests (CIIR, 1993:5; Kruijt, n.d.:20). These areas have also experienced the most violent government repression. The URNG also makes occasional attacks on strategic targets in Guatemala City and its environs. Its platform is land reform and social and economic equality between indigenous people and *ladinos*.

2.1 Counterinsurgency policies

General Ríos Montt, a born-again Christian came to power in a coup in March 1982. Claiming a mandate from God, he launched a campaign of terror in the highlands, particularly the Ixil Triangle and the Ixcán, in northern El Quiché province, in a drive to flush out the guerrillas. This 'scorched earth policy' involved the destruction of over 440 villages and resulted in the deaths of 50-75,000 people, mostly civilians (Falla, 1994:8). Wilson (1995:216) argues that civilian Maya support for guerrilla forces arose from the suffering inflicted upon the civilian population as the army conducted its campaign. However, the majority of indigenous people, whilst they may have been sympathetic to the guerrillas, attempted to maintain neutrality and

to avoid being allied with either side. Despite this, indigenous people were, and continue to be labelled guerrillas by the army and targeted accordingly (Falla, 1994).

Ríos Montt's regime initiated the *Patrullas de Auto-defensa Civiles* (PACs - Self-Defence Patrols). Purporting to protect civilians from guerrilla attacks, the PACs were encouraged to attack 'subversives' within their communities. Although voluntary in principle, participation in the PACs was compulsory in practice for men aged 18-60 in indigenous communities and those who refused to join were disappeared or shot (Kruijt, n.d.:22). The PAC system represented a penetration of the Guatemalan state into areas where its power had been limited. This has led to a concentration of local power in the hands of a few men, the patrol leaders, who were connected to the army (Wilson, 1995:239), many of whom continue to use these positions of relative impunity to settle old and new grievances against community members by violent means. The effects of the PAC system on social cohesion have been immense and are discussed in section 3.4.

Survivors of the 1981-83 counterinsurgency campaign were forcibly relocated to thirty-three 'model villages' in heavily militarised areas of the uplands, such as northern Quiché (Warren, 1993: 28). All relocated persons underwent army re-education programmes before moving to the model villages, using a synthesis of local cultural symbols and evangelical religious discourse in addition to more violent methods, to convince villagers to co-operate with their relocation (Wilson, 1995:231). A third part of the programme involved the designation of development poles in the most heavily militarised areas, where the army implemented relief efforts, funded by the US among other donors. These included food-for-work schemes and the provision of housing (Krujt, n.d.:23) and continued at a reduced level into the late 1980s.

In 1983, Ríos Montt was ousted and another general, Mejía Victores took power (CIIR, 1993:6), promising to return Guatemala to civilian rule. In the months preceding the hand over of power, civil patrols, model villages and development poles were all written into the Constitution to ensure that military rule over the countryside could continue. Further, an amnesty was granted for all political crimes since the Ríos Montt coup, in effect guaranteeing impunity to army officers.

During the height of the army's counter-insurgency campaign in the highlands, between 1981-4, approximately 200,000 Guatemalans fled to Chiapas, Mexico, of whom 45,000 were registered as refugees.⁷⁴ There are also an estimated one million internally displaced persons in Guatemala (Melville and Lykes, 1992:535). Of the internally displaced population, approximately 30,000 have formed the *Comunidades de Población en Resistencia* (CPRs - Communities of Population in Resistance) in the Ixcán, El Petén and the Sierra of the Ixil Triangle. Other displaced people have migrated to the cities, especially the capital Guatemala City. The CPRs were assumed by the army to be particularly active supporters of the guerrilla forces, although they themselves argue that they are civilians, who fled to escape army violence and who have organised in order to be able to move communities quickly in the

⁷⁴A further 150,000 Guatemalans are thought to have fled to Mexico without documentation (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1992:18) and between 100,000 and 200,000 have migrated, mostly illegally to the US (Melville and Lykes, 1992:535). There are estimated to be 6,000 registered Guatemalan refugees in Belize and smaller numbers in other neighbouring countries.

event of an attack. Women of the CPRs have founded their own organisation: the *Organización de Mujeres en Resistencia* (OMR - the Organisation of Women in Resistance).

Military power and repression continued throughout the civilian governments of Cerezo who was elected in 1986 and his successor, Serrano Elías. Serrano's attempt in May 1993 to take over the state with a one person coup failed and he was forced to resign. Ramiro de León Carpio, the former Human Rights Ombudsman became President, completing Serrano's term. Whilst hopes that de León Carpio's human rights background would reduce state violence were high, there is evidence that human rights violations increased in 1994/5 (Human Rights Watch/ Americas, 1994; Economist Intelligence Unit, 1995). Human Rights Watch/ Americas (1994:4) concludes that de León Carpio has been unable to address the lawless behaviour of civil patrols and clandestine detention by the army because he lacks a political power base and thus depends on not alienating the army.

General elections were held in Guatemala on 12 November 1995. Preliminary results suggest that Alvaro Arzú's right-wing *Partido de Acción Nacional* (PAN, National Action Party) may have made substantial gains. The implications of this, in terms of the composition of the Congress and in terms of the different parties' platforms on gender issues are unclear.

2.2 Peace process

In this section, two aspects of the peace process are discussed: the discussions between the URNG and the government, and the organisation of the return of refugees. This is strongly linked with the peace process since it is an indication that large numbers of refugees consider Guatemala safe enough for them to return and also because many of the returnees' demands mirror those of the popular peace and human rights movements, being put forward by the URNG in the peace negotiations.

In order to try to bring about an end to the conflict, as government counterinsurgency tactics relaxed, in the mid-1980s the URNG offered to negotiate with the Guatemalan government and in 1987 met with President Cerezo in Madrid. Army anger at this rapprochement resulted in a suspension of talks until 1990, when the two parties met again, together with a national reconciliation commission. The first formal meeting was held in Mexico City in April 1991, where the URNG put forward an eleven point agenda, including demands for agrarian reform and the demilitarisation of rural areas. Whilst accords have been reached over the last four years on many of the disputed issues - including an agreement on indigenous rights, signed on March 31 1995 - the questions of military reform and action on poverty remain unresolved (Derechos Humanos Comisión de Guatemala 1995:4). *La Misión del las Naciones Unidas en Guatemala* (MINUGUA - the United Nations Mission to Guatemala) started work in November 1994 overseeing the peace process. MINUGUA hopes that a final peace accord may be signed in early 1996 (Caribbean and Central America Report, 9 November 1995:9).

In 1987, as the security situation in the highlands improved, a tripartite negotiating committee of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the *Comité Mexicano de Ayuda a Refugiados* (COMAR - the Mexican Commission for Aid to Refugees) and the *Comisión Especial de Atención a Repatriados* (CEAR - the Guatemalan Commission for Assistance to Repatriated People) was formed. Concern among the refugees both at the role of CEAR, perceived to be strongly linked with the army and at the lack of representation of refugees led to the formation of the *Comisiones Permanentes* (CCPPs - Permanent

Commissions), a representative body elected by a direct vote of all registered refugees in Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1992:19).

The Permanent Commissions were initially an entirely male institution, modelled on traditional indigenous community councils. Because of this exclusion, in 1989, refugee women formed the *Mamá Maquín* organisation to ensure that women's needs would be met in the return process and that women were represented on the committees in charge of the return. *Mamá Maquín* also organised development projects for women in the camps, particularly literacy classes and economic projects. Since 1992, women have been elected to the Permanent Commissions and to the leadership of the return groups of different zones. By 1994, *Mamá Maquín* had over 7000 members in 85 camps in southern Mexico (Mamá Maquín/ CIAM, 1994). Like *Ixmucané*, another refugee women's organisation, *Mamá Maquín* considers itself part of the wider Guatemalan economic, social and political struggle, and plans to work inside Guatemala with returnees, whilst continuing to work with refugees in Mexico. In January 1993, the first organised group return took place. At the end of 1995, approximately 17,000 registered refugees remain in Mexico (*ibid.*).

The *Acuerdo Sobre Identidad y Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas* (Accord on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous People) signed in March 1995 recognises indigenous women's rights. These include criminalising sexual harassment and promoting full implementation of the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The accord also mandates the creation of an office to promote indigenous women's legal rights, which would supply legal advice and assistance. Indigenous women will participate in setting up this office (Comisión to Derechos Humanos de Guatemala 1995:2-3). The accord further stipulates adherence to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, recognises the particular ethnic identity of the Maya people (*ibid.*) and guarantees communal land rights and the participation of local communities in resource management. The fora through which this participation will take place and the position of women within this process remain to be worked out.

The peace process is constantly threatened by new evidence of continuing human rights violations and military impunity, such as the massacre of ten returnees in Alta Verapaz in October this year (*ibid.*). This was interpreted by many as a warning that the army will not concede power as easily as envisioned in the peace accords. Women's and human rights organisations have been at the forefront of civilian protest to demand an end to forced military recruitment and the disbanding of the PACs.

3. GENDER ISSUES IN THE GUATEMALAN CONFLICT

3.1 Political, legal and human rights issues

As the history of the conflict suggests, the power of the military and associated security and intelligence organs has been such, for so long, that they retain control of the Guatemalan state and effective impunity for their actions (Human Rights Watch/ Americas, 1994). The formation of the PACs in rural areas wrested power away from the traditional community political structures, the indigenous civil-religious hierarchy and the mayoral system. Whilst women were not publicly involved in community political structures in most indigenous villages, they had specific places in the civil-religious hierarchies accompanying office-bearing husbands and older women, in particular, often exerted considerable influence through discussion of community matters with their husbands (Mamá Maquín/ CIAM, 1994). Membership of PACs is the duty solely of men and thus the ascendancy of younger men, accustomed to violence, rather than the deliberation and consensus-seeking methods of traditional political structures, has served to reduce the power of women and older men, in community decision-making and also to grant greater legitimacy to violence as a means of conflict resolution.

Although the 1985 Constitution guarantees women the same rights as men, including the rights to vote and to stand for office, women constitute a very small percentage of elected representatives. UNICEF (1994:172-3) reports that only six of the 116 deputies to the national Congress are women and there are no female mayors in Guatemala. It is not known whether female representation in the new government has changed significantly. This low level of female representation in public office may make lobbying for gender-sensitive legislation difficult. The government bureau responsible for the promotion of women, the *Oficina Nacional de la Mujer* (ONAM - the National Office for Women), is seen by many women's organisations as ineffective. UNICEF observes that its programmes have been implemented somewhat paternalistically without proper participation of the intended beneficiary women in its design (1994:82).

The militarisation of Guatemalan society has been deeply contested, by peaceful as well as armed movements from the 1970s. During the height of the repression of 1981-3, most popular organisations disbanded, but re-emerged in 1984-5 when new organisations were also established. One of the most influential is *Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo* (GAM - the Mutual Support Group), initiated by a group of mainly indigenous wives and mothers of disappeared men. GAM continues to campaign prominently for the setting up of a Truth Commission to investigate killings and disappearances and for broader peace and human rights issues, such as an end to forced recruitment of young men for the army. From its inception, GAM has been targeted by military and security forces. In 1985, Rosario Godoy, one of GAM's leaders, was found dead with her younger brother and baby son, in what had been set up to look like a car accident. Both Rosario and her son showed signs of torture and she had been raped. Nineth Montenegro de García, the present leader of GAM, continues to receive death threats.

CONAVIGUA (*Co-ordinadora Nacional de las Viudas Guatemaltecas*, the National Co-ordinating Committee of Guatemalan Widows) was set up to assist those who had lost relatives to find them and to support widows and orphans facing particularly severe economic

hardship as a result of the war. Such issues provide a more legitimate public space for women's activism than other movements (Schirmer, 1993). However, women are also active in other human rights and peace organisations, including *the Consejo de Comunidades Étnicas Runumel Junam* (CERJ, Council of Ethnic Communities 'Runumel Junam') and the *Comité de Unidad Campesina* (CUC, the Committee for Peasant Unity). All these organisations demand equality for indigenous people and *ladinos*, respect for indigenous culture, demilitarisation, investigation of human rights abuses and social and economic reforms, including greater gender equality.

3.1.1 Human rights

Although more men than women have been killed in the conflict in Guatemala, both women and men have been targeted as alleged political activists and as members of indigenous communities. 38,000 people have disappeared (and have probably been killed) since 1966, the highest rate of any country in Latin America (Melville and Lykes, 1992). Women and men political and social activists, including catechists have been threatened, tortured and killed and where the army has attacked civilian villages, it has done so with impunity, massacring entire populations. In some instances, women have been specifically attacked as the 'mothers of guerrillas' (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1992; Mamá Maquín/CIAM, 1994), pregnant women have had their wombs slit open before they were killed and women and girls have been raped, often before being murdered (Smith-Ayala, 1991:30)

Young men aged 18-24 face two years of compulsory military service. Wilson (1995:253) estimates that at any one time, 20 percent of the rural male population is serving in the Guatemalan army, undergoing violent and humiliating initiation ceremonies and being socialised into violence and a strong *macho* ethic. This includes visiting sex workers as a demonstration of male virility and sexuality and forcing women to wash and cook for them, strengthening assumptions men may already have about women as providers of sex, food and clean clothes. Zur (1993) suggests that this may be deterring widows from re-marrying and some younger women from marrying.

In many areas soldiers have gang raped women with impunity (Falla, 1994), have disappeared or killed the husbands of married women they wanted and have forced women to cook and wash for them. In much of the highlands,

'the army's pattern of raping young women has made it difficult in some communities to find women between the ages of 11 and 15 who have not been sexually abused by the army' (ICCHRLA, 1989:46 cited in Aron *et al.*, 1992:38)

This lawless, unpunished behaviour has also contributed towards a loosening of local social controls, so that PAC members have committed rapes and other forms of violence against women and men which formerly would have provoked strong local sanction. Similarly, some young Maya men socialised into this way of behaving in the army, have behaved in this fashion on their return to their communities, with similar effects on local gender relations and patterns of authority.

Refugee organisations have successfully fought for an exemption from military service for all returnee men, for three years from their arrival. All adult men are subject to service in the PACs. In Chacaj, Huehuetenango, in an unusual incident, the army tried to force the women

of the village to join the PAC but they protested and refused to do so (Manz, 1988:61). The government has refused to disband the PACs, claiming that this would infringe the PAC members' rights to free association (Human Rights Watch/ Americas, 1994).

Returnee communities in the Ixcán are subject to frequent surveillance from nearby army bases, particularly from low-flying aircraft. In one returnee community in the Ixcán, women were too afraid to bathe alone (Nusser, 1995:7, cited in **Central America Newspank**, 1995). An important returnee demand has been the dismantling of army bases close to new settlements; the government has frequently reneged on this demand. As relatives of so-called guerrillas, widows specifically have been targeted for surveillance by the army (Schirmer, 1993).

One of the most important demands of the peace and human rights movements is for an end to military and political impunity and that perpetrators of human rights abuses should be prosecuted and the popular movement is pinning considerable hope on the legal process guaranteeing human rights. There is evidence that where PAC leaders have been prosecuted for human rights violations, human rights abuses have ceased (Human Rights Watch Americas, 1994).

3.2. Demographic and health issues

Where attacks took place on entire communities, such as in the highlands during the 1981-3 counterinsurgency campaign and in the attacks on the CPRs in 1992-3, most survivors fled. An estimated 80 percent of the population of El Quiché, Alta Verapaz, Huehuetenango and Chimaltenango departments has been displaced since the early 1980s (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1992:17). Since army attacks were indiscriminate, targeting all Maya people, including children, as potential guerrillas and forcing whole communities to flee, the gender imbalance among refugees and in the CPRs broadly reflects that of the general population (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1992). Where real or presumed political activists have been targeted selectively and killed or disappeared, particularly where local PACs are the agents, their families have often fled to nearby towns, or to Guatemala City. Despite the prominent role of women activists, more of the people killed or disappeared are men and thus the majority of unregistered, internally displaced families may be women-headed.

In much of the highlands, conflict has led to a high proportion of widows among the population. Most widows do not expect to remarry. In the words of one woman from El Quiché province

‘I’ve never considered getting married again because of the kids. What would I do with them? No man would want them: it’s too much expense’ (cited in Hooks, 1991:42).

In the CPRs and in other communities under attack,

‘many *compañeras* give birth during bombings in machine gun fire, when the army’s coming after us. Then it’s just: get the baby and go’ (cited in Smith-Ayala, 1991:76).

Women who have had to flee their community soon after the birth of a baby have often found that the trauma has caused them to suppress breast-milk production. Given the absence of substitute feeds (or hygienic conditions under which to prepare them), this often results in the baby's death.

Large numbers of women have become pregnant through army rape, and many have aborted the foetuses, using local herbs, or more dangerous procedures. Abortion is illegal in Guatemala and therefore not available by safer methods; even if available, the barriers for poor *ladino* and indigenous women, who have been most heavily subjected to rape, to accessing such services would still be considerable. This has resulted in long-term health problems and death for some women from botched abortions.

3.3 Economic issues

3.3.1 *Employment, livelihoods and gender divisions of labour*

In farming communities in Guatemala the traditional gender division of labour involves men growing the food and normally collecting firewood and women processing the food and carrying out domestic tasks (Mamá Maquín/ CIAM, 1994). Additionally, many women supplement household income with the sale of woven cloth either to other community members or to tourists. Women are also usually responsible for selling cash crops, small stock and food surpluses at local markets. No information is available on changes in prices, or on the destruction of infrastructure or markets during the conflict, or subsequent their rehabilitation.

The obligation on rural men to take part in PACs has had serious consequences for family income, as men may spend one day a week patrolling, reducing the time available for farming, or other income-generating activities (Manz, 1988:78). This may push a greater work burden on to wives, or teenage sons, who have to compensate for this lost work time. Many widows have had to take on 'male', as well as traditionally 'female' tasks in order to support their families, which results in a double day and may have adverse nutritional consequences.

In refuge in Mexico, many women, particularly young unmarried women worked in factories or as agricultural labourers. Mamá Maquín/ CIAM (1994) suggest that for such women, returning to rural areas, where no such opportunities exist will be extremely difficult, as they are used to greater mobility without negative sanction. This suggests a need to focus small-scale industrial development in rural areas, in order not to exacerbate migration to the cities, urban unemployment and poverty. The recognition of Maya people as indigenous people with specific cultures and rights to a livelihood in the March 1995 Accord on Indigenous Rights reinforces the imperative for investment in rural areas.

The tourism industry - now Guatemala's second largest source of foreign exchange - was seriously hit by the conflict, particularly in the late 1980s but has now recovered (EIU, 1995). Whilst for some women and men, crafts production and sale has become a lucrative source of income (Swain, 1993), for many others it may be unreliable. Various NGOs are working with widows and other poor women, to assist them with gardening and small stock projects (Hooks, 1991), particularly in the highlands.

No information is available concerning changes in the proportion of GDP devoted to military expenditure. Whilst demilitarisation would, in theory, increase the budget available for the social sector and for promoting economic development, it would also increase levels of unemployment. Unemployment may be particularly high among voluntary returnees, who lack access to land⁷⁵ and who may be discriminated against in seeking other employment because of alleged connections to guerrillas. For these groups and more generally in Guatemalan society, there is a need for skills training and employment creation strategies. It is important that women have equal access to such training and employment.

3.3.2 Access to and control of assets

Much land was destroyed through burning and in the Ixcán and parts of El Petén, through mine-laying, during the army's 'scorched earth' campaign. This has exacerbated landlessness, which was already a critical problem in some areas and because of which men, women and children from much of the highlands migrate seasonally to work as labourers on the coffee and cotton plantations of the south coast. Due to high levels of illiteracy and monolingualism in indigenous languages, particularly among women, workers report that they are often cheated and paid less than the minimum wage. Women and children often receive half men's pay for a day's work (Hooks, 1991; Menchú, 1984). This migrant labour system has persisted throughout the worst repression and continues today. Men's obligation to participate in the PAC has, however, reduced this income source in some areas, since they are unable to leave the village for long periods at a time to work as labourers (Manz, 1988:78), leaving them more dependent on their farms and on wives' earnings. At the same time, pressure to migrate and/or reliance on non-farm income has increased in areas where land is scarce or people lack land rights.

Returnees, especially those who repatriated voluntarily rather than in an organised return may face particular problems in claiming land rights, since by law the army was entitled to confiscate any land whose owners left the area for more than a year. The repeal of this law was one of the key demands of the Permanent Commissions of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico. Traditionally Guatemalan women have not had land rights. Where land is registered, it is normally in the husband's name and many widows have not been able to gain rights to their dead husband's land. Women who speak little Spanish, or do not have male relatives to assist in pursuing claims and may be particularly vulnerable to exploitation (Manz, 1988:125). *Ixmucané*, an organisation of refugee and returnee women, returning to El Petén and Alta and Baja Verapaz, is campaigning for husband and wife to have joint title to land and also for widows and single women to gain land titles (Reencuentro, 1994: 14-15). The Indigenous Rights Accord signed in March 1995 does not address the issue of land rights for women.

⁷⁵ Whilst access to land may be inadequate in communities where a return has been negotiated, since one of the conditions of the returns was access to land, in larger returnee communities, this is less likely to be a serious problem.

3.4 Social welfare and organisation

3.4.1 *Access to health and education services*

Access to health and education services varies considerably by region and class in Guatemala. 45.5 percent of the population cannot afford western health care and in remoter parts of the highlands, access is considerably worse (UNICEF, 1994:64-5). In Alta and Baja Verapaz, 63 percent of the population lack access to western health services, compared to 15 percent of the population in Guatemala City. 75 percent of the health budget is spent on curative services and only 25 percent on primary health care (*ibid.*:69).

Access to and quality of educational provision varies in similar ways geographically and socially. For example, 40 percent of the population is illiterate but 60 percent of illiterate people are women. 71.9 percent of Maya women, compared with 24.6 percent of *ladina* women are illiterate (*ibid.*:165-6). Overall, girls constitute 45.3 percent of the school population and boys, 54.7 percent but by age 16 girls constitute 36.7 percent of school students and boys 63.3 percent. In rural areas this discrepancy may be even greater (*ibid.*:167). Presently educational expenditure constitutes 1.2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (*ibid.*: 70). The equivalent statistic for military expenditure is not available.

Access to education and health services are of great importance in reducing the social and economic gulf between *ladinos* and indigenous people and between men and women. UNICEF observes that, while the majority of indigenous people, particularly indigenous men, speak Spanish, often their level of competence is not adequate for meaningful participation in public life outside of monolingual indigenous communities (*ibid.*:190). This suggests that bilingual education must be given greater priority in post-conflict development. At present, bilingual education reaches only five percent of Maya speaking children entering the first grade and only two percent of those who complete the fourth grade (*ibid.*:145).

Young women in refugee camps in Chiapas reported greater access to education than older women. In Guatemala, many girls were unable to attend school due to conflict and disruption of services, because there was no school in their area, or because their parents could not afford to send them or thought that girl's education was unnecessary (Mamá Maquín/ CIAM, 1994:31). This survey concluded that

‘in refuge, girls go to school with greater frequency than in Guatemala, although they usually begin at an older age than boys, and they show higher drop-out rates, due to their domestic obligations’ (*ibid.*:40).

3.4.2 *Social organisation*

One of the effects of years of state-sponsored terror, with a network of informers, has been a growth of distrust among community members. Indigenous community solidarity, although weakened by the known or suspected presence of informers, was seen as particularly suspect by the army, which deliberately relocated people of different ethnic and language groups to the same model villages, in order to 'prevent the development of meaningful social organisation among them' (Melville and Lykes, 1992:536). Participation in human rights

organisations, such as CONAVIGUA, CERJ or GAM at the local level may have been a source of social support to widows.

In refugee communities the fact that everyone had escaped violence may have reduced suspicions and facilitated the growth of social and political organisations. Women who joined *Mamá Maquín* and other women's organisations such as *Ixmucané* in refuge believe that participation in training and discussion workshops and in group enterprises has contributed to changes in their self-image and, in some cases, to changes in gender relations. A refugee woman in Chiapas said:

‘We are now organized and we are learning. We have a voice, and we as women, also can speak ... Men cannot force us to go back if we are organized ... Men in other communities make remarks against women for organizing. [But in Nueva Libertad] the men in many cases have helped the women or backed them in their efforts’ (cited in Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1992:23).

Another said:

‘We learned to be women in Guatemala. Our mothers taught us to obey and to work in the home without complaining about anything. In refuge, we are opening our eyes. We are coming to know our human rights. Here, women are different from before, though we didn't think it would turn out this way’ (cited in Mamá Maquín/ CIAM, 1994:41).

For many women, such participation continues to be difficult. They may experience problems, including violence from their husbands if the housework is not done, or if they are seen talking with a man. The fact that *Mamá Maquín* has to negotiate with male members of the Permanent Commission, has exacerbated such problems of jealousy and suspicion. Nevertheless, women's participation in community decision-making structures has become so much the norm in many of the refugee camps that in *Victoria 20 de enero*, the first group returnee site, one *Mamá Maquín* leader is a member of the Permanent Commissions, two are members of the Community Development Committee and three others are members of the Information, Land and Security Committees (Mamá Maquín/ CIAM, 1994:75).

3.4.3 Social problems

The PAC system has not only concentrated political power in the hands of younger men, who are socialised into acceptance of violence but has also, according to several sources legitimated increased domestic violence and abuse. A health worker in the uplands described ‘a chain of revenge with women suffering most. The men are angry at the civil patrols and they take it out on the women’ (cited in Manz, 1988:79).

Whilst wife-beating and alcohol abuse are not new problems in the highlands, some health workers have observed an increase in both problems as men vent their frustration on those around them (*ibid.*). Similarly, in refugee camps in Chiapas, some women reported an increase in family violence, attributed to economic problems and feelings of insecurity as refugees, which led to alcohol abuse and violence (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1992; Mamá Maquín/ CIAM, 1994: 49-50). In Chiapas, women also stated that they were vulnerable to rape and physical assault from Mexican men as they went

to gather firewood or to draw water. This relates to localised conflict between Guatemalan refugees and Mexican hosts over the use of resources (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1992:22).

Large numbers of children have become orphans as a result of the conflict in Guatemala. Manz (1988:92) reports that while many children have been taken in out of kindness, some are kept as 'virtual slaves'. For girls this would mean being an unpaid domestic servant, in both rural and urban areas. Rural boys may also be expected to work very hard, assisting with farming and gathering and chopping firewood among other tasks. The majority of children have been given homes by relatives or neighbours; a considerable number of children are, however, in orphanages or live on the streets. Street children in Guatemala are often targeted by the police and security forces, just because they are street children: boys in particular are likely to be considered criminals and beaten or killed; girls are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse.

The high incidence of widowhood in the highlands have resulted in a heavily increased workload and stress because of sole responsibility for the family, for many widows. Some widows, whose sons are young, or who cannot access male support through relatives, have had to sell their land and depend solely on the sale of handicrafts, or move to the cities to try to get work there (Manz, 1988:91-2). Widows with young children may be in the most precarious situation, particularly if they have lost other family members who might have constituted a source of social and economic support. Widowers with young children may be forced to leave the children to fend for themselves whilst they go out and work: this may shift responsibility onto older girls.

3.5 Socio-cultural and ideological issues

Indigenous women have retained 'traditional' dress to a greater extent than indigenous men (Melville and Lykes, 1992:536). Particular patterns of embroidery and weaving, systematised under Spanish colonialism in order to control the indigenous population, signal membership of a specific ethnic group and origin in a particular community and constitute an important aspect of identity, particularly for indigenous women. In Mexico, both documented and undocumented refugees have often abandoned their traditional clothes, in order to appear like Mexicans (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1992; Mamá Maquín/CIAM, 1994). Similarly many internally displaced women in Guatemala, particularly in the cities, adopted *ladina* dress to avoid being targeted as indigenous people.

The decision to abandon indigenous dress, even if temporarily, may be extremely traumatic. One young woman who joined the guerrilla forces initially refused to take off her traditional clothing. Finally members of her unit tricked her into having a bath and took her clothes away to force her to wear the less visible guerrilla uniform (Harbury, 1994:54-5). The majority of girls interviewed by Melville and Lykes (1992:544) in orphanages in Guatemala preferred to wear traditional clothing; many could not, as they depended on what they were given. Some wore indigenous dress but not the specific clothing of their own community.

Traditionally most marriages among indigenous people were between members of the same ethnic group and parents played a significant role in the selection of their children's spouses. Whilst this pattern continues in non-displaced communities, in refugee and internally displaced communities, there is much more contact between people of different ethnicities and

some young people are choosing to marry out of their ethnic group. Some of the women interviewed by Mamá Maquín/ CIAM (1994) said that they found this a disturbing trend, as the children of such marriages would speak Spanish, not an indigenous language and that indigenous culture would thereby die out. However, Mamá Maquín / CIAM (1994) argue that, in exile, in the CPRs and in the returnee communities, particularly, a new pan-Mayan indigenous identity is being constructed, emphasising unity over difference. Whether this is gendered, with men representing a public pan-Mayan identity, and women keeping the traditions of specific ethnic groups, at home, is not clear.

In the URNG, cooking, sewing and washing were no longer considered women's work and women engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage were not stigmatised (Harbury, 1994:104;154).

‘All tasks were distributed equally between squads of men and women; one squad would go for firewood and another would grind corn or fetch water. Men cooked as well. All the work was shared, and that was really nice, but we never dealt with it as an issue - we never stated that this is how things should be, and that we would all have to change in order to form a new equal society of men and women. As a result, when the man was no longer in that particular camp he behaved like a *macho* and stopped doing those tasks because he had never been doing them out of awareness, but rather to fulfil orders. When I was moved to another front, the men in that camp didn't do the cooking and would tell me or the other women to cook them breakfast' (an Ixil woman cited in Hooks, 1991:94-5).

Women who have lived in refugee camps in Mexico may experience specific difficulties on repatriating. Many women entered the 'public sphere' through participation in co-operatives, women's organisations and literacy classes in Mexico, which they had not had the opportunity to do in Guatemala. Many women and men who remained in Guatemala perceive this public participation as indicative of 'bad character'. Widows have also been stigmatised and humiliated in some communities and labelled as whores who are using their community activities as a cover for illicit sexual relations (Smith-Ayala, 1991:192).

Women leaders in the *Victoria 20 de enero* returnee settlement in the Ixcán reported some hostility and gossip about their relative freedom of movement from neighbouring communities (author's discussions in Quetzaltenango, January 1994). In order to try to diffuse this problem and to involve local women in returnee women's organisations, representatives of *Ixmucané* have held meetings with the women of neighbouring communities in El Petén and Alta Verapaz before the return and have found considerable enthusiasm among local women for *Ixmucané*'s development goals and programmes (Reencuentro, 1994:14-15).

3.6 Personal psychological issues

Almost forty years of human rights violations and civil war have had pervasive effects throughout civil society in Guatemala. Warren (1993) observes that one of the main effects is a 'culture of silence', of suspicion and fear that anybody may be a paid army informer. This is exacerbated by the fact that many of the agents of terror were PAC members residing in the same villages as those they terrorised and killed (Zur, 1993:29). This has led, in many cases, to a breakdown of trust between family and community members, reducing social cohesion. People who fled in the early 1980s and returned voluntarily from 1986 onwards to their villages of origin report being regarded with suspicion and their children being labelled as 'guerrilla's children' (Manz, 1988:125). Many landlords were reluctant to rent accommodation to internally displaced people or refugees for fear of bringing suspicion on themselves by housing 'guerrillas'.

The psychological effects of having witnessed and experienced the violence of the García and Montt regimes may be immense. In addition to their own experiences of violence, where their children or other relatives have been killed, women may feel particular grief and feelings of guilt that they did not protect them adequately (Zur, 1993:29). A woman combatant in the URNG stated:

'[a]nd the women who've lost their children - this is something you can never recover from. That is the worst that can happen to a mother. I'm not saying it isn't terrible for men, but they've spent less time with their children. The mothers feel their absence more those restless nightsit's not something tangible, you can't feel it or write it down, there aren't any photos of it. It's the accumulation of the suffering women live with. I can say this because it's something that I've felt in my own flesh, and I've heard it from women who are involved in the struggle and those who aren't. Sometimes I don't think about Guatemala, because if I think about it, I'll end up crying' (*ibid.*:216).

Emotional pain may also be expressed through physical symptoms, such as headaches, backaches and other bodily pains. Zur (1993:30) suggests that women's bodies 'have become the repositories of painful experiences - experiences which they have been unable to articulate both because they have been silenced and also because of the impossibility of speaking about such atrocious experiences'. In refugee camps in Mexico, the process of talking through experiences may have been easier, since the fear of informers was not significant and because not everybody was in refuge because of the violence they had escaped. ASECSA, the co-ordinating body for a number of NGO health programmes, is training health promoters in psychology, to help address the mental health problems caused by the armed conflict (Christian Aid, n.d.).

4. GENDER ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

UN organisations have played two main roles in the Guatemalan conflict:

MINUGUA is acting as a monitor and to some extent a mediator, in the peace process. UN independent experts have been assigned to Guatemala since 1990 to monitor and report on the human rights situation. The present independent expert, Mónica Pinto, has recommended measures, such as disbanding the PACs, investigating and punishing violations of human rights, a reduction in the size of the military and acknowledgement of the CPRs as civilian populations, all of which are among the key demands of the women's, popular and human rights movements. She also recommends reparations to the relatives of victims of human rights abuses (Human Rights Watch/ Americas, 1994:120). This would be a source of economic support for women who constitute the majority of the next-of-kin of victims. GAM's leader, Nineth Montenegro de García, believes that MINUGUA has created greater space for civil society to mobilise against the army (Human Rights Bulletin, 3, 2, June 1995:4).

UNHCR has been involved in legalising the status of and providing assistance to refugees, particularly in Mexico but also in other countries in the region, such as Belize and Honduras, since 1984. No assessment is available of the gendered effects of the ration distribution system in the camps in Mexico. Mamá Maquín/ CIAM (1994) cite a case of food being withheld from the family of a girl who had reported a rape. The scale of abuses of this kind and any gender-specific patterns are, however, unknown. UNHCR, among other organisations, has channelled support to and through *Mamá Maquín* to assist with its programme of promoting women's public participation and also to help women meet their economic needs through credit, asset-building and income-generating programmes (*ibid.*). This is a case of international support assisting women to become stronger advocates for their own view of peace, development and their rights and needs. An important factor in this is that *Mamá Maquín* and *Ixmucané* both started without external support to address issues which refugee women prioritised, and had already built a strong structure before receiving external funds.

Various international NGOs, such as Christian Aid and CAFOD, have also assisted refugees and communities inside Guatemala. Many programmes focus on health and educational development, including radio programming in indigenous languages, credit and agricultural development. No detailed information is available on the gender implications of these programmes.

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ERITREA

by

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ERITREA

ABBREVIATIONS

CERA	Eritrea's Commission for Refugee Affairs
ELA	Eritrean Liberation Army
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLA	Eritrean People's Liberation Army
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
NDP	National Democratic Programme
NUEWmn	The National Union of Eritrean Women
ODA	Overseas Development Administration
PFDJ	People's Front for Democracy and Justice
PGE	Provisional Government of Eritrea
UNICEF	United Nations Fund for Children

1. BACKGROUND⁷⁶

Conflict in Eritrea consisted of a war for independence conducted from 1961 by the Eritrean Liberation Army (ELA) and later the Eritrean People's Liberation Army (EPLA), the combatant arm of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), against the Ethiopian regime, which had interfered in Eritrean affairs prior to annexing Eritrea in 1962. The war ended in May 1991 when the EPLA took Asmara and control of the entire country. At the same time, the Ethiopian government was overthrown in Ethiopia and a transitional government established. Between 1991 and 1993, a provisional government was in place in Eritrea. In May 1993 Eritrea emerged as an independent state after a UN-supported-and-observed referendum of the Eritrean population overwhelmingly endorsed independence from Ethiopia. The post-conflict period dates from the cessation of hostilities in 1991.

Women played a major role in Eritrea's independence movement, both as combatants and as political and productive workers for the EPLF. The EPLF platform rested on the dual planks of Eritrean independence from Ethiopia and social, political and economic transformation of Eritrean society. This included wide-ranging reforms affecting gender relations. Among these were reforms of land tenure and marriage law, encouragement of the participation of women in public life (including local-level assemblies) and conscientisation of women and men in an attempt to overcome traditional gender norms.

In post-conflict Eritrea gender is strongly contested. The present government, headed by the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), the post-war incarnation of the EPLF, remains committed to promoting gender equality. Yet, among ex-EPLF fighters and the civilian population there is evidence of a trend towards rejection of former EPLF and present PFDJ gender policy. The National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEWmn) remains firmly committed to lobbying for gender equality and this process is being supported by a number of donors. Nevertheless, widespread dissatisfaction with Eritrea's post-war settlement, particularly if led by certain ethnic or religious groups, could result in gender equality becoming a scapegoat for the expression of other grievances. This risk is not insignificant, given the support for opposition movements by outside political interests with a stake in destabilising the Eritrean government and with an ideological bias against gender equality. One example of this is Sudanese funding of Eritrea's Islamist movement.

2. POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

The state of Eritrea was created during Italian colonial rule in the late nineteenth century. Between 1890 and 1941 Eritrea was an Italian colony, and after Britain defeated Italy in World War II Eritrea became a British protectorate. In 1950, against the wishes of the Eritrean population, the country was federated to Ethiopia by a United Nations resolution (Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1993:5). During this period Ethiopia increased its control over Eritrean affairs, culminating in its annexation in 1962.

⁷⁶ Very little information regarding gender issues is available on the post-conflict period. This case study draws heavily on the literature concerning gender issues during the conflict period. It was not possible to obtain UNICEF's Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Eritrea (1995) or Eritrea's report for the United Nation's Fourth World Conference on Women.

Armed resistance to the Ethiopian regime of Emperor Hailie Selassie and later President Mengistu began in late 1961 under the auspices of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). In later years dissatisfaction with the organisational structure and political orientation of the ELF led to factional infighting and the formation, in 1970, of a breakaway movement, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). By 1982 the Eritrean People's Liberation Army had superseded the ELF as the most effective armed resistance to the Ethiopian army (Green, 1994:5). In northern Eritrea conflict effectively ceased in areas under EPLF control by the mid-1970s; closer to the Ethiopian border, conflict continued until the EPLF took Asmara in 1991. Despite the cessation of hostilities in areas under EPLF control from the mid-1970s, the reality of a continuing independence struggle meant that inevitably those areas were also affected. Between 1991 and the referendum in April 1993 the Provisional Government of Eritrea (PGE) led the country. The post-referendum PFDJ government is still a transitional government. Multi-party elections are scheduled for 1997.

3. GENDER ISSUES IN THE ERITREAN CONFLICT

Eritrea's population consists of nine major ethnic groups, but no information is available concerning the relative size or power of each. The two main religions of Eritrea are Islam and Christianity, with roughly equal numbers of adherents (Connell, 1995:30). The variety of ethnic and religious groups, combined with differing farming and livelihood systems among the lowland and highland pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and agriculturalists, has created multiple systems of gender relations, the complexity of which requires further research (Almedom, 1992). These differences, which are not explored in detail in this briefing, have affected the extent to which EPLF reforms were implemented during the conflict and have implications for gender relations in post-war society.

Another important variable in understanding present-day gender relations in any given region is the degree of EPLF control during the conflict. Within the EPLF-controlled areas gender norms were much more egalitarian among EPLF members than in civilian society. However, reforms in these areas, even when gradually implemented, have resulted in changes in gender relations (for example in marriage law, or a reduction in infibulation) which have not taken place in formerly Ethiopian-controlled areas. These differences, based on divergent experiences of conflict, remain important in the post-war period.

3.1. Political, legal and human rights issues

3.1.1 *Political representation*

Before 1970, formal women's political organisations did not exist in Eritrea (Burgess, 1991:214). During the liberation struggle, ordinary Eritreans were organised into the National Unions of Peasants, Workers, Women, Youth, Professionals and Students, which formed the basis of the EPLF's organisational structure. Members of these National Unions elected representatives to sit on the EPLF Central Committee, which formulated policy in relation to all EPLF zones with a mandate to oversee its implementation (Green, 1994:36). The women's mass organisation, the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEWmn), provided a structure for women's political representation from village to national level thereby integrating women's concerns into the national policy-making process (Wilson, 1991:50). The NUEWmn also campaigned for increased female participation in education, for equal pay for

equal work and for the implementation of family law at the local level (Connell, 1993:17). Local NUEWmn activists were responsible for a process of grassroots organisation and politicisation of village women in EPLF-controlled areas, which encouraged women to participate in the processes of social transformation, including land reform and the introduction of local marriage by-laws (Green, 1994:36).

By 1991 women's mass organisations were being set up throughout the formerly occupied zones. In these areas their activities were focused on reconstruction and self-help rebuilding of houses, schools and other community services rather than political education. The NUEWmn continues to lobby at the national level for gender-sensitive policies and greater representation of women in politics. For example, four women were appointed head of administrative departments in the PGE after complaints by the NUEWmn about the small number of women in high-level positions. Two women were also appointed as Cabinet Ministers, including the Minister of Justice. The NUEWmn, like other mass organisations, has delinked from the government in the transition to multi-party elections in 1997. This is likely to reduce its ability to influence policy and practice (Green, 1994:3). No information is available as to whether there is a government department responsible for promoting women's equality.

In areas under EPLF control, People's Assemblies, charged with the responsibility for local administration, were established (Silkin, 1989). These comprised representatives from the local mass organisations of peasants, workers, women and youth (men and women aged 18-25). The number of delegates depended on the size of the association (Green, 1994:36). Formerly, women had rarely participated in public community decision-making structures. A quota of 20 percent for women at local level was introduced (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1992:18). There is currently a ten percent quota for women in the National Assembly (Associated Press, 27 August 1995). In November 1995 the National Assembly initiated a reorganisation of regional and sub-regional councils, and agreed that in the newly formed councils women will hold at least 30 percent of seats (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 3 November 1995).

As yet there are no independent NGOs in Eritrea. The national unions are perceived to be closely linked to the EPLF, and thus to the PFDJ government, despite recently disassociating themselves from the government in an effort to become more autonomous. An attempt to launch a Regional Centre for Human Rights in Eritrea was thwarted by the government after the Centre had accumulated almost \$1 million in foreign funding. The government justification for this has been a concern that 'organisations acting in the economic, social and political spheres have Eritrean roots and not be creatures of outside interests' (Connell, 1995:36). Similarly, the PFDJ remains the only legal political organisation until the legalisation of rival political parties in 1997 (*ibid.*:37). The aim of this policy is that in the interim people will be mobilised 'from the ground up in an effort to establish a genuinely open and democratic political culture within which contending nationalist political parties can emerge' (Yemane Gebreab, cited in *ibid.*).

3.1.2. Legal Issues

Limited information is available on the functioning of the legal system, either during the conflict or in the post-independence reconstruction period.

During the conflict, in areas under EPLF control efforts were made to introduce the National Democratic Programme (NDP), a platform from which to challenge gender inequality. One of the cornerstones of this was the Marriage Law, since 'feudal marriage norms (were) based in the supremacy of men over women' (Silkin, 1989:148). The EPLF wished this process of challenging gender and other social inequalities to be participatory and achieved through education to avoid the problems of the imposition of laws demanding radical social change. As a result, the degree of implementation of the NDP varied considerably from region to region. An explicit distinction was made between EPLF fighters and civilians, as it was expected that the EPLF members who had been through a more comprehensive political education process, would be more willing to accept the Marriage Law than civilians. Among other issues, the civilian law did not challenge the issue of polygamy, unlike the EPLF marriage law (Green, 1994:14). The extent to which EPLF Marriage Law has been institutionalised in post-conflict Eritrea is unclear. (See also Section 3.5).

3.1.3 Human rights issues

No statistical information is available on gendered patterns of human rights abuses, such as killings, torture or disappearance under the Derg (the Ethiopian military regime). However, it is clear that women were subject to similar tortures to men (Wilson, 1991:79-80,) particularly when suspected of sympathising with or supporting the EPLF. Wilson reports women political prisoners being kept in cells with standing-room only, and having to give birth under these conditions (*ibid.*).

In the occupied zones rape and harassment of girls and women was 'an everyday event' (Dines, 1989:147 cited in Green, 1989:24). The high levels of infibulation among Eritrean women, particularly in the occupied zones, mean that rape may be even more painful and traumatic than for uninfibulated women. The tearing of scar tissue under these circumstances may have made women particularly susceptible to HIV infection. Fear of rape greatly restricted urban and rural women's mobility in the occupied areas (*ibid.*).

In post-independence Eritrea, women are exempted from national service in the army, as are students and people 'currently holding important positions or working in a very productive capacity in governmental and non-governmental organisations' (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 17 May 1994). The exemption of women from national service is particularly surprising given the participation of women as combatants in the EPLA and raises questions about whether women are now being constructed as unequal citizens, with different rights and responsibilities than men.

There is no evidence that women applying for refugee status or resettlement were discriminated against. However, men were often more successful in gaining asylum than women, particularly when they were supported by a working woman, in a temporary union, known as a 'united front'. In these unions, the man's responsibility was to protect the woman

and seek asylum opportunities for the couple. This in many instances resulted in only the man obtaining asylum overseas (Kibreab, 1995:21). It is unclear whether this is because the men only sought asylum for themselves or whether the women were prohibited from accompanying them because they were not legally married.

3.2 Demographic and Health Issues

There are an estimated 100,000 internally displaced people within Eritrea and 800,000 refugees in Sudan, Europe and North America (UNRISD, 1995:6). The proportion of women amongst Eritrean refugees in Sudan increased considerably from the mid-1970s, as conflict escalated in south-west Eritrea and as repression by the Ethiopian forces became more indiscriminate. In 1975 women comprised nine percent of refugees; in 1976, 17 percent; 23 percent in 1977, and between 36 and 40 percent between 1982 and 1988 (Kibreab, 1995:7-10). Single young people, including former fighters, and female-headed households are over-represented among the refugee population. Kibreab argues that many of the refugees who came to Khartoum did so in order to increase their opportunities for resettlement overseas, in defiance of Sudanese government policy, which required them to remain in camps in rural areas. Thus they were less concerned with reconstructing family and community life than were Eritrean refugees in rural areas of Sudan (*ibid.* : 8). Since independence a steady trickle of young women fleeing parental control has continued (*ibid.*).

The Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates that since 1989, approximately 40 percent of spontaneous returnees to Eritrea were from female headed households. 53.5 percent of returnees were women and 46.5 percent were men (1993:11). Both Kibreab (1995) and Habte-Selassie (1992 cited in Green, 1994:26) observe that, whether their origins were urban or rural, the majority of women refugees in Sudan (up to 70 percent) preferred to return to urban areas in Eritrea. This suggests a need to direct assistance towards urban economic development, and in particular to support women's increased access to productive resources, such as capital and training. However, most productive-sector assistance for returnees through PROFERI, the repatriation programme, concentrates on agricultural development. UNICEF (1994:3) estimates that between 500 and 1,000 people are returning spontaneously every month.

No gender-disaggregated statistical information on mortality is available. Given that women comprised 23 percent of combatants (NUEWmn statistics cited in Green, 1994:8), it is probable that more men than women were killed and injured in the conflict. This is supported by average sex ratios for each province, in which men outnumber women in only one of the eight provinces surveyed by the Leeds Centre for Development Studies (CDS) (1991:70). The average sex ratio for rural Eritrea is estimated at 47:53 (men:women) (*ibid.*).

Both women and men received injuries leading to long-term disability in the war (Green, 1994:3). During the conflict the EPLF made extensive provision of employment opportunities in schools, factories and other EPLF sectors for disabled fighters (Connell, 1993:9), but no information is available as to provision for disabled ex-combatants in the post-conflict period. Considerable areas of productive land are mined (Save the Children Fund, 1993:2), suggesting that rates of disability are likely to rise. In much of Eritrea, where collection of water and firewood are primarily women's responsibilities, and in areas such as the highlands where

women are involved in cultivation, women may be at as great a risk as men (or greater) from mine-related injuries.

Fertility rates are high, with up to eight children per woman being common (Teklemichael (1985) cited in Green, 1994:27). No information is available as to changes in fertility rates due to the war. Despite EPLF promotion of contraceptives among fighters, it appears they were not widely available, particularly amongst civilians (Pateman, 1990:466).

In late November 1994 Eritrea's AIDS Control Office estimated that 1,193 people had AIDS and that another 60,000 have contracted HIV (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 2 December 1994). 71 percent of people with HIV live in Asmara (*ibid.*) and 12 percent in Aseb, a south coast port. 70 percent of people with HIV are in the 20-39 age group, and 32 percent are women; 68 percent are men (Eritrea Profile, vol. 1, no. 34, Nov. 5 1994). It is likely that the conflict has created conditions whereby HIV can spread rapidly. Areas of high seroprevalence may correlate with high areas of militarisation by the Ethiopian forces, such as Asmara, since there is anecdotal evidence that sex work was an important survival strategy for many women, and Ethiopian soldiers provided a large client base.

The death of men, particularly those at the prime age for economic activity, is likely to increase women's work burden. Further, those men are likely to infect their wives and girlfriends, and it is therefore probable that the rate of female infection will eventually reach or exceed the male rate. This has severe economic and social implications for post-war reconstruction, including issues of food security and child welfare. A reluctance to use condoms among Eritrean women and men contributes to, and exacerbates this problem. Several agencies, including UNICEF, are funding HIV/AIDS education work (UNICEF, 1994:6)

3.3 Economic Issues

3.3.1. *Access to assets*

'Prior to the revolution, land tenure systems in Eritrea were complex and differed according to the type of agrarian system. However, one commonality was their lack of provision for women to own land or livestock' (Green, 1994:18). The EPLF policy on land redistribution accorded extensive land rights to divorced, widowed and childless women. A survey carried out by the Leeds Centre for Development Studies which covered over 400 villages in all provinces except Danakil found that 40 percent of villages surveyed had experienced some measure of land reform (CDS, 1991:iii). Of these, 42 percent of land reforms had been initiated by the EPLF. This suggests that a large proportion of rural areas have yet to experience land reform, particularly in the lowlands, as most reforms have been concentrated in the land-scarce highlands (Green, 1994:19).

There is evidence of men resisting the land reform in the period between the end of the war and the independence referendum.

[M]en in many villages and towns formed secret committees to block women from peacetime distribution of land. "The men were rushing to divide the good land for

housing and for agriculture before we established our rights" (Askalu Menkarios, of the National Union of Eritrean Women cited in Connell, 1995:29).

When this was discovered women marched on the president's office to demand action and several of the men organising the action were jailed (*ibid.*). The protest resulted in an extension of land rights to married women. PFDJ policy continues to support women's land rights (Eritrea Profile, vol.1, no. 34, 5 November 1995), but this incident illustrates the continuing resistance of grassroots men to gender equality and suggests a need for the women's movement to retain an effective campaigning profile.

There has been considerable loss of productive land through mine-laying, and through the Ethiopian army's scorched-earth policies, particularly in southern Eritrea. Livestock have also been vulnerable to looting and slaughter by Ethiopian forces. This is a serious constraint on the agricultural productivity of many households, who relied on livestock for ploughing. The CDS survey suggests that up to 57 percent of households have no oxen or camels for ploughing, and among these a high proportion are probably female-headed (CDS, 1991:82). For pastoralists, and agro-pastoralists, the loss of livestock represents even greater asset depletion than for agriculturalists. The land reform law did not address women's rights to livestock. Lack of access to and control over livestock may be a significant cause of poverty, particularly among female-headed households.

In areas where reforms have not been implemented, and in areas of land scarcity, women returning from exile, particularly those without male kin in the area, may face particular problems in negotiating access to land. Men returning to their families may exert pressure to take over plots acquired and cultivated by wives and other female family members from whom they have been separated. The promotion of private land ownership under current government policy may have negative implications for women's access to land over the longer term (Green, 1994:21).

Where land rights have been institutionalised women may still lack the means of working the land. Female-headed households may face specific difficulties, especially in regions where cultural norms prevent women from ploughing and clearing land. In Barka province 15 percent of households (in Sahel province, seven percent) were reported as being 'at risk' because they were female headed; the figure for Barka reflects the proportion of vulnerable female-headed households in Eritrea as a whole (CDS, 1991: Appendix F). Female-headed households' vulnerability in these cases stems from the lack of adult labour, and in some cultural contexts adult male labour, at their disposal, though some women household heads may be able to draw on reciprocal arrangements with other villagers (Wilson, 1991:120). In many cases, their own working days may be extended to compensate for missing labour.

3.3.2 Access to Employment

In occupied zones Eritrean girls were required to register with the Ethiopian army for army service at the age of 16. In most cases they worked as cooks and cleaners, though there is evidence that many girls were also used as prostitutes by the army (Dines, 1989:153).

The NDP stipulates that women and men should receive equal pay for equal work. This needs to be viewed in the context of limited employment opportunities and deeply ingrained gender

divisions of labour (Green, 1994:22). One of the main off-farm income-earning options for rural women, agricultural wage labour, has been reduced through the destruction of some agricultural areas during the war. There may be increased opportunities as land and farms are rehabilitated, but returning male labour may also soak up any increased demand.

In some parts of Sudan, however, employment opportunities were available to refugee women. Bascom (1989: 415), who conducted a study at Wad el Hileau village in eastern Sudan, which had received large numbers of Eritrean refugees, found that Beza women, who had a tradition of agricultural work and decision-making, were among the most favoured labourers on large mechanised farms growing sesame and sorghum.

Little information is available on urban employment opportunities in Eritrea. Some women were working in factories before the war (Wilson, 1991). Most had closed down during the 1980s, but by 1991 were being rehabilitated. Further, there were signs of improvement of the capacity of the informal sector (CDS, 1991). In Khartoum many women refugees made their living by working as domestic servants for the Sudanese middle class; others opened restaurants. The poorer women, often single women or lone mothers, sold beer or undertook sex work, both risky strategies as Islamicisation progressed in Sudan where both were punishable by flogging (Kibreab, 1995). Among married urban Eritrean women in Khartoum, many of whom had been housewives, there was a shift towards women taking responsibility for provisioning the household, perhaps because women were less reluctant than men to take jobs for which they were overqualified (Kibreab, 1995:22).

3.3.3 Functioning of the Economy

No information is available on disruption to the economy during the conflict either in liberated areas or occupied zones. Within the EPLF itself a cashless economy was created with all fighters working for the independence struggle without pay and receiving food, clothes, education, health care, etc., from the EPLF. This isolation from the economic bases of social relations made possible many of the EPLF's more radical policies on gender relations (See Section 3.5).

The PFDJ government is in the process of demobilising the EPLA. The army has been cut from 95,000 to 55,000, and a further reduction to 35,000 is planned (Africa Confidential, vol. 36, no. 16, 1995:7). It is unclear whether women have been demobilised at a faster rate than men, and whether women who wish to remain in the army have been able to do so. One-third of civil servants have lost their jobs as the public administration has been restructured, and there are complaints that party members have been favoured over non-party members regardless of experience and competence (*ibid.*). Again, the gender implications are unclear, but women may face pressure to become housewives to help reduce male unemployment. On the other hand, the PFDJ retains a commitment to gender equality, and the numbers of skilled women, in a context of a shortage of trained people, may act to promote employment opportunities, at least for these women.

3.3.4. Gender Divisions of Labour within the EPLF

The allocation of tasks to women and men within military units was theoretically free from gender bias (Green, 1994:). However, it is probable that women's ability to reach a high rank was constrained by their generally lower levels of education and experience relative to men. Nevertheless some women became commanders of EPLF units or tank drivers, and all combatant women took part in guerrilla activities on an equal basis with men (Pateman, 1990:465). Some of the roles considered the preserve of women prior to the liberation struggle (i.e., cooking, cleaning, fuelwood and water provision) became the duty of all combatants, regardless of gender (Green, 1994:7). Non-combatant EPLF members were active as political organisers, mechanics and medical staff, and women's participation in outreach activities may have given the civilian population an insight into alternative gender roles (Silkin, 1983, in Green, *op. cit.*).

However, women were still underrepresented in occupations formerly dominated by men. For example, within the construction industry only one percent of carpenters and seven percent of surveyors were women, and whilst 98 percent of midwives were women, women only constituted 8.3 percent of doctors (Selassie, 1992:70, cited in Green 1994:7). Nevertheless, the EPLF created a cadre of highly skilled women in several sectors who could act as trainers or role models for other women, particularly those in occupied areas (Green, 1994:11). No information is available on the present employment of former EPLF fighters. Many have stayed on to work for the EPLF during the reconstruction period, but for others the prospect of four more years without pay have led them to seek other employment.

3.4 Social Welfare and Social Organisation

3.4.1 *Access to Education and Health Services*

Very little information is available concerning access to education and health services, particularly for women. This stems from the lack of baseline data due to years of conflict. During the conflict the EPLF ran schools in the areas under their control. In the areas occupied by Ethiopian forces children were forced to learn in Amharic, a major Ethiopian language. Adult literacy classes were available, but again in Amharic, and such classes were strongly oriented in political education towards supporting the Ethiopian state (Dines, 1989:154 cited in Green, 1994:33). There is no evidence that girls and women were specifically disadvantaged vis-a-vis men in the Ethiopian-occupied areas, but the educational opportunities of women and men were more limited than in the EPLF-controlled areas.

Access to education was seen by the EPLF as a vital component of social reform, and a large-scale literacy campaign was introduced in the liberated areas in the early 1980s. By 1989 literacy rates had fallen on average by 50-70 percent in these areas (Selassie, 1992:68, cited in Green, 1994:32). In some areas before the revolution illiteracy rates among rural women were as high as 90-100 percent (*ibid.*) and are still estimated to be 90 percent (UNICEF, 1994:1). For men, the corresponding statistic is 80 percent (*ibid.*).

Since the PFDJ came to power elementary education has been taking place in indigenous languages, with a switch to English after this point. To ensure that girls are not disadvantaged vis-a-vis boys by being unable to speak the language of power, business and the state it is

important that special efforts are made to keep girls in school if there is evidence that their drop-out rates are higher than those of boys. Net school enrolment is estimated to range between 25 and 30 percent (UNICEF, 1994:5), but gender-disaggregated statistics are not available. The Eritrean government's Education for Development Programme aims to promote life-skills education in formal and non-formal school settings and to increase access to education, with a particular emphasis on girls' access to schooling (UNICEF, 1994:5).

In 1981 the EPLF introduced the Eritrean Public Health Programme, which aimed to establish a comprehensive programme of primary health care throughout EPLF-controlled zones. This was to be achieved through the provision of adequate water supplies, improvement of the nutritional status of the population through health education, promotion of breastfeeding, provision of health services for women and children, including family planning and immunisation services, and a range of curative services (Teklemichael, 1985:10-11, cited in Green, 1994). The EPLF operated a range of primary health-care services which were supported by a number of regional hospitals and one central hospital in Orotta. A number of EPLF factories were set up to manufacture basic medicine. By 1989 inaccessible rural areas within the liberated zones were serviced by 40 mobile clinics (Burgess, 1991:216). 60 percent of EPLF health workers were women, who worked mostly as midwives and paramedics (Green, 1994:31).

Despite this since the end of the conflict,

[a]ccess to health services is limited, especially in the rural areas and in particular in the low-land provinces of the country particularly neglected during the years of colonisation. Only 46 percent of the 2,500 villages in Eritrea have reasonable access to primary health care services. When they exist, health facilities are poorly equipped, basic diagnostic equipment are lacking while most health stations do not have cold chain equipment for vaccine care and storage. Most units lack running water' (UNICEF, 1994:4).

Sabo and Kibiridge (1991:680 cited in Green, 1994:27) found considerable anaemia during pregnancy, protein deficiency (particularly among children) and high levels of susceptibility to other commonly occurring diseases, such as typhoid, dysentery and bilharzia. None of this information is gender-disaggregated. Eritrea's infant mortality rate is estimated to be 120 per 1000 live births (UNICEF, 1994:1, quoting 1993 figures), and life expectancy is estimated at 46 years. Maternal mortality is estimated at 710 per 100,000 live births (*ibid.*). Among some ethnic groups, such as the semi-nomadic populations of Barka province, women may be more malnourished than men, since women traditionally show their respect for male kin by eating once men have finished meals. However, there is no firm evidence to support this. Nor is there evidence of changes in intrahousehold patterns of food distribution during or after the conflict.

Eritrea's provision of water and sanitation facilities may be one the worst in Africa, with an estimated 0.25 percent of the population having access to sanitation and seven percent having access to safe drinking water in rural areas (UNICEF, 1994: 4, 1993 statistics). Similar figures for access to safe water are not available. However, 'the infrastructure in rural areas is, in general, inadequate' (Green, 1994:25), and may have been worsened by the war, at least in the areas of most intense conflict. In some areas the Ethiopian army poisoned well water, which may still be affecting water supplies. This reduction in water supply may mean that women and girls are expending a considerable amount of time and energy carrying water.

Very little information is available on the effects of the war on social support mechanisms. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in formerly EPLF-controlled areas, where strong local unions were set up, such organisations may provide social support at a village level (Jenny Holland, personal communication). This may be particularly important for widows, and in general may help people to come to terms with war-induced trauma. No information could be found about social support networks in urban areas in Eritrea. In Khartoum longer-term women exiles set up community restaurants which functioned as information networks and support structures for the Eritrean community (Kibreab, 1995:17-8).

There is evidence of growing tension between former fighters, and in particular returning exiles from Western countries, who are perceived as having got rich whilst others fought the independence war (Economist Intelligence Unit, 1994:35). This is exacerbated by the scarcity of housing and employment opportunities. In this context the visibly different gender norms of ex-EPLF women may provide a convenient scapegoat for men and women who are dissatisfied with their own stake in independent Eritrea. (See also Section 3.5).

The war has resulted in 90,000 orphans (defined as children who have lost one parent). Of these 10,000 have lost both parents (UNICEF, 1994:5). There is also evidence of the emergence of newly vulnerable groups such as street children. These are children who work on the street, selling cigarettes, sweets and other items, rather than homeless children. Whilst information on gender differentials in the number of working children on the streets is unavailable, 30 percent of the recipients of financial assistance in a Radd Barnan programme for street children in Asmara in 1994 were girls (Eritrea Profile, vol.1, no. 25, 3 September 1994:1).

3.5 Socio-cultural and ideological issues

EPLF gender ideology stressed the participation of women alongside men in all aspects of the struggle. Rather than exhorting women to breed sons to fight for the cause, as many organisations involved in armed conflict have done, EPLF recruitment policy rested on convincing civilians to join them, and Eritreans serving in the Ethiopian army and Ethiopian prisoners of war to defect to the EPLF. This was backed up by a ban until 1977 on marriage within the EPLA, and subsequently the provision of contraceptives. PFDJ policy continues to support this full involvement of women in the public sphere. Detailed information on the gender ideologies promoted by the Ethiopian army in the occupied zones is not available, though these were certainly more conservative than EPLF ideology, since girls were expected to become cooks and cleaners, but not combatants.

As part of the EPLF's stated commitment to reduce gender inequality, after the end of the ban on marriage in the EPLF in 1977 exploration of personal relationships prior to marriage, including pre-marital sex, was promoted, and contraceptives were made available. Thus, in contrast to much of the wider society, among EPLF fighters women's worth was not judged on the basis of their virginity and chastity. Silkin (1989) suggests that EPLF promotion of pre-marital sex weakened the link between women's sexual behaviour and family honour. However, outside the EPLF, female virginity remains prized, and extra-marital sex stigmatised. For example, women who had been part of temporary 'united front' unions in

Khartoum often suffered 'moral insult and disgrace and were reduced to a non-marriageable status' (Kibreab, 1995:21).

Since independence former male EPLA combatants married to women combatants are coming under pressure from their families to divorce their wives and take younger virgin brides. This relates both to the images of unfettered sexuality among female combatants, and also to the desire of parents to reassert their traditional control over their children's marriages (The Economist, 25 June 1994:719). Further, the system of marriage among EPLA combatants existed outside the material and social bases of the arranged marriage system - brideprice, and securing alliances through arranged marriages. Thus, the issue of free choice in marriage is undermined in post-conflict Eritrean society by economic as well as ideological factors.

The EPLF has been relatively successful in discouraging female genital mutilation through trained midwives. Many regional marriage laws have banned infibulation, though none have gone as far as to ban clitoridectomy or circumcision (Green, 1994:29). Silkin (1990 cited in Wilson, 1991:138) argues that this would have moved the argument 'beyond women's health and into the sphere of women's rights to and capacity for sexual pleasure, which would alienate the people from the more moderate reform'. Despite being presented essentially as a health issue, the success of the EPLF's campaign may be associated with attempts to change sexual mores, and to promote a freer attitude towards female sexuality.

In refuge in Sudan, women in the rural camps functioned as a source of cultural continuity for their children and for the wider community. This role, common to women in refuge, may have been particularly strong in the context of rural Sudan, where norms of seclusion prevailed and women's interaction with the host population was limited. In contrast, in urban areas women functioned more as agents of change and sources of livelihoods, in addition to bearing the role of socialising children into aspects of their home cultures. This relates both to the economic circumstances of women in urban areas, and to the fact that many had participated in the EPLF and thus had been exposed to very different gender norms (Kibreab, 1995: 9,24).

It remains to be seen whether tensions between Christians and Muslims and different ethnic groups in post-independence Eritrea will undermine the reconstruction process. The Sudanese regime, with which Eritrea's diplomatic relations are strained, has accused the PFDJ of being Christian-dominated and is supporting a small Islamist opposition movement. Thus there is potential for groups who feel disenfranchised in post-war Eritrea to organise around conservative religious or ethnic identities, and in particular against reforms to land tenure and gender relations in pre-independence EPLF and post-war PFDJ policy (Connell, 1995:38).

3.6 Personal/ psychological

Almedom (1992:30) reports widespread 'post-war trauma', particularly in areas such as She'eb, the site of a massacre of 400 people by the Ethiopian army in 1988, and other places where atrocities had taken place and survivors lost many relatives and friends at once. She notes that some widows were reconciled to the assertion that the martyrs (people who died in the independence struggle) had fulfilled their goals, whilst others had not come to terms with their bereavements. Not knowing the fate of loved ones may be particularly traumatic. Survivors feel guilty where they have not been able to fulfil their customary burial obligations (*ibid.*:31),

and many suffer from 'somatic complaints, loss of confidence in oneself and in others, social withdrawal, and lethargy' (Africa Watch, 1992, cited in Almedom, 1992:30).

For women in many places there is a legacy of fear, particularly of rape, which makes undertaking activities which involve travelling some distance from home, such as the collection of water or fuelwood particularly traumatic. In some areas men have taken on these tasks (Green, 1994). The state of destruction and utter poverty is also a cause of distress to women (Almedom, 1992:33), particularly given their generally lower access to resources with which to reconstruct their homes and communities.

In 1992 the Department of Social Affairs planned to encourage people to come to terms with their experiences of conflict and bereavement by writing about their experiences. Given the levels of illiteracy in Eritrea this would need to be combined with oral history work.

Women demobilised from the EPLF, many of whom are unmarried and past the traditional age of marriage, are experiencing difficulties in returning to their communities, as the assertiveness they developed within the EPLF is being resisted, particularly by men in their communities, including former fighters (Connell, 1995:36). One ex-combatant woman commented:

"In the field, the men respected us - our brains, our strength ... But in this society of ours, they now respect make-up, nice hair, being a proper housewife.. If we kneel down to what they want, we'll end up back in the kitchen.' (Amair Adhana, cited in The Economist, 25 June 1994:719).

At the national level there is recognition of the specific problems facing women ex-combatants (*ibid.*), but whether policies and programmes are being formulated and implemented is unclear.

4. GENDER ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

UN involvement in Eritrea has included overseeing the referendum and collaborating with Eritrea's Commission for Refugee Affairs (CERA) on a repatriation programme for refugees in Sudan, named PROFERI. A number of bilateral agencies are now channelling development assistance to Eritrea, whose democratic image and clear need for assistance in the post-war reconstruction process match donor criteria. The majority of international NGOs supporting development in Eritrea before the end of the war channelled their assistance through the Eritrean Relief Organisation, part of the EPLF, including Oxfam-UK and CAFOD. Presently, most NGOs as well as bilateral donors are working directly with government ministries, since there are no Eritrean NGOs and the government is still promulgating legislation on the receipt of donor funds by Eritrean organisations (Connell, 1995:36).

4.1 Assistance to and repatriation of refugees

In Sudan, most refugees of rural origin were relocated to rural camps, and urban refugees to Khartoum, though many rural refugees illegally moved to Khartoum (Kibreab, 1995:8). In the transit camps all assistance, such as land, tools and seeds, was issued in the name of men, except in the case of female-headed households. Thus married women were constructed as men's dependants, rather than as partners in the rural production process, as they had been in Eritrea before flight. For many women employment opportunities were further restricted by local gender norms which expected women to remain secluded. This affected both Christian and Muslim women. Kibreab concludes that 'in the transit centres and settlements, the subordination of women has been intensified more than ever before' (*ibid.*). This may have been a contributory factor in the migration of many rural women refugees to Khartoum.

The repatriation process has not proceeded as fast as planned due to the costs of the programme and tensions with the Sudanese government. According to the Eritrean government, repatriation and assistance programmes have been designed with a strong awareness of gender issues:

'Gender concerns, maintaining a relief to development continuum, and sustainability of inputs were key principles in developing PROFERI. Important principles underlying the co-ordination and implementation aspects of the programme include national execution, decentralisation, community participation, and capacity building' (Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1993:11).

The programme concerns the rehabilitation of the areas where most resettlement is expected to take place in northern and western Eritrea, where up to 88 percent of the refugees are expected to return (*ibid.*). The sectors with the greatest budgets under PROFERI are housing, education, agriculture and food aid (*ibid.*:12). The focus on agriculture suggests that there may be a disjunction between PROFERI policy and the aspirations of many refugees. This may result in secondary migration to urban areas after the initial resettlement period. The majority of refugees are still in Sudan, but tensions with the Sudanese government, as well as the desire of the refugees to return, mean that the Eritrean government is under increasing pressure to hasten the repatriation process.

Various international NGOs are also assisting the repatriation process. CAFOD, for example, has provided food aid and funded the emergency drilling of boreholes in areas to which refugees are expected to return.

4.2 Bilateral and international NGO development assistance

Almedom (1992), who conducted a gender assessment of Oxfam's assistance to Eritrea, concluded that the Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme (APR), administered by the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA, the relief organisation of the EPLF before independence) had involved women, both as beneficiaries and in the decision-making process. However, the degree to which they benefited may have depended on the extent to which EPLF reforms, such as participation of women in village committees and land reform, have been implemented in a given locality (1992:32). She further points out that in rural areas, many of the women she interviewed wanted assistance for their trading activities, and for assistance not to be confined to agricultural development (*ibid.*:32-3). This suggests a need for participatory planning of development programmes as a way of taking women's viewpoints into account, and for attention to off-farm income earning opportunities (for example, through credit schemes).

There is evidence of a continuing commitment to mainstreaming gender issues at the national level, with workshops on gender issues in different sectors being held for policy-makers and practitioners. These have included an ODA/Eritrean Ministry of Education-funded workshop on gender issues in education for teachers and practitioners concerned with curriculum development and educational research (Eritrea Profile, vol. 1, no. 42, 31 December 1994:8).

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