

# **WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN SECURITY**

7-8 December 1999, ESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand

UN ACC Inter-Agency Committee  
On Women and Gender Equality

OECD/DAC Working Party  
on Gender Equality

Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs

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FOREWORD

In the ten months since the joint InterAgency Committee on Women and Gender Equality-OECD/DAC Working Party on Women and Gender Equality Workshop on “Women’s Empowerment in the Context of Human Security” was convened, there have been several crucial developments which have expanded our understanding of the concept of human security.

On 8 March 2000, International Women’s Day, the United Nations Security Council issued a Statement recognizing that peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men. The Statement also affirmed that the equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The Security Council emphasized that if women are to play an equal part in security and maintaining peace they must be represented politically and economically at all levels of decision-making, both at the pre-conflict stage, during hostilities and at the point of peace-keeping, peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction. The importance of an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes while addressing armed and other conflicts was also underscored.

Practical strategies to ensure women’s security and empowerment in post-conflict situations were agreed in the Namibia Plan of Action on ‘Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations’ adopted at Windhoek on 31 May 2000. Subjects addressed during the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” also related to human security. Obstacles to the achievement for women of freedom from fear and freedom from want were identified, and specific actions for Government, regional and international organizations, non governmental organizations and other parts of civil society agreed. Several of these actions are directed at ensuring the equal participation of women in peace-keeping and peace-building. On 24 and 25 October 2000, the Security Council held an open discussion on women, peace and security. It adopted a far-reaching resolution (S/2000/1325) on the topic.

I am pleased to present the report of the workshop of women’s empowerment in the context of human security. In so doing, I am conscious that the report has been delayed, both as a result of the extraordinary pressures associated with the special session on Beijing+5, and the delay in submission of several of the report’s components.

Angela E.V. King  
Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

# COMMUNIQUÉ

## COMMUNIQUÉ

### **Women's Empowerment in the Context of Human Security**

From 7 to 8 December 1999, the third annual joint workshop of the United Nations Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and the OECD-DAC Working Party on Gender Equality met at ESCAP in Bangkok. The meeting focused on Women's Empowerment in the Context of Human Security. The meeting brought together participants from a broad range of UN organizations and representatives of DAC member countries and the World Bank.

Building on the two previous joint workshops – addressing Gender Mainstreaming (Geneva 1997) and the Rights-based Approach to Gender Equality (Rome 1998) – and in the context of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the discussions focused on concrete actions to promote the inter-linked issues of women's empowerment, gender equality and human security.

Enough to eat, a home, health, education, freedom from violence, safety during natural and man-made disasters, democracy, good governance and respect for human rights are all basic elements of human security. The evolving concept of human security also includes:

- shifting the emphasis from the security of states to the security of people;
- re-emphasizing the obligations of states to ensure the security of their citizens;
- recognizing the ways in which problems cross borders and boundaries;
- recognizing the importance of non-state actors;
- requiring accountability for violations of human rights and humanitarian law;
- acknowledging the need for multi-faceted responses to human security issues in times of peace and conflict, including conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction.

One missing element, however, in human security discussions has been an understanding of the fundamental differences and inequalities between women's and men's security. In order to address gender equality goals and objectives effectively, there are five specific and inter-related issues that need to be incorporated into the discussion of human security:

- Violence against women and girls
- Gender inequalities in control over resources
- Gender inequalities in power and decision-making
- Women's human rights
- Women (and men) as actors, not victims

Participants stressed that while threats to women's human security during times of war represent grave dangers, even in times of peace, millions of women and girls daily confront threats to their security in both the public and private sphere. United Nations organs and bodies concerned with peace and conflict resolution should be encouraged to take a broader view of human security to include gender equality. Workshop participants emphasized that good governance is a prerequisite for promoting security for both the individual and the state, and that a vision of good governance incorporates the full citizenship of women.

During the course of the workshop, participants emphasized that gender mainstreaming strategies pursued in human security interventions should be designed to promote women's empowerment. Participants stressed the inter-linkages between freedom from fear and freedom from want. For human security to encompass empowerment and rights, it is critical to consider three stages: survival, security and autonomy.

Given gaps in gender awareness of both policy and practice, the following actions were recommended in order to promote women's empowerment in the context of human security:

**At the policy level**

- Incorporate gender-sensitive legislation and adherence to CEDAW in policy discussions and actions.
- Build on experience in facilitating policy dialogue that benefits from the interaction of NGOs and other actors in civil society with governments to promote women's leadership.
- Establish effective accountability mechanisms for gender equality through more consistent documentation and dissemination of experiences and collection of data disaggregated by sex to influence policy formulation and operational activities.
- Recognize the leadership and innovative role that women are taking in conflict resolution and peace-building and support and incorporate these efforts in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction.

**At the level of practice**

- Create an enabling environment that supports women's empowerment and provides resources to organizations, including NGOs, that are actively involved in this process.
- Facilitate capacity development and improve legal literacy to ensure more effective use of the CEDAW mechanism and its Optional Protocol.
- Ensure women's participation and full gender mainstreaming in mandates and missions related to peace promotion and post conflict reconstruction.
- Ensure that all reporting to intergovernmental bodies on peace building, peacekeeping and reconstruction gives consistent attention to gender equality.
- Work to create a common database of materials relevant to gender equality and human security, including lessons learned, good practice, guidelines, terms of reference, training materials, research results and codes of conduct.

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## Executive summary of the proceedings

The workshop on women's empowerment in the context of human security convened by the United Nations Interagency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACGWE) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Working Party on Gender Equality of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), took place at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) from 7 to 8 December 1999.

The third in the series of joint workshops, the workshop brought together seventeen participants from the IACGWE, representing a total of twelve entities; ten representatives from the Working Party on Gender Equality representing X member States, one representative from the OECD Secretariat, one representative of the International Organization for Migration and one expert/resource person. Earlier workshops on gender mainstreaming and on the rights-based approach to women's empowerment and gender equality had been held at the International Labour Organization in Geneva in 1997 and the Food and Agricultural Organization in Rome in 1998 respectively.

The workshop was opened by Mr. Adrianus Mooy, Executive Director of ESCAP, who drew attention to the prospect of increased conflicts and fragmentation of States and national groups in the new millennium and the importance of considering the notion of human security in a broad way, so as to include some of the critical areas of concern addressed in the Beijing Platform for Action.

In her opening statement, Ms. Angela King noted that issue of human security had received growing attention since the Secretary-General's "Agenda for Peace" and its supplement in 1992 and 1995 respectively. The 1994 Human Development Report had advocated greater emphasis on people's security as opposed to territorial security in the formulation of the concept of human security, as well as a shift from the provision of security through armaments, to security through human development. The Human Development Report had identified seven dimensions required for human security: economic security; food security; environmental security; personal security; community security; and political security. Ms. King pointed out that while all people were faced with threats to their enjoyment of all these dimensions, women faced particular threats in this regard. Although the Platform for Action had identified many of the constituent requirements of women's human security, there had been no comprehensive analysis of these requirements. The workshop would provide a forum in which an understanding of the differences between the requirements of women and men with respect to human security would be examined. It would also provide multilaterals and bilaterals with an opportunity to address the potential of the human security agenda to advance women's empowerment, especially in their day-to-day work.

Ms. Diana Rivington reminded participants that it was well-known that women are active agents in solving their own problems and can turn adverse situations into sources of empowerment. Using the experience of post-conflict reconstruction Rwanda as a case study, she stressed that the critical challenge for multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies was to identify the support women needed and the best way to provide that support. Another important goal was to determine how these agencies could help to build connections between people, rather than contribute to divisions.

A background paper prepared by Ms. Beth Woronuk for the workshop entitled "Women's Empowerment in the Context of Human Security: A Discussion Paper", and commentary on that paper by Ms. Shanti Dairiam, provided the conceptual framework for the workshop. Both drew attention to the fact that discussions and priorities relating to human security have failed to reflect an understanding that women's security interests are often different from men's and have not highlighted women's empowerment as a priority.

The background paper proposed that "the challenge in looking at women's empowerment in the context of human security is to move beyond identifying 'women's issues' at the margins of the primary discussion. The goal is not to develop an annex to the primary discussion that highlights where and how women are the exception to general security issues. Rather the commitment to gender equality raised questions that influence the centre of the definition of human security". Two vital questions were posited: -  
"Whose security is being considered (which men's? which women's?) - How do gender



inequalities and differences affect people's ability (both women and men ---individually and collectively) to articulate their security needs and mobilize resources to meet those security needs?"

The background paper and the commentary concluded that although there was potential to raise women's empowerment issues in the context of human security, this would require concerted effort. The concept of human security must be reinterpreted to include a gender perspective and the notion of autonomy or empowerment factored into its definition. A framework of "Survival, Security and Autonomy" was suggested by Ms. Dairiam as providing relevant indicators, at least in respect of poverty alleviation, and she emphasized that programmes must go beyond those directed at survival, and include empowerment elements for results to be sustainable on a long-term basis.

Three concurrent working groups provided the opportunity for more focussed discussions on particular topics raised during the plenary discussion, while aspects of human security in the ESCAP region were considered at a working dinner.

Based on presentations by Japan and the United States of America, working group 1 discussed promoting women's empowerment and security through good governance, and considered how Member States of the United Nations, the international community, non-governmental organizations and individuals can enhance the empowerment of women and human security. Taking account of Gita Sen's definition of empowerment as the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives, the working group considered empowerment to focus on individual women, as well as women collectively. Good governance predicated respect for human rights, transparency, access to knowledge, resources and decision-making, as well as participation, all of which were essential for empowerment. Several actions were determined to be critical for good governance, and the working group identified actors responsible for the implementation of those actions. For example, the reduction or combating of violence in the household was regarded as a good governance activity, with responsible actors including Member States, NGOs and individuals.

Working group 2 addressed the subject of women at the peace-table: making a difference to human security at the national, regional and global level. Against the background of good practice examples provided by Australia and UNIFEM, in Bougainville and South Asia, respectively, the working group considered initiatives adopted in several contexts to increase women's involvement in conflict prevention and peace-building. The working group recommended regular reporting on the gender composition of peacekeeping missions, as well as the introduction of actions to ensure the mainstream of a gender perspective in this context. It also emphasized that information on successful initiatives, especially at country level, should also be collected and shared among and between multilateral and bilateral agencies.

Working group 3, which discussed a presentation by FAO, considered women's empowerment in the context of freedom from want. Taking the view that poverty is a violation of human rights and a denial of human development, the working group noted that the realization of freedom from want was affected by the changing role of the State in the provision of social and economic services, as well as the reduction of public expenditure. Globalization had also created new challenges, but had also provided new opportunities for women. Investment in the health and education of women and girls was agreed to be the best means of redistributing the benefits of economic growth and ensuring freedom from want. The importance of new technology in improving productivity, especially in the informal sector, and reducing drudgery was emphasized. The working group also drew attention to the connection between sharing of family responsibilities and freedom from domestic violence and the achievement of freedom from want.

From the presentations in plenary and in the working groups, a number of common ideas emerged. Participants agreed that categorizing freedom from want as primarily related to peace-time situations and freedom from fear to conflict situations was an oversimplification, as freedom from want and fear applied both in conflict and peace. Key requirements for both freedoms were transparent governance, a competitive political process, a politically active civil society and respect for the rule of law and human rights.

Where human security in conflict was concerned, the importance of moving beyond provision of assistance to an approach which emphasized equal and equitable representation was underlined. The linkage between women's empowerment and successful peace-keeping and reconstruction was highlighted. Thus, peace-keeping and reconstruction were situations in which new opportunities for women's empowerment could be found, while at the same time, women's empowerment supports peace-keeping and reconstruction. Participants agreed that the work of the Security Council and the Special Committee on Peace-keeping should incorporate a gender equality perspective, and that Governments in their peace-keeping and reconstruction efforts should focus on gender equality issues.

The impact of globalization and the recent economic crisis in Asia featured in discussions of freedom from want. Participants also emphasized the changing role of the State, especially with respect to the provision of services, as well as the growing importance of non-State actors in this regard.

The multifaceted nature of the concept of human security is reflected in the communique adopted by the workshop, as is the importance of viewing the concept through a gender perspective. Actions to promote women's empowerment in the context of human security, both with regard to the policy level and at the level of practice are included in the communique. These reflect and build on actions at the earlier joint workshops. Accordingly, the workshop recommended that the series of meetings between members of the two groups would continue with a workshop in 2000.

WELCOMING BY MR ADRIANUS MOOY,  
UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL, UNITED NATIONS  
AND EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Ms Angela King, Distinguished Participants,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to the United Nations Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and OECD/DAC Gender Focal Points AWorkshop on Women=Empowerment in the Context of Human Security≡. We are pleased to be able to host this important activity which follows similar ground-breaking workshops on the issues of gender mainstreaming and the rights-approach which made important contributions to the clarification and better understanding of those concepts and are now widely accepted as strategies for the empowerment of women.

As we stand poised to enter the new millennium, the process of globalization will inevitably have tremendous impact on the lives of women and men. While the the positive impacts will expand opportunities for women, other effects will need to be examined and managed. While there will be greater integration, the prospect of increased conflicts and fragmentation of states and national groups will also become an important feature . It is therefore extremely timely that you are gathered here to address the linkage between human security and the lives and status of women.

I note with interest that the workshop will be examining the concept of human security in a context beyond the conventional understanding of security of the State from foreign intervention or other types of armed conflict. It will indeed be a challenge to go beyond the concept of human security embodied in the AAgenda for Peace≡ to broaden the concept with the framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This will encompass the evolution of the traditional concept of human security to cover a state of well-being in which an individual or group is assured of protection from physical and mental harm, freedom from fear and anxiety, and freedom from want and is able to live life with dignity.

This concept of human security will cover many of the critical areas of concern raised in the Beijing Platform for Action, including security in situations of armed conflict, and from violence and trafficking and forced migration; from environmental depletion, food security, shelter and housing, and security from want for women in poverty and income security throughout their life cycle. The issues are formidable, for which further analysis and understanding are required.

As a multi-sectoral regional commission, many of these issues are of great importance and relevance to ESCAP. Within the last few months, we have convened meetings which have focused on regional preparations for the global reviews of the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the Social Summit. We have also had intergovernmental legislative committee meetings on environment and natural resources, and on poverty alleviation at which the theme was on social security and social safety nets. Human security issues were also raised at the ESCAP regional meeting in preparation for the Millennium Assembly.

I am confident that with your collective wisdom, knowledge and experience, the deliberations and outcome of this workshop will contribute invaluablely to the discourse on human security. I wish you all success as you embark on the challenging task ahead of you.

Thank you.

STATEMENT BY MS. ANGELA E.V. KING, CHAIRPERSON,  
ACC INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY,  
SPECIAL ADVISER ON GENDER ISSUES AND ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Mr. Mooy,

Colleagues from the OECD/DAC Working Group on Gender Equality and from the United Nations and the United Nations System,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take great pleasure in welcoming you to the workshop on women's empowerment in the context of human security.

This is the first time our joint meeting has been hosted by a regional commission. I would like here to say a special thank you to ESCAP and to its Executive Secretary, Mr Adrianus Mooy, for his willingness to host this meeting. He has consistently supported throughout his tenure, the mainstreaming of gender in ESCAP's work programme, the Women in Development Section and the improving of the numerical gender balance of women staff at the professional level. Our thanks also go to Ms Thelma Kay, Chief of Women in Development Section and her staff for her work for women of the region and for organizing not only this meeting but a very successful meeting to review the implementation of the Beijing Platform a few short weeks ago.

This is the third time that the gender experts and focal points from the United Nations Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and from the OECD/DAC Working Party on Gender Equality have come together to discuss a challenging and timely topic. Our two previous workshops - on gender mainstreaming, which was held in 1997 in Geneva, and on the rights based-approach to gender equality, which took place last year at FAO in Rome - proved stimulating. They also laid the groundwork for important progress, in particular with regard to mainstreaming a gender perspective into all our policies and programmes.

Our first workshop has been critical in carrying forward the gender mainstreaming strategy reflected in ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2, including in areas such as humanitarian assistance, operational activities, and integrated and co-ordinated follow-up to UN conferences. Our second workshop deepened the understanding of the rights - based approach which has formed part of the background of such important developments as the adoption of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women which will be opened for signature this week.

I would like to express my deep satisfaction at the substantial turnout for this workshop given the time of year. This leads me to several conclusions. First, that our two groups have found our previous workshops stimulating and useful. Indeed, the attendance at this workshop, as well as the earlier workshops, leads me to conclude that the opportunity our two groups have had to meet and exchange views have been especially valuable and to suggest that it may well be appropriate to agree that such a meeting should be an annual event. Second, the attendance makes it clear to me that the topic of this year's workshop has been well-chosen and will be definitely worth two days of serious attention and discussion.

I am very grateful to all those who have actively contributed to the development and realization of this workshop. Although she has been unable to join us here in Bangkok, my thanks go to Ms. Gloria Koch from UNCTAD who amalgamated various proposals that were discussed at the last session of the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, into the one we are now addressing. I would also like to thank Ms. Diana Rivington, Chairperson of the OECD DAC Working Party on Gender Equality, and Ms. Gerd Johnsson who strongly supported the choice of topic we proposed and worked to ensure that their colleagues in the Working Party contributed to the formulation of the background paper and the programme of work. It has been a pleasure to work closely with them at every step of the preparatory process. In this regard, I would like to acknowledge their flexibility and that of the rest of the Working Party in relation to the change of dates for the Working Party. This change of dates was required because of the unforeseen,

but very welcome, event which will take place on Friday, Human Rights Day, namely the opening for signature of the optional protocol to the Convention.

I am also grateful to my colleagues: Ms. Carolyn Hannan and Jane Connors for their dedication, enthusiasm and commitment.

Before turning to the business of this workshop, I would like to briefly recall the genesis and function of the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. The Committee was formally established in three years ago in 1996 by the Administrative Committee on Coordination, which is the highest administrative body in the United Nations system and which is chaired by the Secretary-General. Before then, it had a twenty-year history of ad hoc meetings that started in conjunction with the first Women's Conference in Mexico City in 1975. The Committee brings together the gender focal points from some 50 offices and entities of the United Nations system, including the various Departments in the UN Secretariat, the funds, programmes and specialized agencies, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions. The terms of reference, mandates and programme responsibilities of gender focal points vary greatly, but they all ensure that their respective entities actively work on follow-up to Beijing and gender mainstreaming. I have the honour to chair the Committee in my capacity as Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. The Division for the Advancement of Women is the Secretariat of the Committee.

The Committee has a double mandate - it is responsible for supporting the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and of gender-related recommendations of other recent UN conferences and summits. It is also responsible for ensuring that a gender perspective is integrated into the work of the United Nations system as a whole. Based on this mandate, the Committee promotes UN system-wide action and monitors progress in achieving the women- and gender-related goals of UN summits and conferences in the areas of policy, operational activities, coordination, research, training and public information. It identifies emerging issues that require the attention of the system and prepares tools, such as guidelines and checklists to strengthen women-specific activities and gender mainstreaming and compiles good practices. This workshop is of course also an activity of the Committee.

Questions of human security have received growing attention from Governments and intergovernmental forums. In 1992, the then Secretary-General considered the issue of security on the post-cold-war era and in his ground-breaking "Agenda for Peace" addressed the interrelated concepts of preventative diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building. His 1995 Supplement to "An Agenda for Peace" examined these concepts further in the light of ethnic and nationalist conflicts that had erupted and in the light of sanctions and disarmament. Although the focus of these reports was on conflict, they also reflected an understanding of the security dimensions of poverty, environmental degradation, violations of human rights and economic tensions.

In 1994, the Human Development Report reminded us that although the concept of security was commonly understood in relation to the State, with a focus on security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust, there have always been two major components of human security - freedom from fear and freedom from want. This report reminded us that these two dimensions had been recognized from the very foundation of the United Nations where the framers of the Charter gave weight to territories and to people. The Human Development Report urged us to expand our vision of human security from an exclusive stress on territorial security to a greater stress on people's security. It also advocated a shift from the emphasis of security through armaments to security through human development.

Human security has now evolved from a traditional notion which placed the State at the centre, to a concept whose very centre is the human person. It is now understood to encompass a state of well-being in which an individual or group is assured of protection from physical and mental harm; and is free from fear and anxiety. It incorporates freedom from want and a vision of life lived with dignity. It is concept

which is firmly based in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the idea of equal enjoyment by women and men in the rights it guarantees.

The 1994 Human Development Report identifies seven dimensions required for human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. All people confront threats to these dimensions of human security, but women face particular threats, that go well beyond situations of personally experienced infractions on their physical, emotional and material well-being. The idea of human security entails an understanding that threats to women's physical, emotional and material well-being are threats not only threats to women everywhere, but to society as a whole. It is in the interests of us all to identify these threats and to address them in a concerted and systematic way.

The Platform for Action identifies many of the constituent requirements of women's human security. It addresses issues of security in situations of armed and other forms of conflict, as well as security from violence, environmental depletion and catastrophe. It touches on food security, shelter and housing. Despite this, so far no comprehensive examination and analysis of women's human security has been undertaken. Without a better understanding of the concept from a gender perspective, and its local, national and global dimensions, actions and initiatives for improving women's human security in a comprehensive and holistic manner will remain insufficient.

We already have some sense of the gender-specific threats to women's security. Threats to their physical well-being, such as the many forms of violence against women perpetrated in the family, in the community or by or condoned by the State now receive our sustained attention. We are also now keenly aware of women's lack of human security in situations of armed conflict, in humanitarian emergencies, and in transitions from conflict to rehabilitation and development of societies. We need to pay greater attention to the physical well-being of women in armed conflict, as well as the protection and promotion of their economic and social rights in times of humanitarian emergencies.

Our understanding of gender-specific challenges to other aspects of women's human security is less strong. In particular "the freedom from want" dimensions of human security require greater attention so that we can tease out the gender-perspectives in this context. The gender dimensions of economic security, food security, health security and environmental security require particular consideration. For example, although many economic and social aspects of women's human security are well developed, issues such as women's food security and security of shelter or housing require further analysis, including in regard to their intersection with other rights. Women are particularly threatened by loss of shelter, including through evictions, by the existence of statutory and other forms of discrimination, including in relation to property and ownership rights. They also face threats in this context as a result of limited rights within marriage and upon its dissolution and because of sexual and other forms of violence. A greater understanding of women's access to food, and the causes of women's hunger and malnutrition is also required, as is the consequences of environmental factors, which are all shaped by gender-based patterns of behaviour and opportunities.

This workshop provides us with a forum in which we can begin to develop an understanding of the fundamental differences between women's and men's security. But it also provides us with an opportunity to address the potential of the human security agenda to advance women's empowerment.

Over these two days I hope we will be able to reflect on how our work as multilaterals and bilaterals can be such that we empower women in all the dimensions of the human security agenda. In other words, we are faced with two tasks. First we must identify those threats to women's security that affect them because of gender factors and second, we must seek to outline ways in which we can work so that women can be empowered and assist themselves. I have no doubt that these two tasks will be challenging, but our discussions have the potential of providing strategies to enhance the implementation of the Platform for Action, as well as strengthening links with follow-up to other conferences and summits, in particular the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the Millennium Assembly.

Before closing, as we look back over the time since our first meeting much progress has been made in our countries, in individual agencies and in our collective entities OECD and the ACC and Interagency Committee in implementing the Beijing Platform. We have a universally agreed definition of gender mainstreaming. Several agencies have stated gender policies, in others gender mainstreaming is formal part of budget preparation. In some, gender focal points and units have been strengthened. But there is another side, for in others, these units are being eliminated in the very name of gender mainstreaming. Therefore, we must still pursue our goals of achieving gender equality with intensity and with perhaps greater networking, strategizing and solidarity.

We have a challenging, but rewarding task ahead of us. I have no doubt that we will address it with the same commitment that we showed at our last two workshops. I am confident also, that this workshop will build on the groundwork we laid when we met previously. We have an opportunity to tease out threats and identify entry points. I am convinced that we will rise to the challenges and our work will be yet another stepping stone to the achievement of equality between women and men.

Thank you and let's have a wonderful and productive meeting.

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Introductory Statement  
Diana Rivington  
Chairperson, OECD/DAC Working Party on Gender Equality  
Director, Gender Equality Division Policy Branch  
Canadian International Development Agency

Colleagues and friends,

This workshop, intended to be a joint learning experience, is the third in a series of United Nations Inter-agency Committee and OECD/DAC Working Party on Gender Equality workshops, with the first such workshop addressing mainstreaming, and the second a rights-based approach to women's empowerment and advancement and gender equality.

The key issue for us to consider during this workshop which concerns women's empowerment in the context of human security is to transform the perception of women as victims. We know that women are active agents in solving their own problems, and with the right support, they can turn adverse situations into sources of empowerment. In this context, I am reminded of Shakespeare's verse in Henry IV, Part One: "Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety". The challenge for multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies is to identify the support women need, and to determine the best way that we can provide that support. We must also determine how we can build connections between people, rather than contribute to divisions.

The experience of Rwanda in post-conflict reconstruction is a useful example in this regard. Even before the terrible events of 1994, Rwanda was one of the world's poorest countries, with over 50% of its households being below the World Bank Poverty level. Now over 70% of households are below this level, but they are even poorer than before. Thirty-four percent of households are now female-headed, as compared with 21% in 1994. Twenty-five per cent of men aged between 16 and 64 are missing.

Within this context of human insecurity, women's empowerment might appear elusive. Nonetheless, several strategies have been employed by the 7 or 8 bilateral and 4 multilateral agencies present, and results have been impressive. These strategies include: building on the strength of existing women's organizations; strengthening national machineries; working in synergy with other donors; and addressing not only women's basic needs, but also their strategic interests.

These strategies have contributed to an environment in which major changes in family and property laws have taken place. Legislation now provides that women may inherit and recognize their rights with regard to matrimonial property. Draft legislation entitling women the right to land is also well advanced. A strong consortium of women's organizations has also developed and there has been political activism with respect to issues of common interest. For example, following a Cabinet reshuffle, women occupied only two Cabinet posts in Rwanda. Protests by women were mounted in February 1999, with the results that women were nominated for seven out of nineteen "secrétaires-generaux" or senior civil service positions.

While the results are impressive, much more remains to be done. The barriers to women's participation in decision-making, delineated in a survey on this issue conducted in April 1999, must be addressed, as must the lack of social services which support women in respect of their family responsibilities. Kindergartens, creches, day-care facilities, schools, potable water, family planning and accessible healthcare are priorities in this regard. Ways of reducing the daily burden of household work, including the development and provision of appropriate technologies that lighten that burden and save time and energy, as well as the encouragement of male responsibility with regard to household work must be devised. The current absence of a culture of gender equality, and lack of information about national protective legislation and women's human rights pose significant problems. A positive image of women is also missing, and must be created so that their capacity and ability to take on decision-making roles can be reinforced.



Actions to help address these issues that can be taken by multilateral and bilateral donors include the provision of support for further changes to legislation, for judicial training and for claims under revised legislative provisions. New programming, especially that related to poverty-reduction, must also be based on solid gender analysis. In this regard, it is critical for us to appreciate that it is not only **what** we do, but **how** we do it that is critical. Where poverty and conflict are concerned, gender-sensitive and rights-based approaches provide the conditions for ownership at the national level and the empowerment of people, both women and men.

I look forward to our discussions as we seek to develop new strategies to pluck the flower of empowerment from the nettles of poverty and conflict

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**WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN SECURITY**

**DISCUSSION PAPER PREPARED BY  
MS. BETH WORONIUK**

**COMMENTARY, MS. SHANTI DAIRIAM**

## **Women's Empowerment in the Context of Human Security: A Discussion Paper**

By Beth Woroniuk

*Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society including participation in the decision-making process and access to power are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.*

**Beijing Declaration** (para 13) (United Nations, 1996)

*On the eve of the millennium, the needs and aspirations of the great majority of human beings can still be expressed simply and starkly: safe water; shelter from violence - that of nature and of one's fellow men; enough food for the family; a job; schooling for the children; and a state which does not oppress its citizens but rules with their consent.*

- Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations<sup>1</sup>

### **I. Introduction**

Enough to eat, a home, health, education, freedom from violence, safety during natural disasters, democracy and respect for human rights are all elements of human security as defined in the opening quotation. It has been argued that this concept is likely to "revolutionize society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (UNDP 1994:22) and at first glance human security appears to be a relatively straightforward concept. Yet there is not always agreement on what 'human security' could and should mean.

One of the missing elements in the human security discussions to date has been an understanding of the fundamental differences between women's and men's security. How can the definition of human security be refocused to include a gender equality perspective? What concerns does a gender equality mainstreaming strategy raise for programmes based on human security priorities? What is the potential of a human security agenda to advance women's empowerment? This paper aims to provide a common base for debate and analysis and to assist in setting the course of future actions.

This paper examines the concept of human security and how it is used in international discussions. It then considers how gender equality has been and could be promoted in the context of this new agenda. Section IV builds on the discussion of gender equality by introducing the concept of women's empowerment. Using this empowerment approach, three examples are discussed in Section V, armed conflict, natural disasters and food security. The paper concludes with a summary of the issues that flow throughout the previous sections and poses questions for consideration.

### **II. Human Security**

#### **A. What is human security?**

Despite its increased use in international discussions, the concept of human security often remains undefined. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees: "human security is a term which carries the risk of meaning all, and nothing" (Ogata 1999).

The origins of the focus on human security are often traced to the publication of *An Agenda for Peace* by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992. This document pointed out that threats to global security were not only military in nature:

*A porous ozone shield could pose a greater threat to an exposed population than a hostile army. Drought and disease can decimate no less mercilessly than the weapons of war. So at this moment of renewed opportunity, the efforts of the Organization to build peace, stability and*

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<sup>1</sup> Address to the General Assembly, New York, 21 September 1998.

*security must encompass matters beyond military threats in order to break the fetters of strife and warfare that have characterized the past.* (Boutros-Ghali 1992, para 13).

Boutros-Ghali argued that not only were environmental instability, poverty, famine and oppression critical security issues in and of themselves, they were also both sources and consequences of conflict.

In 1994, UNDP's **Human Development Report** introduced the specific term 'human security.' The report argued for a movement away from the narrow definition of security that focused on states ("as security of territory from external aggression, or as a protection of national interest in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust") to one that focused on **people**. The changing nature of conflict and a clearer understanding of the threats faced by most people called for this redefinition of security.

*There have always been two major components of human security: freedom from fear and freedom from want.*  
**UNDP Human Development Report (1994)**

The report identified four essential characteristics of human security:

- *human security is a universal concern*: "there are many threats that are common to all people - such as unemployment, drugs, crime, pollution and human rights violations." (p. 22);
- *components of human security are interdependent*: no state can isolate itself from insecurity in another part of the world;
- *human security is easier to ensure through early prevention than later intervention*;
- *human security is people-centred*: "it is concerned with how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities -- and whether they live in conflict or peace" (p. 23).

The UNDP Report outlined a concept of human security that included seven dimensions: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political.

This definition has attracted criticism as an unwieldy policy instrument (DFAIT 1999). The Canadian Department for Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), for example, has proposed a more narrow definition: "human security means safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It is a condition or state of being characterized by freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, their safety, or even their lives... The litmus test for determining if it is useful to frame an issue in human security terms is the degree to which the safety of people is at risk." (DFAIT 1999: 5).

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has put yet another emphasis on human security. In a 1999 speech, she pointed out that the norm for the majority of the world's population is insecurity: "If to be secure means to be free from fear of being killed, persecuted or abused; free from the abject poverty that brings indignity and self-contempt; free to make choices - then a majority of people in today's world do not live in security." (Ogata 1999). She urged the international community to develop more effective political and security mechanisms to address conflicts.

The concept of human security is important to gender equality advocates not just because of what it is thought to include, but also because of who is using it and how. The concept is not just employed by activists to draw attention to a political agenda or mobilize support for ending poverty. It is not just used by academics to redefine theoretical frameworks. Rather it is being used by governments to develop policy responses, to set priorities and to justify their actions.<sup>2</sup>

### **B. What do the different uses of human security have in common?**

Despite the different interpretations, definitions and emphases, the concept of human security does have common elements. The following characteristics are emerging as central to a human security agenda.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, there is now an international 'Human Security Network' which involves high-level representation from ten countries, including Norway, Switzerland and Canada.

- ***It shifts the emphasis from the security of states to the security of people.*** This is considered one of the primary contributions of the concept of human security. For centuries, security has been seen primarily as national or state security. The State was the basic building block of the international community with its sovereignty and territorial integrity of paramount importance. The notion of human security brings people into international discussions and raises concerns around the security and safety of people, not just States.
- ***It implies and re-emphasizes the obligations of states to ensure the security of their citizens.*** The focus on people's security raises the profile of states to provide and protect their citizens. One recommendation in the 1994 **Human Development Report** was that "national governments in rich and poor countries adopt policy measures for human security. They should ensure that all people have the basic capabilities and opportunities, especially in access to assets and to productive and remunerative work." (UNDP 1994: 39).
- ***It recognizes the inter-relatedness of people and that many issues cross borders and boundaries.*** A human security position highlights the inter-dependent nature of people in today's world stressing that many problems do not have passports and cannot be stopped at political borders. Women and men in industrialized countries are not isolated from poverty in developing countries as seen by migration patterns and diseases that do not respect borders. As well, people in developing countries are also at risk from industrial pollution from northern factories that moves around the globe.
- ***It recognizes the importance of non-state actors.*** The international campaign against landmines is often cited as an effective initiative spearheaded by non-governmental organizations. "Civil society organizations are seeking greater opportunity and greater responsibility in promoting human security. In many cases, non-governmental organizations have proven to be extremely effective partners in advocating the security of people." (DFAIT 1999: 9)
- ***It requires that those responsible for violations of human rights and humanitarian law are held accountable.*** The creation of the International Criminal Court as well as the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda are seen as important advances in the pursuit of a human security agenda.<sup>3</sup>
- ***It highlights the complexity of security issues reinforcing the need for multi-faceted responses.*** Among the different uses of human security, there is agreement that it is a multi-faceted concept that requires coordination and collaboration among a wide range of actors. One response given prominence is an increased reliance on 'soft power' or persuasion rather total focus on military might and hardware ("powerful ideas rather than powerful weapons") (Hay 1999).

### **III. Promoting Gender Equality in the Context of a Human Security Agenda**

#### **A. Until now - gender equality: a missing element in human security discussions**

To date, official discussions and priorities regarding human security have not reflected an understanding that women's security interests are often different than men's nor have they highlighted women's empowerment as a priority. For example, the report of a meeting of ten governments to discuss human security issues in May of 1999 is silent on the overlap between gender equality issues and human security.<sup>4</sup> The meeting agreed on the following elements in a human security agenda: anti-personnel landmines; small arms; children in armed conflict; international humanitarian and human rights law;

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<sup>3</sup> Notes for an address by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Relations, Princeton University "Kosovo and the Human Security Agenda" April 7, 1999. Available at: <[http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/english/news/statements/99\\_state/00\\_028-e.htm](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/english/news/statements/99_state/00_028-e.htm)>. Accessed on August 26, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Ministers and representatives of the Governments of Austria, Canada, Chile, Ireland, Jordan, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand and Norway participated. South Africa was present as an observer. See *A Perspective on Human Security: Chairman's Summary* (Lyspen, Norway, 20 May 1999). Available at <<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/foreignp/HumanSecurity/lysoen-e.htm>> Accessed 18/11/99.

international criminal court; exploitation of children; safety of humanitarian personnel; conflict prevention; transnational organized crime; and resources for development.

There are gender dimensions in each of these issues. Perhaps the point could be made that by tackling this ambitious agenda, gender equality issues will also be dealt with. Yet it is clear from experience that unless there is an unequivocal discussion of how and why differences and inequalities between women and men are relevant within specific areas and a clear consensus that action is required, little is achieved. Thus given the absence of an explicit discussion of gender inequalities and women's empowerment, the argument that 'human security automatically includes women's empowerment' rings empty.

It is not just Governments that have failed to bring these two concerns together. Non-governmental organizations have also had difficulties developing programmes that recognize the inter-relationships between gender equality and human security. In looking at one dimension of human security - peacebuilding - a recent publication notes that "programmatically attention to women and peacebuilding is in a rudimentary state for most peace-related non-governmental organizations (NGOs)." (Mazurana & McKay 1999: 39).<sup>5</sup>

### **B. Mainstreaming a Gender Equality Perspective into human Security Discussions**

One strategy to challenge this silence is to ask what would a human security agenda look like if gender equality considerations or a commitment to women's empowerment were fully incorporated into the understanding of this concept.

Asking this question is consistent with international commitments to equality between women and men. The Beijing Conference achieved consensus on the importance of bringing a gender perspective to all structures, institutions, policies and programmes. The 'mainstreaming paragraph' included in each major critical area of concern in the *Platform for Action* states: "governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively"

Within the United Nations, the term 'gender mainstreaming' was defined in July in ECOSOC's agreed conclusions 1997/2:

*Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.*

Thus the challenge in looking at women's empowerment in the context of human security is to move beyond identifying 'women's issues' at the margins of the primary discussion. The goal is not to develop an annex to the primary discussion that highlights where and how women are the exception to general human security issues. Rather the commitment to gender equality raises questions that influence the center of the definition of human security. There are at least two vital questions:

- Whose security is being considered (which men's? which women's?)?
- How do gender inequalities and differences affect people's ability (both women and men -- individually and collectively) to both articulate their security needs and mobilize resources to meet those security needs?

### **C. Entry points and overlap between a human security agenda and the goal of gender equality**

To date there has been no comprehensive examination of differences between women's and men's perceptions of and experiences with human security. Yet without a better understanding of the concept and

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<sup>5</sup> The argument is not that there have been no women's initiatives in peacebuilding (as there have been numerous), rather that the majority of organizations working on peacebuilding initiatives have not explicitly outlined the links between women's empowerment and peacebuilding and developed organizational and programmatic responses to those linkages.

its local, national and global dimensions initiatives for improving women's human security in a comprehensive and holistic manner will remain insufficient. (UN 1999: para 72).

This section looks at possible avenues in the human security discussions to raise gender equality issues. Our search is to identify entry points for a strengthened vision of human security that brings the security of women, not just men, to its core.

- ***The shift in emphasis from the security of states to the security of people.***

It is much easier to raise issues relating to women's empowerment if the discussion is already on people. This is one lesson that has been learned in international development programmes. It is difficult to ask 'where are the *women*?' if *people* are not in the picture.<sup>6</sup> Thus this basic element of human security provides an entry point to raise issues of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Yet as has been seen in recent years, gender equality issues do not automatically come to the fore in a discussion of human security. This focus on people (rather than States) can be seen as necessary but it is not a sufficient condition. There is a need for advocates to push the definitions of human security so that it refers to the security of both women and men.

- ***The re-emphasis on the obligations of states to ensure the security of their citizens.***

In recent years, activists and gender equality advocates have made significant investments in the area of international human rights. They have pushed for compliance with international norms and laws and have promoted the use of international conventions as tools to support equality between women and men -- both internationally and at the grass-roots levels (IWTC 1998; Alfredsson and Tomasevski 1995; Schuler 1995). This focus is particularly important in the current political and economic context that de-emphasizes the role of the State.<sup>7</sup>

The growing awareness and use of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* among grassroots activists and the increase in international networking on how the *Convention* has been used could be seen as part of advancing a human security agenda. The *Optional Protocol* to that Convention constitutes another step forward for women and women's organizations to hold their governments accountable for their international commitments.<sup>8</sup>

The Beijing *Platform for Action* also clearly points to the responsibility of Governments to promote equality between women and men. There is a clear commitment on the part of Governments to formulate national plans of action to implement the recommendations outlined in the document.

- ***The recognition of the inter-relatedness of people and that many issues cross borders and boundaries.***

One aspect of the international movement for women's empowerment has been the awareness that although specifics vary from context to context and from country to country, women tend to share common concerns and issues. There have been numerous fruitful regional and international initiatives designed to share experiences, mobilize support and develop strategies all based on the view that an international effort is more constructive and effective than isolated national initiatives.

Take, for example, the issue of the international traffic in women and girls. There are no definitive numbers on how many women and girls are trafficked each year. The International Organization for Migration reported that half a million women a year are trafficked into Western Europe alone (IWTC

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<sup>6</sup> Ten years ago Cynthia Enloe urged people to ask 'where are the women?' in order to start unravelling the gender dimensions of militarization, tourism and other international issues that were seemingly 'gender neutral'. (1989)

<sup>7</sup> "Further consideration needs to be given to the regulatory role of the State at a time when various functions previously considered to be the exclusive domain of the State are being privatized, and certain regulatory functions devolve upon other entities. Likewise, deregulation of a range of activities, and a lack of or insufficient regulation in others, can have a disproportionate negative impact on women and girls and pose additional threats to their human security, rather than alleviating existing ones." (UN 1999: para 79).

<sup>8</sup> For information and background on the Optional Protocol, see:  
<<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/protocol/index.html>>

1998: 47). By definition, this is an issue that crosses borders and women's organizations have recognized that international solutions are necessary.

- ***The recognition of the importance of non-state actors.***

A higher profile in the international arena for non-state actors has the potential to support greater equality between women and men. Although most advocates of a human security agenda cite 'international public opinion' and mobilization around issues such as landmines, recognition of the work of the international women's movement can also be highlighted.

Given women's lack of access to formal political structures much of women's organizing has been done at the non-state levels. Coalitions and networks are common-place from the community level up through international organizations. The vibrancy of the NGO forums at the UN Conferences on Women illustrate the creativity, energy and commitment of the 'non-state actors' working for women's empowerment.

Another example is women's participation in peacebuilding. A recent publication documenting women's roles in peacebuilding notes that "women's meanings of peacebuilding and their actions at grassroots level are essentially invisible at United Nations, governmental and academic levels." (Mazurana and McKay, 1999: 12). Despite this lack of profile, women have been active in organizing for peace at numerous levels.<sup>9</sup>

Yet this greater profile for non-state actors is not unambiguous. Many organizations lack accountability structures and function in non-democratic fashions. There are no guarantees that all non-state actors will be supportive of women's participation or advocate for greater equality between women and men.

Furthermore, many violations of women's human rights have come at the hands of non-state actors.

- ***It requires that those responsible for violations of human rights and humanitarian law are held accountable.***

Accountability and reconciliation can have different meanings for women and men. In order to be effective, accountability structures and initiatives should incorporate these different experiences and expectations.

Antjie Krog has written moving accounts of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa (1999). Amongst the horror, complexity and dignity of the testimonies, she provides a striking statistic on who testified on behalf of whom: "After the first five weeks of intensive hearings, six out of ten of the testimonies were made by women, but three quarters of the women's testimonies and 88 percent of the men's testimonies were about abuses to men. 25 per cent of the women's testimonies dealt with abuses to their sons, 11 percent to their spouses and 8 per cent to their brothers. Only 4 per cent of men spoke about their sons and none of them talked about their spouses or sisters." (p.3)

Last year representatives from two Liberian women's organizations in a meeting with European donor agencies rejected the proposed support for post-conflict trauma healing by psychological counseling. This was not their first priority. They explained: a majority, more than 60% of the female population older than 15 years had been raped during the conflict and this meant a structural decline in morals in the community and even worse in the status and position of women in the society as a whole. The first priority for these women's organizations therefore was moral rehabilitation and they saw only two ways to achieve this:

- 1) *a public plea of guilt and pardon by the President on behalf of all men in Liberia. The pardon should include affirmative action to improve the status and position of women in Liberia. Donor agencies could mediate with silent diplomacy, etc.*
- 2) *Strong support to women's leadership in Liberia, including mentoring and promotion.*

- Rahman (1999)

Recent attention has focused on holding individuals accountable for crimes against women committed during conflict. In addition, Brunet and Rousseau (1998) point out that redress for violations of women's rights in times of armed conflict involves more than strengthening the institutions responsible for

<sup>9</sup> Cockburn (1998) details three women's organizations that have worked across conflicting groups.



punishment of perpetrators of violence. Governments, communities and individuals are also responsible for addressing the causes and consequences of violations of women's human rights:

*In the final analysis, redressing massive violations against women involves not only a recognition of the crimes, the perpetrators of those crimes and above all their victims; it involves sustained action so that that status of 'second-class citizens' assigned to women before a conflict situation occurs -- a status which persists and is accentuated afterward by all the kinds of violence they have had to suffer -- is finally abolished. (pp. 34-5)*

- **The identification of the complexity of security issues reinforces the need for multi-faceted responses.**

Gender equality issues share this complexity. Activists and analysts have long argued for holistic approaches to questions of inequality between women and men. Women cannot just be seen as mothers or as workers or guerrilla fighters. Numerous identities, roles and responsibilities are brought together in single lives. Development initiatives that only focus on one aspect such as women's need for work or women's family responsibilities have limited success. Furthermore although there is often emphasis on the differences between women and men, they also share crucial connections and ties. This consistently complicates an analysis of gender inequalities and exposes the frailty of overly simplistic explanations.

This re-examination of the core elements of human security draws attention to the importance of understanding the specific circumstances of both women and men. A discussion of human security should not predetermine what will make people -- both women and men -- feel (and be) more or less secure. Generalizations can be useful in alerting people to possibilities or issues to look out for, but each assumption should be tested in specific circumstances.

#### **D. Missing dimensions in human security discussions**

In order to effectively address gender equality goals and objectives there are five specific and inter-related issues that should be incorporated into the discussion of human security. These issues relate to the central question of what is different about women's and men's security. These questions are not to be seen as additions or extras to the main discussions. Rather they should be woven into the very understanding of what human security can and should mean.

##### **(a) Violence against women**

If 'freedom from fear' is a touchstone in the human security approach, then the issue of violence against women must figure prominently. Given the pervasive nature of violence against women, this is a very different security issue for women and men.

Not only does gender-based violence directly affect the lives of millions of women around the world, it indirectly affects countless more through the limits it imposes on women's and girls' mobility and the constraints it puts up against women's participation in political, economic and social activities.

The 1993 *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life." (article1) Thus violence against women encompasses:

*Gender violence involves an enormous amount of human suffering and injustice, and encompasses every country and all types and classes of people. Far from characterizing regrettable but isolated incidents in the personal domain, violence -- or at least potential violence -- conditions every woman's life and dominates the lives of millions of women, impeding both their personal development and the contribution they can make to the lives of those around them... Gender-related violence is a complex and far reaching issue but one that lies at the heart of current debates about sustainable development, good governance and quality of life.*

- El-Bushra and Piza-Lopez (1993:8)

- Violence in the family (including battering, sexual abuse of female children, dowry-related violence, and female genital mutilation).
- Violence within the general community (including rape, sexual harassment, and trafficking in women).
- Violence perpetuated by the state.
- Violation of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict.
- Violations of reproductive rights (including forced sterilisation and female infanticide).<sup>10</sup>

Several authors have argued that there is a 'continuum' of violence (for example, Cockburn 1999; Moser & McIlwaine 1999; El-Bushra and Piza-Lopez 1993). This continuum spans domestic violence through war and State violence. Moser and McIlwaine (1999) look at case studies from Colombia and Guatemala and point out the inter-relationships between political violence and economic and social violence. They also stress that there are gender dimensions in these inter-relationships and that different types of violence are 'heavily gendered.' "In using a methodology whereby people themselves analyze the causal relationships of different types of violence, it emerged that the causes of violence are more usefully conceived as a continuum. A continuum of violence causality shows how one type of violence can lead to another, as well as intersect in gendered ways." (p. 6) This type of analysis that 'unpacks' and disentangles the various strands of violence -- including both the impact on women and men and their own actions, reactions and understandings of violence -- offers a fruitful avenue to add to the understanding of violence (and armed conflict) and to develop solutions and strategies.

A second issue to highlight in the discussion of violence against women is gender-based violence during war (UNDAW 1998; Sajor 1998). As one report points out there is more than one dimension to violence against women in times of armed conflict (Women, Law & Development International 1998). First, women are subjected to violence because they are women: rape, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy.

Second, women are also often subjected to violence that is not directly aimed at them, but affects them because of their specific roles and responsibilities. For example, women tend to have the primary responsibility for maintaining the household (collecting water, food, etc.) These duties may place in them in particular risk from mines or 'collateral fire'. Thus they are not injured specifically because they are women, rather because of their gender-specific responsibilities.

There is great concern over gender-based violence in times of conflict not only because it happens, but also because until now it has rarely been recognized. The most horrific crimes against women not only go unpunished; they are not always recognized as violations of fundamental human rights (Brunet and Rousseau 1998).

Violence against girls and young women -- both in times of conflict and in times of relative peace -- is a third issue. It has been pointed out that not only do girls face specific human rights violations in times of war, but there also 'walls of silence' that impede awareness of the situation of girls (Nordstrom 1997). Girls also face threats outside of war that pose challenges for a human security agenda. For example does a human security agenda have the potential to raise the priority of actions to eliminate harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation?

**(b) Gender inequality in control over resources**

*Sexual violence is the most obvious distinctive experience of women in armed conflict; it results in immense suffering and trauma, it is unrelated to any arguments as to military necessity, and it is almost universal in all types of warfare. It has been said that women's bodies are the fighting ground for the battle between men and since within many societies a woman's chastity is a matter of family honour, rape is perceived to be the ultimate humiliation of the male enemy.*

- Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (1998)

<sup>10</sup> Full text of the *Declaration* is available at: <gopher://gopher.undp.org/00/undocs/gad/RES/48/104>

The world over, men and women tend to have very different access and control over resources -- over credit, land, water and time. They also tend to have differential access to education, health services, agricultural extension, and skills training. Thus their ability to protect their own security and ensure the security of family members differs enormously. In times of crisis, the factors influencing the range of available options and possible solutions that could be mobilized vary among and between women and men.

The *Platform for Action* provides a useful starting point to look at these differences. It points out for example, that female poverty implies less chance for women to influence their circumstances. Biases in educational systems may mean that women and girls do not have the skills to take advantage of new opportunities in post-conflict reconstruction. The absence of reproductive health services limits women's options and only causes death. Women's limited title to land often means less access to agricultural extension services and credit and also translates into reduced access to water. Women's responsibility for domestic chores tends to mean that time is an extremely limited resource for women -- time to participate in community organizations, time to study and time to earn an income.

The challenge then, in a discussion of human security is to ensure that these differences and inequalities are brought to the heart of the discussion. A fundamental insight is that human security and people's ability to develop survival strategies will vary depending on gender roles, relations and inequalities.

**(c) Gender inequalities in power and decision-making**

In addition to basic inequalities around the access and control over resources, women tend to be excluded from formal decision-making structures. Although there have been gains at the community level and in grass roots organizations, there are marked disparities between women and men in public positions up through national and international forums. The statistics on women in government are well known.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore the unequal control over economic resources described above influences women's decision-making at the basic level of the household as well as in more public institutions.

Both the *Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women* and the *Platform for Action* highlight the importance of this issue. Article 7 of the *Convention* calls upon State Parties to ensure that women, on equal terms with men, participate in the formulation of government policy. The *Platform for Action* is concerned both with women's access to and full participation in public, private and non-governmental structures and organizations and women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership positions.

These inequalities in relation to power are important in the context of human security. Just as women and men start from different positions in mobilizing material resources, they also begin from different positions in mobilizing power. Women's needs may not be taken into account when communities set priorities or when community leaders interact with outside aid agencies. Women's limited access to the media may mean that gender equality issues are not given coverage or profile and not articulated as important. Given these inequalities, women tend to find it more difficult than men to put their issues, needs and priorities forward. This imbalance can influence the definition and priorities within a human security agenda, glossing over the differences between women's and men's security.

**(d) Women's human rights**

The protection and respect of human rights has been singled out as an important element in a human security agenda. This aspect of the agenda could be explicitly broadened to ensure a more active pursuit of women's rights as human rights. It is important that the use of 'human rights' in this context clearly includes women's human rights.

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<sup>11</sup> See the website of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on *Democracy through Partnership between Women and Men* for one set of figures: <<http://www.ipu.org/iss-e/women.htm>>

At the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna) there was a fundamental international consensus that discrimination against women, violence against women and gender-specific rights issues were important human rights issues that deserve attention from governments and through the UN human rights advocacy and monitoring systems.

Just as the discussion at last year's workshop on *A Rights-based approach to women's empowerment and advancement and gender equality* pointed out that "the rights to equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex are at the core of human rights", so should women's human rights be at the core of a definition of human security.<sup>12</sup>

**(e) Women (and men) as actors, not victims**

A fifth dimension in broadened human security discussions is an emphasis on women (and men) as actors and subjects. A potential danger in bringing only an incomplete gender equality focus to human security discussions is to only focus on women as victims -- as rape victims, as displaced people without options, as widows without resources, as mothers who have lost their sons, as powerless community workers excluded from the main decision-making organizations, etc. This pitfall is most likely in situations where gender equality issues are dealt with as an 'add-on' to the main discussions, rather than incorporated into the basic understanding of human security.

Even in the most difficult circumstances, women possess resources, skills and capabilities. These resources may be stretched, threatened or changed by crisis situations and they may not always be visible to outsiders. Yet it is important to understand gender-specific 'survival coping mechanisms' and identify ways of supporting what women are already doing.

Yet, women's priorities, interests and agendas are not always obvious to outside institutions or even to the men in their communities. Without participatory methodologies and the effective involvement of the women concerned, it is impossible to have a clear understanding of the dynamics at work within a specific situation. Guijt and Shah (1998) provide a challenging review of gender issues in participatory development. They make the case that participatory methodologies do not 'automatically' include women and specific attention is required to ensure that women's, as well as men's, interests and priorities are brought to the forefront with participatory processes. Throughout the discussions on human security, outside organizations should work to ensure that women are seen and promoted as actors, not just passive 'target groups.'

#### IV. Women's Empowerment

##### A. What do we mean by "women's empowerment"?

Exploring the literature on women's empowerment, several common elements emerge:<sup>13</sup>

- Empowerment is ***both a process and a goal.***

<sup>12</sup> Workshop - United Nations Inter-agency Committee on women and Gender Equality and OECD/DAC Working Party on Gender Equality, 5-7 October 1998, *Final Communiqué*. Available at: <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/news/communique.htm>>

<sup>13</sup> See "Empowerment" in OECD-DAC Working Party on Gender Equality (1998) for one brief discussion and a list of resources. BRIDGE (1997) provides an interesting overview and Lam (1996) is a useful annotated bibliography on women's empowerment.

*In the context of these UN human rights instruments, the continuing substantive and conceptual neglect in the international community of human rights abuses against women is an unquestionable hypocrisy. Compare, for example, the actions of nation states against apartheid or racial discrimination with the inactivity against gender discrimination and sexual segregation in many parts of the world. Compare the efforts to outlaw torture with the lack of emphasis on rape, gender-specific torture, sexual surgery and genital mutilation. Compare the efforts in the international community to outlaw and condemn slavery with the inattention to the practice of trafficking in women, forced prostitution, forced marriages or sex tourism.*

- Marilyn Waring (1996:118).

- An understanding of empowerment is difficult, if not impossible, without ***an understanding of power***. Many of the authors who have wrestled with the implications and components of empowerment come back to discussions of power. They stress that power can be understood in many different forms and that it has different dimensions. They tend to argue for a vision of power that moves beyond the 'zero-sum' definitions common in many discussions of international and state-to-state relations (BRIDGE 1997; Rowlands 1997; Rao *et al* 1999). This zero-sum view of power (if A has more power, then B has less) was a dominant paradigm in international relations theory for decades. Many definitions of power centered on the ability of A to influence B or get B to act in a way that B might not normally respond.

Feminist discussions of power urge the consideration of other types of power, including *power to* (productive power which creates new possibilities without domination); *power with* (the ability of a collective or group working to achieve a goal that would be impossible for individuals) or *power from within* (the uniqueness or strength within each person).<sup>14</sup>

- Women's empowerment should be understood in a "***relational context***" -- in other words, the obstacles to women's empowerment cannot be understood without a clear vision of the relationships, roles, responsibilities and inequalities between women and men. This is not the same as putting forward a simple dichotomy that sees women as 'good' or 'oppressed' and men as 'bad' or the oppressors'. The focus on gender relations and inequalities calls for a much more specific and nuanced analysis that looks at both the divisions and connections between and among women and men.
- ***Empowerment is not something that can be "done" to people***, rather women need to be the agents of their own empowerment. Outsiders and outside organizations can help create the conditions favourable to women's empowerment and they can support processes that work in these directions:

*Appropriate external support and intervention, however, can be important to foster and support the process of empowerment. Development organizations, can under some circumstances, play an enabling or facilitating role. They can ensure that their programmes work to support women's individual empowerment by encouraging women's participation, acquisition of skills, decision-making capacity, and control over resources. Agencies can support women's collective empowerment by funding women's organizations which work to address the causes of gender subordination, by promoting women's participation in political systems, and by fostering dialogue between those in positions of power and organizations with women's empowerment goals. (BRIDGE, 1997: 4)*

#### Definitions of Women's Empowerment

*Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to transformative action (Karl, 1995:14)*

*Empowerment is "the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power." "The goals of women's empowerment are to challenge patriarchal ideology ... to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality...and to enable poor women to gain access to, and control over, both material and informational resources." (Batliwala 1994:130)*

*It is important to consider which... of the strategies developed and used by women have empowered them. The strategies considered effective are those which increase the quality of women's lives by enabling them to contribute to the decision-making processes in their communities and societies, to achieve a more equal status with men, and to participate in changing their environments in the direction of greater social justice and democracy. (Bystydzienski, 1992)*

<sup>14</sup> Rowlands (1997) and BRIDGE (1997) are just two examples of these discussions.

- There are *many dimensions to women's empowerment* including personal, collective, national and global as well as economic, political and social.

In her exploration of empowerment, Jo Rowlands (1997) argues empowerment can be seen as operating within three dimensions (personal, relational and collective). Yet she cautions against over simplifying this model as each of these dimensions interact with each other and are influenced by the specific context.

*Empowerment cannot simply be equated with self-confidence and dignity; it is also what happens as a result of having self-confidence and dignity. Hence the need for 'a sense of agency' as an essential element of personal or collective empowerment. Empowerment processes are dynamic, and the three dimensions of empowerment suggested in the model are closely linked: positive changes in one dimension can encourage changes in either the same dimension or others. (p. 127)<sup>15</sup>*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Dimensions of Empowerment</b></p> <p><i>Personal:</i> developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the effects of internalized oppression.</p> <p><i>Relational:</i> developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it.</p> <p><i>Collective:</i> where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone. This includes involvement in political structures, but might also cover collective action based on co-operation rather than competition.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Rowlands (1997).</p>
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- it is important to ground *specific understandings of empowerment in day-to-day contexts* and acknowledge that empowerment means different things to different women.

Most guides to gender analysis caution that gender relations must be understood in their specific contexts. They argue against a simplistic view that lumps all women together (or all men together). An understanding of gender relations and inequalities is only possible with a full consideration of how gender identities interact with race, class, age, religion and other social divisions. This is echoed in studies of empowerment as they push organizations concerned with empowerment to understand the issues within their specific contexts and as understood by specific women (Kabeer 1994; Rowlands 1997).

In their important study of women's empowerment in South Asia, Carr *et al.* (1996) make a strong case for understanding 'everyday forms of women's empowerment.'

*If empowerment is the ability to exercise power, then everyday forms of women's empowerment are the ability of women to exercise power in the social institutions that govern their daily lives: the household and extended family; local community councils and associations; local elite; local markets; and local government. In addition, empowerment has to be understood in context, that is, the concrete everyday reality of women's lives differs from place to place. (p. 213)*

### **B. What does a discussion of gender equality and women's empowerment contribute to the human security discussions?**

How can gender mainstreaming strategies be pursued in human security discussions in a way that is supportive of women's empowerment? First it is important to go beyond an analysis of the different roles, responsibilities and resources of women and men. Many development programmes attempt to understand who is involved in specific activities (which women and which men) in order to reach other development objectives. For example, there is now an awareness that in order to improve child immunization rates, mothers need to be targeted in education campaigns. This instrumentalist approach offer few possibilities to support empowerment.

Although the **differences** between and among women and men are important, it is equally important to understand the **inequalities** that run through these differences. For example, the issue is not just that women and men tend to do different work, but that men's work tends to be more valued by society and that

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<sup>15</sup> Emphasis in the original.

men have greater options in pursuing employment. Not only are there consistent asymmetries, but the asymmetries consistently disadvantage women.

Second, it is important to focus on the process used to both identify and help meet women's and men's needs (or in the context of the primary discussion of this paper - women's and men's human security interests). A programme can attempt to meet people's needs in a static or top-down fashion (for example dig wells for a community or provide emergency shelter). Or a programme can focus on supporting the community (both women and men) in their efforts to both define their priorities and meet their needs. For example, it could support capacity development for women's organizations on maintaining water supplies or it could support the formation of women's organizations that could articulate housing needs to community leaders and outsiders and lobby for appropriate programmes. The preceding discussion on empowerment highlights the fact that women's empowerment is a political process. While outside organizations can help facilitate or help create the conditions for women's empowerment they cannot empower women.

## V. Human Security and Women's Empowerment: Three Examples

Moving on from frameworks, concepts and definitions, this section explores three examples of how and why women's empowerment is relevant in human security discussions and what this focus can contribute to these discussions. The discussion is illustrative rather than exhaustive. It demonstrates the types of issues that emerge.

### A. Armed Conflict

Human security is most often associated with armed conflict and the damage, dislocation and disruption it brings. There are clear gender dimensions that relate to both the understanding of conflict and efforts to build peace and support reconstruction. As the *Platform for Action* points out "while entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society as well as their sex." (UN 1996, para 135). The last year has seen several initiatives designed to understand gender differences and inequalities in conflict, to raise the profile of women's contributions to peacebuilding or to improve institutional responses to conflict situations.<sup>16</sup>

Although much remains to be documented and understood on how, where and why women's and men's experiences in armed conflict differ and converge, there is a growing literature on this topic.<sup>17</sup> One constant theme of these numerous studies is a rejection of the simplistic dichotomy of women as peaceful and men as war-like. History does not support this generalization. Countless men have resisted war and organized for peace, just as women have been warriors, committed atrocities and mobilized behind nationalistic armed struggles. Yet, rejecting this dichotomy does not then mean that gender differences are nonexistent. After studying women's and men's experiences and actions in conflict situations there is a clear recognition that conflict is a gendered process (Lorentzen and Turpin 1998). In other words, women and men experience conflict differently: they have differential access to resources, carry out different work, balance different responsibilities, play different roles within communities, respond to different social norms of appropriate behaviour for their sex, and tend to build peace in different ways. Although there tends to be a primary division of labour between men as the main combatants and women as civilians, there are numerous examples of women taking up active fighting roles. Furthermore, modern warfare has blurred the distinction between noncombatants and soldiers as civilian casualties have escalated throughout the last century.

#### *Understanding the gender dimensions of conflict*

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<sup>16</sup> This list includes, but is not limited to the World Bank Conference on *Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (Washington, June 1999), the launch of the International Alert Campaign *From the Village Council to the Negotiating Table: Women in Peacebuilding*, the Conference "The Aftermath: Women in Post-War Reconstruction" (Johannesburg, July 1999) and the development of gender awareness training materials for both military and civilian personnel involved in peace support operations (sponsored by Canada/DFAIT and the UK/DFID).

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, BRIDGE (1996a, 1996b, 1996c); Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (1998); Date-Bah (1996); Grenier (1997); GOOD (1997); ILO (1998); Manning and Arneil (1997); Lorentzen and Turin (1998); Sorensen (1998); Turshen and Twagiramirya (1998) and Lentin (1997).

What does it mean to say that conflict is a process where gender differences, definitions and inequalities matter? Cockburn (1999) provides an overview for looking at gender, armed conflict and political violence. She argues that greater and more careful attention to gender analysis in conflict situations would help provide better tools for "understanding, preventing and ending" conflicts.

Cockburn points out that there is more than one form of gender or feminist analysis, but that all feminist gender analyses share a primary characteristic: "the differentiation and relative positioning of women and men is seen as an important ordering principle that pervades the system of power and is sometimes its very embodiment." (p. 3). Thus, she implicitly argues that it is impossible to fully understand power and conflict without understanding gender differences and inequalities. Thus the argument is not just that women and men have different conflict experiences, but that the power differences between and among women and men and the mobilization of gender identities influence how conflicts begin, evolve and end.

Examples of possible gender dimensions in pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict phases are outlined in CIDA's Gender Equality and Peacebuilding Framework (adapted slightly as Table 1).

**Table 1: Examples of Gender Issues during Four Phases of Conflict**

Elements of Conflict Situations	Possible Gender Dimensions
<b>Pre-Conflict Situations</b>	
Increased mobilization of soldiers.	Increased commercial sex trade (including child prostitution) around military bases and army camps.
Economic upheaval	Given women's and men's unequal access to economic resources, economic crisis will often have a differential impact.
Nationalist propaganda used to increase support for military action	Gender stereotypes and specific definitions of masculinity and femininity are often promoted. There may be increased pressure on men to 'defend the nation.' Men's honour may be seen as depending on their women's purity.
Mobilization of pro-peace activists and organisations	Women have been active in peace movements – both generally and in women-specific organizations. Women have often drawn moral authority from their role as mothers. It has also been possible for women to protest from their position as mothers when other forms of protest have not been permitted by authorities.
Increasing human rights violations	Women's rights are not always recognized as human rights. Gender-based violence may increase.
<b>During conflict situations</b>	
Psychological trauma, physical violence, casualties and death	Men tend to be the primary soldiers/combatants. Yet, in various conflicts, women have made up significant numbers of combatants. Women and girls are often victims of sexual violence (including rape, sexual mutilation, sexual humiliation, forced prostitution and forced pregnancy) during times of armed conflict.
Social networks disrupted and destroyed - changes in family structures and composition	Gender relations can be subject to stress and change. The traditional division of labour within a family may be under pressure. Survival strategies often necessitate changes in the gender division of labour. Women may become responsible for an increased number of dependants.
Collapse of health care services	Women and men often have different health care needs. As well, women's specific needs are often less visible.



Elements of Conflict Situations	Possible Gender Dimensions
Mobilization of people for conflict. Everyday life and work disrupted.	The gender division of labour in workplaces can change. With men's mobilization for combat, women have often taken over traditionally male occupations and responsibilities. Women have challenged traditional gender stereotypes and roles by becoming combatants and taking on other non-traditional roles.
Material shortages (shortages of food, health care, water, fuel, etc)	Women's role as provider of the everyday needs of the family may mean increased stress and work, as basic goods are more difficult to locate. Girls may also face an increased workload. Non-combatant men may also experience stress related to their domestic gender roles if they are expected, but unable, to provide for their families.
Creation of refugees and displaced people	People's ability to respond to an emergency situation is influenced by whether they are male or female. Women and men refugees (as well as boys and girls) often have different needs and priorities.
Dialogue and peace negotiations	Women are often excluded from the formal discussions given their lack of participation and access in pre-conflict decision-making organisations and institutions.
<b>During reconstruction and rehabilitation</b>	
Political negotiations and planning to implement peace accords	Men's and women's participation in these processes tends to vary, with women often playing only minor roles in formal negotiations or policy making.
Media used to communicate messages (peace accords, etc.)	Women's unequal access to media may mean that their interests, needs and perspectives are not represented and discussed.
Use of outside investigators, peacekeepers, etc.	Officials are not generally trained in gender equality issues (women's rights as human rights, how to recognize and deal with gender-specific violence generally and as a war crime). Women and girls have been harassed and sexually assaulted by peacekeepers.
Holding of elections	Women face specific obstacles in voting, in standing for election and in having gender equality issues discussed as election issues.
International investments in employment creation, health care, etc	Reconstruction programmes may not recognize or give priority to supporting women's and girls' health needs, domestic responsibilities or needs for skills training and credit
Demobilization of combatants	Combatants often assumed to be all male. If priority is granted to young men, women do not benefit from land allocations, credit schemes, etc. Often little attention is given to the society into which the combatant is to be reintegrated -- with all its changed gender dynamics given the conflict.
Measures to increase the capacity of and confidence in civil society.	Women's participation in community organizations and NGOs is generally uneven. These organizations often lack the capacity and interest in granting priority to equality issues.

***Implications of an improved understanding of the gender dimensions of armed conflict for a human security agenda***

Although there are still many questions and much to be learned about the relationships between the construction of gender identities, the gender divisions of labour and what actually happens in times of pre-conflict through to post-conflict reconstruction, there are insights from the current discussions can contribute to a better understanding of human security.

- **Understanding gender issues can assist in the understanding of armed conflict:** There is increasing evidence that a better understanding of the gender dimensions of conflict (including the construction of masculinity and femininity, the militarization of masculinity, the continuum of violence and both women's and men's strategies to build peace) will contribute to both understanding armed conflict and constructing non-violent alternatives to resolve disputes.<sup>18</sup>

This is not to say that there are simple solutions. As was noted earlier, history does not support the view of women as natural peacemakers. Rather the argument is that this type of analysis can call attention to and assist in the understanding of elements and dimensions of conflict that are not always obvious. Cockburn draws parallels between the massacres of twelve students in an American high school and the conflict in the Balkans:

*I suggest that if we were more alert to everyday gender processes like these, expressed in bullying and exclusion, in an infatuation with weapons, and in the ways these things are represented (for gender blindness is itself a gender process), we would have better tools for understanding, preventing and ending incomparably more destructive conflagrations such as the... war in the Balkans. (1999:2)*

This argument could be logically extended to say that understanding gender issues would also help us understand human security issues.

- **The importance of recognizing complexity and specificity:** Just as the earlier discussion of empowerment highlighted the importance of looking at each specific situation, so do the stories of women and men's experience in conflict situations. It cannot be assumed that definitions of human security, priorities and issues will be the same for all women and men.

Documentation of conflict situations point to various cleavages and divisions. Some relate to factors that are often cited in gender analysis: class, age, race, and ethnicity. Others relate to women's differing conflict experiences. For example in Guatemalan communities there were problems between widows and non-widows following the years of violence in the 1980s. "Resentments built up between women when a widow managed to survive without a man and a married woman felt threatened in case the widow should steal her husband. On the other hand, those who had lost their husbands and sons suspected that others in the community had betrayed them." (Zur 1993).

Yet the analysis of conflict from a gender perspective also highlights the inter-connections of the various dimensions of armed conflict: the political and economic, the personal with the collective, the social with the military, and the past with the present.

- **There is a need to better understand how working to support women's empowerment can support peace and how building peace can support women's empowerment:** Although it would be easy to assume congruence between building peace and facilitating women's empowerment, experience shows that these two processes do not always go hand-in-hand. Working toward gender equality can raise conflicts, especially when social institutions and communities have just experienced enormous strain and disruption.

Many post-conflict situations and the return to 'peace' have produced fewer (not greater) opportunities for

<p>Key questions to be posed in post-conflict situations</p> <p>In political reconstruction: "Will the emerging political system recognize and protect women's rights and interests? And will women be enabled to influence and participate in the political process?"</p> <p>In economic reconstruction: "Will the emerging economic environment be conducive to women's empowerment, or will it rather reinforce economic marginalization and increase women's vulnerability?"</p> <p>In social reconstruction: "Will the social sector address women's particular needs and concerns in an appropriate and adequate manner? Will women's capacities and skills be recognised and incorporated into the provision of social services? Will social reconstruction generate socio-economic relationships that are advantageous to women?"</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Sorensen (1998)</p>
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<sup>18</sup> Several recent discussions have focused on masculinities and the roles these play in conflict by UNESCO on *Male Roles and Masculinity*

women. According to El-Bushra and Piza-Lopez:

*Conflict is on balance more likely to disempower women than to empower them, as it attacks their physical and mental health, places obstacles in the way of their economic self-sufficiency, and enhances the social attitudes which maintain their subordination. In short, the impact of conflict on women mirrors the impact of conflict on all the more marginalized members of a community, and indeed on all vulnerable communities (El Bushra and Piza-Lopez, quoted in BRIDGE 1996a: 16)*

This is not to say that there are no opportunities to carry out peacebuilding initiatives in ways that support women's empowerment.<sup>19</sup> Rather, the argument is that clear analysis and attention are required in order to work towards mutually supportive outcomes. Women's empowerment will not automatically be part of all initiatives aimed at post-conflict reconstruction.

### **B. Natural Disasters**

Earthquakes, hurricanes, mudslides and other natural disasters also raise human security issues. Women's and men's attempts to provide shelter, food, healthcare and safety for themselves and their families are greatly strained in wake of emergencies resulting from natural disasters.

A common framework used to understand people's situation, options and potential coping strategies following natural disasters is the vulnerabilities/capacities framework (Anderson and Woodrow 1989). This framework aims to strengthen the developmental approach to relief in emergency situations. It is based on the idea that people's existing strengths (capacities) and weaknesses (vulnerabilities) will influence the way they respond to a crisis and what the impact of that crisis will be. Women and men generally have different vulnerabilities and capacities, although these are also influenced by other factors such as age, ethnicity, and class.

In looking at human security issues in emergency situations with a concern for women's empowerment, it is clear that vulnerability to disaster is not equally distributed among women and men. Gender differences and inequalities are interwoven to shape risk factors. Kumar-Range (1999) cites numerous studies that document how even in very diverse populations and situations (drought in Malawi, a cyclone in Bangladesh, or a hurricane in the United States), women are most at risk. Specific issues include:<sup>20</sup>

- **Poverty:** Poor people suffer disproportionately during times of natural disaster, with women-headed households often particularly vulnerable. Given their precarious position before the disaster (including health situation and economic assets), they are less able to meet their security needs following the disaster. Among poor people, women are not only disproportionately represented, but they also face additional obstacles when attempting to develop coping strategies.
- **Women and men often have different needs:** Gender roles and responsibilities mean that women and men have different responsibilities. In emergency situations, most women continue to be responsible for several immediate material security needs: gathering water, ensuring that family members are fed and cared for and seeking out health services for children and the elderly.
- **Environmental degradation:** Gender differences and inequalities influence how people experience and respond to environmental crisis and degradation (Kumar-Range 1999; OECD/DAC 1999). For example, women's and men's cropping patterns often mean that women are farming more marginal land which tends to be threatened first in times of crisis. As well, reduced supply of wood and water can mean increased workloads for women given their domestic responsibilities.

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<sup>19</sup> In wrestling with this question, Meredith Turshen writes, "Working on this book of war horrors, I was tempted to conclude that all wars are damnation and all warriors depraved. I searched desperately for something positive to take away. And then I found it in the meaning of social upheaval. War also destroys the patriarchal strictures of society that confine and degrade women. In the very breakdown of morals, traditions, customs and community, war also opens up and creates new beginnings." (1998:20)

<sup>20</sup> This discussion is drawn from Kumar-Range (1999), BRIDGE (1995), and Sida (1997).

- **Local networks and decision-making structures:** The marginalized role of women within many organizations and their absence from decision-making structures also contributes women's vulnerability. Kumar-Range (1999) points out that women tend to be active in communities and households, but are marginalized by agencies and organizations responding to the disaster.

Although an understanding of the factors that affect vulnerability is crucial, the focus on women's empowerment draws attention to the importance of understanding both women's and men's capacities and potentials as well. This understanding is only possible through the consistent use of participatory methods and a focus on understanding and strengthening women's forms of organization. Basic needs can be delivered in an emergency context in a top-down fashion that reinforces traditional gender roles, stereotypes and responsibilities. Or the international response can help to facilitate women's empowerment. Based on the earlier discussion of empowerment, starting points for the latter type of approach can be identified. They include the recognition and strengthening of women's existing forms of organization; recognition and support for all of women's roles (including productive activities), not just assistance in domestic and family-related activities; participatory methodologies to identify women's specific priorities, needs and obstacles; and a clear understanding that mainstreaming a gender perspective does not just mean targeting women, but rather it starts with an understanding of the complex divisions and connections among women and men in a specific situation.

### C. Food Security

A final example of how women's empowerment can be incorporated into a human security agenda is that of the understanding of food security. According to the UNDP 1994 **Human Development Report**:

*food security means that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food. This requires not just enough food to go around. It requires that people have ready access to food -- that they have an 'entitlement' to food, by growing it for themselves, by buying it or by taking advantage of a public food distribution system. The availability of food is thus a necessary condition of security - but not a sufficient one. (p. 27)*

Research and analysis have demonstrated that gender differences and inequalities are important issues in the understanding of food security (Quisumbing 1995, Sida 1997a)<sup>21</sup>:

- **Gender and food availability or adequate food production:** Women face particular constraints as farmers, processors and marketers of food based on gender inequalities. There tend to be marked gender differences in land ownership, time available, ability to mobilize family labour, access to extension services, education levels, access to market information and access to credit. As well, women tend to own fewer tools and do not always benefit from the introduction of new technologies.
- **Gender and economic access to available food:** Intra-household dynamics (including inequalities in decision-making authority and social views on the relative value of sons, daughters and other family members) influence how the benefits of increased food production are distributed among family members. Research has documented how women typically spend a higher proportion of their income on food and healthcare for children than do men.

In their analysis of gender and food security, the Food and Agriculture Organization notes that 'accurate information about men's and women's relative access to, and control over, resources is crucial in the development of food security strategies. Several areas for action are identified:

- Access to land
  - Access to credit
  - Access to agricultural inputs
  - Access to extension and training
  - Access to education
  - Access to technology
  - Access to rural organizations
  - Access to services
- FAO website on *gender and food security*:  
<<http://www.fao.org/aender/>>

<sup>21</sup> This analysis is based on general observations that may not be applicable in all situations, however it is intended to highlight widespread trends.

- **Gender and nutrition security:** Women's ability to balance family responsibilities with productive tasks influences household nutrition security. The management of household resources which can improve nutritional status is usually the responsibility of women. Gender roles and division of labour influence how and in what ways women carry out these responsibilities. For example, there is evidence that even in families with relatively good food supply, women may not have adequate time available to feed very young children as frequently as is necessary to ensure normal growth. "This can often be the case for women whose male family members demand increased labour inputs into cash crops at the expense of their domestic responsibilities. Tensions frequently arise around how women allocate their time." (Sida 1997a:7)

This analysis helps to demonstrate how gender differences and inequalities are relevant in discussions of food security. Yet a focus on women's empowerment highlights the importance of **how** these issues are approached and the types of strategies developed to improve the food security element within human security. There is a danger that women are targeted in a purely instrumental fashion in order to (for example) improve food security for children, rather than in the context of a broader objective relating to women's empowerment.

A concern for empowerment raises numerous questions. For example, how are women involved and consulted? Are there efforts to strengthen women's collective capacity to resolve food security issues? Are food security initiatives based on a 'multi-faceted' understanding of women's and men's concrete day-to-day realities? Do food security programmes recognize the power structures within a community and understand how the new or incoming resources will facilitate women's empowerment or retrench traditional power structures that exclude women?

## VI. Conclusions and Questions

### A. Thoughts and themes

In conclusion, several themes emerge throughout the preceding discussion. First, although there appears to be potential to raise women's empowerment issues in the context of human security, experience and the evidence to date tells us that this will not happen without a concerted effort. All too often the male experience is taken as the norm or the primary experience and specific cases where women's experience may differ are noted on the margins. In order to deliver on its 'revolutionary potential' the concept of human security must be reformulated and grounded in the recognition that although security means different things to different people, there are qualitative differences in the meaning of security for women and men.

Second, bringing a gender equality perspective to the human security discussion opens up possibilities to improve the understanding of security, insecurity and conflict. This is true at both the level of understanding and resolving these issues. As was pointed out in a recent UN document:

*Women face threats that go well beyond situations of personally experienced infractions on their physical, emotional and material well-being. Human security entails an understanding that threats to women's physical, emotional and material well-being are threats to society as a whole, as well as to women everywhere. It is therefore in the interests of us all to address such threats in a concerted and systematic way to reduce, eliminate and ultimately prevent their recurrence. Consequently, addressing issues of women's human security involves considerations beyond solidarity or social justice, and encompasses an understanding of shared interest. (UN 1999: para 71)*

Finally, there are lessons that can be drawn from the experiences to support greater gender equality and women's empowerment that can enrich and improve the understanding of human security. For example the strategies and lessons of international coalitions on women's rights and the international traffick in girls and women can provide lessons for other 'non-state actors.' The experiences of women in promoting reconciliation open new avenues to explore in building more stable post-conflict situations. As well, women's experiences in promoting peace at the grassroots level offers potential paths to be followed in more 'mainstream' negotiations.

As well, the reconceptualization of power and the movement away from a vision of power as a 'zero-sum' force that are part of the discussions on women's empowerment offer insights for human security discussions. It is still not generally accepted that 'soft power' (or the politics of persuasion rather than

coercion) has an important role in international politics.<sup>22</sup> It appears that many observers of international relations are reluctant to move away from a traditional vision of what power is and how it is exercised.

### **B. Questions and Opportunities for Action**

In considering possible actions, the following questions could be explored.

- ***How can a restrictive notion of human security be challenged and broadened so that it explicitly includes gender equality?***

Representatives of international organizations and bilateral development co-operation agencies can provide concrete examples of how women's and men's security differs, raise issues of violence against women and women's human rights and bring these issues into discussions of governance. Ways to incorporate the 'missing elements' in the human security discussions outlined in Section III.3 could be identified.

Gender equality focal points and others could actively engage people within their own organizations working on this concept and demonstrate both the importance and utility of refining the concept of human security.

Workshop participants could work to 'put faces on the words' or disaggregate categories utilized that hide the differences and inequalities between women and men: displaced population, refugees, former combatants, the poor, etc.

- ***How can efforts to ensure that all initiatives and programmes incorporate a gender equality perspective? A specific effort is required in initiatives dealing with post-conflict reconstruction, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding.***

Admittedly this is not a new or particularly innovative recommendation, but it is still valid. For example, the vast majority of post-conflict/reconstruction initiatives still appear to have major weaknesses in this area. Many organizations still cite time constraints, cultural constraints and lack of resources as reasons for their failure to take gender inequalities and differences into account in programme planning.

Key dimensions of this perspective could include:

- documenting and understanding the differences and inequalities between and among women, men, boys and girls -- and how these influence people's ability to act to meet their interests related to human security;
  - an analysis of women's empowerment and gender equality and how it relates to the overall objective or expected result of an initiative;
  - promoting a view of women as actors rather than victims;
  - avoiding simplistic assumptions about who can or does do what work or who has what responsibility.
- ***Are there specific opportunities to support women's empowerment in initiatives designed to support human security?***

Returning to one of the key elements in the understanding of women's empowerment and the role of outside organizations, development co-operation agencies should focus on creating the conditions that support women's empowerment and providing resources to organizations actively involved in this process. There are opportunities to do this throughout major initiatives (through the use of a mainstreaming strategy) and not just through specific initiatives targeted at women.

There is a need to document experiences (both successful and unsuccessful) as many of the lessons that currently exist relate to women-specific initiatives rather than to general initiatives that have attempted to work with a gender equality mainstreaming strategy.

- ***How can the staff of bilateral and multi-lateral agencies improve the use of international commitments to equality between women and men in supporting a human security agenda? Are there***

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<sup>22</sup> See Hay (1999).

***innovative ways to engage in dialogue and support efforts to hold states accountable for their commitments?***

Policy dialogue is now a prominent mechanism in international circles, yet it could be better used in support of women's empowerment. The focus on dialogue and persuasion that appears to be part of a human security agenda increases the importance of this dialogue.

Improved skills and information bases could facilitate a more effective use of this mechanism in working towards human security policy approaches that incorporate women's empowerment.

Efforts could also be strengthened to increase the participation of women's organizations and gender equality advocates in these discussions. Despite advances, many organizations promoting women's empowerment and gender equality are excluded from key discussions. As well they remain under-resourced and in need of capacity development.

As well, the efficacy of international commitments are strengthened through improved knowledge and awareness of these commitments among general citizens -- women and men. Improved 'convention literacy', translation of international documents into local language, and the development of communications vehicles that inform women of their rights all support greater awareness and a more informed citizenship.

• ***How can experimentation be encouraged in the search for creative solutions to operationalize the increasing understanding of gender dimensions of human security?***

New approaches are required to communicate the evolving concept of human security across agencies and organizations. Numerous organizations have developed 'tools' and guidelines that could prove useful (see box).

There is a need to test specific tools and share successful strategies. Advances at the conceptual level are only relevant to women and men in partner countries if these policy changes are translated into actual changes in the way organizations work.

**Areas of Concern: Operational Implications of a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in Humanitarian Assistance**

A background paper on 'mainstreaming gender in the humanitarian response to emergencies' discussed by the IASC Working Group Meeting (April 1999) identified the following broad areas of concern and activities (along with specific examples of advances):

- Prevention of violence and protection (for example, UNHCR has developed special materials on the protection of refugee and displaced women).
- Targeting and relief distribution (for example, WFP has specific policies and gender guidelines on relief food distribution).
- Health and reproductive health (for example, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNHCR have developed guidelines and best practices in this area).
- Nutrition and household food security (for example, the FAO is developing guidelines to address the gender perspective at all phases of the disaster response cycle).
- Income generation and skill training (for example, the ILO has focused on gender and post-conflict situations)
- Disaggregated data, information and advocacy materials.

-IASC Working Group (1999)

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**Commentary by  
Shanthi Dairiam, International Women’s Rights Action Watch (Asia Pacific)**

The paper raises a very fundamental question: How do we bring a gender dimension into the discussion on human security. The paper is of the view that hitherto official discussions regarding human security have not differentiated effectively between the human security interests of women and men and the links between inequality between women and men and human security, and peace building have not been established clearly enough to form a basis for addressing the gender dimensions of human security effectively and realistically.

The paper highlights a broad framework, **“Freedom from fear and freedom from want”**, elaborated in the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report, for considering human security issues. This is a useful framework as it facilitates a comprehensive approach to human security issues and embraces both civil and political as well as socio-economic rights. In fact, it permits us to argue for the interrelatedness of these two sets of rights.

The paper also points out that though there are differences in the debates on the key elements that constitute human security, never the less there are also commonalities in the concept of human security. We have to focus on these commonalities to identify and incorporate the gender dimensions. I would like to draw attention to two of the common elements. They are, the shift of emphasis from the security of States to the security of people and the need to hold accountable those responsible for violations of human rights and humanitarian law. The former is important because it enable us to provide people-centred solutions, and the latter, because in the elaboration of accountability the paper argues for accountability to be extended from punishing the perpetrator to taking sustained action to abolish the status of “second class citizen” assigned to women before conflict occurs, and which places them at great risk of being violated during a conflict situation. This approach is critical as it forces us to recognize the factors that contribute to the vulnerability of women and by reducing these factors bring about a change in the subordinated status of women.

I would now like to comment on the UN definition of the term ‘gender mainstreaming’ cited in the paper. According to the UN gender mainstreaming is “ a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes so the women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated”. I find this definition rather simplistic as it views the differences between women and men unproblematically. It does not surface the existing inequalities between women and men and does not present the agenda of bringing about equality between women and men as an essential political agenda if we are to bring about women’s empowerment. Women’s empowerment is then also a political agenda.

The paper however hints that difference between women and men can translate into inequality on page 3 “How do gender inequalities and differences affect people’s ability individually and collectively to both articulate their security needs and mobilize resources to meet those security needs”and surfaces it more clearly on page 14 “Although differences between women and men are important, it is equally important to understand the inequalities that runs through these differences and again when quoting Cockburn on page 15 “The differentiation and relative positioning of women and men is seen as an important ordering principle that pervades the system of power and sometimes its very embodiment”.

In the work of IWRAW Asia Pacific we refer to gender as an ideology that determines:

- ❖ What is expected of us as women and men
- ❖ What is allowed of us- opportunities, access, mobility, aspirations
- ❖ What is valued in us



INFLUENCES BEHAVIOUR: institutional and personal (both women and men)

Determines:

- ❖ Disparity
- ❖ Disadvantage
- ❖ Discrimination

The ideology of gender therefore contributes to the creation and perpetuation of inequality between women and men. I feel the concept of gender needs to be clarified if we are to have a realistic and productive discussion.

The paper seeks to identify the missing gender dimensions in human security discussions. These are violence against women, gender inequality in control over resources, gender inequalities in power and decision making, women's human rights and women and men as actors and not as victims. It also gives three very useful examples of contexts that explore the relevance of women's empowerment in human security discussions. These contexts are armed conflict, natural disasters and food security. Regardless of the contexts, the gender dimensions that need to be addressed and that have been identified are critical. I would in particular emphasize the last dimension, that is, people as actors and not as victims. The paper also raises the question of agency "How do gender inequalities and differences affect people's ability individually and collectively to both articulate their security needs and mobilize resources to meet those security needs."

The question of the agency of women combines with the element of accountability mentioned earlier through which the subordinated status of women can be changed. The change in the status of women cannot be achieved without facilitating the agency and autonomy of women. So this will be the goal of empowerment and addressing gender dimensions and, as the paper points out, not targeting women as mere instruments of better food security, more immunizations etc but giving them autonomy access and control and power.

We need a comprehensive framework and indicators to ensure that what we do will ensure such empowerment. Taking the context of poverty, I would like to use the framework of "**Survival, Security and Autonomy**" to identify some relevant indicators. Agency and autonomy may also be referred to as empowerment. This framework is taken from Kabeer and Subrahmanian,<sup>23</sup> who note that poverty alleviation programmes target the poor to provide safety nets that logically set a priority on survival needs. But this is not enough. Human well being considerations demand that issues of security of livelihood and the development of the agency of the people are built into the project framework. The technical aspects of the project have to be delivered in a way that social aspects contributing to a person's capacity to access, mobilise and utilise resources are enhanced. This is what will enable an intervention to move from a welfarist approach to an empowerment approach. Frequently, survival and security needs of the poor demand that they link themselves into oppressive client patron relationships that erodes all their rights and capacity for agency and autonomy. In the case of women an added dimension is oppressive gender relationships to which women link themselves to safeguard their survival but which will reinforce and perpetuate their dependency and subordination.

We need indicators to see what will enable the poor women to move from survival to a state of security and finally to a state of autonomy. The relevant indicators need to be studied from the perspective of class, caste, seasonality, regional - rural and urban variations.

Survival, security and autonomy are critical inter-related elements. Without them the poor slide in and out of poverty, as they are not able to consolidate and sustain the gains they may be making. This is because of the vulnerability they face with no fall-back mechanism. Vulnerabilities arise from not having economic surplus to cope with crisis such as ill health or natural disaster and then being forced into

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<sup>23</sup> See Kabeer, N. and Subrahmanian, R. 1996. Institutions, Relations and Outcomes: Concepts and Methods for Gender Aware Planning. IDS Discussion Paper. University of Sussex.

exploitative social and economic relationships. It is the cause and effect of social and political powerlessness.

The table attempts to provide some indicators for survival, security and autonomy although the indicators need to identified according to the context.

**INDICATORS FOR SURVIVAL, SECURITY AND AUTONOMY**

<b>Survival</b>	<b>Security</b>	<b>Autonomy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to productive resources</li><li>• Engaging in productive activity</li><li>• Minimum income</li><li>• Adequate food intake</li><li>• Access to basic housing and related amenities</li><li>• Access to basic health services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ownership of productive resources and assets</li><li>• Availability of safety net</li><li>• Access to community resources (labour and material)</li><li>• Access to social network like group membership</li><li>• Social and legislative framework that confers and legitimises rights to work, to ownership of assets , to be free of discrimination</li><li>• Awareness of rights</li><li>• Forum to claim rights</li><li>• Political and social contacts</li><li>• Freedom from risk of violence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mobility</li><li>• Able to decide on important issues for self, family members and the community</li><li>• Control over income/assets e.g. Use buy and sell</li><li>• Control over own labour and time</li><li>• Representing women and the community in decision making bodies</li><li>• Access to a wide range of occupations</li><li>• Able to act as social agent for self without intermediary e.g. access to health services, other public goods and services, make police report</li><li>• Able to make claims for self from the family</li><li>• Capacity to claim legal rights</li><li>• Participation in public protests and political campaigns</li><li>• Non existence of harmful or discriminatory practices in the family</li><li>• Have an identity outside the home</li></ul>

# **ANNEXES**

- **PROGRAMME OF WORK**
- **WORKING GROUP SESSIONS**
- **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**



## Programme of Work

**Tuesday, 7 December 1999**

8:15 – 9:00

**Registration**

*Venue: Registration Counter, UN Conference Centre, Ground Floor*

9:00 – 9:45

**Official Opening**

*Statement by: Mr. Adrianus Mooy, Executive Secretary of ESCAP*

*Venue: Conference Room 4, UN Conference Centre, Level 1*

**Introductory Remarks by:**

- *Ms. Angela E.V. King, Chairperson, ACC Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE)*
- *Ms. Diana Rivington, Chairperson, OECD/DAC Working Party on Gender Issues (OECD/DAC WP)*

9:45 – 10:00

**Presentation of a Background Paper: “Women’s Empowerment in the Context of Human Security. A Discussion Paper”.**

*Presentation by: Ms. Jane Connors (UN-DAW)*

10:15 – 10:45

COFFEE BREAK

10:45 – 12:00

**Plenary Discussion of the Background Paper**

*Chair: Ms Unni Ramboll (OECD/DAC WP)*

*Discussant: Ms. Shanti Dairiam, International Women’s Rights Action Watch (Asia/Pacific)*

12:00 – 1:30

LUNCH

1:30 – 5:00

**Working Group Sessions**

*This part of the workshop will consist of three concurrent working group sessions.*

*(A separate list of working group sessions and instructions for the sessions has been prepared and will be distributed).*

*Venue: Meeting Rooms B, D, E.*

Including a COFFEE/TEA BREAK

5:00 – 7:00

BREAK

7:00 – 9:00

**Working Dinner (own account)**

*Moderated by: Ms. Angela E.V. King and Ms. Diana Rivington*

Four short presentations will be followed by an open discussion.

- *Human security in the ESCAP region: Mr. Jose Carillo*
- *Human security and trafficking: Ms. Usa Lerdsrisuntad*
- *Human security in the economic crisis: Ms. Hiran Sakar*
- *CEDAW and the Optional Protocol: Ms. Jane Connors*

**Wednesday, 8 December 1999**

- 9:00 – 11:00            **Report back from Working Sessions**  
**Chaired by: Ms. Cate Johnson (OECD/DAC WP)**  
**Venue: Conference Room 4, UN Conference Centre, Level 1**
- 11:00 – 11:30            COFFEE/TEA BREAK
- 11:30 – 12:30            **Preparatory Discussion on Communiqué**  
*Chaired by: Ms. Diana Rivington*
- 12:30 – 2:00            LUNCH
- Pre-appointed group prepares communiqué**  
*Ms. Diana Rivington (OECD/DAC WP)*  
*Ms. Gerd Johnsson (OECD/DAC WP)*  
*Ms. Cheryl Stoute (IACWGE)*  
*Ms. Joanne Sandler (IACWGE)*
- 2:00 – 3:00            **Adoption of the Communiqué and Closing of the Workshop**  
*Chaired by: Ms. Angela E.V. King and Ms. Diana Rivington*
- 3:00 – 3:30            COFFEE/TEA BREAK
- 3:30 – 5:00            **Briefing on the Beijing Special Session, to be held 5-9 June 2000**  
*Chaired by: Ms. Angela E.V. King*
- Including a presentation on ESCAP Preparatory Meeting  
by Ms. *Thelma Kay* (ESCAP) and discussion with nongovernmental  
organizations

**ANNEX II**  
**FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORKING GROUP**  
**SESSION**

Tuesday 7 December 13.30 until 17.00

This part of the workshop will consist of three concurrent working sessions discussing women's empowerment in the context of human security. One working session is organized by the OECD/DAC Working Party on Gender Equality (OECD/DAC-WP) and one is organized by the UN ACC Interagency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) while another is organized by IACWGE with the input of the OECD/DAC Working Party. Each working group has an appointed facilitator and presenters. Rapporteurs for the feedback to plenary on Wednesday morning will be selected from the participants.

Participants will select one of the three working group sessions. The working group sessions will run all afternoon. Although the sessions may be run slightly differently by the facilitators there are some basic elements for the sessions. One or more presentations will be made, participants will discuss issues arising from these presentations, the background paper presented in the morning plenary and their own experience. The working sessions are expected to arrive at some concrete recommendations to take back to the plenary session on Wednesday morning. These recommendations will also feed into the final communiqué.

The focus of the three working groups is given below:

**1. "Promoting women's empowerment and human security through good governance"**

**Room B**

Moderator/facilitator: Ms Gerd Johnsson, MFA, Sweden

Rapporteur: Ms Unni Ramboll, MFA, Norway

Presentations by: Mr. Satoru Kurosawa, Japan

Ms. Cate Johnsson, USAID

Theme: The suggested focus of this session will be how states, the international community, NGOs and individuals can enhance the empowerment of women and human security. We will discuss how good governance and respect for human rights can promote empowerment and human security in terms of access to knowledge, resources and decision-making power. We will also look at the links between empowerment, human security, a participatory approach to development and democratic processes and overall poverty eradication strategies.

**2. "Women at the peace table. making a difference to human security at national, regional and global level.**

**Room D**

Moderator/facilitator: Ms. Joanne Sandler

Rapporteur: Ms. Francesca Cook (OECD)

Presentation by: Ms. Chandni Joshi, UNIFEM Regional Programme Advisor

Ms. Rosemary Cassidy, AUSAID, Australia

Theme 1: While women play critical roles in preserving, advocating for, and restoring peace to communities and countries in conflict, they are almost completely absent from the formal and recognized process of peace negotiations. Increasing numbers of United Nations and civil society initiatives have focused on strategies to increase women's involvement in negotiating peace agreements and preventing armed conflict from intensifying. This working group will develop an overview of initiatives being undertaken or supported. It will explore successful strategies, challenges, gaps and opportunities that relate to incorporating gender equality dimensions and empowering women in the process of rebuilding communities and countries. Participants will work on key action strategies for strengthening human security by advocating women's leadership.

Theme 2: will focus on experiences of how women's empowerment and human security have been affected in times of armed conflict. Examples will be given from the conflict in East Timor and from the protracted and cumbersome peace-process in the Middle East. Discussions will cover suggestions on possible mechanisms to involve women on a more regular basis in peace promoting efforts, how networks can be established and how the various actors, including the UN, can enhance women's empowerment and human security in times of armed conflict.

### **3. Assuming women's empowerment for advancing freedom from want**

#### **Room E**

Moderator/facilitator: Ms Yomiko Tanaka, JICA, Japan

Rapporteur: Ms. Birgitta Sevefjord, SIDA, Sweden

Presentation by: Ms Revathi Balakrishnan, FAO

**Theme:** The session will explore causes and consequences that impede women's empowerment thus undermining their ability to take control of their lives. The issues should be examined on the basis of a consensus that "Poverty is in itself a violation of human rights and is seen as a denial of human development." The right to all for an adequate standard of living, through guaranteed, yet to be fulfilled. Poverty is a human living condition of characterized by status of perpetual want for basic necessities of life. Deprived of access to material goods and denial of the dignity for provide for oneself, people in poverty are disempowered. Poor women are most often carrying the burden of poverty for themselves and their families. Women's demand for freedom from hunger, nutrition insecurity, ill-health drudgery, illiteracy, and economic uncertainty, should be explicitly addressed in UN development enterprise and national development initiatives. Global support by state and non-state organizations' support to women is crucial as they seek opportunities to help themselves to be free of want-to eradicate personal poverty with dignity worthy of any productive person.

The session should explore the issues such as women's right to adequate food for themselves and their families; right to secure productive employment and production inputs to ensure economic security and personal power to secure equitable access to basic necessities of life (shelter, child care and health care); right to relevant technology and information to reduce drudgery and improve their productiveness; and right to secure education and basic skills to improve their capabilities and personalities. The session should address associated gender concerns that perpetuates discrimination against women within the families, communities and nation states and organizational gender biases that impede women achieving freedom from want. Finally, the session should examine the practical measures to ensure women's right to basic necessities of life set in the framework of freedom from want with human dignity, self-esteem and gender equality.

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**ANNEX III**  
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