

Chapter 7

Women, Human Security, and Peace-building: A Feminist Analysis

Susan McKay

1. Introduction

“To build peace requires visioning what constitutes peace and security across cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, and between genders.”¹

Two key dimensions of women’s security that, more often than not, are omitted from discussions of human security are (1) feminist critiques of the concept of human security and (2) the ways girls and women experience insecurity and the conditions that must be met for them to be secure.

I begin this chapter by explicating why gender should be incorporated as a key dimension of human security discourses. Using several post-conflict countries as examples, I provide an overview of feminist critiques of security and draw attention to how women’s experiences and gender discrimination exacerbate their insecurity. I then present a feminist framework of human security that explicates threats of violence that are both direct and structural and argue that reducing direct and structural violence must be an international priority if girls and women are to experience improved human security. I next compare two key security documents - *Human Security Now*² and *Women, Peace and Security*³ according to their feminist emphases and discuss how women’s peace-building initiatives focus upon improving girls’ and women’s human security by seeking to prevent and reduce direct and structural violence. Finally, I emphasize that women’s peace-building is crucial in drawing attention to and enhancing girls’ and women’s security - for example, in advocating women’s increased involvement in developing peace accords and establishing constitutions that incorporate

gender equality and women's human rights as key components.

My expertise in women's health, women's studies, and feminist peace psychology shapes my analysis. Therefore, I include discussion of women's and girls' experiences of psycho-social and physical insecurity, as well as more established parameters associated with human security.

2. Gender and Human Security

Gender analyses take into account perspectives and behaviors of women and men, boys and girls, and are a corrective to gender-bias in either direction. These may or may not draw upon feminist analyses. In relation to human security, Simone Wisotzki stressed that “underlying gender hierarchies and their relevance for shaping societal practice must be made visible, and alternatives to overcoming insecurities have to be developed.”⁴ For example, in developing programs and policies, analyzing potential effects upon both genders is crucial because men and women experience the erosion of security differently.⁵

Effects of Women's Inequality

Girls and women experience human insecurity differently from men and are subject to gender hierarchies and power inequities that exacerbate their insecurity. Because of their lower status, girls and women are less able to articulate and act upon their security needs, as compared with boys and men. A 1994 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report noted: “In no society are women secure or treated equally to men. Personal insecurity shadows them from cradle to grave...And from childhood through adulthood they are abused because of their gender.”⁶

Holzner and Truong argued that “all forms of human (in)security are gendered, even though their manifestations, patterns and degree of intensity may be specific and context dependent,”⁷ because social structures, practices and symbols in societies are gendered. As noted by Ulf Kristofferson, Humanitarian Coordinator of the Joint United Nations (UN) Program on HIV/AIDS, “Whether it is economic security, food security, health security, personal or political security, women and young girls are affected in a very specific way due to their physical, emotional and material differences and due to

the important social, economic, and political inequalities existing between women and men.”⁸ For example, in many parts of the world, women and girls are fed less than men and boys, have fewer opportunities to secure an economic livelihood, and receive less education than boys.⁹ Inequalities also threaten girls’ and women’s health, an essential component of their security, and increase their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

Beth Woroniuk drew attention to key gendered dimensions that have been missing within human security discussions, notably (1) violence against women, (2) gender inequality in control over resources, (3) gender inequality in power and decision making, (4) women’s human rights, and (5) women (and men) as actors, not victims.¹⁰ Erin Baines questioned how central an agenda gender-related violence should be within human security discourses and pointed to the potential danger of privileging women over men, given the persistent lack of masculinist analyses.¹¹ Baines’ point that masculinist analyses of human security deserve far greater attention is an important one. However, given women’s low status worldwide, the inequality of and the profound influences of patriarchy on women’s ability to attain equality, the risk of privileging girls’ and women’s human security over boys’ and men’s seems remote and, even, implausible. Further, scant evidence exists that feminist analyses have been mainstreamed into international debates about human security. Instead, sophisticated and insightful feminist analyses are usually ghettoized within feminist international studies and the academic literature of sister disciplines.

Post-conflict societies merit special attention in terms of how well they meet girls’ and women’s human security needs since they are not very peaceful and are subject to pervasive lawlessness, social dislocation and, often, intense violence.¹² Within the context of contemporary armed conflicts and during post-conflict, women and girls suffer disproportionately due to the gender-specific effects of contemporary conflicts.¹³ Also, they are neglected within disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes because they are not recognized as combatants or are viewed simplistically as camp followers or “wives” of rebel commanders.¹⁴

Burundi, in Africa, provides an example of discrimination against girls and women and of indifference to gender-based violence. As is true in many countries throughout the world, Burundi’s patriarchal and patrilineal culture supports gender discrimination. As such, through customary practices, it creates, reinforces, and maintains girls’ and

women's human insecurity. Girls and women have little influence in decision making about their own lives. They cannot own property or the land they work, nor can they inherit their husbands' property. Their educational levels are lower than men's, and they have limited ability to make decisions about their sexual health, family planning, and access to health care; abortion is illegal. Abortion is illegal despite an increase of sexual violence and accompanying threats of contracting sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Police and magistrates have humiliated women when they reported rape, and women have seldom been successful in bringing perpetrators to justice.¹⁵

3. Feminist Critiques of Human Security

Whereas gender disparities in human security provides an important level of analysis, the primary interest of feminist analyses is to make women's perspectives visible - to gather and interpret information from the standpoints of girls' and women's diverse experiences in order to affect policy making in regard to women's rights. Feminist analysts' larger referents are human security discourses and androcentric biases. They bring to the forefront girls' and women's experiences to emphasize that removing gender-linked insecurities, such as unequal social relationships, are critical to women's security.¹⁶

Feminist analysts accept as true that patriarchal assumptions and actions privilege men and are globally endemic - although these vary by race, class, culture, and Euro-American, non-Western, and other perspectives. Reiterating this perspective, Gunhild Hoogensen emphasized that security should be defined by those who are least secure: "Feminisms, including western, non-western, and indigenous feminisms, offer powerful arguments articulating voices of the insecure, and deserve to be heard and responded to by mainstream sources."¹⁷

A key feminist question about human security is "whose security is emphasized and how?" The feminist answer is that boys' and men's security is prioritized over that of girls and women because of sexism whereby women and girls are discriminated against because of their gender. Yet, even when acknowledged, this question must continually be reintroduced because it is easily forgotten within typically

masculinist-dominant human security discourses. Other feminist questions are, “how do ordinary women define human security as compared with prevailing meanings?” and “what forces in a nation or community create, reinforce, and maintain gendered conditions of human insecurity, and what are these?” In their critiques, feminist scholars assert that human security must privilege issues of physical, structural, and ecological violence rather than military security. Also, their critiques underscore interrelationships between military, economic, and sexual violence.¹⁸

Envisioning a global security that takes into account both state security *and* the security of individuals and their natural environment, J. Ann Tickner encapsulated the ways in which feminist critiques diverge from traditional masculinist notions of human security:

Feminist perspectives on security start with the individual or community, rather than the state or the international system. Rejecting universal explanations that, they believe, contain hidden gender biases, since they are so often based on the experiences of men, feminists frequently draw on local interpretation to explain women’s relatively deprived position and their insecurity...feminists seek to uncover how gender hierarchies and their intersection with race and class exacerbate women’s insecurities.¹⁹

Similarly, Erin Baines observed that, “Feminists offer not only important data on the security of the individual but also fresh new perspectives into the nexus of the individual and structures of violence at the local, national and global level.”²⁰ Feminist critiques of threats to women and girls’ human security consequently raise awareness about missing pieces within the prevailing human security discourse. They eschew reductionism or piecemeal approaches by considering *all* constraints that prevent girls and women from attaining human security. Baines identified three central themes emerging from feminist scholarship on human security: 1) impacts of armed conflict on women, gender relations, and gender roles; 2) ways international humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping operations widen or diminish unequal gender relations; and 3) women’s absence from decision making positions that are central to peace-building.

Peace educator Betty Reardon, a pioneer feminist critic of the concept of security and peace, asserted that feminists view of human security stresses human relationships and meeting human needs, whereas a masculine view tends to emphasize institutions and organizations.²¹ According to Reardon, two key overall factors feminists identified as critical in improving human security are protection from attack and fulfillment of fundamental needs; however, security agendas typically favor the former. Reardon visualized a feminist global agenda for human security as follows:

A feminist world security system would attempt to include all peoples and all nations based on a notion of extended kinship including the entire human family...[that] any system to be effective must be fully global, that no nation can fully assure its own security, as the security of each is best assured by the security of all.²²

Reardon further argued that security should be redefined to emphasize a life-affirming stance and to incorporate social justice, economic equity, and ecological balance such as the agenda developed by the Women's International Network for Gender and Security (WINGHS) with its four critical feminist dimensions of human security: a healthy planet, meeting basic human needs, respecting and fulfilling human rights, and renunciation of violence and armed conflict in preference for nonviolent change and conflict resolution.²³

Inger Skjelsbaek, although supportive of the importance of feminist security analyses, questioned whether feminist concepts of human security are viable. She observed that women's experiences and identifications contain considerable diversity and noted that not all women are subordinate to men.²⁴ Contemporary feminist analyses and critiques, however, are cognizant that experiences and perspectives vary according to ethnicities, race, class, sexualities, geographies, and culture.

Gender justice is another key aspect of improving women's human security that is only occasionally discussed within feminist human security discourses. Gender justice refers to legal processes that are equitable, not privileged by and for men, and which distinguish gender-specific injustices that women experience.²⁵ Girls and women are usually rendered invisible or are marginalized within judicial processes, including war

tribunals, when they seek justice in response to gender-specific violence. Within the context of armed conflicts and their aftermath, “gender injustice perpetuates inequality, violates fundamental human rights, hinders healing and psychological restoration, and prevents societies from developing their full potential.”²⁶

4. How Girls and Women Experience Human Insecurity

Kristen Timothy emphasized that the most pervasive threat to women’s security is violence in its various forms.²⁷ The United Nations Fund for Women [UNIFEM] stressed that gender inequality is key to the continuing scale of violence against women, is critical to their (in)security, and is tied to global security. Women are keenly aware that these threats affect their security and want changes that prevent and decrease violence in their lives.²⁸ They must be safe from direct physical and psychological violence such as that which occurs from acts such as rape, battering, and gender-specific torture.

Using examples from Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Iraq, and other post-conflict countries, I provide context for these assertions. In Sierra Leone, following the ending of an 11-year old civil war, presidential and parliamentary elections were held on May 14, 2002. According to a Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children report, sixty-two internally-displaced women were interviewed when they voted: “53 rated peace and security as one of their top priorities and expectations from the newly elected (or re-elected) officials.”²⁹ In Afghanistan, women identified security as the primary barrier to their full participation in Afghan society; they view security as the foundation for rebuilding the country.³⁰ About Afghan women, Antje Bauer observed that “being safe from violence is the precondition for women to reclaim public space. Security is the basic condition for the future.”³¹ Further, post-conflict discriminatory criminal laws, lack of gender justice, and family members who restrict and violate them, severely compromise women and girls’ security and prevent their equal participation with men in family and community life.³²

Direct (physical) Violence

Charlotte Bunch and Roxanna Carillo asserted that gender-based violence is the primary

human security concern for women:

Women in both the [global] North and South live with the constant risk of physical harm. The experience and fear of violence is an underlying threat in women's lives that intertwines with their most basic security needs at all levels -- personal, community, economic, and political. In virtually every nation, violence (or the threat of it) shrinks the range of choices open to women and girls, limiting their mobility and even their ability to imagine having control over their lives.³³

The World Health Organization identified violence against women as epidemic throughout the world and a key public health concern. Interpersonal violence is the tenth leading cause of death for women between 15 and 44 years of age. In countries where population-based studies have been conducted, between 12 and 25 percent of women have experienced attempted or forced sex by an intimate or ex-partner. Forced prostitution, sex trafficking, and sex tourism are on the rise.³⁴

Structural (indirect) Violence

In addition to the importance of preventing and reducing direct violence, women point to the insecurity of structural (indirect) violence. Deborah DuNann Winter and Dana Leighton define structural violence as follows:

[structural violence is] embedded in ubiquitous social structures, normalized by stable institutions and regular experiences. Structural violence occurs whenever people are disadvantaged by political, legal, economic, or cultural traditions. Because they are longstanding, structural inequities usually seem ordinary -- the way things are and always have been. But structural violence produces suffering and death as often as direct violence does, though the damage is slower, more subtle, more common, and more difficult to repair.³⁵

Within non-feminist human security discourses, structural violence is usually given limited attention despite its major effects on women's lives.³⁶ In part, this occurs

because structural violence is so insidious and consequently less visible and so is the discrimination that exacerbates it.

5. Post-Conflict, Girls and Women: A Feminist Human Security Framework

The four-cell framework in Table I details threats to women’s human insecurity from direct and structural violence during conflict and after conflicts. Feminist scholar Birgit Brock-Utne originally developed a six-cell model to analyze the presence (or absence) of negative and positive peace at organized (macro or institutional/ societal) and unorganized (micro) levels.³⁷ This adaptation of her model provides a feminist human security framework that can be used within any context to analyze existing threats to girls’ and women’s human insecurity.

In general, feminists take a bottom-up approach when analyzing impacts of armed conflict whereas conventional security studies tend to use a top-down approach.³⁸ A bottom-up approach starts with the conditions of women’s lives; in this discussion, a bottom-up approach starts by looking at the presence of direct and indirect violence at unorganized and organized levels. As such, analysis at this level can help determine what elements are missing from conventional and critical security perspectives which come from top down.

Table 1: Women’s and Girls’ Human Security During and After Armed Conflicts: Indirect and Direct Violence/ Unorganized and Organized Threats

	Direct Violence	Structural Violence (indirect)
Unorganized: violence occurs from individual acts at the micro-level	Cell 1 Violence from rape, partner battering, verbal/emotional abuse by partner and family members, “honor” killings. Exposure to sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, during and after armed conflicts from partners or individual acts of rape. Harassment, injury, and murder of women and girls in post-war	Cell 2 Fewer household resources compared with boys and men, compromised health because of poor-quality water, food, and housing. Environmental damage that affects quality of life and life span. Lack of personal and political freedom of choice. Forced marriage. Difficulty marrying post-war due to stigma,

	societies.	shame, and psychological trauma resulting from forced maternity. Lack of economic opportunities. Prostitution for economic survival and to feed children. Pressure to wear garments to cover the head and body despite personal choices.
Organized: at institutional/ societal (macro) levels	Cell 3 Violence from military or other organized groups including murder, beatings, abductions, systematic rape with high risk for sexually-transmitted diseases, forced abortions, gender-specific torture, abductions into a fighting force, sex slavery, physical and psychological assaults. Gendered effects of land mines planted as a military maneuver. Sex trafficking. Female genital excision.	Cell 4 Neglect during formal disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes. Exclusion or marginalization within peace negotiations and post-conflict peace accords. Lack of decision-making authority within political and economic systems. Inability to participate in elections and public life. Lack of gender justice. Religious-based oppression. Lack of access to skills training, schooling, primary health care, and reproductive health services.

This human security framework contains threats of direct and structural violence at unorganized and organized levels, emphasizing girls' and women's human security in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sierra Leone.

Cell 1 contains examples of threats of direct violence towards girls and women that are unorganized by a political, economic, military, or other institution. Peacekeepers, at times, perpetrate acts of violence against girls and women in the countries where they serve;³⁹ yet, such acts are typically unorganized and individual, not formally organized by leaders of peacekeeping forces. In one example, in post-war Iraq, women and girls are harassed on the streets, and many cover their heads and bodies because they fear violence. If they choose not to wear a *hijab* (Muslim garment covering the head and body), they potentially subject themselves to verbal harassment.⁴⁰ A second example comes from post-war Afghanistan where women fear for their physical safety because the country lacks well-trained police and security forces.⁴¹ Also, honor killings are a form of direct and unorganized violence in which girls and women are murdered by family members for purportedly besmirching family honor, for

example, they are blamed and killed because they, themselves, were raped.

Cell 2 contains examples of human security threats that occur because of unorganized structural violence. Fueled by lack of opportunities for securing an income, the inability to secure a livelihood is a key form of structural violence. In post-war Afghanistan, women's ability to generate incomes is problematic, and widows and female heads of households suffer disproportionately. The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children's reported the situation as follows, "The deputy minister for Women's Affairs, Tajjwar Kakar, noted that hundreds of widows come to the ministry offices every week, desperate to find jobs or financial assistance in order to survive."⁴² The employment situation for Afghan women with professions is worsened because many have been forced to abandon their professions.⁴³ Also, because of tribal customs and fundamentalist Islam, girls have often been forced into marriages that are arranged by their families. These marriages perpetuate their low status and may lead to their injury by family members.⁴⁴ In post-war Sierra Leone, girl mothers (under 18 years of age when pregnant) who were abducted into the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) report that since they have returned to their communities, they must beg for food to feed themselves and their children. They barely survive because they earn money only through low-paying work such as hair plaiting. Others must turn to prostitution.⁴⁵

Cell 3 contains threats to human security that are organized at societal (macro) levels. In Afghanistan, women in the city of Herat were subjected, by the order of the governor, to abusive gynecological examinations to prove their virginity. Many girls and women have been afraid to leave their homes for work or school because they fear rape or abduction by armed groups.⁴⁶ In early March 2004, more than 30 girls' schools had been burned since the Taliban fell.⁴⁷ On May 2, 2004, three young girls in eastern Afghanistan, were poisoned, apparently by militants, as punishment for attending school. In the south of the country, girls' schools had been attacked in the months prior to the poisoning, and a school was burnt to the ground in Kandahar.⁴⁸ Women activists have been threatened with death, and sex trafficking of women through and from Afghanistan has been reported.⁴⁹ Also, the country of Afghanistan has one of the highest rates of mines and unexploded ordnance which have posed particular threats to young children, including girls who farm, tend animals, and collect water in areas where these munitions are often found.⁵⁰ In Sierra Leone, girls and women suffered direct threats of violence

from the various military forces, both pro-government and rebel, during the war. Large numbers of girls were abducted into the RUF to serve as porters, cooks, spies, “wives,” and fighters.⁵¹ They were raped, tortured, and otherwise injured, and forced to work. Large numbers of women and girls in the civilian sector also were raped, tortured, killed, and otherwise brutalized, predominately by the RUF, but also by other forces.⁵²

Cell 4 contains threats that occur from organized (macro level) structural violence. For example, inadequate reproductive health services, including lack of prenatal and postnatal care, jeopardize the health of girls and women and result in high death rates in their infants. In Afghanistan and Sierra Leone, maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the world.⁵³ In Afghanistan, only 15 percent of births are presently attended by trained birth attendants.⁵⁴ Another form of macro-level structural violence stems from the laws of a country, for example, laws prohibiting women from the right to vote or to own or inherit land. In parts of Afghanistan, women have been denied the right to participate in political processes.⁵⁵ In Iraq, when Ibtisam Ali led a petition drive in Hilla demanding a percentage of seats for Iraqi women in the new national assembly and thus challenged the organized structural violence in her country, she was told by a man that “women did not deserve equal representation because they were not equal to men.”⁵⁶

Organized structural violence was also evident in Sierra Leone when girls and women were significantly under-represented in UN DDR processes. Some girls and women reported that poor physical and safety conditions existed at demobilization sites so they avoided demobilization. More often, the opportunity to participate in demobilization was not given to them, largely because they were not seen to be fighters or did not have a gun to present.⁵⁷ Consequently, they lost benefits that could provide them with opportunities to enroll in school and/or learn marketable skills, thus contributing to their difficult economic circumstances and their insecurity.

6. Comparative Gender/Feminist Emphases: Two Human Security Reports

Despite more than a decade of important scholarship, gender theorizing and feminist perspectives have remained on the margins of human security discourses.⁵⁸ To provide comparative examples of gendered and feminist emphases within human security documents, I will analyze two recent reports to analyze in the extent to which gender

and/or feminist perspectives are represented: *Human Security Now*⁵⁹ and *Women, Peace, and Security*.⁶⁰

Human Security Now is a comprehensive agenda developed by the Commission on Human Security. *Women, Peace and Security* is a study commissioned by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan that was prepared in response to the October 31, 2002 adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN, 2000). Resolution 1325's discussion of women's peace and security was a historic first for the Security Council because, for the first time, it endorsed civil groups, especially women, in peace processes.⁶¹

Human Security Now focuses upon key interrelated areas that produce insecurity, such as conflict and poverty, armed conflict and post-conflict situations, forced migration, and economic insecurity. The Commission views human security as dynamic, comprehensive, protective of "the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment"⁶² and complementary to state security. Its policy recommendations include protection and empowerment strategies to decrease human insecurity around the world.

Throughout, the report emphasizes the importance of individuals and their empowerment and the inter-linkages between planet, nation, community, and individuals. Gender discrimination as it relates to women is occasionally identified, for example, in discussing how gender-related domestic violence reflects girls' and women's lesser status. In discussing criminal tribunals held in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, *Human Security Now* implicitly targets issues of gender injustice and impunity by making the extremely-important point that future peace agreements should not grant amnesties for gender-based crimes. Also, disproportionate effects of global financial crises upon women are noted. In a section about forced migration, sex trafficking involving women is briefly covered. The importance of girls' schooling in eliminating gender disparity is emphasized as is the key issue of school security, an especially critical concern in countries with ongoing civil wars. A feminist analysis is apparent in the report's discussion of specific effects of environmental degradation and its related impacts upon women's economic livelihood; this latter section provides an important example of what could have been accomplished in the rest of the report.

Human Security Now underscores Hoogensen and Rottem's argument that, within

human security discourses, opportunities are however repeatedly lost to explicate gendered and feminist dimensions.⁶³ In her discussion of this same report, Bunch noted that by failing to take up women as subject, “something is missing in the report.”⁶⁴

Although not intended as a comprehensive analysis, the report contains important gaps in *Human Security Now* that have significant implications for girls’ and women’s human security. The report’s almost ubiquitous use of the term “people” masks real differences in security threats experienced by males and females and fails to explain how inequalities and power relations fuel these. In *Human Security Now*, boys and men are presumed to be combatants in fighting forces, which ignores the widespread presence of girls and women in these forces and their disproportionate neglect during DDR processes.⁶⁵ Furthermore, one section that identifies gaps in post-conflict strategies fails to explicate that women are under-represented in peace processes and peace-building schemes.⁶⁶ In the same section the importance of peace-building initiatives within local civil society and communities is discussed.⁶⁷ Women are often key actors at these levels, but their participation is not highlighted though this omission is remedied, in part, within a brief discussion about the important role of women’s groups in strengthening civil society and capacity building.⁶⁸

Reproductive health issues are accorded minimal attention in *Human Security Now* and, in the main, are “boxed” on one page that cites an excerpt from a 1992 UN Population Fund fact sheet. The report fails to point out how security threats, such as HIV/AIDS in the family, markedly impact girls’ ability to attain an education because they are prematurely cast into roles of responsibility at home and/or the family has no resources to support their schooling. Bunch observed this same omission, saying that:

What it [the report] fails to explore fully as core matters of human security are those complex issues of bodily integrity that women have identified as critical to their intimate security: reproductive rights and violence against women in the family in particular...Bodily/integrity/reproductive rights/violence against women in the family are the missing chapters from this report, and all too often from much of the human security literature and discussion.⁶⁹

The report notes that the UN Security Council recognized links between security and women, children, refugees, and HIV/AIDS, that women and girls were especially vulnerable during conflict, and that they experience gender-based violence such as rape, enforced prostitution and trafficking. The report, however, could have improved its analysis by highlighting differential impacts of sexually-transmitted diseases upon girls and women and the relationship between their unequal status and the personal and political violence that they experience. Finally, the report could emphasize how women's reproductive security affects other kinds of security, such as food security. In discussing hunger, water, and control of natural resources, a feminist analysis would point to the relationship between gender discrimination, power inequities, and girls' and women's human insecurities.

Women, Peace, and Security focuses on girls' and women's human security. The study identifies impacts of armed conflict upon girls and women, the special needs of girls and women during post-conflict including in DDR, women's agency and importance in the promotion and maintenance of peace and human security, and the importance of incorporating a gender perspective into peacekeeping. Its feminist agenda and policy recommendations stress distinct experiences of girls and women during armed conflicts and gendered aspects of women's and girls' human security needs, such as for food and health security and protection. *Women, Peace and Security* fully recognizes how girls and women participate in fighting forces and are subsequently left out of DDR programs. After conflicts end, the difficulties girls and women experience in reintegrating back into their communities are detailed. The reproductive health needs of women and girls are stressed as is the importance of girls' and women's involvement in informal and formal peace processes. The marginalization of women during peace and security negotiations and within post-conflict agreements, disarmament, and reconstruction processes and the importance of increasing their levels of participation are accorded key emphases. Peace-building is viewed as an important role of women during post-conflict reconstruction and an opportunity to improve girls' and women's human security.

7. Linking Women's Peace-building to Human Security

A major goal of women's peace-building is to call attention to women's and girls' oppression, marginalization, and threatened security, and to establish a peace-building agenda that involves women as key actors. However, instead of being "at the table" where they belong, women are typically not involved as participants within formal peace-building initiatives. As noted by Isha Dyfan, Katherine Haver, and Kara Piccirilli,⁷⁰ "Despite the work women do at the grassroots level to organize for peace, the majority of their voices go unheard during formal processes including peace negotiations, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, constitution-creation, elections, reconstruction, rehabilitation, truth and reconciliation, and establishing a judicial system."

Despite their being left out of the public arena, women's peace-building has had significant impacts in restoring normalcy within post-war countries.⁷¹ Women peacebuilders typically work at community and regional levels where they emphasize processes, such as reconciliation, that build peace and human security.⁷² Consequently, their peace-building can take unconventional forms such as demonstrations and other forms of grassroots activism.⁷³

Women's peace-building emphasizes psychosocial, relational, and spiritual processes.⁷⁴ McKay and de la Rey's feminist analysis of South African women's meanings of peace-building revealed that, for women in their study, peace-building is a process, and relationship building is crucial to peace-building's effectiveness. Meeting basic human needs underlies their peace-building initiatives.⁷⁵

Mazurana and McKay's feminist definition of peace-building was shaped by women's explanations of, and actions for, peace-building:

Peace-building includes gender-aware and women-empowering political, social, economic and human rights. It involves personal and group accountability and reconciliation processes which contribute to the reduction or prevention of violence. It fosters the ability of women, men, girls and boys in their own cultures to promote conditions of nonviolence, equality, justice, and human rights of all people, to build democratic institutions, and to sustain the environment.⁷⁶

Women's peace-building, therefore, is centrally concerned with the presence and prevention of direct and indirect violence in girls' and women's lives which, as outlined in Table 1, are key aspects of girls and women's human security.

Peace-building for Human Security

In the countries from which I have drawn examples of direct and structural violence, women's groups are working under extremely difficult circumstances to build peace. Their activism creates dangers for both individual and collective security, as indicated in the following assessment of the situation in Afghanistan:

The barring of women by the Taliban from most employment and secondary education paradoxically galvanized Afghan women activists. The underground schools and literacy programs they established have given rise to many of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) now active in Kabul... [they] operate in a difficult environment. A renewed and expanded international commitment to security is urgently needed if the limited gains women have made in Kabul are to be institutionalized and emulated in other Afghan cities.⁷⁷

In Iraq, likewise, women fear violence if they are activist during post-war peace-building. The Women's Network reports that "According to reports, women have been apprehensive to emerge in public because of the violence and looting, and support seems to be growing for Islamic fundamentalism in the South...the US and British occupation forces appear to have made little effort to appoint specialists in women's affairs or make women's rights a priority in the reconstruction effort."⁷⁸ As in Afghanistan, post-war insecurity has posed a special threat to these women. In their efforts to prevent and reduce direct and indirect violence, they themselves face violence.

Priorities and initiatives for peace-building and human security. Consistent with Security Council Resolution 1325,⁷⁹ Afghan women have advocated for their equal participation and full involvement in maintaining and promoting peace and security in Afghanistan. These women peacebuilders have sought ways to build women's leadership in Afghanistan so as to take advantage of women's talents, skills and

contributions and improve their security.⁸⁰ They identified key areas for improving their human security: supporting women's health, food security, and education; strengthening women's community-based organizations; and establishing an independent media. In West Africa, although excluded from peace processes and negotiations in the region, West African women members of the Mano River Women's Peace Network (Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone) joined together to build peace, reconciliation, and confidence in their countries⁸¹ They organized themselves regionally, built networks, and identified measures to help stop the recurrence of civil wars that have imperiled the region.

Such initiatives illustrate how women peacebuilders are working to improve peace and human security in post-war countries. Their activities are widespread although usually unrecognized, offer one-to-one and community help, and are often not well organized. These peace-building initiatives act to reduce direct and structural violence, empower girls and women, and increase their security. They embody the fundamental goal of human security, which has as its focus individual security. Yet, in addition to these bottom up activities, to significantly improve girls' and women's human security and reduce the effects of power and gender inequities, women must be also included at the top -- within governmental, intergovernmental, and UN policies and programming, a goal that remains elusive.⁸²

8. Conclusion

In recognizing the current militarized climate surrounding national and human security, Rosalind Petchesky questioned whether feminist human security discourse "is a good enough answer to the militarization of people's minds that's rapidly becoming 'normal' thought."⁸³ Her words frame a key challenge for gender and feminist analysts to find ways to incorporate their critiques into mainstream security discourses, particularly in highlighting the key importance of reducing direct and structural violence in girls' and women's lives and conveying the necessity of working towards its prevention and eradication using both "bottom up" and "top down" approaches.

As I have argued in relation to the countries of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sierra Leone, gender-based direct and structural violence is a critical issue for women's human security. Also, girls' and women's empowerment through the promotion of gender

equality and reduction of gender discrimination is crucial to their security and the protection of their political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights. Because women's peace-building initiatives are key in addressing and reducing gender inequities and discrimination and related direct and structural violence, their peace-building work must be encouraged and supported by policies and programs that underscore its importance in improving human security.

Policy Recommendations

- Analyze human security by using both feminist and gender perspectives. Incorporate these perspectives in developing and implementing programs and policies about human security.
- In tandem with grassroots, NGOs, governmental, and intergovernmental groups, work collaboratively to improve girls' and women's status as an integral aspect of human security, particularly in conflict and post-conflict societies.
- Recognize that both direct and structural (indirect) violence against girls and women is key to girls' and women's insecurity in all societies. Therefore, programs and policies that promote human security must address this central feminist concern at micro, meso-, and meta-levels.
- Promote and fund women's peace-building at top-down and bottom-up levels to improve girls' and women's human security.

Notes

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