

Women's Political Participation and Influence in Post-Conflict Burundi and Nepal

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Nepali women's organizations demonstrating against violence against women.
Photo: WAPDCA.

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Executive Summary

Since the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in October 2000, there has been growing international recognition of women's role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. However, while implementation of Resolution 1325 is taking root at the international strategic and policy levels, worldwide experience shows that there remain significant barriers to the full integration of a gender perspective in peace and post-conflict processes at the country level. For instance, women's participation in peace negotiations continues to be limited, and women remain underrepresented at all levels of decision-making during the crucial post-conflict reconstruction period.

Based on case studies of two countries that recently emerged from armed internal conflict – Burundi and Nepal – this report examines one fundamental aspect of Resolution 1325: the provisions to increase women's participation in post-conflict decision-making. While Burundi and Nepal display many differences, the two countries present interesting similarities in terms of achievements and challenges in relation to involving women in decision-making following the end of armed conflict. For example, women in both countries have traditionally been barred from access to public and political life, and during the Burundian and Nepali peace processes no woman took part in the formal negotiations in either country.

This marginalization notwithstanding, Burundi and Nepal stand out in their efforts to advance women's involvement in national politics following the end of armed conflict. Introduction of mechanisms for affirmative action prior to the first post-conflict elections in each of the two countries led women to obtain close to one-third of the seats in their respective legislatures. Women in civil society have also been heralded for their mobilization and efforts throughout the peace and post-conflict process in both countries, and women's organizations have been an important driving force behind women's engagement in political life and the promotion of provisions stipulated in Resolution 1325.

These positive achievements, however, should not blind us to the many remaining challenges that impede women's effective participation in decision-making in Burundi and Nepal. Even though women's representation in political institutions has substantially increased, entrenched patriarchal norms, gender inequality and discriminatory practices continue to limit the ability of women to participate in and influence political decision-making in both countries. And although women's organizations have been an effective arena for women's participation in peacebuilding and policy-related activities, their political influence, sustainability and diversity are imperilled by a lack of political will and insecure and inflexible funding regimes.

Drawing on information gathered through interviews with key actors in Burundi and Nepal, this report goes beyond merely numerical aspects of women's participation in decision-making, revealing both progress made and the obstacles that remain for women's effective participation in post-conflict political processes. By identifying cross-cutting issues in Burundi and Nepal, the report also presents general lessons about the prospects and problems of increasing women's political participation, which lay the ground for a set of recommendations for how national and international actors may support and promote women's participation in post-conflict political decision-making both in Burundi and Nepal and in other similar cases.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFJB	Association des Femmes Juristes du Burundi
CA	Constituent Assembly
CAFOB	Collectif des Associations Féminines du Burundi
CNDD–FDD	Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie – Forces pour la défense de la démocratie
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPN-M	Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist
CSO	civil society organization
FWLD	Forum for Women, Law and Development
FRODEBU	Front pour la démocratie au Burundi
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDEA	International Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance
LPC	local peace committee
MP	member of parliament
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OAG	Observatoire de l’Action Gouvernementale
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
SPPDF	Synergie des partenaires pour la promotion des droits de la femme
SOFEBA	Solidarité Femmes Parlementaires
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIN	United Nations Mission to Nepal
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UPRONA	Union pour le progrès national
WAPPDCA	Women’s Association for Peace, Participatory Democracy and the Constituent Assembly
WATCH	Women Acting Together for Change
WHR	Women for Human Rights

1. Introduction

Since the unanimous adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in October 2000 (*hereafter* Resolution 1325),¹ there has been increasing interest in women's role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. As the first of its kind, Resolution 1325 recognized the relevance of gender in peace and security matters, and mandated all United Nations member-states to ensure full participation of women at all levels of decision-making in conflict resolution and peace processes. It also called for the protection of women and girls against violence during and after conflict, and for the adoption of a gender perspective to prevent and mitigate impacts of conflict on women. While progress has been made in implementing these provisions, particularly at international strategic and policy levels, worldwide testimonies show that translating the goals of Resolution 1325 into reality in conflict-affected countries remains a challenge.

The purpose of this report is to examine achievements and challenges related to implementing one particular aspect of Resolution 1325: the provisions for increased participation of women in post-conflict decision-making.² Through case studies of two countries that recently emerged from armed internal conflicts – Burundi and Nepal – the report examines the extent to which women have been able to participate effectively in national political decision-making after the end of conflict. While Burundi and Nepal display many differences and find themselves at differing stages of the post-conflict peace process, the two countries present interesting cases of achievements and obstacles related to involving women in decision-making. In both countries, women have traditionally been barred from access to public and political life, and during their respective peace processes no woman took part in the formal negotiations. This traditional marginalization of women from decision-making notwithstanding, Burundi and Nepal stand out in their efforts to advance women's involvement in national politics following the end of armed conflict. Since the country's first post-conflict elections in 2005, Burundi's parliament and government have had 30% female representation, while women have made up more than one-third of the Constituent Assembly in Nepal since 2008. This puts both countries ahead of most industrialized democracies in terms of women's presence in formal political institutions.³ In addition, both are notable for the large numbers of women engaged in women's civil society organizations, which have been lauded for their mobilization and efforts throughout the peace and post-conflict political processes in the two countries.

These achievements notwithstanding, a number of challenges remain to be addressed if women in Burundi and Nepal are to be fully able to participate effectively in political

¹ UNSC 2000. Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th Meeting (S/RES/1325 (31 October 2000)). For the full text of the resolution, see the Appendix to this report.

² This includes Provision 1, which urges all UN member-states 'to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict', and Provision 8b, which calls on all actors involved to adopt 'measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements.'

³ Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 2010a. 'Women in National Parliaments.'

decision-making. The aim of this report is thus to go beyond the merely numerical aspects of women's political participation, and not only to discuss the progress that has been made but more importantly to reveal the obstacles that remain for women's effective participation in post-conflict decision-making. What steps have women taken to gain political participation and influence? What challenges have they faced? And to what extent have their initiatives and interests been addressed by main political actors in the post-conflict period? By identifying and documenting cross-cutting issues in the two case studies, the study also seeks to draw more general lessons that could serve to deepen our understanding about the prospects and problems of increasing women's participation in post-conflict decision-making processes in Burundi, Nepal and other comparable cases.

1.1 Method and Definitions

The study makes use of qualitative methodologies and builds primarily on testimonies from first-hand interviews conducted during two field visits to Nepal (10 September–10 October 2009) and Burundi (15 November–13 December 2009), in addition to a review of existing literature. In both Burundi and Nepal, the majority of the fieldwork was conducted in the capitals (Bujumbura and Kathmandu, respectively). The interviews were qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured and open-ended, and were used to gather information from a range of relevant actors about their perspectives on women's participation in the two countries' post-conflict political processes. A chain-referral sampling method was used, and in both field sites informants included representatives from a variety of women's groups and networks, other civil society organizations (CSOs), official government institutions, political parties, the United Nations, and international nongovernmental organizations operating in the two countries.⁴

The terms 'women's political participation' and 'women's organizations and networks' are frequently used throughout the report and hence need some clarification. In this study, a relatively broad definition of 'women's political participation' is adopted. It not only encompasses the extent to which women are represented in, participate in and influence national political decision-making, but also includes women's political mobilization and participation through civil society organizations. The term 'women's organizations and networks' refers to a wide range of civil society movements that have identified women as the primary constituency that they are mobilizing, and that have built organizational and/or political strategies around concerns of women. There is a wide spectrum of women's organizations in Burundi and Nepal, ranging from small grassroots organizations to more established organizations and networks at the national and regional levels.⁵ As this report

⁴ Owing to the sensitivity of some of the issues addressed, the interviews were not recorded, but the researcher took extensive notes during and immediately after the interviews. For the same reason, the names and affiliations of most of the informants are omitted throughout the report. In total, 90 interviews were conducted. Translation was used during most of the interviews in Burundi, and to a lesser degree in Nepal.

⁵ Central goals of women's organizations in conflict and post-conflict situations often relate to issues of special concern for women (such as gender equality, women's cultural status, legal rights, security, education, political representation and economic standing). Yet, it is important to bear in mind that 'women' is not a single category. As with most other social groups, women's interests vary extensively across time and space, and the interests that they mobilize around may differ substantially and be divided along ethnic, religious and socio-economic lines (Beckwith 2005, p. 583; Belloni 2008, p. 183; Söderberg Jacobsen 2004, p. 14).

looks primarily at women's participation in and influence on national post-conflict decision-making, the women's organizations of main interest are those that are engaged in political advocacy at the national level.

1.2 Structure of the Report

To provide a background for the importance of women's participation in post-conflict political decision-making, the report begins with a brief overview of former findings and existing international policies on the topic. The following two sections examine women's participation in political decision-making, first in Burundi and then in Nepal. Each section starts with a background on the political status and role of women. An account of the nature, extent and influence of women's involvement in political decision-making then follows – first discussing women's participation and influence in formal politics, and then examining their political participation through civil society, which provides an alternative channel for political influence. Key lessons from the two case studies are then presented, before the report ends with some concluding remarks and a set of recommendations for how national and international actors may support and promote women's participation in political decision-making in Burundi, Nepal and other similar cases.

2. Women and Post-Conflict Decision-Making

2.1 Why Involve Women?

Various studies have argued that the immediate post-conflict context presents new opportunities for strengthening women's participation in politics.⁶ It is held that during the chaos of an armed conflict, traditional gender structures often shift and provide a new window of opportunity, which can give women more space for involvement in various aspects of peacebuilding and decision-making. Women are affected parties, victims, survivors and wagers of armed conflict, and thus have a major stake both in the resolution of conflict and in future political developments. Women's participation in post-conflict decision-making can thus be valuable for a variety of reasons:

First, women constitute 50% or more of the population and their contribution in post-conflict decision-making can be essential for fostering a broad popular mandate for peace and democracy. Full and equal participation by both women and men in political decision-making provides a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society, and may as such enhance the legitimacy of political processes by making them more democratic and responsive to the concerns and perspectives of all segments of society.⁷

Second, numerous studies have shown that, through their different experiences, insights, approaches and points of view, women can contribute to broadening political debates by redefining political priorities and providing new perspectives on political issues.⁸ As Rachel Mayanja, the Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, has pointed out, 'Women's participation enriches the process, as women are likely to put gender issues on the agenda, set different priorities and possibly bridge the political divide more effectively.'⁹ In the immediate post-conflict period, priorities for future political activities are often identified, and without the participation of women in political decision-making, women's needs, concerns and contributions run the risk of being overlooked.

⁶ See, for instance: Anderlini, Sanam Naraghi, 2007. *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters*. London: Lynne Rienner; Sørensen, Birgitte, 1998. 'Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Issues and Sources.' WSP Occasional Paper No. 3, June 1998. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development: Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies; Tripp, Aili Mari, Isabel Casimiro, Joy Kwesiga, and Alice Mungwa, 2009. *African Women's Movements: Changing Political Landscapes*. New York: Cambridge University Press; pp. 5-6.

⁷ Bouta, Tsjeard, Georg Frerks, and Ian Bannon, 2005. *Gender, Conflict, and Development*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank, p. 52; UNIFEM, 2005. 'Securing the Peace: Guiding the International Community towards Women's Effective Participation throughout Peace Processes,' p.3.

⁸ Chinkin, Christine, 2003. 'Peace Agreements as a Means for Promoting Gender Equality and Ensuring Participation of Women.' Paper prepared for the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) Expert Group Meeting, Ottawa Canada, 10-13 November 2003, pp. 9-10; ISS, 2009. 'Bringing Women into Government.' *Strategies for Policymakers* No.1 March 2009, p.2; Porter, Elisabeth, 2003. 'Women, Political Decision-making, and Peace-Building.' *Global Change, Peace & Security* 15(3), p. 250.

⁹ Mayanja, Rachel, 2010. 'Armed Conflict and Women - 10 Years of Security Council Resolutin 1325.' UN Chronicle.

Third, roles taken by and given to women during a post-conflict process may set the stage for women to gain experience and visibility that can be used in political institutions in the future, thus enhancing the gender inclusiveness of the regime. During the immediate post-conflict period, future power-relations are cemented and new constitutions laying the groundwork for the introduction of new political structures and institutions are often drafted. Women's participation in this process may, accordingly, lead to long-term advances for women's political empowerment.¹⁰

2.2 International Policies on Women's Political Participation

The rights of women to participate in political decision-making are enshrined in many international treaties and laws. Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is heralded as being the first Security Council resolution that officially recognizes the importance of women's inclusion in decision-making in peace and post-conflict processes. Yet, Resolution 1325 followed on from decades of earlier milestones and political advances that recognized the need for a global strategy to advance women's rights.¹¹

The equal participation of women and men in public and political life was one of the cornerstones of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),¹² which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and came into force in 1981. Today, 186 countries are parties to CEDAW, and hence bound to take appropriate measures to promote women's participation in decision-making and leadership positions. In 1995, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, engendered renewed pressure for the implementation of the CEDAW provisions. The conference resulted in a non-binding document, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,¹³ which emphasized the need to improve women's access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making, and exhorted all governments to adopt affirmative-action measures to ensure that women made up at least 30% of all representatives in national parliaments.

What makes Resolution 1325 distinct from these previous advances is that it provides the first legal and political international framework that recognizes the role of women in armed conflict and peacebuilding. The resolution goes beyond the historical image of women as exclusively victims of war, and acknowledges women's role as participating peacemakers, peacebuilders and negotiators. The text of the resolution's 18 provisions is wide-ranging and calls upon all UN member-states, the Security Council, the Secretary-General and non-state actors to take action in three interconnected areas: increasing the participation of women at all levels of decision-making; adopting gender perspectives and training to prevent and

¹⁰ Chinkin 2003, p. 25; UNIFEM 2005, p. 2; Sørensen 1998, p. 13.

¹¹ For example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1985), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Commission on the Status of Women's report on Women and Armed Conflict (1998), and the Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Declaration and Platform for Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations (2000); see Black 2009, p. 8.

¹² Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/> (accessed 20 April 2010).

¹³ Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/> (accessed 20 April 2010).

mitigate the impacts of conflict on women; and protecting women and girls from violence during and after conflict.

Accordingly, Resolution 1325 provides an important step in advancing women's rights to participation in politics and decision-making. The resolution recognizes not only 'the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building' but also stresses 'the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution'. Another groundbreaking aspect of Resolution 1325 is that it officially endorses the inclusion of civil society groups in peace processes, and calls on all actors involved in such processes to adopt mechanisms supporting local women's peace initiatives. This is the first time that non-state actors have been acknowledged under international law to have a right to be included in peace processes, through their right to claim their space and voice their views on peace and security matters.¹⁴

2.3 Diverging Policies and Practices

In the nearly ten years that have passed since the adoption of Resolution 1325, there has been growing international recognition of women's rights to participate both in peace negotiations and in post-conflict decision-making.¹⁵ Progress has also been made in terms of implementing the resolution's provisions. At the time of writing, 18 countries had developed national action plans for putting Resolution 1325 into practice.¹⁶ Moreover, issues of gender in development and peacebuilding have become a high priority within the international donor community,¹⁷ with gender mainstreaming coming increasingly to the forefront in the engagements of the UN and other international actors in peace and reconciliation processes. However, while the implementation of Resolution 1325 is increasingly taking root at these international strategic and policy levels, much remains to be done at the country level to mainstream gender perspectives in peace and decision-making processes. As Sanam Naraghi Anderlini reflects, implementing the resolution's provisions 'remains an uphill battle against business as usual',¹⁸ and the Commission on the Status of Women reports that there is a continued lack of equal participation of women in all areas of decision-making.¹⁹

Most of the national action plans that have been adopted so far have been in Western countries, and in most states affected by armed conflict there is still a long way to go before

¹⁴ Anderlini 2007, pp. 7, 72.

¹⁵ Tryggestad, Torunn L., 2009. 'Trick or Treat? The UN and Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.' *Global Governance* 15, pp. 539-557.

¹⁶ Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Liberia, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Uganda and the United Kingdom.

¹⁷ For instance, many international organizations have adopted strategic documents for gender mainstreaming in their programmes, such as the 'DAC Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment,' which were adopted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in 2008, and 'Integrating Gender into the World Bank's Work: A Strategy for Action,' which was adopted by the World Bank in 2002.

¹⁸ Anderlini 2007, p. 73.

¹⁹ Commission on the Status of Women, 2009. 'Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels: Moderator's Summary.' Commission on the Status of Women, 53rd session, 2-13 March 2009, p. 4.

women are fully integrated in peace and post-conflict political processes. Women's participation in decision-making, both during and after peace negotiations, continues to be limited. This pattern was, for instance, clearly reflected in a recent study by the United Nations Development Fund for Women that showed that women, on average, comprise fewer than 10% of all participants in peace negotiations and fewer than 2% of the signatories to peace agreements.²⁰ Furthermore, although several countries emerging from conflict have adopted constitutions that grant women equal political rights and guaranteed political representation, women remain underrepresented in decision-making bodies at all levels in the crucial post-conflict reconstruction period.²¹ As a response to this worrying trend, the UN Security Council adopted a follow-up resolution to Resolution 1325 in October 2009, calling for renewed attention to women's role in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, and further underlining the need for states to take measures to improve and enhance women's participation in post-conflict decision-making.²²

However, while women often are completely excluded from formal peace negotiations and only marginally represented in political decision-making structures, experience in various conflict-affected countries shows that women often participate vigorously in informal peacebuilding and policy-related activities.²³ Women are active in community peacebuilding, and through women's organizations and networks they work collaboratively across ethnic and religious lines to make valuable contributions to peace both during and after conflict. In order to grasp the scope and impact of women's political participation in post-conflict contexts, it is thus vital to look not only at women's participation within the conventional political arena, but also at their activity in civil society, which forms an alternative arena for women's political participation and influence.²⁴

Both Burundi and Nepal are parties to the three most relevant policy frameworks regarding women's rights to participate in political decision-making: CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and Resolution 1325. The two countries have thus committed themselves both to eliminating political discrimination of women and to ensuring women's access to and full participation in political structures and decision-making. As will be discussed in the following two sections, Burundi and Nepal are societies with deeply engrained gender inequality, where women traditionally have been marginalized from public and political life. In the past few years, however, both countries have made significant advances to enable women's involvement in political decision-making. How have women been able to make their way into political and public life in these societies, which are otherwise not renowned for gender equality? To what extent have women been able to participate effectively within the political realm, and what have been the main obstacles to their political participation and influence? These are some of the main issues that will be

²⁰ UNIFEM, 2009a. 'Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence.' Ongoing research.

²¹ UNSC, 2009a. 'Women and Peace and Security.' Report of the Secretary-General, 16 September, 2009.

²² UNSC, 2009b. *Security Council Resolution 1889 on Women and Girls in Post-conflict Situations*. Adopted by the Security Council at its 6196th Meeting (S/RES/1889 (5 October 2009)).

²³ See for instance: Anderlini, Sanam Naraghi, 2000. 'Women at the Peace Table: Making a Difference.' UNIFEM; Bouta et al. 2005, pp. 66-69; Porter 2003, p. 246; Sørensen 1998, pp. 6-11.

²⁴ Waylen, Georgina, 2007. *Engendering Transitions: Women's Mobilization, Institutions, and Gender Outcomes*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.5.

addressed in the following two sections, first in relation to Burundi and then in the context of Nepal.

3. Burundi

Burundi is a small, resource-poor and conflict-ridden country of some nine million people, located in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Since its independence from Belgium in 1962, Burundi has been riddled with chronic tension and violence, and in 2005 the country emerged from an ethnically motivated civil war, which since 1994 had pitted the Tutsi-dominated government army against several Hutu-based rebel groups.²⁵ During the war, the civil population was used both as a target and as a shield by the government army and the rebels, and the government's failure to prosecute human rights violations nurtured a culture of impunity, allowing both Hutu and Tutsi groups to commit crimes, which predominantly were directed towards civilians.²⁶ Women were by large the most disproportionately affected group during the civil war. Targeted for their role in reproducing the ethnic group to which they belonged, women and girls were subjected to rape and other forms of sexual abuse by government soldiers and rebels alike.²⁷ As more men than women were killed, jailed or joined the rebel movements during the war, a number of women also became single heads of households, left with the sole responsibility to ensure their families' survival in harsh socio-economic conditions.²⁸ Yet, during the conflict, women took on new roles in the domestic and public spheres, roles that Burundian society had not ascribed to them previously. Moreover, many women played a vital role in peacebuilding, and worked actively to build inter-ethnic relationships between Hutu and Tutsi women at the grassroots level.²⁹ After a protracted process of negotiations, all the rebel groups eventually signed ceasefire agreements with the government, and the 2005 elections marked a symbolic end to a civil war that had lasted for more than a decade.



Figure 1. Map of Burundi

²⁵ The Burundian civil war represents one of the most intractable conflicts in Africa. While exact measures of the human tragedy are hard to obtain, it is estimated to have caused the deaths of over 300,000 people, and to have displaced another 1.3 million (Sullivan 2005, p.78). For detailed analyses of the Burundian civil war, see Daley 2006; Lemarchand 2009; and Reyntjens 2000.

²⁶ Ndikumana, Leonce, 2000. 'Towards a Solution to Violence in Burundi: A Case for Political and Economic Liberalisation.' *Journal of Modern African Studies* 38(3), p. 436; Daley, Patricia, 2006. 'Ethnicity and Political Violence in Africa: The Challenge to the Burundi State.' *Political Geography* 25, p. 669.

²⁷ Tripp, Aili Mari, 2005. 'Empowering Women in the Great Lakes Region: Violence, Peace and Women's Leadership.' *Social and Human Science Papers in Women's Studies/Gender Research*, no. 3. France: UNESCO, p.3.

²⁸ Reyntjens, Filip, 2000. 'Burundi: Prospects for Peace.' *Minority Rights Group International Report*, p.20.

²⁹ Ndimurukundu-Kururu, Barbara, 2005. 'Le rôle des femmes dans la reconstruction post-conflit: expériences et leçons retenues du Burundi.' Paper presented at gender consultation on 'Empowering women in the Great Lakes Region: Violence, peace and women's leadership,' Addis Ababa, June 2005, p.2; Watt, Nigel, 2008. *Burundi: Biography of a Small African Country*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 117-8.

3.1 Background on Women's Political Status and Role in Burundi

As in most other parts of Africa, women are a massively disadvantaged group in Burundi. Women's social status and role are to a large extent shaped by a patriarchal set of norms,³⁰ which subordinates them to their fathers or husbands, and relegates their role to the domestic sphere.³¹ Women also make up the group that is most affected by poverty, and women's lack of inheritance rights both restricts their access to property and weakens their opportunities for economic and social independence. Moreover, despite the end of the civil war, women continue to suffer from a widespread problem of gender-based violence,³² which further limits their participation in society, as fear of violence circumscribes their freedom of movement and expression. Thus, despite a reformation of laws, practices and institutions to guarantee gender equality in recent years,³³ women continue to be a socially, economically and politically marginalized group in Burundi.

While having enjoyed the right to vote and to stand for election since the country's first democratic elections in 1961, Burundian women have traditionally been excluded from political life. As Bentley & Southall indicate, politics is 'an overwhelmingly male preserve',³⁴ and with the remarkable exception of Sylvie Kinigi, who served as prime minister of Burundi from 1993 to 1994, women's political representation in national and local decision-making institutions has until recently been negligible.³⁵

The Struggle for Political Representation

Notable changes in women's political role were initiated during the peace negotiations, which took place in Arusha, Tanzania, between 1998 and 2000. When the negotiations started, no women were invited to the peace table. While women's groups mobilized and demanded representation, they were rejected by the negotiating parties, who stated that women had no right to participate in the talks owing to their low representation in decision-making bodies both prior to and during the war.³⁶ However, as a result of persistent pressure from women, the negotiators eventually relented and granted seven women permanent observer status at the talks. In this capacity, these women were able to follow the negotiations, lobby political leaders and report back to the women's movement on news and

³⁰ Literally, 'patriarchy' means 'the rule of the father,' but more generally the concept refers to 'a society ruled and dominated by men over women' (Agbalajobi 2010, p. 78).

³¹ Sebudandi, Christophe, 2007. 'Pratiques et coutumes discriminatoires à l'égard de la femme au Burundi: Transformer le patriarcat, donner la parole à la femme.' Bujumbura: Dushirehamwe.

³² For instance, it is estimated that 19% of adolescent girls and women have been victims of sexual violence (UNFPA 2006:2). A centre for victims of sexual violence in Bujumbura relates that there has been a gradual increase in the number of reported cases of rape in the past few years. Domestic violence also remains widespread (Pézar and Tessières 2009, pp. 76-77).

³³ For instance, in 2003 Burundi adopted a national gender policy, and in 2005 it passed a new constitution that affirms the equality of all citizens before the law and stipulates that nobody should be subjected to gender-based exclusion or discrimination.

³⁴ Bentley, Kristina A., and Roger Southall, 2005. *An African Peace Process: Mandela, South Africa and Burundi*. Cape Town: HSRC Press, p. 153.

³⁵ For instance, after the 1993 and 2001 elections women held less than 10% of the seats in the National Assembly (IPU 2010b; Tripp 2005, pp. 6-8).

³⁶ Anderson, Miriam J., 2010. 'Transnational Feminism and Norm Diffusion in Peace Processes: The Cases of Burundi and Northern Ireland.' *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 4(1), p. 4; Tripp 2005, p. 11.

developments in the peace process, so that the women's movement could plan its lobbying strategies accordingly.³⁷

With support from UNIFEM and the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation, an All-Party Burundi Women's Peace Conference was organized just over a month before the signing of a peace agreement in August 2000.³⁸ The conference aimed to represent all of Burundi's women, with 50 participants drawn from political parties, women's organizations, refugee groups and Burundi's internally displaced women.³⁹ The result of the conference was a declaration in which the women urged the negotiating parties to adopt a gender perspective in all issues raised during the talks, and to guarantee women 30% representation in the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of government, and in all bodies created by the peace agreement.⁴⁰ As a result of relentless lobbying and backing from international actors, most of the women's recommendations were ultimately recognized and incorporated into the peace agreement. These included a call for the elimination of all laws that discriminated against women, an end to impunity for gender-based violence, recognition of the right of women to own property and land, and equal access to education for girls.⁴¹ However, the negotiators adamantly argued that there were insufficient qualified women to hold political office. They accordingly refused to guarantee women's representation in future decision-making bodies and limited themselves to including a stipulation to pursue 'gender balance' in public institutions.⁴²

In November 2001, a transitional government was installed, its main task being the drafting of a new constitution. The rejection of the 30% quota was evident in the new political institutions. Women were granted 4 out of 26 ministerial positions (15.3%), 17 out of 186 seats in the National Assembly (9.1 %), and 10 out of 54 seats in the newly established Senate (18.5 %). With support from UNIFEM and national and local women's organizations, women representatives in these political institutions continued to pressure for increased women's political representation during the interim period. Combined with intense advocacy and awareness-raising on women's political rights, these efforts brought results, and the calls for guaranteed representation in decision-making bodies were eventually accepted and incorporated into the new post-transitional Constitution.⁴³

³⁷ Anderlini 2000, p. 21; Burke, Enid de Silva, Jenifer Klot, and Ikaweba Bunting, 2001. *Engendering Peace: Reflections on the Burundi Peace Process*. Nairobi:UNIFEM, p. 13; UNIFEM, 2006b. 'Beyond Numbers: Supporting Women's Political Participation and Promoting Gender Equality in Post-Conflict Governance in Africa,' p.31.

³⁸ See the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, signed in August 2000. Available at: <http://www.usip.org/resources/peace-agreements-burundi> (accessed 21 April 2010).

³⁹ Nduwimana, Françoise, n.d. 'United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security: Understanding the Implications, Fulfilling the Obligations.' Background report prepared for the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, pp. 82-3.

⁴⁰ Tripp et al. 2009, pp. 211-2.

⁴¹ Anderson 2010, pp. 4-5; Ogunsanya, Kemi, 2007. 'Women Transforming Conflicts in Africa: Descriptive Studies from Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Sudan,' ACCORD Occasional Paper Series 2(3), p. 30; Tripp 2005, p. 11.

⁴² UNIFEM 2006b, p. 32.

⁴³ OAG, 2008. 'Evaluation de la mise en application des mesures prises par le Gouvernement pour l'intégration de la femme dans les sphères de prise de décision.' Bujumbura, October 2008, p. 23; UNIFEM 2006b, pp. 32-33.

As a result, the Constitution,⁴⁴ which was approved through a referendum in February 2005, was revolutionary in the sense that it called for the large-scale entry of women into mainstream politics. The Constitution stipulated that there should be a minimum of 30% female representation in the government, the National Assembly and the Senate (Art. 129, 164, 180), but also included provisions regarding party lists for elections, requiring that at least one of every four candidates should be a woman. Since this would only guarantee 25% women's representation, an additional clause was included, allowing party leaders to co-opt from their lists women who had not won a seat in order to meet the 30% quota (Art. 164).

3.2 Women's Participation in Formal Post-Conflict Decision-Making

During the summer of 2005, Burundi held four rounds of democratic elections,⁴⁵ which gave a resounding victory to the largest rebel group during the civil war⁴⁶ and hence were regarded as marking the end of the country's eleven-year civil war. The elections clearly indicated that the women's movement's struggle to improve the participation of women in politics had brought results. A considerable number of women participated in the electoral process – as polling station agents, election monitors, voters, campaigners and candidates.⁴⁷ As fewer than the required minimum of women were elected, 12 and 9 women were co-opted to the National Assembly and the Senate, respectively, giving women 36 out of 118 seats in the National Assembly (30.5 %), and 17 of a total of 49 seats in the Senate (34.7 %).⁴⁸ Women were also rewarded with 7 out of 20 government posts (35%). These women attained prominent positions in the government and were appointed to lead ministries that previously had been the exclusive domain of men, such as the Ministry of Foreign Relations and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Planning of Development and National Reconstruction. For the first time in its history, Burundi also got a female Vice-President of the Republic, a female Speaker of Parliament, and two women as First and Second Vice-Presidents of the Senate.⁴⁹

The 2005 Constitution did not specify any required minimum for the level of women's representation in other government institutions, including local government. Yet, the numbers of elected women also increased somewhat at the local level, albeit not to the same extent as in the national institutions. Women won 5% of the positions as chief of collines, got 22% representation in communal councils, and were appointed to 4 out of a total of 17 provincial governor positions. In other public institutions, however, which did not

⁴⁴ See République du Burundi, 2005. *Constitution Interimaire Post-Transition de la République du Burundi*. Available at: http://www.senat.bi/documents/constitution_bdi_francais.pdf (accessed 21 April 2010).

⁴⁵ Municipal elections were held on 3 June 2005, elections to the National Assembly on 4 July 2005, and indirect elections for the Senate on 29 July 2005, while the indirect election of the president took place in a joint session of the National Assembly and the Senate on 19 August 2005 (Lemarchand 2009, pp. 170-1).

⁴⁶ The Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie – Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD–FDD), which subsequently, and as stipulated in the Constitution, formed a coalition government with the two other parties that had gained more than 5% of the vote in the legislative elections, Union pour le progrès national (UPRONA) and Front pour la démocratie au Burundi (FRODEBU) (Falch 2009, p. 11).

⁴⁷ Nduwimana, n.d, p. 82; Tripp 2005, p. 7.

⁴⁸ IPU, 2010b. 'IPU Parline Database.' Available at: <http://www.ipu.org/parline/parlinesearch.asp> (accessed: 21 April, 2010).

⁴⁹ OAG 2008, p. 46; UNIFEM 2006b, p. 35.

have any legally binding minimum level for women's representation, women continued to be underrepresented.⁵⁰

Women's Ability To Exercise Influence

Nearly five years have passed since women's unprecedented entry into Burundi's political institutions. Since then, the country has gone through a turbulent political period. Problems between the Parliament and the government have at times paralyzed the exercise of government functions, and the failure of political leaders to find compromise solutions has led to a highly dysfunctional government, distrust and instability.⁵¹ Yet, although some women in political office have changed or left their positions,⁵² women still occupy several important positions in national political institutions, and the 30% quota has largely been upheld and respected in the National Assembly, the Senate and the government since the 2005 elections. However, while acknowledging the symbolic importance of women's presence in these political institutions, most of the people interviewed for this study expressed the view that numerical levels of women's representation do not reflect women's ability to participate effectively in Burundian politics. This situation can be ascribed to several factors:

First, while most of the interviewed male political leaders asserted that women are free to join their parties, and that there are no restrictions on women with regard to participating and taking on leadership positions in those parties, most other respondents argued that Burundi's political party culture is not conducive to women's active participation and expression of their issues of concern. According to Burundian culture, women are not expected to talk in public, and those who do so risk being stigmatized for behaving inappropriately. Several respondents thus argued that political leaders are resistant to letting women speak up and engage in political discussions, and female party members often appear to be subordinate to their male colleagues. A female member of parliament (MP) held that there are only a handful of women in the Parliament that are proactive and dare to speak up about issues of concern to them in political discussions, while a human rights activist similarly asserted,

*Women have no voice inside the political parties. The political parties threaten women members that they will be removed from their positions if they say something that is not in line with the party. Therefore, they cannot speak out and fight for their issues of interest.*⁵³

Second, women's effective participation in politics is limited by the apparent tendency to exclude women from decision-making positions and forums. While women's representation in higher echelons of party structures has increased somewhat following the introduction of

⁵⁰ OAG, 2009. 'Analyse de l'implication de la femme dans la prise de décision au niveau local.' Bujumbura, September 2009, pp. 3-4, 39.

⁵¹ For more information on political developments after the 2005 elections, see: Falch, Åshild, 2009. 'Towards Durable Democracy in Burundi? An Assessment of the Promise and Pitfalls of Democratization in Burundi.' Oslo: PRIO Paper, and ICG, 2008. 'Burundi: Restarting Political Dialogue.' Africa Briefing No.53. Nairobi/Brussels: 19 August 2008.

⁵² For instance, the female President of the National Assembly and the Second Vice-President of the Republic were replaced (by men) in 2007.

⁵³ Author interview, Bujumbura, November 2009.

legal requirements for a minimum of 25% women in central party committees,⁵⁴ the leadership of the major political parties is still almost exclusively a male domain. As a female MP explained,

*Decisions in political parties are usually taken by a small group of men behind closed doors, and women have to wait for their male leadership to take its decisions before voting in the Parliament.*⁵⁵

According to respondents from civil society and international organizations, there is resistance towards having women in leadership positions in the political parties, and as the majority of leaders of political parties and members of the central party committees are men, they tend to favour other men for higher positions when they are compiling electoral lists.⁵⁶ Thus, few women figure in leadership positions within the political parties, and out of the 43 officially recognized political parties in Burundi, only two have a female leader.⁵⁷ For most women MPs, their leadership energies are thus to a large extent limited to their participation in their parties' women's wings. Women parliamentarians have also established two cross-party women's organizations – the Solidarité Femmes Parlementaires (SOFEBA) and the Association des Femmes Burundaises pour la Paix Deputé à l'Assemblée Nationale – but divisions along political lines have made it difficult for these organizations to identify a common agenda around which they might have exerted political pressure throughout the post-conflict period.

A third issue that affects women's role in politics is the tendency to regard women as illegitimate politicians. Since political candidates are either elected through closed party lists or appointed through co-optation, many women (and men) politicians do not have their own political constituency or agenda, and thus feel bound to be loyal to their political leadership. Many women, and especially those who were co-opted (and not elected) after the 2005 elections, thus appear as 'tokens' rather than agents for change inside Burundi's political institutions. This has led to a widespread belief that women in political office have only been put there to fill quotas, and not as a result of political will to have more women in decision-making.

Lack of economic independence, time constraints due to dual domestic and professional responsibilities, and limited education and training are other factors that inhibit women's effective political participation and advancement in Burundi. Electoral campaigns are costly, and in order to reach the top of a party's electoral list a candidate must be able to pay for his or her own campaign. Women often lack adequate resources to pay for a campaign, and as one female MP asserted, 'no matter how competent a woman politician is, if she cannot pay for the electoral campaign, she will not be put on the top of the list.'⁵⁸ Furthermore, as

⁵⁴ In 2008, women's representation in the executive committees of the parties represented in the National Assembly was as follows: 33.3% in CNDD–FDD, CNDD and MRC; 16.67 % in FRODEBU; and 17.39 % in UPRONA (OAG 2008, p. 40).

⁵⁵ Author interview, Bujumbura, December 2009.

⁵⁶ While the electoral law stipulates that at least one of every four candidates on a party list should be a woman, it does not specify the ranking of male/female candidates.

⁵⁷ The political parties led by women are the Party for the Development and Solidarity of the Working Class, which was established in 2004 and is led by Patricia Ndayizeye, and the Alliance Démocratique pour Renouveau (ADR), which was registered in 2007 and is led by Alice Nzomukunda.

⁵⁸ Author interview, Bujumbura, December 2009.

female politicians are expected by their husbands to uphold their traditional role as wives and mothers, conflicting domestic and political responsibilities make it difficult for them to spend as much time on politics as their male counterparts, and on many occasions women are obliged to leave political discussions to take care of their domestic duties. Many women politicians were also completely new to politics when they were elected or co-opted in 2005, and lack of education and political experience further limit their ability to contribute effectively in political forums. As a representative from the international community reflected,

*Women in political positions are not really influencing politics. They are still very attached to their political parties, and there is a great need for capacity-building to empower women to become independent, so that they can express themselves and their opinions.*⁵⁹

These obstacles notwithstanding, the presence of women in the legislative and executive branches of government marks a significant departure for Burundian society and public perceptions of women's role in politics. For instance, a national survey conducted by the Observatoire de l'Action Gouvernementale (OAG) indicates that the increased representation of women in politics has had a significant impact in terms of improving public attitudes towards women's engagement in public life, with the vast majority of respondents being positive to having women in political positions.⁶⁰ As Catherine Mabobori, the leader of the Burundian women's delegation to the Arusha negotiations and a current MP, argued, 'During the Arusha negotiations, men said that women's place was in the kitchen and in the bed. But now, they have learned that politics is not only a men's business.'⁶¹ Despite the many remaining challenges, women have become more visible in politics, and have as such both transformed the notion of what is possible for women and increased interest among women about pursuing a political career.

3.3 Women's Political Participation Through Civil Society

By the time that the peace process started in Arusha in 1998, Burundian women's organizations had already been mobilizing for peace for several years. In response to the civil war that began in 1994, women came together on a multi-ethnic basis, created a number of groups and associations, and lobbied for peace both at the grassroots and at the national level.⁶² They also formed two umbrella organizations – Collectif des Associations et ONGs Feminines du Burundi (CAFOB)⁶³ and Dushirehamwe⁶⁴ – to bring together diverse women's

⁵⁹ Author interview, Bujumbura, November 2009.

⁶⁰ OAG 2008, p. 78.

⁶¹ Author interview, Bujumbura, November 2009.

⁶² Anderson 2010, p. 7; Ndimurukundi-Kururu 2005, p. 2; Watt 2008, pp. 117-8.

⁶³ Established in 1994, the vision of CAFOB was to strengthen the operational capacity of its member associations, to train women in leadership skills, and to get women into positions of responsibility in peacebuilding and decision-making (Burke, Klot and Bunting, 2001, p. 11). The umbrella organization quickly grew from 7 to 15 organizations by 1996 (Tripp et al. 2009, p. 210), and now comprises over 50 women's organizations with over 30,000 members.

⁶⁴ Dushirehamwe ['Let's Reconcile'] is another prominent umbrella organization, which emerged with support from UNIFEM, International Alert and Search for Common Ground in 1996. The organization currently consists of 352 local women's groups, who are working to promote women's economic and political empowerment, and to increase women's political participation.

groups. These women's networks have also been crucial for the mobilization of women's organizations throughout the peace and post-conflict process. During the peace negotiations, CAFOB and Dushirehamwe gathered women with diverse backgrounds to stand together for a common women's agenda, and organized workshops, conferences, demonstrations and radio broadcasts in an attempt to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict.⁶⁵ The umbrella organizations have also been important for establishing contact between women at the grassroots and national levels, and made it easier for women's organizations to influence public opinion in favour of women's rights and women's participation in decision-making.⁶⁶

Today, there are a number of women's organizations operating in Burundi. Most of these have their head office in the capital, but many organizations also operate in the provinces, reaching out to women at the grassroots level. Women's organizations have adopted a variety of strategies to push for their issues of concerns. They have organized workshops, conferences and demonstrations, sent statements and propositions to political leaders, and targeted female journalists to create media publicity around their programmes and activities. Although there has been a gradually worsening relationship between civil society and the Burundian government over the past three years,⁶⁷ the government has not stepped in to curtail the work of women's organizations, as it has done with some organizations working on human rights and good governance. Accordingly, women's organizations have had somewhat greater space in which to manoeuvre and advocate for their issues and concerns than many other civil society organizations, and have to a varying degree succeeded in getting their initiatives across to policymakers.

Main Issues of Advocacy

Throughout the peace and post-conflict processes, one of the main topics on the agenda of Burundian women's organizations has been to enhance women's participation in politics. Women's organizations have lobbied political leaders for increased representation of women in formal decision-making structures, but they have also directed their actions towards women throughout the country to create awareness about women's rights and opportunities to get involved in politics. As mentioned earlier, when the parties to the Arusha peace negotiations rejected women's demands for political representation, the negotiators' main argument was that there were insufficient qualified women to justify a quota. Thus, CAFOB responded by compiling a list of women with the education and expertise required to serve in the government, which they subsequently handed over to the team of mediators.⁶⁸ Prior to the 2005 elections, women's organizations also exerted pressure on political parties to place women candidates in first and second place in their electoral lists, and since the elections they have continued to push for greater representation of women in political institutions, particularly in local and provincial governments, where the Constitution does not stipulate any minimum level of women's representation.

⁶⁵ Ogunsanya 2007, p. 30; ONUB, 2006. 'Burundi and Women's Political Participation - the Role of ONUB,' p. 2.

⁶⁶ Nduwimana, Françoise, 2006. 'Canada's Support for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region.' Peacebuild, the Canadian Peacebuilding Network, p. 20.

⁶⁷ Influential networks and organizations have been troubled by infiltration of politicians or government officials (Falch 2009, p. 16; Human Rights Watch 2009; Lemarchand 2009, p. 186).

⁶⁸ Tripp 2005, p. 11; Ogunsanya 2007, p. 31.

Women's organizations have also played an important role in supporting and encouraging women's participation in politics, both as voters and as political candidates. Prior to the 2005 elections, for instance, a network of women's organizations – Synergie des Partenaires pour la Promotion des Droits de la Femme (SPPDF)⁶⁹ – organized a nationwide campaign, 'Vote and Get Yourself Elected,' to inform women about their rights to vote and to encourage them to stand for elections. Women's networks and organizations are also mobilizing women to take part in the upcoming electoral process, which is scheduled to take place between May and September of 2010. CAFOB, for instance, has started a campaign entitled 'She Is Capable' to raise awareness on women's capability to participate in politics and to encourage women to stand for elections; and, in collaboration with UNIFEM, SPPDF has prepared a comprehensive strategy to improve women's political participation in the 2010 elections.⁷⁰

The persistent gender discrimination in Burundi's legal framework is another issue that has mobilized many women's organizations. With the Association des Femmes Juristes du Burundi (AFJB) at the forefront, organizations have campaigned for equal inheritance rights and for legal sanctions against rape and other forms of gender-based violence, neither of which were incorporated in Burundi's legal framework. In order to frame their demands within an international context of requirements to incorporate a gender dimension into the political agenda, women's organizations have drawn on international instruments, such as CEDAW and Resolution 1325. In addition, they have actively utilized media as a tool for influencing political leaders, for instance by presenting the testimonies of victims of sexual violence on the radio and in newspapers.

Women's organizations have also undertaken considerable efforts to promote the adoption of a gender perspective in the design and implementation of the peacebuilding programmes that have been initiated with support from the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). In 2006, Burundi was chosen as one of the pilot countries for the UN Peacebuilding Commission, with US\$ 30 million being earmarked by the PBF for peacebuilding projects. When the Burundian joint steering committee of the PBF was formed, women were not represented. However, after active lobbying with support from International Alert and the New York-based NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, it was eventually agreed that Dushirehamwe would represent Burundian women's organizations in the committee. Since then, Dushirehamwe has advocated persistently for gender indicators to be adopted in the monitoring mechanisms of all PBF projects.⁷¹

⁶⁹ SPPDF was established in 2004 and is a women's network consisting of 29 women's organizations. The network works on a case-to-case basis, and has focused primarily on women's participation in the 2005 and the upcoming 2010 elections.

⁷⁰ SPPDF, 2009. 'Stratégie harmonisée pour une meilleure participation des femmes burundaises aux élections de 2010.' Bujumbura, September 2009.

⁷¹ International Alert, 2008. 'Integrating women's priorities into peacebuilding processes: Experiences of monitoring and advocacy in Burundi and Sierra Leone.' Report of civil society workshop, London, 25-29 February 2008, p. 12; Klot, Jennifer, 2007. 'Women and Peacebuilding.' Independent Expert Paper commissioned by UNIFEM and UN Peacebuilding Support Office, p. 4.

Outcomes and Challenges

As discussed above, civil society has been an important arena for women's mobilization and action throughout the post-conflict period. Women's organizations have created space for women to engage in public and political life, have played a key role in bringing up issues related to women's rights on the political agenda, and have raised awareness and openness around issues of particular concern to women. Some direct policy outcomes can be also identified as a result of their advocacy work. As mentioned, lobbying by women's organizations was instrumental in the introduction of a constitutional quota for women's representation in national political bodies in 2005, and owing to continued pressure a provision for 30% women's representation in political institutions at the local level was also incorporated in the electoral code in September 2009. After persistent lobbying, through public meetings and campaigns, as well as submission of written proposals to the government and the UN's Burundi office, a law that punishes perpetrators of violence against women was eventually incorporated into the penal code in April 2009. A law has also been drafted that would grant women inheritance rights. In this case, however, the government has decided to submit the draft to the general public for consultation rather than to the Parliament, and has not demonstrated much interest in adopting this law.

Legal advances notwithstanding, women's organizations' efforts in the past five years have been more fragmented and less visible than during the peace efforts. After the 2005 elections, several of the most highly experienced and qualified women in civil society left to take up positions within Burundi's political institutions. According to International Alert, this has weakened the women's movement, which lost some of its most vibrant and experienced leaders, and also led to tension between women's organizations and women in political office.⁷² Many women in civil society feel that their former colleagues who have been elected to political office or accepted government positions are no longer engaging in activism on behalf of women's interests, and claim that they are too bound to their political parties. Female politicians, on the other hand, hold that it is difficult to ally with women in civil society because of the political affiliations of women's organizations. On some occasions, however, women in political office and women's organizations have cooperated on the development of legal propositions, such as the revision of the penal code, and they have developed a joint strategy for improving women's political participation in view of the upcoming 2010 elections.

Moreover, representatives from women's organizations related that they face difficulties in getting support for their initiatives and demands from national policymakers, and complained that government institutions seldom consult them or invite them to meetings and hearings. Like women in political office, they pointed to Burundi's patriarchal political culture as a major barrier for their political influence. A representative of one women's organization, for instance, explained that 'there is a lot of stigma against women who speak up, and since we are women, the politicians many times just ignore our demands'.⁷³ Furthermore, representatives from women's organizations asserted that while political leaders sometimes listen to their initiatives and demands, their follow-up is characterized by limited action.

⁷² International Alert, 2007. 'Women's political participation in countries emerging from conflict in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.' Report of Consultation Workshop, Kampala, 28-30 August 2007, p. 36.

⁷³ Author interview, Bujumbura, December 2009.

Another factor affecting women's organizations' ability to operate and exert influence on decision-making is the support that they get from the international community. Financial support from international actors has been instrumental for the development and growth of women's organizations in Burundi. However, beyond its financial impact, the international community has also provided both inspiration and technical knowledge to women's organizations. Leaders of women's organizations have, for instance, often been sent to international conferences, where they have met women from other developing countries who face similar challenges, returning energized by their discussions. Representatives from women's organizations also asserted that their advocacy efforts have more leverage when they are backed by international organizations and have the support of donors. However, hard competition and dependence on funding has also led to infighting among women's organizations. As one representative from a network of women's organizations argued, 'it is difficult for us to have sustainable projects, because the funds are very limited and it is hard to get follow-up support for the projects that we have initiated'.⁷⁴ Another inevitable consequence of women's organizations' dependence on external support is that their agendas and activities have become largely influenced by the agendas set by international organizations, making it difficult for them to pursue goals that do not mesh with the international community's priority areas of development.

⁷⁴ Author interview, Bujumbura, November 2009.

4. Nepal

Situated between India and China, Nepal is a poor, landlocked and ethnically diverse state with 28 million people. In 2006, the country emerged from a ten-year-long armed internal conflict between the Nepali government and the Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist, which resulted in a wide range of human rights abuses, the deaths of more than 13,000 people and the displacement of another 200,000.⁷⁵ The conflict had severe consequences for women, who became vulnerable to all forms of violence, including rape, torture and trafficking.⁷⁶ In the absence of men –



Figure 2. Map of Nepal

who joined the fighting, fled or migrated to seek alternative employment to support their families – the war also led to an increase in the number of single women and widows, who were left behind with sole responsibility for household work.⁷⁷ The conflict's negative impact on women notwithstanding, the increase in female-headed households empowered many women by leading them into public life, where they engaged in activities previously reserved for men.⁷⁸ Some women joined the Maoist movement, where they took up central and multiple roles, working as soldiers, medical personnel, cooks and porters, and carrying out communications work.⁷⁹ Yet, many women also became engaged in peacebuilding activities at the grassroots level, working for democracy, disarmament and a peaceful end to the conflict.⁸⁰ As in Burundi, women's involvement during the armed conflict hence contributed to breaking some of the traditional and cultural barriers set up for women within Nepali society,⁸¹ and during the People's Movement, which in April 2006 initiated the peace process, women played an active role, participating in peaceful demonstrations campaigning for peace and democracy. The armed conflict was formally concluded with the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA)⁸² in

⁷⁵ For detailed analyses of the Nepali conflict, see Gates & Miklian 2010, Gobyn 2009, and Sharma 2006.

⁷⁶ Ariño, María Vilellas, 2008. 'Nepal: A gender view of the armed conflict and the peace process.' *Quaderns de Constuació de Pau*. Barcelona: Escola de cultura de pau, p. 7; UNFPA, 2007. 'Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Nepal,' p. 70.

⁷⁷ Rana-Deuba, Arzu, 2005. 'A National Study on Changing Roles of Nepali Women Due to Ongoing Conflict and its Impact.' *Samanata Studies* No.6. Kathmandu: Samanata Institute for Social and Gender Equality, pp. 77-8.

⁷⁸ Aguirre, Daniel, and Irene Pietropaoli, 2008. 'Gender Equality, Development, and Transitional Justice: The Case of Nepal.' *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* Vol. 2, p. 361.

⁷⁹ Various sources indicate that as much as one-third of the guerilla cadres and around half of the middle leadership in the Maoist movement were women (Bouta et al. 2005, p. 16; Manchanda 2001, pp. 118-9; UNDP 2010, p. 99).

⁸⁰ GAPS, 2009. 'Global Monitoring Checklist on Women, Peace and Security,' p. 74.

⁸¹ As Rita Manchanda reasons, the conflict opened up 'intended and unintended spaces for empowering women, effecting structural social transformations, and producing new social, economic and political realities that redefine gender and caste hierarchies' (Manchanda 2004, p. 237).

⁸² For the text of the 'Comprehensive Peace Accord Concluded Between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).' Available at: http://www.peace.gov.np/admin/doc/CPA_eng-ver-corrected.pdf (accessed 21 April 2010).

November 2006. As stipulated in the CPA, Nepal held its first post-conflict elections to a new Constituent Assembly (CA) in April 2008, and this body has since been tasked with the drafting of a new constitution for the country.

4.1 Background on Women's Political Status and Role in Nepal

Like Burundi, Nepal is a society characterized by a strong patriarchal culture, where women traditionally have been marginalized from participating in public life. Women's social status and relative equality with men varies among Nepal's various ethnic groups, regions and castes. Yet, their position is normally determined by patriarchal traditions, in which the predominant view is that women are subordinate to men and their role should be confined to the domestic sphere, where their main duties involve child-raising and household chores.⁸³ In combination, discriminatory cultural practices and laws pose major hurdles for achieving gender equality in Nepal, and women are falling behind men in areas such as education, economic empowerment and political participation.⁸⁴

Although women have had the right to vote and to stand for election since 1951 and the government in 1991 ratified the CEDAW without any reservations, women's voices have long been silenced in Nepal. Women have traditionally had little opportunity to participate actively in political life, with few or no women represented in the legislative, judiciary and executive bodies.⁸⁵ Some concrete efforts to ensure women's representation in local and national politics were made prior to the peace process.⁸⁶ However, women had never comprised more than 6% of Nepal's parliamentarians before 2007,⁸⁷ and the few women in political positions were mostly limited to the upper caste or were close relatives of male politicians, and largely subordinate to male members and leaders.⁸⁸

The Road Towards Increased Representation

In spite of the above-mentioned transformation of gender roles during the conflict and women's active involvement in the 2006 People's Movement, women were not included as mediators, participants, observers or signatories in the peace negotiations between the Maoists and the government, which in November 2006 culminated in the CPA. As noted by

⁸³ UNESCO, 2006. 'Forms and Patterns of Social Discrimination in Nepal.' *UNESCO Kathmandu Series of Monographs and Working Papers*, no. 8, p. 51.

⁸⁴ Acharya, Meena, 2003. *Efforts at Promoting Women in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Tanka Prasad Memorial Foundation, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, p. 42; Geiser, Alexandra, 2005. 'Social Exclusion and Conflict Transformation in Nepal: Women, Dalit and Ethnic Groups.' Working Paper. FAST Country Risk Profile Nepal. Bern: Swiss Peace, pp. 22-24; Sigdel, Kamal Raj, 2009. 'Laws Riddled with Errors.' *The Kathmandu Post*, 17 September 2009.

⁸⁵ Acharya, 2003, pp. 49-50; Kabir, Farah, 2003. 'Political Participation of Women in South Asia,' p.11; Nepali, Rohit Kumar, and Prakash Shrestha (eds.), 2007. 'Unfolding the Reality: Silenced Voices of Women in Politics.' Kathmandu, SAP International, p.70.

⁸⁶ The 1990 Constitution stipulated that all political parties contesting elections to the Lower House of Parliament must have at least 5% female candidates, and that three seats in the Upper House are reserved for women. The Local Self-Governance Act of 1999 demanded 20% women's representation in local elected bodies (Nepali & Shrestha 2007, p. 49; UNFPA 2007, p. 61).

⁸⁷ Women representatives occupied 3.4 % of the seats in the Parliament after the 1991 and 1994 elections, and 5.8 % after the 1999 elections (IPU 2010), and women's representation in the cabinet has generally been limited to 1-2 out of a total of 20-45 ministerial positions (Acharya 2003, pp. 49-50; Kabir 2003, p. 11).

⁸⁸ IDEA, 2008. 'The Constituent Assembly of Nepal: An Agenda for Women,' p.12; UNDP, 2009. 'Nepal Human Development Report 2009: State Transformation and Human Development,' p. 72.

Ian Martin, the head of the UN Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) at the time, 'At all the political negotiating tables I have seen in Nepal during the peace process, not once have I seen a woman at the table.'⁸⁹ To the frustration of the women's movement, neither the Maoists nor the political parties representing the government included any female representatives in their delegations to the talks. The peace negotiations were a male-dominated and exclusive process,⁹⁰ and the resulting CPA did not include more than one paragraph that specifically mentioned women.⁹¹

After the signing of the CPA, the parties formed various committees that would be responsible for developing the main issues in the agreement. Among these were the National Monitoring Committee, in which 2 out of a total of 31 members were women, and a committee set up to develop a new Interim Constitution, which at the time of formation was completely devoid of women. After considerable pressure from female politicians and women's organizations, however, the six-member all-male Interim Constitution Drafting Committee was eventually expanded to include four women and one representative from the Dalit community. During the drafting of the Interim Constitution, women in political parties and civil society continued to lobby for guaranteed women's representation in the new political institutions that were to be established. Their voices were finally heard, and at the last minute a clause calling for affirmative action for women's political representation was incorporated into the new Interim Constitution, which was adopted in January 2007.

The Interim Constitution made provisions for a mixed electoral system for the planned elections to the Constituent Assembly.⁹² By combining methods of 'first past the post' (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR),⁹³ it aimed to give all traditionally excluded groups (such as women, Dalits, oppressed communities/indigenous groups, backward regions and Madhesis) a greater voice in the legislature.⁹⁴ The Interim Constitution stipulated that a minimum of one-third of the total number of candidates to the Constituent Assembly should be women (Article 63(5)), and this provision was also included in the new electoral law that was passed by the Interim Parliament in June 2007.

4.2 Women's Participation in Formal Post-Conflict Decision-Making

In view of the traditional marginalization of women from public and political life, the elections to a new Constituent Assembly, which were organized in April 2008, represented a milestone and an important victory for Nepali women. While none of the political parties entirely fulfilled the required percentage of women enlisted as candidates, all of the major political parties followed the provisions to some extent.⁹⁵ Altogether, nearly 3,500 women

⁸⁹ Martin, Ian, 2007. 'Implementing commitments to women's equal participation.'

⁹⁰ ICG, 2010. 'Nepal: Peace and Justice.' Crisis Group Asia Report No.184. Kathmandu/Brussels, 14 January 2010, p.13.

⁹¹ Article 7.6.1 emphasizes women's rights to protection and the need to stop all forms of sexual exploitation.

⁹² Government of Nepal, 2007. 'Interim Constitution of Nepal 2063 (2007).' Available at:

<http://www.supremecourt.gov.np/main.php?d=lawmaterial&f=constitution> (accessed 21 April 2010).

⁹³ Some 240 of the members of the Constituent Assembly would be elected through FPTP, and 335 would come to office through PR.

⁹⁴ UNDP 2009, p. 74.

⁹⁵ Nepali, Rohit Kumar, and Uddhab P. Pyakurel, 2009. 'A Study of Nepal's Constituent Assembly Election: The Influence of Civil Society and the Multilateral System.' Paper presented at FIM Forum Delhi 2009, p. 6.

contested in the elections, comprising around 35% of all candidates, and on Election Day women outnumbered men as voters.⁹⁶ As a result of the elections, women obtained 30 seats through the FPTP elections (12.5% of the available 240 seats), and 161 seats in the PR elections (close to 48% of the 335 seats available). In addition, six women were nominated by the three major political parties to comply with the quota, which meant that women held 197, or around one-third, of the total of 601 seats in the new Constituent Assembly.⁹⁷ In the new coalition government that was formed shortly after the elections, however, women were appointed to only 4 out of a total of 24 ministerial positions (16.67%), with responsibility for the Ministry of General Administration, the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Education.⁹⁸

Beyond Numbers

The adoption of a quota for women's representation in political institutions has been a crucial first step to open the doors for women to take part in decision-making in Nepal. Two years after the 2008 elections, women still hold 33% of the seats in the Constituent Assembly. Women are also represented in each of the eleven thematic committees that have been set up to discuss the draft of a new constitution, giving them an unprecedented opportunity to influence national decision-making and the development of a new constitutional framework for the country. However, although noting that there are some influential women in the Constituent Assembly, most informants for this study argued that there is in reality only limited space for women in Nepali politics. As the Nepal NGO Report on Beijing +15 also states,

*Even though there has been some numerical improvement in the quantitative dimension as a result of the affirmative action/positive discrimination, the overall participation of women in decision-making and powerful positions is still very low.*⁹⁹

And in a similar vein, a report by South Asia Partnership (SAP) International asserts,

*Because of the quantitative reservation and proportional participation the number of women representation in the political structure has sequentially increased. However, corresponding qualitative improvements in women's participation is yet to happen.*¹⁰⁰

Several reasons may explain this state of affairs. First, women's effective participation in decision-making is hindered by a pervasive male domination inside political parties. According to several male and female Constituent Assembly members, decisions in political parties continue to be made by a handful of senior and high-caste male leaders, and women's opportunities within the political parties are determined on the basis of their loyalty and kinship to particular leaders, rather than their capabilities and performance. Although women are active, to varying extents, in all of the major political parties, most of

⁹⁶ UNIFEM, 2009b. 'UNIFEM Annual Report 2008-2009,' p. 11.

⁹⁷ IDEA 2008, p.6.

⁹⁸ Jagaran Nepal, 2008. 'Women in Politics.' Women Empowerment: Quarterly Bulletin of Jagaran Nepal 1(5), p.6.

⁹⁹ Singh Rana, Pinky, Gopal Krishna Shivakoti, and Samjhana Kachhyapati (eds.), 2009. 'Keeping the Beijing Commitment Alive: Nepal NGO Report on Beijing +15.' Kathmandu: National Network for Beijing Review Nepal, p.44.

¹⁰⁰ SAP, 2009. 'Combating Violence Against Women in Politics: Revisiting Policies, Politics and Participation.' Proceeding report, 2nd South Asian Regional Conference on Violence Against Women. Kathmandu, 16th -18th November 2008, p. 51,

which also have women's wings, women's representation in higher levels of the parties' central or decision-making committees is almost negligible.¹⁰¹ As a female politician argues,

*Nepal is still a male-dominated society. There's a tendency of leaders to think that women aren't as capable as men. So they bring in more men in their party. There are statements from parties to say that in principle they are inclusive of women, but they haven't been practising what they talk about.*¹⁰²

Second, despite the existence of women's wings in most political parties and also an Inter-Party Women's Alliance, where women occasionally gather to discuss political issues, women politicians find it hard to raise issues of particular concern to women in the Constituent Assembly. While the Inter-Party Women's Alliance has contributed to building cross-party alliances among female politicians, the chair of the alliance, Uma Adhikari, admits that 'it is not possible to channel our issues through [the eleven thematic committees], because the gender-related issues are not a priority.'¹⁰³ A respondent in a study conducted by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) similarly argues that 'all parties have women's wings, but no one listens to them.'¹⁰⁴ Moreover, several female Constituent Assembly members assert that the political parties are characterized by negative attitudes and behaviour towards women, and that the political institutions do not give much space to women with opinions.¹⁰⁵

Third, limited education and literacy capacity, along with a lack of political experience and knowledge about the political system, further impede many female politicians from participating effectively in the political process. A considerable part of the female members of the Constituent Assembly are new to politics, feel a high degree of loyalty to their political parties, and thus find it difficult to articulate their own agendas. A SAP report similarly notes that 'women CA members have not been prepared for their roles and responsibility, and neither have they been allocated any specific role as people's representatives.'¹⁰⁶

A fourth issue that influences women's roles and their ability to participate in politics is the perception that the increase in women's representation was primarily a response to legal requirements, and not a result of the political parties' determination to improve gender equality in political structures and decision-making. According to several respondents, this has led to a widely held belief that female Constituent Assembly members 'have only been put there as tokens to fulfil the requirements'.¹⁰⁷ The NDI also notes that this perception 'weakens their credibility and further discourages parties from spending campaign money on women'.¹⁰⁸ The apparent lack of political will is also demonstrated in numerical terms: Although legal requirements stipulate that a minimum of 33% of all positions at all decision-making levels should be held by women, only 7.3% of ministerial positions are currently held

¹⁰¹ SAP 2009, p. 54 ; Singh Rana et al. 2009, p.45.

¹⁰² NDI, 2008. 'Assessing Women's Political Party Programs: Best Practices and Recommendations.' Washington: NDI, p. 82.

¹⁰³ Aryal, Mallika, 2009. 'Women Push for Gender Equality in New Constitution.' Inter Press Service News Agency.

¹⁰⁴ NDI 2008, p. 85.

¹⁰⁵ Jagaran Nepal 2008, pp. 44-45; Nepali & Shrestha 2007, p. 66.

¹⁰⁶ SAP 2009, p. 51.

¹⁰⁷ Author interviews, Kathmandu, September – October, 2009.

¹⁰⁸ NDI 2008, p. 84.

by women,¹⁰⁹ and women's representation in other decision-making positions that are central to translating laws and policies into practice is poor. For instance, while a provision for 33% women's representation in all government sectors was adopted with the passing of a Civil Service Bill in August 2007, there is only nominal representation of women in the institutions set up to integrate the Maoists and in the transitional justice committee, while Nepal has no female ambassadors.¹¹⁰

In spite of these challenges, there is no doubt that the increased women's representation in the Constituent Assembly has opened up new opportunities for women to participate in decision-making in the crucial post-conflict period in Nepal. Female members of the new legislature also have more diverse backgrounds than was previously the case, representing different geographical areas, castes and ethnic groups, something that has contributed to raising awareness among a diversity of women that they have a right to participate in politics.

4.3 Women's Political Participation Through Civil Society

The tradition for women's organizations in Nepal goes back to 1948, when the Nepal Women's Association was formed to raise political and social awareness among women and to protest against the government's refusal to give women voting rights. Subsequently, however, the king's subversion of the democratic system to an autocratic regime suspended all civil society organizations and their activities between 1960 and 1990.¹¹¹ In the early 1990s, a number of socially and politically oriented women's organizations were created, but during Nepal's armed conflict (1996–2006) civil society activity was again virtually curtailed and organizations were obliged to have prior consent from the Chief District Office before organizing programmes.¹¹² However, as mentioned earlier, Nepal saw a new wave of women's political engagement during the People's Movement in April 2006, when women from civil society took to the streets to demand peace and democracy. Since then, a myriad of active women's organizations have been operating in Nepal, with a variety of priorities, activities and target groups. Some of the women's organizations are associated with political parties, while others represent specific ethnic, caste and religious groups or geographic regions. Many of the organizations work across the whole country, but most of them have their base and operate in Kathmandu, and are generally headed and staffed by women.

Throughout the peace and post-conflict political negotiations, several women's organizations have actively channelled their views and demands to national decision-makers. Despite the variety of their working areas and target groups, women's organizations have sometimes also gathered in alliances and coalitions to work for joint causes, and with

¹⁰⁹ In May 2009, the Maoist party withdrew from the coalition government owing to 'a struggle over control of the army and the collapse of cabinet unity' (ICG 2009, p. 2). A new coalition government was formed, with representatives from 22 parties, in which 3 out of a total of 41 appointed ministers are currently women (7.3%). The ministries that now are led by women are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives.

¹¹⁰ Aguirre & Pietropaoli 2008, p. 357; UNDP, 2010. 'Power, Voice and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific.' Asia-Pacific Human Development Report, p. 85.

¹¹¹ Nepali & Shrestha 2007, p. 28; SAP 2008, p. 51.

¹¹² Geiser 2005, p. 24; UNIFEM 2006a, p. 25.

financial and moral support from the international community they have formed several women's networks, such as Shanti Malika, Women's Alliance for Peace, Power, Democracy and Constituent Assembly (WAPPDCA), and WomenAct, which all work to address issues related to women, peace and security. Although there are no formal linkages for communication between political institutions and civil society groups, many women's organizations and networks have persistently pushed to get access to political leaders and institutions, using an array of methods (including petitions, media publications, workshops, seminars, signature campaigns and street demonstrations) to make their initiatives heard by national decision-makers.

Promoting Women's Participation and Rights

As in Burundi, the demand for increased women's participation in political decision-making has been a key topic on women's organizations' agendas throughout the post-conflict period in Nepal. While their lobbying for female representation in the 2006 peace negotiations brought few results, women's organizations have made various efforts to promote women's political participation during and after the signing of the CPA. For instance, as a response to political leaders' argument that there were no women capable of taking part in the peace process, the women's network WAPPDCA published *Who Is Who of Nepali Women* in 2006. This book included information about over 3,000 women qualified to take up positions of responsibility related to the peace and electoral process, and was handed out to all of the political leaders to convince them that there were plenty of competent women to take on political tasks. Women's organizations also organized weekly street demonstrations with banners demanding women's representation in the peace process, handed over petitions to the government, and organized signature campaigns calling for 33% women's representation in political institutions.

Since the 2008 elections, the activities of Nepal's women's organizations have been more fragmented, but some endeavours to further promote the participation of women in politics have been made. For instance, in 2009 WAPPDCA and the Inter-Party Women's Alliance launched a campaign called 'Mission 50-50,' aimed at ensuring equal representation and more meaningful participation of women at all levels of the state, and the Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD) has lobbied the government to adopt legal provisions obliging political parties to have a minimum of 33% women's representation at all levels of their organizations. Along with international organizations, such as the NDI and the International Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), some women's organizations and networks have also engaged in capacity-building and leadership training programmes for current and potential female political candidates. Different organizations have targeted diverse constituencies of women in their training programmes. For instance, prior to elections, WAPPDCA was active in educating voters and preparing women for political positions, and now provides training in computer skills and English to women in the Constituent Assembly, while the NDI is working with female members of the Constituent Assembly through a Women's Leadership Academy, aiming to enhance their political skills and their ability to deliver services.

Moreover, many women's organizations have engaged in the struggle to end gender discrimination in Nepal's legal framework. Although the Interim Constitution sets out to guarantee fundamental rights of speech, association and political participation and to outlaw

discrimination on the basis of sex, caste, ethnicity or religion, Nepal still has several laws that discriminate against women.¹¹³ A number of women's organizations have thus specialized in the promotion and protection of women's rights, and have called for reform of discriminatory laws and regulations, as well as recognition of women's human rights, equal inheritance rights, equal citizenship rights, rights for widows and single women, redress for crimes committed against women during the civil war, and sanctions against human trafficking and gender-based violence against women. In this work, many women's organizations have drawn on international political frameworks, such as CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and Resolution 1325, to bring strength and legitimacy to their demands.

Since 2008, many of the efforts to promote women's rights and protection have been directed towards the constitution-drafting committees. A number of women's organizations and networks have developed charters with specific recommendations about what needs to be included in the new constitution in order to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, age or marital status, and these have been submitted to various committees of the Constituent Assembly. In 2009, an umbrella organization for local women's groups, Women Acting Together for Change (WATCH), also organized a procession with participation of over ten thousand rural women in the Kathmandu Valley, where they presented 120 demands for the constitution-drafting process to members of the Constituent Assembly's committees. While the draft constitution has not yet been finalized, there are indications that some of these recommendations will be incorporated, along with more general provisions for gender equality. For instance, some political parties have already adopted gender-equality agendas and have endorsed women's role in decision-making and efforts to end violence against women.¹¹⁴

Outcomes and Challenges

All of the individuals interviewed for this study – from women activists to male politicians – agreed that women's organizations have played a central role in promoting awareness on gender equality, and in transforming what earlier were regarded as women's private concerns into wider public issues in Nepal. While the efforts of women's organizations have often been scattered and their interests diverse, they have been successful in drawing policymakers' attention to gender-discriminatory laws and practices. During the past four years, they have also been a driving force behind the adoption of laws and regulations that protect women's rights, including a law ensuring the right of women to confer citizenship on their children (Nepal Citizenship Act, 2006),¹¹⁵ a gender-equality law calling for an end to all discriminatory laws and regulations against women (Gender Equality Act, 2006), regulations providing protection for victims and sanctions for perpetrators of human trafficking (Human Trafficking Control and Regulation Acts, 2007/08), and a law punishing perpetrators of domestic violence (Domestic Violence [Offense and Punishment] Act, 2009). Owing to pressure from the organization Women for Human Rights, a legal proposal that would offer financial support to men who marry widows was also put on hold, and in 2009 advocacy by

¹¹³ Joshi, Sunil Kumar, 2009. 'Violence against women in Nepal: Role of health care workers.' *Kathmandu University Medical Journal* 7(2), p. 89; Sigdel 2009.

¹¹⁴ UNDP 2010, p. 101.

¹¹⁵ Yet, foreign spouses of Nepali women are still not allowed to acquire citizenship in the same way as foreign spouses of Nepali men.

women's organizations also led the government to mandate 33% women's representation in Local Peace Committees, which are responsible for monitoring the CPA at the local level.

However, while the government has taken many steps to improve the rights and protection of women on paper, the implementation of these strategies is weak. Representatives from women's organizations noted that the government often demonstrates a willingness to sign agreements and to agree to commitments related to women's needs and concerns, but complained that efforts to incorporate their initiatives into decision-making have been marked more by rhetoric than by substantive action. For instance, reports indicate that domestic violence, dowry deaths and sexual violence are on the rise, and that most perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence continue to escape prosecution under the Nepali criminal justice system; the provision of 33% women's representation in all government sectors has not been followed up in practice; and a bureaucracy engrained with patriarchal norms and practices continues to prevent children from acquiring citizenship through their mothers.¹¹⁶ This inevitably raises doubts as to whether the legal advances have contributed to any actual improvement in the lives of women.

Women's organizations have been most successful in drawing policymakers' attention to their initiatives when they have joined forces in networks and lobbied for a joint agenda. Yet, since the signing of the CPA, the Nepali women's movement has fragmented, with different interests resulting in different approaches and agendas. As a respondent from an international organization argued,

*When women's organizations have lobbied for a joint cause, it has been largely successful. But afterwards they have fragmented again, and the lack of concerted efforts has weakened their political influence.*¹¹⁷

Tension between women in political parties and women's organizations has also weakened the women's agenda since the 2008 elections, with women's organizations accusing women in political parties of only prioritizing issues according to their parties' agendas and forgetting about women's issues, and female politicians blaming women's organizations for prioritizing working areas according to the possibilities for obtaining international funding. Furthermore, political instability and infighting have affected women's organizations' ability to get their demands across to policymakers. In the three and a half years since the signing of the CPA, Nepal has had three governments, and there have been frequent changes in ministry personnel, leading to discontinuity in policy commitment. Representatives of women's organizations say that they sometimes have lobbied a politician only to discover that he or she has changed position the next time they contact him or her, which obviously limits their ability to exert political influence.

Owing to limited home-grown funding opportunities, the operational capacity and strength of women's organizations (like most other CSOs) in Nepal is highly dependent on support from international actors. Many women's organizations have received extensive project

¹¹⁶ Joshi 2009, p. 89; National Human Rights Commission, 2009. 'Three-Year of Comprehensive Peace Accord.' Kathmandu, Nepal, pp. 45-6; Sharma, Bhuwan, 2010. 'Laws Have Changed, Mindsets Haven't.' Inter Press Service News Agency.

¹¹⁷ Author interview, Kathmandu, September 2009.

funding from international partners, and this support has been crucial in their work to influence decision-making. However, representatives from women's organizations express concern over the fact that the majority of available funding is for short-term and narrowly defined projects. Several respondents reported that they have had to change the direction of their work to please international donors, and stated that long-term planning is difficult. Moreover, as funding criteria give priority to well-established organizations with English-speaking staff that already have a track record of projects, smaller grassroots organizations are often undermined, limiting the possibilities for women at the local level to channel their voices to political actors. According to some of the interviewed Constituent Assembly members, this has in turn decreased the legitimacy of women's organizations among policymakers, who say they regard them as 'dollar farmers' and as representatives of the international community, rather than representatives of Nepali women.

5. Moving Forward: Lessons Learned from Burundi and Nepal

Burundi and Nepal offer important examples when it comes to achievements and challenges related to increasing women's participation in post-conflict political decision-making. In line with Resolution 1325 and other international policies, both countries have made significant efforts to involve women in formal decision-making since the end of conflict. Women have attained a higher level of political representation in national political institutions than ever before, and now hold important positions of political responsibility in both countries. Women's organizations have also offered an important and complementary strategy for enhancing women's engagement in public and political life, and for bringing up issues of relevance for the implementation of Resolution 1325 on the national political agenda. These positive steps notwithstanding, the foregoing has made clear that a host of (surprisingly similar) challenges still need to be addressed if women are to be able to participate on equal footing with men in decision-making processes in Burundi and Nepal. Several more general lessons can be drawn from this, regarding both women's formal political participation and their political activity outside of the conventional political arena.

5.1 Affirmative Action: A Kick-Start with Limitations

The cases of Burundi and Nepal illustrate that use of affirmative action, such as quotas and reserved seats, can be an effective mechanism for accelerating women's representation in formal politics. In both countries, women were earlier only marginally represented in political institutions, and following the introduction of minimum requirements for women's representation there has been a substantial increase of women in national political institutions. The quota system has lowered some of the structural barriers that earlier limited women's access to political positions. Moreover, it has made political institutions more inclusive and made women more visible in an arena that previously was reserved for men. Accordingly, it has not only challenged the norm that politics is a masculine sphere, but also raised awareness among women about their opportunities and rights to take part in decision-making.

However, while quota adoption has been an important step in terms of increasing women's political representation, the two case studies clearly demonstrate that increased representation via affirmative action does not necessarily translate into meaningful participation and enhanced influence for women in politics. Affirmative action does not by itself alter stereotypical perceptions about women's skills and performance or encourage a gender division of responsibility in political institutions. The use of quotas has been contentious, and there is a tendency for male politicians to regard the women's quota as a ceiling rather than a floor for women's political representation. Several male politicians express minimal interest in advancing the role of women inside political parties and are resistant to women's guaranteed representation. As a female MP in Burundi asserted, 'Men feel like they have sacrificed something by giving women positions of power. They feel like

they have given us a gift.’¹¹⁸ This has weakened women’s positions and credibility as political representatives, and has led to a widespread belief that they are ‘tokens’ rather than agents for change within political parties. This has particularly affected women who have been co-opted by political parties simply to fulfil quota requirements. These women are entirely dependent on their parties’ nominations, and many of them have neither a political programme nor an electoral constituency to respond to. The tendency to look upon the quota as an end is also reflected in political and public institutions that have no binding minimum levels for women’s representation, where women continue to be chronically underrepresented. This clearly demonstrates that in order to enhance women’s effective political participation, affirmative action needs to be accompanied by a shift in underlying gender power relations, as well as broader institutional changes.

5.2 Patriarchy and Gender Inequality Hinder Women’s Political Participation

In Burundi and Nepal, as in many other developing countries, deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and practices continue to subjugate women to men, leaving them with a feeling of inferiority, which places them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis their male counterparts in the political sphere. While political parties in both countries for the most part have complied with required minimum levels for female candidates, women’s representation in decision-making committees inside the political parties is almost negligible. Women appear as subordinate to the male-dominated political leadership, and a persistent patriarchal political culture, which to a large extent is also internalized by women, makes it difficult for women to demand space and bring forward initiatives related to women’s particular interests and needs. Furthermore, there is a clear tendency for political party leaders to curb women’s voices, and women MPs in both countries assert that political parties are characterized by negative attitudes towards women members, who receive little support from their male colleagues. In Nepal, several female Constituent Assembly members related that they often felt intimidated by their male colleagues, and in Burundi respondents argued that male leaders sometimes threaten women politicians if the latter express views that are not in line with party policy. Women’s leadership energies are thus to a large extent isolated in parties’ women’s wings and interparty women’s caucuses, whose secondary status prevents them from effectively provoking the leadership into committing to expressed gender-equality goals.

As societies, Burundi and Nepal are also characterized by deeply ingrained gender inequality, in which the low status of women manifests itself in a number of ways that affect their ability to participate in politics. In both countries, women are more affected by poverty than men, and as political campaigns are expensive and require solid financial backing for success, women’s lack of access to sufficient financial resources limits their opportunities for both political engagement and advancement. Women’s disproportionate household burdens further limit their ability to participate effectively in politics. As in most other developing countries, Burundian and Nepali women are expected by their husbands to uphold their traditional roles as wives and mothers, and for female politicians the dual burdens of domestic tasks and professional obligations limit the time that they can allot to political

¹¹⁸ Author interview, Bujumbura, December 2009.

activities. Political parties are run in ways that take no account of the dual role of women, and women who focus on their careers are often judged for going against the norm. Furthermore, many of the women who entered political institutions after the first post-conflict elections in Burundi and Nepal are relatively or completely new to politics, and limited education, along with lack of the political knowledge and experience required to make a substantial contribution to policymaking, constitute great obstacles for their political advancement.

Women's political representation is better today than ever before in Burundi and Nepal, but ensuring that the work of these relatively newly elected women is substantive remains a challenge. The implementation of affirmative action has largely failed to eradicate entrenched cultural and traditional authorities that discriminate against women. Most women continue to be trapped in a traditional role that does not allow them to be visible in the public and political spheres, and from which they find it hard to break out after stepping into politics. Accordingly, in order to overcome the persistent gap between commitments to and *de facto* gender equality in politics, broader cultural and institutional changes are required, along with a qualitative increase in women's capabilities. Beyond the guarantee of quotas, women need training and programmes designed to build their self-confidence and to provide them with technical skills so that they can be effective candidates who are able to express themselves and their opinions. Training programmes also need to target men, and to expose them both to the complexities of gender discrimination and to the need to promote women in public office, as well as the mechanisms for doing so. With support from international donors, some efforts are under way in this regard in Nepal, where several capacity-building programmes have been initiated for women in political office. In Burundi, however, there has been poor follow-up of women who took up political positions in 2005, and few political parties have developed training sessions, sensitization and mobilization strategies for women. Moreover, no programmes aimed at changing attitudes and political behaviour towards women within the political structures seem to have been developed in either country.

5.3 Women's Organizations: A Driving Force Behind Women's Participation and Rights

While women have encountered considerable challenges in participating and exercising influence inside formal political institutions, the cases of Burundi and Nepal show that civil society is a contrastingly effective arena in which to create space for women's participation in public and political life. In both countries, the expansion of women's public roles and responsibilities during armed conflict laid the ground for the establishment of an array of women's organizations and networks. Through these organizations and networks, women engaged in peacebuilding activities during the conflict, mobilized actively for the integration of a gender perspective and women's representation in the peace negotiations, and continued their advocacy for women's political participation, rights and needs throughout the post-conflict period.

Women's organizations and networks constitute a nurturing ground for women's political participation in a variety of ways. On one hand, they have been key for the mobilization of women to engage in informal policy-related activities, and have as such contributed to

visualizing women as actors and agents for change in civil society. In both countries, various women's organizations have channelled their views and demands from outside the peace and political negotiations, and have sought endorsement of their initiatives by political parties. For many female politicians, women's organizations have also been an important stepping stone for entry into formal politics. By working in women's organizations, these women have been able to cultivate their political, social and personal power, and have developed leadership skills, experience and confidence to venture into formal politics.

On the other hand, Burundian and Nepali women's organizations have worked actively to promote women's participation in formal politics. With backing from international actors and policies on women's right to representation in decision-making, women's organizations were the main force behind the introduction of quotas for women's political representation in both countries. Through programmes focused on political education and the provision of support to prospective women candidates, women's organizations have also encouraged women to engage in formal politics. Several organizations and networks have provided assistance to women candidates, irrespective of their political affiliations; and, prior to the first post-conflict elections in both countries, women's networks organized nationwide campaigns to raise awareness on women's political rights and to convince women of the importance of their vote. As a result, a large number of women took part in the organization and monitoring of the election process, and in both countries women outnumbered men as voters in the most recent elections.

Burundian and Nepali women's organizations and networks also stand out for the work that they have done to promote a variety of other issues related to Resolution 1325. Through organization of meetings, workshops and discussions, these organizations have generated awareness among women about their political situation, and have informed women of their political and social rights. Moreover, they have played a vital role in influencing decision-makers at the national level to uphold agreements on women's rights. Several organizations have lobbied political institutions for policies and reforms designed to increase women's representation in decision-making, to eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination, and to protect women and girls from gender-based violence. Through this work, they have politicized a number of issues that traditionally have been deemed beyond the remit of public decision-making (such as domestic violence, marital rape, social welfare needs, and reproductive health and rights) in Burundi and Nepal. Accordingly, they have contributed to broadening the political debate, and made it more legitimate to speak up about the rights and particular needs of women. As a Burundian respondent argued, 'Before, violence against children and women was not seen as a problem, but now it is considered as an important issue, also by men.'¹¹⁹

In addition, women's organizations have been important drivers behind legal reform and the adoption of policies to enshrine women's political, social and economic rights. As noted earlier, it was largely because of pressure from women's organizations that provisions for gender equality and quotas for women's political representation were incorporated in the two countries' constitutions. In Nepal, women's organization's persistent lobbying has also forced the government to adopt laws and regulations against gender discrimination, domestic violence and human trafficking; in Burundi, their demands for a law sanctioning

¹¹⁹ Author interview, Bujumbura, November 2009.

perpetrators of sexual violence led to the incorporation of such a provision into the penal code in 2009. In both countries, women's organizations have drawn upon international legal and normative frameworks (such as CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Resolution 1325) that have been endorsed by the Burundian and Nepali governments to back up their demands for improved women's rights.

However, while women's organizations' initiatives and demands related to Resolution 1325 have brought many positive results, it is also important to note their limitations. Representatives from civil society and the international community express discontent over the slow progress in the implementation of legal advances and question whether the reforms have brought any actual dividends for women in the two countries. The male-dominated political culture continues to constitute a challenge for women's organizations' influence on decision-making, and political leaders are often not interested in prioritizing their initiatives and demands. In Nepal, women's organizations' demands are often received positively by policymakers but lack follow-up and action. In Burundi, women's organizations have encountered considerable resistance to and lack of awareness of the gender issues that they have brought forward to policymakers. Accordingly, while we may celebrate the progress achieved with regards to increased women's political representation and legal protection, these results should not deter us from addressing the many challenges to women's rights to protection, participation and decision-making that remain.

5.4 Women's Platforms Have Political Leverage

Most respondents interviewed for this study agreed that women's organizations have been most successful when they have fostered a joint political platform for which they have sought political influence. During the peace negotiations in Burundi and Nepal, women united across ethnic, political and class backgrounds, and developed clear agendas with joint recommendations. Throughout the peace processes, women's networks also made it easier to influence public opinion in favour of women's rights and women's participation in decision-making. Hence, although women did not participate directly in the peace negotiations in either country, several of their gender-specific recommendations were subsequently incorporated in the peace agreement in Burundi and in the Interim Constitution in Nepal. Since the end of their respective conflicts, however, the women's movements of both countries have fragmented, and owing to diverse affiliations and interests they have faced difficulties in synchronizing their strategies for political advocacy, which has weakened their influence on political decision-making.

Furthermore, links and interaction between women's organizations and women in political office is crucial for advancing women's issues and for creating a common women's agenda. Collaboration between women MPs and women from civil society has been a strategic asset in negotiations over improved rights for women on several occasions. Yet, the links between them have become weaker since the first post-conflict elections in Burundi and Nepal. In both countries, a breakdown of trust between women in political office and women in civil society has developed, where women's organizations accuse female politicians of not doing enough to advance a women's agenda, while women politicians blame women's

organizations for listening more to their international donors than to women at the grassroots level.

5.5 Potentials and Perils of International Support

With growing international consensus around the importance of women's participation in peace and post-conflict processes, increasing donor resources have been made available for women's organizations in Burundi and Nepal, as in many other conflict-affected countries. External funds have undoubtedly been an important source of support for women's organizations, and instrumental for the development of their operational capacity, ideas and activities. Experience in Burundi and Nepal also shows that women's organizations were strongest when they were receiving considerable support from the international community.

However, respondents from women's organizations in both countries express concern over how the prevalence of short-term and project-based funding leads to insecurity regarding the sustainability of their activities and makes it difficult to engage in long-term planning. Moreover, representatives from women's organizations in both countries stressed that, because women's organizations are heavily dependent on external support, a funding environment characterized by hard competition and narrowly defined calls for funding means that international donors often gain excessive influence on the work and agendas of those organizations. In Burundi, a representative from one international organization suggested that some of the issues that were advanced by women's organizations were primarily the result of international pressure, and in a similar vein representatives from some Nepali women's organizations related that they had had to change the direction of their work in order to secure funding from international donors. In Nepal, several respondents also argued that women's organizations' dependency on external funding has reduced the legitimacy of their work, as political leaders tend to regard them as representing the interests of the international donor community, rather than Nepali women. Another expressed concern is that international funding opportunities tend to favour well-established women's organizations that operate in the capital cities, undermining smaller women's organizations operating at the grassroots level. As a representative of a Nepali umbrella organization for local women's groups asserted, 'International donors are mainly interested in "show off projects". And since grassroots-based projects are not so visible at the national level, it is extremely hard to get funding for our local projects.'¹²⁰

While the sustainability of women's organizations in Burundi and Nepal is of paramount importance for increasing and upholding women's political participation, the current system for financing makes their sustainability uncertain. Most organizations continue to depend largely on international assistance, and the inability of external donors to make long-term commitments is a persistent problem for many women's organizations. These organizations need international support and encouragement, but they should not be deprived of their initiatives, which is often what happens when international actors seek rapid results.

¹²⁰ Author interview, Kathmandu, October 2009.

6. Emerging Recommendations

While progress has been made to follow up on Resolution 1325's provisions to increase women's involvement in decision-making in Burundi and Nepal, the previous sections have made clear that numerous remaining challenges need to be overcome if women are to be able to participate effectively in political processes. Through concerted efforts and initiatives by national and international stakeholders, the process of women's political advancement could be accelerated. This section presents a set of measures to promote and advance women's participation in decision-making in Burundi and Nepal (and other comparable cases), with a list of recommendations for governments, political parties, women's organizations and international actors.

6.1 To Governments

Burundi and Nepal are parties to several international treaties and laws that mandate governments to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in political structures and decision-making. While the two governments have made efforts to lower some of the structural barriers to women's participation in formal politics, the political environment of neither country is conducive to women's effective participation, and there is considerable room for improvement with regard to the governments' support for and incorporation of women's demands and initiatives in decision-making. In order to build space for women to participate in and influence political decision-making, it is essential that the Burundian and Nepali governments:

- 1. Promote women's participation in political decision-making.** Beyond the adoption of quotas, the governments should work proactively and undertake public campaigns to emphasize the importance of women's participation in political decision-making. The governments should introduce complementary activities to increase the public's understanding of the quotas as an integral part of efforts to achieve gender equality and democratic governance, and provide resources to all parties for the training of women in the skills required to become political candidates and leaders.
- 2. Mandate increased women's representation in leadership positions.** Both governments should introduce policies that oblige political parties to better integrate measures for gender equality in their leadership structures and political platforms, and ensure that women participate and hold decision-making positions in all committees, commissions and other political forums.
- 3. Consult women's organizations.** The Burundian and Nepali governments should acknowledge women's organizations as a significant source of expertise, knowledge and experience in dealing with issues associated with gender, peace and security. Accordingly, they should ensure regular, systematic and long-term consultation with and engagement of women's organizations to gain a better understanding of women's concerns and needs, which should be integrated into policy formulation and implementation.

6.2 To Political Parties

Political parties are the main gatekeepers for women's political participation. Political parties decide who will be listed on the ballot and in what place, and are the arena where policies are debated and decided upon. In order to advance women's effective participation within this realm, political parties should thus:

- 1. Implement measures to enhance gender equality.** In order to change male-dominated political cultures, all political parties should adopt appropriate measures and policies, such as party quotas, transparent criteria and party-list placement designed to promote the election of women (e.g. 'zebra' lists alternating men and women), along with funding for women candidates and women party members. They should adopt party rules mandating gender balance in their party management and policy committees, and train all political candidates in gender-related issues, including gender awareness. Political parties should also address how they might create a more enabling environment for women to engage in politics – for instance, by introducing measures and working hours that allow women and men to contribute equally to decision-making processes, and organizing capacity-building and leadership training for female leaders.
- 2. Include women in decision-making bodies.** In order to ensure and advance women's participation, political parties should adopt internal decision-making structures that are democratic rather than closed, and encourage women to bring their voices and concerns to political discussions and forums, also on issues that are not gender-related.
- 3. Incorporate women's views in policy agendas.** Political parties should utilize the experience and knowledge of women's organizations, which also have ties with women at the grassroots level, to facilitate the incorporation of local women's concerns and needs into their policy formulation.

6.3 To Women's Organizations

Civil society is a key arena for women's engagement in public and political life in Burundi and Nepal, and in both countries women's organizations and networks have been a driving force behind the passage of legislation that protects the rights and needs of women. In order to maintain the pressure for the implementation of Resolution 1325, it is vital that women's organizations:

- 1. Monitor the government's actions.** Women's organizations should continue to monitor the efforts of governments to implement Resolution 1325; examine to what extent gender-equality legislation and other policies affecting women are put into practice; hold governments accountable for their commitments to international policies on women's rights; and disseminate information broadly.
- 2. Continue to advocate for women's political participation and rights.** In order to promote implementation of Resolution 1325's provisions, it is important that women's organizations continue to raise awareness of the importance of women's political

participation, as well as of the barriers women face in the political arena, including discriminatory practices. Women's organizations should maintain their advocacy for women to participate and hold decision-making positions in all political institutions, and push for the adoption and implementation of legislation that protects the rights of women.

- 3. Support women in political office.** Women's organizations should support women in political office by promoting increased visibility of female politicians through highlighting their political achievements in the media, and by exchanging and disseminating good practices and lessons learned. They should also use their ties with the community level to serve as a link between women politicians and women at the grassroots, and should encourage women in political office to use this link to mobilize and communicate with voters.
- 4. Strengthen women's platforms and partnerships.** Experience from Burundi and Nepal shows that women's organizations have more political leverage when they unite and lobby jointly for issues of concern to women. In order to uphold the pressure on their governments to implement Resolution 1325, women's organizations should aim at strengthening these joint platforms and partnerships. They should also reinforce their partnerships with political parties, and encourage men and women in political office to develop cross-party cooperation and policies to galvanize support for gender-friendly policies and legal or constitutional reform.
- 5. Reach out to men.** Engaging men as advocates and allies is crucial for promoting gender equality and women's political participation. Women's organizations should thus increase their efforts to reach out to male politicians when lobbying for women's rights and concerns; seek to integrate men into their initiatives to promote women's political progress; and highlight and celebrate stories of men who challenge gender stereotypes and demonstrate commitment to gender equality.

6.4 To International Actors

International actors have played crucial roles in the advancement of women's participation in political decision-making in Burundi and Nepal. However, the international community should not rest on its laurels. Acknowledging the importance of sustaining women's active political participation in the crucial post-conflict period, international actors should continue to encourage policies and reviewing existing funding mechanisms to further strengthen women's political participation in the two countries. Within their mandates, international actors should:

- 1. Encourage gender balance in political institutions.** International actors should encourage the Burundian and Nepali governments to comply with international laws and agreements, including Resolution 1325, and adopt a more gender-inclusive approach in decision-making. Donors should encourage heads of government to exercise gender parity in executive appointments, signal to governments that aid is conditional on good-faith efforts to involve women in decision-making, and promote the collection of gender-disaggregated data on women in politics and other channels of political influence.

- 2. Assist gender mainstreaming in political parties.** With the aim of promoting gender equality inside political parties, international actors should make the case for the importance of gender equality in decision-making in their dialogues with the governments and political parties of Burundi and Nepal, and support training programmes on gender-related issues that include both female and male members of political parties.
- 3. Support women's political capacity-building.** In order to strengthen female politicians' ability to participate effectively in decision-making, the international donor community should support activities and training programmes aimed at increasing women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership, and support fundraising activities that may assist women in overcoming the financial barriers related to electoral campaigns. Furthermore, international actors should stimulate and facilitate women politicians' networking with women's organizations; support long-term programmes to develop cross-party cooperation and policies among men and women members of parliament; and encourage exchange of information and best practices on ways to advance women's participation in politics.
- 4. Promote the sustainability and diversity of women's organizations.** Acknowledging the importance of sustaining women's active participation in public and political life, international partners should review existing funding mechanisms to further strengthen women's organizations in Burundi and Nepal. Importantly, international actors should consider possibilities for allocating more flexible and multiyear funding, such as core grants with less stringent funding requirements, in order to provide women's organizations with the flexibility needed to develop long-term programmes and activities around specific concerns and needs of women as defined by the local community, instead of as defined by funders. Furthermore, international partners should develop strategies aimed at diversifying funding schemes to increase the opportunities of smaller grassroots women's organizations to receive funding. International actors should also support training in alternative ways of generating income, along with efforts aimed at building the operational capacity of women's organizations, so that these organizations can become more self-reliant.
- 5. Promote women's participation in peace negotiations.** While the main focus of this report has been on post-conflict decision-making, the importance of ensuring women's inclusion in peace processes should not be overlooked. Experience in various countries suggests that women's participation in peace negotiations may lay the ground for a more gender-inclusive regime in the post-conflict period. Although women in Burundi and Nepal were denied the opportunity to take part in their countries' peace negotiations, it is important that international actors continue to work proactively and exert political pressure on teams involved in peace negotiations to include provisions that support women's participation in peace talks, as well as in post-conflict decision-making.

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8. Appendix

8.1 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325(2000)

Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)

On Women, Peace and Security

Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting, on 31 October 2000

The Security Council,

Recalling its resolutions 1261 (1999) of 25 August 1999, 1265 (1999) of 17 September 1999, 1296 (2000) of 19 April 2000 and 1314 (2000) of 11 August 2000, as well as relevant statements of its President and recalling also the statement of its President, to the press on the occasion of the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace of 8 March 2000 (SC/6816),

Recalling also the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/52/231) as well as those contained in the outcome document of the twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the twenty-first century" (A/S-23/10/Rev.1), in particular those concerning women and armed conflict,

Bearing in mind the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the primary responsibility of the Security Council under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security,

Expressing concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements, and recognizing the consequent impact this has on durable peace and reconciliation,

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

Reaffirming also the need to implement fully international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts,

Emphasizing the need for all parties to ensure that mine clearance and mine awareness programmes take into account the special needs of women and girls,

Recognizing the urgent need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and in this regard noting the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations (S/2000/693),

Recognizing also the importance of the recommendation contained in the statement of its President to the press of 8 March 2000 for specialized training for all peacekeeping personnel on the protection, special needs and human rights of women and children in conflict situations,

Recognizing that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security,

Noting the need to consolidate data on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls,

1. **Urges** Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict;
2. **Encourages** the Secretary-General to implement his strategic plan of action (A/49/587) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes;
3. **Urges** the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf, and in this regard calls on Member States to provide candidates to the Secretary-General, for inclusion in a regularly updated centralized roster;
4. **Further** urges the Secretary-General to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel;
5. **Expresses** its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations and urges the Secretary-General to ensure that, where appropriate, field operations include a gender component;
6. **Requests** the Secretary-General to provide to Member States training guidelines and materials on the protection, rights and the particular needs of women, as well as on the importance of involving women in all peacekeeping and peace-building measures, invites Member States to incorporate these elements as well as HIV/AIDS awareness training into their national training programmes for military and civilian police personnel in preparation for deployment and further requests the Secretary-General to ensure that civilian personnel of peacekeeping operations receive similar training;
7. **Urges** Member States to increase their voluntary financial, technical and logistical support for gender-sensitive training efforts, including those undertaken by relevant funds and programmes, inter alia, the United Nations Fund for Women and United Nations Children's Fund, and by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other relevant bodies;
8. **Calls** on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, inter alia: (a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; (b) Measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements; (c) Measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary;
9. **Calls** upon all parties to armed conflict to respectfully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls as civilians, in particular the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Refugee Convention of 1951 and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the Convention Security Council - 5 - Press Release SC/6942 4213th Meeting (PM) 31 October 2000 on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the two Optional Protocols thereto of 25 May 2000, and to bear in mind the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;
10. **Calls** on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict;
11. **Emphasizes** the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes including those relating to sexual violence against women and girls, and in this regard, stresses the need to exclude these crimes, where feasible from amnesty provisions;

12. ***Calls*** upon all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, and to take into account the particular needs of women and girls, including in their design, and recalls its resolution 1208 (1998) of 19 November 1998;
13. ***Encourages*** all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants;
14. ***Reaffirms*** its readiness, whenever measures are adopted under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, to give consideration to their potential impact on the civilian population, bearing in mind the special needs of women and girls, in order to consider appropriate humanitarian exemptions;
15. ***Expresses*** its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take into account gender considerations and the rights of women, including through consultation with local and international women's groups;
16. ***Invites*** the Secretary-General to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution, and further invites him to submit a report to the Security Council on the results of this study and to make this available to all Member States of the United Nations;
17. ***Requests*** the Secretary-General, where appropriate, to include in his reporting to the Security Council, progress on gender mainstreaming throughout peacekeeping missions and all other aspects relating to women and girls;
18. ***Decides*** to remain actively seized of the matter.

Women's Political Participation and Influence in Post-Conflict Burundi and Nepal

Based on case studies of two countries that recently emerged from armed internal conflict – Burundi and Nepal – this report examines one fundamental aspect of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325(2000): the provisions to increase women's participation in post-conflict decision-making. While Burundi and Nepal display many differences, the two countries present interesting similarities in terms of achievements and challenges in relation to involving women in decision-making following the end of armed conflict. For example, women in both countries have tradi-

tionally been barred from access to public and political life, and during the Burundian and Nepali peace processes no woman took part in the formal negotiations in either country. Yet, Burundi and Nepal stand out in their efforts to advance women's involvement in national politics following the end of armed conflict. Introduction of mechanisms for affirmative action prior to the first post-conflict elections in each of the two countries led women to obtain close to one-third of the seats in their respective legislatures. Women in civil society have also been heralded for their mobilization and

efforts throughout the peace and post-conflict process in both countries, and women's organizations have been an important driving force behind women's engagement in public and political life. Drawing on information gathered through interviews with key actors in Burundi and Nepal, this report goes beyond merely numerical aspects of women's participation in decision-making, revealing both progress made and the obstacles that remain for women's effective participation in the two countries' post-conflict political processes.