

Second N-PEACE Regional Training of the
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VOLUME

2

Women's Perspectives of Peace and Security



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*



ABOUT N-PEACE NETWORK

The N-Peace (Engage for Peace, Equality, Access, Community and Empowerment) Network is a multi-country initiative managed by UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre (APRC) with UNDP Offices across Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Nepal, Afghanistan and the Philippines, in partnership with Search for Common Ground, the Institute for Inclusive Security and supported by AusAID. The network serves as a means for engagement between civil society, government, and other groups on the issues of Women, Peace and Security, and conflict prevention. It works to support women's networks and leadership capacities to build peace and empower their communities. To learn more visit: www.n-peace.net.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

In November 2012, a second group of women from the N-Peace network countries were trained through a training of trainers programme carried out by UNDP APRC and the Institute for Inclusive Security. This intensive training equipped women with knowledge and skills to advance Women, Peace & Security issues. The stories that fill these pages were shared by the second batch of N-Peace trainers who offered their reflections on peace and security in their respective countries. This volume is the second in a series of such reflections by women peace advocates in Asia. The overall conceptualization of this e-publication is managed by the Regional Crisis Prevention and Recovery team at the UNDP Asia Pacific Regional Centre.

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FOREWORD

The Women, Peace & Security (WPS) agenda has gained momentum in recent years across Asia-Pacific in countries affected by conflict. Women's movements, at grassroots to national levels, are working to advance protection from sexual and gender-based violence and strengthen the role of women in conflict prevention, resolution and peace building.

The N-Peace network – a regional initiative spanning Afghanistan, Nepal, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines – builds on this momentum to advance provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. Today, 800 practitioners are connected through this vibrant network.

UNDP Asia Pacific Regional Centre and the Institute for Inclusive Security, as partners under the N-Peace initiative, train women peace advocates to advance the role of women in peace and security, and pass on their knowledge and skills to broaden country networks for advocacy on this agenda. In this e-publication, Women's Perspectives of Peace & Security Volume II, we have the privilege of showcasing the voices of women who form part of our second pool of N-Peace trainers.

This group represents the diversity of experience and rich talents of women in the N-Peace network; they include trainers, civil society representatives, an ordained minister, human rights activists, lawyers, public servants, writers and researchers. While their backgrounds are unique, common threads tie them together – each has witnessed the inordinate impacts of armed conflict on women and girls, and continues to work towards advancing peace in their countries.

Collectively their stories represent a sincere and bold call to action – women can and must be included as full and equal partners in peace and security.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Rosellini'.

Nicholas ROSELLINI

Deputy Assistant Administrator and
Deputy Regional Director
Regional Bureau for Asia & the Pacific (RBAP)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The N-Peace Facilitators from Regional Crisis Prevention and Recovery team at [UNDP Asia Pacific Regional Centre](#) would like to acknowledge the inspiring women who form the second pool of N-Peace Trainers. Ten of these women have shared their perspectives on peace and security for this series, which seeks to showcase the voices of peace advocates, working at the grassroots to national levels, across the N-Peace network countries. Their personal stories, from the frontlines of conflict-affected communities, form a significant contribution to the [Women, Peace & Security](#) agenda.

A special thank you to the N-Peace Network partner, [the Institute for Inclusive Security](#), for carrying out the second N-Peace Regional Training of the Trainers (ToT) to build the knowledge and skills of women to advance WPS priorities. The N-Peace trainers are currently implementing country-level trainings to further promote action on WPS by building capacities and strengthening in-country networks.

The N-Peace Facilitators would also like to acknowledge [the Australian Agency for International Development \(AusAID\)](#) for its ongoing support to the N-Peace network, including its capacity-building initiatives.



Women's schools for peace in Poso

Lian GOGALI, Indonesia

Lian Gogali, a native to the Poso District of Central Sulawesi, is the founder and director of Institute Mosintuwu (means togetherness), the first foundation in the Poso region to unite women and children from different social, religious and ethnic backgrounds. The Institute Mosintuwu aims to build communication and trust among different communities after the decade-long conflict between Muslim and Christians. Within this organization, she has also established an Interfaith Women's School to create an interfaith grassroots movement in the conflict affected areas. In 2012, The Women School was implemented in 24 villages across the Poso district. Lian Gogali was first recipient of the Coexist Prize, from the Coexist Foundation (2012) honoring her outstanding and courageous work. She has also written a book, *"The Poso Conflict: Voices of Women and Children Towards Reconciliation and Remembrance"* (2009), on how survivors struggled to surmount their trauma and recreate a community of religious co-existence.

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I grew up in a small, remote Christian village in Poso, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. In 1997 I left to go to Yogyakarta, on the island of Java, to gain a university degree in Theology. I never planned on returning. But when my father suddenly died two years later, I returned to Poso for his funeral.

I discovered that the Poso I had left behind was gone. In its place was a region where Muslims and Christians were pitted against each other in a series of brutal riots and violent attacks.

I returned to find members of my family had died and my sister's house had been burnt down by Muslims, causing her family to become internally displaced in camps with terrible sanitation standards. The school I had attended as a child was turned to rubble.

Many places where we had lived our normal lives were swallowed up by the violence. Poso was in ruins. It was only the beginning of a terrible near decade long conflict that resulted in thousands dead. The area became extremely segregated between Muslims and Christians, and no one could cross those boundaries without threat of being killed.

As part of my master's program, in 2002 I came back to Poso to carry out research in IDP camps. Many experiences during this time marked me deeply and, looking back now, changed the course of my life entirely, which makes me stay in Poso to work for the women and children.

WOMEN ACTING FOR PEACE ACROSS CONFLICT LINES

Since the beginning of the conflict media sources had only been telling the stories of violence; stories of the killings and slaughter between Muslims and Christians. But when I lived with women and children in the refugee camps, I heard many different stories about how Muslims and Christians had helped and rescued each other during the conflict, at times even risking their own lives.

One story that inspired me was about a group of Muslim women and children refugees who were starving to death in the jungle. One day they ran into a group of refugee Christian women and children. Instead of running away from each other, the Christian group of women gave the Muslims food and drink.

Another story was from a Christian family. People from outside their village had come to burn it down and kill all the Christians. As they were searching for Christians in the village, the Muslim women let them hide in their houses and gave them headscarves to disguise them as Muslims. After they got rid of the people who wanted to burn down the village, the women protected and guarded each other to safety. Stories like these were rarely told in the media. But in the camps I had the privilege of hearing them first hand.

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Learning together and striving for peace collectively has also created a grassroots movement of women peace advocates. I have proudly seen this movement grow in numbers and momentum

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A SCHOOL FOR PEACE & WOMEN

It was these stories of peace that inspired my permanent return to Poso. Even though I knew I was facing social ostracism, as I had newly become a single mother, I simply could not forget about these women and children. I saw that women in Poso were the most untapped resource for creating social harmony and peace and I had a dream to establish an alternative school that teaches religious tolerance, peace, and people's rights through a school for women.

This was a personally challenging time in my life. One year after I came home, I had to fight for my own rights to have an equal position and be recognized by the community. At the time, my family, and even the women's rights activists and peace organizations in my community asked me to leave the city because of my social status. Even though I am an educated woman, it was a difficult period. I can only imagine what the thousands of women who are not educated go through in this daily struggle just to survive in a patriarchal system.

I strongly believe that education is key to empowering women. Driven by this belief and inspired by the women of peace in the camps, in 2009 this dream became a reality and I founded Institute Mosintuwu, which means togetherness. Through this initiative I started the Women's School, which now has 24 sites where women are taught the importance of dialogue to achieve peaceful living and prevent conflict.

Learning together and striving for peace collectively has also created a grassroots movement of women peace advocates. I have proudly seen this movement grow in numbers and

momentum. I have also come to see that elevating the voices of women, when rooted in interfaith dialogue has the potential to impact not only a peaceful future for Poso, but also its economic and social development.

WOMEN MOVE TO STOP RECENT VIOLENCE

In late 2012 when incidences of violence in Poso district erupted, disrupting economic and social life and causing fear in the community, members of the Mosintuwu's Women's School, who call themselves the Community of Poso Women for Peace and Justice, were quick to act. The group successfully convened a peace rally attended by women from different religions – Islam, Christianity, Hinduism – and various ethnicities.

In scorching heat, amid high-tensions following a shooting, women who are mostly housewives made speeches stressing the importance of continuing to work together to build peace and reject all forms of violence in Poso. There was no fear from the women. Bravely they formed a united front for peace.

I hope to develop my interfaith organization and this movement to connect grassroots communities throughout Indonesia and the world. It is my dream to expand this work to reach and connect more women, who will not only integrate dialogue into their daily life, but will campaign for harmony in diversity and work together to achieve peace and security.





The peace process in Afghanistan

Dr. Monisa Sherzada HASSAN, Afghanistan

Dr. Monisa Sherzada HASSAN, is currently the Gender Advisor to the Joint Secretariat for the High Peace Council (HPC), Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP). She previously worked at the Women Capacity Development Social Association (AWCDSA) and served as an Honorary Advisor to the Education Centre for Poor Women and Girls in Kabul (ECW) since 2003. From 2005 to 2007, she served as a medical staff at the Amendatory Commission and from 2003 to 2004 she worked as a newscaster for the national radio and TV in Afghanistan. Prior to this, Dr. Hassan worked in the Afghanistan Embassy in Berlin, Germany. She is also a member of the Afghan Women Union (VAF) in Germany. Dr. Hassan graduated from Kabul Medical University as a General Physician in 2008. She holds a Bachelor of Law and Politics from Kabul University and a Master of German Language, Literature and Political Science from Essen University, Germany.

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Within the framework of the High Peace Council we have established gender policies and we are working closely with national and regional networks

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Before the occupation by the Soviet Union, the civil war, and the emergence and the fall of the Taliban, I had the chance to grow up in a country that was just as cosmopolitan as France or Britain. One could literally feel the cultural pulse throughout every part of Afghanistan.

In my youth, I was a girl-scout. I grew up believing and being taught that there is no difference in the abilities of men or women. It is my wish that Afghan people, and particularly Afghan women, have the same opportunities I did. The course of their lives and ability to achieve success should not be pre-determined by gender.

The era in which I grew up bears little resemblance to Afghanistan today, wrecked by three decades of conflict. Yet, knowing this chapter of our history bestows me with faith – war and the oppression of women is not inevitable.

THE ARCHITECTURE FOR PEACE

The High Peace Council (HPC) and Provincial Peace Committees (PPCs) support Afghanistan's Peace & Reintegration Programme (APRP), which aims to reintegrate insurgents in return for security, jobs and other incentives. As a Gender Advisor to the Joint Secretariat of the High Peace Council, I work on women's issues and in close collaboration with the female members of this peace-making body.

Progressive steps have been made towards women's inclusion in the peace process. At the founding of the High Peace Council, nine women were appointed as members out of the 70 member seats. While these numbers are not ideal, I believe these female members play a significant role in the committees to which they have been assigned.

Within the framework of the HPC we have established gender policies and we are working closely with national and regional networks, civil society groups, and the international community. By collaborating with civil society organizations, I help to expand women's engagement in these Government-led processes.

I also coordinate seminars that are designed to meet the needs of the female members of the HPC and build their skills and capacities so they can effectively engage in processes towards reintegration and reconciliation. Whether it is communications or negotiations skills, it is imperative that we support women to function as active members of the HPC and the PPC.

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Afghan women
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HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Despite the obstacles to women's agency, I am inspired by the resilience of Afghan women. I am also inspired by hope for the future, and love for my country. In the future, I hope that not a single Afghan woman has to leave her country, or shed a single tear for the loss of a family member to war.

I hope that Afghan women will collectively emerge from the shadows and sidelines of Afghan society and finally be acknowledged as leaders in the key decisions we have to undertake. It is my heartfelt wish that Afghan women are able to turn over these dark chapters in our history in partnership with men.



PATRIARCHY AND POWER

While there are certainly capacity gaps that still need to be addressed for women's meaningful participation in the peace process, many of the restrictions for women are steeped in conservatism and religious values. These are values which are tightly woven within the social fabric of Afghanistan today.

Afghan society, with its religious affiliations and religious commands, constricts women's ability to access avenues to pursue empowerment and leadership opportunities. The patriarchal power dynamics of Afghan society mean that women are highly dependent on male family members, religious leaders, and government representatives as their decision-makers, putting women in a position of inferiority.

Afghan women cannot act as public figures without adhering to these religious and conservative tenets. Equally, women need the support of the male religious leaders and also the support of male community leaders, such as Jihadi leaders, in order to realize various projects and work towards women's empowerment.

Gaining the support of these leaders requires that women adhere to their ideology; thus, not enabling or empowering them to work on advancing women's role in society and decision-making. As a result, their work remains symbolic. Because adhering to these leaders' aspirations is about internalizing their ideology and not about what they, as women, envision for Afghan women.



Localizing women's participation in peace building

Myra M. TAMBOR, Philippines

Myra M. TAMBOR, is widely known in the province of Samar for her radio programs on current affairs. She is also the Executive Director of the Katungod han Samarena Foundation, a Non-Government Organization which supports women's rights and empowerment in the conflict areas of Samar. Under her leadership, the organization is working to mainstream gender equality within local government units and is pursuing local legislation for the integration of provisions within the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 in impoverished Samar. She actively works for integration of peace and women's issues in outcomes from the Philippines National Anti-Poverty Commission where she sits as women council representative for the Visayas region.

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In the province of Samar, we have been able to reach out to local government units to deepen their understanding of UNSCR 1325 & 1820

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As a child, I grew up in a part of the Philippines affected by armed conflict and violence. I remember nights when my parents would wake me from my sleep as rebels had raided our town. I vividly recall the pounding noise of gunfire and footsteps of panic as people ran outside our house. I remember my parents trembling carrying their children to safety.

Today, because of the continued armed struggle, our province Samar is one of the poorest, despite its vast natural resources. To break this cycle and carve out a new path, policies promoting inclusive peace and development, including the role of women, must be widely localized.

UNSCR 1325: AT NATIONAL TO LOCAL LEVELS

In recent years, the Government of the Philippines has made strides towards reforms for gender equality, with legislation and policies promoting women's participation and equality in our country's development. With funds of 5 percent earmarked specifically for gender across all government agency budgets, we have a financial commitment to progress this agenda.

Unfortunately, from my experience I have seen that the implementation of this budget to benefit women at the local level is very weak. Nonetheless, I am happy to say that women's participation in peacemaking and peace building is growing in numbers and in strength across the country.

I believe much of this has been possible thanks to efforts at the top with the leadership of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Secretary Teresita Deles.

The strong women non-government organizations and women's networks based in Manila are also truly moving mountains and bridging gaps from Malacanang Palace, to national leaders, and right down into local communities.

These dynamic national alliances have inspired community women like us to do more in organizing women, awareness raising on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, and capacity development in communities affected by conflict.

With the support of Women Engaged in Action On 1325 (WE ACT 1325) – a national network of women in peace, human rights and women's organizations advancing UNSCR 1325 – in the province of Samar we have been able to reach out to local government units to deepen their understanding of UNSCR 1325 & 1820 and the Philippine National Action Plan (PNAP) for the implementation of this agenda. We have also engaged civil society organizations of women to claim their rights based on provisions of these Resolutions.

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As of this writing, four towns have passed resolutions on the localization of the PNAP 1325 & 1820

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Recently, in partnership with WE ACT 1325, the network conducted an orientation and awareness raising initiative on UNSCR 1325 & 1820 in the town of Calbiga, followed by three municipalities in conflict-affected areas of Matuguinao, San Jorge and San Jose de Buan. These events were attended by local government officials, women's organizations and national government agencies.

As of this writing, four towns have passed resolutions on the localization of the PNAP 1325 & 1820, incorporating provisions into their gender and development plans, and allocating substantial funds for implementation. We hope to replicate the same to other conflict-affected areas in the whole Samar Island. I am also conceptualizing a monitoring mechanism to gauge the impact of such efforts, and to identify areas of needed improvements for the existing interventions at the local level.

Much more work needs to be done for the impacts of this agenda to be felt by local women and her community itself. At this point in time, women in my part of the country are still struggling to take on meaningful roles in development and peace building processes. Women in rural areas remain isolated from these processes and are not taken seriously by leaders at the community level.

CHANGING ATTITUDES ON WOMEN, PEACE & SECURITY

In progressing the localization of UNSCR 1325 – and also respect for international human rights instruments – gaining the support of the military and rebels has remained a challenge. Trying to convince both groups that Samar women and children should be foremost considered in the military operations, and encounters with the rebels, has received mixed receptions.

To increase respect for this agenda and international instruments, including International Humanitarian Law (IHL), through my organization Katungod han Samarena (Rights of Samar Women Organization) and Sulong CARHRIHL Network, I monitor various violations, documenting and sharing these inhumane cases. This brings attention to tragic suffering which is avoidable if the tools to provide protection were indeed respected.

For people to understand how we can transform these violent patterns of behavior, I believe a wider understanding of security and peace needs to exist in the minds of the people in Samar. Development and progress towards peace will never be achieved if we continue to believe that owning a weapon makes a man strong and secure within a community. Within this mindset, insecurity and fear thrive.

Local perceptions of women must also be challenged so to accommodate for positive changes outlined within provisions of the PNAP on 1325 & 1820 and localization plans. The more inclusive process will undoubtedly produce the most sustainable outcomes for all the people of Samar.





The war-affected women of Sri Lanka

Meloney PALIHAKKARA, Sri Lanka

Meloney PALIHAKKARA, works at the Centre for the Study of Human Rights, University of Colombo as a Senior Project Officer. She has 12 year experience in designing curricular and trainer guides, and implementing training programmes and courses on human rights, women's rights, and UNSCR 1325, aimed at various target groups including vulnerable communities in Sri Lanka. Ms. Palihakkara is also a researcher with experience investigating issues relevant to human rights. Ms. Palihakkara holds a Bachelor of Law and a Master of Law from the University of Colombo. She also holds a Graduate Diploma in Business Management, University of Colombo.

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As a human rights lawyer, I have always sought to espouse the key tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I strongly believe that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and that everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms without any distinction based on sex.

Since 1999 I have been actively engaged in the protection and promotion of human rights in my country, Sri Lanka. Given our country's violent history, I believe it is the right time to secure a dignified life for war-affected persons, especially women, whose human rights have been severely violated throughout decades of conflict.

I personally hope to see the Sri Lankan Government create mechanisms to address war-affected persons' grievances, specifically targeting women, through a human-rights based approach. From my exposure to war affected women, including widows, the many stories I have heard of women unable to exercise their basic rights underscores this absolute need for strengthening interventions.

STORIES OF INSECURITY EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN

Not long ago, I met a thirty-two year old woman from Vanni, in northern Sri Lanka. At the time she was living in Veladi with her only living child. Wishing to remain nameless, she told me about how she witnessed the tragic death of her family members during the Humanitarian Operations.

'My two children and husband were killed before my very own eyes. I could not forget that unfortunate incident and of course how can I forget them?' she said.

Seared by these tragic memories, she suffers from depression and anxiety. She lives in a temporary shelter on her husband's land, and works as a daily laborer. She received no compensation for the deaths, yet remains motivated to work so she can provide her child with the best possible education.

I also met another war affected 27 year old mother with a child.

'I lost my beloved husband due to a shell attack during the Humanitarian Operations. I was unable to get his death certificate and I have also lost my personal documents; birth certificate, national identity card, deed, and all my education certificates.'

She was given a sewing machine by a Non-Government Organization for livelihood support. However, she was unable to earn a decent income by tailoring, as most of the families in the village were also given sewing machines. She earns Rs3500 per monthly by teaching in a nursery school in the village.

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War-affected women are socially and economically extremely vulnerable. They face many difficulties in their day-to-day lives

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These are just two of the thousands of stories of the war-affected women and widows in Sri Lanka. There are approximately eighty-six thousand widows in northern and eastern parts of the country. Many of them were widowed at a young age.

CHALLENGES ALONG THE ROAD AHEAD

War-affected women are socially and economically extremely vulnerable. They face many difficulties in their day-to-day lives, and lack of skills and livelihood opportunities prevent them from accessing secure employment. Most of them are engaged in unskilled labour on a daily payment basis. Due to this lack of security and low incomes, some poor women are pressed to engage in sex work to cover regular expenses of the family.

Similar to the woman from Vanni, war-affected women regularly suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. While dealing with the tragedy of their loved ones being killed or wounded, often before their very own eyes, they also have to be a pillar within their families nurturing traumatized offspring, all while performing duties as the sole breadwinner. Unfortunately, a barrier to many women in the north and east to receive medical treatment and support is a lack of Tamil speaking counselors and psychiatrists.

Many women also have to return to their hometowns without basic facilities and infrastructure, and live in temporary shelters on their own land or crown lands. Securing ownership of their land can also be challenging due to unavailability of death certificates of husbands, or other related documents.

With this absence of legal documents, many women have not received any compensation. Some do not even know about compensation procedures. From my experience, I have also seen that women also lack awareness on human rights and protection mechanisms; making them vulnerable, once again, in the post-conflict setting.

At this critical stage of our transition towards recovery, civil society organizations, community leaders, peace builders and human rights activists have a big role to play strengthening and empowering the war affected women. Moreover, the Government needs to broaden its support to services that truly reach this proportion of the population whose silent suffering cannot be ignored.

For many war-affected women, it is hard to see even a dim light along the road to recovery. I believe that the Government and other stakeholders must work together to build up their confidence and capacities, and empower war-affected women to deal with the past and help them to secure their rights and dignity in the future.





Building peace with the women of Maluku

Zakiyah SAMAL, Indonesia

Zakiyah'Kiky' SAMAL, is a humanitarian and peace worker from Ambon, Maluku Province, with over 11 years of experience working in the field of peace building and conflict management. She is the Founder and Chairperson of KANJOLI-Community for Peaceful Changes, a youth based organization that works with ex-combatants. She is also the co-founder of Walang Perempuan (Home for Women) a local Non-Government Organization working for peace building, women's rights and empowering communities in Maluku Province. Ms. Samal has experience working as a trainer and consultant with civil society organizations and Non-Government Organizations and she previously worked for a UNDP project, 'Peace through Development', as a Project Officer.

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We worked vertically to gather supporters from the elite – including the wives of officials – and horizontally, mobilizing women at the grassroots

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Two months after the conflict erupted in my city Ambon, Maluku Province, Indonesia, I started my humanitarian work. At the time I was forced to live in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. Countless people had been injured, forcibly expelled from their houses, and many were separated from their family members.

I remember the heavy sense of hopelessness we all felt weighed down by. There was something so deeply wrong in our lives. I asked myself – why do people suddenly become wild, and attack and slaughter each other? I could not make sense of it.

It didn't take me long to wake up from this sadness. I couldn't let it take me down any longer. I had to do something. So I started gathering children to teach them what they were missing in school. Almost all school activities had stopped for more than two years.

With growing numbers of pupils, my friends and I established an alternative school. We created places to learn and used space in collapsed buildings, and under trees for classes.

It became clear that many of the children and the women in the camps were suffering from trauma. Providing psycho-social support also became a key service to the families in the camp, which led us to create a local non-government organization for trauma-healing, especially for women and children.

To end the suffering I witnessed, and for women and children to rebuild their lives, I knew that peace was essential. I joined the first movement for peace in Maluku which was led by women. It was also the first interfaith civil society group initiating activities to assuage community tensions and take steps towards building peace.

A WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

In August 1999, the Vice-Governor of Maluku, who was a woman, came together with other concerned women, from religious groups and civil society, to discuss how to resolve the conflict. At this meeting the idea of a women's movement for peace was born. While its initial activities were coordinated in secret, the group took on the name *Gerakan Perempuan Peduli (GPP)* or Concerned Women's Movement.

Women who joined this movement came from different backgrounds, religions, and different struggling areas. We worked vertically to gather supporters from the elite – including the wives of officials – and horizontally, mobilizing women at the grassroots. The numbers grew quickly, as did the momentum to build peace.



We celebrated when the Maluku Government adopted the recommendations in the petition



While the conflict raged, the GPP coordinated interfaith public prayer sessions, campaigns to stop violence, street marches, and provided services to support conflict-affected persons, including counseling and training. Intensive communication strategies targeted the militia, religious leaders, high level bureaucrats, and military officials. Initiatives also reached out to women and children who were involved in the conflict, including youth engaged with the militia to become peace ambassadors and stop violence.

This crusade for peace by the GPP had several victories. Notably the petition, 'Conscience of Women', which was hand delivered by women peace activists who marched together to the government offices. We celebrated when the Maluku Government adopted the recommendations in the petition, which later became the basis for a government-led peace process. Women leaders from GPP were deservedly engaged in the negotiations which led to a peace agreement.

LOOKING BACK

While this women-led movement achieved great success for peace, I remember times during the conflict when some people showed very negative views towards my friends and I, for reaching out to both sides of the conflict and people from all communities that were suffering. For us, there were no sides. We provided services where there was greatest need.

Each time when we went to the IDP camps and found women and children welcoming us, I would see hope in their eyes. Through our presence they knew they were not alone. This is an invaluable reward I have received through my work and it continues to drive me today.





Filipino women peace makers in Mindanao

Scheherazaide PAHM, Philippines

Scheherazaide PAHM, is a peace advocate working with youth groups from Mindanao, Philippines. As a Youth Program Coordinator of the Mindanao Commission on Women, she is engaged in capacity-building young women on gender-principled leadership and conflict prevention, resolution and containment. She is the Convenor of the Mindanao Youth for Peace, a youth movement that promotes peace through upholding one's sense of cultural heritage while recognizing that diversity is a source of strength. She holds a degree in biology from the University of the Philippines Mindanao.

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I am hopeful that women of my region will seize this moment to carve out new roles and avenues toward gender equality.

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The signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro brings Mindanao at a critical phase in determining women's meaningful participation in peace building. We are all hopeful that this framework will lead towards achieving sustainable peace in Mindanao. This is also an opportune time for women to carefully define their stake in the new political entity.

As a Moro woman, born and raised in Mindanao, I am hopeful that women of my region will seize this moment to carve out new roles and avenues toward gender equality.

MORO AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN MEDIATORS

My involvement with the women's movement started in 2009. Since then I have been organizing young women into a movement that raises awareness of personal peace, while building their capacities on gender-principled leadership. I have also been conducting trainings on non-violent means of conflict resolution among youth and grassroots women.

In turn, my work has exposed me to rich opportunities to learn about women's engagement in community conflict resolution, including traditional means of resolving conflict used by Moro and indigenous groups in Mindanao.

In most cases, this process commences when the community calls for a recognized figure, usually a male, to settle the dispute. A woman relative of this figure will participate if brought to either observe the proceedings or to document the agreement between both parties. Through this practice, the woman eventually learns the skills of conflict resolution, until such a time that the community starts to come to her to settle their issues.

In this role, the woman mediator ensures that she has thorough information about the case. She then brings both parties together or talks to them separately when necessary. When judgment needs to be passed, she seeks guidance from the elders or spiritual leaders.

Decisions and agreements reached often adhere to the traditional justice system of the communities. The local government code of the country is also an option, especially when one of the parties involved does not belong to the same ethnic group. Rituals are sometimes held to seal the agreement and start the process of healing and reconciliation.

I have seen women's roles as mediators range from family disputes to large scale conflicts in the community. From these experiences, I learned that while culturally ascribed qualities and roles may restrict women's role in decision-making, at times it can also reinforce their important role in the community.

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we must remain
steadfast in ensuring
that women's voices at
all levels do not waver

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Qualities often associated with women, such as being calm and patient, have proven useful to cool down situations and diffuse tensions amongst conflicting parties in my region. While women may be seen as needing protection in some respects, women are also valued as neutral protectors of a community's best interests.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE FORMAL PEACE PROCESS

There have been notably efforts by both the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to engage women in the formal peace process. From the side of the MILF, it has for the first time recently appointed two Moro women to its Board of Consultants and Technical Working Group.

The GPH panel, on the other hand, has had women members since 2004 and is currently chaired by a woman. The newly created Transition Commission, a body tasked with drafting the Bangsamoro Basic Law, has selected four women out of its fifteen member composition. Women's civil society organizations are also actively engaged in lobbying for and monitoring women's meaningful participation, not only in the peace negotiations, but also for Mindanao's development.

I believe women's participation in the formal peace negotiations should be celebrated. Yet, we must remain steadfast in ensuring that women's voices at all levels do not waver. While there are women who already participate in community to national level decision-making for peace, we must continue to show solidarity for those who are still striving just to have their voices heard.

As the transition unfolds, I look forward to opportunities where a woman's participation in decision-making structures and mediation processes will be realized because of her own capabilities, instead of being a mere representative of her male relatives. I also hope that this window towards peace is pursued as an opening for women in my region to access their full rights.

While the government has taken concrete steps to promote gender equality and women's engagement in peace processes, even with legal provisions in place, many restrictions still confront Filipino women. These include gender-based violence, multiple burdens and socially constructed roles that limit women's participation in public life. In order to advance equality in a society where views on women's roles remain bound by culture and tradition, I believe that women themselves must fully understand, claim, and safeguard their rights in our pursuit of peace.





Women speak in Papua

Siti Rohmanatin FITRIANI, Indonesia

Siti Rohmanatin FITRIANI, is a trainer at the Social Welfare Training Center of Social Welfare Ministry of Indonesia. Previously Ms. Fitriani served as a researcher, training manager, and program designer for interventions associated with social development, poverty alleviation, social security, and community development. Previously she worked for the Non-Government Organisation Women Solidarity of Yogyakarta, empowering women affected by the earthquake in 2006. Ms. Fitriani writes on women's issues in newspapers and web publications. She holds a Master's Degree in Social Work, through which she carried out a dissertation on unwanted pregnancy services.

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Until moving to Papua from Java, I had never experienced conflict before my own eyes. Nor had I experienced this type of communal conflict

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Four years ago, as a civil servant, I was assigned to work in Papua – a province in the eastern part of Indonesia – where sentiments for independence are strong, a protracted conflict is alive, and violence is ubiquitous.

Until moving to Papua from Java, I had never experienced conflict before my own eyes. Nor had I experienced this type of communal conflict where groups try to kill each other using cleavers, bows, knives, or guns.

In the beginning, I was also staggered by the news cycle; distressing rotations each day and each week capturing the sprawling violence. I tried to understand the context better, yet felt threatened by the complexity of the conflict and myriad insecurities – physical, psychological, political, social, and economic.

There is sadly no sense of an approaching peace. The tensions just go up and down, rising with fear or fury. Sometimes I even feel the tensions between me and my friends, between me and my neighbors, even between me and the people I pass in public places.

I know that these feelings exist in part because I am Javanese and they are Papuans. I am from the ethnic group that is ultimately accused of being a conqueror of Papua, and a killer of Papuans through the Indonesian military.

BREEDING INSECURITY

I quickly came to notice that in Papua such feelings of insecurity were widespread and constant. This raised a question for me; 'if I feel insecure, and Papuans feel insecure, who does feel secure and comfortable in these circumstances? And is the ongoing conflict in Papua maintained by invisible powers for its own sake?'

I don't have answers to these questions. What I can say is that I have seen the impacts of people defining and dividing themselves along lines of ethnicity, race, religion, and gender. And I have realized that when one draws heavily on these cues we 'other' those who are different – different skin colour, different hair - and it is in this space between 'us' and 'them' where suspicion and prejudice flourish.

We have all suffered from jealousy at times. Some Papuans feel jealous because many newcomers are leading in the economic sector, while some newcomers are jealous because Papuans receive more privileges in other sectors. Entrenched conflict and fear is rampant everywhere – in the workplace, in the community, in Government.

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It is my hope that this small initiative I have started becomes a platform to launch Papuan women's voices into public discourses

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From my experience I have seen that the ideas and opinions of women in Papua are not adequately heard. Women are seen as incapable of making strategic plans and decisions. For instance, Papuan women are not allowed to be involved in cultural processes of decision making called "para-para".

It is my hope that this small initiative I have started becomes a platform to launch Papuan women's voices into public discourses and build a movement towards creating a more peaceful Papua.

Change never comes without dreams and struggles. While we are collectively imagining a better future for Papua, we are also fighting for that dream.

How can we live together in harmony if we suffer from such negative prejudices?

RAISING WOMEN'S VOICES

Trying to understand these tensions and prejudices made me think about what I can do to help this situation. I started thinking of strategies and activities and decided to do a social media campaign with women and reach out to community members. I started to build a community of women who care and are willing to engage in efforts towards peace in Papua. The community is called Perempuan Bicara, or, 'Women Speak'.

The Women Speak community started as a virtual place for discussion, which led some of us to come together for a face-to-face meeting. With many new comers to Papua engaged in this project, we wanted to reach out and build a dialogue between Papuan and non-Papuan women.

We also decided to target Papuan women who were selling betelnut, vegetables, and fruits in traditional markets, in front of shopping centers, and on roadsides. We came to them, had discussions, and got to know their story in order to create a narrative on Papuan women now, and in the future.

With women from this community, together we are building both a narrative on peace, and a coalition with other organisations working on peace issues in Papua. This coalition will speak to government to seek its commitment to solve the problems in Papua. The coalition will also seek to influence the Women Working Group in the Papua Citizens Committee, the official committee representing Papuan people to give input on Government policies in Papua.





Timorese women's voices in peace building

Filomena de Jesus PINTO, Timor-Leste

Filomena de Jesus Pinto, is currently working as a Program Officer for the International Republican Institute. In this role Ms. Pinto works closely with non-government organization and political parties, providing various kinds of capacity-building trainings, on topics such as law and regulation, and women's political participation. She has also conducted focus group discussions in 13 districts to identify issues to determine voter preferences and priorities. From 2003-2008 she worked with the International Catholic Migration Commission based in Dili, providing training for women on torture awareness, stress management, secondary stress management, small grant training, proposal writing, as well as counseling support.

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To help heal wounds from the conflict, I worked with women victims of human rights violations and torture

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Life in a post-conflict context is far from easy. There are many stages we have to go through as a new nation, within our communities, and individually. For a full transition to peace, support has been needed for people's psychological recovery.

To help heal wounds from the conflict, I worked with women victims of human rights violations and torture. This has included working with widows and carrying out memorial activities, such as resurrecting monuments to honor those who have passed and the suffering experienced by survivors.

I believe this work is important so women victims can overcome some of the horrific hardships they endured and gain the strength to fully function in their communities.

PROVIDING SPACE FOR WIDOWS' VOICES

Empowering women to be involved in decision-making for peace building has been challenging in Timor-Leste. Our patriarchal social systems often positions women outside of decision-making roles. Traditionally women are meant to have decisions made on their behalf by men, be that as the head of the family or in their community.

One experience working with widows in the village of Muapitine, District of Lospalos, stands out in my mind for engaging women in decision-making. At the time I was working for the International Catholic Migration Commission, providing training for women on torture awareness and stress management.

In 2005, I went to Muapitine with my colleague who was providing counseling to widows whose husbands had been tortured and killed before their very own eyes. We were also there to offer support in the process of building monuments for the victims that would stand as symbols of their suffering in efforts towards self-determination, or, ukun rasik an.

The decision to include the names of those who died as victims of torture required a lot of consideration among the widows. We were also faced with an issue regarding a tradition which requires that widows, together with their children, should provide two buffalos, one goat and money to an uncle of the family in order to recognize the widow's husband. Such donations were beyond the means of the widows.

SPEAKING OUT

During this process, I was appointed directly by the widows to lead a dialogue to resolve these issues and move forward with the process of honoring the

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As witnesses to their husbands being killed by the Indonesian military, it was important for the women to have a voice

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fallen. Key players in the dialogue included a sub-district administrator, chief of village, a traditional leader, and men and women representatives from the families. I encouraged the group to value the opportunity to listen to the voices of the widows, so that any solution for the community supported their healing.

The widows recommended to engrave their husbands' names on monuments in order to honor them as victims of torture. They also advocated for recognition of widows and orphans as heroes of the nation through subsidies similar to those for veterans. While many Timorese have received medals commemorating the deaths of husbands, children, and siblings, practical assistance is also essential to help alleviate their social and economic vulnerability, which is often linked to rights violations suffered.

As witnesses to their husbands being killed by the Indonesian military, it was important for the women to have a voice in the process of commemorating their loved ones. My involvement in the community was well received, particularly among the women who rarely have an opportunity to speak out publically.

In the future I hope that these monuments remain more than symbols and impart lessons to the next generation, teaching them of the suffering, patience, determination and struggle of women in their community who assisted their fellow countrymen in achieving independence.





Kachchakaduge Sumithra Nandani FERNANDO, is an activist and ordained minister working with the Methodist Church for 27 years. Previously, she worked with the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka for four years where she served as the Executive Secretary for the Women's Commission. She has a wide range of ministerial and pastoral experience working in war-torn areas where she is committed to building harmonious relationships with people of different communities estranged due to the ethnic conflict. At the height of the ethnic crisis, she undertook many risky assignments in order to strengthen peacemaking efforts. Sumithra is also actively involved in promoting gender, justice and equality for women. Presently she is engaged in a project for empowering war widows and conflict-affected children in the Wannu districts. Sumithra holds a Bachelor of Theology from the United Theological College of Bangalore and a Master of Women's Studies from the University of Southampton, United Kingdom.

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Widows of war are certainly among some of the most vulnerable groups of women in society

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Empowering war widows & children

K. Sumithra Nandani FERNANDO, Sri Lanka

'My husband was a fisherman. About five years ago, when he returned from the market, somebody checked his identity card and shot him dead,' says Jeyadavi weeping. This single mother, 23, is a resident of Wannu district.

'I have a five year-old daughter. I don't get help from the government or anybody else. My parents are the ones who look after me and my daughter. My father is a laborer. They have six other children,' she says.

The Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs of the Provincial Council of the East stated recently that there are 86,000 widows in the north and east of Sri Lanka; of whom 40,000 widows are in the north and 46,000 are in the east. Most of these women are widowed in their early twenties and left with one or two young children. Among these widows there are sick, disabled and old women. Others do not even know the whereabouts of their husbands.

Widows of war are certainly among some of the most vulnerable groups of women in society. Although the government has recognized the problem, from my personal experience, there is a need for greater commitment and services to truly help these women rebuild their lives. As an ordained minister, I carry out initiatives via the church which reach out to war widows and their children.

REBUILDING LIVES

During the war when I visited the refugee camps, I was struck by the vulnerability of the women and children. I spoke to many of them, and one-by-one each shared with me their story. I remember their eyes, pools of grief, filling with tears as they recounted what they had witnessed.

War not only creates an unyielding threat to women's physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing, but for many in the post-war context it creates uncertainty for their future, and their children's future.

Widowhood creates new pressures and challenges for women and children. It impacts the physical safety and mobility of women and can restrict their ability to access basic goods and services. Widowhood can similarly restrict women's ability to exercise their rights and access inheritance, land and property, adding to their vulnerability.

Among the many other challenges experienced by widows are the financial pressures as the family breadwinner, coping with post-conflict trauma, taking responsibility for the emotional well-being of one's family, and supporting the education of their children, who can also be unfairly treated due to their mother's status. On an emotional level, widows also need a shoulder to lean on and support to move away from memories of violence, death, disappearance, sexual assault and fear for one's life, to shape the future with new hope.

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I honor these women for their courage. Their struggle is however far from over.

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I honor these women for their courage. Their struggle is however far from over. Therefore, our journey to empower war widows and their children will continue!



Women whose husbands have 'disappeared' are exposed to the same hardships, but without official recognition of their status. They also deal with the insecurity and impact of not knowing the fate of their loved ones.

A community-based project, Empowering War Widows & Children for Shalom, is my personal initiative that supports widows and vulnerable children in their struggles to regain a quality of life eclipsed by the years of war. This initiative is one of the projects run by the Methodist Church Sri Lanka committed to promoting ethnic harmony and community development, and to assisting victims of war.

The church also offers skills development training, provides medical and psychological care, and aims to increase women's socioeconomic status in society, to make war widows valuable assets to their communities.

Working with war widows and hearing their stories encouraged my return to the camps in the northern and eastern districts many times. Via our programme, we supported the relocation of a group of widows who were therefore able to go back to their communities and rebuild their lives with our support. Their poignant stories later inspired me to write a book, *The Changing Role of Women in Conflict Situations*.

Being part of these types of initiatives which help women heal emotional wounds and mend their broken souls has personally been very humbling. The ability to foster this type of healing has become one of my personal strengths that yields high returns. I have been able to empower women in great need, while drawing strength and inspiration from them to empower myself.



Advancing the role of women in the security sector

Juliana Da CRUZ, Timor-Leste,

Juliana Da CRUZ, until recently worked for the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) as a Security Sector Reform (SSR) Gender Affairs Officer on the SSR Programme. In this position she worked to encourage women's participation in security forces, while also working with the security sector to create women-friendly conditions for their increased engagement. Prior to this role she worked for International NGOs in Kenya and Timor-Leste on gender issues in development and security, including field work in refugee camps in both locations. She has also designed and facilitated trainings for government staff in the security sector on domestic violence and gender. Ms. Da Cruz holds a Bachelor of Business in Tourism Management from Dili Institute of Technology.

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I believe with more women in the security sector, we can also strengthen our ability to tackle gender-based violence

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Throughout Timor-Leste's history of colonialism and occupation, women were deprived of opportunities to gain an education and gain the skills to become leaders.

As our country develops we need to transform this history of deprivation into story of historic gains for women. It is my personal wish to see women engaged as full partners participating in nation-building and decision-making across all sectors. Even in the traditionally male dominated areas, such as the security sector, I hope to see women's increased participation.

I believe with more women in the security sector, we can also strengthen our ability to tackle gender-based violence and protect women from many forms of violence to which they are disproportionately exposed.

INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

In Timor-Leste there has been increased political participation of women as voters and candidates in elections, as well as 38 percent women parliamentarians. Yet, in the security sector there has not been as much growth; currently there are 13 percent women in the Defense Force and 18 percent in the Police Force.

Women face numerous challenges to engage in these divisions. Cultural gender stereotypes are constraining factors and there is also a lack of trust from our leaders toward women who eschew traditional gender roles.

In my work to support the increased role of women in the security sector, I have collaborated with the government to provide capacity-building programmes to support women in this sector, and thereby increase their knowledge and ability to participate in decision-making roles. We also trained other stakeholders so they can effectively advocate for the integration of gender issues in security sector reform processes.

To encourage further mainstreaming of gender-sensitive policies, we previously carried out awareness raising initiatives, particularly on the National Action Plan (NAP) on Gender Based Violence (GBV). We also worked to strengthen connections on security matters, supporting local partners to act as an advocacy bridge between policy-makers and civil society organizations.

In conflict-affected communities we conducted research with partners to develop a gender-based understanding and analysis of local contexts. Using this knowledge, and to advance women's issues in the security sector, I helped provide technical support to the Secretary of State for Security.



Women's participation
in the security
sector and women's
protection from
violence are two sides
of the same coin



The Government of Timor-Leste has undertaken security sector reforms which have initially included an analysis of security institutions and a comprehensive public perception survey. The government is also developing a national security policy, and a gender-based analysis has been included in the review. This will include an analysis of capacity in the security sector with cases of sexual and gender-based violence and to prevent the occurrence of such violence.

On the whole, I believe that women's participation in the security sector and women's protection from violence are two sides of the same coin – and both can lead to women's increased development and participation in decision-making in Timor-Leste.



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