

Canadian Centre  
for Foreign Policy  
Development



Centre canadien  
pour le développement  
de la politique étrangère

---

125 Sussex Dr. Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

**GENDER AND PEACEBUILDING  
ROUNDTABLE REPORT**

Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development

Barbara Arneil, University of British Columbia  
Kimberley Manning, University of Washington

April 24, 1997

**1006.5E**

ISBN: E2-346/1997E-IN  
0-662-30439-X

## **Gender and Peacebuilding Roundtable Report**

Barbara Arneil, University of British Columbia

Kimberley Manning, University of Washington

April 24, 1997

### **Introduction:**

The relationship between peacebuilding and gender is a critical one. In many countries it is women who have been instrumental in reconstructing war-torn areas, fostering reconciliation and rebuilding sustainable societies after a period of violence or crisis. Sometimes because they are the only ones left living (for example, Rwanda); often because they are critical to the basic development of micro-economics and families in given societies.

While it has been long recognized that the key to 'development', more generally often lies in supporting women's activities, such wisdom has not yet broached the peacebuilding discussions either here in Canada or internationally. It was proposed therefore that an initial forum be held in order to explore the relationship between gender and peacebuilding and provide some specific recommendations to the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Canadian International Development Agency as it develops its overall policies on peacebuilding.

On Monday, April 24, a one day roundtable on gender and peacebuilding was held at the University of British Columbia, supported by the Centre for Foreign Policy Development. At the table was an international mixture of government officials, academics and non-governmental representatives from both the north and south (See appendix 1). The basic question put to the assembled group was: **How can women support peacebuilding initiatives and how can peacebuilding initiatives support women?**

A paper and set of specific questions was circulated prior to the meeting and provided the focus for the discussion which ensued (see appendix 2). Finally, Guatemala was chosen as a specific case-study to discuss, within the larger rubric of peacebuilding initiatives, partly because of the extraordinary role of women in the peace negotiation in that country, partly because of Canada's interests in Guatemala and partly because Guatemala is at a critical juncture in its peacebuilding process. Three of the individuals who attended the roundtable therefore had a specific interest in and experience of the Guatemalan peace process and the role of women within it.

### **Definition of peacebuilding:**

One of the key problems first identified in our discussion was how to define peacebuilding. It was pointed out that even in international discussions many people use the term to describe different things. Out of this discussion may be distilled a number of recommendations:

- 1. Canada should take the lead in developing a universally-recognized and accepted definition of peacebuilding.**

2. A) **Peacebuilding should be defined in terms of its results rather than its inputs.** This is analogous to the 'Reinventing Government' approach to domestic government policy. Rather than measuring how many peacekeepers are on the ground or how much money is being spent in what activities; peacebuilding must be seen in the concrete construction of peace in a given country - the results for all people living in that country must be measured, rather than the activities of the people from the outside going in.

**B) A results-based approach to peacebuilding initiatives must incorporate a gendered analysis including both:**

**i) the impact on women of peacebuilding initiatives;**

**ii) the potential to mobilize women to support peace.**

As well it was argued by some that for women in particular, peacebuilding must incorporate development assistance, adapted to meet the needs of reconstructing civil society.

**3. In any peacebuilding initiative, Canada must ensure that women's voices are at the table.**

Canada should consider whether or not to involve itself in a peacebuilding initiative if women are not included, or what leverage can be brought to bear to insure women's voices are heard. A specific and recent example is Guatemala where women's voices were included in the negotiations and El Salvador where they were not. A set of related recommendations include:

A) Canada should support civil society's involvement in peace negotiations.

B) Canada should examine models already available (for example, South Africa and Guatemala have incorporated women's groups into their post-conflict reconstruction negotiations)

**4. Canada must recognize the difference in the definition of violence and insecurity for women and men, and the differing needs therefore of peacebuilding initiatives.** There are specific forms of violence and insecurity which affect women in different or more profound ways than men. For example, mass rape, land mines, domestic violence, displaced persons, etc. are specific ways in which women (and children) are impacted by conflict differently or in greater numbers than men. Canada should be encouraged to continue its leadership in areas such as demining and consider more broadly other aspects of violence as they impact on women specifically, in order to insure that such insecurity is addressed in peacebuilding initiatives.

### **Areas of Analysis**

After the general discussion of how one defines peacebuilding, the group chose to look at gender and peacebuilding under four general headings:

- 1) Supporting Political Reconstruction
- 2) Strengthening and Democratizing Legal Institutions
- 3) Transforming Military and Human Security
- 4) Economic and Social Reconstruction

## 1. Supporting Political Reconstruction

Political reconstruction is often defined as the holding of free elections - it was pointed out that limiting peacebuilding, in the political sphere to this goal, may not be helpful in insuring women's participation in political society. Rather if women are to be included in the political realm, the goals of political peacebuilding must be viewed more broadly as good governance and the expansion of civil society. **One specific recommendation that was made was to increase the number of contacts between women's groups , in countries affected and Canadian NGOs, particularly indigenous women.** Secondly, it was argued that human rights should be at the centre of any peacebuilding initiative. **Canada might support women's rights by providing support for dissemination of information about women's and children's international rights,** either through the education system or popular workshops. Finally some of the participants believe that the best place to begin political reconstruction is at the local level. Domestic NGOs in Canada could work, for example, with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to support city-specific programmes aimed at strengthening the capacity of women's groups and mid-level bureaucrats to engage in political dialogue.

## 2. Strengthening and Democratizing Institutions

Canada could take an important role in regards to the relationship between gender and institution building in several ways. **First and foremost, Canada should insure that any support given by Canada in terms of personnel or training in judicial, legal or police development must include both a gendered perspective and women as members of the peacekeeping/peacebuilding team.** For example, in Guatemala in the last year at the pushing of women's groups, the government has now an enforceable law against domestic violence but the police have little training in domestic incidents and the prosecution of violators of this new law. Canadian expertise could help to develop the tools to combat this very real threat to women's security.

## 3. Transforming Military and Human Security

There was a lot of discussion about how a militarized society is transformed into a civil society, after a period of violence and crisis, and to ensure that violence does not re-emerge. One of the key issues in countries like Rwanda, former Yugoslavia, South Africa and Guatemala is the establishment of Truth Commissions or similar tribunals to allow people to document, publicly the experience they went through during the period of conflict. The dual issues of amnesty and impunity must be addressed with specific references to crimes against women. UN reports have documented the use of rape as an instrument of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Haiti, Kashmir, Bangladesh, Kuwait, Peru and Rwanda. The documentation of rape as a war crime is still very limited. **Canada should support in any peacebuilding initiative the addressing of crimes against women in the processed of specific countries. Secondly, Canada should take the lead in lobbying the UNHCR to broaden its definition of refugee to include those fleeing gender-based violence.**

One area which was mentioned several times and has largely been neglected by the international community is the demobilization of women soldiers. **Canada should support research and analysis on the special needs of demobilized female soldiers and guerrillas.** It has often been the case that women, who have been involved in military activity find themselves at the end of a war suddenly redefined in a completely new role, within the home and denied some of the public benefits (land, education or training) accorded to male demobilized soldiers.

#### **4. Economic and Social Reconstruction**

For women and children, it is the recognition and respect of economic and social rights which is perhaps the most critical to their long term security. One point which was made during the discussions and should be reiterated here is the strong link between the economic and social well-being of women and children in any given society. In countries like Guatemala and Rwanda where women were, until recently, unable to own property in their own right, this must be recognized as an enormous obstacle to the rebuilding of society. **Thus Canada should endeavour to support women's groups seeking to have the right to property and providing leverage through micro-credit where possible for the creation of a civil economy.**

Secondly, the role of International Financial Institutions on peacebuilding and women and children in particular was raised repeatedly. **It was recommended that the Canadian government should examine structural adjustment programs and their particular impact on women and peacebuilding, as an on-going part of their analysis around where to become involved in peacebuilding initiatives.**

Finally, it was argued that not enough work has been done on a cross-comparative analysis of different models of peacebuilding and gender to look at how women were incorporated or not incorporated in the reconstruction of a society and the results of different models of economic and social reconstruction. **Therefore, it was recommended that Canada initiate some research into different models of peacebuilding, and how women have both been supportive of and supported by a particular set of arrangements, to see which may work in future negotiations.**

#### **Conclusion:**

The roundtable provided each one of us with the opportunity to address the central question: How can women support peacebuilding and how can peacebuilding support women in post-conflict situations?

A number of recommendations emerged as a result of our discussion, as discussed above. First and foremost is the need to find a universal definition of peacebuilding which is able somehow to find a universal definition of peacebuilding which is able to somehow capture what is happening on the ground, the extent to which peace is actually being built rather than counting beans in

means, in concrete terms, women from the country concerned must be at the table in any negotiations, women must be part of the peacebuilding team from Canada, and a gender analysis must be done to understand both the violence and insecurity experienced by women and their specific needs.

These general recommendations are reflected in each of the specific areas of analysis that we looked at as a group, from political reconstruction to strengthening of democratic institutions, to the transformation of a society from conflict to civil peace. Peacebuilding, as has been demonstrated in a country like Guatemala, can provide an unique opportunity to harness the strength of women in any given country to rebuild a peaceful world, while simultaneously using the process to empower women and bring all people into the building process of these newly emerging democracies.