

Integrating women's priorities into peacebuilding processes: Experiences of monitoring and advocacy in Burundi and Sierra Leone

Report of a civil society workshop
25-29 February 2008
International Alert, London



About this report

This report was produced by International Alert. It outlines the findings and recommendations of a workshop with representatives from Burundian and Sierra Leonean civil society organisations working in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment organised by International Alert in London on 25th to 29th February 2008. International Alert is grateful for the financial support provided by the Danish, Norwegian and UK governments for the workshop. The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of International Alert.

About International Alert

International Alert is an independent peacebuilding organisation that has worked for over 20 years to lay the foundations for lasting peace and security in communities affected by violent conflict. Our multifaceted approach focuses both in and across various regions; aiming to shape policies and practices that affect peacebuilding; and helping build skills and capacity through training. Our regional work is based in the African Great Lakes, West Africa, the South Caucasus, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Philippines. Our thematic projects work at local, regional and international levels, focusing on cross-cutting issues critical to building sustainable peace. These include business and economy, gender, governance, aid, security and justice. We are one of the world's leading peacebuilding NGOs with an estimated income of £8.4 million in 2008 and more than 120 staff based in London and our 11 field offices. International Alert is grateful for the support of our core donors: Irish Aid (Department of Foreign Affairs Ireland); Danida (Danish International Development Agency); DFID (UK Department for International Development); The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency); and SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation).

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Acronyms

BINUB	United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi
CECM	Caisse d'Epargne et de Credit Mutuel
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil society organisation
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
ENCISS	Enhancing Interaction and Interface between Civil Society and the State to Improve Poor People's Lives
GBV	Gender-based violence
GEMS	Grass-roots Empowerment for Self Reliance
NaCSA	National Commission for Social Action
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PBC	United Nations Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SCR 1325	Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
SSR	Security sector reform
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WISE	Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment

Executive summary

This report outlines the findings and recommendations of a workshop with representatives from Burundian and Sierra Leonean civil society organisations (CSOs) working in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment organised by International Alert on 25th to 29th February 2008. The aim of the five-day workshop was to **exchange experiences, discuss common challenges and strengthen future collaboration** in order to support the integration of gender-related priorities into peacebuilding processes. The workshop resulted in a number of findings and recommendations that can be built on to ensure enhanced support for women's organisations to monitor and advocate for the inclusion of gender perspectives in peacebuilding processes.

Discussions around security-related issues raised the important point that **security sector reform (SSR) processes in both countries have suffered from a lack of engagement with civil society and other non-state actors**. Women's organisations face particular challenges in their attempts to hold security sector actors accountable, as few women's organisations have traditionally engaged with the security sector and lack sufficient technical expertise, capacity and connections to exercise meaningful oversight over the sector.

It was widely agreed by workshop participants that **women's economic insecurity** underlies a number of other forms of insecurity, vulnerability and discrimination and should be addressed by those attempting to improve women's involvement in peacebuilding processes. Women's economic insecurity is compounded by a number of factors, including illiteracy, traditional practices, and discrimination by financial institutions and in public policy. Economic empowerment enables women to participate more actively in society and peacebuilding processes and to reduce their vulnerability to various forms of abuse. However, these programmes need to be informed by a conflict-sensitive approach. For example, microcredit schemes can sometimes increase tensions within households and communities when only certain women can take part in these schemes and may have to respond to high expectations from family and community members.

Women's **political participation** was identified as a priority by workshop participants from both Sierra Leone and Burundi. Women's increased participation in formal political bodies and within civil society is an important end in itself, but is also seen as a potential entry point for promoting gender-sensitive legislation and policies. In Sierra Leone, women's sustained mobilisation resulted in the adoption of three 'gender bills' that substantially improve women's legal rights. In Burundi, on the other hand, women parliamentarians and civil society actors have been less successful in reforming discriminatory legislation.

Burundi and Sierra Leone were the first two countries to be placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), a new intergovernmental advisory body of the United Nations that supports peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict. They have also benefited from funding from the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), established at the same time with the PBC to act as a bridge between conflict and recovery at a time when other funding mechanisms may not yet be available. Although Sierra Leone and Burundi were each allocated US\$35 million of PBF funding in early 2007, very little has been done by women's organisations around these issues in Sierra Leone in contrast to the extent of activities initiated in Burundi. In Burundi, women's CSOs have been relatively successful in incorporating gender concerns into the work of the PBC and have prepared to monitor the implementation of PBF projects from a gender perspective. In both countries, confusion about the PBC/F processes and delays in implementing PBF-funded projects have hindered the positive impact of the fund and the involvement of civil society in monitoring the processes.

A number of challenges constrain the work of women's organisations, and **gender-sensitive monitoring of the implementation of policies** and the enforcement of laws is a particular challenge. Overall capacity gaps in terms of resources and technical expertise limit the impact and sustainability of women's organisations. Women's activism is also often elitist and fragmented. To reach its full potential, the constituencies of women's organisations should be broadened, especially among rural women, who often tend to be excluded from active roles in civil society. This could give women's CSOs more relevance, legitimacy and a stronger mandate. Issues discussed at the national level must also be adapted to local contexts, where needs and priorities may differ. Local women should be supported to have more understanding of and voice in national policy-making processes, such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the work of the PBC. On the other hand, support from international organisations and pressure at the international level is important for progress in national-level advocacy. Pursuing advocacy channels at international, national and local levels in tandem can result in more significant change on the ground.

Key recommendations for international actors working in Burundi are as follows:

- Provide training to members of the Technical Gender Committee of the *Cadre de Coordination* in the development of gender-sensitive indicators and monitoring techniques;
- Continue to link up international advocacy efforts with the in-country work that Dushirehamwe and their partners are doing;
- Share strategies around the role of CSOs in security sector oversight with women's organisations to enable them to develop appropriate technical expertise;
- Support further research into women's security needs and priorities, and build capacity to engage in effective advocacy with security sector actors and institutions on the basis of these priorities;
- Build capacity to campaign effectively for legal reform, including sharing lessons learned from other regions; and,
- Provide opportunities for more cross-learning about successful strategies undertaken by women CSOs in other contexts to integrate gender-related priorities into post-conflict reform agendas and peacebuilding processes.

Key recommendations for international actors working in Sierra Leone are as follows:

- Support the establishment of a technical committee or network of women's CSOs that can monitor the security sector;
- Train women's CSOs in the development of gender-sensitive indicators and the creation of monitoring mechanisms to oversee the implementation of the PRSP and PBF-funded projects in Sierra Leone;
- Support further research into the economic dimensions of women's insecurity and build capacity of women's CSOs to engage in effective advocacy around women's economic priorities with a range of local, national and international stakeholders;
- Build capacity to enable the creation of a more representative, diverse and inclusive network of women's CSOs throughout Sierra Leone; and,
- Assess the impact of the new gender bills and the SSR process at the community level to determine the degree to which they are contributing to positive changes in security and access to justice, particularly for women.

Introduction

Women peacebuilders and other civil society actors in various conflict-affected countries face very similar challenges as they attempt to integrate women's interests in peacebuilding policy processes. To date, there has not been much emphasis on cross-regional learning and sharing, although civil society organisations (CSOs) from different countries can potentially learn a lot from exchanging experiences, insights and strategies with each other. With this in mind, International Alert organised a workshop with civil society actors working in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment from Sierra Leone and Burundi to facilitate this process, in particular to discuss common challenges and strengthen future collaboration. The workshop took place over five days in London from 25th to 29th February 2008. Alert is working in both countries, which are priority regions for the organisation's three-year multi-country project on 'Operationalising SCR 1325'.¹ Burundi and Sierra Leone were the first two countries to be placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), a new intergovernmental advisory body of the United Nations that supports peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict. They have also benefited from funding from the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), established at the same time with the PBC to act as a bridge between conflict and recovery at a time when other funding mechanisms may not yet be available. Both countries have received US\$35 million in funding in support of peacebuilding activities through the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Therefore, the workshop focused on identifying innovative strategies that can be transferred from one context to another for getting women's priorities into peacebuilding processes, particularly the PBC/F.

Box 1: Expectations of the workshop identified by participants

- Sharing of CSO strategies, lessons learned and entry points for intervention
- Access to Alert's support and input, particularly in terms of gender analysis
- Clarification, support and new energy for the women's movement
- Strengthening of linkages between international, regional and local level realities
- Lessons learned from experience with transitional justice mechanisms in Sierra Leone
- Strengthening of skills for policy analysis and policy monitoring

Discussion themes

Throughout the workshop, a number of key policy issues relevant to civil society actors in both countries were raised. A central concern across all issues was the challenge that civil society organisations face in attempting to integrate gender perspectives into peacebuilding policies, particularly security-related activities, and then effectively monitoring the implementation of these policies. Another priority frequently mentioned in the context of all the themes was the need for more effective mechanisms for the prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV). More holistic approaches that recognise the links between GBV and women's potential to participate politically, achieve a sustainable livelihood, and feel secure in their communities in the aftermath of conflict are needed. Given the prevalence of GBV in conflict-affected contexts such as Burundi and Sierra Leone, it should be treated as a significant peacebuilding issue with broader implications for both men and women, and communities as a whole.

Advocating for women's security priorities in the context of security sector reform

Reforming the security sector to produce effective, democratic and accountable actors and institutions is a key component of building sustainable peace. However, attention has only recently focused on the need to integrate gender perspectives into security sector reform (SSR) processes.² Furthermore, the security sector is a traditionally closed sector, which can make it even more difficult for civil society organisations to access information on those involved in the SSR process. Although each country is at a different stage of SSR, the reform processes in both Burundi and Sierra Leone have suffered from some similar shortcomings, partly due to lack of civil society engagement. Women can be particularly vulnerable to violence at the hands of the security sector, and sensitisation is needed to ensure that the police and army are aware of women's human rights and protection needs.

In Burundi, SSR has been largely influenced by external actors, without the participation of the local population, and issues of national security have been prioritised over human security.³ Overall, the reforms have been implemented in a context of high political tension, as there is a rebel movement still active in the country and the general population has an extremely low level of trust in the security forces, which they consider as one of the primary causes of insecurity. A study on women's security priorities conducted in 2007 as part of Alert's project on Operationalising SCR 1325, for example, highlighted the lack of professionalism by security forces and the ongoing rebel movement as two of women's primary concerns, and stressed that the SSR process may not be addressing the root causes of insecurity at the community level.⁴ According to the Burundian participants, the commitments made by the international community to support the SSR process have not always been acted upon.

Although the SSR process in Sierra Leone has had relative success, reforms have only focused on formal state institutions that donors can easily engage with, and have not involved non-state actors until very recently. The consequences of leaving out non-state actors, particularly those that provide services such as security or justice at the community level, can eventually lead to the undermining of the broader SSR process. This can also mean that money is not being allocated where it is needed the most. Participation by people at the local level has also been insufficient, and critical groups have been overlooked or marginalised from the benefits of the SSR process. For example, many female ex-combatants have not been demobilised and have not received psycho-social support, and the socio-economic aspects of reintegration of all ex-combatants have been overlooked.

Civil society organisations can play an important role in addressing security issues, and this can also apply to gender-related priorities. In Sierra Leone, for example, CSOs have complemented the efforts of the international community in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process. In Burundi, they have supported the DDR process and negotiations with rebel movements. However, women's organisations tend to face additional challenges in holding security sector actors accountable and exercising meaningful oversight over SSR processes, as few women's organisations have traditionally engaged with the security sector. As a result, they do not have sufficient technical expertise, capacity and connections, which are key determinants of successful advocacy with security sector actors.

Gender, economic issues and peacebuilding

Women's economic insecurity underlies a number of other forms of insecurity, vulnerability and discrimination and should be addressed by those attempting to improve women's involvement in peacebuilding processes. Understanding the economic causes and consequences of conflict has been a key focus of the peacebuilding community in recent years, but little work has been done to understand the links between gender and economic insecurity in the context of peacebuilding. Similarly, those working with tools such as SCR 1325 have often failed to make the link between women's economic insecurity, or development-related issues more broadly, and their ability to engage in the various aspects of peacebuilding.

Women's economic insecurity and the difficulties they face in participating in productive economic activities are compounded by a number of factors. Illiteracy, traditional practices, discriminatory financial institutions and public policy all contribute to high levels of economic insecurity among women. The school drop-out rate for girls is often high, and poverty, early marriage and pregnancy can all further reduce the future economic independence of women. Lack of access to land, credit and technical training, as well as a lack of adequate childcare facilities, make it very difficult for women to build up productive entrepreneurial activities. As a result, women work mostly for the informal sector and also have the added burden of carrying out unpaid domestic work in the home. Much of the training and support for women that is available is concentrated in urban areas and rural women working in subsistence farming are unable to access the collateral or credit that would enable them to expand their activities. Importantly, there is a lack of disaggregated data in most countries that would enable a deeper understanding of women's contribution to the economy, both formal and informal.

Women's economic insecurity and poverty more generally, are inter-linked with GBV, and can cause women and girls to be in potentially dangerous situations where they are vulnerable to sexual violence and discrimination. Empowering women to be financially independent and providing viable options for income generation can increase their overall personal security.

Microcredit is often turned to as a solution to women's economic insecurity, but it does not always work for all women, and is not necessarily a panacea. In some cases, it can even lead to negative consequences, such as pressure on women to hand over money earned to their husbands and competition in polygamous families. Microloans are an extra resource to boost status in the community rather than an investment, which often makes it difficult to pay back. There are, however, some good examples, such as a microcredit programme being run by NaCSA in Sierra Leone, which gives money to cooperatives rather than individuals and has a 95 percent repayment rate, and projects such as those run by Caisse d'Épargne et de Crédit Mutuel (CECM) and Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE) in Burundi, which benefit Burundian women in both urban and rural areas.

It is important that the barriers that prevent women's engagement in productive activities, particularly in setting up businesses, are addressed. Tax systems can be very complex and the impact of external

interventions on local economic dynamics in conflict-affected contexts is not properly understood. One way to encourage more gender-sensitive responses is to ensure that women's priorities are represented in government budget allocations and in policies such as poverty reduction strategies.

Opportunities or strategies for supporting women's economic empowerment could include women entrepreneurs coming together regionally to exchange expertise, or banks that cater specifically to women by providing them credit on terms that work for them. Essentially, it is necessary to work at two levels. At the project level, microcredit activities need to become more integrated, pairing up psycho-social support with credit and benefiting communities as well as targeting individual women. At the macroeconomic level, advocacy should focus on the inclusion of gender issues into regional and national economic policies and priorities.

Women's political participation

The key question around women's political participation is how to translate legal advancements and increases in women's representation into substantive change in the status of women. Constitutions in all countries in the Great Lakes Region, for example, have quotas for female representation in legislature of at least 30 percent. In Sierra Leone, on the other hand, representation of women in formal political bodies is lower than in the Great Lakes Region. However, important legal advances have been made (e.g. inheritance legislation) that have not yet been seen in countries such as Burundi.

The workshop identified a number of challenges that inhibit substantive participation by women in political institutions. Economic empowerment and literacy are key conditions for political participation. As a result, a large majority of women, as well as men, are excluded from participating in political life at all levels. Those women who do participate in political parties or other public institutions face a number of challenges. Their role is often in the low echelons of the party hierarchies, and only a minority of women are in a position to influence key decisions. Women who make it to positions of power within political institutions, for example as members of parliament, often lack the technical and political support required to undertake their tasks effectively. Gender-based violence, particularly forms of structural discrimination such as the lack of rights for widows or little access to education for women and girls, can also contribute to low levels of engagement or participation by women in formal and informal political spheres.

Table 1: Factors that Influence Women's Political Participation in Burundi and Sierra Leone

Enabling factors	Hindering factors
International legal frameworks (SCR 1325, CEDAW), peace accords and constitutions	Lack of expertise, resources and capacity among women's organisations and female politicians
Dialogue and advocacy with government and political parties	Armed conflict and insecurity
Support for women candidates and politicians by CSOs	Extreme poverty, illiteracy and lack of knowledge
Collaboration in networks	Disillusionment and depoliticisation among women
Awareness-raising campaigns	Pressure by political parties on women candidates and politicians
Women experts acting as resources for the women's movement	Elitist and fragmented women's movement
Shared women's agenda for the elections, common interest across women's movement	Division along political, social and ethnic lines
Support of men	Lack of sustainability of women's political coalitions
Decentralisation of some government functions and civil society activity	Traditional norms and practices

A major concern raised by a number of participants in the workshop was the extent to which women politicians are able to promote gender issues and represent women in general. This disconnect can be identified on at least two levels. First, the relationship between women in politics and women in civil society can be problematic, as their priorities and interests often differ. Second, there is an even wider disconnect between elite women – both in civil society and political institutions – and the rest of the female population, particularly in rural areas. As a result, women in power do not always address gender issues in their work and are therefore not representative of all women in society. This is also partly due to challenges within the political system: women in politics may be faced with a situation in which they cannot speak out about sensitive issues and have to follow the party line. These obstacles and setbacks have resulted in depoliticisation and disillusionment among some women when they have not seen improvements in the short term.

The workshop identified a number of opportunities for increasing substantive participation by women:

- Quotas are an important mechanism that can give women the opportunity to enter political decision making, but these will only work if they are considered as temporary measures rather than long-term solutions to women's marginalisation.
- Decentralisation is another entry point for increasing the quantity and quality of women's representation. As the government's decentralisation process in Sierra Leone continues, there could be increased space for women to access decision-making at the local or district level. In addition to openings in the formal political sphere, in Sierra Leone there are also new women's CSOs coming up at the district level, which do not feel that Freetown-based umbrella groups sufficiently represent them. These new CSOs can be an entry point for women's activism on political issues.
- Men's support is important for programmes that aim to mobilise women to participate politically, particularly given that they are usually the dominant actors in political institutions.
- Women's CSOs can play an important role in trying to bridge the differences between groups of women and improve the chance of substantive political participation by women. One of the participating organisations, ENCISS (see Annex II), for example, has supported women's CSOs in Sierra Leone in putting together a 'women's manifesto' to encourage political parties to take up women's issues and include women in their electoral lists. Since the last elections in 2007, they have set up a 'Women's Election Watch' programme to monitor whether the recommendations of the manifesto are implemented by the new government. ENCISS has continued this work by setting up the 'Honoring Women's Initiatives' programme in early 2008, which serves as a platform for women's electoral campaigns for the forthcoming local elections.
- Training and capacity-building for women political leaders and representatives can also be an effective method of providing them with the leadership, advocacy and technical skills required for effective political participation. Gender sensitivity should also be included in such programmes.

Strategies for advocacy and monitoring of the integration of women's priorities into peacebuilding processes

A key goal of the workshop was to share innovative practices and discuss common challenges around advocating for a gender perspective in peacebuilding policies and monitoring their implementation. Two good practice examples in particular were identified during the workshop:

- In Burundi, women's organisations have undertaken considerable efforts to advocate for a gender perspective in the design and implementation of the *Cadre Stratégique de Consolidation de la Paix*, the strategic peacebuilding framework in Burundi and PBF-funded projects, including through the establishment of monitoring mechanisms.
- In Sierra Leone, women's organisations were instrumental in advocating for and supporting the recent adoption of three pieces of legislation that guarantee women's rights in the contexts of domestic violence, inheritance rights and the registration of customary marriages.

Both of these examples provide important insight into the advocacy and monitoring efforts of women's organisations, and much can be learned through sharing and documenting these experiences. For example, although Sierra Leone and Burundi were allocated US\$35 million each in PBF funds in early 2007, very little has been done by women's organisations around these issues in Sierra Leone in contrast to the extent of activities initiated in Burundi. Similarly, women's organisations in Burundi and beyond can learn from the experience of the movement that campaigned for the new legislation on women's rights in Sierra Leone.

Working with international peacebuilding processes: The Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund

All participants in the workshop underlined the importance of CSOs to be able to take part in international peacebuilding processes, such as the PBC and the PBF. Several challenges have made this difficult and have constrained the effectiveness of the PBC and the PBF. Overall, there is a great deal of confusion and a general lack of information about the processes among governments, local UN institutions and civil society actors. Governments of Sierra Leone and Burundi are often at the heart of the misunderstandings about the roles of the PBC and the PBF, but the UN system has to improve communication and information sharing about the institutions for governments and civil society organisations to maximise the impact of these processes.

A key challenge related to the PBF identified by participants is the fact that PBF funding is relatively small and short term and is intended to be catalysing as part of a strategic longer-term plan. A key frustration among donors and many civil society actors is that projects presented to the PBF are rarely part of a long-term strategic peacebuilding plan. Within this context, civil society can play a role in discussions about strategic peacebuilding priorities and how the PBF can support the achievement of these priorities. The shortcomings associated with the PBC and PBF are often caused by lack of capacity and knowledge of peacebuilding in beneficiary governments and local UN organisations, as well as the heavy demands that are made on governments that have little capacity.

Monitoring Peacebuilding Fund projects from a gender perspective in Burundi

Advocacy and monitoring efforts by Burundian CSOs to incorporate a gender perspective in PBF projects have included the following:

- Alert's partner organisation Dushirehamwe (see Annex II), in collaboration with UNIFEM, mobilised Burundian women's CSOs working on issues related to SCR 1325 into what became a coordinating body of CSOs in this field, the 'Cadre de Coordination et Concertation pour la consolidation de la Paix et la mise en oeuvre de la Resolution 1325' (hereinafter, the *Cadre*). Dushirehamwe was chosen to represent Burundian women's organisations in the joint Steering Committee of the PBF, where they have provided technical advice on and advocated for the inclusion of a gender perspective in the PBF's work.
- Awareness raising has been conducted by CSOs among a wide range of stakeholders about SCR 1325 as well as among grass-roots women about the PBF and the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in Burundi.
- To monitor the implementation of PBF projects, Dushirehamwe set up **local women's groups** across the country, which will monitor how the projects are carried out and the impact they have at the local level. However, the PBF projects have taken a long time to begin due to delay in funding decisions, and many of them have not even started yet.
- Dushirehamwe and the women's CSOs that are members of the *Cadre* have developed **gender-sensitive indicators for each project** that will help to monitor the extent to which they support both women and men equally. Burundian women's organisations have split into thematic working groups and when the PBF Steering Committee makes project documents public, the relevant working group will review them and suggest gender-sensitive indicators.
- Dushirehamwe and the *Cadre* have also developed indicators for the *Cadre Stratégique*, the strategic peacebuilding framework in Burundi, and these have been taken into account in the development of the joint monitoring and tracking mechanism of the *Cadre Stratégique*.

The relative success of incorporating a gender perspective in PBF-funded projects is a result of a combination of coalition-building among a wide variety of Burundian women's groups and other CSOs, alliances with international partners in New York as well as in Burundi, and outreach to women in diverse communities across the country.

In 2007, a representative from Dushirehamwe spoke to high-level officials in New York in an event organised by Alert and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, about the fact that women's representation was absent from the PBF National Steering Committee in Burundi. As a result, Burundian women's organisations were asked to put forward a women's representative for the PBF Steering Committee. Due to information provided and the advocacy of Alert, UNIFEM and others, a door was opened for initial dialogue, feedback and recommendations.

Women's organisations and other CSOs got together to establish a Technical Gender Committee, where expertise in different fields can be drawn upon, requiring policy-makers to recognise the expertise offered by these networks. Consultations with rural women in different parts of the country, on the other hand, confirmed the initial advocacy messages of women's CSOs and gave their advocacy work more legitimacy.

Important obstacles still constrain the work of CSOs advocating for more gender-sensitive peacebuilding projects. Women's CSOs have encountered considerable resistance to and lack of

awareness of gender issues among policy-makers and officials in charge of implementing projects. There is also the potential for additional backlash against women's organisations for engaging in international advocacy that relates to the actions of the government agencies, and even getting their advocacy recognised at the international level can be difficult. Monitoring the implementation of PBF projects is challenging, as women's organisations often lack capacity and women taking part in local monitoring committees rarely have the technical capacity to fully monitor the implementation of PBF projects. Overall, it is a key challenge for women's organisations to raise awareness among grass-roots women about policy issues, legislation and PBF projects.

Table 2: Factors that Influence Monitoring of Peacebuilding Fund Projects in Burundi

Enabling factors	Hindering factors
Gender-sensitive individuals at the local UN agencies SCR 1325 as an advocacy tool	Lack of engagement with civil society by policy-makers and officials
United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) mandate requires gender issues to be taken into account	Potential backlash from the government for engaging in international advocacy
Coalition of a large number of women's organisations with a wide range of expertise	Low institutional and technical capacity of civil society organisations, closely linked to project-based funding
Support by international institutions, such as UNIFEM and International Alert	Lack of technical expertise among local women's groups to carry out local policy monitoring
Legitimacy derived from consultations with rural women	Lack of gender-sensitivity and awareness of SCR 1325 among project officials
Joint advocacy at the international level	Severe delays in the implementation of PBF-funded projects

Advocating for new gender bills in Sierra Leone

Women played an important role in the run up to and during the 2007 elections, which provided a catalyst for the adoption of the three new gender bills in Sierra Leone. There were many women among the National Election Commission members and election officials, and the campaigning led by women's CSOs for a violence-free election and their participation in the electoral process had a calming effect and led to a decrease in political violence. Simultaneously, women's CSOs campaigned for the government to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in full before the elections. As a result of widespread women's mobilisation by women's networks that had been sustained for several years, the previous government fast-tracked three pieces of legislation improving women's legal rights, collectively known in Sierra Leone as the 'gender bills'. The three laws that were adopted were as follows:

- *Law on domestic violence*: The domestic violence law gives family support units in the police the necessary tools to either mediate disputes or to support women who decide to take criminal or civil action when their rights are violated. The law also requires that the government provides temporary safe houses to victims of domestic violence.
- *Law on the registration of customary marriages*: This new legislation requires the registering of customary marriages and divorces and sets a minimum age for marriage of 18. This law provides women with the legal rights in customary marriage, making this a great step forward for rural women in particular, who are less likely to be able to get married or divorced within the formal system.

- *Law on inheritance rights:* The inheritance law ensures that throughout Sierra Leone women have access to the property they are rightfully entitled to when their husband dies, without interference from extended family members.

Now that the three ‘gender bills’ have been adopted by the parliament, a key priority of women’s organisations is to make women, as well as men, aware of these rights and legislation.

Table 3: Factors that Influenced the Adoption of the Gender Bills in Sierra Leone

Enabling factors	Hindering factors
Use of international legislation, such as SCR 1325, by CSOs Successful coalition building by women’s CSOs around the issue of legislative reform Women experts acted as resources for the women’s movement	A disconnect between elite women in the cities and rural women Lack of financial and technical capacity of CSOs, closely linked to project-based funding Poverty and illiteracy among majority of women

Recommendations

The workshop resulted in a number of findings and recommendations that can be built on to ensure enhanced support for women's organisations to monitor and advocate for the inclusion of gender perspectives in peacebuilding processes. Some general findings included the following:

- The constituency for women's advocacy should be broadened out to include a wider range of stakeholders, especially among rural women who have until now been excluded from most civil society activism. This will give women's CSOs more relevance, legitimacy and a stronger mandate.
- Issues discussed at the national level must also be adapted to local contexts where needs and priorities may differ. Local women should have more understanding of and voice in national policy-making processes, such as PRSPs and the work of the PBC.
- Pressure at the international level is important for progress in national-level advocacy, and pursuing both advocacy channels in tandem can result in more significant change on the ground.

Key capacity gaps and other needs among women's CSOs are as follows:

- Lack of monitoring skills, including in the development of gender-sensitive indicators;
- Lack of information about peacebuilding policy processes;
- Lack of institutional and technical capacity among CSOs; and,
- Limited access to decision-makers, particularly those working in security sector institutions.

Specific recommendations for international actors working in Burundi are as follows:

- Provide training to members of the Technical Gender Committee and the *Cadre de Coordination* in the development of gender-sensitive indicators and monitoring techniques;
- Continue to link up international advocacy efforts with the in-country work that Dushirehamwe and their partners are doing;
- Share strategies around the role of CSOs in security sector oversight with women's organisations to enable them to develop appropriate technical expertise and practical steps for engagement;
- Support further research into women's security needs and priorities and build capacity to engage in effective advocacy with security sector actors and institutions on the basis of these priorities;
- Build capacity to campaign effectively for legal reform, including sharing lessons learned from other regions;
- Provide opportunities for more cross-learning about successful strategies undertaken by women CSOs in other contexts to integrate gender-related priorities into post-conflict reform agendas and peacebuilding processes;
- Support women's groups to actively engage in transitional justice processes; and,
- Support women's organisations to carry out monitoring of the integration of gender in the framework of the PRSP.

Specific recommendations for international actors working in Sierra Leone are as follows:

- Support the establishment of a technical committee or network of women's CSOs that can monitor the security sector;
- Train women's CSOs in the development of gender-sensitive indicators and the creation of monitoring mechanisms to oversee the implementation of the PRSP and PBF-funded projects in Sierra Leone;
- Support further research into the economic dimensions of women's insecurity and build capacity of women's CSOs to engage in effective advocacy around women's economic priorities with a range of local, national and international stakeholders;
- Build capacity to enable the creation of a more representative, diverse and inclusive network of women's CSOs throughout Sierra Leone; and,
- Assess the impact of the new gender bills and the SSR process at the community level, to determine the degree to which they are contributing to positive changes in security and access to justice, particularly for women.

ANNEX I: Participating organisations

Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security

The Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security is the parliamentary forum in the UK for the discussion and critical analysis of issues relating to Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

The APG is a unique opportunity for parliamentarians, civil servants and civil society to come together in one forum to debate; to encourage dialogue, on the basis of expert information and opinion from across the political spectrum and civil society, on issues relating to gender and peacebuilding. It particularly focuses on how to promote throughout government UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which highlights the vital role women play in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The Associate Parliamentary Group on Women Peace and Security was officially registered in July 2006 and is chaired by Baroness Uddin.

Cadre de Coordination des Organisations féminines pour la consolidation de la paix

Recognising that gender is not sufficiently integrated into the peacebuilding process and specifically in the framework of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and activities funded by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in Burundi, Dushirehamwe, through the Alert-funded 1325 project, organised an ad hoc technical committee (*Comité Technique Genre*) which evolved into the *Cadre de Coordination*. This *Cadre* comprises 37 organisations who are working together to provide a gender analysis of the PBC strategic framework and the project activities submitted to the joint pilot committee for the PBF in Burundi. The *Comité* has also developed gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring these projects, and in the context of the implementation and monitoring mechanism of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi.

Dushirehamwe

Dushirehamwe is a network of women peace activists that started as an International Alert training project and is now an independent local association. Dushirehamwe has around 125 members who have all been trained as trainers in strategies for addressing conflict and gender relations – skills that they have put into practice in working with female leaders all over the country. It is estimated that the network reaches out to over 7,000 women at the community level. It is gaining increasing national recognition and is often asked to defuse tensions in the community. Women in the network come from a variety of backgrounds including social and community workers, nurses, church members, women working with grass-roots NGOs and teachers – all providing strong linkages with local structures and people.

Current and proposed work by Dushirehamwe includes: assisting the repatriation and reintegration of refugees and displaced people; training women on their rights and responsibilities and on political participation; enabling better linkages to be created between women at the grass-roots level and women decision-makers through regular exchange meetings; identifying critical advocacy issues regarding women's roles in a post-conflict society, and developing an advocacy and monitoring strategy around these issues.

Enhancing Interaction and Interface between Civil Society and the State to Improve Poor People's Lives (ENCISS)

ENCISS exists to increase the capacity of representative civil society organisations to participate in, influence, contribute to and monitor the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the local government policy planning and implementation; and to strengthen the capacity of the Government of Sierra

Leone to engage in constructive dialogue with civil society within these policy frameworks. The focus of ENCISS is to improve the interface between state and non-state actors, and to set the agenda by facilitating its achievement by others. ENCISS works towards:

- Strengthening the voice and ability of genuinely representative civil society organisations such as vendors, farming and traders associations, with particular attention focused on issues of equity and representation;
- Making the application and benefits of the PRS and decentralisation real at household, village and district levels; and,
- Addressing the disconnect that prevails in society at and between every level.

Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS)

Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) is a UK-based network of NGOs working on gender, peace and security issues. It was formally established in May 2006 *‘to build on UNSCR 1325 and, through collective action, to promote, facilitate and monitor the meaningful inclusion of gender perspectives in all aspects of UK policy and practice on peace and security’*.

This is achieved by the collaborative research and advocacy by working group members around key policy instruments, such as UN Security Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the European Parliament Resolution on the Participation of Women in Peaceful Conflict Resolution (2000/2025) and the UK National Action Plan on women, peace and security.

GAPS is a research and advocacy organisation that works to bridge the gap between the realities of women (activists and non-activists) at the local level in conflict and post-conflict affected countries and UK decision-makers and practitioners working on peace and security. GAPS will highlight both practical examples of women’s contributions to peace and reconstruction efforts, as well as strategic ways forward for the implementation of UN SCR 1325 and the UK National Action Plan.

Grass-roots Empowerment for Self Reliance (GEMS)

Grass-roots Empowerment for Self Reliance (GEMS) is a national NGO formed in Sierra Leone in May 1998 to work on peace and security for grass-roots women and youths. The organisation was formed to respond to the worsening plight of grass-roots women as a result of the civil war and to strengthen the efforts of the small number of organisations working with women.

GEMS’ mission is to build the capacity of specifically grass-roots women and youths, empowering them politically, economically and socially to realise their full potential, enabling them to participate in decision-making processes and become self reliant. It hopes to achieve this in two ways: capacity building and advocating for changes to existing systems and structures that prevent the advancement of women and youths. The long-term objectives of GEMS are as follows:

- Work towards a society characterised by political, social and economic empowerment of women and youths, resulting in a change in public mentality that will ensure that transformed women and youths can live in peace, with integrity and respect for human rights;
- Reach the most marginalised group of grass-roots women and youths – those in remote rural communities – and contribute towards building their capacity to meet their needs through political, economic and social empowerment leading to self reliance and stronger communities; and,
- Advocate for changes to the laws, structures and attitudes that would ensure the promotion and protection of women and human rights in Sierra Leone.

ANNEX II: Workshop agenda

February 2008

Monday 25th

- 9.00–10.00 Welcome and introduction to International Alert over coffee (Phil Champaign)
- 10.00–13.00 Strategic planning session 1: Introducing partner organisations' work; Sharing experiences (Facilitator: Ndeye Sow)
- 14.30–17.30 Strategic planning session 2: Identifying key women's peacebuilding priorities (Facilitators: Minna Lyytikainen and Karen Barnes)
- 19.00 Group dinner

Tuesday 26th

- 9.00–12.00 Thematic discussion 1: Security issues and SSR, focusing on civil society oversight of the security sector (Facilitator: Peter Albrecht)
- 12.00–14.00 Brownbag discussion on economic issues and peacebuilding (Facilitators: Canan Gunduz and Diana Klein)
- 14.00–17.00 Thematic discussion 2: Sexual and gender-based violence as a peacebuilding issue (linked to transitional justice) (Facilitator: Karen Barnes)

Wednesday 27th

- 9.00–11.30 Open discussion on the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund (Facilitator: Dan Smith)
- 11.30–13.00 Strategic planning session 3: Strategies for advocacy and monitoring of policy processes – The PBC and PRSPs (Facilitator: Ndeye Sow)
- Rest of day: Free

Thursday 28th

- 9.00–15.00 Preparation for GAPS event and meetings with Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DFID) representatives (lunch between meetings)
- 16.00–17.30 GAPS event: 'Civil Society Monitoring of Peacebuilding Processes: Lessons learned from Sierra Leone and Burundi' hosted by the Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security

Friday 29th

- 9.00–12.30 Thematic discussion 3: Women's political participation in conflict-affected regions (Discussant: Regina Saffa; Facilitator: Ndeye Sow)
- 14.00–17.30 Strategic planning session 3: Key priorities of partner organisations and how they can be advocated for at local, national and international levels (Facilitators: Karen Barnes and Minna Lyytikainen)

Endnotes

- 1 See http://www.international-alert.org/our_work/themes/gender_2.php for more details on Alert's project on Operationalising SCR 1325.
- 2 See for example: Megan Bastick and Kristin Valasek (Eds.) (2008). *Gender and Security Sector Reform toolkit*, Geneva: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN-INSTRAW.
- 3 Willy Nindorera (2007). 'Security Sector Reform in Burundi', *CENAP/NSI Working Paper*, Bujumbura: Centre d'Alerte et de Prevention des Conflits and the North-South Institute; Kristiana Powell (2007). 'Security Sector Reform and the protection of civilians in Burundi: Accomplishments, dilemmas and ideas for international engagement', *CENAP/NSI Working Paper*, Ottawa: North-South Institute and Centre d'Alerte et de Prevention des Conflits.
- 4 Concilie Nibigira and Théodora Nisabwe (February 2008). *Les perceptions des femmes sur la sécurité et la réforme du secteur de police*, Bujumbura.

International Alert.

346 Clapham Road, London SW9 9AP, United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0)20 7627 6800, Fax +44 (0)20 7627 6900, Email general@international-alert.org

www.international-alert.org

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