



In collaboration with the highly acclaimed blog 3 Quarks Daily (3QD), the Dialogue Advisory Group has been working on quarterly symposia where internationally recognized figures debate challenges in conflict resolution and human rights. The symposium can be reached via www.3quarksdaily.com and www.dialogueadvisorygroup.org.

p. 3	Essay 1	<i>Rita Manchanda and Antonia Potter Prentice</i> Who's that girl? Women, war, and the challenges of identity
p. 5	Essay 2	<i>Elisabeth Rehn</i> The Necessity of Integrating Women into Peace Processes
p. 6	Essay 3	<i>Chuck Sudetic</i> Stop Bandyng about Anecdotes and Loose Commentary
p. 8	Essay 4	<i>Sarah Cliffe</i> Women as Actors Rather than Victims of War
p. 10	Essay 5	<i>Rita Manchanda and Antonia Potter Prentice</i> Let Us Start by Listening Seriously

The distinguished participants in this symposium are

Rita Manchanda: Research Director of South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR) and has written extensively on security and human rights issues in the region. In particular she has intellectually shaped the discourse on feminizing security. Among her many publications is the volume *Women War and Peace in South Asia: beyond Victimhood to Agency* which has been a pioneering study on feminist theorizing and praxis on conflict and peace building.

Antonia Potter Prentice: Prior to her current work on gender, peace and security as Senior Associate to the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, Senior Advisor to the Dialogue Advisory Group and consultant for organizations including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the Global Network of Women Peacemakers and Terre des Hommes, she was Country Director for Oxfam GB in Indonesia, its largest programme in the SE Asia region. She initiated the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue's work on women, gender and peacemaking and has worked for a number of NGOs, mostly in Asia, having lived in Afghanistan, America (New York), Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Switzerland (Geneva), Timor Leste, and currently Belgium (Brussels). Antonia is a Board Member of the Democratic Progress Institute and is married with three small children. She is starting out on Twitter at Antonia_pp.

Elisabeth Rehn: Minister Rehn has a long political career in Finland, as Member of Parliament, Minister of Defense, Minister of Equality, Presidential candidate, and also as a Member of European Parliament. Since 1995 she has been with the United Nations, as Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Former Yugoslavia, as Special Representative of the Secretary General in Bosnia & Herzegovina, and later as independent expert on Peace and Security. She is the co-author of the 1325 report for Unifem "Women War Peace" 2002, Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP) report for UNDP on the situation in Palestine 2004, and the UNHCHR report on DRC 2010. Rehn is also the Chair of the Board of Directors at the Trust Fund for Victims at the International Criminal Court, the Hague.

Chuck Sudetic: Writer and former journalist and analyst for the United Nations war crimes tribunal in The Hague. His work has appeared in The New York Times, Rolling Stone, The Economist, The Atlantic Monthly, and other publications. He authored Blood and Vengeance, a critically acclaimed book that captured the experiences of two Bosnian families, one Muslim Slav, one Serb, during the tumultuous century that ended with the Srebrenica massacre of 1995. He co-authored La Caccia, the memoirs of the war crimes prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte.

Sarah Cliffe: Special Adviser and Assistant Secretary-General for Civilian Capacities at the United Nations. Before joining the United Nations, she worked at the World Bank, covering post-conflict reconstruction, community driven development and civil service reform. She was chief of mission for the Bank's program in Timor-Leste from 1999 to 2002; led the Bank's Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries Group from 2002-2007 and was Director of Operations for East Asia and the Pacific from 2007 – 2009. She was Special Representative and Director for the World Development Report on Conflict, Security and Development. She holds degrees in History and Economic Development from Cambridge and Columbia Universities.

Rita Manchanda and Antonia Potter Prentice

Who's that girl? Women, war, and the challenges of identity

It's been another knockabout month on the frontlines of that old unwon war of attrition about equality between the sexes. On the upside we had Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard thrilling the hearts of those who abhor sexism, misogyny and hypocrisy with her magnificent, finger-pointing skewering of the Leader of the Opposition on the floor of Australia's parliament. On the downside, first we had Pakistani schoolgirl and human rights activist Malala Yusufzai shot in the head by the Taliban; then second, back in peaceful Canada, the well-respected Human Security Report Project was telling us that they found out this year that sexual violence against women in war isn't quite the big deal we've been making it out to be (although to be fair they also reminded us that domestic violence in war settings—and indeed beyond—is a serious and neglected problem; a conflict perhaps to be recognized as such all on its own).

But without getting into the whys and wherefores of the data the Human Security Report got and how they used and presented it, the three events make you realize that the mere fact of being labelled a man or woman (or a boy or a girl) remains a very incendiary business indeed, even in peacetime. The fact is, labels matter, arguably more in wartime than in peace. After all, labels are what a lot of conflicts are about. Are you Muslim or Christian? Alawite or Sunni? Hutu or Tutsi? 'Have' or 'have not'? 'With us' or 'against us'? But is it less risky to ask 'and are you are a woman or a man?' Does that descriptive make any difference to the labels that went before? Not only do women have many different labels, and where they can, a tendency to use them in many different ways, but as we shall see, they have a venerable history of using common labels, and those that denote shared values, to make constructive contributions to resolving their communities' worst ills such as armed conflict, to the benefit of all.

The thing is, that women, like men, are not just women. The other labels they can lay claim to might be ethnic (I'm Tuareg), religious (I'm Jewish), political (I'm pro-government) or related to things they do like bearing children (I'm a mother), bearing arms (I'm a guerilla), or bearing witness (I'm a human rights worker) — frankly bearing a whole lot of things besides, though that is not the particular axe we want to grind in this piece. So what difference does it make which of those labels a woman uses, or others use of her? Does it matter which she chooses to prioritize and when? Is she even free to do that?

Violence starts putting red lines and black and white boxes around 'who we are' in ways we might not always choose, as do national projects and our choice of politics. Life hangs on the balance of such labels—ask Rohingya Muslims fleeing Myanmar, Buddhist tribals attacked in Bangladesh, or people with Kurdish or Armenian roots, or professing Alawite or Sunni faith from Syria fleeing into bordering lands. And if to that I am label is added, 'woman' —that female body can become the ground on which some fronts of that war is fought: the purveyor

of community identity and its reproducer can be sexually tortured and stigmatised, displaced, impoverished or widowed. Or, while still a child, shot in the head on the way to school.

Consider this: can Jamila forget who she is as another mass grave is unearthed where her 'disappeared' brother may be buried because he by virtue of being a Kashmiri Muslim was a suspect or worse expendable? Can Indu forget who she is when militants massacred her family because of who they were, forcing her to leave home and neighbours, to seek in town the ghettoized security of her community? Yes, Jamila is a woman but she is also a Kashmiri and a Muslim, entwined in complex ways with the ethnic and religious struggle, which defines her daily life; just as Indu, a Kashmiri Pandit woman lives in with quotidian explicit reminders with her community identity. There's probably not a moment in the day when she is not conscious of who she is, in a way women and men living in peace in Delhi or Brussels are probably not.

Women have won a merited reputation for bridging the divides of sectarianism and political orthodoxy to come together and organize for peace — essentially using the common values of some of the shared labels (e.g. woman, mother, wife, schoolgirl) to find middle spaces between the harder line positions that come with some of the other labels (e.g. communist, monarchist, revolutionary, reactionary, warrior). Inspiring examples of using the female label as an organizing principle which transcends the recognized fault lines of conflict continue to crop up: the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition winning seats at the talks which led to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 and inserting language on integrated approaches to social services and education and on addressing the needs of victims which would never otherwise have been there; Sudan's Gender Experts Team (GEST) enabling women across community divides to bring recognized new perspectives into the peace process leading to the 2006 Darfur Peace; Somali women organizing a 'sixth' clan in 2002, transcending clan divides by forming a clan of women who came from each and every one; and there are many more. As Marie Mullholland, a self-proclaimed Irish nationalist republican who works with Protestant Unionist women said of her peace building work "it's because I can imagine a future when those names won't mean the same thing."

Significantly, though, there aren't examples of men organizing in the same way (or certainly none we know of; it's an interesting side note that the international community has demanded stringent empirical research to prove the value of women's contribution to peace making, while it has never demanded the same about men's contributions). The reason for this is perhaps obvious: men can stick to their other labels as through them they can access power, resources and agency. Women's organizing is typical of how marginalized people organize: their lack of status forces them to seek common ground and shared positions — even with plenty of disagreement, and some unresolved issues along

the way. If only more peace tables looked like a women's coalition for peace! They don't of course, because the key ingredients of power and resources – and let's not forget the weapons - aren't there.

What's interesting though, is that whether you think that women get socialized in a gender stereotypical way to 'nurture' and 'care' or not, the times they've got close to peace processes have shown they tend to push for issues like inclusion, equality, justice and social reform. They also tend to ally with and support other marginalized groups. In Afghanistan in the 2003 Constitutional Jirga 20 percent of the voting delegates were women, albeit many were proxies of warlords; but women affiliated to the Afghan Women's Network forged alliances with other marginal groups, the Uzbeks, supporting the demand for minority rights – and getting recognition of the Uzbek language and gender sensitive language in the new Constitution. In Nepal, in the slew of agreements that comprised the peace road map – Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2006) the Interim Constitution (2007) and the Constituent Assembly (2008-2012), the motifs that pop out are inclusiveness, proportionality and participation, derived from an alliance of discriminated and institutionally excluded groups - women, indigenous peoples, and oppressed castes. But once the conflict resolution momentum abated and polarized politics returned, political party identities reasserted themselves and gender became a particular (and predictable) casualty: for example, no one troubled to lobby for any of the almost 4,000 (they were just under 20 percent of the full Maoist fighting force) women combatants to get demobilization, disarmament and reintegration packages designed according to their needs, as was being done for their brothers in arms.

The frustrating thing for many is that the 'forgetting' of gender (label or fact) is as much something women do as men. Women can also prove to be quite the autocratic, ruthless and cruel leaders that their male counterparts can be, as feminist advocate Nicholas Kristof reminded us in the pages of the New York Times in his September 30th opinion piece "Women Hurting Women". But before we get into the business of deciding that given the chance, women will behave just as men do or have done, let's remember, that we have not yet reached the holy grail of 'critical mass', so we don't actually know. If women were at critical mass, - defined by the Committee which monitors states parties compliance with the 'bill of rights for women', the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, as at least 35% across all institutions of power including the media, everywhere in the world - then we would be at a point where we can judge if men and women in general handle power differently or the same. But we're not there yet, by a long way. Right now, it's still a man's world, and the women that are making it to the top are still doing it in that context, some by reaching a helping hand down the ladder to women below, and others kicking the ladder away in echo of what perhaps was done to them before. That's not telling you how the critical mass of women would behave in power, it's telling you how those individual women behave when the bulk of power is still held by the other sex. Good luck to you, Julia Gillard.

But, with all that said, there are still other complexities for women to navigate than just the challenge of on going sex discrimination. There are women who are fully conscious of their female identity, and who may also be fully aware of the marginalization, which has ensued from it. But they may still choose in the interests of a community to which they belong, to identify more strongly with that group than with their 'gender group'. To expect women to stand apart from their community's ethnic movements is to misread the historical experience of the many ways in which women are embedded as members of a particular ethnic community in the struggles of those groups, and nowhere more so than in conflicts which turn on ethnicity and identity issues. It's proven hard so far to find spaces in those conflicts where it matters less that you are a Rohingya woman, for example, than that militarization, a culture

of impunity and exclusionary politics are laying waste to society and jeopardizing the future of its children.

In the Philippines, where this very month an important framework agreement has been signed between the government and the largest Muslim rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, many (though not all) women have expressed a desire to describe themselves and act first as members of the "Bangsamoro" group, which describes their ethnicity, than as women. This is partly because of the painting of the 'gender agenda' as a Western imported agenda – a contention that listening to the conversation of women's groups in pretty much any conflict-affected country in the world will quickly dispel; but they also because are looking for ways to pursue very gendered priority issues – like pervasive domestic violence – in ways which can be integrated with the struggle to maintain their distinctive culture and the community identity which goes with it. It's important to remember that it's up to those women, or the feminist Qu'ranic scholars, and all the others juggling these complicated labels, to figure out when they want to be who, and the broader purposes they want those labels to serve.

So yes, you can get a bullet in your back for speaking the wrong language in the wrong place; for praying a certain way a certain number of times a day; for casting your 'secret' ballot against the diktat of the hidden eye that watches; for being a girl who speaks her mind and heads off to school. Labels are dangerous, in different and often worse ways for women than for men; playing with them may be very much like playing with fire. But, echoing the slogan of another defining campaign on women's rights, let's not forget, it's a woman's right to choose. ■

Elisabeth Rehn

The Necessity of Integrating Women into Peace Processes

Much good news is reaching us about “women making the case”, but it is also true that the opposite sometimes dominates. In which category should we put the Canadian Human Rights Report, telling us that sexual violence against women in war was not the big deal we are making it to be?

In their essay, Antonia Potter Prentice and Rita Manchandan raise the question, what then is a big deal? For me, after talking face to face with thousands of raped women and men in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Northern Uganda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Bosnia & Herzegovina—we have a tendency of counting this kind of problem by percentages, number of instances of sexual violence, child soldiers, refugees, IDP’s—every case is a big deal. Unfortunately, the violence continues after the war, from a tactic of war to a habit of post-conflict life. Dr. Denis Mukwege, the founder of the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu (DRC) has told me how the war changed sexual violence to a much more brutal and destructive form. He has during the history of Panzi treated close to 40,000 women, children and men who have been victims of sexual violence. Listening to him makes it clear that this is a big deal.

Sexual violence is indeed (despite its terrible influence on the society) not the only issue when making peace and building up society after a conflict. Women want inclusion, equality, and social reform, and very strongly, justice. When experienced conflict mediators are asked: What is more important, peace or justice? the answer predominantly given is peace as many lives are thereby saved. But the victims of sexual violence do find justice important. Sometimes it is the only way of building their future without fear, and for overcoming stigmatization. For them ending impunity and pursuing justice is of paramount importance.

The UN resolution 1325/2000 has a main message: enhancement of women in decision making, in the peace processes, and at the negotiation tables. In some way the related resolutions which have followed took the focus from this message stressing the women’s role as victim. Helping victims is important, but we cannot forget that the only way to support them is to get women involved in the decisions, as actors in politics, in economics, and with rights to own property. The victims themselves want this. It is impressive meeting women in DRC, raped, infected with HIV, kicked out by their husbands from their homes after being “unfaithful”, who refuse to be called victims, they are “survivors”. They are ready to fight for the better future of their country. One way forward that they believe in is to get education for their daughters.

The strong women of West Africa have worked hard and successfully in building peace. The example of Liberian women is well known, followed now by the strong activities of Femmes Africa Solidarité and others for democratic and non-violent elections in the region. They engaged

in the elections in Liberia, but the real breakthrough was made in the Senegal election at the Women’s Situation Room. Women in Senegal were informed at gatherings about the importance of voting, and not to allow violence at polling stations. All parties were represented at the Situation Room and presidential candidates visited them. They organized a link to the Ministry of Interior, to Police stations, and the women as observers had mobile phones to report immediately about unrest or women hindered to vote. The outcome is known. President Wade immediately declared his loss, calming down his supporters. The new President visited the Situation Room on the next day after his election, promising to keep the parity rule.

Women are regarded as one block with similar minds and opinions. Of course it is not true, like men women represent ethnic groups, religions, political opinions, young and old, the whole variety of life. Bearing this in mind women have still been able to engage in collective actions, like the Liberian action for peace, or the Women’s Situation Room in Senegal. As the President of FAS, Bineta Diop explains: you have to discuss with the women’s groups what is dividing them, and to find the issues they can agree upon. Then build up the action on these issues to get everybody on board.

The Women’s Situation Room in Senegal is an example of women’s common action for democratic participation. It has been widely recognized, including by the African Union. The concept was brought to the elections in Sierra Leone and observers from Kenya and other African states facing elections in the near future were present in Dakar to learn. The many earlier violent elections like in Ivory Coast must not be repeated. If the unified actions of women can ease the tensions, it is already a long step forward.

Negotiating for peace is not an independent special event. It is an ongoing and sometimes very long process of ending conflict by building the momentum to sit down at the table for talks. Even then much of the work is done far from the tables. Experts, advisors, are listening to different interests of the people and the persons in power. If there is a genuine interest to embrace the whole population in a future peace, the skills and knowledge of women must be taken into account. It cannot be denied that women have a strong responsibility in the implementation of peace agreements. When we talk about the head mediator, we use the word “he”, not she. We are informed he has advisors who know about the needs of women. It is not enough. The mediator must himself be fully sensitized about the importance of integrating women in the process. If he does not genuinely care then the courtesy meetings listening to women representatives are only a play for the galleries. The same rule goes for the few women mediators. ■

Chuck Sudetic

Stop Bandyng about Anecdotes and Loose Commentary

Preface

1) I am a feminist. I see myself as fortunate to have come of age in this age when significant, growing, but still-inadequate numbers of women have taken their rightful place in business and government and the professions and all other walks of life in many parts of the developed world and in some corners of underdeveloped countries.

2) Women are the species. Men have controlled too much too long. They continue to maintain a stranglehold on too many women in too many parts of the world, from the high rises of Manhattan and The Bronx to the highlands of Lesotho and the hills of Swaziland.

Discussion

I feel disappointed at the essay under discussion. Perhaps I'm missing something in these words. Perhaps I demand too much from words and essays. But I consider this piece a lost opportunity, a bandying about of undeveloped anecdotes and loose commentary undisciplined by a honed argument and without enough definition even to foster engaging discussion of something concrete and urgently important.

This is unfortunate, because when it comes to the question of women and war, I see war everywhere. I see as much violence, and perhaps more, in places where "peace" reigns.

The really important work in overcoming barriers confining women is on behalf of the hundreds of millions of women for whom the barriers in question are maintained and defended with violence, and in too many instances deadly force. This, to me, translates into urgency. So I seek discussions grounded in the practical, in the question "What is to be done?" rather than on the ethereal or the academic.

There is much to be said about labels and their effects, positive (protection) and negative (exclusion), which this essay suggests but, for me, fails to explore. The practical cannot, I fear, be grasped well at this level. Because the real problem, as I see it, is in the deeper structure that produces the labels, the mysterious workings deep beneath the anthropology, the sociology, the psychology, the linguistics.... And in these disciplines, it is revealed not through the theoretical discussions, but through the minutiae of the case studies.

What, for instance, beyond drafting legislation and enforcing the law, must change in the culture – the deep-seated habits of mind – that lead men and, let's be fair, women to choose to shoot or detonate bombs to prevent young girls from going to school because he or she believes some god requires women to be subservient unto men?

What must change to stop a mother in some inner city neighborhood from telling her son that he must kill his sister, as his father commands,

for the "honor" of the family, because this is demanded by some patriarch back in his village?

What must be done to have mothers-in-law stop torturing young wives and slave girls?

What must be done to stop young husbands from throwing acid into the faces of unwanted spouses or from dousing them with gasoline and setting them alight?

What must be done to have "born-again" Christian men in the United States to consider rape a criminal act and not the fault of the victim, who is now to be castigated and shunned? And what must be done with the families of rape victims in Africa who send them into the bush to live, and die, alone?

Let's discuss the nature of this war zone. And let's explore solutions.

The term that resonated most with me in the essay at hand was "war of attrition." But I feel that the term is not well fitted to the reality at hand, to the "struggle" that will – for it must if civilization is to become more equitable and more efficient – need to be waged for decades and generations to alter, positively, patterns that are so ingrained beneath the anthropology, the sociology, the psychology, the linguistics...etc. Here, obviously, there will be a need for persistence, perseverance, courage, and sacrifice, and more spite of the kind demonstrated by that little girl from Pakistan who lies recovering from her wound in a hospital in England. More people like her will die in this struggle.

This process, even if it did not require a blood payment, is complicated, daunting, terrifying...

How, for instance, can women and men outside of Swaziland help women inside Swaziland better defend themselves and their daughters from men who would infect them with HIV in a way that, I at least, consider premeditated murder deserving of criminal prosecution and punishment? These are men who promise vulnerable women protection and succor, but actually exploit them for sexual pleasure and abandon them when convenient, and too often leave them to deal with the killer virus in conditions of destitution that produce death in droves by pneumonia and tuberculosis and in turn leave their children orphans, to become prey, too often, to sexual predators?

How, for instance, can women and men from outside help young girls, virgins, who have, or are vulnerable to rape, by men infected with HIV who believe this will cure them?

What about saving the daughters of Roma whose fathers fall into debt

to loan sharks and then sell their daughters into prostitution in Budapest and Amsterdam and Brussels to repay it?

How can mothers be taught not to spoil their sons, making them utterly dependent upon women servants, and beat their daughters into submission?

How about the Eastern Congo? This is my favorite case study example, because it shows the daunting complexities of trying to do good. In Eastern Congo, among some peoples, abduction of young girls and forced sex and payment of a dowry goat are the traditional practice of taking a wife. And here this age-old practice, combined with the impunity that has surrounded armies always and everywhere, has enabled soldiers and their officers to assume that they can engage in mass rape – the greatest spate of rape reported in the history of man.

Congo's parliament—under pressure from wise, well-meaning, persevering, and courageous women activists—has defined in law all sex with women under the age of 18 to be rape, and has introduced tribunals to try men arrested for such crimes and punish men found guilty and award damages to the injured. This is a very, very good thing. But how to deal with the side effects, the injustices in the application of this law that ruin women and men?

In the less-than-a-dollar-a-day world of Eastern Congo, a father speaks for a minor daughter. A minor daughter who has been raped is to be shunned. So consider this scenario, which is based upon an actual case: Young soldier and a sixteen year young woman fall in love. They have consensual sex, which is rape under the law. She becomes pregnant. They decide to marry. The young man approaches the father of the pregnant young woman and offers to pay the dowry goat.

The father presses criminal charges. Not because he is interested in honor or justice. But because he is interested in the opportunity to be awarded \$10,000 in damages, from the state since the young man is a soldier. (Never mind that no award of any such damages has ever been paid. The courts have made such awards on paper.) So for the father, no goat is enough. The case goes to trial. The girl pleads with the court not to put her husband in jail. She tells the court that she will be sent away to care for her still unborn child on her own with no income. She tells the court she loves her husband. The judge even pleads with the father to relent. The father refuses to drop the charges. He wants to be awarded the \$10,000 that will never be and says it is a matter of "honor." And the court is bound by the statute. Outcome: The young man is convicted and sent off to jail. The young woman goes off to some hostel to give birth to her son, before she is forced out on her own to toil as a prostitute. The child will make his or her way. And the father will have a piece of paper saying the state owes him \$10,000.

There is too little time to waste on bandying about undefined terms and flitting discussions. In this is an age of opportunity, an age when rule of law might just be spreading. It is foolishness to assume it will last without being nurtured and consolidated. For this we need women—and especially women in power—and we need them to lead and wage the struggle down to the ground level. ■

Women as Actors Rather than Victims of War

This essay raises a series of fascinating questions about identity and women's participation in peace-making. The focus is—rightly, I believe—on women as actors rather than victims of war.

This is not to say that we should ignore the particular impact of conflict and violence on women: in the last two decades, for example, women and children have made up close to 80 percent of refugees and those internally displaced. Women generally bear the greatest burden of coping with the effects of conflict, whether in trying to feed and care for families that have lost all their income and assets, rebuilding homes that have been destroyed, or dealing with being chased from their neighborhoods and starting a new life elsewhere. And whatever the final statistical wisdom proves to be on the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and intimidation, there is no doubt that rape and sexual humiliation of women have been used to to inflict suffering and create a climate of fear, from the conflicts in west and central africa, to authoritarian regimes in Chile and Argentina, to the Balkans, to the violence fuelled by drug monies in central America.

Activists—male and female—have done much to publicize these effects and to help women to organize to claim recognition and reparations for the harm suffered. The essay highlights however an element which is equally and perhaps even more important in considering the links between women's identity and violence—women's role as actors in peace-making and in rebuilding societies that have been torn apart by violence. It outlines clearly the "fact of life" that women do not have unique identities—they may be involved in efforts to resolve conflict as much through their political, ethnic or religious identity as through their sense of solidarity as women.

This raises an interesting question of the trade-offs between promoting participation of women in peace-making processes as a separate "women's representation", versus promoting their participation as part of the other groupings (whether governmental, political and resistance organisations, social movements, or community representation) in which they take part, and from which part of their identity is drawn. In the end I believe—as do the authors of the essay—that this is a choice for the women in the societies concerned: they will have a stronger sense of whether they have shared interests as women which would benefit from being separately represented, or whether they feel energies should be devoted to making sure that their political, social and community groups are adequately representative of, and accountable to, the perspectives of the women that they should represent. Another way of thinking about this is through the lens of "inclusive enough" agreements, suggested by the 2011 World Development Report on Conflict, Security and Development. What does "inclusive enough" mean in terms of women's representation in the political settlements that aim to end violence. On the one hand having no women engaged is clearly a red flag, as it would be for other major identity groups in the societies concerned. But HOW

women are represented is probably best left to be thrashed out by the societies concerned.

A second issue implicitly raised by the essay is the divergence between Western pressure - real or perceived - for the inclusion of women and women's issues in peace processes, versus local perspectives. This can sometimes be overblown, and manipulated as an attack on local women's activists. But it is a real concern. Most studies of programs to change women's political, economic and social status show that this is a long struggle, and that it needs to be undertaken within local realities. The national solidarity program in Afghanistan, for example, was shown to have a statistically significant improvement on perceptions (amongst both men and women) of women's ability to lead. But the change was relatively small, persuading less than 10 percent of the concerned communities of this change in mindset over three years. This often contrasts with donor perceptions of change, and with a technocratic approach that argues that well-written top down "gender action plans" can solve gender equity problems in a short space of time. There is a need to ensure that support and funding to women's movements (which can provide crucial space for thinking and action) is delivered sensitively, and is not perceived as imposing external models.

All of the above essentially agrees with what I understand to be the perspectives of the authors. Where I would take issue is on two points - one an omission, and one a simplification.

The omission is simple but perhaps important. The angle of the essay is primarily on women's agency in political talks, with the examples of Northern Ireland, the Philippines and so on. But there is another element of peace-building where women's agency is crucial, and this is in the reform of state institutions to have them serve all citizens. Often less visible than political negotiations, there may actually be a crucial peace-building gain to having women involved in decision-making on reform in public finances, or in the security forces. Indeed, the World Development Report points to examples—Nicaragua's security and justice reforms versus those of neighboring countries, for instance—where the involvement of women plausibly appears to have been one of the most significant factors in the success of reforms. This point, on women's involvement in the "hard" sectors rather than only in more socially-oriented discussions, is often under-attended in the debate on gender and violence.

The simplification is the argument that women are better at cross-sectarian organizing, with the examples of Northern Ireland, Somalia and Sudan. Perhaps this is so—certainly women have played this role courageously in some cases, and in the face of rough criticism from their own communities. But so have men. So two points on this. First, it may make sense in each society to identify where the strengths lie in cross-sectarian communication: are these in women's groups, in trade

unions, in business associations, in political parties, or in organizations dealing with social issues, for example? Second, while this can be an important strength for women and an activity women's groups may want to consider, let's not push the idea that "reaching across divides" is women's unique purview. Because we want all actors, men included, to feel responsible for this. And importantly, because while cross-sectarian organizing and awareness-raising can be incredibly valuable, it has some risk of boxing women in to a "soft" area of conflict resolution. We do indeed need women who can play this role, but we also want empowered women who feel that they can contribute in many ways to peace-building—starting political parties, reforming their security forces and governments, starting businesses that provide a sense of hope for communities, as just a few examples. ■



Rita Manchanda and Antonia Potter Prentice

Let Us Start by Listening Seriously

It's hard to write a rebuttal when one gets the strong sense that even those, like Chuck Sudetic, who claims to be so disappointed by the ideas we shared (or the way we shared them?), actually subscribe very much to the main points we were making.

Elisabeth Rehn has dedicated her professional life to this work, and a key lesson her response to our piece, and her work in general, teaches conflict mediators, and peace process support actors is to listen, listen, and then listen some more to a broad representation of people on the ground, including of course women. Listening, and acting on what is heard, and reporting back on those actions are highly validating for the person being heard, especially when their experience is normally one of disempowerment and marginalization.

Unwittingly but helpfully answering Chuck's vociferous call for 'more practicality' she describes the effective and pragmatic mechanism of the Senegal Women's Situation Room. She trenchantly reminds statisticians, policy analysts and the writers of glib op eds that each individual experience of conflict related sexual violence is a shock to the world's conscience, and a wound to its victim's very soul that can never be forgotten. So whether there are in reality handfuls, hundreds or thousands of such cases, each individual one stands as a horror on its own. She reminds us that for victims of these kinds of crimes of conflict, peace and justice aren't a 'choice' or a 'tension'; they are quite simply the same thing. Impunity means for them that the conflict is not over. There's no rebutting that from our side, and we're pretty sure that Sarah Cliffe and Chuck Sudetic feel the same way.

What she does not perhaps spell out is an insight that comes out more in Sarah Cliffe's piece and is an important finding of the 2011 World Bank Development Report on Conflict, Security and Development to which she referred: that investing in citizen security, justice, and jobs is essential to reducing violence in societies, especially post-conflict ones, a finding which relates quite as much to women as to men. The effects of sexual violence in conflict, especially when not dealt with, lead to extreme social distortions and specific, negative socio-economic consequences for the survivor and her or his family. It's not hard to agree that sexual violence is bad for people, bad for communities, bad for societies; but recognizing that preventing it by empowering women across the board, alongside changing attitudes, seems to be a tougher sell. We would maintain that socio-economic empowerment as is as important for women as political empowerment: with resources, comes status and choices; with status and choices come voice and power.

Chuck Sudetic is right: violence is everywhere, the cultures that make this ok have got to change, and clumsy international attempts to support local efforts to do this have got to get more nuanced. Chuck wants us to fix this now; Sarah reminds us that cultural change, attitudinal change take years to take root. We agree with him: we wish it had been fixed

yesterday; but Sarah's right, mind-set changes are incremental, and if each society is to find its way from the 'inside out', as it were, it must set its own pace for change – taking into account women's views alongside men's about the pace that fits.

Sarah also asserts that we have oversimplified our case on women's coalition building across divides. She argues that men done this, but - frustratingly - does not give us examples which compare to those we cited for women, as this is a gap in our knowledge we are keen to address. We would love to see how such peacebuilding coalitions might (or have already?) connect and work with women's ones. She is clearly worried about the marginalizing effect of 'single identity' organising implied by women's organizing for peace, and thinks that we were ignoring the vital need for such groups to collaborate, cooperate with and even co-opt men. We agree that political parties, trades unions and the like are all vital organs in society which can be used in re-building societies post conflict, and should all have a prominent place for women; but we think she underplays the fact that women, as an enormously marginalized group in public life across the globe, identify themselves that they need 'private' or 'safe' spaces to gear themselves up, build tactics and strategies before, or alongside the work they do with or to men to build peace. We need shared, inclusive spaces to work things out, for sure; but if we're not coming into that room as equals in terms of our access to power and resources, we might need some time to prep ourselves, if that's ok with you.

This brings us to Sarah's emphasis on the appealingly pragmatic concept of the 'inclusive enough' peace process, which sounds a warning bell for us. Who defines what's inclusive enough? We maintain that the marginalisation of women has a special quality precisely because women represent such a vast 'minority' group – more than three and a half billion people spread across every society in the world. It would be impractical indeed for an inclusive approach to dogmatically require a mathematical proportion of representation of each defined grouping involved in any given conflict, but the sheer numbers tell us just how disproportionate the exclusion of women continues to be and why Chuck is right to call for an urgent response to that.

Finally, we'd like to address Chuck's point that to talk of labels is to put at a theoretical level an issue of lived urgency, which must be dealt with in the immediate reality. Writing in 16th November 2012 International Herald Tribune, Chrystia Freeland examines the attribution of Obama's recent presidential win to the 'rainbow coalition' of minorities, which included, significantly, a large proportion of women. She discusses research on creative performance and identity integration carried out by the Singapore Management University and the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan which shows, say its authors "that ethnic minorities and women in male dominated professions are most creative when they have found a way to believe that their 'multiple

and conflicting social identities are compatible... those who see their identities as compatible they are better at combining ideas from the two identities to come up with something new... People who have high identity integration, it is not that they are more easy-going. It is that they find peace between the two different worlds'.

This useful and practical piece of research shows how valuable women's skills in multiple identity handling is; and hence it demonstrates how Chuck has misunderstood a fundamental point which Sarah and Elisabeth grasp: when we talk about women's labels and identities we are talking about the different ways in which they are agents and actors - movers and shakers in their own lives – as well as the roles which cultures and histories have boxed them into. We weren't reducing them to theory; we were insisting on their agency. He's right, cultures need to change which currently treat the violence and the discrimination if not as OK, then certainly as non urgent and ignorable. But what he actually does is to pose a series of questions, referring himself in a loose and anecdotal way to a series of briefly sketched cases, which still don't give us the solution that he clearly has in mind, apart from the fact that this violence must in the end be met with violence. What was the answer he was offering to the nightmare story of the twisting of good intentions from the Congo?

What we suggested, and continue to suggest, is that we start by listening seriously, urgently indeed, to the voices of women affected by this violence at all levels and in all ways, wherever they may be; let them tell us all what they think, want and need. And let's act on that, men and women, together. ■