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A Seat at the Table: The Role of Rwandan Women in Peace-building

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Abstract

The prospective contributions of women to peace-building initiatives have garnered attention at the national, regional, and international levels in recent times. Given that women continue to be substantial casualties in the most severely impacted regions of conflict, interventions in global development have also been drawn to the identification of critical issues about security, peace, and women. This research investigates the contribution of women's participation in peace-building initiatives in Rwanda to the country's long-term stability. This paper has examined many reports and national, regional, and institutional agreements to gain insight into the challenges faced by women while participating in peace-building initiatives. On the contrary, the study reveals that severe war scenarios, specifically those in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region, have not only increased women's consciousness regarding the imperative nature of resolving conflicts with decisiveness. Moreover, it has contributed to an increased recognition of the significant contribution that women can make to the promotion of peace. Nevertheless, women often encounter barriers that prevent them from being granted equal opportunities as their male counterparts, which significantly hinders their endeavors to engage in the peace-building process. Engaging in 'dialogues' and 'peace campaigns' are two strategies that can be implemented to foster inter-community reconciliation in conflict-affected areas. Concerns such as 'equality', 'women's participation in decision-making', 'access to power', and 'resources' should be emphasized, according to this research, to enable women to participate completely as valuable shareholders in peace-building initiatives. Hence, by examining the experiences of women in women experiences in peace-building and conflict resolution, this study prompts the following inquiry: What are the rationales for advocating for gender equality and women's participation in peace-building efforts?

Keywords: Peace-Building, Reconciliation, Women, Peace, Rwanda

Introduction

During instances of conflicts, violence, genocides, and wars within a community, women and children bear the brunt of the burden and are the most vulnerable groups, despite their limited involvement in the events that trigger these conflicts. Women disproportionately experience the negative effects of violence and societal disintegration in nations affected by war. Essentially, they consistently bear the brunt of a societal condition in which they possess less or no authority. Although women are the main targets of war, they are seldom acknowledged as participants in conflict resolution agreements. They occasionally engage in peace negotiations due to the common perception that it is

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predominantly a matter associated with masculinity. Based on a United Nations evaluation, women accounted for 2% of conflict mediators and 8% of peace negotiators worldwide from 1990 to 2017. (Issifu A. K., 2015) This data suggests that women are often marginalized when it comes to seeking peaceful resolutions to conflicts. Conflict disproportionately affects women, causing them significant pain, while conflict resolution processes unjustly exclude them. This stems from their perception that they have minimal or nonexistent input to provide towards the peace movement.

Despite common misconceptions, when allowed to participate in conflict resolution and promote peace, women demonstrated their skills and capabilities effectively. After the deadly conflicts in Wajir, Kenya in 1991, the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) was established by women from Wajir. This committee played a crucial role in the restoration of peace in Kenya. (Hudson, 2009) Furthermore, in post-apartheid South Africa, the Harambe Women's Forum emerged as a catalyst for change, despite facing adversity, trauma, and violence. The forum played a significant role in rebuilding the devastated communities and actively participating in peace-building efforts. During the Liberian conflict, Liberian women advocated for a cessation of hostilities through the 'Mass Action for Peace' campaign as a means to advance peace. During the Libyan conflict, both the government and the United Nations acknowledged the significant role played by women in promoting security, development, and peace. Both Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Beijing Platform for Action on Women and Armed Conflict emphasize the commitment of the global community to address issues that arise after conflicts by promoting women's participation in efforts to establish peace. (Mwambari, 2017) Both men and women are commonly impacted in conflict zones through a range of different means. The majority (80%) of individuals who are forced from their homes due to war are women and children, whereas men play an active role in the hostilities on both sides.

The Rwandan civil war and genocide of 1994 brought to light the importance of women in the realms of peace promotion and conflict resolution. Rwanda was the site of one of the most catastrophic conflicts of the 20th century during that particular year. It was the location where many consider the most lethal act of genocide in the history of humanity took place. Rwandan women have played a crucial role in both sustaining the peace process and bringing an end to the conflict. In Rwanda, the conflict was resolved by making a resolute attempt to tackle the fundamental causes of the conflict and

grievances, rather than relying just on the military outcome of one of the warring factions. (Mwambari, Women-led non-governmental organizations and peacebuilding in Rwanda., 2017) This explains why, despite prolonged conflict, the nation's endeavors to establish peace have been successful and the probability of additional bloodshed is minimal. The government, civil society, development partners, friendly nations, local individuals, and other social groupings have all made substantial contributions to maintaining the sustainability of this peace initiative and continue to do so. Women play a prominent role in Rwanda's endeavors to address conflicts, promote comprehension, and propel the country's enduring peace-building initiatives.

This paper highlights the contribution of women in Rwanda's efforts to establish and maintain peace. The paper examines the progress made by Rwandan women in promoting peace and the challenges they face in participating in peace-building efforts, within the framework of peace-building theory. A comprehensive examination has been conducted on the documents produced by several organizations, encompassing both regional and worldwide conventions and accords about women and peace-building. The significance of women's roles in peace-building and conflict resolution initiatives in nations afflicted by war is commendable, given their unique societal standing. Consequently, the functions of Rwandan women in the process of resolving conflicts and restoring harmony in Rwandan society are investigated in this study. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the participation of women in the post-conflict peace-building process in Africa, with a particular emphasis on the experiences of women in Rwanda. The present research examines the experiences of women engaged in peace-building and conflict resolution to respond to the following inquiry: "Why is it crucial to promote gender equality and the participation of women in peace-building efforts?"

Research Methodology

The research is predicated upon secondary data, which consists of documented information. The present data was gathered through the extraction of pertinent information from various sources and prior inquiries. The preponderance of these publications pertained to the subject of women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, with a particular emphasis on the context of Rwanda. As a result, written materials obtained from libraries, including textbooks, journal articles, and other secondary sources, were employed. The research also utilized online sites that contained data on the Rwandan civil war and atrocities, as well as endeavors to address the conflicts. These records are already accessible to the public. The research uses a

qualitative technique to carry out empirical research. The utilization of qualitative technique enables a more comprehensive comprehension of the underlying factors and components of the Rwandan Civil War, along with its profound repercussions on society, with a specific emphasis on women. Additionally, it helps to emphasize the importance of women's involvement in peace-building and asserts that their participation can result in achieving gender equality. Furthermore, the case study of Rwandan women employs both explanatory and descriptive methods to elucidate their experiences and underscore the vital role they play in global peace movements.

A Feminist Perspective of Peace Studies and Peace-building

Peace-building has been defined in diverse ways by various entities such as departments, organizations, schools, agencies, scholars, and others. According to Galtung, the Roman concept of "pax" is the prevailing notion of peace in modern peace theory and practice. It primarily benefits the powerful by preserving the existing social order. Galtung recognized the necessity for a more inclusive and holistic understanding of peace that would encompass diverse social beliefs and global values, to establish harmonious circumstances. (Iloh, Okafor, & Oghomitse, 2021) Peace should be achieved through nonviolent methods and concepts. Establishing a correlation between peace and the complete absence of any sort of structural violent behavior is a challenging and enduring goal, especially in areas affected by war and conflict. However, perceiving peace solely as a sequence of predominantly negative and subsequently pleasant occurrences is inadequate. "Negative peace" denotes the status of conflict-free, while 'positive peace' comprises a wider concept that includes individual security. Regardless, it is imperative to contemplate strategies that can accomplish gender equity and peace, right from the first.

While conflict resolution can still need military intervention in dominant discussions, feminist dialogues have produced entirely positive models for achieving peace. Their discussions commence by addressing the necessity for safeguarding and exploring personal encounters with sadistic tendencies, within the confines of their confidential domain. "Achieving peace, social justice, and ecological sustainability requires the elimination of social relationships that rely on dominance and subordination." (McLean Hilker, 2011) Genuine security requires not just the absence of war, but also the elimination of unfair social ties and gender inequality. The primacy should be given to the innate human desire for social interaction, unity, and mutual reliance. Her conception of security is founded on a

"forceful interrelation across all strata of society." The philosophy is dynamic since its goal is to establish justice rather than simply maintain order. Substituting warrior-patriots with citizen defenders provides more advantageous models for promoting women's equal participation in global politics. The concept of Peace and Security for All serves as both a normative assertion and a mental representation, as the female demographic is seldom acknowledged in conventional security approaches. Conversely, achieving peace and security for individuals of all genders and ages in their diverse circumstances is a monumental task. Feminist peace concepts aim to confront this challenge: Judith Ann Tickner advocates for a vision of peace that is founded on gender equality. She argues for strengthening women's rights and international governance while shifting the focus from escalation to prevention. Consequently, a shift in attitude from a strictly defined security policy to a strategy focused on peace is imperative. Feminists often question and critique military notions and systems. (Högberg, 2019) This has also ignited discussions over the inclusion of women in the armed forces within feminist rhetoric.

Feminist peace concepts are based on the principle of equitable involvement of both men and women in all aspects and stages, with a particular emphasis on incorporating gender perspectives in all areas of security, peace, and development policy. Since the beginning of the 1990s, women's advocates in Western society have earned greater acknowledgment from the community due to their assertive requests. The transnational women's movement adapted its strategies in response to the World Conferences on Women, which significantly facilitated this achievement. Feminist NGOs have shifted their self-perception from simply opposing criticism and monitoring to actively engaging in lobbying and exerting influence at international UN conferences. Christa Wichterich observed that the convergence of subjects in NGO and UN discussions was a new political development during the 1994 Cairo UN International Conference on Population. (Gatera, 2021) Rather than merely criticizing UN policies, the bulk of feminist non-governmental organizations (NGOs) nowadays strive to actively exert influence on them. Nevertheless, there were dissenting voices within feminist organizations.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a highly comprehensive initiative aimed at promoting women's rights and achieving gender equality on a worldwide scale, with a special focus on peace and security, was ratified in 1995. Despite notable progress, gender inequality continues to persist. During the period from 1992 to 2018, women accounted for a mere 13% of negotiators, 3% of mediators, and 4% of signatories

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in crucial peace negotiations. The Beijing Platform of Action was endorsed during the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women as a culmination of the efforts made by various women's non-governmental organizations. This platform mandates the enactment of institutional measures to promote gender equality for women. States were recommended to "incorporate a gender justice perspective into all policy sectors and all levels of government." consequently, the notion of gender mainstreaming was introduced in global politics to ensure that organizations include gender equality in their actions.

While women are making significant contributions to the areas of justice, peace, and security, they are still not adequately represented in formal peace processes. A study conducted by the International Peace Institute examined 182 peace treaties signed between 1989 and 2011. The study found that when women were involved as representatives, peacekeepers, and parties in the mediations for peace agreements, the likelihood of these agreements lasting for at least two years increased by 20%, and the chances of them lasting for at least 15 years increased by 35%. It was observed that this year marked the twentieth anniversary of the observance of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 (2000) concerning women, peace, and security. Despite significant advancements, there continues to be a dearth of women's rights and their representation in leadership positions within the realm of peace-building.

Following the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) subsequently approved nine further resolutions, ultimately bringing about the establishment of the Women, Peace, and Security Schema. Although there is global recognition, challenges continue to exist. Injustices, patriarchal systems, military masculinities, and discriminatory power structures impede the ability of women to participate in peace-keeping and conflict resolution. The existing approaches employed to oversee and assess the advancement of gender-related initiatives in post-conflict settings are frequently deemed insufficient by women's movements. There is still a lack of female representation in peace-building initiatives. Approximately 10% of the participants involved in the Afghan discussions were female. During the recent peace discussions in Yemen and Libya, the absence of women negotiators was notable, with only a meager 20% representation of females in political negotiations in Libya.

Women involved in peace processes tend to prioritize economic development, transitional justice, education,

and reconciliation. They often champion the cause of underprivileged populations and the necessary conditions for addressing the underlying causes of conflict. Due to the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence, women have the opportunity to engage with the entire population, rather than just half, as men may be hindered from entering war zones.

Historical Context of the Rwanda Conflict

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), an insurgent faction, and the Rwandan Armed Forces, the governing population, engaged in an extended internal conflict in Rwanda spanning from October 1, 1990, to July 18, 1994. The protracted battle between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes in Rwanda intensified the war. Over 336,000 Tutsis were forced to seek asylum in neighboring countries following the 1959-1962 revolt that replaced the Tutsi kingdom with a republic dominated by the Hutu. The RPF was founded in Uganda by these expatriates, and, under the leadership of Fred Rwigyema and Paul Kagame, it became a fully functional military force by the late 1980s. (King, 2008)

The Rwandan Civil War commenced in 1990 when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a rebel faction primarily composed of Tutsi refugees, launched an offensive in northern Rwanda after establishing a strong presence in Uganda. During the following three years, no political party was able to establish a distinct advantage. The Arusha Accord was signed on August 4, 1993, between the Rwandan government led by Hutu President Juvénal Habyarimana and the RPF. While there is debate among historians, it is widely believed that the genocide of the Tutsis had been premeditated for a significant period. However, the assassination of Habyarimana on April 6, 1994, which created a power vacuum and led to peace negotiations being negotiated, is considered the immediate trigger for the genocide. On the subsequent day, a combination of troops, police, and militia, predominantly composed of Hutus, carried out the killing of high-ranking Tutsi and moderate Hutu military and political figures. An estimated number of 500,000 to 662,000 Tutsis lost their lives during around 100 days. This was due to armed militias systematically killing members of the Tutsi ethnic group, as well as some moderate Hutus and Twa.

After the 1994 conflict and mass killing in Rwanda, which resulted in the death of one million people, around three million individuals sought sanctuary in camps in the nearby Democratic Republic of Congo, while tens of thousands remained displaced within Rwanda. Women were singled out based on their gender as well as their ethnic background. One-third of women aged 13 to 35 who were victims of sexual assault were

found to be HIV-positive, further exacerbating their preexisting physical and psychological distress. Approximately 16,000 female genocide survivors who are HIV-positive have been compelled to go due to gender-based violence, as per the latest calculations.

Conflict Resolution and the Role of Women

During contemporary conflicts, women experience a significantly higher degree of physical suffering, endure greater property loss, and are regularly subjected to sexual abuse by militia organizations. However, their perspectives are disregarded in the process of peace negotiations. Women are consistently and conspicuously marginalized from the peace-building process, despite being the ones who endure the most significant damage from conflict and despite evidence that contradicts this exclusion. Research conducted by the International Peace Institute (ISP) indicates that the involvement of women in peace processes increases the likelihood of the resulting peace agreement lasting a minimum of 15 years by 35%. Based on this study, women demonstrate a greater inclination towards transitional justice, economic growth, reconciliation, and education all crucial elements for establishing a robust and enduring peace, rather than being preoccupied with the presumed benefits of conflict. Women often employ distinct strategies and assume different roles in advancing peace compared to what is typically seen in formal peace negotiations conducted at high-level state security discussions. These strategies include bridging divides, acting as reliable intermediaries, broadening the scope of peace talks, and aiding in post-conflict reconstruction.

Expanding the scope of a peace process increases the likelihood of women achieving a lasting peace settlement. When considering the factors necessary for societal reconciliation and reconstruction, women are more inclined than men to raise more substantial societal obstacles. Women generally prioritize necessary societal reforms, economic recovery programs, and transitional justice measures over power-sharing territorial gains, or military activities, therefore notably increasing the likelihood of achieving sustainable peace. By promoting women's engagement in rebuilding after a conflict, places that have experienced conflict become more stable. Studies conducted by the ISP indicate that peace agreement commissions responsible for implementing specific provisions such as demobilization, disarmament, truth and reconciliation processes, or constitution drafting are significantly more successful when women are in leadership roles. The emergence of robust public institutions and the provision of essential services, including healthcare, education, and access to food and clean water, are key factors in creating a more stable society after a conflict.

Priorities often emphasized by women

Initially, women in Rwanda were mostly engaged in home affairs. Women in agricultural activities on their property to ensure the family's sustenance, while also tending to their children, the infirm, and the old. They were engaged in a variety of tasks. Women were completely reliant on their husbands. They did not possess legal entitlements to the profits generated from the land or had restricted autonomy. Women were prohibited from opening bank accounts without the approval of their husbands, which prevented them from securing funding to start a business unless they received assistance from a male family member or their spouse. Rwanda, being a patriarchal country, did not provide women the right to own land or property, similar to many other countries. The decline in women's rights can be attributed to their inability to financially support their families after the death of their husbands.

Following 1994, women were the heads of 34% of households in Rwanda. Within these households, 62.15% of them, approximately 21.5% of adult women, lived below the poverty threshold. Approximately 70% of the female population in the nation lived in a state of acute poverty. According to reports, there were an estimated 110,000 families in the entire country where children were the heads of the household. (Costa, 2018) Similarly, a significant number of guys, including individuals who formerly served in the military, also encountered post-traumatic stress disorder. The psychological wounds resulting from the war and atrocities in 1994 require both time and specialized care. The breakdown of families and the acquisition of a confrontational approach have eroded the trust among the Rwandan population. During a period characterized by an increase in prostitution, domestic violence, alcohol abuse, and drug misuse, society underwent significant trauma and psychosocial deterioration, the effects of which may still be observable in the present day. Notwithstanding the prevailing conditions, women made a momentous determination that contributed to the initiation of peace in one of the world's most susceptible nations during that period.

The occurrence of the Rwandan genocide and civil war in 1994 shed light on the significant role that women play in conflict resolution and peace-building. Rwanda experienced one of the most severe conflicts of the 20th century in that specific year. It was the site of the most severe genocide in documented human history. The of primary objective facing the newly established Rwandan administration in the immediate aftermath of

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the 1994 genocide was to restore and maintain security, law, and order, while also initiating the national healing and reconciliation process. To prevent any disruption or sabotage of the process, it is imperative to involve every segment of society to achieve these objectives. Attaining peace necessitates the active involvement of all parties implicated in the conflict, regardless of whether they are liable for the wrongdoing or the ones who have suffered from it. It is imperative for all individuals to actively engage in the establishment of a sustainable peace that fosters the growth of the economy, political unity, and community development in the aftermath of conflict. From the beginning, the Rwandan government recognized this and actively worked to involve women in the process of restoring peace and rebuilding after the conflict. The male population experienced a substantial decline due to the genocide. Many males were killed, some were imprisoned, a considerable number fled Rwanda to seek refuge in neighboring countries, and others joined the resistance in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The women had no other option except to engage actively in both the rebuilding of their country and the search for lasting peace. Thanks to the government's unwavering backing, they were actively involved in all stages of the peace-building and reconstruction endeavors.

The Rwandan government also discovered that women had a major role in instigating the revolt and insurgency that occurred following the conclusion of the genocide. They disseminated intelligence to the insurgents engaged in combat with the governmental forces deployed in the trenches and forests. As a result, the ongoing conflict would proceed as it had historically done so long as women persisted in their involvement with the insurgency. The administration acknowledged that without successfully convincing women to withdraw their support for the rebels, attempts to terminate the war would be unsuccessful. Consequently, efforts were undertaken to enlighten women about the perils of backing the rebels, and the consequences of a protracted conflict, especially on themselves and their children. Women recognized that they experienced the greatest repercussions when they were forcibly displaced from their residences and towns during conflicts between government forces and insurgents. Over time, women began to increasingly support the government instead of the insurgents due to its ability to guarantee them safety and protection. After realizing that adopting this position was necessary to protect their sanctuary and that of their children, they initiated a campaign to induce their husbands and family members to withdraw from the rebellion and peacefully return to their homes, contributing to the swift suppression of the rebellion. Consequently, the primary measures taken to engage women in the cessation of hostilities and the establishment of the peace process in Rwanda were focused on convincing them to endorse the government.

Their spouses and family members reconciling effectively puts an end to the dispute and accelerates the process of achieving peace. Perhaps the most significant contribution made by women in the pursuit of resolving the Rwandan conflict is as follows. They engaged in this endeavor at their peril, as they became the primary targets of the insurgents, whose forces were progressively dwindling as the men returned to their families after surrendering to government forces. Women implemented various strategies, such as working in tandem with government forces, to accomplish this goal. Negotiating a tranquil surrender under the stipulation that their spouses and other relatives who had previously capitulated would be exempt from retribution constituted one such strategy. Furthermore, the insurgents encountered substantial challenges in organizing their endeavors as a result of the inadequate information obtainable from women concerning the whereabouts of government forces. Additionally, women started providing intelligence to eligible community combatants, government forces, and other deployments regarding the precise whereabouts and schedules of assaults against the insurgents, hence, facilitating the resolution of the disputes.

Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Women's Approaches

In recent decades, there has been a rise in the research of feminist perspectives within the domains of conflict and peace-building. There is a demand to include feminist and women's perspectives that have been marginalized in previous peace-building efforts. Additionally, there is a need to analyze the mechanisms that have allowed these exclusions to occur. Feminists argue that women's daily struggles and experiences enable them to offer unique viewpoints on peace-building that challenge the predominantly male narrative on conflict and peace-building. (Shulika, Women and peace building: from historical to contemporary African perspectives, 2016) In addition, scholars specializing in black and African feminism have emphasized the importance of acknowledging the diverse and intricate experiences of women, particularly those that occur amid and following conflicts. Hence, the efficacy of peace-building methods will be diminished if only one gender is involved, without the participation of both genders. Consequently, the active participation of women at all levels is vital to enhance the efficacy of peace-building efforts.

Hudson employs a range of methodologies to establish the conceptual structure for her study on the conflicts prevalent in Africa, with a specific emphasis on African feminist theory. African feminists employ the term "womanist" to articulate the alignment between the practical circumstances of African women's lives, their intersecting identities, the dynamics of empowerment, and the ultimate goal of liberation. African feminist theory asserts that the feminist peace-building strategy aims to be all-encompassing, involving both genders throughout all stages. The efficacy of incorporating women into both formal and informal procedures, such as negotiations, has been proven. Nevertheless, despite the outcomes of including both genders in these procedures, empirical evidence has shown that the representation of women in official processes remains minimal, and their involvement is more prominent in non-governmental organizations at the local level.

Rwandese women played an active role in initiatives meant to cultivate national healing and reconciliation, alongside males. Cooperatives, which involve the collaboration of village residents for communal development, were included in these initiatives. These individuals, who have experienced both the atrocities of genocide and have also been responsible for doing such acts, now reside together and work together to expedite the process of healing and reconciliation. The Ndiumunyarwanda (I Am Rwandan) Program is one of the programs being referred to. Additional initiatives include the Umuganda Program and the Umugorobaw'ababyeyi (Parents' Evening), during which parents from a shared community engage in discussions encompassing many topics such as politics and social matters. Both of these occurrences happen every month. Genuine reconciliation is widely believed to have been facilitated by the cooperative arrangements established in Rwanda, which involved both the direct victims and perpetrators of the genocide. Moreover, the active involvement of women in these endeavors contributed to the progress of national unity and reconciliation.

Rwandan women, who constituted the majority before and during the genocide, have been recognized as a clear example of the widespread pattern of women being victimized during violence and conflict, and being underrepresented in politics. This is mainly due to the deliberate use of sexual exploitation and violence against women. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of women have faced allegations of actively participating in the Rwandan genocide, thereby defying harsh patriarchal norms. Moreover, according to one assertion, Rwandan women made a substantial contribution to the efforts of reconstructing the nation following the period of bloodshed and advancing the cause of peace. Females

have engaged in politics and grassroots activism. Women partnered to foster fellowship and solidarity among themselves, showcasing their gendered comprehension and proactive abilities. An example of such endeavors is the Unity Club, which functions as a platform for influential women leaders and the spouses of high-ranking government officials. Its primary objective is to foster harmony among its members and effectively promote the values of unity and reconciliation throughout communities. The Unity Club facilitated the realization of socio-economic reforms by women from diverse backgrounds, enabling them to campaign for these ideas and ultimately impact the adoption of legislation that safeguards and promotes women's rights universally.

Women in Leadership and Gender Equality

Untapped potential, aptitudes, and capacity for female leadership are being increasingly acknowledged. The proportion of women in national parliaments worldwide has steadily increased over the last two decades, multiplied from 11.8 percent in 1998 to 17.8 percent in 2008, attaining 23.5 percent in 2018. The representation of women in parliaments has significantly increased in certain regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, where it grew from 11 to 23.6 percent over the past 20 years, and in the Arab States region, where it increased from 3.1 to 17.5 percent. (Shulika & Muthuki, 2020) Not only does global representation fail to meet the standard of having women make up half of the world's population, but it also falls significantly below the commonly cited benchmark of 30% as the minimum level of representation needed to achieve a "critical mass" of legislators who have substantial influence rather than being merely symbolic.

Therefore, it is imperative for international development strategy to prioritize the significant integration of women into leadership positions at the national, local, and community levels. Nevertheless, some individuals may raise doubts regarding the importance of women's participation in politics, civil society, or other positions of leadership roles. What is the significance of increasing women's involvement in global politics? The influence of women in politics has a beneficial effect on democracy since it enhances public sentiment, promotes cooperation across political parties and ethnic groups, and guarantees a more enduring future. The involvement of women in politics fosters gender equality and shapes the scope of policy matters that are addressed, as well as the kind of solutions that are suggested. Studies indicate that a legislator's gender significantly influences their legislative goals. Compelling data suggests that when the number of women elected to office increases, there is a corresponding increase in policies that prioritize the

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quality of life and consider the goals of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities.

Moreover, Rwandan women have proven their ability to be commendable leaders, both within their communities, and in the realm of policy-making. The formation of the ministry responsible for Family and Women's Affairs by the Government of National Unity facilitated the active involvement of women in post-genocide politics and society. This action was taken to recognize and appreciate the transformation as well as the crucial contribution that women have made to Rwandan society. Rwandan women in various leadership roles played a vital role in fostering unity among women and the community at large, to collectively address their nation's difficulties. By actively engaging in the peace-building process, they have experienced a shift in their stance and gained fresh avenues to shape national policy. The world community has recognized the undeniable reality of women's presence in parliament. Rwanda's parliament was ranked most inclusive towards women globally by the International Parliamentary Union in late 2011, with 56.3% of its lower house members being female. (Maliga, 2015)

It might be argued that the active involvement and presence of Rwandan women in society indicate positive developments and progress toward a more peaceful and gender-equal society. Their significant contribution emphasizes the need to employ and safeguard a gendered framework in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction. The Rwandan situation exemplifies the advantageous contribution that women may make in fostering peace and influencing various socioeconomic aspects of the nation as a whole. Rwanda's significant representation of women and its successful reconciliation process after the 1994 genocide have positioned it as a notable African and global exemplar for gender equality and conflict resolution. However, there exists a dominant worldview among men that prioritizes the "politics of numbers," so marginalizing feminist ideas and women. Rwanda has endorsed UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which provides policy suggestions for dismantling gender obstacles in the traditionally male-dominated security sector.

Rwanda's Gacaca Court and Restorative Justice

During the transition from prolonged periods of violence, instability, and persecution to a more peaceful era in civilizations, the adoption of truth-seeking procedures, innovations in international criminal law, and other forms of transitional justice have become common. Legal and informal approaches to transitional justice, such as top-down and bottom-up procedures, are

being examined in several locations, including South Africa, Liberia, Peru, Chile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and Northern Ireland. These developments have been extensively examined and explored through various studies, publications, conferences, and discussions, focusing on concepts related to transitional justice as a whole. Nevertheless, the application of a feminist viewpoint has not traditionally been employed to scrutinize and evaluate these procedures. (Sentama, 2009) In general, the specific experiences and vulnerabilities of women have not been adequately considered systematically. Critics seldom consider the extent to which newly implemented peace- and reconciliation-promoting policies will genuinely enhance the position of women in a society recovering from oppression or violence.

Post-conflict states have a special opportunity to establish norms that would enable and ensure the active participation of the entire population, including women, in a more stable, fair, and self-governing political system due to the need for rebuilding. This book offers valuable perspectives on feminist and women's outlooks regarding provisional justice, also classified as 'justice in transition.' By broadening the range and perspective of possible solutions, feminism can be incorporated into the conversation to enhance the possibility of implementing a justice approach that brings about significant change during the epoch of conflict or instability.

Another important aspect is that following the genocide, Rwandan women assumed non-traditional formerly male-only positions, such as the role of justice in the neighborhood Gacaca courts (antiquated dispute resolution tribunals). In addition to resolving disputes among community members, these tribunals were instrumental in adjudicating matters about individuals accused of and responsible for genocide. As of November 2005, the estimated percentage of female justices in the Gacaca courts was 15.7%. Presumably, Aloisea Inyumba was appointed as the first Executive Secretary of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, which was instituted in March 1999, in recognition of the substantial contributions women have made to fostering peace and resolving disputes in Rwanda, especially about their achievements in the Gacaca courts. (Lorentzen, 2020)

Further, by participating in house construction in the newly established townships, Rwandan women significantly contributed to the government's efforts to rebuild and restore. Consequently, they bolstered the process of returning thousands of displaced individuals

to their home countries and provided opportunities for resettlement to those who came back. In addition, the genocide and civil war hurt food security and agricultural output in Rwanda. As a result, women in the country initiated several agricultural initiatives through self-help projects. Consequently, women guaranteed food security by cultivating crops on their farms or participating in the Food for Work Program, providing sustenance for their families and the wider population. This promoted the process of national reconciliation as hunger presented a significant menace to the stability and cohesion of the nation.

Conclusion

Women and children are the most susceptible individuals in society; they experienced the greatest hardships before, during, and following the conflict. However, they are not the instigators of wars, but rather the ones who endure the greatest adversities. In contemporary society, rebels or individuals involved in conflict have employed comparable strategies targeting women, akin to those utilized by terrorists. Consequently, women are specifically targeted and exploited as instruments of warfare. A multitude of women were subjected to sexual assault in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while 250,000 women and girls from Rwanda fell victim to sexual violence. Shockingly, 66% of the victims of rape in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide tested positive for HIV/AIDS.

This paper offers a comprehensive analysis of the involvement of women in Rwanda's efforts to establish and maintain peace. This paper analyzes the significant progress achieved by women in Rwanda in advancing peace from the viewpoint of peace-building theory, while also addressing the challenges they encounter when engaging in peace-building initiatives. Feminist peace concepts advocate for the equal participation of both men and women at all levels and aspects, particularly focused on incorporating gender perspectives into security, peace, and development policies. This article suggests that discrimination against women raises the likelihood of a state facing internal conflict. Furthermore, it emphasizes that taking gender into account is a crucial element in ensuring a successful peace-building process. Studies examining peace-building through a feminist lens, such as those conducted in Rwanda, provide valuable evidence that can be used to reconsider the peace agenda in a manner that is more comprehensive and morally sound. The paper argues that a culturally contextual gender analysis is an essential tool in all peace work, encompassing both the feminist theory of peace-building and the practical application of a gender perspective.

UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security acknowledged the significance of women's experiences in conflict for its mission to promote peace and security. One of the objectives of the Council is to promote the advancement of women's rights in conflict resolution and peace processes. Nevertheless, the persistent discrimination, marginalization, and sexual assault directed toward women provide significant barriers to the realization of Resolution 1325. While it is undeniable that there has been an increase in support for local women in peace-building after the ratification of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, it is evident that funding for women's groups and activists has declined over time. Since 2001, international initiatives for global peace have shifted their focus from assisting women's groups and activists to combatting terrorism worldwide. Consequently, women's security movements have made relatively limited contributions to the global effort to combat violence against women.

Women possess the capacity to actively engage in endeavors aimed at fostering peace. Following multiple conflicts, women persist as the predominant demographic and bear the significant responsibilities of rebuilding the nation and the households. They must explore diverse strategies to restore communal stability, ensure food availability, and promote peace. To achieve lasting peace, it is imperative to address the issue of equitable access to power, education, and other resources for women at both the national and international levels. Governments should vigilantly monitor and ensure the proper implementation of this measure across all sectors and at every level to promote sustainable development in post-conflict crises through this method. Efforts to promote education and raise awareness are crucial in this matter. If carefully positioned, women can play a pivotal function in a post-conflict nation's efforts to establish peace.

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