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A Gender Perspective for Conflict Management
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The post-Cold War era has been characterised by an increase in the number and complexity of conflicts. United Nations peacekeeping operations, as defined by the secretary-general in the 1992 Agenda for Peace, have expanded and become increasingly complex. Today, UN peacekeeping missions include more non-military/civilian components, which are involved in preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution, peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building. These civilian components have resulted in a broadening of the range of personnel and skills deployed beyond the traditional role of the military. Although external influences can never be overruled, most conflicts have been characterised by an intra-state nature. The most striking feature of these conflicts has been their impact on civilians, who have been both perpetrators and victims. In the background, one is faced with the breakdown of the state, with vast human rights abuses, abject poverty and other social ills. As a result, there is an expanding need for the participation of women in peacekeeping operations and reconstruction. In the past, women have been largely excluded from most roles in peacekeeping missions, and have also enjoyed limited participation in the civilian components of peacekeeping missions.

This paper aims to draw attention to a variety of strategies aimed at increasing the involvement of women in decision-making processes during peacekeeping missions and reconstruction. Most importantly, the paper will look at attempts to integrate women in the process of conflict management, preventive diplomacy and peace-building by looking at the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) case study, which involved focusing on women in the conflict management, capacity-building area of peace-building.

In general, women occupy lower-level positions in the peacekeeping arena. According to Beilstein (1995), professional women and female military officers are largely absent from senior peacekeeping management levels. The percentage of women professionals assigned to UN peacekeeping missions varies significantly, with most women participating in civilian missions. A general pattern has emerged, whereby peacekeeping missions with multi-purpose mandates have allowed women to make a more meaningful contribution in the management and resolution of conflicts.

In a UN scenario, the head of a peace mission is the special representative of the secretary-general (SRSG). This person is chosen for his or her diplomatic and mediation skills, which must be supplemented by the individual's credibility. The main task of this individual is to offer leadership during attempts to support and monitor the implementation process of a ceasefire agreement. The SRSG heads a team of actors whose aim it is to support his/her initiatives.

In the history of UN peacekeeping, there has only been two women SRSGs: Angela King, who served as special advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women to the United Nations, as well as chief of mission in the UN Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) for 16 months; and Margaret Anstee, who served as special representative to the secretary-general during the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II).

There is a lively debate regarding the effective integration of the gender issue into the focus of conflict management initiatives by responsible organisations, such as the UN, as well as other regional and sub-regional organisations. With regard to conflict intervention, some feel the need to propel the role of women into mechanisms in order to address conflicts. The argument highlights the fact that women bear the greatest burden of social ills during and after conflict. In addition, women are only considered at the bottom of the social ladder during times of peace.

Developments on the Conflict Management Front

The paradigm shift in strategies to focus on conflict management, has meant that a new capacity has had to be built to reflect the new change in focus. Looking specifically at Africa, the call to build regional and sub-regional capacity is more pertinent, as there has been increased activity to relieve the burden of the UN.

The issue that keeps cropping up is the extent to which women have been speedily and effectively included as part of these capacity-building initiatives. There seems to be more concentration on military capacity-building associated with conflict management. This raises the question as to what is actually meant by the term capacity-building.

Due to the changed nature of conflict management – as represented by preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace-
building and post-conflict reconstruction – it would be natural that capacity-building should follow the same pattern. If one looks closely at the composition of militaries on the continent and elsewhere, women are a minority. Consequently, capacity-building within this component does not say much about the role of women in conflict management. Even if this were not the case, the military is only one component within a broader picture. Capacity-building would therefore have to be comprehensive.

According to Sowa (2000:2), this process would include activities 'such as brokering ceasefire agreements or comprehensive peace accords'. With the documented effect of conflict on women, it is inexcusable not to have women participate significantly in such a process.

Although Article 8 of the Charter of the United Nations calls for the equal participation of men and women in the organisation's work, the organisation has no detailed policy regarding women and peacekeeping. Few women have served in the military contingents of UN peacekeeping missions, a fact attributed to the national composition of contributing armies.

The secretary-general recommended to the General Assembly a target of 50% women in UN field missions.

Although this was a positive development, the organisation has little or no control over the selection and allocation of peacekeeping troops.

Between the years 1957-1992, member states contributed male and female personnel. Out of 47,336 personnel recruited, only 520 were women – a few were officers, with a high majority being enlisted. Nevertheless, the situation is slowly changing, with many countries involving women in national militaries. Several countries now allow women to serve in combat roles. These countries include Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United States, Venezuela and Zambia.

Unprecedented positive developments were the appointment of Ms. Marta Elisabeth Rehn and Ms. Danuta Waniek into top-level decision-making positions within military components.

Conflict Management and Women

Participation of women has generally been limited to the role of counselling other women affected by conflict, or engaging in other humanitarian-oriented activities. Although these are important, the point should be made not to replicate patriarchal division of labour in conflict management interventions by assigning women to the periphery of the political debate.

Some scholars subscribe to the school of thought that women are socially conditioned to be more peaceful, peace-loving and less violent than men. They further argue that as a result of women's intermediary role within the household and community, they believe women have well-developed negotiating skills, which could and should be extended into conflict resolution and negotiations in national and international arenas.

It has also been remarked that the presence of women in peace-keeping missions makes a difference in decision-making. These differences are most notable in terms of content, priorities, management style, organisational culture and group dynamics. It has also been said that women's leadership is likely to bring less military/forceful interaction. Consequently, where women have joined organisations or decision-making bodies in sufficient numbers, they have created a more collaborative atmosphere, characterised by mutual respect, and have also sought consensus, rather than a winner take all solution.

Arguments supporting the integration of more women in peacekeeping are usually based on the conviction that women are, naturally, more inclined towards peace than men. Beilstein (1995:13) attributes this to the role of women in their societies, which demands that they be pacific. In addition, Beilstein presents women as intermediaries to issues, a status that has demanded the development of negotiation skills. Taking cue from such an analysis, is it safe to assume that women are socially conditioned to seek peace.

The argument for more women to participate in peacekeeping is also supported by the contribution of women to decision-making. Women decision-makers, according to Beilstein (1995:13), contribute to the decision-making process in terms of 'content, priorities, management style, organisational culture and group dynamics'.

Helland and Kristensen (1999:83) argue in favour of women being further integrated, as they believe women bring a new dimension to the accepted way of doing things (which happens to be a male perspective). According to the
authors, gender equality within peace missions influences gender relations within local communities. They maintain that gender equality provides positive results for the mission and its mandate. Factors that formulate our assumptions about the role of women in conflict management are usually advanced as 'unprogressive', and therefore perpetuate the stereotype that women are incapable of playing meaningful roles in this field. The stereotype that women lack tenacity and mental fitness for the role of conflict managers at the highest level has also been problematic.

Skjelsbaek (1997:24) sees general thinking patterns as being formulated mainly by practices, and vice versa. The author maintains that practices are 'collective human activities, distinguished by the aims that identify them and by the consequent demands made on practitioners committed to those aims. Looking at women, the act of mothering is characterised by attempts to foster growth through protection, nurturing and training. [Women] should be aptly recognised as daily practitioners, whose patterns of behaviour have potential for peace'.

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**Conflict Management Activities and the Role of Women**

It is of great importance that we have a clear understanding of the elements and challenges of conflict management. When using the term conflict management, we are referring to a process and not an event, therefore we expel the view that conflicts end and advocate that they are forever in transformation. The main elements of conflict management are preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building.

**Preventive Diplomacy**

Preventive diplomacy refers to action that can prevent disputes from arising between parties. It can also prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflict and, in addition, it can limit the spread of the latter should they occur. Among those who embark on preventive diplomacy are multilateral organisations, regional and sub-regional organisations, international organisations and non-governmental organisations, to name but a few. The types of preventive diplomacy include fact-finding missions, early warning and conflict analysis, as well as confidence-building trips. These actions are important as they provide insights into the nature, causes and sustaining factors of conflicts.

Peacemaking attempts to seek peace with the parties to a potential or raging conflict. Peacemaking is usually undertaken during the phases of preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping. The aim of preventive diplomacy is to stop existing disputes from escalating into conflicts, and to limit the spread of the latter should they occur.

Preventive action is an area where women, in countries or regions with strong civil societies, could make a mark by expressing their views on conflicts. There could be no doubt about the relevance of women's groups within conflict scenarios. What is lacking is proper documentation and referencing – of all civil society preventive actions, women's activities are mentioned the least. The truth of the matter is that women, sometimes by their own doing, stake a claim to the role of mother, wife or sister in public affairs – very seldom do they elect to be rightful actors for any other group.

One of the fundamental tenets of modern facilitation and mediation is that no one group should be perceived as 'benefiting' from the process. This would threaten the continuation of the process and even threaten the little mutual gains that are achieved. The point being made here is that modern-day prevention of conflict requires the full commitment of everyone, no matter how irrelevant they might have been previously perceived. As such, women should shed the stigma of being only mothers, and should express themselves as a group to be reckoned with. This is easier said than done, due to factors associated with social organisation which prescribe a more submissive role.

Within this discussion, we are dealing with two levels of women: the first include local women who are affected by the conflict every day; and the second group are women who are professionals and work in the conflict management field. Although there are prominent examples of women leading civil society groupings, more can be achieved to
elevate this participation from being merely a sideshow, to being part of the 'real' interventions.

**Peacemaking**

Peacemaking refers to diplomatic processes aimed at ending conflict through mediation and negotiation. Peacemaking includes all mechanisms designed to bring hostile parties to agreement through non-violent means. Peacemaking compliments all the other elements of conflict management, because peace is the most important feature in all stages of the process. For peacemaking to succeed, strategies and solutions must take into account the most affected and vulnerable groups. On another level, retrospection recommends that peacemakers should, as a matter of standard practice, solicit views, opinions, experiences, values, and priorities to be incorporated into their strategies.

Peacemaking is usually undertaken with the assistance of diplomats from multilateral organisations and governments. Although this is ordinarily the case, there has also been significant involvement of civil society organisations in peacemaking. With the increased number of conflicts, we have witnessed church groups and conflict management non-government organisations engage in peacemaking, resulting in conflict environments being flooded with a multiplicity of actors.

The role of women in peacemaking needs to be meaningful. Their role needs to reflect their participation in every facet, instead of being merely window dressing for the achievement of political correctness. In view of the almost universal acceptance of women as equal participants in international affairs, their involvement in peacemaking questions how committed multilateral organisations are to their advancement. The answer to this question is also influenced by the employment and utilisation practices of these organisations, which employ individuals instead of people advanced by governments. The employment of more women should be given the priority it deserves. Moreover, the utilisation of women should move up the priority list.

**Peacekeeping**

Peacekeeping refers to the deployment of a neutral third party force with the consent of the conflicting parties. Current and future peacekeeping is multi-dimensional, and includes the deployment and interaction of military and civilian components. The functions/tasks associated with peacekeeping are centred around the protection of civilians; the provision of basic necessities; the rebuilding of social and political institutions; and the organising and monitoring of elections.

Women's contribution to military peacekeeping is considered far smaller when compared to their male counterparts. The UN has very little detailed policy on the participation of women in peacekeeping, even despite Article 8 of its charter, which highlights equal participation of men and women in all its activities. The limited number of women involved in military peacekeeping has been attributed mainly to the lack of control the organisation has over the composition of contributed troops. Troop-contributing countries have full control over the selection of who receives training, as well as the allocation of who will serve in a peace mission.

Only when national governments become sensitised to the importance of women military peacekeepers, will the entire peacekeeping exercise become more effective.

What follows are some of the functions and tasks included in peacekeeping activities. This list is not exhaustive and more tasks could be included.

**1. Political Staff**

Political staff members are political specialists who usually have a diplomatic background, and who monitor and analyse all aspects of the political situation with the aim of advising the SRSG. Political staff members are crucial members of the SRSG's team, as they may have to represent their superiors at important meetings.

The capacity of women participating at this level should be enhanced. The importance of such participation is based on the fact that women could bring an important gender perspective to certain issues. This point is important, as the SRSG provides guidance regarding issues on the ground which, more often than not, affect women. It is therefore essential that governments encourage women to join their diplomatic service and undertake various specialised peacekeeping training that would empower them with specific skills to qualify them for appointment.

**2. Human Rights Monitors**

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/54AC7AD314921F0DC1256C3D002D03C8-accord-gender-2000.html
The human rights monitor is one of the best-established civilian role players in peace support operations. Human rights monitors normally have a legal background and training, but could also have experience in many other disciplines. For example, forensic experts in cases where massacres are being investigated. Human rights monitors are normally mandated to observe and monitor the behaviour of conflicting parties, as well as any other actor in the conflict area. The monitors report their findings to the SRSG and other international institutions responsible for human rights issues, such as the UN and African Commissions on Human Rights.

There is a saying that 'women's rights are human rights'. If this is true, it makes sense that the observation of human rights requires a gender element. Peacekeepers should exercise respect for cultural diversity in their area of operation. However, they are, more often than not, put in a tight corner by the fact that these very same societies do not observe women's rights.

3. Election Observers

Election observers have been widely used by both the UN and the OAU. Election observers are usually diplomats, election commissioners or members of civil society who are involved in democratisation and electoral issues.

4. Civilian Police Observers

The task of civilian police observers is to observe and monitor domestic police forces. Depending on the specific mandate of the mission, the role of the civilian police observer could be restricted to observation. However, it may include training and other tasks. UN civilian police observers make up a multinational group, with police officers from the various countries operating in teams of two or three, depending on the situation.

The suffering of women in conflict situations is well documented, and some of it has been documented by those charged with protecting civilians – the police. It is a fact that the majority of police officers in conflicting countries are male. Even the civilian police observers are male. This state of affairs poses some limitations on the effectiveness of civilian police, as women may shun their utility. Governments must be encouraged to avail female officers for training in preparation for participation in this role. If member states increase their contribution of women in civilian police forces, this could result in greater female participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

5. Peace Monitors

Peace monitors are a more generic group who are most often used to monitor the implementation of a political agreement. However, they can be utilised to monitor any situation, depending on their mandate. Regional and sub-regional organisations should be encouraged to utilise civilians – especially women – for this type of monitoring. It is also important to enhance the already existing capacity of women peace monitors, as they identify, on one level or another, with women on the ground.

6. Sanctions Monitors

In cases where sanctions have been imposed on a conflicting party, and where the monitoring of sanctions is included in the mandate of the peace operations, civilian sanctions monitors could be used to monitor the implementation and impact of the sanctions. By monitoring sanctions, the SRSG and international community would be in a better position to judge whether the sanctions were being properly implemented, whether they were having the desired effect, and whether people who were not being targeted by the sanctions (for example, the civilian population), were being adversely effected by the sanctions.

The debate regarding the effect of sanctions on untargeted groups is ongoing, but facts on the ground point to the suffering of women and children. Encouraging women to participate in monitoring sanctions is an important way of bringing to the fore this suffering. It would also generate solutions and strategies to alleviate the condition.

7. Humanitarian Personnel

Civilian humanitarian personnel is normally the largest group in most peace missions. This group includes UN agencies such as UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, FAO and WHO, as well as the ICRC and a wide range of NGOs such as OXFAM, Save the Children and MSF. UNHCR and some other agencies maintain their own databases of potential short-term staff, and numerous countries maintain national lists of experienced personnel who are willing to be deployed at short notice. There are also smaller non-governmental organisations that avail themselves during humanitarian emergencies, and more often than not, they are staffed by women. The major challenge facing NGOs
is how to coordinate their activities with those of a UN mission. Capacity and knowledge about coordination need to be enhanced in order to create an environment in which their activities are effective. This would benefit all, especially women, who are more affected by humanitarian emergencies than other groups.

**Role of Women in Post-Conflict Reconstruction**

Reconstruction according to Sowa (2000:4) ‘refers to projects and programmes designed to restore, rebuild and redevelop institutions, structures and communities destroyed by conflicts’.

Demobilisation and reintegration usually monopolise the initial phase of reconstruction. The biggest challenge is to initiate programmes that would make peace attractive, and war an obsolete option. The role of women is important and their participation should be encouraged. The participation of women in decision-making levels within organisations involved in this field would assist in establishing the relevance of programmes with regard to the role of women in conflict.

Anderson (1999:240) points out that from experiences of reconstruction in Somalia, initiatives achieve limited success due to the exclusion of women, because traditional or conventional approaches tend to consolidate the stereotypical gender roles that gave rise to unequal power relations. This issue could be addressed by women participating in the design of these strategies, thereby adding value to the process by giving some form of gender impact assessment.

During negotiations of ceasefire agreements and/or peace accords, there is usually very little or no attention paid to gender issues, for fear of ‘scaring’ away an imminent settlement. As a result, a gender perspective regarding the orientation of interventions during reconstruction is lost. In addition, women in areas of conflict are faced with a restricting social organisation that dictates that they remain at the periphery of social life. To the credit of international organisations, programmes are designed to include the participation of women, but in actual fact, men dictate their participation.

Reconstruction is a very trying era for countries departing from conflict, as they have to balance the needs for economic stability and reconstruction. This requires a form of social reconstruction, which could present an opportunity for the evolution of new and fitting social patterns. For example, in post-genocide Rwanda, most of the people considered capable of economic activity are women – this is the case in most other post-conflict scenarios, and as such, interventions should be centred around women.

It would be ideal if women participating in conflict management and reconstruction could emphasise the need to contribute towards capacity-building the local women's population. We believe that effective participation of women in peacekeeping and reconstruction requires the following activities to be undertaken:

- to utilise women for training and capacity-building initiatives in the areas of conflict management, resolution and transformation;
- to demystify the African woman's cultural stereotypical role by encouraging debate and dialogue;
- to re-educate society on gender balance, and to respect identifiable roles for women in African society, over and above the religious and cultural interpretations of women as being inferior;
- to encourage women's organisations to develop alternative media channels through emphasising positive images of African women in leadership roles;
- advocate that gender sensitisation begin at school, in order to foster an appreciation of and respect for diversity;
- to encourage the inclusion of women as members of traditional councils of elders, and to quash cultural practices that privilege men and disadvantage women;
- to promote women as the custodians of culture. As culture is dynamic and ever-changing, women should retain such roles and persevere to introduce new ideas and re-educate;
- to propagate the economic empowerment of women to prevent dependency, and to extend development programmes to rural areas where most African women live;
• to canvass more women to be involved in the law-making process – laws should preferably come from within the community and should not be imposed from the outside.

**Peace-Building**

Peace-building refers to post-conflict initiatives aimed at addressing the socio-economic issues in order to enhance peace and stability. The concept refers to programmes aimed at consolidating peace and are specifically designed to prevent conflict resurgence. The following fields are involved in peace-building: political intervention, humanitarian relief initiatives and human rights monitoring.

A recap of the objectives of peace-building should emphasise how important building peace really is, and how imperative it is to get the support and commitment of the societies/communities involved. According to a report by an expert group convened by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (1996:para. 65a), peace-building would be more effective if indigenous initiatives and processes – especially those initiated by women – were supported and integrated into the peace process. The group reiterated the point that '[people] who are most directly affected and involved must be the major interpreters and resolvers of problems of peace and security'.

Peace-building provides an opportunity to link security and development, and also enables the process of political change to be used for socio-economic rebuilding. The group (1996:para 69b) advocates the idea that this phase of political change should be utilised to confront and redress economic and social deprivation. One way of doing this would be to re-visit the status of women, as far as their exclusion and discrimination is concerned. Socio-economic rebuilding would be meaningless if there were no women intereners to highlight these issues in the decisions made.

As stated above, peace-building involves institutional rebuilding or restructuring, and offers an opportunity to give new definitions and functions to regulate society. Some argue that in post-conflict environments, the key objective is the attainment of political stability and socio-economic restructuring. The argument maintains that some measure of political stability must be achieved to offset economic rebuilding. This means that sincere attention needs to be paid to the political rebuilding of a country, with particular emphasis on the building of strong democratic government institutions. The issue of broad representation within these institutions has to be raised – marginalised groups must no longer be the victims of discriminatory socio-political practices. In the past, women have been the most marginalised of all groups. Cultural beliefs have confined them to the periphery of social and political debates. In the future, however, post-conflict institutions without proper representation of women will have less democratic legitimacy. The idea is to ensure that women participate on an equal footing with men in all spheres of a peace mission in order to give proper meaning to real representations.

Skjaeler (1997:29) is of the opinion that the feminist security concept is preoccupied with the objective of defining and finding peace for all through the dimension of 'caring'. Caring, in this sense, is represented by the pursuit of sustainability, vulnerability, equity and protection, and should advance women as leaders in peace-building. The author raises an interesting point: it is safe enough to assume that these qualities in women are there as a result of the position that women have occupied within the political strata. In other words, this pattern of behaviour might be different if women were in a position of political authority.

**Challenges to Peacekeeping Capacity-Building Initiatives:**
**The case of ACCORD**

ACCORD is a South African-based organisation involved in conflict resolution, peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy throughout the continent of Africa. As a conflict resolution organisation, the challenge facing ACCORD is to create a stable environment to facilitate the process towards democratic governance in Africa.

ACCORD's aim is to influence political developments across the continent by bringing conflict resolution to the forefront as an alternative to violence and protracted conflict. The organisation runs intervention, training, education, research and communication programmes in key sectors, with the goal of building and transforming today’s leadership into a more successful one for the future.

The peacekeeping programme at ACCORD is part of the Training for Peace (TfP) Project, which was established in 1995 with funding from the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The TfP project was formed out of a partnership between the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and ACCORD.

During the last five years, the peacekeeping programme at ACCORD has conducted peacekeeping training
workshops in 11 SADC countries. The programme has conducted workshops in Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The focus of ACCORD's training is civilian-oriented, with emphasis being paid to civil-military cooperation and coordination.

The training workshops take the form of lectures, syndicate exercises and role-playing. The workshops were divided into five groups of participants from the military, police, ministries of foreign affairs, civil society and academics. Looking back at the numbers of those trained reveals a very limited participation of women in the workshops, although various attempts were made to call for more female participants.

The total number of those trained was 431. Of this total, only 56 were women, as compared to 375 males. A more comprehensive breakdown of statistics revealed that most of the women trained were accounted for by civil society organisations, rather than government structures. This is not acceptable. The fact of the matter is that government institutions – in the form of military, police and foreign affairs – still suffer from a lack of balanced gender representation.

The issue we have to contend with is how to make sense of building capacity, whilst at the same time, recognising the unrepresentative nature of the institutions we work with. Although no one organisation can alter the state of affairs single-handedly, the solution lies in establishing client-oriented capacity-building initiatives. By this, we mean that capacity-building initiatives have to function within the demands of conflict management organisations, in the form of sub-regional, regional and international organisations. The time has come for specialist skills to be developed with the aim of building a pool of skills that can perform specific tasks during peace missions. Prior consultation with the aforementioned organisations would enable an assessment to be made of their needs. Prior consultation would also shape the focus of the capacity-building initiatives.

The link between capacity-building and women's participation is that conflict management outcomes will largely reflect the content of capacity-building initiatives. The above mentioned, client-oriented approach creates an opportunity to focus capacity-building initiatives on addressing the needs of executing organisations, whilst at the same time, giving the gender debate due attention.

**Conclusion**

Given the effect of conflict on women, it is inevitable that the meaningful management of conflicts should include a significant role for women. Rhetorical commitment in this regard needs to be translated into firm action in the area of capacity-building. Women should be part of conflict management initiatives, and should also be properly empowered.

Peacekeeping capacity-building initiatives must reflect the capacity needs of the regions in which they are employed. However, the sad reality is that commitment needs to be initially shown by the implementing organisations, and institutions need to utilise women in order to trigger enthusiasm. As discussed in the paper, capacity-building initiatives need to, in some way, reflect the comprehensive conflict management strata. The main reason for this is that during modern peace missions, the demand for coordination between the component parts calls for the introduction of a culture of cooperation through training. Ideally, capacity-building initiatives should not emphasise the readiness of one component, at the expense and neglect of others.

Regional and sub-regional organisations need to be encouraged to utilise all peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building resources available to them. Regional organisations such as the OAU and Sub regional organisations such as SADC, IGAD, ECOWAS and the Maghreb region in North Africa need to be nudged into utilising the civilian capacity that exists within their regions. In order to be taken seriously, the gender debate within some regions of the world will have to be introduced through multilateral regional organisations, especially in Africa. Regional organisations should start by setting targets to be achieved within a particular timeframe to address the gender issues. With such a system, states would be compelled to take notice and properly use women for the purpose of conflict management.

This is a direct challenge to developments on the ground, with most sub-regional organisations preparing military stand-by arrangements for peacekeeping. In southern Africa, there is a regional body, Southern African Databank on Human Rights and Democracy (SAFDDEM), which is responsible for keeping data on individuals eligible for human rights monitoring. This is a step in the right direction.

The second major issue is the influence (or lack thereof) of the gender debate to ongoing conflict management capacity-building initiatives. There is general agreement regarding the need for capacity to be built in Africa in preparation for peacekeeping. However, what seems to be lacking is an analysis of the impact that the type of
capacity being built has on the ability of Africans to wrestle with conflicts. The question we would have to ask ourselves is how far will we allow ourselves to be drawn into building capacity that is not reflective of our needs. The fact of the matter is that peacekeeping or enforcement action should always be sanctioned by a higher authority, such as the UN. As such, UN action rarely relies exclusively on the military, as there is an important role for civilian activity.

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