

International Development Policy Series – 13

# GENDER IN PEACEBUILDING

*Local Practices in Indonesia and Nigeria*

*Edited by*

**Elisabeth Prügl, Christelle Rigual,  
Rahel Kunz, Mimidoo Achakpa,  
Henri Myrntinen, Joy Onyesoh,  
Arifah Rahmawati and  
Wening Udasmoro**

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Gender in Peacebuilding

# International Development Policy

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## Foreword

We are pleased to introduce the 13th volume of *International Development Policy*, ‘Gender in Peacebuilding: Local Practices in Indonesia and Nigeria’.

This volume aims to develop a better understanding of the multiple and complex ways in which gender is present in peacebuilding practices and both enables and constrains transformative goals. It explores how gender becomes productive either by being deployed strategically or by asserting itself inadvertently, for example through gender stereotypes, gendered divisions of labour, or identity constructions. Finally, it looks at the effects of deploying gender as a technology of government, and what inclusive peace might look like.

The present volume is the culmination of a six-year research project funded by the Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development (r4d) and the long list of co-editors reflects its cooperative nature. The project, led by the Gender Centre at the Graduate Institute, investigated the gendered dimensions of social conflict, armed violence and peacebuilding through close collaboration between scholars from Indonesia, Nigeria and Switzerland, who jointly conceptualised and implemented the research and who co-authored the contributions.

This experience and its results as presented in this volume also highlight the need for more collaborative research across North–South divides. Research of this kind is still relatively rare, as are open access co-authored publications stemming from such research.

The volume includes eight chapters and two interludes. Each chapter provides a gender analysis of one distinctive initiative or practice in a specific context in either Indonesia or Nigeria, while the interludes present reflections on, and experiences with, particular methodological issues that emerged during the collaborative research process. These contributions convey the wealth of existing practices aimed at transforming violent conflict and building peace across diverse communities in these two countries.

Chapter drafts were presented and discussed in an authors’ workshop held online in October 2020. We would like to thank workshop participants for providing relevant input to the authors, and the peer reviewers for their valuable insights. Finally, we are grateful to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Republic and State of Geneva—Service for International Solidarity (SSI) for their financial support. We also appreciated the commitment of the Gender Centre at the Graduate Institute to this project and throughout the editorial process for this volume.

Our hope is that this volume will contribute positively to the diverse, rich and complex field of gender in peacebuilding and provide new insights on how local dynamics can escalate or de-escalate conflicts. We believe it may also prove helpful in promoting debate among scholars, activists, and practitioners, and a broader audience interested in exploring how rich, varied, creative and effective local peacebuilding efforts can be.

*The Editors*

Geneva, May 2021

# Preface

*International Development Policy* is a critical source of analysis of development policy and international cooperation trends, aimed at an audience of scholars, policymakers and development professionals. It offers a diverse range of academic views from both industrialised countries and emerging economies.

*International Development Policy* is edited by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, an institution of research and higher education dedicated to advancing world affairs. Located in Geneva, at the heart of an international centre of multilateral governance, the Graduate Institute benefits from a rich legacy linked to the founding of the international system and the League of Nations in the 1920s, and the emergence of the developing world in the 1960s.

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We extend our thanks to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Republic and State of Geneva—Service for International Solidarity (SSI) for their financial support.



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This volume is an outcome of a research project funded by the Swiss Programme for on Global Issues for Development (r4d).



**Swiss Programme for Research  
on Global Issues for Development**

In the light of global challenges, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) launched in 2012 the joint “*Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development*” (r4d programme). The main goal of the r4d programme is the generation of new knowledge and the application of research results that contribute to solving global problems and securing public goods in low-and middle-income countries within the framework of global sustainable development. The r4d programme consists of six modules, five with thematic priorities and one for thematically open calls. [www.r4d.ch](http://www.r4d.ch)



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# Abbreviations

BAL	Basic Agrarian Law, Indonesia, 1960
BRA	Aceh Reintegration Agency, Indonesia
CSO	civil society organisation
CSPS	Center for Security and Peace Studies, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
DDR	disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (programmes), Aceh, Indonesia
FDI	foreign direct investment
FGD	focus group discussion
FORMALIN	Forum Masyarakat Peduli Lingkungan (Community Forum for Environment Care), Indonesia
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement), Indonesia
GAMPA	Gerakan Pemuda Pecinta Alam Wongsorejo Banyuwangi (Movement of Wongsorejo Banyuwangi Youth Nature Lovers), Indonesia
GBV	gender-based violence
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (UN)
IFI	international financial institution
IHEID	Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland
ILO	International Labour Organization
IO	international organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IR	international relations
KFPE	Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries, Switzerland
LGA	Local Government Area, Nigeria
MHC	The Moluccan Hip-Hop Community, Indonesia
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OP2WB	Organisasi Petani Wongsorejo Banyuwangi (Farmers' Organisation of Wongsorejo, women's branch) Banyuwangi, Indonesia
OPWB	Organisasi Petani Wongsorejo Banyuwangi (Farmers' Organisation of Wongsorejo) Banyuwangi, Indonesia
PA	Partai Aceh (Aceh Party), Indonesia
PAB	Paparisa Ambon Bergerak collective, Indonesia
P/CVE	preventing/countering violent extremism

PTD	Peace through Development (UNDP programme)
r4d	Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development, Switzerland
SSI	semi-structured interview
TNI	Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian military)
UGM	Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Nigeria
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WPS	Women, Peace and Security (United Nations Resolutions on)



## Notes on Contributors

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is International President of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and President of WILPF Nigeria. She is the founder of the Joy Onyesoh Foundation, which is dedicated to building resilient communities in Nigeria. An experienced activist, facilitator, organiser, trainer and researcher, Onyesoh's consultancy and research interests lie in the area of gender and development, with a focus on women, peace and security. She has written a doctoral dissertation on women's transformative leadership in conflict and post-conflict societies.

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gender issues, literature, violence, identity politics, and critical discourse analysis. One of her latest works is 'Gendered Dynamics of Labour Force Participation in Insurgency and Ethno-Religious Conflict: The Cases of Aceh and Ambon', to be published in *International Feminist Journal of Politics* (forthcoming).

# Introduction: Local Peacebuilding through a Gender Lens

*Elisabeth Prügl, Rahel Kunz, Mimidoo Achakpa, Henri Myrntinen, Joy Onyesoh, Arifah Rahmawati, Christelle Rigual and Wening Udasmoro*

## Abstract

Around the world, people and communities transform violent conflicts and build peace in various ways. Such local practices have been widely documented in various disciplines but have rarely been studied in the field of peace and conflict studies. These practices highlight the ways in which peacebuilding involves various axes of difference that intersect with one another, including gender, age, class, ethnicity, religion and political ideologies. Adopting a feminist approach, we analyse such intersecting differences to develop a better understanding of the multiple and complex ways in which gender is present in peacebuilding practices, and of how it both enables and obstructs transformative goals. We address the question: How does gender inform peacebuilding initiatives in intersection with other social dynamics and identity categories, and to what effect? Identifying a number of gender logics, we show how intersectionally gendered dynamics shape and are shaped by peacebuilding initiatives. We analyse how gender becomes productive either by being deployed strategically or by asserting itself inadvertently, for example through gender stereotypes, gendered divisions of labour, or identity constructions. We build on the outcomes of a six-year collaborative research project involving scholars from Indonesia, Nigeria and Switzerland that centred on investigating peacebuilding initiatives at local, meso-and macro-levels in Indonesia and Nigeria.

## 1 Introduction

People and communities around the world have a wealth of competence in managing and transforming violent conflicts. They foster links across religious, ethnic and ideological divides; bring to bear their authority as family members or government or community leaders to counteract enmity; creatively disrupt conflict and build relationships through their art; and organise politically to achieve inclusive societies. Their work recognises the power of gender, age,

religion and other social dynamics to fuel othering, but also to function as a resource for building peace. People are assigned different roles in conflict and peacebuilding along various axes of difference that intersect with one another, including gender, age, class, ethnicity, religion and political ideologies. A feminist approach to peace and conflict studies brings into view such intersecting differences. It also trains our eye to people's diverse experiences of conflict and peacebuilding in the context of their communities, beyond the strategising of governments and insurgents. It thus provides a unique entry point to the exploration of local practices of conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

Such local practices have been widely documented in various disciplines and contexts, but have rarely been studied in the field of peace and conflict studies. Rather, in this context, peacebuilding has mostly been used to refer to international interventions in post-conflict societies, defined as 'all types and phases of international intervention aimed at political, legal, economic and social transformation of a war-torn state' (Duncanson, 2016, 4). This includes policies and programming that engage international organisations (including the United Nations and the World Bank), governments, and non-governmental and civil society organisations intent on constructing a peace, typically based on ideals of liberal governance (Campbell, Chandler and Sabaratnam, 2011; Paris, 2010). While sensitive to local contexts, such efforts remain decidedly top-down. Put simply, peace appears to be something that outsiders from the North bring to people from the South who seemingly have failed to keep violence at bay. Local actors, initiatives, and processes for peace in conflict-affected communities are often rendered invisible. This volume addresses this neglect and silencing through detailed analyses of local peacebuilding initiatives. This is not to suggest that peace can be built only locally or that gender matters only in local contexts. On the contrary; as much feminist scholarship shows, gender is pervasive in international relations on multiple scales (Sjoberg, 2013; 2008). We start, however, with the premise that peace cannot be built without regard for local power relations. These encompass local dynamics as well as political and economic processes originating on scales beyond the local.

In 2000, feminist lobbying led to the adoption of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325, initiating what has become known as the UN's women, peace and security agenda (WPS). The expectation of feminists was that WPS would lead to a disruption of the patriarchal power relations that feed war and violence. With the implementation of this agenda, peacebuilding has come to encompass efforts to increase women's participation and to account for their gender-specific needs. But such efforts have tended to focus on including women, understood as a homogenous group, to the detriment of recognising the complexities of gender as an aspect of political and social

relations (Duncanson, 2016; Hudson, 2012; Myrntinen, Naujokis and El-Bushra, 2014; Rigual, 2017; Speake, 2013). This is also the case for many initiatives that insist on ‘engaging “local women”’ (Väyrynen, 2010, 149). The effect of this has been to invisibilise gendered hierarchies and negotiations of gender identities. Moreover, efforts to implement the WPS agenda have largely remained too top-down (Shepherd, 2017). Taking the form of ‘gender mainstreaming’, they have approached gender equality as a problem amenable to technical solutions, failing to appreciate that transforming gender relations is a deeply political project. Efforts to include women in peacebuilding have thus often kept in place existing power relations and the violence they sustain.

Our starting point in this thematic volume is thus the role of gender rather than that of women in building peace. Our objective is to develop a better understanding of the multiple and complex ways in which gender is present in peacebuilding practices, and of how it both enables and obstructs transformative goals. We show how intersectionally gendered dynamics shape and are shaped by peacebuilding initiatives. We identify how gender becomes productive either by being deployed strategically or by asserting itself inadvertently, for example through gender stereotypes, gendered divisions of labour, or identity constructions. We acknowledge the importance of exploring women’s initiatives—organising and mobilising for peace in their respective communities, as many scholars focusing on local peacebuilding have emphasised—and shed light on such activities. But we also examine the multiple and complex gendered dimensions of and challenges to peacebuilding, how gender is performed and reconstituted through peacebuilding practices, the effects of deploying gender as a technology of government, and what inclusive peace might look like.

The volume is an outcome of a six-year collaborative research project that, funded by the Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development (r4d), has investigated the gender dimensions of social conflict, armed violence and peacebuilding.<sup>1</sup> The project has entailed close collaboration between scholars from Indonesia, Nigeria and Switzerland, who jointly conceptualised and implemented the research and who co-authored the contributions to this volume. While during the first half of the project we examined how gender

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1 Funding by the Swiss National Science Foundation is gratefully acknowledged. Project Nr. 400240\_1146777. See project website: <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/research-centres/gender-centre/gender-dimensions-social-conflicts-armed-violence-and-peacebuilding> (accessed on 17 May 2021). The project was conceptualised by Jana Krause based on her research project *Resilient Communities: Non-Violence and Civilian Agency in Communal War* (Krause, 2018).

operates in conflict cycles, our focus during the second half was on peacebuilding activities. We approached the topic by focusing on locally emerging practices firmly anchored in conflict-affected communities and post-conflict settings in Indonesia and Nigeria. With long and diverse histories of both violent conflict and peacebuilding, the two countries provided us with rich material for analysis. Both shifted from authoritarian to democratic regimes at the turn of the century, and both subsequently witnessed violent conflict. Both are regionally diverse and violence has taken different forms, including communal conflicts, resource conflicts, and insurgencies. Both countries also have a vibrant civil society and a blossoming landscape of local peacebuilding activities.

Our research on peacebuilding started from a common question—*How does gender inform peacebuilding initiatives in intersection with other social dynamics and identity categories and to what effect?* We have explored peacebuilding initiatives at local, meso- and macro-levels, including community groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and state and international efforts linked to six subnational regions: Maluku, Aceh, and East Java in Indonesia, and Plateau State, Delta State, and Enugu in Nigeria. The absence of UN peacekeeping in these regions encouraged us to bring local agency to the fore—though such agency is rarely completely untouched by national and international policies and discourses. In addition to internationally brokered peace agreements (in the case of Aceh and the Niger delta), international development logics and neo-liberal economic orthodoxy have influenced the peacebuilding practices under investigation, highlighting the imbrication of national and international dynamics with local ideas and practices.

We aim to make a number of contributions to the existing literature. First, our volume features analyses of initiatives and agents of peacebuilding that have hitherto not received much attention. These include initiatives of political participation and activism, art-for-peace initiatives, livelihood initiatives aimed at peacebuilding, and community-building for peace, for example through traditional institutions. Our contributions look at these efforts through a gender lens, unpacking often-neglected dimensions of peacebuilding such as household dynamics, and making visible the way gender, in intersection with other axes of difference, supports or derails local efforts for peace.

Second, we self-consciously applied a feminist methodology to our research. This led us to identify peacebuilding initiatives through an inductive process of engaging with local activists and practitioners living in conflict-affected communities and post-conflict settings. It allowed us to explore the multiple, complex and ambiguous ways in which these agents have understood, experienced and practiced the links between gender and peace. In some instances,



FIGURE 1.1 Situation of the research fields  
SOURCE: AUTHORS



we became part of their efforts—initially by providing survivors and perpetrators an opportunity to tell their stories, giving them visibility. But we also supported some initiatives actively, thereby becoming part of peacebuilding efforts. While this erased the boundary between the researcher and the researched, which is often required in research designs that are meant to show objectivity, it allowed us to become partners of our research subjects, embrace their causes, and generate political impact through the process of research.

Third, this volume addresses calls by feminists for more collaborative research across North–South divides: it is still relatively rare to find such research, and in particular co-authored publications issuing from such research. The fact that we had financial support for the aforementioned partnership facilitated this collaboration. It also allowed for ongoing reflections and conversations regarding neo-colonial dynamics in South–North research projects, including the risk of extractive research practices. We sought to build a fair and equal partnership, based on trust and taking responsibility for establishing the necessary conditions for mutual learning and creativity in our research. Reflexivity on this matter was built into our project proposal and research design, drawing on the principles developed by the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE).<sup>2</sup>

Fourth, we provide practical insights relevant to development, peace and security practices. Engaged in ‘research for development’, we want our findings to speak not only to scholars, but also to activists and practitioners in the fields of security, conflict management and peacebuilding. This has challenged us to put into practice feminist insights about the way theory is practical and praxis needs theory (compare to Prügl, 2020), for example by remaining wary of arriving too quickly at simplistic, universalising problem definitions and solutions. By untangling how peacebuilding is gendered in context and by identifying gender-sensitive peacebuilding initiatives, we hope to contribute to making peacebuilding thinking and practice more inclusive and more attuned to existing efforts in conflict-affected communities. We distil recommendations that derive from the unique combination of a nuanced theoretical approach to gender with concrete empirical insights collected through long-term, in-depth field research, knowledge co-developed within our international team, and a thorough consultative process carried out with the conflict-affected communities involved.

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2 The KFPE is an information hub for North–South research in Switzerland. Its principles are explained on its website at [https://kfpe.scnat.ch/en/11\\_principles\\_7\\_questions](https://kfpe.scnat.ch/en/11_principles_7_questions) (accessed on 17 May 2021).

The volume includes six chapters and two interludes. Each chapter provides a gender analysis of one distinctive initiative or practice in a specific context in either Indonesia or Nigeria. The interludes present reflections on, and experiences with, particular methodological issues that emerged during our collaborative research process. They focus, respectively, on the topics of sexual violence and experiences of field research, and deal with silences and issues that came up during ‘side conversations’ in the research process or during our research meetings, representing a reflexive analysis of our own research practices.

## 2 Situating Local Peacebuilding Practices

Our conceptualisation of peacebuilding combines approaches from both feminist and peacebuilding literature. We draw on insights from the ‘local turn’ in peacebuilding (Leonardsson and Rudd, 2015; Mac Ginty, 2014; Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013; Randazzo, 2016) that has emerged as a reaction to top-down peacebuilding practices. Critical of the neo-colonial posture inherent in projects, which imposes liberal institutions of governance and neo-liberal economic policies, scholars have advocated paying attention to local agencies in order to increase the legitimacy of peacebuilding by encouraging a rethinking of authority, rights, and redistributions as a matter of everyday practice (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013, 769). These approaches recognise the scalar hybridity of peacebuilding; that is, the way in which international and national processes and interventions shape locally situated phenomena. In dialogue with the literature on the ‘local turn’, Rigual (2018) suggests that peacebuilding is a discursive formation that includes various bodies of academic scholarship providing explanations of war and associated visions, together with processes and programmes for peace. She argues the need for building bridges between the local turn in peacebuilding and the feminist focus on the everyday. This is what we attempt to do in this thematic volume. The feminist approach with which we align ourselves is based on a commitment to studying situated practice. It valorises local knowledge, explores intersectionally gendered practices, and carries a normative commitment to equality and inclusion.

Critical feminist scholarship on peace and conflict provides us insights into the relevance of gender in peacebuilding, including in intersection with other axes of difference (Cohn, 2012a; Confortini, 2010; Kappler and Lemay-Hébert, 2019b; Stavrevska and Smith, 2020; Väyrynen et al., 2021). It also pushes us to question simplistic dichotomies of violent conflict and non-violent peace and the supposedly ‘natural’ roles ascribed to and played by women and men in

conflict and peace. Gender is not only a set of expectations linked to one's biological sex, but also as a system of power and of meaning-making (Confortini, 2010; Väyrynen et al., 2021). Such scholarship has documented women's work for peace in situated contexts, the activism of feminist peace movements, and gendered experiences of peacekeeping and peacebuilding from the perspective of marginal positionalities (Anderlini, 2007; Cockburn, 2007; Enloe, 1993; Flaherty et al., 2015; Kaufman and Williams, 2010 and 2016). Feminist scholarship also informs our methodology. Thus, studies of the local effects of the UN's women, peace and security agenda, remind us that the local cannot be thought of as a pristine site unaffected by politics (Firchow and Urwin, 2020; George and Soaki, 2020; Shepherd, 2020; Tamang, 2020). Understood as everyday social relations (rather than geography), the local is saturated with power relations, including political and economic processes originating on national and international scales (Mac Ginty, 2015; Massey, 1994). Moreover, for feminists the local is an epistemological position: it anchors standpoints and offers a situated context for co-creating knowledge in a way that is sensitive to epistemic power relations (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 2004).

A feminist understanding of peacebuilding focusing on local practices leads us to foreground particular kinds of processes and programmes. Liberal approaches tend to understand peacebuilding programmes as outside interventions that involve the international community (Paris, 2004) and follow 'a sequence of activities ranging from cease-fire to creating a new government and reconstructing the economy while bringing together former enemies' (Pruitt, 2013, xv). The focus tends to be on short-term initiatives that imagine peace as an outcome, a goal that can be achieved through targeted interventions. But feminist scholarship unveils the war/peace dichotomy that underlies this understanding as gendered, emphasising how violence describes a continuum and cannot be sorted into the containers of war and peace (Davies and True, 2015; Rigual, 2018, 9). Accordingly, peacebuilding is not a linear sequence of short-term initiatives, but must be understood as a long-term practice. Indeed, if war and peace cannot be convincingly separated, then perhaps peacebuilding needs to be conceptualised as an ongoing practice rather than a state of being or an outcome. From a feminist perspective, this practice needs to be evaluated normatively for the kind of 'peace' it establishes or performs.

Our empirical findings challenge us to adopt a broader understanding that is not limited to a linear sequence of peacebuilding and includes both short- and long-term elements. We show that peacebuilding happens, and is needed, in diverse spaces and temporalities, in different types and levels of conflict. We define peacebuilding as *activities, conducted by a conflict-affected community or external (national and international) actors, intended to transform conflict,*

*prevent the re/occurrence of violent conflict, and build non-violent relationships, including social and economic justice, within and beyond the community.* This definition trained our focus on community relations and on the situated practices we wanted to foreground. It enabled a broad understanding of conflict as including not only killings, but also gender-based and other structural violences. It also enabled us to recognise the hybridity of initiatives, and led us to identify both local and extra-local actors and practices as being relevant for peacebuilding processes. Most of the initiatives we analyse in this volume do not have an explicit international dimension or involve international actors, but they often interact or engage with international dynamics in some ways. We collaborated with local actors to identify various peacebuilding practices, in this way recognising that the meaning of peace is ultimately negotiated in context (Bulduk, Onyesoh and Achakpa, this volume). We analyse these meanings through a number of gender logics that focus on the ways in which gender works in peacebuilding initiatives to create particular gendered forms of peace.

### 3 How Does Gender Inform Peacebuilding and to What Effect?

Feminist theories suggest that gender is a socially, culturally and historically specific construction. Gender performs what it means to be a human; it also structures societies, assigning value to institutions and practices. Constructivist theorising captures gendering as a process, including the productive force inherent in gender, the way in which gender drives identity formation, processes of institutionalisation, and symbolic imaginaries. Butler (2006) calls this the performativity of gender. As such, gender works as a regime that encodes hierarchy to produce social categories, practices and discourses, with complex power implications. The effect is to legitimise certain practices and delegitimise or silence others. Its binary logic contributes to framing discussions, research designs, and everyday forms of social interactions; it also silences non-binary, non-gender-conforming logics, groups and individuals.

Beyond the basic understanding of gender as a social construct, there is considerable variety in the way scholars employ the concept. Some seek to identify gendered structures and the constraints gender places on individual agency; others explore the gendering of identities through constructions of femininity and masculinity and the queering of these. Yet others emphasise the way gender has become an object of movement politics, the way gender inequality is contested, but also the way activists use gender constructions as a resource for peace politics. Finally, gender also has long been an object of governmental intervention, and is being deployed as a form of governmentality.

These different understandings often complement rather than contradict one another. They provide us with routes via which we may conceptualise the role of gender in peacebuilding and thus answer our question regarding how gender shapes and is shaped by peacebuilding, and the effects it produces.

Gender does not work in isolation. It becomes productive in intersection with other social dynamics. This has particular relevance for conflict studies and for understanding the ways in which identities (based on nationality, ethnicity or religion) fuel violence (Cockburn, 2010; Kappler and Lemay-Hébert, 2019a). These axes of difference produce different effects. They can function to establish group identities, founding what scholars of civil war call fragmentation or fractionalisation. They can also act to modulate antagonisms among opposing groups, adding fuel to enmity or enhancing co-operation. The particularities of the way intersectional processes drive conflict cycles deserve considerably more empirical attention (Prügl and Rigual, 2018). Here we make a start by focusing on the way gender informs peacebuilding in an intersectional manner.

In the following, we introduce four logics to help us understand the workings of gender in peacebuilding initiatives: gender as a structuring, gender as an identity logic, gender as a resource for activism, and gender as governmentality. We identified these logics inductively in our examination of peacebuilding initiatives. They emphasise different aspects of the productivity of gender and draw on diverse feminist theorising with and beyond Butler. The first two logics address the non-conscious and habitual aspects of gender, the way it operates through social structures and internalised identity performances, what Giddens (2013) calls the 'practical consciousness' and Bourdieu calls a 'habitus' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Intersectional dynamics are particularly salient when looking at peacebuilding from this perspective. In the second set of logics gender is performative in more conscious ways. It is mobilised for political goals, strategically deployed, and becomes a means of governmentality. Essentialisations often outweigh intersectional constructions when gender is used as a political resource in this way. The chapters in this thematic volume foreground these four logics of gender in different ways and to different degrees.

### 3.1 *The Structuring Logic of Gender*

The structuring logic of gender is perhaps the most familiar. It pertains to the way gendered dichotomies order modern social formations, including knowledge systems, labour relations and political and social practices (Lorber and Farrell, 1990). It not only produces female and male roles or spheres through processes of socialisation and institutionalisation, but also arranges them

hierarchically, excluding and making invisible all that deviates from what is considered the standard. It produces a binary reality and constrains actors to operate within, and conform to, a certain set of representations. Some scholars describe this structuring logic as patriarchy, and emphasise the way in which it intersects with other logics. Thus, Cockburn (2010) explains war as resulting from the intersections of patriarchy, economic power, and ethnic or nationalist power.

The structuring logic of gender is apparent in the way the gendered opposition of war and peace informs research in Peace and Conflict Studies. It also guides practices of diplomacy and popular understandings of the relationship between women and peace. It shapes responses to conflicts by (in)visibilising certain groups and legitimising others, defining what are the proper or important dimensions to address in peacebuilding. It informs who is authorised to become a legitimate actor in political and peacebuilding processes, explaining why women continue to be so frequently excluded from decision-making processes and political representations across the globe and why women's participation is often limited to certain ('secondary') roles and issues, meaning that they often literally sit at different tables than men.

We encountered such structuring logics in the communities we explored in our research. Thus, community leaders in Delta State in Nigeria emphasised the importance of caring relations for peace and saw a particular role for mothers in helping to achieve 'harmony'. Yet peacebuilding activists working in Delta encountered threatening behaviour when appearing to usurp power, and it was considered inappropriate for women to join vigilante groups (Bulduk, Onyesoh and Achakpa, this volume). In Aceh, women's secondary status during the insurgency became visible when female ex-combatants were excluded from economic and political benefits in post-conflict reintegration programmes unless they were close to elite men (Rahmawati, this volume). The structuring logic of gender thus (re)creates a division of labour and power in peacebuilding, where economic and political participation is reserved for men while women are denied jobs and are relegated to informal processes and to working at the grassroots level. It also serves to reproduce a binary and gendered construction of 'peace as the absence of war' that contradicts local understandings—including those articulate in our interviews in Delta—that define peace as including economic development (Bulduk, Onyesoh and Achakpa, this volume).

The structuring logic of gender generates inequalities and oppression, but sometimes also enables agency when patriarchal gender constructions assign distinctive powers to womanhood. In Jos, Nigeria, for example, women told us about 'checkmating' male family members, preventing them from joining

communal violence. Although relegated to the private sphere, their authority as mothers and wives allowed them unique influence and peacebuilding agency (Rigual, Onyesoh and Udasmoro, forthcoming).

### 3.2 *The Identity Logic of Gender*

The structuring logic of gender finds a counterpart in individual performances of identity. Patriarchal structures fix social norms to establish oppositional and/or complementary male and female gender roles, creating the conditions for essentialising people's positions in society. Yet social norms never do fully determine. Rather, they are enacted by competent human beings that negotiate their agency vis-à-vis such norms. Gender identities also differ depending on social context. Moreover, stereotypical gender identities are enacted more or less faithfully, in this way reproducing, shifting, and challenging meanings. For example, women may perform repertoires and values culturally considered masculine, and men may fail to live up to hegemonic standards of masculinity. Sometimes, such 'mistaken' or creative performances risk becoming culturally unintelligible, generating various forms of social sanction. They also, however, play an important role in disturbing taken-for-granted patterns, sometimes disrupting the heteronormative gender order and with it the gendered meanings of war and peace.

A substantial body of literature shows how constructions of masculinity and femininity and logics of masculinist protection are foundational to enactments of armed violence and war (Cockburn and Zarkov, 2002; Cohn, 2012b; Duriesmith, 2016; Enloe, 1993; Young, 2003). Not surprisingly, such identity performances also sustain peacebuilding practices. They sometimes manifest as stabilising enactments of femininity, as in the case of the Umuada in Enugu, Nigeria, who draw on traditional constructions of what it means to be a first daughter for their activism (see Onyesoh, this volume). A similar logic is at work in Delta, where communities evoke the power of mothers to teach how to act peacefully (Bulduk, Onyesoh and Achakpa, this volume). But women peacebuilders also disturb traditional gender orders. This is certainly the case with female ex-combatants when they refuse to go back to traditional gender orders once the fighting has stopped, as with the Inong Balee in Aceh seeking to become politically active (Rahmawati, this volume). It is also the case for anti-land grab activists in East Java who disrupt conservative gender orders that relegated them to the domestic sphere by engaging in public protests and in sabotage against companies (see Udasmoro and Prügl, this volume). In both instances new opportunities emerge for shaping understandings and practices of peacebuilding in conjunction with redefinitions of femininity.



The art-for-peace initiative in Ambon, analysed by Udasmoro and Kunz (this volume), offers interesting insights into the possibilities of gender-disruptive identity enactments for constructing a new peace. In the context of the initiative, youth from various backgrounds, including former combatants, draw on art to develop new identity performances that strikingly contradict the militarised masculinities that motivated them to fight. Moreover, their disruptions of gender are intimately linked to violating the boundaries of other intersecting identity formations, in particular ethnic and religious belongings. Embracing difference and building friendship through art is their strategy for transforming gender, ethnic, and religious performances in an effort to build peace, drafting new visions of identity and community.

### 3.3 *Gender as a Resource for Activism*

Describing gender as structuring and performative implies a quasi-habitual and unconscious enactment of its prescriptive force, but in the peacebuilding activities we examined we also found several instances where activists deliberately used existing gender constructions, applying them strategically to achieve various goals. Gender, or rather particular constructions of femininity and masculinity, in these contexts became a resource or tool for peacebuilding.

The use of ‘strategic essentialism’ for achieving political goals has been the focus of extensive discussion in feminist circles since Spivak (2006) introduced the concept. Within feminist peace movements, it has been employed particularly extensively in the form of maternalism—so, by drawing authority from discourses of motherhood (Cohn and Jacobson, 2012; Prash, 2015). In our project, we encountered multiple strategic uses of this sort. For example, a powerful construction of femininity exists among the Igbos in Nigeria, where the Umuada are traditionally called on to resolve family and clan conflicts. Today, they are reinventing themselves, consciously taking advantage of their traditional authority to also engage in peacebuilding activism and charitable activities (see Onyesoh, this volume).

Contrasting these constructions of women as powerful, images of women’s weakness can also become a resource for activism and peacebuilding. In East Java, for example, women were invited to move to the front of anti-land grab protests as a strategy for reducing violence against protesters. Social taboos against attacking women, and constructions of police as protectors of women, were mobilised consciously by women’s activism (Udasmoro and Prügl, this volume). Such strategic use of notions of women’s weakness problematically reproduces a devaluation of women. The activism it enables, however, can also lead to enlarging their political power. This was the case in East Java, where



women were able to expand their political agency despite being also instrumentalised for other goals (Udasmoro and Prügl, this volume).

### 3.4 *Gender as Governmentality*

The strategic use of gender among peacebuilding activists has a counterpart among governments and international organisations (IOs). Called on to mainstream gender into their policies, and to implement the UN's women, peace, and security agenda, governments and IOs have developed policies and programming to foster goals of gender equality, supporting the creation of gender expertise (Kunz and Prügl, 2019) and turning gender into a form of governmentality (Prügl, 2011; Repo, 2015). Gender experts, including academics and government and non-governmental practitioners, establish problem definitions and solutions to govern gender. They frame issues in new ways and propose complementary solutions, thereby producing new understandings of the relationship between gender and peace. When taken into consideration in peacebuilding efforts and initiatives, gender expertise often ends up essentialising biological sex to push for more inclusivity for women in every dimension of peacebuilding.

In this volume, Rigual analyses a 'development for peace' project in Maluku that was jointly designed and implemented by three UN agencies. She shows that the project activated gendered stereotypes, portraying women as diligent and serious in order to affirm the project's gender character. Because target communities and policy officers alike held such stereotypes, women were more frequently selected as beneficiaries, reproducing pre-existing gender constructions. Yet the project also disrupted existing gender relations. Somewhat unusually, it identified economic development as a crucial terrain for peacebuilding, providing innovative problem definitions and solutions. Enabling women's economic participation had the effect of shifting local gendered norms: women beneficiaries of the co-operative initiative felt more confident in challenging leadership in their communities and collectively making their voices heard. Gender was thus reconstructed, and new power relations emerged for a newly gendered peace.

## 4 **Summaries of the Contributions**

The gender logics outlined must be read as heuristic tools and there is obvious overlap. As a result, the contributions to this thematic volume often identify several logics at once. At the same time, each foregrounds different ways in which gender is productive, in intersection with other social dynamics, roughly

illustrating the logics outlined. The contributions are arranged in a way that allows us to show the structuring and identity logics of gender first. This is followed by interludes reflecting on our research process. The remaining chapters then explore the logics that emphasise gender as a tool for activism and as a form of governmentality.

The reintegration of ex-combatants is a crucial part of peacebuilding. The first chapter, by Rahmawati, analyses how reintegration processes in Aceh worked out for female ex-combatants. It focuses on social dimensions, economic dimensions in terms of access to compensation funds, and political dimensions in terms of support for female ex-combatants' candidacy to the local parliament. The analysis finds that the reintegration process has benefited only a few and left out most female ex-combatants. Although female ex-combatants do not face social stigma, their access to the benefits of economic and political reintegration is strongly influenced by their kinship with and proximity to men in power. Thus, the structuring logic of gender has intersected with kinship and social status to produce unequal outcomes. This intersectional dynamic also created a hierarchy among the female ex-combatants, shaping their changing identities and forms of femininity. The chapter underscores the importance of paying attention to intersecting dimensions of equality and inclusivity in reintegration processes.

The second chapter, by Bulduk, Achakpa and Onyesoh, explores alternative visions of peace in Delta State, Nigeria. It juxtaposes visions identified through interviews with NGOs and community groups with academic theories of peace, and brings these into conversation with one another. It discusses an understanding of peace as an absence of both direct and indirect violence, and one that requires economic development. It also identifies a vision of harmonious living, which involves overcoming negative emotions, and draws on feminist literature to connect this vision to the concepts of maternal thinking and building relations of care. Finally, it identifies the idea that peace should be gender-inclusive and finds that the form of such inclusion is contested. Assessing visions of peace through a gender lens, the chapter argues that gender logics lead to a privileging of employment for young men, the reservation of maternal thinking to women, and a questioning of women's ability to truly contribute to vigilantism.

The volume's third chapter shifts the attention from the structuring to the identity logic of gender. In the context of the focus on 'everyday peacebuilding', the field of peace and conflict is increasingly interested in the use of art as a tool for peacebuilding. This contribution, by Udasmoro and Kunz, proposes a critical reading of the intersectional dynamics of art-for-peace initiatives. It focuses on the context of Ambon in Indonesia to analyse one

particularly prominent art-for-peace initiative: the Paparisa Ambon Bergerak (PAB) collective. In this initiative, youth from various contexts, including former combatants, come together across ethnic and religious divides, embrace differences, and draw on art to develop new identity performances in order to transform violent masculinities for peace. Through art projects, they also create new spaces for women's voices and denounce issues linked to gender-based violence in order to build a peaceful society. The analysis reveals how the identity logic of gender works intersectionally, and highlights the complex social power dynamics and individual and collective dimensions of art-for-peace activities.

Two interludes follow, providing reflections on the dynamics of North–South research projects and on the way in which the topic of gender-based violence came up and sometimes inadvertently was silenced as our research progressed. Gendered power relations thus need reflection, even in a project that explicitly sets out to study such relations. The two interludes offer glimpses of the deliberate reflexivity that was built into our research project, as feminist methodologies require.

Ensuring that research is ethical and contributes to the reduction of inequalities, especially gendered, class-based, and racialised power imbalances, is a central tenet of such methodologies. The same, ideally, goes for peacebuilding processes. However, in spite of important and meaningful attempts to redress power imbalances, both academic research and peacebuilding work too often remain highly unequal endeavours. In the first interlude, Myrntinen examines how, as a transnational feminist research project, the researchers involved sought to develop and foster practices to counteract power imbalances, together with the communities involved in the research, and what this might mean for future research in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. He illustrates how power imbalances between the global North and the global South are often inescapable, as both research and peacebuilding are in multiple ways entangled with broader power structures underpinned by patriarchy, militarism, neo-coloniality and neo-liberal capitalism. The interlude also provides some examples of how feminist-inspired research and peacebuilding function to create opportunities to analyse and question these power structures, to think and act beyond, and to develop less extractive and more emancipatory practices.

The second interlude, by Rigual, Myrntinen, Rahmawati and Achakpa, problematises the silencing of gender-based violence in our research. Violent conflicts tend to exacerbate forms and frequencies of such violence (OHCHR, 2020; Wood, 2014). Yet information on gender-based violence is notoriously difficult to collect, even more so during war, and in particular

in contexts where cultural, religious and legislative arrangements consider such violence taboo and stigmatise survivors. The interlude provides reflections on how we dealt with snippets of evidence on gender-based violence that emerged during the research process in conflict-affected communities in Indonesia and Nigeria. It also discusses how we may have inadvertently silenced such evidence in the process of conducting our research and explores the multifaceted and complex social, economic, and political dimensions that may have contributed to the risk of such silencing. It provides insights into the gendered context that enabled this potential silencing effect in Indonesia and Nigeria. Finally, it reflects on some strategies adopted in this project and on possible pathways to a better integration of the sensitive but centrally important issue of gender-based violence in conflict research.

Two subsequent chapters illustrate different forms of women's activism for peace. Women's leadership and empowerment is the focus of the contribution by Udasmoro and Prügl. It interprets women's participation in protest movements in light of feminist understandings of peace as inherently agonistic and involving struggle. The chapter traces a shift from male to female leadership in the anti-land grab protests in Wongsorejo, East Java, arguing that they empowered women to enact everyday citizenship. It also traces the way in which gender was deployed strategically in this shift and how it informed performances of identity. During the Reformasi era, men led the protests, but women supported them in a subversive appropriation of the ideology of Ibuism. This gender division of protest has shifted, in part based on the idea that putting women at the front will ensure that protests are less violent. Yet this also enabled a political empowerment of women and raised their status in the household. The authors argue that the protests allowed women to establish themselves as rights-bearing citizens and as skilled politicians. As they renegotiated gender relations in their families and communities, their struggle over land rights became a struggle for recognition for a new kind of peace.

Onyesoh's chapter on the Umuada focuses on a traditional institution from the south-eastern region of Nigeria. The Umuada is a kin group comprised of the first daughter of a lineage. It has historically served as a forum for women to voice their concerns and even today plays a key role in performing rituals, such as those associated with burials. It also traditionally engages in arbitration and conflict de-escalation, and maintains a strong level of agency and respect in the community. Onyesoh argues that institutions such as the Umuada have changed with colonialism and the associated loss of status for women. But she shows how they have recently been revalued and can serve

as a model for peacebuilding for women across Nigeria and beyond. Gender, here, emerges as a structure intersecting with lineage: it matters whether one is a daughter and thus part of the lineage, or a wife who has married into the lineage from the outside. Being a daughter conveys distinctive powers that have allowed the Umuada to emerge as political agents that strategically deploy their power to contribute to building peace within and between communities.

Complementing the empirical exploration of community-based peacebuilding initiatives in the preceding contributions, the chapter by Rigual zeroes in on the work of international organisations in Indonesia and Nigeria. It reviews programmes that have come to integrate the goals of peacebuilding and development in the two countries. It also provides an in-depth discussion of a nutmeg co-operative in Maluku, tracing situated impacts and effects. The chapter first assesses the extent of gender mainstreaming, finding that gender considerations are thoroughly integrated into 10 strategy documents. Second, it analyses the meanings gender assumes as programmes are implemented, finding essentialising constructions of women and men in programme documents. Yet an in-depth exploration of the cooperative in Maluku also shows that women are economically and politically empowered through the co-operative, resulting in a disruption of conservative gender norms. Finally, the chapter shows how these programmes produce broader governmental effects: efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism have led to a shift of funding, which has starved existing peacebuilding programmes in other areas; and neo-liberal governance logics have led to an emphasis on efficiency over goals of building cohesion in programme evaluations.

Myrntinen concludes this volume of *International Development Policy* by discussing the implications of the findings from the individual chapters for policy and programming interventions, identifying pitfalls and opportunities for advancing projects of gender-sensitive peacebuilding.

This volume will have achieved its goal if it conveys to readers the wealth of existing practices for transforming violent conflict and building peace in diverse communities in Indonesia and Nigeria, and if readers come to recognise that such practices are saturated with intersecting power relations. One core dimension of such power relations is gender, which we show to be a potent force propelling outcomes along a spectrum of peace and violence. Attempts to manage conflict and build peace would do well to recognise the force of gender and harness it to their ends.

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# Questioning the Mantra ‘All for One and One for All’: The Reintegration of Aceh’s Female Ex-combatants

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## Abstract

The involvement of female combatants in the Aceh conflict challenges the stereotype of peaceful women, but these women have largely been overlooked in formal peacebuilding programmes. Using a qualitative approach, this chapter reveals the complex ways in which gender obstructs just and fair reintegration. Three areas are looked at closely: social reintegration (public acceptance of ex-combatants), economic reintegration (access to compensation) and political reintegration (support for female ex-combatants’ candidacy to the local parliament). The chapter finds that gender in intersection with other identities influences which female ex-combatants benefit from reintegration programmes. It explores explanatory factors such as loyalty to the struggle for freedom, the timing of disarmament, and kinship with male elites (men in power)—identifying the last of these as the most important. Although female ex-combatants do not face social stigma in this context, their access to economic and political reintegration benefits is limited and strongly influenced by their kinship with and proximity to men in power. Consequently, Aceh’s female ex-combatants cannot be seen as homogenous. Post-conflict peacebuilding programmes have created inequalities, and the old mantra ‘all for one, one for all’ has lost its meaning. These findings underscore the importance of looking at equality and inclusivity in an intersectional way at every stage of peacebuilding, including where reintegration processes are concerned.

## 1 Introduction

During the conflict in Aceh, a group of women combatants disrupted simplistic stories of women as victims and in need of protection from men. They were called the Inong Balee, the women’s military wing of the Free Aceh Movement (in Indonesian, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM)). They number around 2,500 and constitute almost 2 per cent of all former GAM members (Rahmawati,

2019). The existence of the Inong Balee affirmed women's important roles not only at the micro (households), meso (economic activity) and macro (the community's social and cultural rituals) levels (Abdullah, 2017) but also in the public political sphere. Unfortunately, when hostilities ceased these female combatants, as well Aceh's women in general, were largely excluded from the peace process. During the Helsinki peace negotiation process in 2005 not a single woman sat at the table nor was their existence formally recognised in the Helsinki Agreement. The absence of women's representation and the failure to recognise their important roles show how peacebuilding practice is gendered. This has been highlighted by the feminist literature that emphasises women's marginalisation historically (Pankhurst, 2000; Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004).

Yet as the literature on intersectionality reveals, gender often intersects with other dimensions of identities (see the introduction to the present volume). And this is the case with the situation of female ex-combatants in post-conflict Aceh, where gender performs in dynamic ways and intersects with other social identities. This intersection creates hierarchies and heterogeneity (Sigiro, 2020) among female former combatants. To gain a better understanding of the ways in which gender intersects with other dimensions of identity during the reintegration of female ex-combatants in Aceh, this chapter seeks to answer two key questions: How has reintegration occurred in Aceh? How do we explain female ex-combatants' access to and participation (or lack thereof) in this process? Though female ex-combatants in Aceh are idolised to the point of 'shero worship' (female heroics, especially those performed in the name of gender equality), the economic and political reintegration processes in Aceh have only empowered a few such ex-combatants; most have, ironically, been disempowered. Economic and political reintegration is primarily influenced by proximity to and access to (male) elites, often established through kinship bonds. There thus exists a hierarchy of female former combatants. They no longer belong to an egalitarian and homogenous group, and the mantra 'all for one, one for all'—formerly used to generate community and solidarity within the Inong Balee—no longer applies. Female ex-combatants who maintain access to, or even kinship with, those in power—that is, former GAM leaders, all of whom are men—have greater access to economic and political reintegration. Female ex-combatants without such access or kinship bonds, meanwhile, have little to no access to economic and political reintegration resources.

This chapter uses intersectionality analysis as a framework for understanding how female ex-combatants' social identities affect their ability to access social, economic and political resources (Crenshaw, 1991). Such a framework provides an improved and more comprehensive understanding of peacebuilding and reintegration in Aceh and allows us to investigate why female

ex-combatants are excluded in various ways during reintegration and why some are excluded more than others. Empirically, women are often excluded from access to or control of decision-making processes; and where women have been included, they have been seen as exceptions. At the conceptual level, social inclusion and exclusion mechanisms are intertwined with the process of female identity formation. Normatively, former combatants' unequal access to reintegration resources means the loss of potential opportunities. This study asserts two important findings regarding gender in post-conflict Aceh. First, there are patriarchal practices that remain strong within society and among former combatants. Second, women's social identities are defined primarily by their kinship with and access to men in power, both of which afford them greater control of resources. Both have contributed to the restoration of male-dominated social and power structures, within which women's positions have changed little (Vlachová and Biason, 2005). Overall, this chapter demonstrates the workings of the structuring logic of gender in (re)creating divisions among female ex-combatants in the context of reintegration processes. It also reveals the ways in which gender logics of identity shape these women's reintegration experiences.

The analysis in this chapter is mainly based on in-depth interviews with three Inong Balee members. These women were selected as main interviewees based on their similar experiences as female combatants: all joined GAM voluntarily in the late 1990s while teenagers; each received a secondary education; all had family members who supported GAM and their involvement in the movement; and each played a leadership role as a *mualem* (military trainer) or as a platoon commander. All three have also been active in the Aceh Party (*Partai Aceh*, or PA), a political party established by former GAM members. They are:

- Zuraida, also known as Cut Matang or Icut (henceforth 'Ida'), from Bireun. Now 36 years old and unmarried, Ida holds a university degree and works as an honorary staff member of the Bireun Regent's office. She also helps her mother with small-scale farming. Ida began helping GAM in her third year of elementary school, when she would bring food and cigarettes to combatants. She formally joined the Inong Balee in 1998, when she was 17 years old. She comes from a GAM family; her uncle, Abdullah Syafei, was a commander, and her parents were active members whose home was frequently used for meetings. While a member of GAM, Ida served as a *mualem* for both male and female troops.
- Indra Wahyuni, also known as Cut Intan, Iin, or Nurshima (henceforth 'Cut Intan'), from Aceh Besar. Now 37 years old, she is married and has four children. Cut Intan joined the Inong Balee in 1998, at the age of 17,

after graduating from a secondary education economics institute; she subsequently spent two years as an honorary staff member of the Aceh Reintegration Agency (BRA). Like Ida, Cut Intan came from a GAM family. Her father was a GAM advisor, while her younger brother also spent a year as guerrilla fighter, returning home only after being afflicted by severe protein malnutrition. Indeed, she had been interested in the military equipment he wore, and joined GAM following his invitation.

- Agustina—also known as Tina—from Aceh Besar joined GAM in 1999 after graduating from a junior high school. She came from a family and village that supported GAM, and thus grew familiar with GAM ideology and became interested in joining the movement. In 2002, Tina married a local GAM commander. She continued her military training until 2003, when she returned home to give birth. Thirty-five days later, the infant was left with Tina's mother and Tina returned to the mountains. She contracted malaria however due to her weakened condition and soon descended from the mountains, living with someone in Bireun—a regency far from her homeland—for two years. Tina returned home in 2005 after the tsunami, but her baby called her *kakak* (sister) and no longer recognised her as its mother.

This chapter's analysis also draws on data from other in-depth interviews, with family members of the main informants, members of the Executive Body of the Aceh Reintegration Agency (BRA), male ex-combatants and female former GAM leaders. Four focus group discussions (FGDs) with other female ex-combatants were conducted between 2015 and 2017 to collect further information and gain a better understanding of Aceh's post-conflict situation and of progress with regard to reintegration. An overview of the characteristics of all Inong Balee members interviewed and those who participated in the FGDs is provided in this chapter's appendix. All interviewees were informed of the purpose of the research and gave their permission to be identified by name. Data collection was conducted between 2015 and 2018 and utilised both the national and the local language (Indonesian and Acehnese, respectively). Local researchers assisted with translation and transcription.

## 2 The Aceh Conflict and the Inong Balee

GAM waged a separatist struggle against the Indonesian government between 1976 and 2005. It was a vertical conflict that involved many factors (Zuhri, 2015). From a structural point of view, it can be categorised as a deep-rooted conflict (Bloomfield and Reilly, 1998) with its origins in strong ethno-political identity and perceived injustices in redistribution that left Aceh 'rich, but poor'

(Heiduk, 2006). Owing to its specific political identity, the Aceh conflict may be characterised as an 'ethno-nationalist struggle against the Indonesian state' (Bertrand, 2004, 161).

The public perception that the national government had failed to recognise and respect Aceh's important contributions to the Indonesian National Revolution was another contributing factor (Reid, 2005). Such sentiments were evident in the Darul Islam Rebellion (1953–1962), led by the charismatic *ulama* and former revolutionary Teungku Daud Beureueh (Dewanto, 2016). Fourteen years later, Hasan Tiro mobilised similar sentiments to establish GAM (1976–2005). Both movements had the political fantasy of establishing an independent Acehnese state, one that existed outside the Unitary Republic of Indonesia and 'shone as brightly as in the time of Sultan Iskandar Muda' (Dewanto, 2016, 21). Nevertheless, some criticised GAM's stated goals as nothing but a 'tactical political manoeuvre' (Schulte, Nordholt and van Klinken, 2007).

Rebellion, accommodation and peace talks continued in cycles for decades (Reid, 2005), subjecting the Acehnese people to extensive suffering. Violence peaked between 1998 and 2000, when Indonesian security forces occupied Aceh and transformed the province into a 'killing field' (Sihbudi and Irewati, 2001, 39). Even before then the Indonesian Army had designated the province a military operations area (1989); this endured until the Helsinki Peace Agreement was signed in 2005. Approximately 1.5 million Acehnese (39 per cent of the province's population) were detrimentally affected by the conflict (Noble et al., 2009). The National Violence Monitoring System recorded more than 8,000 deaths in Aceh between 1998 and 2005 (Government of Indonesia and the World Bank Group, 2007), while Aspinall (2009) writes that some 12,000 to 20,000 Acehnese were killed during the struggle.

Many Acehnese, especially in rural areas, supported GAM's struggle for freedom, which lasted 29 years. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 210,000 Acehnese—approximately 5 per cent of the population—were involved in GAM at some point (IOM, 2008). These individuals' roles varied: some were lobbyists, while others handled fundraising, collected intelligence, participated in conflict or provided support (logistics, shelter, information). The endurance and strength of the Acehnese people cannot be separated from their passion for 'fighting on God's path', which can be traced back to Islam's arrival in the region in the seventh century (Alfian, 2005). The Acehnese people understand righteous war as '*wajib ain*'—something 'compulsory for all Muslims, male and female, young and old, including children' (Alfian, 2005, 200). GAM's struggle took place in an era of 'all for one and one for all', a phrase that emphasised the solidarity and support that then existed within society.

Thus, it is not surprising that many women have shaped the history of the Acehnese people, through both their leadership as sultanas and their courageous opposition to colonialism. Their courage and strength turned Aceh's notable women into 'sheroines', role models, and 'points of reference' for the young women who joined GAM. An estimated 3,800 of GAM's members were women; 680 were actively involved in combat (Noble et al., 2009). Unfortunately GAM kept no record of its members or of its female combatants. Combatant numbers, male and female, thus vary greatly depending on the definition used to identify them (MSR, 2009). The Inong Balee itself estimated that between 2,000 and 2,500 women were active combatants.<sup>1</sup>

The Inong Balee, also known as Askariyah/Askarimah or Laskar Tjoet Njak Dien (Hamzah and Abdullah, 2014, 545), was established by GAM in the 1990s to accommodate female combatants. Although the term *inong balee* literally means 'widow' or 'woman who has been abandoned by her husband', it has historically had a more specific meaning: a woman who has taken up arms after her husband's death in the fight against colonialism. It has been used, for example, to refer to the women troop led by Admiral Malahayati, who successfully fought back a Dutch armada in 1599 during the reign of Sultan Al Mukammil (Majid, 2014).

During the Aceh conflict, Inong Balee members were adult or adolescent women (married, unmarried, and widowed). They had diverse levels of education: some were still in senior high school while others had completed their elementary, junior high, and senior high school studies. Most came from rural areas, particularly those where support for GAM was highest. These young women joined the fighting voluntarily, either via recruiters or on their own initiative. Most received military training, just like male fighters, and were taught physical fitness, military discipline, political ideology, religious knowledge, human rights, international law and intelligence-gathering techniques (Rahmawati, 2019). Having received this training, the women were sworn into GAM by local leaders. They wore military uniforms, bore arms and lived in the mountains and forests of Aceh for months at a time, always ready to engage with or to evacuate and flee from the Indonesian military (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, TNI).

GAM required all female fighters to receive their parents' permission before joining the organisation, and indeed many parents were proud that their daughters had joined GAM. As Ida's mother and Cut Intan's father, respectively, explained: 'We approved of [Cut Intan] being there. We knew it was because

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1 FGD with female ex-combatants, Banda Aceh, 12 May 2015.



of Allah, fighting for Allah. It was because of history; religious history. Yes, this made us willing to support the holy war.' And, 'I told her [Cut Intan] to put herself forward. She was still young. But don't do wrong, because any wrong would become known. For instance, if something is considered wrong according to religious teachings, it must be avoided'.

The author's previous study of young Acehese women's decision to become Inong Balee members found that their involvement was due to push, pull and legitimisation factors (Rahmawati, 2019). Their participation as GAM combatants was a political action aimed at addressing grievances, but also enabled them to 'continue the history' of women's involvement in the Acehese nation-building process while simultaneously reaffirming their right to justice and dignity by fighting 'on God's path'. A history of family involvement in opposition movements, pressure and support from family, friends and neighbours and a sense of insecurity resulting from 29 years of economic and social deprivation pushed young women to become Inong Balee members. Meanwhile, a major pull factor was the 'sheroic' image of bravery and courage that members projected. Several narratives emerged, including imitating the heroes of old, appearing strong in a military uniform and bearing arms, and wanting to become a police officer or soldier. These push and pull factors were reinforced by another factor—namely, legitimacy: the belief that it was the responsibility of all Acehese, including women, to defend the justice and dignity of the Acehese people. Thus, Inong Balee members can be identified as reluctant guerillas as defined by Viterna (2013), simultaneously recruited and politicised.

### 3 Aceh's Post-conflict Context

An enormous earthquake measuring 8.9 on the Richter scale and a subsequent tsunami struck Aceh in December 2004. The humanitarian crisis that followed pushed GAM and the Indonesian government to dedicate themselves seriously to ending the violent conflict. Peace talks began anew—facilitated by the governments of Finland and several European Union member states and mediated by President Martti Ahtisaari—and ultimately resulted in the signing of the Helsinki Agreement on August 15, 2005 (Merikallio and Mitchell, 2006). The Agreement was an institutional and legal document, one that functioned as a policy umbrella for peacebuilding while simultaneously validating the integration of Aceh into the Indonesian Republic. Aceh thus began to rebuild. At the same time, significant shifts occurred in local government, with the province receiving special autonomy through Law No. 11 of 2006, which explicitly recognised Aceh's political, economic and sociocultural

uniqueness. Under this autonomy law, Aceh was entitled to special funds from the central government, amounting to USD 9.77 billion (IDR 88.7 trillion) by 2020 (Safrina, 2020). It has been a new chapter in the history of the Acehnese people, who have experienced significant sociocultural, political and economic shifts since.

New social and political relationships emerged. During the conflict, Indonesian security apparatuses—the military and the police—and GAM dominated society and the polity. Since the signing of the peace agreement, however, this hierarchical arrangement has made room for civil society actors. Meanwhile, the formal implementation of Islamic law (*sharia*) in Aceh has also changed peoples' everyday lives. In the name of enforcing Islamic law, far-reaching social changes have been introduced, many of which regulate women, their bodies and their sexuality. Local regulations (*qanun*) also control women through the patriarchal Acehnese culture in the name of religion.

At the same time, numerous local parties have emerged in Aceh and dominated its political landscape; these include the Aceh Party, the Nanggroe Aceh Party, the People's Party of Aceh and the Aceh Peace Party. The first two dominate post-conflict Aceh's elections in the executive and legislative branches (Shahab, 2012). National parties, though still present, have been unable to find a strong footing or assume a dominant role.

In the realm of economics there has been consistent contestation between local and national actors, as well as between local actors themselves (primarily between those from a GAM background and those without such a background). For the most part, former GAM members wield political power, and this has resulted in the unequal distribution of economic resources. Former GAM members have also benefited from better economic incentives (Ansori et al., 2015) and enjoyed more access to development projects (Aspinall, 2009). The division of economic resources has, however, been uneven among former GAM members too; elites have enjoyed the greatest share, while rank-and-file members have received little.

While these sociocultural, economic and political changes have affected both men and women, a study of post-conflict Aceh conducted by Lee-Koo (2012) finds that peace in Aceh has 'reconstituted the power hierarchy that undermined women and used state-making processes to restrict their ability to struggle for equality' (Lee-Koo, 2012, 2). In this sense, Aceh's post-conflict and post-crisis experiences are little different from those of Sri Lanka (Harris, 2004), Haiti (Duramy, 2014) or Kashmir (Parashar, 2018). Government and non-governmental efforts to rebuild Aceh, involving local, national and international actors, have often employed an emergency policy approach that

prioritises resolving emergencies and restoring normalcy. Gender equality, as Lee-Koo (2012) stresses, is commonly seen as ‘something that could be addressed later, as in a time of crisis it is a luxury’. This approach has been commonplace in areas dominated by men, where masculine perspectives are employed (Justino et al., 2012) and women in general are marginalised and labelled ‘victims of conflict’.

At the same time, however, the Helsinki Agreement has also had tangible positive effects. It has, for instance, brought physical security and thus peace of mind. In one FGD, a female ex-combatant expressed her satisfaction with the post-conflict situation:<sup>2</sup>

I'm happy ... happy because now if people want to go anywhere, they can do so freely. Before, after evening prayers, the villages were silent. Now? Not so much. Before ... forget the adults, even the children wouldn't dare cry. Going to school was trouble, and studying religion at night was terrifying. Everybody [was afraid].

Since the end of the conflict, the people of Aceh have been free of the spectre of sweeps and identity checks.<sup>3</sup> ‘Now, things are good. We're free. There are no longer those sweeps happening at three in the morning; no longer any identity checks. No threats, in short. Since peace, people have been free.’

During another FGD, an *inong balee* explained how peace had benefited women and improved their lives:<sup>4</sup> ‘Yeah, things are better now that we have peace. During the conflict, we all had to hide. If we left, well ... we had to see if they [the military/police] were there or not. Now, we're free.’

Their improved physical security has enabled women ex-combatants to consider the futures of their families once again: ‘... now our children can go to school. Before, the children were frightened, couldn't learn. When pregnant, we would worry that our children would grow up dumb.’

#### 4 Reintegration and Female Ex-combatants

The day after the Helsinki Peace Agreement was signed, the *inong balee* left the forests and descended from the mountains. They, too, were required to participate in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes,

<sup>2</sup> FGD with female ex-combatants, Aceh Besar, 5 May 2015.

<sup>3</sup> FGD with female ex-combatants, Banda Aceh, 12 May 2015.

<sup>4</sup> FGD with female ex-combatants, Banda Aceh, 14 February 2016.

to surrender their weapons, and to return to their home towns. Thus, women began to rebuild their lives as ordinary citizens. The reintegration of ex-combatants was coordinated by the Aceh Reintegration Agency (BRA), an ad hoc institution established by the Indonesian government in conjunction with the Acehese local government. The Agency identified three main pillars as being necessary for the creation of a sustainable peace in Aceh: (1) return, reconstruction and reintegration; (2) truth, reconciliation and social cohesion; and (3) peace consolidation and conflict prevention (BRA, 2009).

Studies around the globe have highlighted the complex and contradictory gender relations involved in the reintegration of female ex-combatants (Democratic Progress Institute, 2016). In Sierra Leone (Lema, 2009), Nepal (Luna, 2019) and Colombia (Giraldo, 2012) female former combatants have been perceived as deviating from their femininity, straying from their natural role of tending to their husbands, their children, and their families. In Sierra Leone, female ex-combatants were formally recognised and one clause of peace agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (*Lome Peace Agreement*) made specific provisions for them. In Nepal, although female combatants were not identified specifically in the peace agreement they were targeted by DDR programmes. In Colombia meanwhile, female former combatants have neither received formal recognition nor been specifically targeted by ongoing DDR programmes. The experiences of female former combatants in Aceh most resemble those of their counterparts in Colombia. The Helsinki negotiations, for example, excluded the Inong Balee, and ultimately produced an agreement that failed to recognise female combatants' contributions, needs and interests. Consequently, the reintegration of Aceh has been almost exclusively the domain of men, taking a male perspective and predominantly involving male actors. Since the signing of the Helsinki Agreement, male former combatants have dominated the political and economic sectors, winning local and provincial elections in 2006 and 2012. During the 2009 legislative election, the Aceh Party—a vehicle that has been used to accommodate former GAM members—won 33 of the 69 seats available in the Aceh Parliament (Shahab, 2012); of these, only three went to women (Ansori et al., 2015). Male former combatants have also benefited from better economic incentives and enjoyed more access to development projects (Aspinall, 2009).

In an attempt to fully understand the complexity of the reintegration of Aceh's female ex-combatants, as well as the gender intersections contained within, the following section will discuss three elements of reintegration: social, economic, and political (United Nations, 2014). This discussion reveals that women's access to and participation in social, economic and

political reintegration has been informed significantly by their social identities. Two identities have been particularly prominent: (1) their kinship or other bonds with GAM elites and/or men in power, and (2) their perceived loyalty to the struggle, measured based on their date of withdrawal (i.e. before or after the signing of the Helsinki Peace Agreement).

#### 4.1 *Social Reintegration*

According to the operational guide to Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) issued by the United Nations, social reintegration is intended to ensure that former combatants are accepted by their communities of origin and by society in general (UN, 2014). Successful social reintegration is a prerequisite for other forms of reintegration, including economic and political reintegration.

As part of Aceh's DDR programmes, the Inong Balee had to surrender its weapons and members had to return to their home towns. They were no longer combatants, but civilians, and were required to live as such. At the same time, however, they have not faced ostracism and have not been compelled to hide their identities (as is the case in Liberia; see Specht and Attree, 2006). Indeed, the Acehnese people perceive the active involvement of women in the conflict as having been unavoidable. History shows that numerous women have led Aceh or taken up arms to defend it, both on land and at sea.

The *inong balee* themselves feel proud to have been part of such a struggle, to have continued the tradition of Acehnese sheroism. Indeed, during the conflict, GAM even used these women's involvement for propaganda purposes, propagating news of its ethnonationalist struggle to the international media and showing the international community that its struggle was that of all Acehnese people: male and female, old and young, urban and rural. One informant, a woman leader who had represented GAM at one of the failed peace talks that preceded Helsinki, mentioned this:<sup>5</sup> 'So, I see it like this. They [GAM] were shaping women [female combatants], not to empower them but just as part of a propaganda process. That was their interest: international relations.'

Still, women felt proud of their struggle. They had received their parents' blessings and brought honour to their communities<sup>6</sup>: 'We were proud that we could bear weapons, so proud. When we returned to our villages they said, "Eh, the *inong balee* are back". People would be proud.'

5 Interview with Cut Farah, Banda Aceh, 15 February 2016.

6 FGD with Inong Balee, Aceh Besar, 5 May 2015.

It is thus not surprising that, as social reintegration began, Inong Balee members were warmly welcomed in their home towns. Some were even welcomed with the *peusijuek* ritual, a Hindu tradition that remains in use today to seek happiness, harmony and salvation. Today this ritual is led by customary and religious leaders, and usually involves the recitation of Islamic prayers at a mosque (*meunasah*).

Tina received such a *peusijuek*, and explained that villagers welcomed her with tears of joy and a chicken dinner—at the time a luxury owing to the scarcity of meat in post-earthquake and post-tsunami Aceh.

When I first came down the mountain with the troops, I was the only woman, and people were all crying. Crying because I was one woman among men. They gave me food, fried up some chicken—a chicken, left over from before the tsunami, was slaughtered. Yes, they were all very good, those villagers, when it came to helping GAM. When I came back from training, we had a glorious *peusijuek* in the mosque.

Having returned to her home town and received a warm welcome, Tina assumed her normative role as a housewife and helped her husband work their land. She was also actively involved in local social activities, such as prayer groups and women's associations. She became an active member of the Aceh Party, established by former GAM members. The party flag she hangs in her home shows Tina's continued pride in her involvement in GAM and in PA.

Tina's experience illustrates how the social reintegration of Aceh's female ex-combatants occurred readily, without any significant obstacles, as most combatants—including female combatants—came from families and villages that supported GAM. Successful social reintegration made it possible for women ex-combatants to return to their normative roles. These duties are often described as 'domestic labour' but nonetheless reach far beyond the domestic sphere. Traditionally and historically, Acehnese women have a range of obligations and duties, and are responsible for 'their families (husbands, children and extended family) and their rice fields, as well as [for] proving their commitment to their communities by contributing to economic and religious activities' (Abdullah, 2017, 2). Thus, it is no surprise that many have been able to readily assume administrative, religious and political duties in post-conflict Aceh.

However, successful social reintegration does not always result in successful economic and political reintegration. The following subsections discuss how female ex-combatants' access to economic and political opportunities overlap

with their social identities, particularly their kinship and their perceived loyalty to GAM.

#### 4.2 *Economic Reintegration*

As already explained, the Helsinki Agreement makes recommendations regarding the reintegration of Aceh's former combatants. Point 3.2—Reintegration in society—is of particular importance. It highlights the importance of the economic reintegration and empowerment of former combatants, political prisoners and victims, ensuring their access to employment and incomes. It holds that beneficiaries will receive financial support or be provided access to temporary employment to improve their welfare. Economic reintegration intends to create economic opportunities, thereby increasing the incomes of former combatants and enabling them to live ordinary lives as civilians (UN, 2014). When conducted successfully, economic reintegration has a positive psychological effect, enabling former combatants to become more confident, to take pride in their new civilian identities and to obtain the trust of their communities.

Diverse actors have assisted in Aceh's reintegration process, which has been inexorably related to the area's post-earthquake and post-tsunami recovery and reconstruction programmes. These actors have sought to reintegrate combatants into Acehnese society as part of a broader framework of sustainable peacebuilding. Programmes have directly and indirectly targeted individuals, groups, communities, local infrastructure and local governments, and ranged from economic empowerment to home/road rebuilding and healthcare (Gayatri, 2008; Noble et al., 2009). Funds have come not only from the Indonesian government, but also from some 38 donor institutions, including several foreign governments. Implementation of these programmes, meanwhile, has involved 89 institutions and agencies, which have been responsible for approximately 140 programmes throughout Aceh that had cumulatively cost USD 365.6 million (IDR 3.7 trillion) by 2008 (Noble et al., 2009).

Although this aid has had a tangible effect on its beneficiaries, the International Crisis Group critically notes that these programmes have suffered from 'unclear goals, poor implementation and a lack of transparency' (Crisis Group Asia, 2007, 10). For instance, many Acehnese who identify as former combatants or as victims have yet to receive any compensation. Cut Intan, for example, was undoubtedly a former combatant, but at the time of our interview had yet to receive any compensation; Ida and Tina, meanwhile,



received compensation, though they did not mention the amount. Cut Intan expressed anger that she had been excluded.<sup>7</sup>

[...] I'm sad to talk of it. There's no end. No end to my story. [...] most people are enjoying things, but [...] our troops have not gotten to enjoy things. Not the ones who bore arms. It's the civilians, the spies, who got the best use of it. Those of us who were involved directly ... like me ... there's no victory for us [...]. There's peace, but no justice for us.

Cut Intan felt that her efforts as a combatant, and even as a military trainer, had gone unrecognised. According to Ida, combatants who received compensation were those who had descended from the mountains the day after the Helsinki Agreement was signed. These were perceived as having been brave and loyal to GAM until the end; conversely, the men and women who left the mountains before the Helsinki Agreement was signed have been deemed disloyal and thus unworthy of compensation.

Ida said that combatants were promised USD 1,785 (IDR 25 million) each; this amount was written in a document she signed after she had surrendered her weapon for decommissioning.<sup>8</sup> She did not, however, receive the promised amount. The real number of combatants was significantly higher than the 3,000 identified in the Helsinki Agreement; a multi-stakeholder review (Noble et al., 2009), for instance, holds that GAM had 14,300 combatants. Thus, the amount of compensation specified in the Agreement had to be divided among far more people. Amounts varied, from USD 1,785 to USD 428 to USD 214, to as little as USD 35. The GAM commander determined the amount of compensation, as well as the recipients.<sup>9</sup>

Two key elements influenced whether female ex-combatants received compensation funds: their perceived loyalty and their kinship with men in power. Table 2.1 in the appendix to this chapter illustrates the influence of these factors, as do the cases under discussion here. Both Ida and Tina descended from the mountains after the Helsinki Agreement was signed; Cut Intan descended before then. All three have been politically active since the signing of the Helsinki Agreement. All are members and cadres of a GAM-established local political party, specifically the Aceh Party. They recognised the importance of continuing their struggle, not through military but through political means, and thus demonstrated significant loyalty. All

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7 Interview with Cut Intan, Aceh Besar 8 April 2017.

8 Interview with Ida, Bireun, 22 April 2017.

9 FGD with female ex-combatants, Bireun, 27 January 2017.



three have continued to show strong support for and allegiance to GAM's ideals, and have thus demonstrated great loyalty to the movement. Ultimately, it was their perceived loyalty that enabled them to access compensation.

Regarding the ex-combatants' kinship with male GAM leaders, of the three informants Cut Intan's kinship with men in power is the most tenuous. Her older brother was a GAM leader at the village level, but he died before the conflict ended. This was also the case for Ida. She, however, is the niece of Abdullah Syafei, GAM's supreme leader, who was shot and killed by Indonesian soldiers in 2004, and benefited from being associated with his prestige. Finally, Tina's husband was formerly a GAM leader at the local level and has remained active in subsequent GAM-driven institutions. Both Ida and Tina received compensation while Cut Intan did not.

In conclusion, female ex-combatants' ties and cultural perceptions— influenced by their intersectional identities—have affected how they have been viewed and treated in post-combat society. Female combatants' kinship bonds with male GAM leaders primarily inform the former's access to economic resources. In other words, there is an intersection between female ex-combatants' social identities and the way they have been viewed and treated. This finding also shows that patriarchal practices remain strong in Aceh, determining what is available and unavailable to women by virtue of women's ties to men, creating a highly gendered narrative of female ex-combatants' access to economic reintegration.

### 4.3 *Political Reintegration*

Theoretically, political reintegration is designed to create opportunities for former combatants to become involved and participate in decision-making processes at the village, local and national levels. It is intended to provide former combatants with the opportunity to voice their concerns and interests through legal and non-violent means. In this chapter, political reintegration is understood as encompassing former combatants' participation in local politics and decision-making processes.

As stated previously, Aceh's sociocultural context since the signing of the Helsinki Peace Agreement has returned women to the domestic sphere, and local formal regulations (*qanun*) have limited their sociopolitical activities. Informants felt this tangibly, especially as they sought to become involved in village-level decision-making processes.<sup>10</sup>

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10 FGD with female ex-combatants, Aceh Besar, 5 May 2015.

Yes, we've got the same rights [in law] as men. But in every village activity, in every part of village development, women aren't involved. Though we don't ask them for [all our] rights, we must ask for some. At the very least we need to know what they're talking about. What they'll do. It's not satisfactory for us, but that's the way it is.

At the same time, however, the three main informants recognised that their experiences as *inong balee* had imbued them with strength and courage, enabling them to persevere in times of great adversity. All had become politically active and realised the importance of continuing their struggle, not through military but through political means. The three of them believed that the Aceh Party was continuing GAM's struggle, and had thus participated actively in its operations, serving as cadres, coordinators and campaign staff in rural villages during Aceh's local elections. Cut Intan, for example, was so loyal to PA she had no interest in joining another political party.<sup>11</sup>

I'm active with PA. When someone asked me to join another party, I said "My blood flows in PA. Not in PNA, not in PAN, not in Golkar". I said that. Because PA, it's a historic party. It's got a history. It's not an ahistorical party. Not created simply to spend money, or because a group of friends said, "Let's form a party". No, not like that, not like that. PA is the party whose blood flows through me, I said. PA is a fighter. Because we're not at war now we must fight through our parties. Our war must not use weapons, but political parties.

Representing PA, two informants—Ida and Cut Intan—used their leadership experiences as *mualem* as capital when contesting local parliamentary elections in 2009. Beforehand, however, they required the party's support. Their access to such support, as in the case of economic reintegration, was influenced by their social identity and their kinship networks in particular. Even though both Ida and Cut Intan contested the election, the former received financial support while the latter did not. Again, Ida's kinship networks enabled her to receive financial support from the party. Cut Intan, in contrast, had no kinship bonds and thus received no support.

In the end the results were disappointing for both candidates: neither Ida nor Cut Intan was elected, and thus their desire to convey the aspirations of the people went unfulfilled.<sup>12</sup> Cut Intan felt betrayed by PA. To finance her campaign

11 Interview with Cut Intan, Aceh Besar, 7 May 2015.

12 Interview with Ida, Bireun, 22 April 2017.

she had sold her home, and this resulted in bankruptcy. After the election, she and her family (her husband and their three children) lived with Cut Intan's parents. She subsequently had no interest in participating in local politics. Ida, meanwhile, though disappointed with her electoral result, allowed the votes she received to be taken by a male PA candidate from her constituency, as she recognised that her own campaign had relied heavily on PA financing. Ida has continued her political activism, and proven herself to be an agent with the capacity to contest structural inequalities. She has criticised the patriarchal practices that remain strong in Aceh, including religious leaders' ongoing efforts to limit what is available and unavailable to women in politics.<sup>13</sup>

In Aceh, if we go to the Islamic schools, they say, "Don't vote for a woman, because women cannot become leaders". I do not agree, because parliament isn't for leaders; it's for voicing people's hopes. If a woman were to lead, to become governor, sometimes women are fairer and more just than men.

## 5 Conclusion and Recommendations

The current understandings of the peacebuilding processes in Aceh have touched little on gender issues and intersectionality. The present analysis complexifies interpretations of women's role in post-war reconstruction, using GAM's female combatants as its main narrators. Although female ex-combatants have been celebrated as sheroes of the war, generally they have gone unheard and unseen. Moreover, not all of them have been able to better their lives. The *inong balee* are far from egalitarian and homogenous; nor have they maintained the solidarity implied by the motto 'all for one, one for all'. Reintegration has revived inequality, as felt particularly strongly by former combatants from non-elite backgrounds who lack kinship ties with men in power. Access to economic and political resources, as well as participation in reintegration, has depended on these women's social status.

The reintegration of female former combatants underscores the importance of inclusivity in peacebuilding processes as well as the necessity of programmes that are sensitive to the intersections of gender with other social status positions. It is important to consider women's different experiences during and after violent conflict; by doing so, their agency and beliefs can be recognised,

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Ida, Bireun, 22 April 2017.

as can their desire to reintegrate themselves into the polity as ordinary citizens. The sheroic narratives of female combatants must not be exploited for political propaganda, but used as a potential resource to improve women's status in conservative societies such as that of Aceh. Inclusivity cannot be realised where access is offered solely to female ex-combatants from elite families.

## Appendix

TABLE 2.1 Characteristics of *inong balee* interviewed

Informant	Status during conflict			Post-conflict structural benefits		
	Kinship with GAM elites (power)	Leadership in PIB (leadership)	Leaving mountains after Helsinki (courage and loyalty)	Receipt of compensation	Formal employment (access to resources)	Legislative candidacy (political)
<i>Inong 1</i>	+	+		+	+	+
<i>Inong 2</i> (Tina)	+	+	+	+	+	
<i>Inong 3</i>						
<i>Inong 4</i> (Ida)	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Inong 5</i> (Cut Intan)		+			+	+
<i>Inong 6</i>			+			
<i>Inong 7</i>		+	+		+	
<i>Inong 8</i>			+	+		
<i>Inong 9</i>			+			
<i>Inong 10</i>			+		+	

SOURCE: AUTHOR

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# Exploring Gendered Understandings of Peace in Delta State

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## Abstract

In this chapter we draw a picture of alternative visions of peace from the standpoint of individuals affected by violent conflict and engaged in peacebuilding in Delta State, Nigeria. Drawing on interviews conducted with NGOs, a community group, and vigilantes, we identify multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings. We discuss these against theorisations of peace in the academic literature and find resonances that allow us to bring community meanings of peace into conversation with the literature. From our interviews, we identify and discuss an understanding of positive peace that requires economic development. We also identify a vision of harmonious living that involves overcoming negative emotions, and draw on feminist literature to connect this vision to the concepts of maternal thinking and building relations of care. Finally, we identify a commitment to peace as inclusive of women, yet note that the extent and form of inclusion is contested among different actors. Assessing these understandings of peace through a gender lens, we argue that gender logics inform these multiple meanings.

## 1 Introduction

Critical scholars have brought to light the importance of ‘the everyday’ in peacebuilding, highlighting the agency of local populations and seeking to valorise their voices in constructing peace (Mac Ginty, 2014; Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013). A focus on the everyday underlines the ethical and analytical urgency of bringing to light the understandings and experiences of those who have lived through violent conflict and are engaged in peacebuilding. It also reveals the power of individual and community practices in framing and constituting peace on the ground. In this chapter, we seek to make visible understandings of peace among communities in Delta State, Nigeria, a state rent by lethal violence, but one that also is the site of a diverse range of peacebuilding initiatives. What visions of peace do peacebuilding agents put forward?



Violence in the Niger delta (which encompasses Bayelsa, Rivers, and Delta States) is typically associated with oil exploitation. However, such violence also has a long history and predates the discovery of oil in 1957. Intracommunal, intercommunal, interethnic, political, and criminal violence have undergirded the violence of rebel groups, its different types merging into one another and shifting over time (Ebiede, 2017). Despite the 2009 amnesty agreement with rebel groups and the implementation of a programme of disarmament, demobilisation and reconstruction, there were over one thousand recorded deaths in the Niger delta in 2019, and Delta State was one of the most volatile states based on the number of reported fatalities (PIND, 2020).

Motivations for conflict and violence in the state are diverse and include land disputes, disagreements with oil exploration companies over revenue or compensations, cult clashes, electoral violence, and sexual and gender-based violence. For instance, electoral violence is widespread in the region as political leaders recruit youths and arm them to intimidate the electorate and electoral officials in order to manipulate election results in their favour. After the elections, groups of armed youths often turn into militant organisations, leading to clashes of greater violence. Another trigger is the never-ending battles between rival gangs and cult groups for the control of the creeks, many of which are routes for oil bunkering, or oil theft. Bodo, Gimah and Seomoni (2020) argue that this is a booming and profitable business, which consists of a multitude of different actors including the local militant groups in the creeks, commodity traders, and military personnel. Likewise, communal violence driven by tensions over land and boundary disputes is a widespread cause of fatalities (PIND, 2020). The violence in Delta State has impeded development, entrenched widespread poverty, and impacted the lives of thousands of people. Showcasing these people's visions for a peaceful future highlights their status not only as victims but also as agents in building peace in their communities.

In this chapter, we identify meanings of peace in Delta State from the interviews we conducted with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community and vigilante groups. Committed to a feminist epistemology, we seek to understand peace from a bottom-up perspective, bringing to the fore the standpoint of the individuals concerned. Drawing a picture of alternative visions of peace, we discuss different understandings against the rich scholarly body of theorisations of peace in the academic literature. We show that visions of peace cannot be thought of as uniform, but include multiple imaginaries that may clash with one another. We reveal the ways in which these multiple meanings/imaginaries of peace are gendered by studying them through the lens of gender logics discussed in the introduction to this thematic volume. In

particular, we show that gender structures these visions—that is, they reproduce gendered roles as hierarchically arranged dichotomies, and construct binary gender identities, propelling performances of sometimes (but not always) stereotypical femininity and masculinity.

In the following, we first introduce theoretical literature around themes and concepts that emerged from the interviews as qualities of peace. This includes the discussion in the literature of peace as an absence of direct and structural violence that also requires economic development, of involving relationality and relations of care, and of requiring gender inclusivity. We then bring this literature into conversation with insights from our interviewees about economic development, harmonious living and relations of care, and peace as a state of being that is inclusive of women. We show that gendered logics inform these visions of peace, circumscribing the ways in which women and their issues are included or excluded, the divisions of labour reproduced, and the identities constructed.

The study was conducted in the South Warri and Uvwie Local Government Areas of Delta State in December 2018. The research team included two national coordinators and three local researchers. The team held several meetings with different groups and organisations, collecting data through focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews following an agreed-upon guide. In this chapter, we use the interviews that the team conducted with the civil society organisations Gender Justice, Community Peace and Development Initiative, One Love Civil Society Organisation, Ideal Women Advancement Initiative, Value Rebirth and Empowerment Initiative, The Right to Education Empowerment Centre for Social Change, Women in Peacebuilding Network-Nigeria, and Women Peace and Security Network. We also include in our analysis the FGDs that were conducted with the Okukokor Vigilante Group<sup>1</sup> and the Ekpan Community Stakeholders Group, the latter being a coalition of the various interest groups in the Ekpan community. The organisations whose interests are represented in the Ekpan Community Stakeholders Group include Ekpan Women Peace Initiative, Ekpan Integrity, Community Liaison Officers, and Community Relations Committee. The discussions and interviews were recorded and transcribed for coding and for ease of analysis.

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1 Vigilante groups emerged as a response to theft and robbery and have a long history in Nigeria. See a more detailed analysis of the proliferation of vigilantism and politics of vigilante groups in Pratter (2008).

## 2 Conceptualisations of Peace in the Literature

There is a large body of interdisciplinary literature seeking to define and problematise the notion of peace. Given our bottom-up approach to the topic, we discuss in this section theorisations of peace that speak to the main themes identified in our interviews. These theorisations problematise the idea that peace means an absence of physical violence, evoke a 'positive peace' that also requires economic development, and bring to bear feminist understandings of care as a form of peacebuilding and the need for gender inclusivity.

### 2.1 *Positive Peace and Peace Economies*

Notwithstanding the disagreements over the qualities of peace in policy and academic debates, one of the virtually undisputed attributes of peace is the absence of violence. There are, however, important divergences in the perceptions of what is considered violence and what types of violence must be eliminated for peace to emerge. A narrow definition focuses on physical injuries and death. In contrast, those who champion the broader definition of violence argue that injuries of other kinds are no less painful. For Galtung, for example, 'violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations' (Galtung, 1969, 168). He distinguishes between direct violence (where the instigation of an act of violence can be traced to a person or persons) and structural violence (where the violence is built into structures and manifests itself as unequal life chances). Even though peace is understood broadly as freedom from violence, whether this is the absence of direct violence and war or the absence of structural violence in the form of social injustices and oppressions, constitutes a cornerstone of academic debates. These distinctions imply two different types of peace. While negative peace is the absence of direct forms of violence, positive peace entails the absence of any form of structural violence and 'the integration of human society' (Galtung, 1964, 2).

Those who champion the idea of positive peace pay attention to human agency, individual needs, and their fulfilment, and aim to deliver peace through the affective, emotional, logical and experiential elements of everyday life (Mitchell, 2011). In these arguments, peace is framed as a desire, aspiration, and fulfilment. It is also conceived as a profoundly affective concept, including emotional elements of everyday life such as wellness and flourishing. Lederach

(2007), for instance, builds his notion of ‘sustainable peace’ on the metaphors of health and wellness, arguing that sustainable peace is ‘like the immune system in the body or a healthy ecosystem in the environment’, whose goal is to create ‘healthy, generative social interaction’. Likewise, for Hugh Miall (2007), the idea of positive peace relates to the goal of human flourishing; the idea of self-realisation of human beings rather than mere survival. Mitchell (2011) shows that fulfilment consists of social harmony, economic prosperity and individual betterment, as well as the ability for humans to develop and use their capacities for creativity, service and enjoyment. Positive peace is thus tied up with the idea of ‘cultivating and altering the quality of life by means of the specific qualities of the everyday—including caring, communication and interaction’ (Mitchell, 2011, 1635).

A major element of human flourishing in a positive peace is economic wealth, and the question of how to promote such wealth is a major point of contention in the literature. Many scholars turn their attention to economic causes to explain the puzzle of violent conflict, studying a range of different economic variables. This stream of thought includes the theories on the ‘resource curse’, that is, the argument that countries with abundant natural resources are more prone to violent conflict, and the theories on greed, that is, the idea that profitable opportunities for rebel groups are a cause of violent conflict (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Ross, 1999). Such scholars imply that economic causes play a more prominent role in fuelling violent conflict than ‘grievances’; that is, political differences, inequalities, or ethnic divisions. Paul Collier (2009), for example, states that

ethnic tensions and ancient political feuds are not starting civil wars around the world [...] economic forces—such as entrenched poverty and the trade in natural resources—are the true culprits. The solution? Curb rebel financing, jump-start economic growth in vulnerable regions, and provide a robust military presence in nations emerging from conflict.

As exemplified by Collier, and explained by Rigual (2018) in detail, the conflict analysis of economics scholars suggests that one of the pathways to peace is economic development as conflict is understood to be deeply rooted in economic causes. In this literature, development is mainly expected to happen through neo-liberal economic policies that aim to liberalise domestic markets, promote foreign direct investments (FDIs) and introduce structural adjustment programmes championed by international financial institutions (IFIs).

Though this approach has remained the main paradigm in the policy realm, it has led to heated discussions, particularly within academic circles.<sup>2</sup>

Many scholars have problematised the appropriateness of neo-liberal economic policies in post-conflict countries, arguing that they might have adverse effects for politics and everyday lives in post-conflict societies. Ahearne (2009), for instance, argues that the economic reforms initiated by IFIs and donors following the civil war in Sierra Leone oversimplified the relationship between poverty and conflict and that between growth and peace. Even though Sierra Leone enjoyed reasonable growth after conflict, this growth did not 'trickle down' to the poor and the marginalised, and food security, unemployment and poverty continue to be problems for Sierra Leoneans. Similarly, even though FDI is deemed essential for the development of post-conflict countries, contributing to the creation of new employment opportunities and bringing in new technologies, many scholars point out the potential negative consequences of FDIs in post-conflict countries, including the aggravation of conflicts over access to land, or to jobs or revenues generated by companies. Paczynska (2016), for instance, shows that the FDIs made in post-conflict Liberia were mostly channelled into palm oil, forestry and rubber and exacerbated political tensions and protests. She argues that the post-conflict economic strategies introduced in Liberia recreated the pre-war economy, when a small political elite and foreign companies benefited from natural resource wealth by marginalising the majority of Liberians. These issues have guided scholars to make distinctions between war/peace economies and positive/negative peace economies.

Peterson (2014) argues that the aim of all economic reforms proposed by guiding actors in post-conflict countries is to transform what is called the 'war economy'; that is, the structures of economic relations that prolong or sustain violence. Peace economies, on the other hand, are constituted by economic relationships that neither benefit from nor have a causal relationship with physical, organised political violence. Peterson classifies peace economies as either negative or positive peace economies. While a negative peace economy prioritises stability and an absence of immediate physical violence as a result of economic incentives, a positive peace economy is more transformative and aims to abolish not only physical violence, but also other forms of injustice, such as discrimination, fear, or intimidation. Feminist understandings of

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2 Even though the liberal approach has been somewhat moderated in recent years having been given a 'social face' or even a 'feminist face', the commitment to orthodox economics remains. See, for example, Prügl (2016).

peace are comparable to Peterson's positive peace economy as it aspires to the economic and social empowerment of women and other marginalised groups.

## 2.2 *Relationality and Relations of Care*

While both struggles over justice and an absence of violence have remained important aspects of academic debates around the nature of peace, feminist scholars have expanded the discussion by framing peace not only as an issue of social justice and human flourishing, but as a state of being that is tied to relationality and relations of care. The conception of feminist peace that arises from the arguments of second wave feminists is centred on an ethic of caring; 'of knowing, feeling, and acting in the interests of another' (Forcey, 1991, 334). Scholars promoting such an ethic direct their attention to maternal practices of caregiving and nurturing, which give rise to an ethic of care that is characterised by receptivity, relatedness, connectedness, feelings, empathy and caring (Forcey, 1991). Sara Ruddick (1989) analyses the principles of maternal practice through the lens of the ideals of non-violence, which she defines as renunciation, resistance, reconciliation and peacekeeping. Ruddick argues that mothers reject violence and are committed to non-violent techniques even when they are the more powerful ones in their relationship with their children—which she calls the 'nonviolence of the powerful' (Ruddick, 1989, 166). She contends that mothers choose methods such as persuasion, self-suffering, negotiation, bribery or the invocation of authority. Such methods of renunciation of violence also include training the children: 'a mother has to train children not to stamp on the baby, throw a rock at the head, push a toddler in the river, or squirt insecticide in an enemy's face' (172). Ruddick argues that mothers who are guided by the ideals of non-violence train their children to prefer justice over tyranny and exploitation. For Ruddick, maternal practices are inherently dependent on relationships and an ethic of care. She argues, 'The peacemaker asks of herself and those she cares for not what they can afford to give up, but what they can give, not how they can be left alone, but that they can do together' (181). That is why for Ruddick non-violent mothers and their maternal practices offer an image of peace as an active connectedness.

Individuals are not primarily centers of dominating and defensive activity trying to achieve a stable autonomy in threatening hierarchies of strength, although this does describe some individuals and some moments in most lives. They are also and equally centers of care, actively desiring other selves to persist in their own lively being, judging their own well-being in terms of their capacity for a love that 'struggles towards definition'.

At the centre of such practices of care are relationships that are built on empathy, love, understanding and dialogue. These kinds of caring relations/encounters, as Noddings (2008) argues, involve the carer and the cared-for, who both contribute to the relationship. While the carer is attentive to the needs of the cared-for, the cared-for responds in a way that acknowledges the effort of the carer. For Noddings, key to caring relations is dialogue, as it is through dialogue that expressed needs, motives and interests are identified. For this reason, Noddings argues that dialogue is central to every human interaction, and especially to caring ones. Such an understanding of relationships of care is also acknowledged outside feminist scholarship. For Allan (2006), for instance, global care is the highest achievable level of peace and involves an affective dimension because of its focus on caring for others and human social intercourse. Allan argues that principles of justice are crucial for making the world a better place and that care needs to include general conceptions of justice. However, as the humane aspects of consideration, sympathy and compassion for others lead the principles of an ethic of care, peace grounded in these principles goes beyond justice. It goes beyond the right to be treated equally as the focus is on treating others humanely. This kind of ethic is committed to the notion of non-violence with the aspiration that no one should be hurt. In the context of peacebuilding, Vaittinen et al. (2019) show that everyday forms of care that are practiced by men and women alike play a crucial role in creating trust and peaceful transformations of conflict.

### 2.3 *Gender Inclusivity*

At the core of feminist visions of peace is the idea of including all in creating peace, and of the eradication of multiple sources of oppression based on social identities such as gender, ethnicity or race. Duncanson (2016) argues that such an intersectionally inclusive view of peace is necessary as genuine peace requires the empowerment of individuals and communities to realise their own security.

Feminist scholars have long emphasised the gendered impacts of violent conflicts and revealed the importance of women's equal and meaningful participation in peace processes. They have shown that in situations of violent conflict women are disproportionately affected by widespread human rights violations including but not limited to sexual and gender-based violence.<sup>3</sup> Given the disproportionate gendered impacts of conflict on women, True and

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3 Even though we do not aim to detail the feminist theorisations of sexual violence in armed conflict in this chapter, we think that it is important to highlight the richness of these discussions. See, for example, the different strands of feminist thought on sexual



Riveros-Morales (2019) argue that women's participation in peace processes is imperative. In spite of the introduction of the women, peace and security agenda more than two decades ago with the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, feminist scholars have shown that women have been excluded from peace processes or that their influence remains limited when they are present. These scholars have also shown that the inclusion of women in peace processes is crucial not only in confronting gender-based subordinations, but also for the conclusion of peace talks and the implementation of peace agreements (Paffenholz et al., 2016).

Even though women's inclusion in such processes is perceived as immensely valuable for peace, many feminist scholars are wary of framing women and gender equality as a means of achieving peace. Duncanson (2016), for instance, criticises Hudson et al.'s (2012) argument, presented in their *Sex and World Peace*, that gender equality is necessary for peace, claiming that such an argument frames women's rights as a means to an end and falls into the trap of instrumentalising women. Instead, she suggests an understanding of gender equality as mutually constitutive with peace and emphasises the significance of framing women's empowerment as a goal in itself.

### 3 Understanding the Gendered Meanings of Peace in Delta State

The NGOs and community and vigilante groups we interviewed in Delta described peace in a multitude of ways. Yet there were also commonalities. The qualities and concepts interviewees referred to include an understanding of positive peace encompassing economic development; harmonious living and relations of care; and women's inclusion. In this section, we further explore the meanings of these concepts and qualities from the standpoint of our interviewees. We also put these understandings into dialogue with the discussions introduced in the theoretical chapter (conceptualisations of peace in the literature), which speak to the interviewees' conceptualisations of peace in Delta. The case of Delta not only reveals the multiple properties that are

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violence: Reid-Cunningham (2008), Seifert (1996), Costantino (2012), Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2009; 2013), Meger (2011; 2016), Cohen (2013; 2016; 2017), and Wood (2006; 2009; 2018). It is also crucial to note the violence men and gender-non-conforming individuals experience in the context of armed conflict. Across the world, many armed groups in conflict-affected contexts have directed violence against people due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. See Daigle and Myrntinen (2018), Serrano-Amaya (2018) and Drummond (2018).



attached to peace by different organisations/groups, it also shows the structuring and identity logics of gender that inform such meanings.

### 3.1 *A Positive Peace Economy*

A first meaning that emerged from the interviews is of peace as the absence of both direct and structural violence. Even though many interviewees emphasised the absence of overt forms of violence as central to the realisation of peace, they understood violence more broadly. Many considered social, political and economic inequalities as threats and regarded the eradication of these structures as fundamental to achieving peace. Peace then becomes a matter of social justice, fairness and equality, as one of our NGO interviewees formulated the issue:

To be in a situation of peace: when you look at a situation where there is justice for all. When I say justice, I am talking of fairness [...] where there is fairness, where there is quality of life, where the socioeconomic situation of the community or the society is fully shared among the dwellers, male or female ...

Community Peace Development Initiative, interview, 2018

Peace, justice and fairness seem to belong together in this formulation; but so do 'the socioeconomic situation of the community' and 'quality of life'. Justice and fairness are positioned to generate a high quality of life. Indeed, what the peace and conflict literature refers to as economic development emerged, in many of our interviews, as key to achieving social justice and thus as a prerequisite for peace. In the words of one research participant, 'those small issues like employment and development issues within the community make peace come' (Ekpan Community Stakeholders Group, interview, 2018). Practically, this meant the eradication of poverty through employment and income generation activities, as mentioned by many of our interviewees. The 'small issues' of economics emerged as intricately enmeshed with the large issue of peace.

Our interviewees also emphasised that the principles of equality and fairness needed to encompass gender relations. This theme emerged especially strongly among our NGO interviewees: 'Our peacebuilding [work] is on equity. What is good for men is good for women; what is good for you is good for me. We try to entrench this culture because denial is a trigger of conflict' (Value Rebirth and Empowerment Initiative, interview, 2018).

Emphasising gender equity, in explaining the initiative's socioeconomic justice and governance focused peacebuilding work this interviewee's understanding resonates with the positive peace economy advanced by Peterson

(2014), as reviewed above, which includes transformations of inequalities and injustices, including those related to the governance of natural resources. Women's NGOs in particular emphasised the issue of gender discrimination in land ownership and mentioned their involvement in land disputes.

However, such gendered discriminations did not appear in many of the interviewees' accounts of peace or in initiatives on peacebuilding. When it came to the equal distribution of resources and jobs, meanwhile, some of our interviewees gave preference to men. This preference was particularly visible in the interviews with the stakeholders from Ekpan community. For instance, one interviewee from the Ekpan Community Stakeholders Group mentioned the insufficient employment opportunities created by private oil companies:

And in my own area [...] we have a lot of companies there and they are not really helping us to make peace come to stay because they are not helping *our boys* in terms of employment ... it is part of what makes our boys misbehave. And I believe that if they help us to give employment to our boys, [...] peace will come, as in peace will come to stay.

Ekpan Community Stakeholders Group, interview, 2018

Here the structuring logic of gender asserted itself to help constitute the meaning of peace. Having constructed men, and male youth in particular, as those with an inclination to resort to violence, a gendered logic leads to a prioritising of employment for men. Men's lack of income and employment opportunities comes to frame discussions around peace, because economic injustice against them is seen as connected to the perpetuation of violence. In contrast to the first NGO we quote in this section, this understanding portrays a more restricted understanding of peace in terms of 'socioeconomic situation'. When put into dialogue with the literature we reviewed, we find that the kind of economic peace imagined by this interviewee neither takes into account the gender dimensions of structural violence nor prioritises the economic and social empowerment of women. As a result, even though some organisations emphasised the economic empowerment of women and introduced initiatives in this regard, the qualities that are at the heart of a feminist peace economy are not represented in some others' understandings of peace in Delta.

### 3.2 *'Harmonious Living' and Relations of Care*

Our interviewees considered peace not only as related to the issue of economic justice, but also as a quality of social relationships. A widely shared framing of peace that emerges from the interviews is the idea of 'harmonious living', which highlights the affective and relational qualities of peace. Many

interviewees approached conflict as endemic in social life and thus as something that needed to be managed. As a representative of one NGO suggested, 'conflict is not positive or negative, it is the handling of the conflict that brings peace' (One Love, interview, 2018). And many of our interviewees emphasised that maintaining social ties was crucial to managing conflict. The idea of harmonious living as a product of human interactions emerges as a key element in this. It carries resemblances to what feminist scholars would call relations of care. Thus, relationality is an essential element of peace as harmonious living: 'Relationship; when there is this, there will be no violence' (One Love, interview 2018).

In the narratives of our interviewees, such relationships are built on a range of affective qualities. To begin with, there are negative emotions, such as fear and distrust, that need to be overcome in order to found peaceful relationships: 'We have peace when each party clearly understands the interests of the other side with respect to accommodating their views. There will be absence of fear and distrust' (Okukokor Vigilante Group, interview, 2018).

Eliminating fear and distrust makes it possible to understand the interests of others and accommodate them. Conversely, understanding and respecting others prevents fear and distrust. A stakeholder group participant agreed with this interpretation, adding the need for tolerance: 'I think it is still brought down to understanding, tolerance, tolerating one another and harmonious living together; that is peace' (Ekpan Community Stakeholders Group, interview, 2018).

Respect and tolerance thus brought about harmonious living or peace. They also make it possible to overcome 'rancour or bitterness' and thus to achieve unity: 'Peace is when people live together harmoniously without rancour or bitterness towards one another [...] first thing that will make us to have that peace is to unite and understand ourselves. If we refuse to unite and understand ourselves, peace will never come' (Ekpan Community Stakeholders Group, interview, 2018).

Overcoming negative emotions and embracing understanding and respect thus is not something that entails individualised feelings, it is central to building community, unity. Harmonious living thus is built on social ties.

Arguably this discussion connects to theoretical understandings of relations of care. It recalls Noddings's (2008) arguments, discussed earlier, about the centrality of dialogue to caring human relations. Dialogue makes it possible to express needs, identify potentially clashing interests, and understand them 'with respect to accommodating their view', as expressed by the interviewee above. Our interviewees also understood, though, that this needed the eradication of emotions such as fear and distrust, that dialogue and understanding

needed relations based on tolerance and trust. Thus our interviewees constructed peace not only as something more than justice for all, but also as profoundly reliant on the presence of what feminist theorists have called caring relations.

Caring relations also surfaced in another context—in discussions about mothers as peacebuilders. The figure of the powerful mother is familiar from other African literature on peacebuilding (Prasch, 2015; Oyewumi, 2003); in Delta, it featured in the way relations of care between a mother and her children were perceived as playing a central role in assuring peace. In the accounts of many of the NGOs and the community group interviewed, women are produced as mothers who are responsible for educating their children and can thus ensure peace in the community. ‘Gender is a social construct but in reality, women are central, care and home keepers. They are mothers and they play a major role in peacebuilding. *A good woman* can educate her children to play an active role in peacebuilding’ (One Love, interview, 2018).

Whereas it is, in the matter just quoted, a mother’s care and education that enables peacebuilding, another interviewee highlighted the mother’s power to control:

A mother can really control the child in the home and the mother can control peace at home and within the community. Because the mother can control the child from home as a means of teaching the child [...] that little boy will grow up to be the best father. That is one of the works of mothers.

Gender Justice, interview, 2018

The particular relationship between mother and child is what enables both care and control. It is the unique requirement of managing this power relationship that motivated care theorists, such as Ruddick, to develop their arguments about maternal practices of non-violence. Like our interviewees, Ruddick emphasises mothers’ power in the training of children to counteract violence. And like Ruddick, our interviewees also emphasise that this is not simply a matter of ties between mother and child, but has implications for the community: women can educate their children to ‘play an active role in peacebuilding’ and the mother can ‘control peace at home and within the community’. Thus, they show that the human relations that are central to the building of peace not only include the relations between adversaries or relations outside the context of the family, but also relations between mothers and their children. In other words, relations of care go beyond developing mutual understandings, tolerance, or trust between parties who have conflicting interests; they

also involve mothers' maternal practices of renouncing violence, expressed through the training of their children. Peace relies on relationality and care at the level of the family and the extension of such relations to the community.

As has been shown in the literature, gendered logics can re/assert themselves in visions of peace. The risk is that a rigid gender division of labour is reproduced, and we see this reflected in the statement of the interviewee quoted above in the sense that 'gender is a social construct but in reality, women are [...] care and home keepers'. This seems to suggest that gender is not malleable, that women are always already or potentially mothers 'and home keepers', and that non-violence is quasi-innate in these roles. Yet the reference to 'a good woman' moderates this suggestion, implying that mothering for peace may require skills and competence, and perhaps involve a process of learning. Indeed, a number of NGOs interviewed targeted women as mothers in their initiatives with the aim of encouraging maternal practices of non-violence and increasing the authority of mothers over their children and in the peacebuilding training of children. In doing so, these organisations also drew on gender, producing performances of the 'good woman' and reproducing traditional gender identities. But for Ruddick, mothering is not attached to women; non-violence emerges from maternal practices and thinking, and everybody can embrace these, regardless of whether they are mothers or not. In the words of the interviewees, meanwhile, motherhood is reserved for women.

### 3.3 *Women's Inclusion*

The different sets of properties attributed to peace in Delta in the interviews also lead to various understandings of peace related to the issue of women's inclusion. On the one hand, many of the interviewees underlined the significance of the political inclusion of women in the structures of governance and in peacebuilding processes. In these accounts, the exclusion of women was deemed 'a threat to peace', and the eradication of structures of subordination was regarded as crucial to ensuring the peace in Delta. Women's organisations in particular emphasised the importance of developing women's political potential, improving their access to income, and in some cases training men in leadership positions to help combat prejudices against women as agents of peace. On the other hand, some NGOs instrumentalised women's political participation in the building of peace, forgoing the idea that women's empowerment may be a goal in and of itself. For instance, an NGO staff member mentioned, with regard to the training they provide for male community leaders to increase the participation of women: 'If a woman has an answer to the prevention of conflict, we are more interested in the overall goals and in

the overall peaceful coexistence (Value Rebirth and Empowerment Initiative, interview, 2018). The interviewee maintained that 'who brought in the result' is not important.

The same interviewee concluded that what matters for the organisation is the 'competence' of an individual, irrespective of gender. That is, if a man is more 'competent' in a particular area, 'he will take the lead', and the same also applies to women. The empowerment of women thus becomes secondary; the goal is peace and women's participation is a means to get there. The same interviewee also mentioned that bringing women peacebuilders into certain communities may be considered insensitive. Many other interviewees similarly mentioned the impact of community restrictions on the gender-division of their peacebuilding work and framed the inclusion of women as a concern that should be sensitive to community dynamics.

But some even questioned whether women can be a means of achieving peace, and justified the limited role of women in political and peacebuilding processes. For instance, one of the vigilante groups labelled women as 'weak' and unable to help the group in supporting their operations against crime. At the same time, group members held women themselves responsible for not showing an interest in joining the group.

Women are not part of the vigilante [group] because it is a very stressful and dangerous job. Women cannot fight criminals [...] No one stops anyone from joining. Since the inception of the vigilante group, no woman has come to join the group. I believe women do not have the power or self-will to join the vigilante group.

Okukokor Vigilante Group, interview, 2018

Women's roles are, instead, framed as limited to mediating conflicts between couples and among women. The structuring logics of gender in this case assigned the 'appropriate' roles for women in achieving 'harmony'. The rejection of inclusivity and the framing of women as 'weak' reproduced gender divisions of labour and led to the exclusion of women from certain types of peacebuilding efforts that were perceived as masculine.

#### 4 Conclusion

What are the visions for peace of peacebuilders that work in a context of violent conflict? Our analysis of such visions in Delta State uncovers multiple and sometimes contradictory, meanings. These include an understanding of peace

as an absence of both direct and indirect violence, encompassing in particular economic development. They also include the notion of harmonious living, which involves overcoming negative emotions and building relations of care. We have shown that these visions can be brought into conversation with the academic literature. They connect to notions of positive peace put forward by Galtung, and they emphasise the economic basis of peace and the need for economies to be equitable, as suggested in Peterson's notion of a peace economy. They also connect to theorisations by Lederach (2007) and Miall (2007) of peace as including human flourishing experienced in everyday life, which our interviewees characterised as 'harmonious living' and achieving 'quality of life'. We show that this understanding resonates with ideas put forward in feminist theorising of relationality, and in particular with relations of caring. The importance of building and maintaining social ties is central to this understanding and to that of many of our interviewees. Finally, many peacebuilders in Delta State also share ideas present in the feminist literature about the need to include women in political processes, though there was disagreement about the extent and forms of such inclusion.

These various notions of peace are not incompatible; but the introduction of a gender lens brings to the fore conflicting understandings. Gender structured visions of peace lead to reproductions and contestations of gender divisions of labour and gender identities. The structuring logic of gender played a key role in the framing of peace as an absence of violence. It also led some peacebuilders to a priori assume that it is men who have the inclination to resort to violence, and therefore to prioritise male employment. It also functioned to reproduce the gendered distribution of and rights over natural resources. Even though many of our interviewees—particularly women's organisations—referred to economic injustices, built connections between violence and economic inequalities, and framed economic development as a prerequisite for peace, others did not consider the gendered dimensions of structural violence in their understandings of economic peace. This became evident in their focus on male employment and their disregard of gender discriminations in the governance of resources such as land ownership. Likewise, we have shown that even though many interviewees thought that women needed to be included in politics and peace processes, some NGOs explicitly instrumentalised women's inclusion/participation for peacebuilding purposes. In the vigilante group, understandings of appropriate gender roles led to a framing of women as 'weak' and unable to support the group's operations against crime.

Gender identities also limited more inclusive visions of peace. Relationality and relations of care, particularly between mothers and their children,



anchored understandings of peace as harmonious living. The structuring logic of gender provided the script for constructing motherhood as the appropriate role for women. But the arguments around what it means to be ‘a good woman’ recognised that mothering requires skills and competence, and some of the NGOs interviewed sought to support the development of this feminine identity, encouraging performances of the ‘good woman’ by enhancing the power of mothers to teach their children how to act peacefully. While thus using gender as a resource for political change, they ended up forgoing an opportunity to generalise maternal thinking and practices beyond a feminine ghetto.

Our analysis, thus, shows that visions of peace are multiple and at times conflicting. They are often informed by gender logics, which shape the practices of building peace in Delta State, such as the ways in which women and their issues are included in or excluded from the processes of peacebuilding, the identities evoked, and the divisions of labour reproduced. Identifying and problematising visions of peace constitutes an important aspect of community struggles to transform violence, building caring ties, and promoting an understanding of gender equality that also takes women’s empowerment as a goal in itself.

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# Art-for-Peace in Ambon: An Intersectional Reading

*Wening Udasmoro and Rahel Kunz*

## Abstract

In the context of the focus on ‘everyday peacebuilding’, the field of peace and conflict is increasingly interested in the use of art as a tool for peacebuilding. Feminist contributions emphasise the important gender dimensions of art-for-peace processes, but so far intersectional dynamics have received less attention. The aim of this chapter is to bring the interdisciplinary feminist literature into dialogue with insights on the intersectional dynamics of (everyday) peacebuilding and so propose a critical reading of the intersectional dynamics of art-for-peace initiatives. We focus on the context of Ambon in Indonesia to analyse one particularly prominent art-for-peace initiative: the Paparisa Ambon Bergerak (PAB) collective. Our analysis draws on a combination of data: visual and literature (poems) artwork produced by the PAB collective, in-depth expert interviews with PAB representatives and local peacebuilding activists, and secondary literature on PAB. Our analysis reveals the complex social power dynamics and individual and collective dimensions of art-for-peace activities.

It is in creativity, in the fashioning of self and world, that people find their most potent weapon against war.

NORDSTROM, 1997, 4

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The process to build the connection and friendship and to visit each other, is as important as the art itself.

Interview with a founding member of Paparisa Ambon Bergerak,  
September 2020

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## 1 Introduction

Even though it has been happening for a long time, the use of art to build peace has been attracting growing interest in the field of peace and conflict since the 1990s. In the context of the increasing focus on ‘internal wars’ (Bergh and Sloboda, 2010), ‘everyday peacebuilding’ and the ‘local turn’ (Bleiker, 2009; Kim, Kollontai and Yore, 2016; Labor, 2018; Rizzolo and Schuler, 2003; Zelizer, 2003), scholars and practitioners acknowledge the potential of art to transform conflicts and build peace. They highlight the ways in which art initiatives can contribute to healing, building peaceful environments, stimulating creativity for peacebuilding and building bridges and bringing people together by valuing and harnessing differences to move beyond othering (Marshall, 2014). Thus, art plays an important role in peacebuilding.

Feminist contributions emphasise the gender dynamics of art-for-peace projects (Clery, 2014; Parker, 1984; Väyrynen, 2013). Yet in this literature, intersectional dynamics have received less attention. In this chapter, we bring this interdisciplinary feminist literature into a dialogue with insights on the intersectional dynamics of (everyday) peacebuilding, which in turn has paid less attention to art-based peacebuilding. Drawing on these insights, we propose a critical reading of the intersectional dynamics of art-for-peace initiatives.

We focus on the context of Ambon in Indonesia to analyse one particularly prominent art-for-peace initiative: the Paparisa Ambon Bergerak (PAB) collective. PAB has received widespread praise for its contributions to peacebuilding in Ambon (Indonesia Development Forum, 2018). Existing studies of PAB focus mostly on its use of digital and social media to counter rumours and false information, and on its use of art-for-education and -peace (Bräuchler, 2019; Indonesia Development Forum, 2018; Manuputti, 2018). The gendered and intersectional dimensions of PAB as an art-for-peace initiative have not yet been explored in detail.

Our analysis draws on a combination of data: visual and literature (poems) artwork produced by the PAB collective, in-depth expert interviews with members of PAB and local peacebuilding activists (carried out between 2014 and 2020) and secondary literature on PAB.<sup>1</sup> The data for this article were collected in the context of the project Gender Dimensions of Social Conflict, Armed Violence and Peacebuilding. The project seeks to understand the role of gender in conflict cycles and peacebuilding in three Indonesian provinces (Aceh,

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1 We would like to thank our interview partners. Interviews were conducted by Arifah Rahmawati, Christelle Rigual, Jemmy Talakua, Wening Udasmoro and Rahel Kunz. Interviews have been anonymised for confidentiality purposes.

Maluku and East Java). The Maluku conflict was concentrated in Ambon City, located on Ambon, one of the 32 islands that make up the Maluku archipelago (Azca, 2006). It is in this context that the PAB art-for-peace initiative emerged in Ambon. We draw inspiration from Väyrynen, who proposes studying art-work as a 'method that allows a critical reading of the nation's identity politics in relation to war and collective trauma' (Väyrynen, 2013, 138). Jauhola, meanwhile, suggests a methodology that reads art as open-ended politics instead of offering stable interpretations of art (Jauhola, 2016). In our context, the analysis of artwork allows us to perform a critical reading of the intersectional dynamics of art-for-peace initiatives.

We also follow the call by Andrä to pay more attention to the ways in which 'intersections of class, gender, race, and sexuality come to matter in art as an approach to peace' (Andrä, 2020). We take a broad understanding of intersectionality as a lens that exposes both the multiple dimensions of identity that mediate individual experience and the broader intersecting power dynamics at work in art-for-peace initiatives (Kappler and Lemay-Hébert, 2019; Stavrevska and Smith, 2020). In our analysis, we focus on two dimensions. First, we investigate the ways in which gendered, ethnic, class and religious 'differences' are understood and mobilised in art-for-peace initiatives. Here, we draw on the logic of gender as a resource for peacebuilding, illustrating how it often intersects with other social dynamics. We illustrate how the PAB initiative is a site where 'differences' are explicitly mobilised as well as challenged and transformed for peacebuilding purposes. Second, we analyse the ways in which art-for-peace initiatives trouble and transform existing gender relations intersecting with other identity categories and broader power dynamics. We draw attention to the ways in which the logic of gender as identity works intersectionally in the PAB initiative. In particular, our analysis finds two key contributions to peacebuilding in these art initiatives: the transformation of violent masculinities of young, mostly lower-class urban men, and the creation of spaces for expressing young women's voices and denouncing gender-based violence. We highlight how these intersect with, draw on, and are complicated by the colonial heritage in the context of Ambon. Yet while our analysis highlights the key contribution that PAB initiatives make to mobilising differences for peace, overcoming violence, and building bridges for an inclusive peace, we also point out some tensions that come with these transformations.

The next section reviews the literature and presents our conceptualisation of art-for-peace initiatives; section three provides a short background on conflict and peacebuilding in Ambon; section four presents the PAB initiative, before moving to an analysis of the intersectional dynamics of this initiative in sections five to seven and concluding in section eight.

## 2 Art, Peace and Intersectionality

While art has been used widely and effectively as an instrument of peacebuilding, it is important to acknowledge that art is not inherently peaceful and can also be used to create and fuel conflict (Andrä, 2020; C. Baker, 2019; Bergh and Sloboda, 2010). Art can be used for mobilising people and resources for conflict, and disseminating ideologies of othering that contribute to conflict. During conflict, art can act as a morale booster or a diversion for the non-fighting population, as intimidation, or as torture (Bergh and Sloboda, 2010, 4–5). In the Indonesian context, arts have been used by the authorities to control people's ideology in the context of political conflict between Nationalists and Communists, most prominently during the New Order era under the Suharto presidency (1968–1998). Suharto controlled the arts performed by the Gerwani, a women's communist organisation, killed many dancers during the period 1965–1966 (Larasati, 2013 and 2019) and used arts to control women's sexuality, which was considered demonic (Wieringa, 1996 and 2002).

Yet art can also be used in more positive ways to contribute to conflict transformation and peacebuilding. This potential of art to transform conflict and build peace has been analysed in various contexts by scholars and practitioners from the fields of art and of peace and conflict (Andrä, 2020; Bräuchler, 2019; Clery, 2013; Marshall, 2014; Premaratna and Bleiker, 2010; Zelizer, 2003). These studies identify various forms that art-for-peace initiatives can take: as artistic products or artifacts; as training tools, for example through art education; as artistic processes and as social protest (Zelizer, 2003). Thereby, art works in various ways to build peaceful individuals and societies. It can transform cycles of violence and act as an 'antidote to violence' (Marshall, 2014, 38) at both the individual and the collective level. Art promotes creativity, releasing hormones related to feelings of connection and happiness, and contributes to healing, whereby the 'destructive force of life is changed into the creative force in art' (Marshall, 2014, 37). In artistic practice, differences are needed and celebrated; they are 'the source of new understanding, connection, and richness' (Marshall, 2014, 38). Thus, through art, people practice trusting and reconnecting to themselves and others, and opposed groups can be brought together to create something collectively (Rizzolo and Schuler, 2003). Finally, art-based initiatives can also act as a form of social critique (Smith, 2017), for example for protest and ideological mobilisation against a political regime (Mandal, 2003). Thus, artistic engagements for peacebuilding can make numerous contributions in terms of broadening the scope of peacebuilding to include hitherto marginalised peacebuilding activities, creating space for the inclusion of alternative voices, reintegrating societies divided by violence to resist



exploitation and outside intervention, and building new identities (Bräuchler, 2019; Premaratna and Bleiker, 2010). Importantly, art-for-peace initiatives also provide sources of alternative imaginations: 'insights found within the creative arts [...] can contribute alternative understandings of conflict and possibilities for peace' (Clery, 2014, 211).

In Indonesia, arts and literature have been used by Indonesian artists to resist and oppose the power of the Suharto regime using irony and satire. Every decade creates its own movements, such as Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (New Art Movement) in 1975, Semsar Siahaan drama in the 1980s and early 1990s, and the youthful radicalism of the Taring Padi (Fang of the Rice-plant) collective in the late 1990s (Vickers, 2013). In the 1990s, many theatre groups challenged the violent and oppressive regime of Suharto, including Theater Koma with their satiric performances (Bodden, 2010). In post-conflict and post-tsunami Aceh, the performance of arts such as traditional dancing has been used for trauma healing (Twarog, 2010). In our analysis, we focus mostly on the ways in which PAB art-based initiatives contribute to moving beyond othering and separation processes, and to transforming identities and power dynamics crucial for building inclusive peace.

What has so far received little attention in the literature are the intersectional dynamics of art-for-peace initiatives. In our analysis of art-based peacebuilding, we bring insights from the feminist literature on art-for-peace together with insights from scholars who analyse the intersectional dynamics of (everyday) peacebuilding yet pay less attention to art. In the feminist literature on the links between art, peace and gender, there is a tendency to focus on how (violent) masculinities contribute to militarising societies, to contesting peace, or to remilitarising societies in post-conflict situations (Baker, 2019; Enloe, 2000; Tidy, 2015). Thus, Baker for example analyses how veteran masculinities in popular culture in Croatia (e.g. those associated with a veteran singer) contribute to reproducing the militarisation of society and contest (rather than foster) peace (Baker, 2019). Tidy provides an analysis of an American popular culture figure, illustrating the 'uneasy productive dualities' in the mobilisation of masculinity for anti-militarist ends and the reproduction of gendered power relations through reworked military masculinities (Tidy, 2015, 456). This reveals a general blind spot in the literature on gender, peace and conflict that tends to focus on violent masculinities and pays less attention to the various non-violent and peaceful forms of masculinities that are involved in everyday conflict transformation and peacebuilding (Kunz, Myrntinen and Udasmoro, 2018).

Yet some feminist research in peace and conflict studies has analysed the ways in which non-violent masculinities and the transformation of gender



dynamics more broadly are part of art-based peacebuilding. Väyrynen analyses how, in the context of Finland, visual art contributes to resistance to hegemonic masculinities and provides alternative masculinities for tackling trauma in a post-conflict context (Väyrynen, 2013). The literature on art education and therapy highlights how gender identities can be transformed through art (Baker et al., 2019) and how spaces for silenced voices can be opened up. For example, a study based on the experience of gender-specific art programmes in a mental health care centre in the Netherlands finds that art therapy ‘can contribute to posttraumatic transformation and to a redefinition of masculinity’ (Baljon, 2011, 151). In this context, art allows men to discover that it is possible to develop forms of masculinities that are not associated with aggression and destruction but are centred on creation. In the context of Indonesia, Larasati emphasises embodied and non-verbal means of trauma healing through art that challenge Western-centred psychology approaches (Larasati, 2013; 2019; see also Smith, 2007). In the context of post-conflict Aceh, Free Aceh Movement members, who used violence during the conflict, started to use art as a mechanism for maintaining peace in Aceh and creating non-violent masculinities (Kunz, Myrntinen and Udasmoro, 2018). Art-based activities thus seem a very powerful way to transform ideas and practices of masculinity, heal trauma and build peaceful relationships.<sup>2</sup>

We draw on this literature and combine it with insights on the intersectional dynamics of peacebuilding. This literature emphasises the ways in which intersecting social dynamics of gender, class, ethnicity, age, religion, etc. shape conflict transformation and peacebuilding practices (Kappler and Lemay-Hébert, 2019; Rigual, Prügl and Kunz, forthcoming; Stavrevska and Smith, 2020). Various understandings of intersectionality exist.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, we draw on intersectionality as a lens to investigate both intersecting identity dynamics and social power dynamics present and/or explicitly mobilised in art-for-peace initiatives. As various scholars have noted, a broad understanding of intersectionality allows one to focus on the micro–macro continuum ‘to view the individual experience as a specific translation of wider structures of disadvantage

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2 We are aware of the fact that art can also contribute to reinforcing patriarchy, but this is not the focus of this chapter.

3 The origins of this concept are commonly attributed to the work of Crenshaw (1991) and Hill Collins (1993), aimed at ending discrimination against women and as a tool with which to question the assumption of woman as a unitary category. The concept was originally designed to theorise the complex forms of subordination of black women in the US (Davis, 2011; hooks, 2014). Yet intersectional analysis has a much broader base, ranging across multiple contexts in the global South and North, in part linked to anticolonial feminisms (Hancock, 2015; Mendoza, 2016).

and privilege'. In this way, intersectionally shaped experience is understood 'as a peephole through which the "worlds" of violence and peace can be explored' (Kappler and Lemay-Hébert, 2019).

While there are few explicit intersectional analyses of art-for-peace projects so far, various studies do analyse the intersection of various identity and power dynamics in art-for-peace initiatives. In *Textiles Making Peace*, Andrä acknowledges the importance of focusing on the intersectional dynamics of art-for-peace and surveys studies that reveal how in post-conflict situations 'needlework can serve to remake individuals' sense of self and the social fabric of communities' (Andrä, 2020, 6). This was the case for example in post-conflict Peru, where indigenous women testified to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by means of the *arpillera*<sup>4</sup> (Franger, 2014). In her analysis of art-based projects in ex-Yugoslavia, Schroer-Hippel shows how men's stitching activities in public squares in Belgrade contributed to deconstructing ideas regarding hegemonic masculinities and proposing more peaceful forms of masculinity (Schroer-Hippel, 2016). This illustrates the intersectional dynamics of the use of textiles for peacemaking, whereby textiles can be used to denounce and mend intersecting gendered and colonial relations for example (Andrä, 2020). Yet Andrä also points out the double-sidedness of textile-for-peace initiatives, which can reproduce gendered and racialised understandings of textile art and thus be 'employed to make or break colonial framings and relations' (Andrä, 2020, 5). Focusing on Northern Ireland and Australia, Pruitt analyses the ways in which youth are involved in music-based peacebuilding in order to transform conflicts, for example by 'challenging racial and gender inequality, poverty and community violence' (Pruitt, 2013, xiv). In the context of Fiji, Clery analyses the ways in which art initiatives contribute to peacebuilding by creating safe spaces for dialogue, communicating messages of peace, and engaging communities in imagining possibilities for peace (Clery, 2013). In this context, arts-based approaches to peacebuilding address various intersecting themes, such as 'family and gender-based violence, religious and interdenominational conflict, racism, homophobia, and issues of stigma surrounding mental health and wellbeing' (Clery, 2013, 1).

These analyses show how art-for-peace initiatives have the potential to challenge intersectional power relations, bridge differences, and provide

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4 *Arpilleras* are brightly-coloured patchwork pictures, stiched on a background of sack cloth, often made by women. They became a popular instrument to document and denounce oppression during the military regime of Augusto Pinochet in Chile in the 1970s and 1980s. See <https://stitchedvoices.wordpress.com/2018/04/29/what-is-an-arpillera/> (accessed on 29 April 2021).

alternative narratives and practices of peacebuilding. They also illustrate the potential tensions in art-for-peace projects, which can empower women but also reproduce intersectional discriminations. Drawing on these insights, this chapter focuses on the intersectional dynamics of art-for-peace initiatives in Ambon. We conceptualise art as an important site and instrument whereby intersectional dynamics are mobilised, visibilised, negotiated, contested and transformed.

### 3 Conflict and Peacebuilding in Ambon

The violent conflict in Ambon, in the province of Maluku (1999–2002) followed the fall of Suharto's New Order government, an authoritarian regime that had been in power for over thirty years. In Indonesian politics, the slogan 'Unity in Diversity' (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*) has been used by different political regimes to strengthen their power. 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika tan hana dharma mangrwa'<sup>5</sup> appears in a work of Mpu Tantular entitled *Sutasoma*. He was a very important author at the time of the Majapahit Kingdom (the second biggest of the kingdoms of the archipelago, 1293–1500). The slogan was used by Sukarno following independence to unite different religious and ethnic groups in Indonesia. Suharto also used the slogan, with the same aim. However, instead of respecting differences, in reality Suharto actively promoted the homogenisation of Indonesia, 'Javanising' it (i.e., imposing Javanese culture), using the bureaucracy and the military as tools to reduce the diversity of Indonesia, and controlling tensions among different groups through military power (Bhakti, Yanuarti and Nurhasim, 2009, 7; O'Rourke, 2002). The subsequent transition period spawned violence in different parts of Indonesia as jockeying for power between the New Order government and the Reformasi movement fuelled political chaos in many provinces (Trijono, 2002; van Kinken, 2007). Religious and ethnic divisions deepened as people in Aceh, Ambon, Kalimantan and Sulawesi held Javanese domination responsible for poverty and social injustice in these regions. Following the end of the 30-year Suharto regime, conflicts fuelled by suppressed tensions erupted all over Indonesia. In this context, the term 'diversity' had lost its appeal and other terms and slogans were used more frequently in the Reformasi era (see below).

Ambon experienced the bloodiest ethno-religious conflict during this transition to the Reformasi era. The flashpoint of the conflict was Ambon City.

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5 Translation by the authors: 'Being different but still one, the truth is not ambiguous'.

Violence was 'communal', pitting (Christian and Muslim) indigenous populations against (predominantly Muslim) immigrants (Bertrand, 2004; Schulze, 2017). Indigenous Ambonese—both Muslim and Christian—dominated in office work and other white-collar jobs, and were expected to find employment there (Sudjatmiko, 2008). In contrast, the mostly Muslim Buton, Bugis, and Makassar migrants dominated the transportation sector and also largely controlled trade in Ambon. They were able to draw on extensive and powerful economic networks, especially for manual labour. The violence pitted ethnic Ambonese and these immigrants against one another, but took on a religious overtone, in part as a result of Islamist influences from outside the region. The violence itself was triggered by a fight between two young men, a Christian from Mardika and a Muslim from Batu Merah, a neighbourhood of Ambon City (Azca, 2006). Yet to fully understand the emergence of the conflict in Ambon, one needs to consider its more structural and long-term foundations (Bräuchler, 2019). Ever since the arrival of the colonising powers religion has been politicised. Jakarta's push for the Islamisation of politics in the 1980s and 1990s also contributed to this. The demographic shift brought about by spontaneous (mainly Muslim) immigration and governmental transmigration programmes from the 1970s onwards increased existing tensions and competition in the job market. And the Indonesian security forces took sides in the violence in an attempt to maintain their power. Maluku also faced, and still faces, colonial and neo-colonial exploitation of its natural resources (Bräuchler, 2019, 204).

These outside interventions were also accompanied by the construction of dichotomous narratives regarding Ambon. In Indonesia, including Ambon, there exists a narrative that opposes the 'civilised' centre to the 'uncivilised' periphery (Irawanto, Ramsey and Ryan, 2011). Western Indonesians, most commonly represented by the Javanese, have been framed as having a higher culture and a more refined language, while eastern Indonesians are commonly stereotyped as violent and unrefined. This seems ironic, as history shows that political and cultural conflict, including military invasion, has more commonly been the tool of the Javanese. Take, for instance, the Majapahit Kingdom, which exerted its political, cultural and social influence over much of eastern Indonesia (Berg, 1974; Muljana, 1979)—including Ambon.

Nonetheless, such civilisation narratives act as cultural markers of Ambon even today (Sulistiyono and Rochwulaningsih, 2013). On the one hand, these narratives are influenced by the identity categories created by non-Ambonese, particularly the Javanese, representing the inhabitants of all the islands other than Java as '*Sabrang*', literally meaning 'people across the sea'. From the Javanese standpoint, *Sabrang* people are considered uncivilised. The Javanese

have continued to label these populations as outsiders and to stereotype them as violent and uncivilised, including through their *wayang* (shadow puppetry), which was used by the New Order regime (1968–1998) to reproduce Javanese hegemonic power. In *wayang*, those from *Sabrang* are stigmatised as anti-heroes and as violent monsters lacking etiquette (Sulistiyono and Rochwulaningsih, 2013). At the same time, the ideal of violent masculinity is reproduced within Ambonese society. What is perceived as ‘aggressiveness’ in this narrative is understood as ‘straightforwardness’ by the Ambonese and they claim this as part of their culture. In our interviews in Ambon, respondents would also reaffirm this narrative: ‘Fighting is normal for the Ambonese. It is our habit’ (interview with a village leader, 2014). This opinion is also underlined by a founding member of Ambon Bergerak: ‘We’ve been in conflict since our ancestors. Conflict is in our culture, but when interventions come from outside then it becomes bigger’ (interview with a founding member of Ambon Bergerak, September 2020). The playing out of aggressive masculinities can be observed, for example, on the football field, where fighting might break out between male youths after one group loses a match. Informants stated, however, that when such fights occurred, local elders would arrive and end the fighting (interview with a village leader, 2014). This illustrates the rich conflict management infrastructure in Ambon.

The people of Ambon have long-standing traditional cultural mechanisms for conflict management, thanks to which they have been successful in creating a harmonious society and in maintaining it a long time. These include a kinship system known as *pela gandong*, wherein two clans become allies, intermingle, and/or intermarry, thereby creating a strong bond between them. Such alliances are established across religious, ethnic or social affiliations. So, for instance, a friendship between a Muslim and Christian may, over time, evolve into an alliance between their clans and families. This mechanism has provided a cultural means of de-escalating conflict in Ambon, including conflict between families and communities. Traditional leaders and elders are particularly prominent, using *pela gandong* as a mechanism for reminding others of the kinship bonds that have united them for generations. Another common practice is *panas pela*, through which community elites meet among themselves to maintain peace. This mechanism, which occurs within a specific space known as *baileo*, has also offered the Ambonese a means of mitigating conflict (Wattimena, 2009). Such traditional cultural mechanisms have been maintained by the elders and adults of Ambon and they mostly involve senior men, who occupy culturally honoured positions in Ambon’s Muslim and Christian communities.

During the violent conflict in Ambon, such local mechanisms were used in an attempt to mitigate its effects, and they are still in use today. At the same time, new instruments were developed as youth groups sought other mechanisms. Youths from diverse backgrounds recognised that the media had contributed significantly to the expansion and escalation of the conflict—particularly the Java-based newspapers that were diffusing coverage of the conflict throughout Indonesia. In their coverage of the Ambon conflict, Javanese newspapers were biased and influenced by their specific religious affiliations (including, for example, in their reporting of stories that Christians had attacked Muslims or vice versa). Thus, young Ambonese sought to restrict these media outlets' right of entry, instead creating their own stories, which—for example—emphasised the restoration and normalisation of relations between villages. They named their movement 'provoking peace' (*provokasi damai*) (Rohman, 2019, 12).

#### 4 Paparisa Ambon Bergerak and Art-for-Peace

Ambon is known as 'the city of music', and singing is commonplace in everyday Ambonese life. Indeed, many of Indonesia's most popular musicians have come from the city (and some have also been involved in art-for-peace initiatives). Young people in Ambon are very interested in all forms of art, and 'creative, pro-diversity movements' flourish (*Tempo*, 2018). Young people from diverse religious, ethnic, class and sociocultural backgrounds have started to meet regularly and established various initiatives to promote and maintain peace. Since 1999, many bloggers in Ambon have been promoting peace through their writings (*Tempo*, 2018). In 2007, the Maluku Photo Club, an interfaith community for young people interested in photography, was formed. Its members promote peaceful relationships across religious divides and diffuse photos that show the beauty and peacefulness of Ambon, with the aim of changing people's perceptions of Ambon as a conflict-torn city. In 2008, the Moluccan Hip-Hop Community (MHC) was founded (*Tempo*, 2018). Five years later, the #SaveAru environmental campaign was to go viral on Twitter (Bräuchler, 2019).

From these pre-existing initiatives, in around 2010 Ambon Bergerak (Ambon on the Move) was born. Initially, the collective organised various activities in cafes and throughout the city. Since 2014, these have included regular cross-regional art events named TrotoArt (sidewalk art). In 2015, thanks to funding from ICT Watch from Jakarta and from Ambonese supporters, some of whom had emigrated to the capital and wanted to support peacebuilding in Ambon, PAB moved to permanent premises in Sirimau District and became Paparisa

Ambon Bergerak (the word *paparisa* translates as 'house') (interview with a founding member of PAB, September 2020). Thus, PAB did not originate thanks to, and is not dependent on, government or international funding, in contrast to art-based projects initiated by the international community, whose activities are heavily controlled by external influence (including, for example, certain performance–healing initiatives in the context of post-conflict, post-tsunami Aceh) (Twarog, 2010).

The underlying idea of PAB is that creative activities will mend religious-related divisions and build peace in Ambon. An initiator of PAB explained in an interview that the community is a 'home' for any group that opens dialogue and loves peace:

The beginning of the initiative, it was because we're all children of the 80s. We had friends in our youth of all sorts, and the youth of 2008/2009, the children were living separately, and then in the end the youths had no friends of other religions. Maybe, at the time, our friends all felt the need to open space for people of different religions to meet. When the incident happened in 2011, we never talked about peace. We always thought about more than results; we always thought about our friendships. Our slogan was 'Community: It's all about friendship'. We wanted everyone to be friends first, so the barriers within could be torn down.

Interview with a founding member of PAB, July 2017

PAB engages in many different activities, including blogging, film, hip-hop, theatre, music, painting, art exhibitions, street art activities, and classes on public speaking, the history of Ambon, and entrepreneurship. PAB activities thus include all the forms of art initiatives identified above: artistic products or artifacts, training tools (including art education), artistic processes and social critique (Zelizer, 2003). All these activities bring together people from different backgrounds to build friendships, strengthen communities and build a culture of peace (interview with a founding member of PAB, September 2020). PAB initiatives resonate with global transformations, and with the broader movement of Indonesian 'street culture' resisting political violence, such as the post-tsunami and post-conflict punk culture in Aceh and in Indonesian urban culture in general (Heryanto, 2008; Jauhola, 2015). A few studies of PAB's activities have emerged. They focus mainly on its contributions to environmental activism, its innovative use of digital and social media for conflict prevention and transformation and its art-for-peace projects (Bräuchler, 2019; Irawanto and Octastefani, 2019; Manuputti, 2018; Rohman, 2019). We focus on the intersectional dynamics of the PAB art-for-peace initiatives.



## 5 'Embracing Difference' as a Resource for Peacebuilding

Post-conflict Ambon is characterised by segregation along religious (i.e., between Muslims and Protestants), ethnic (Ambonese and non-Ambonese) and class lines. Segregation has systematically transformed villages, hamlets, and even housing developments into enclaves. In its efforts to create and cultivate peace in Ambon and prevent future conflict, PAB found that such segregation precluded people from meeting, and aims to address this problem through its activities:

PAB has held many events in the streets, in cafes, and in other public spaces. Members have not only played music and read poetry, but also exhibited their artworks. They hope that, if people come, they will meet others whom they have not met since the conflict. They will bring together youths from various backgrounds, to promote intergroup interactions. Friendships will be rekindled, with PAB as the catalyst.

Interview with a local peacebuilding activist, September 2020

In its activities, PAB emphasises the importance and potential of embracing difference (interview with a founding member of PAB, September 2020). PAB itself consists of youths from various religious, ethnic, tribal and gender backgrounds, who all desire a sustainable peace in Ambon: 'Everyone is different. Every person has their own stories. The elderly guys, most of us, we were soldiers. We had different backgrounds. We met at school to build Paparisa Ambon Bergerak' (interview with a founding member of PAB, September 2020). The PAB collective does not use the term 'diversity', but instead refers to 'embracing difference, living together, friendship, community, pluralism', etc. Given the particular meaning that 'diversity' has taken in the context of use of the slogan 'unity in diversity' in Indonesia and given that PAB does not use the term, we also—as far as possible—refrain from using it in this chapter.

In their activities, PAB members consciously and positively draw on difference, including gender, religious, and ethnic differences. The photograph in Figure 4.1, for instance, includes members of PAB from various backgrounds posing as icons of peace. In the background (on the left), we can see a mural painting of two former child combatants: Ronald Regang and Iskandar Slamet. Having once fought in the name of Christianity and Islam, respectively, these two youths from lower-class families have become spokespersons for peace in Ambon and symbolise the importance of moving beyond differences, and productively mobilising difference for peace. These two child ex-combatants became peacebuilding agents after they stopped their violent activities thanks





FIGURE 4.1 Members of PAB in front of the mural depicting two young ex-combatants who became peacebuilders

SOURCE: PAB

to advice from a clergyman, Jacky Manuputty (interview with a former child combatant, November 2014).

In another illustration of the mobilising of differences as a resource for peacebuilding, the photo in Figure 4.2 features a group of young people in front of a mural created by PAB to portray its ideal of intergroup harmony. Mural arts have often been used by urban youth as a way of resisting state norms and structures. In this context, however, Ambonese youths create murals to resist violence and conflict and to build peace. Indeed, these murals have become an important icon of peacebuilding in Ambon.

Figure 4.3 features a PAB mural that promotes bringing together populations that were, after the conflict, no longer in contact with one another (interview with a founding member of PAB, September 2020). This interactive mural unites people from different backgrounds through art, as explained by a founding member: 'talking about friendship, the hands here function as nameboards, as those who come are asked to write the name of a friend, one from a different religious background, whom they hadn't met in a long time, or with whom they'd lost contact owing to the conflict' (interview with a founding member of PAB, September 2020).



FIGURE 4.2 Art-for-peace mural  
SOURCE: PAB



FIGURE 4.3 Artwork for building friendship  
SOURCE: PAB

Thus, the PAB collective is a site where ‘embracing difference’ is explicitly and successfully mobilised for peacebuilding. This is done through using art as a product, but also as an interactive process, educational tool, and site for social critique. Embracing difference and building friendship through art is

its strategy for transforming gender, ethnic and religious performances in an effort to build peace, drafting new visions of identity and community. Thereby, differences are understood as a resource, and celebrated as ‘the source of new understanding, connection, and richness’ (Marshall, 2014, 38). Through its emphasis on ‘embracing differences’, PAB sheds light on the various intersecting identities that mediate art-for-peace initiatives. Beyond the focus on identity, we also read PAB activities as sites where structural inequalities that contribute to the marginalisation of certain groups and individuals are revealed and mended. Using an intersectional lens allows us to draw attention to these contradictory ways in which differences are mobilised but also challenged and transformed, as the next section shows.

## 6 Peacebuilding and the Transformation of Identities

PAB initiatives not only mobilise various dynamics of differences in explicit ways for peacebuilding, they are also a site where these differences are negotiated and transformed. This happens in two main ways: through the transformation of masculinities and the opening of spaces for women’s voices. Using art as a means of creating and cultivating peace in Ambon, PAB has contributed to transforming and diversifying masculinities, from violent, military forms into non-violent forms. During the conflict, the movement’s founders were aged between nine and sixteen, and many were child combatants (interview with a former child combatant, November 2014). These young men saw their involvement in the conflict as a means of defending their religion and their community. They felt compelled to participate, as otherwise they would not be considered ‘men’. Thus, violent, militarised forms of masculinity were highly prevalent in Ambonese society. Yet men’s experiences of, and involvement in, the conflict were also shaped by several other social categories, including class, age and ethnicity. With regard to social class, for instance, as in other conflict areas in Indonesia men from the lower middle classes were more likely to become combatants; upper-middle-class men, conversely, were more likely to be sent abroad (to Java, or another island) to avoid the conflict. Ethnicity was a similarly complex matter. Ambon is not only home to the ethnic Ambonese but also to a sizable Butonese, Buginese, and Makassarese diaspora as well as to migrants from across Indonesia (including Java). During the conflict, migrants—both male and female—were more likely to flee Ambon as they remained a marginalised minority. In terms of age, meanwhile, youths were more likely to become combatants. Older residents of Ambon tended to advise these combatants, or—conversely—to seek peace.

PAB members recognise that the violence perpetrated during the conflict was an inappropriate means of resolving social issues. Their experiences with conflict left them traumatised, and thus they have sought ways of healing and promoting non-violent means of resolving conflict. Through art-based activities, they contribute to healing traumas and to transforming and moving away from violent forms of masculinity. They believe that, through art activities such as writing and reading poetry, playing music, and exhibiting their paintings, they will be able to transform dominant violent masculinities into non-violent ones. Thereby, the expression of bravery will be transformed from violent means of expression to expression through innovative art-for-peace projects and becoming agents for peace. As one founding member stated: 'We have a culture of *Kabarasi*: if you are brave, people will respect you' (interview with a founding member of PAB, September 2020). A local peacebuilding activist explained:

These are men who reflect the common stereotypes of Ambonese men. But they recognised that violence couldn't solve problems. For that, they required something softer, art and culture for peace. Not violence, but creation. What kind of men are they now? These young men have transformed. Ambonese men have long been identified with violence, but now many of them avoid responding to things with arrogance. They are more refined, more polite, using poems as a language for representing their refinement. Before, they would use violence, but now they use a more feminine approach. So there has been a paradigm shift regarding violence.

Interview with a local peacebuilding activist, November 2020

What is interesting in this statement is the gendered dichotomy between a violent masculine approach and a peaceful, soft feminine approach (associated with poetry, for example). Through the PAB initiative, as masculinities are transformed and diversified, this dichotomy is to some extent reproduced but also destabilised. This is also illustrated in the somewhat gendered division of PAB activities, whereby male members tend to be more involved in rap music while female members are more present in poetry, for example. This illustrates the tensions inherent in PAB activities: they challenge and transform violent masculinities, yet risk reproducing gendered stereotypes in the process.

This negotiation and transformation of masculinities can also be observed in the artwork produced by PAB members. Various artistic creations express such contradictory messages. Take, for example, the poster presented in Figure 4.4,





FIGURE 4.4 'Art Attack' poster  
SOURCE: PAB

which was used to advertise an art exhibition called *Art Attack Volume 1*, held by PAB on 28 December 2018.

This event involved various activities, including a tattoo bazaar, a sketch workshop and a stand-up comedy performance. The poster features the Mona Lisa with headphones, and a rocket launcher on her shoulder. In our reading, this poster expresses some of the contradictions and transformations of masculinities in the context of PAB art-for-peace activities. It features a Banksy version of the Mona Lisa. This resonates with developments in the global street art movement.<sup>6</sup> A founding member of PAB confirmed that he was deeply

<sup>6</sup> Mural and street art have a long history of being used to demand social change. They played an important role in the fall of Suharto and also recall the brick wall in post-industrial cultural critique in the UK context (Heryanto, 2008; Larasati, 2019).

inspired by Banksy's mural art (interview with a founding member of PAB, November 2020). A member of PAB who was involved in designing the poster told us that his idea was to introduce the Ambonese art scene to the work of Banksy and to use this famous reference to represent the courage and bravery of using art-for-peace. He explained:

The young artists, we started a new event. We tried to come up with a different style (to be brave), so we came up with art attack. Mainstream art is boring so we encourage young artists to push their ideas. For the visual, I love Banksy (I'm a fan of him). I saw Mona Lisa there. Not all artists here know Banksy so I wanted to introduce Banksy. I was trying to encourage them.

Interview with a founding member of PAB, September 2020

This poster features symbols and words that can be interpreted as violent—the use of the word 'attack' and the depiction of a rocket launcher/bazooka. This is also the case for other PAB art creations, which often use terminology and symbols associated with violence and conflict. The poster is mostly bright yellow, with text in red and black, which can be interpreted as quite aggressive colours and understood as red blood coming out of the rocket launcher. At the same time, the headphones suggest that the Mona Lisa is listening to music. The poster portrays a violent form of activity, illustrated by means of a the rocket launcher. Yet it also disturbs gender stereotypes by portraying the Mona Lisa in this pose, giving an 'active' role to a woman we usually see seated.

We read this poster as an expression of the destabilisation and transformation of identities in the context of art-for-peace initiatives. It shows the complexity of the relationship between peace and conflict, disrupting dichotomies. It also illustrates the ways in which PAB productively mobilises the dialectic between the persistent nature of conflict as part of Ambon society and as part of culture on the one hand (e.g., violent, direct language and pride in violent symbols, etc.) and the shift towards peaceful identities on the other (e.g., use of 'soft' language and attitudes, friendship and care, etc.). Thereby, PAB also contributes to countering the mainstream national media stereotype of Ambonese men as violent and aggressive, while reasserting the value of Ambonese history and culture.

In the bottom left corner of the poster, we find a PAB logo. The man in the red headband depicts the Moluccan hero Pattimura, who fought a heroic struggle against the Dutch colonial government. Pattimura was selected for his patriotism and his courage, both of which are symbolically associated with Ambonese men: 'The logo is Pattimura, someone that we all respect. If you go

to Ambon, you will find Pattimura everywhere, because we are proud of him' (interview with a founding member of PAB, September 2020). In that logo, Pattimura's headband is red: a colour associated with patriotism. 'The usage of the red headband symbolises the local wisdom. Moluccan men, they like wearing red headband as symbol of patriotism. When we struggle for something, we use the red headband as a symbol of patriotism' (interview with a peacebuilding activist, September 2020). PAB sometimes also uses a similar feminine logo—an image of the Martha Christina Tiahahu, who also fought against the Dutch colonial government (interview with a founding member of PAB, September 2020). In our reading, this resonates again with the efforts of PAB to transform the meaning and expression of 'bravery' in the context of violent forms of masculinities, a transformation leading towards peaceful, artistic expressions of masculinities. Thus, we read this poster as an illustration of efforts to transform violent masculinities associated with the conflict into peaceful, brave masculinities that express themselves through artistic means. Yet paradoxically, the poster could also contribute to renewing the image of violence associated with Pattimura's struggle and could thus contribute to reproducing acceptance of violent forms of masculinities in people's imaginations (despite PAB's explicit renouncing and denouncing of violence). This shows again the potential tensions in art-for-peace initiatives.

Another PAB initiative is entitled 'Poetry Hunt', a monthly meeting in which participants try to find poems scattered across the city (Figure 4.5).

The poster advertising the event uses various shades of dark grey and black, creating a dark and threatening atmosphere. Front and centre, it features a circular target, connoting hunting and shooting. In the background there is an old, partly destroyed corner of a wall with writing on it. The text is mostly hidden behind the target visual in the front, but the initial words of each line are visible. Some of these words suggest conflict and fighting and contribute to the dark atmosphere of the poster: 'damage', 'haunted', 'head', etc. But in practice, the poetry hunt is a playful activity that brings people together and gets them to move across the city in search of poems, going to parts of the city they have not visited before, illustrating the transformations that art-for-peace initiatives can bring about. Again, we can see how PAB activities to some extent play on and reproduce imagery associated with conflict and violence, yet with the aim of building peace. This contributes to challenging and complexifying dichotomies between conflict and peace.

Our analysis shows how PAB activities contribute to transforming violent forms of masculinities into more peaceful, artistic forms. We can see how art works to negotiate, diversify and transform masculinities, yet this process is never smooth and creates tensions and sometimes also reproduces



FIGURE 4.5 Poetry Hunt  
SOURCE: PAB

gendered dichotomies. Through art activities, PAB also complexifies and destabilises dichotomies between peace and conflict, and between violence and non-violence. PAB art initiatives bring into complex association (violent) anti-colonial masculinity (and to some extent femininity) and the bravery of post-conflict peacebuilding masculinity. We read these initiatives as revealing the intersections between forms of masculinity and the power dynamics of the region's colonial heritage. Thereby, art works not only as a form of healing of trauma and of mending of relationships, but also as a form of social critique, illustrating the open-ended politics of art. Yet art-for-peace initiatives often generate tensions. As illustrated in PAB art productions, art can be employed 'to make or break colonial framings and relations' (Andrä, 2020, 5). Moreover, the transformation of masculinities often produces complex results: certain





FIGURE 4.6 Artwork representing women's bodies commodified and victimised by violence  
SOURCE: PAB

forms of non-violent masculinities can become dominant and new forms of power dynamics and hierarchies emerge, providing, for example, certain men with social status linked to their post-conflict peacebuilding activities (Kunz, Myrntinen and Udasmoro, 2018). Art-for-peace projects seem particularly suitable for revealing this instability of masculinities.

## 7 Spaces for Women's Voices

As part of their objective to build peace, PAB initiatives aim to provide spaces for women's voices. PAB has sought to ensure that women are represented both through art and as members of the collective. This space is used by women artists for many purposes, including to express issues linked to women's bodies. Several PAB artworks incorporate questions of womanhood and femininity, as seen in Figure 4.6.

This artwork, according to one of the women artists involved in its creation, is intended to represent women victims of violence, whose numbers increase every year in Ambon. It depicts a woman's body, damaged through an act of violence (interview with a woman artist member of PAB, 28 September 2020). The use of recycled elements of a plastic mannequin in this piece can also be interpreted as speaking to the commodification of the female body.

Here, PAB both creates space for depicting women's experiences of violence and seeks to prevent further violence against women. One member of PAB explains how art saved her life:

Because I almost got raped by a person on the street, and even till today it's hard for me to tell my family because of that moment, I had to pass through my life, and now it's fine. Because I think I open a new session of my life. I tell this story to so many people, so I think this is why I say art is saving my life.

Interview with a woman artist member of PAB, September 2020

The act of speaking up and creating artwork linked to issues of violence against women is also evident in works that refer to 'comfort women' (known locally as *jugun ianfu*), those women coerced into sexual servitude during the Japanese occupation of the Indonesian archipelago (Figure 4.7).

The violence experienced by comfort women was shared by thousands of women throughout Asia. The poem translates as:

Your samurais  
 Slicing my woven cloth  
 The red sun  
 You stain the memory  
 Comfort women  
 Hae  
 Hae  
 Hae

Although comfort women were taken from throughout Indonesia, the poem focuses predominantly on the experiences of the comfort women of Ambon, many of whom have survived until the present day. This is evident in the line *mengiris kaun tenunku*, as the woven cloth known as *kaun tenun* is identified with Ambon. Through such artwork, PAB uses art both as a way to heal trauma and as a social critique to denounce the practice of violence against women, thus contributing to the building of a more peaceful society. Here, we can again



FIGURE 4.7 Poster criticising the sexual abuse of *jugun ianfu* (the 'comfort women' of Japanese colonisation)  
SOURCE: PAB

observe how PAB art establishes associations between recent peacebuilding practices and overcoming the violence of colonial heritage. This illustrates how PAB art-for-peace initiatives reveal the complex ways in which gender logics intersect with ongoing colonial power dynamics.

Based on a shared wish to include more women, both male and female members of PAB have sought to provide spaces for women to narrate their own bodies and raise gender issues. Such spaces, in an Indonesian context, only became prominent after political reform had begun, thanks to the works of Ayu Utami and the Sastra Wangi movement (Marching, 2007). These spaces are intended to enable women to express their experiences in terms of their bodies, and of their sexualities.



FIGURE 4.8 Poster for the Urban Genitals initiative  
SOURCE: PAB

The poster presented in Figure 4.8 was produced by one of the community's female members. A particular message is written on the poster:



truly, it is humanity that births cities, but today, the city functions as a doorway to the birth of many things; its womb shapes humanity; births behaviours and habits.

Urban genital offers the responses of Ambon's poets and visual artists to their city, through their eyes we will be taken through its alleys, newspaper pages, churches, beaches, bedrooms, cellular phones, shoe soles, wastebins, shopping centres, and complex human minds.

Urban Genitals is an initiative by women artists. They link their critique of the problematic implications of urban planning and city development in Ambon to a critique of gender ideology regarding reproduction (interview with a woman artist member of PAB, September 2020). They criticise how the authority of humans as those who control the cities is replaced by the authority of the cities, which control humans. Humans as logical subjects are replaced by cities, which become the subjects that control humans, via their economic activities, capitalism etc.

Here the space for women shows the ways in which women artists in PAB voice their experience of violence through the metaphor of the woman's body. Their art brings these often marginalised or stigmatised themes into a discussion about the complex and problematic situating of bodies in public spaces and peacebuilding. Remembering past gendered violences and associating them with today's gendered violences, these works emphasise the importance of art for gendered trauma healing. The artistic productions of women artists in PAB visibilise complex intersecting links between colonial heritage and recent conflicts and peacebuilding. They weave together the colonial past with today's cities as sites of capitalism and the complex forms of gendered violences involved. Mobilising art for healing trauma, building bridges, and expressing social critique, PAB members build the bases for an inclusive peace. But art in this context not only contributes to peacebuilding, it is also an important expression of feminism and a form of female political agency, as has been shown by other scholars (Jauhola, 2016).

## 8 Conclusion

PAB is a community that creates a space in which Ambonese artists from various backgrounds can build peace. Its initiatives aim to strengthen the connection between different groups segregated through conflict, embrace differences, and build trust, friendships, and peaceful interactions. PAB activities mobilise art-for-peace in various ways: as artistic products, as

interactive artistic processes, as training tools in art education, and as social critique. Our analysis shows the complex intersectional dynamics at play in these art-for-peace initiatives. They contribute to transforming masculinities into non-violent forms, and open spaces for women's voices and for raising awareness regarding violence against women and building peace. They also highlight the ways in which art-for-peace initiatives challenge dichotomies between conflict and peace, making an important contribution to peace and conflict studies beyond peacebuilding in Ambon. Our analysis allows us to show the various ways in which art-for-peace initiatives can contribute to inclusive peacebuilding. It also confirms that gender logics often work in intersection with other identity and power dynamics, in our context linked in particular to colonial heritage. Thus, our analysis reaffirms the importance, for inclusive peacebuilding, of addressing various forms of 'difference'. It also suggests that artwork lends itself particularly well to overcoming differences, healing trauma, building bridges and proposing new visions for peaceful societies.

Yet the example of PAB also illustrates the tensions that art-for-peace initiatives can generate, for example when they reproduce gender stereotypes regarding different forms of art, notions of 'soft femininity', or violent imagery. Moreover, transformations of masculinity can sometimes produce contradictory results. Certain forms of non-violent masculinities can become dominant and new forms of power dynamics and hierarchies emerge, providing, for example, certain men with social statuses linked to their post-conflict peacebuilding activities. This illustrates the complexity of intersectional dynamics in art-for-peace initiatives.

It is important to remember that our critical reading aims to point to the open-ended politics of art-for-peace rather than offering fixed interpretations and meanings. We also do not aim to romanticise art. As we have seen, art can be used in many ways, including to fuel conflict and to build peace. As shown, in the context of Indonesia, art has a complex relationship with violence and conflict: it has been instrumentalised as a machinery of political violence and as a developmentalist tool. Future research could look into this complex relationship in more detail. Our analysis, meanwhile, shows that art-based initiatives can make important contributions to the building of peace. In particular, perhaps, when they emerge in a local context, as a local idea rather than as part of a government plan or other external intervention. Thus, it is important to take art-for-peace initiatives seriously as a form of peacebuilding and to continue investigating their intersectional implications.

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# Doing Research Differently? Putting Feminist Research Principles into Practice

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## Abstract

Ensuring that research is ethical and contributes to the reduction of inequalities, especially gendered, class-based and racialised power imbalances, is a central tenet of feminist research. The same, ideally, goes for peacebuilding processes. However, in spite of important and meaningful attempts to redress power imbalances, both academic research and peacebuilding work too often continue to be highly unequal endeavours. These imbalances persist between the global North and global South, but also within countries. For the most part, these imbalances are inescapable, for now at least, as both research and peacebuilding are in multiple ways entangled with broader, unequal power structures that are underpinned by patriarchy, militarism, neo-coloniality and neo-liberal capitalism. However, feminist-inspired research and peacebuilding work both do also create opportunities to analyse and question these power structures, to think and act beyond and to develop less extractive and more emancipatory alternatives and practices. This interlude examines how, as a transnational feminist research project, the researchers of this thematic volume sought to develop and foster such practices together with the communities involved in the research, and what this might mean for future research in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 1 Introduction

A central tenet of feminist research is ensuring that it is ethical and contributes to the reduction of inequalities, especially gendered, class-based and racialised power imbalances. This was also at the heart of the broader project on gender and peacebuilding practices upon which this thematic volume is based. Ideally, the kinds of peacebuilding processes that the research presented here hopes to document and foster would similarly open spaces for and contribute to reducing gendered and other inequalities. However, in spite of important and meaningful attempts to redress power imbalances, including through participatory and feminist research practices, both academic research

and peacebuilding work too often continue to be highly unequal endeavours. These imbalances persist between the global North and global South, but also within countries and societies. For the most part, these imbalances are inescapable, for now at least, as both research and peacebuilding are in multiple ways entangled with broader, unequal power structures that are underpinned by patriarchy, militarism, neo-coloniality and neo-liberal capitalism. At the same time, however, feminist-inspired research and peacebuilding work both do also create opportunities to analyse and question these power structures, to think and act beyond and to develop less extractive and more emancipatory alternatives and practices.

While these imbalances are nothing new, they have been thrown into sharp relief by the global COVID-19 pandemic, be it through its direct impacts or its longer-term after-effects. The gendered, class-based and racialised inequalities in terms of access to secure incomes, of work–life balances, of who carries out socially reproductive labour versus financially compensated work and so on have increased dramatically over the course of the pandemic. The shift to socially distanced, internet-based communication has increased access for some (e.g. making it no longer necessary to apply for visas) but has also heightened barriers to participation for many others, be it in terms of the languages or the tools and ways of communication used. In the long term, responses to the pandemic carry within them—theoretically at least—the possibility of leading to a more equitable world, one in which priorities are reset, health and care work is valued, and security re-conceptualised as being about human rather than state security. In the short term however, gendered, class-based, racialised and other imbalances look to have been deepened by the pandemic.

Parallel to the pandemic, 2020 has also seen increased calls for decolonising academia and addressing its racialised power imbalances and biases, in part inspired by the global Black Lives Matter movement. While this push for academia to seriously reconsider its own structures and ways of working has been building for decades, it has arguably gained more saliency during the pandemic, with its highly unequal impacts. While many of the most prominent actions around decolonising academia have been around symbols, such as statues or names of institutions, the calls go much further. What is required is an honest reckoning of the role of academia in creating and upholding global imbalances in the past and in the present and of the need to diversify curricula, alongside decentring the global North, but also changing the ways in which academia functions—from the ways in which research is conducted to the way support staff are treated.

Our research project could not foresee the pandemic and its consequences; nor can we claim to have been at the forefront of struggles to radically change

academia. Nonetheless, by adopting a feminist approach to research, and by working both by necessity and by design in a networked, partially decentralised, collaborative manner, our ways of researching did unintentionally give us a preview of what 'research at a distance' can look like and how gendered, racialised and institutionalised power imbalances can at least be ameliorated.

## 2 Addressing Power Imbalances, Translating, Networking

The long-term research project on gender and peacebuilding that this thematic volume draws upon brought together global South researchers and practitioners from Indonesia and Nigeria as well as their counterparts from the global North, based in Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Our approach to research explicitly sought to reduce power imbalances, to not be extractive and to be as emancipatory as possible. Nonetheless, it also ran up against its own limits in this respect, and remains embedded in global North-centred power structures. Each of our research members came with different skill sets, and different expertise, background knowledge and access to networks and gatekeepers. Some had experience and understanding at the local, practical level, others more at the theoretical level, and as a team we sought to ensure that these strengths were balanced, one not being valued over the other.

The project involved various levels of partnerships and brokering, each with their own inherent inequalities: between research participants and researchers, between researchers and local gatekeepers, between the lead research organisation and partners and between the donor and the grantees. While these deep-rooted imbalances cannot be overcome over the course of one project, they were not rendered invisible but rather addressed explicitly by the donor and all participating partners. From the outset, the participating researchers openly discussed strategies to mitigate imbalances to the degree possible, including giving back to communities participating in the research, having collaborative approaches to designing and implementing the research and analysis processes, co-authoring and/or co-editing all publications, moving beyond more conventional global North analytical frameworks, and building in opportunities for fostering more junior researchers, in particular from the global South. The donor too was explicit in encouraging a more egalitarian approach to research through its partnership criteria.

Inevitably, a research process such as this one also involves multiple levels and processes of translation, be it of concepts and theories or of life experiences. While the on-the-ground research took place in communities in various parts of Indonesia and Nigeria, the analysis was carried out in other locations

on three continents—including Abuja, Geneva, London and Yogyakarta—and by people who were not directly part of these communities. In the final instance, the research outputs utilise for the most part the current global lingua franca, English, a language that is the mother tongue of none of the respondents or research team members. Such processes create multiple ethical challenges in terms of ensuring that we remain true to the stories and testimonies we gathered, but also make these legible and shareable through frameworks of academic analysis.

Many of the analytical tools used for making our findings legible and comparable—be those in terms of the theoretical concepts or of the software used—are, however, very much products of the global North and as such may not always capture the conceptual frameworks or lived realities that define the lives of our research participants. The knowledge produced by this global North-based analysis is also often valued higher than ‘local’ knowledge, placing us as researchers into positions of privilege that require examining but also come with responsibilities, such as that of not devaluing our respondents’ knowledge and experiences.

While it is often a cliché to talk about projects like this being mutual learning processes, this truly was the case for all of us involved in this research project. Beyond learning about each other’s contexts, building South–South relationships as much as North–South ones, or developing new analytical skills as researchers, our project also explicitly sought to expand this circle of learning and of benefiting from it. Thus, we supported concrete, local-level gender-responsive peacebuilding efforts in Indonesia and Nigeria. These included, for example, supporting a Peace Museum in Aceh, Indonesia, and in Nigeria training informal security providers on gender issues. Beyond having validation sessions with participating communities, the project also sought to produce accessible outputs, such as a documentary film, as a means of ‘giving back’ to the research participants, albeit in a small way. This giving back was especially important in those communities that were suspicious of the motives of the research.

Being a transnational project, the analysis stage especially also relied heavily on communications technologies, which are by now—thanks to COVID-19—widespread but by no means available to everyone, especially in conflict-affected and marginalised communities. This differential access to languages and means of communication inevitably produces differences and hierarchies between the researchers and research participants. Furthermore, the majority of the research outputs of this project, be they academic papers, conference presentations, books or policy briefs, are far removed from the lived realities of our research participants—and often inaccessible to them, hidden behind paywalls, language



barriers and, in the case of conferences and workshops, immigration restrictions and prohibitive travel costs. Nonetheless, the demands of donors and of academia of course apply to this project as well, and this means producing outputs for mainly global North academic and policy discussions. This is not negative per se, but again highlights the necessity for us as the interpreters and presenters of the material to act as ethically as possible.

### **3 Security and Ethics of Conducting Research in Conflict-Affected Societies**

The field research for this project was conducted in communities affected by conflict. In some cases, that conflict had ended decades ago, in others it was simmering, but in all cases it was omnipresent in research participants' lives. This raised further questions around security and research ethics, and the degree to which research was possible or not, and on which issues. It also meant adapting methodologies and approaches so as to ensure the safety and security of everyone involved in the research process, not only researchers and research participants, but also those assisting in and facilitating throughout the process, including ensuring self-care when and where this was possible. In spite of all attempts to mitigate risks, researchers did need to navigate tensions and conflicts at times, as even national researchers encountered mistrust and occasionally hostility in some locations. A further sensitive area consisted of the balancing acts that are inherent to research on conflicts. This included presenting the findings so that they neither demonise and dehumanise perpetrators nor downplay acts of violence or deny their culpability. It also meant ensuring that those who suffered violence are not depicted as defined by victimhood only, devoid of agency. Furthermore, we sought to enable the emergence of those stories of conflict that have been drowned out by dominant narratives. Lastly, taking an explicitly feminist, pro-gender equality approach in conducting research with actors who do not always share these outlooks and values has required ensuring that we are respectful of their world views to the degree possible while not compromising on key feminist principles.

### **4 COVID-19: What Will It Mean for Research?**

The outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic has put at least a temporary end to conventional academic field research as well as to in-person academic and policy discussion forums. It is as yet unclear to what degree the 'new



normal' will look like the 'old normal', when and if field research will be carried out to the same extent as previously and how much more interaction will happen online as opposed to in-person. There is an enormous risk that in the aftermath of the pandemic, financial resources will be diverted away from gender equality work, that inequalities will become more entrenched and that the working conditions in academia and NGOs will become even more precarious and only accessible to those who can afford them financially—so, to those who have other forms of income or are supported financially by someone. The crisis does, however, also provide opportunities for a rethinking of priorities as mentioned above, and forces us to see the interconnectedness of our lives and how the personal truly is political.

The aftermath of the pandemic will also force academics to rethink approaches to doing field research, not just in terms of measures such as using masks and hand sanitisers. For one, it will force researchers to recognise more clearly that they also pose a potential danger to research participants, be it as potential vectors of disease or otherwise, inverting the more common assumption of 'the field' posing a danger to researchers. Secondly, one of the main benefits—and often the only benefit—of field research for participants has been the opportunity to link up to broader debates and make their stories heard. Those conducting research should thus also think through how to better ensure that research participants can become and remain networked, should they wish to do so, within new, videoconferencing-based structures that are fast evolving. Ideally, these new ways of engaging can be more egalitarian, allowing for research participants to engage more directly with global networks, but this will also require investments in enabling this access. They may also lead to a need to rethink the current role of the researcher as the main transmitter and translator of such knowledge from 'the field' for global debates. This ideally opens up possibilities for the kind of decentring of knowledge, breaking down of established hierarchies, and pluralisation of voices that the movement to decolonise academia calls for. However, such outcomes cannot be taken for granted, and nor does such broadening of the debate render critical academic analysis obsolete. Instead, it will require more rather than less engagement, and also more time and resources.

In the aftermath of the pandemic, the research and academic community must also seriously take into account unequal possibilities with regard to being able to live up to ever-increasing work demands, depending on one's gender, age, living conditions, location, class, health and other factors. These differences have led to widening gulfs between researchers, benefiting those who are already in a more comfortable position while taking an increasing emotional, mental and economic toll on many others. While we should celebrate

the achievements of feminist research and peacebuilding and celebrate resilience, we can neither close our eyes to nor remain silent about the emotionally, financially and physically draining impacts of this work, be they for activists, community members or researchers.

The research process that led to this book gave us an opportunity to try and test different, less top-down, less extractive and more egalitarian ways of approaching academic work, in line with the feminist principles that we sought to promote. The twin moments of the pandemic and the increased push for a decolonised academia have made the need to rethink and restructure our ways of working an immediate concern. Our experiences as a research project showed some of the ways in which this is possible: by having clear partnership criteria, by using networked approaches, by co-authoring and co-editing, by creating new opportunities for junior researchers, and by thinking through ways of 'giving back' more concretely and meaningfully to research participants. As we highlight in the introduction to this thematic volume, gender 'does work' as a logic: as a structuring logic, as an identity logic, as a resource for peacebuilding. All of these logics are intertwined with our research and with the work done by the peacebuilders with whom we studied and engaged. The more we are aware of these logics, of their inherent power imbalances and potentials, and the more we engage with them directly, the better we can try to build a feminist peace.

Our ways of 'giving back' were only initial steps, and in spite of them the project still remained embedded in broader global power structures. As academia starts moving into a post-pandemic world, there are opportunities for doing things fundamentally differently—be that reducing inequalities or further exacerbating them. We hope that our experiences can help advocate and show ways of attaining the former, rather than the latter.

### Recommended Further Reading

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# The Silencing of Gender-Based Violence

*Christelle Rigual, Henri Myrntinen, Arifah Rahmawati and Mimidoo Achakpa*

## Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) has been a central area of concern for feminist peace and conflict research and advocacy, yet it was an issue that did not loom large in our research on gender and peacebuilding in Indonesia and Nigeria. In this interlude, we examine the explicit reasons why our project did not focus on questions of GBV, and the silences that exist in our case study locations around the issue. We, further, discuss the ways in which we may have inadvertently contributed to the silencing of narratives of GBV through our approach, and what can be done to try and avoid or minimise these impacts.

## 1 Introduction

Over the past decades, researchers and activists across the globe have highlighted the multiple impacts of conflict and displacement on all forms of gender-based violence (GBV)—be it committed by armed actors or civilians—against persons of all gender identities (see, for example, Féron, 2018; Serrano-Amaya, 2018; Swaine, 2018; Zalewski et al., 2018). While much of this research has focused on pre-mediated and ‘opportunistic’ GBV practised by armed actors against civilians and combatants, civilian-to-civilian GBV may also increase in times of conflict, in part due to the weakened rule of law and reduced effectiveness of and trust in the police and other state actors. In spite of the difficulties of researching GBV in conflict-affected societies, the topic has attracted a great deal of academic and policy interest over the past decade. At times, this has happened to the degree that the focus on it has eclipsed and silenced narratives pertaining to other forms of harm experienced in conflict and/or taken a voyeuristic and sensationalist position, dynamics we sought to explicitly avoid in our research (Baaz and Stern, 2013; Meger, 2016).

This interlude humbly attempts to address the question of the possible inadvertent silencing of GBV that might have happened as part of our research in conflict-affected communities in Indonesia and Nigeria. While our focus was

on the interlinkages between gender, conflict and peacebuilding, the issue of GBV was not a central theme in it, and rarely came up spontaneously in interviews. We explore these silences here along with the possible role our research design and methodology had in contributing to them, in particular with respect to forms of GBV or groups of victims/survivors that tend to be already invisibilised, such as sexual violence against children, against men and boys, or against lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex and other (LGBTQI+) individuals.

In our research design, we did not highlight the issue of GBV, in part due to the risk of a focus on it overshadowing other gendered dynamics of conflict and peacebuilding and in part out of our concern not to re-traumatise participants, especially as we were not able to provide any direct counselling or support. While we in no way discouraged research participants from relating instances of violence if they so wished, we also did not ask interviewees to seek these out or to dig deeper into these experiences. Our research questionnaires included one question on domestic violence, but on occasion respondents did also mention other forms of GBV. When it came up in interviews, it was often in very discreet, euphemised ways. The most direct mentions came not from community members or direct survivors, but rather from healthcare workers, NGO activists or other service providers, often in off-the-record and informal discussions, between or after interviews. At times, respondents would deny the existence of domestic violence in their communities or regard it as a strictly private matter. Most of the GBV cases mentioned were rapes of women or girls by armed state and non-state actors, with other forms of GBV being mentioned less, or not at all.

## 2 Comparing the Country Contexts

The issue of GBV came up more rarely in the interviews in Indonesia compared to those in Nigeria, possibly because the widely publicised acts of GBV perpetrated by Boko Haram (*Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād*) have sparked more of a discussion around these issues in the latter country (Oriola, 2017). This does not mean that it is not an issue of concern in the former country as well, and of our Indonesian case study sites conflict-related sexual violence has been documented in both Aceh and Maluku, and domestic violence is an issue in all communities in both countries (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Brown, Wilson and Hadi, 2005; Clarke, Wandita and Samsidar, 2008; IOM, 2007).

The issues of GBV and sexual violence against children are particularly taboo, and information is lacking in both countries. Two review research articles on cases of child abuse in Indonesia reach similar conclusions, pointing

to the scarcity of data on this issue while also underlining the high risk of sexual violence affecting boys and girls due to societal taboos on sexual matters, early child marriages, a lack of institutional support for reporting, and poverty (Rumble et al., 2020; Wismayanti et al., 2019). Testimonies from social workers in Nigeria collected during the course of our research suggested egregious cases of violent rape of very young children in Jos and Enugu, but there is a lack of systematic collection of information on this issue in Nigeria as well. In spite of national (in Indonesia) and regional (in Nigeria, as recently passed in Delta State) legislation prohibiting or criminalising it, female genital mutilation is still widely practiced in both countries (Lubis and Jong, 2016; Okeke, Anyaehie and Ezenyeaku, 2012).

Research data on domestic violence is more readily available in both countries, although data remains sparse. Data from Indonesia has indicated increased reporting of cases, which can be indicative of greater trust in reporting systems, of better reporting systems, or of an actual increase in acts of violence. According to the National Commission on Women (Komite Nasional Perempuan, Komnas Perempuan), between 2011 and 2012 there was a dramatic increase in reported cases of violence against women in Indonesia; and from 2014 to 2015 there was an increase of 9 per cent (data from the National Commission on Women, Komnas Perempuan). According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 33 per cent of women in Indonesia aged from 15 to 64 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence (UNFPA, 2017). In a similar manner, in Nigeria in 2018 the reported proportion of women aged 15–49 who had experienced physical or sexual violence in the previous 12 months was 31 per cent (NPC, 2019, 429).

While collecting information on GBV is notoriously difficult in times of 'peace', this task is even more difficult in conflict-affected situations. These challenges are further exacerbated in contexts where cultural, religious and legislative arrangements consider sex and sexual violence as taboo, and stigmatise victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence as wrongdoers. One reason for the absence of GBV narratives in our data is the sensitivity of the issue. As in many other societies, discussions around sexual activities in general tend to be taboo in the communities we engaged with, violence within families or between intimate partners is seen as a private issue, and survivors of sexual violence face social stigmatisation. Non-heterosexual orientations are often either condemned morally or legally prohibited (in Nigeria, and regions of South Sumatra and Aceh in Indonesia; see *Equaldex*, 2020a and *Equaldex*, 2020b), making any research on violence against these communities particularly challenging. Patriarchal representations and constructions of masculinities have been and are challenged on multiple levels by men and women alike at the community level (see several contributions in this volume, as well as

Kunz, Myrntinen and Udasmoro, 2018 and Prügl et al., 2019), but nonetheless they continue to impede awareness and acceptance of violence against men and boys.<sup>1</sup>

### 3 Addressing Silences

The key questions arising from our data for us as researchers are: How do we engage with these silences around GBV and did we inadvertently contribute to a shutting down of discussion? Was our decision to not pry into questions of GBV an ethical one, avoiding voyeurism and re-traumatisation, or one that marginalised survivors? Did we afford more space, agency and potentially dignity to our respondents by allowing them to talk about GBV if they so wished, or did our lack of questions around it make them feel that we did not want to hear about these experiences? There are no easy answers.

Silences and silencing have attracted increased interest in recent years, including among feminist-inspired researchers of conflict-affected societies (Eastmond and Selimovic, 2012; Fujii, 2010; Selimovic, 2020). Selimovic has categorised silences related to conflict and violences along two axes: one of social remembering and social forgetting, and one of enabling and disabling silences:

Disabling silences are imposed on the agent, sometimes over the *longue durée*, and attempt to erase events and agents from memory and discourse, or relegate victims to constrained subject positions. Enabling silences can be articulations of experience, a strategy for resistance, and part of communication and a normalising discourse.

SELIMOVIC, 2020, 2

These dynamics around silencing are not necessarily mutually exclusive and may be at work simultaneously or to different degrees at different points in time. For us as researchers, we see that this requires a balancing act: ensuring that our research design, its implementation, and the analysis simultaneously do not shut down the possibility of addressing experiences of GBV and also respect the respondents' right to maintain silences. Depending on the context, this will require different kinds of research approaches and different ways of seeking to ensure safe spaces: what can work in one situation for one

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<sup>1</sup> As also acknowledged by researchers focusing on sexual violence against men; see Féron (2018), Zalewski et al. (2018) and Touquet and Schulz (2020).



respondent to create a sense of safety might evoke deep insecurity in others. We also need to adapt our research methodologies to be more accommodating of the fragments of data gleaned from the grey spaces of off-the-record interviews, of indirect allusions, and of what is left unspoken. In both the research and the analysis, we should also remain mindful of how our own interpretative biases, analytical tools, and categories may do injustice to the lived realities of survivors by seeking to oversimplify the inevitable messiness of experiences of conflict and violence as we seek to stress certain aspects we see as important while de-emphasising others (see Touquet and Schulz, 2020)

#### 4 From Research to Practice

As we have also highlighted elsewhere in this volume (Interlude 2; chapters 8 and 1), one of the concerns of this research project has been to contribute to peacebuilding practice as much as to research. In terms of addressing GBV, we hope that in the longer term more gender-equal peacebuilding and conflict prevention will reduce all forms of GBV. In the short and medium term however, there is a need for peacebuilding actors to seriously take all forms of GBV into account in their work. The impacts of GBV in conflict and post-/non-conflict settings remain severe for survivors. These include increased rates of morbidity and mortality, physical consequences, forced pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, in addition to the emotional impacts as well as social effects of ostracisation. Given the silencing of GBV and the profound lack of information and systematic data, policies responding to and seeking to prevent GBV often remain limited. In the past decade, there has been a growing awareness of the links between sexual and gender-based violence, health, human rights and national development. However, few programmes simultaneously aim at addressing the drivers and consequences of sexual and gender-based violence in an integrated and comprehensive manner, with responses being implemented separately by state and non-state actors, and by separate line ministries within national governments.

In conflict-affected contexts, civil society organisations (CSOs) and in particular women's groups have been at the forefront of care and support for survivors of GBV. Anchored in conflict-affected communities and trusted by community members they are often the first line of response for survivors who might fear reporting to more official authorities such as the police, or who might not trust these authorities to respond. CSOs can provide safe spaces in which to express experiences of victimisation, provide counselling and guide survivors to medical support, and propose trauma-healing sessions, training

on HIV/AIDS, and gender-empowerment coaching. Women's organisations—both national and, especially, state and local community associations—are, however, badly under-resourced and may find themselves at a disadvantage vis-à-vis better resourced international NGOs (Imam, Biu and Yahi, 2020).

In spite of an increasing awareness of the issue and solid research emerging on GBV in times both of conflict and of non-/post-conflict, severe limitations regarding data collection persist and affect possible prevention as well as care and support policies for survivors. GBV deserves urgent attention/intervention programmes from both state and non-state actors in order to protect affected populations, improve mechanisms of prevention, and develop adequate institutions to support survivors at the physical, psychological, and societal levels.

Reflecting on our research methodologies and on silencing, we see a need for flexible and reflective approaches that maximise respondents' options for agency: to share their experiences on their own terms or to remain silent. For us as researchers, this requires a willingness to engage deeply with these narratives, to be aware of our own biases and to continue to listen more closely to what is being said and what is not.

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# ‘No Matter What—I’ve Got Rights’: Women’s Land Grab Protests in Banyuwangi, East Java

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## Abstract

For the past twenty years, the residents of Wongsorejo in the East Java Regency of Banyuwangi have protested against the expropriation of their land, clashing sometimes violently with government and company forces, and today women lead this struggle against land grabbing. In this chapter we interpret women’s participation in protest movements in the light of feminist understandings of peace as inherently agonistic and involving struggle. We trace a shift from male to female leadership in the anti-land grab protests in Wongsorejo, arguing that they empowered women to enact everyday citizenship. We also trace the way in which gender was deployed strategically in this shift and how it informed performances of identity. During the Reformasi era, men led the protests, but women supported them in a subversive appropriation of the ideology of Ibumism. Today this gender division of protest has shifted, in part based on the idea that putting women at the front will ensure that protests are less violent. But this has also enabled the political empowerment of women and raised their status in the household. We argue that the protests allowed women to establish themselves as rights-bearing citizens and as skilled politicians. As they renegotiate gender relations in their families and communities, their struggle over land rights becomes a struggle for recognition of a new kind of peace.

Peace is when the economy improves. When people are prosperous, and the agricultural sector is developed, and the water from the reservoir is diverted here [...].

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with Organisasi Petani Wongsorejo Banyuwangi/OPWB and Organisasi Petani Perempuan Wongsorejo Banyuwangi/OP2WB, February 2017



At the time, see, the movement only involved men. The women, if they wanted to get involved, they could. They weren't really needed, and they'd only come if needed. Bu SK said to the women ... said they were needed when the shooting occurred. [...] After that we stayed involved. The men weren't mobilised, so it was the women who remained.

Interview with SK, November 2016<sup>1</sup>



## 1 Introduction

Since the end of the Suharto regime in Indonesia, the residents of Wongsorejo, a subdistrict in the Regency of Banyuwangi in East Java, have protested against the expropriation of their land. In the 1980s, the regime gave land rights to PT Wongsorejo, an Indonesian company under Chinese ownership, to develop a kapok plantation, and in 2015 the Banyuwangi Regency extended these rights to allow the company to build an industrial estate.<sup>2</sup> The rationale for the government in both instances was to enlist the private sector for development purposes. From the perspective of local farmers however, the land in question belongs to the families of the ca 11,000 residents of Wongsorejo. Although few have titles certifying ownership, their ancestors cleared the land and their families have worked it for generations. From their perspective, the government's land grab is patently unjust—not least because it has not delivered the economic prosperity promised and has led to a diversion of water for tourism. Building peace in Wongsorejo means building prosperity; and for the farmers prosperity requires land and redressing unjust land grabbing, as implied in the first quote above.

Men led the farmers' protest initially. But, as the second quote above makes clear, women are its main protagonists today. This is surprising since the

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1 In the Javanese language, there are several ways to address people: *bu* or *ibu* is for elderly women or can also mean mother, *pak* is for elderly men or can mean father, *mbah* means grandmother or grandfather, *mbok* is for elderly women or can mean mother (usually from the lower classes), *mbak* means big sister, *mas* big brother. We keep these forms of address in our quotes from our interviews in order to convey a sense of the status of the individuals referred to.

2 Kapok, also known as Java cotton, is a fibre derived from the kapok tree and is used mostly for the stuffing of pillows and mattresses, but also for insulation.

(admittedly scarce) literature on gender and land grab protests in Indonesia paints women's involvement as marginal. For example, in West Kalimantan women are considered to be apolitical, and they have joined protests only when provided with informal opportunities to do so (Julia and White, 2012; Morgan, 2017). The case of Wongsorejo constitutes a stark counterexample to this, with women having the lead. Because women's involvement has changed over time, it provides an opportunity to ask about the way gender matters in land grab protests. How did the shift from men's to women's leadership happen? What role did gender play in this shift? And what does it mean for gender relations in Wongsorejo and for the type of peace created through the struggle?

Feminist peace researchers tend to reject the idea that war and peace stand in opposition and are mutually exclusive. They focus instead on the way violence is pervasive in societies as they reproduce inequalities, exclusions and othering. Thus, from the perspective of the marginalised, violence is experienced every day, whether in the form of economic insecurity and hunger, crime and domestic violence, or misrecognition and epistemic violence (Wibben et al., 2019). Relatedly, such scholarship recognises that advantage, inequalities and oppression are often contested, and thus that conflict is an integral part of society; as Shinko (2008, 487) reminds us with Foucault (1979), politics is a continuation of war by other means. As a result, she argues, peace is always 'agonistic': because 'peace, or what is referred to as peace, is rent with subordination, repression, and domination, where the strong marshal all of their force to institutionalise, legitimate, and instantiate a system of order that will maintain their strategic position of privilege', struggle is an integral aspect of 'the war/peace nexus' (Shinko, 2008, 488). Such struggle is a crucial site for producing (sometimes begrudging) respect and recognition across difference. We read the anti-land grab protests in East Java as a performance of agonistic peace that achieves this kind of recognition of the standpoints of the subordinate. Peacebuilding is thus reformulated as a type of political practice geared towards gaining recognition across difference, an ongoing contestation of power relations, including struggles for social justice (Richmond, 2013). The concept of citizenship can usefully be appropriated for such an understanding of peacebuilding. Rather than simply meaning political participation, citizenship practices become everyday enactments that centre antagonisms and passion (van Klinken and Berenschot, 2018).

Gender is deeply imbricated in such peacebuilding or 'dissident citizenship' (Sparks, 2016). As outlined in the introduction to this volume, gender informs stereotypes that circumscribe possible agency, offers scripts to enact identities, and sometimes constitutes a strategic resource for change. The war/peace binary itself is hardly thinkable without gender. It normalises the stereotypical



association of men with war, citizenship, and leadership, on the one hand, and of women with peace, the home front, and needing protection, on the other (Hutchings, 2007; Young, 2003; Elshtain, 1982). In so doing, it establishes hierarchies and exclusions. A variety of situated constructions of femininity and masculinity join these stereotypical associations, often in intersection with other constructions and sometimes disrupting the gender binary. These include, for example, the pious activist described by Rinaldo (2013a), whose femininity or feminism needs to be read in conjunction with religion, and the 'queered' gender advisor suggested by Jauhola (2013a, 174), who in her work interrupts normalised understanding of gender. Like the 'Ibu' celebrated in Suharto's Indonesia, they perform gender in distinctive ways—often unconsciously, but sometimes consciously deploying stereotypes and performing identities to strategic ends. In all cases, their enactments are political, shaping contestations and with them different forms of peace.

In the following we explore women's shifting enactments of citizenship in the anti-land grab protests in Wongsorejo, the role that gender has play in this shift, the effects of this on society, and the kind of peace it has helped bring into being. We first situate the protests in Indonesian history, tracing their origins in the politics of Suharto's New Order regime and the post-Suharto ('Reformasi') era. We then show how women and men have participated in the land struggles and the way gender has informed their activism. We document how women appropriated a gender stereotype from the Suharto era, that is 'Ibuisim', to legitimate their political agency. While they initially saw their activism as supplementary to that of men, the gender division of protests shifted over time as the movement strategically deployed women to flaunt femininity in order to preempt violence from security forces. The movement thus employed gender as a resource and thus opened the door to giving women the lead. Their identities changed in the process, allowing women farmers to establish themselves as rights-bearing citizens and as skilled politicians who participated in political activism in the Regency and beyond. In this way, their struggle over land rights reconfigured the meaning of peace as it brought into view the concerns and priorities of their communities from the perspective of the feminised margins.

Our analysis draws on 14 interviews and two focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted between November 2016 and February 2017 in the hamlet of Bongkoran in Wongsorejo,<sup>3</sup> where the land dispute has been centred since 2012. Interviewees included farmers, members of the male and female branches of the farmers organisation Organisasi Petani Wongsorejo Banyuwangi (OPWB

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3 Bongkoran is located between two villages in in the subdistrict of Wongsorejo, one with the same name as the subdistrict (so, Wongsorejo), the other called Alas Buluh.

and OP2WB, respectively), and villagers and activists who had clashed with local strong men and security officers hired by PT Wongsorejo. Interviews were conducted in two rounds of visits by a team of researchers in the context of the r4d project on Gender and Conflict.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 Land Struggle, Gender and Reformasi

The end of Suharto's New Order regime (1966 to 1998) spawned an avalanche of conflicts in Indonesia. These included not only communal conflicts and insurgencies, such as those in Aceh, East Timor and Maluku, but also conflicts over land. Many trace the origins of Indonesian land conflicts back to the 1960 Basic Agrarian Law (BAL). In order to foster national unity while facilitating development, the BAL overruled customary *adat* law, which varies by community, and put all land under the control of the state (Bedner and Arizona, 2019). The Suharto regime used the law to advance export-oriented economic policies, including the establishment of plantations and the vast exploitation of natural resources. It ruthlessly appropriated untitled lands without obtaining the consent of the local communities and without paying compensation (Fitzpatrick, 2007, 137).

Not surprisingly, this created massive grievances. However, resistance to the government's land grabs risked accusations of communist sympathies and invited violent repression. The regime had risen to power following the failed 30 September Movement coup in 1965, which it blamed on the Communist Party of Indonesia. Land was one of the issues entangled in the politics of the subsequent purge, as the Indonesian Communist Party had advocated for land reform, and many of its members were small farmers who opposed the rural landholding elite. Labelling people communists became a government tactic to criminalise the opposition, and the New Order regime now framed all forms of protests by farmers as communist efforts to regain power (Larasati, 2019, 2).

Not surprisingly, when the Indonesian political system opened up and free expression became possible once more, people organised and protested against their loss of land. The Reformasi era saw a mushrooming of peasant movements, civil society and feminist and environmentalist organisations (Candraningrum, 2018; Robinson, 2018). It also saw the establishment of Legal Aid Centres whose programmes support marginal groups and communities

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4 They included, in addition to Wening Udasmoro (WU), Arifah Rahmawati (AR), Dati Fatimah (DF), and Asnawan (A) and Yeni Lutfia (YL).

to this day. Their arguments often are legal, opposing ‘folk law’ and state law, and proposing that farmers’ claims are valid based on custom (Sholahudin, Siahaan and Wiratraman, 2020). But land conflicts have continued to fester, in part as a result of legal complexity, in part because of economic interests. The Jokowi government, in power since 2014, has sought to certify farmers’ traditional land rights, but the 1960s land policy remains in place and the legal status of land is not always clear. Moreover, economic policies continue to favour commercialisation and generate demand for land. In the aftermath of decentralisation policies implemented in the Reformasi era, authority regarding economic development and natural resources lies at the district level, and often local elites profit from the unclear legal status of land (van Klinken and Schulte Nordholt, 2007). Decades of land conflicts have sharpened inequality as powerful elites have been able to secure titles while poor farmers are left without land certificates and become the victims of expropriation.<sup>5</sup>

This scenario also plays out in Banyuwangi, where the local government’s response to the new land policies has been slow (Subandio, 2018). The district has become a poster child for successful economic development with a focus on local industry and tourism (taking advantage of its proximity to Bali). In 2019, at the commemoration of its twenty-third year of regional autonomy, Banyuwangi received the appreciation of the Minister of Internal Affairs for its outstanding performance in accelerating development (Fanani, 2019). In the meantime, struggles over land rights continue not only in Wongsorejo, but also in other parts of the district; and they are increasingly overlaid with struggles to preserve the environment.

As elsewhere, state building in Indonesia has been gendered. The New Order government promoted an ideology of a gendered separation of public and private spheres, with public activities reserved for men and women structurally placed in the domestic sphere (Suryakusuma, 1988; Wieringa, 2001). In what Suryakusuma has termed ‘state Ibuism’, women were constructed as mothers for the sake of national development in support of male power. Wieringa explains the shift from Sukarno’s early post-independence state, when women were seen as independence fighters, to the New Order: “The ‘woman’ was no longer defined as a comrade in the revolutionary struggle; under the New

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5 This has been richly documented in the case of oil palm cultivation in Kalimantan, where land grabs have enriched entrepreneurs, politicians and bureaucrats at the expense of small-holder farmers (Li, 2017; Julia and White, 2012). Not surprisingly, such violence has produced clashes between people defending their lands on the one side, and companies and the state on the other, with farmers in Kalimantan using economic strategies to resist industrial oil palm cultivation (Semedi and Prasetya, 2014).

Order, she was a submissive wife and devoted mother. General Suharto became the super-patriarch as father of the development family he wanted his New Order state to become' (Wieringa, 2001, 72). Government-sponsored activities and women's organisations (the PKK or Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga/ Education for Family Prosperity and Darma Wanita or Women's Duty) supported this role assigned to women in development from the central to the village level.

The structures created by the Suharto regime were broken down during the Reformasi era, and with them state-sponsored Ibuism. But the figure of the mother proved powerful in the protests that led to the overthrow of the New Order regime, motivating women's opposition and resonating among the disgruntled (Robinson, 2009). In addition, cultural and religious understandings of motherhood as powerful continue to thrive, often among women who organise in a context of Islamic revival, sometimes in tension with and sometimes in support of a politics of gender equality and women's empowerment (Jauhola, 2013b; Rinaldo, 2013b). We read the protest of women in Wongsorejo in the light of such constructions; understandings of motherhood circumscribe their struggles, as do languages of equality and rights. They limit and open up different modes of agency, offer strategic resources for activism, and shape a distinctive vision of peace involving prosperity, justice and environmental preservation.

### 3 Ibuism as Resistance

In the 1980s, PT Wongsorejo was granted usage rights over 603 hectares of land, which it used to cultivate kapok plants; 220 hectares of this land was taken from farmers. In the 1970s, soldiers and village administrators had coerced farmers into signing contracts (using their fingerprints) that stated that they approved the transfer of land to PT Wongsorejo. Those who refused to give their approval were branded communists. But despite experiencing significant violence at the hands of local strong men and security officers, the farmers were unwilling to abandon the land that they and their ancestors had worked. In 1999, after the collapse of the New Order regime, residents of Wongsorejo organised in the Farmers' Organisation of Wongsorejo, Banyuwangi (OPWB) to reclaim their land. With a membership of some 1,000 in its early days, the OPWB began to organise protests, including confrontations with the village chief and demonstrations before parliament (Fatimah, 2019, 3). It received support in its struggle from Surabaya Legal Aid and the Association of East Java Farmers.

Although men dominated in the OPWB, women were actively involved in the movement from the beginning. They employed a range of strategies and tactics, participating in demonstrations, serving as witnesses in court, and sometimes going face-to-face with local thugs and security officials (Fatimah, 2019). But there was a clear gender division of labour: men led the organisation and women supported it. Now in her sixties, SM remembers:

DF: So, Ibu, from the beginning, when did you start joining in with the OPWB's activities?

SM: Me, ... I don't know the year. I never went to school, but if there are any activities, I'll take part.

DF: So from the beginning?

SM: Yes, from the beginning.

Interview with SM, November 2016

A major trigger for women's participation was a violent clash with security forces during which a young man was killed. One of the current leaders of the OPWB women's wing recalls:

YL: Bu, you joined the struggle from the very beginning?

LS: Me, before I married my husband, I was already part of the struggle. So, the struggle started in 1999, if I'm not mistaken, and I married in 2000.

YL: Oh, so you were already involved when you married?

LS: Yes. In fact, my husband was already taking part. When the shooting happened, I was pregnant with my first daughter. I was first ... when the shooting happened, with Mas TK, that was in front of my house. I was with the women, with Bu SK, and she was with me. Pregnant too.

Interview with LS, November 2016

Thus the women jointly with each other participated in protest activities. Motherhood and pregnancy were far from a hindrance; indeed, motherhood was a motivator and gave women's activism legitimacy. In Java, kinship is traced bilaterally, and it is customary for women to inherit and thus own land. While Islamic law prescribes that women inherit a percentage, though less than men, families often divide the land equally between sons and daughters according to customary practice; indeed, the eldest sister sometimes inherits more than the younger brothers (Robinson, 2009, 23). As part owners, women farmers are motivated to protect the land. Having land allows them to meet the everyday needs of their families, such as providing food and water, both of which are considered women's responsibility.

This unique feminine responsibility provided a strong motivation for women's protest, and sometimes led them to adopt relatively radical positions. For example, SL was a long-time activist who had participated in the struggle since the beginning. When the company offered the villagers 60 ha of land in 2014 in order to resolve the conflict, she argued as follows:

A number of officials came, and the lands were all measured, Mbak. A lot of them came ... see, we should have been given a bit. We didn't want it. Yeah, didn't want it. Our people didn't want it. What would we eat? Me, I didn't go to school. The smart people said, 'It's okay for the government to take the land'. Well, what would the government have the children eat? ... I'd never gone to school, and I answered like this: 'I'm one of the government's children too. What would I eat?' There were a lot of people facing difficult times, but no they only focused on that.

Interview with SL, November 2016

SL spoke from her role as a mother ('what would the government have the children eat?'), but also called in the government's responsibility ('I'm one of the government's children too. What would I eat?'). Illiterate, she saw no future for her in jobs outside farming and was loath to give up the security provided by the land. What drives her argument is familial commitments: as she has a responsibility to feed her family as mother and wife, so the government—as a father—should have a responsibility to ensure she can fulfil this responsibility.

With the morality of the protest thus anchored in familial commitments, women were deeply motivated in their cause. But their activism contradicted the patriarchal imaginary of the New Order era. They were not simply bystanders providing numbers to protests organised by men; they also strategised independently of them. Moreover, they organised sabotage and tried to kill the kapok plant seedlings that the company had planted on what they considered to be their land.

SK: Mbah NA all of a sudden came to the house, because she didn't have any work ... nothing much. She said to me that she'd bought some poison for the randu trees.<sup>6</sup> It wasn't enough ... then I decided to use my husband's. I gave her a litre and I said, 'No need to pay'. And at the time, see, I had a three-month-old baby. So I apologised to Mbah NA. I couldn't go. I was responsible, had to work here. Bu SK answered,

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<sup>6</sup> Randu is another term for kapok.

'Yeah, let the women be responsible, not the men'. So, if the women went, and there were company supervisors, they would be careful. And my husband suddenly came out of the house and said, 'Where's my weed killer?' I answered, 'It was taken by one of my friends to treat roots'. Even though I'd taken it myself. But when I went to the market, I bought some more. So I asked some friends and discussed things with people I could trust.

YL: Right, because it was a secret, Bu?

SK: Yes, a secret. And after that, I said to my friends that, if we wanted to poison some plants, we should find plants that hadn't been contested [that is, plants on land allocated to the company that had not been contested]. Like the one on my family's land, there'd been no cases. That was the first one I wanted them to poison. Then we went to other plantations, taking turns.

Interview with SK, November 2016

Two issues stand out in this narrative. First, women strategised and took the initiative, going far beyond participating in protests organised by the men. And second, they felt that they needed to keep their strategising secret from their husbands, presumably because they might not have agreed. Another one of our interviewees confirmed the importance of acting independently from the husbands.

SM: The important thing is that, if anything happens, we can go without our husbands knowing. At the time, Bu SN was in the field, very pregnant. If I'm not mistaken, she was almost nine months along. And her husband didn't know [that she was going out]. At the time, I was working the green beans ... I wanted to know what the police and mobile brigade were like. So I left the beans, then I found out that Bu SN had been fighting with the police and the mobile brigade.

Interview with SM, November 2016

Indeed, women also did not shy away from violence. One of our interviewees recounted an incident where women beat security staff: 'I mean, we were protecting ourselves. At first, the ones who beat them were actually the women. Like, Mbah NA, her daughter Mbak SU and then the thug named MA.' (Interview with LS, November 2016).

Today there are no more kapok trees in Bongkoran, the main site of the land grab in Wongsorejo, in part because they were the constant target of sabotage and costly protests. As two leaders of the movement joked with the interviewer:



YL: So now there are no more kapok plants left?

SK: Maybe they're tired, Bu.

YL: Hehehehehe ... tired of fighting against SK.

YA: Here [in Bongkoran] there are none left.

SK: Replaced by mangoes, by what have you, after the women here ...

FGD with the OPWB and OP2WB, February 2017

SK thus gives credit to the women of Wongsorejo for having defeated the plantation. Their participation in the protest after 1998 reflected both continuity and a break in the New Order gender division of labour that saw women's place as being at home. They assumed a subversive role in the conflict—justified by their familial role of ensuring that their children can eat—yet kept their most radical activities hidden from the men. They supported the goal and the actions of the OPWB, but also showed independent agency through enactments of motherhood. In this way, they appropriated Ibuism and changed its meaning so that it allowed them to perform protests and make their voices heard.

#### 4 Women in the Lead—New Gender Divisions of Protest

The women of Wongsorejo may have killed the plantation, but they did not defeat the company. PT Wongsorejo's land usage rights ended in 2012, but the Banyuwangi Regency gave the company building-usage rights two years later. The plan was to build an industrial estate, again partially on contested lands.<sup>7</sup> Although there was an effort at mediation (as referenced earlier, farmers were offered 60 hectares of the 220 they claimed), and although the company promised to create 70,000 new jobs, farmers did not give in (Sholahudin, Siahaan and Wiratraman, 2020, 428). They feared not only the loss of their livelihoods, but also that the new industry would have detrimental ecological effects and negatively impact soil fertility (Arifianto, 2018). The plans thus revived the conflict

<sup>7</sup> According to the farmers we interviewed, the new industry would be vehicle spare parts. The Banyuwangi Regency Spatial Plan foresees an industrial area consisting of 'base metal industry, basic chemical industry, petroleum industry, machinery and equipment industry, wood, rubber, plastics, paper, food, and beverage industry' (Sholahudin, Siahaan and Wiratraman, 2020, 426).

after it had somewhat receded. But the leadership had now shifted from men to women. The OPBW's membership was less than a third of its original size by 2019 as a result of internal organisational dynamics and intimidation by the company (Fatimah, 2019, 3). But in 2015, the organisation established a women's branch (OP2WB), in which it enrolled the wives of OPWB members—by 2017 the OP2WB consisted of 280 members (FGD with the OPWB and OP2WB, February 2017). And the OP2WB came to spearhead the resistance against the planned industrial estate. As an elderly villager explained, 'now the men can't be on the frontlines. The ones out front are the women. The men, they have to be dragged along.' (Interview with SL, November 2016). In addition to land rights, the struggle came to include environmental issues, also forging links with related struggles in East Java, for example about sand mining and water.<sup>8</sup>

The idea that women should move to the front is familiar from other movements that take advantage of constructions of women as needing protection to deter the violence of security forces. Such instrumentalisation has been criticised (Doss, Summerfield and Tsikata, 2014; Lamb et al., 2017; Park and Maffii, 2017) though some have questioned the characterisation of women as pawns without agency (Joshi, 2020). In Wongsorejo activists seemed to have learned from movements outside the region, in particular from Rembang. But they also drew lessons from their encounters with security forces during the violent clashes of 2001. As SK, one of the OP2WB leaders recalled, after the shooting, 'The son of Bu SN's sibling was captured and brought into the mobile brigade's vehicle. Her sister came and told the mobile brigade to let the kid go. And the mobile brigade, he said, "You're lucky you're a woman. If you weren't a woman, I'd shoot you.' (Interview with SK, November 2016).

And SK confirmed that the mobile brigades acted differently towards women and men: 'Yes, there'd surely be violence' if the brigades faced men.

This understanding that the security forces would treat women differently became an integral argument for women's organising in 2015 and for women increasingly moving to the front in protests. As one young man asserted after being asked why women are up front now: 'Because if someone were to hit them ... they wouldn't hit women, right. Maybe they'd hurt fellow men, but at most they'd rustle the women's shirts and hats.' (Interview with BI, November 2016). And a senior man agreed:

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8 Organisations involved in the environmental movement in the area include, apart from the OPWB and OP2WB, the Movement of Wongsorejo Banyuwangi Youth Nature Lovers (Gerakan Pemuda Pecinta Alam Wongsorejo Banyuwangi, GAMPA) and the Community Forum for Environment Care (Forum Masyarakat Peduli Lingkungan, FORMALIN) (Kholik, 2018).

We have to face a lot of things, violence, and then we have had our heads broken, beaten, rivers of blood. ... We are all tired of that. Kidnapping is often done too. And so problems should be resolved with a good strategy or approach. For that, using women is one strategy for resolving problems and avoiding violence.

Interview with SU, November 2016

During our focus group discussion with the OPWB and OP2WP in Bongkoran, participants confirmed moreover that this strategy has kept activists out of prison:

BO: Yes. Alhamdulillah, since we established OP2WB, there haven't been any people going in and out of prison.

WU: Why not, Bu?

BO: Yes, that is it. If the men were meeting the men, they'd end up fighting.

WU: And then be sent to prison? So after OP2WB was established, there's been nobody else sent to prison?

BO: Alhamdulillah. Because after that the women were in the front.

FGD with the OPWB and OP2WB, February 2017

The idea of 'using the women' may indeed have been an element in the creation of the OP2WB, which after all was an offshoot of an organisation led by men. But such a narrative discounts women's agency and strategising, which we have shown to be considerable. In Indonesia more broadly, women's activism blossomed in the post-Suharto era on issues ranging from political participation and violence to marriage and inheritance laws (see Robinson, 2018). Such activism also included rural women, as the case of Wongsorejo shows. Thus, while men originally led the OP2WP, women made it their own and shaped it to their own needs. One of its leaders recalled:

I've said to Mas YA ... Mas, these women, their goal is to meet once a week. That is OP2WB itself. Mas, I want to organise the women. But I didn't make it once a week. Maybe I am having too much trouble myself. I made the meetings once a month, but during the day. If it were night, I couldn't come. See, in the field I have trouble. So it's in the day. Mas YA said, 'That's better'.

Interview with LI, November 2016

Moving women to the front thus was not only an instrumental move but also led to a change in gender divisions of protest and in associated power relations.

As the women appropriated the organisation, they gradually became leaders in the movement. Importantly, they took control of the movement's finances. As a male leader of the movement recounted during a focus group discussion:

Before, there were routine funds, but it didn't work because we weren't careful. After that, because things kept developing, the issues didn't reduce in number but increased. In the end, we gave in. We surrendered the funding issues to the women. Alhamdulillah, they have helped us a lot. Especially in our other activities. We were helped a lot by the women.

FGD with the OPWB and OP2WB, February 2017

For women, assuming the responsibility for managing the money meant not just helping the men; it entailed a shift in gender divisions of labour and to some extent a shift in power. Quoting Sullivan (1994), Robinson (2009, 30) has argued that Javanese women's control of household budgets is not a source of power since money carries low prestige (in contrast to men's spiritual potency). However, our interviews indicate that the process of women taking over financial management from men was not without conflict, suggesting that having control of money is valued. Moreover, women's roles in the public and private spheres seemed entangled, and their leadership in managing movement finances apparently had implications for their status in the household. The following quote from the head of the OP2WB is telling:

See, now, the budget problems can be overcome, for the women. Me, I use the knowledge I got from Bu GU [one of the women members of the OP2WB], the knowledge from her. At first Bu GU said, 'Why is the budget held wholly by the women?' Because the needs, the women know them. If we have any money left over, we know the money, and we can put something aside. But the men, they'll ask the women for money. And then if the women don't know their finances, and there are other needs, then there will be fighting in the family. Some will get like this over funds.

After thinking about it ... well, yes, that's how it was. Me, before, when the money was still handled by my husband, it wasn't all 100 per cent there. 'What other money is there?' That's how it is. I'll admit it. And now, after we know how things are, and the women know it ... in a month, we'll put aside 5,000 rupiah [USD 0.38] of our shopping money. That's the key. See, the men, they feel offended. They don't trust us, the men. The Madurese, they are easily emotional. Me, I said, 'Pak, don't misunderstand us. None of us are belittling the fight you've undertaken. Because OP2WB, see, the ones who started things and established the group, it's

you. And your fight, it'll never be forgotten by OP2WB. In fact, you should be controlling us.' That's what I said. After that, bit by bit, they became aware of the need for a good budget.

Interview with LI, November 2016

The quote is remarkable for how easily it shifts between references to family budgets and the funds of the organisation. Taking charge of the organisation's budget went hand-in-hand with being in charge of the household budget. It also shows that women's taking over of the reins did not proceed without conflict, and LI found it necessary to appease the men, evoking their superior status in the family as father ('pak'), and telling them that their fight will not be forgotten and that 'In fact, you should be controlling us'. The fact that control of the finances was a matter of conflict indicates that it also involved relations of power. Indeed, we found both, jealousies and men supporting women's leadership in the organisation.

Overall however, the extent of men's support for women's lead and activism was surprising. Take, for example, SM's responses to our questions:

DF: Those meetings are at night usually, right?

SM: Yes, at night.

DF: And how does your husband take it?

SM: He usually waits at home. The children, sons and daughters, and the in-laws, they join me. There's nothing at night.

DF: How does your husband feel? He has no objections to you taking part in such activities?

SM: Sometimes he comes here too.

...

DF: Has he ever complained, Bu, that you take part in the demonstrations? That it disturbs the cooking and the like.

SM: That stuff ... for a bit I won't clean for a while. The important thing is that I cook, and things are ready, and then we have breakfast. If we need to pack something to go, we do. Me, it's like that, Mbak.

DF: So cooking is important. Cleaning can wait.

SM: Right, Mbak.

DF: And your husband doesn't protest?

SM: No. See, we work together. We understand each other.

Interview with SM, November 2016

Not only do some men seem to not mind women's activism and support them at home, they also offer assistance from behind in women's protest activities, including by bringing food. As LI recounts,

LI: If the *kentongan*<sup>9</sup> had already sounded, we wouldn't feel like eating. So we'd be on the road, we'd go. Sometimes, Bapak, he'd know that I hadn't had breakfast so he'd buy some bread before coming home.

YL: He brought it there?

LI: Yes.

YL: And did the other men do that too?

LI: Yes. The following day, if there was the opportunity, they'd expect that they'd have to come ... they'd bring some things. [...]

Interview with LI, November 2016

Creating a new organisation and putting women in the front thus generated a change in gender divisions of protest. We argue that this was not simply a matter of men instrumentalising women for their own purposes; instead, both women and men strategically deployed constructions of women as weak and needing protection to pre-empt violence from the security forces. This use of gender as a resource for activism had identity effects: it entailed a political empowerment of women, paired with a gain in status in the household. In the following, we read their activism as performing active citizenship and thus constructing a more inclusive peace in Banyuwangi, in which those intersectionally marginalised along the axes of gender and class have a role to play.

## 5 Organising Gives Us Passion—From Empowerment to Citizenship

The political empowerment of the women activists of Wongsorejo is significant not only at the personal and household levels. Our understanding of peace as agonistic leads us to suggest that their leadership contributes to the enactment of a particular kind of peace, one that recognises their claims even if it does not fulfil them. Another way of framing the issue is to suggest that the protests of women in Wongsorejo empower them to perform citizenship at the level of the everyday (van Klinken and Berenschot, 2018). It is possible to identify in the narratives of the women two aspects of such empowerment—one signalling personal bravery, the other adopting an understanding of rights-bearing citizens in a changed polity.

9 A gong the villagers use to call people to assemble, and that has been used to signal the need to assemble for protest.

Women's resistance has entailed a considerable amount of courage in the face of significant violence, and the stories women tell of their struggles are replete with testimonies of bravery: "Those thugs said, "*Bu*, don't stand out too much. Something will happen." And she answered, "I've surrendered myself to the Almighty. Live or die, I have the courage. I have to fight for the land where I was born, whatever happens. Whatever happens." (Interview with SK, November 2016).

This recounting of bravery also highlights the role of religion in the movement. Indeed, the revival of Islam and the role of piety in women's activism in Indonesia have been a topic of scholarly investigation (Jauhola, 2013b; Rinaldo, 2013b; Robinson, 2009), and gaining courage by surrendering oneself to the Almighty constitutes a distinctive way of enacting empowered citizenship. But another source of power was being organised and was part of a larger movement.

DF: OPWB and OP2WB, what benefits have these organisations offered?

SM: Yeah, they've given us the passion.

DF: I mean, since these organisations were established ... You've been involved from before. Are women more active now, since the establishment of OP2WB? Has there been a change, or has it remained the same?

SM: Yes, there's been a change. I'm not afraid of anything. We can overcome things together.

Interview with SM, November 2016

Van Klinken and Berenschot (2018) advocate a re-conceptualisation of citizenship that appreciates the passion and antagonism involved in the political. SM tells us here that organisations are crucial to this—"they've given us the passion", that is, the motivation to face danger in order to change things, to overcome fear.

The empowerment that comes from religion and organisation comes through vividly, for example, in the stories women tell about learning how to speak in political forums, a daunting prospect for anyone, but especially for women often labelled uneducated. SM recounts her first time speaking up spontaneously.

SM: When we demonstrated at parliament, I took part. Joined when we went to the regent too. To the house of the village chief too. I just joined in then.

DF: And if you joined, did you just come physically, or did you talk too?



SM: Yeah, I also talked, spontaneously. Like, 'Pak, what will the fate of the farmers be? Nothing to eat ... poor.' And then the official asked 'Why?' and Bu SE added, 'Yeah, they're hungry, Pak. There's nothing to eat.' Like that, Mbak.

Interview with SM, November 2016

LI, meanwhile, recalls how she found herself for the first time having to speak in front of cameras at a press conference, involving activists from different parts of Indonesia, in Yogyakarta:

Like, in Yogya, I was teased by Mas GO. ... I didn't know that it was a press conference. It turned out that there were a lot of reporters and a press conference. The ones from Kalimantan, they were accompanied by the legal body. And then from NTT [Nusa Tenggara Timur (East Nusa Tenggara)] they were supported by Mbak IT, and then from Kendal they were also supported ... but we from Wongsorejo, where was Mas GO? Even though things were ready to begin. And then the conference began, and they were all supported by their own legal organisations, and the group from Wongsorejo was left all alone. I couldn't do anything. I was stiff. I read whatever I could. Me, I tried to answer what I could. Over there, we all forgot that we weren't sure. ... I answered as I could. Mbak W1 said, 'Oh My God! What is all this ... alright, answer.' I got hot and cold. 'Mas AG, where is Mas GO?' 'I don't know where.' The first one to speak was from East Nusa Tenggara, and then the second was from Kalimantan. The third one was from Wongsorejo. Oh, by Allah ... but Alhamdulillah, what I talked about was what had happened. So after the conference was over, Mas GO was clapping his hands. What did he want? 'I've succeeded, Bu, in guiding you,' Mas GO said. 'Where were you? I was looking for you.' Mas AD laughed. 'Bu, you were already correct and proper in your speaking.' 'That's what you say, Mas.' 'No. We have it recorded here, Bu,' Mas AG said. 'But oh, Pak, I'm so afraid. You really know how to give us a lesson.' That's what I said. I'd told Mas GO that I couldn't speak. But me, I had no idea what I was talking about. I forgot what I said. Like I was unaware. I was a witness, Bu. I was surprised. Just look at it.

Interview with LI, November 2016

Overcoming fear in this context meant something quite different to overcoming fear in the face of police violence. Being part of an organisation, encouraged by other members, and tutored by supporters, LI ended up discovering

her speaking abilities and polishing her political skills: 'I was surprised. Just look at it.'

LI's story also shows the importance of external non-governmental organisation (NGO) support for the activists. Surabaya Legal Aid is perhaps the most important of these, represented by the figure of Pak HE often mentioned by our interviewees. The organisation began supporting local activists in 1999, bringing the struggle of villagers in Wongsorejo to the public attention 'when the shooting happened', providing a legal defence, and helping strengthen their organisations.

LI: Mas HE came before the organisation was established. In 1999 he was already here.

YL: How important has his presence been, Bu?

LI: Very important, because Mas HE, he can share ... we can expand our network, and from the beginning it was Mas HE who helped us develop our network. We met our friends, at the very first, through Mas HE. ... Before, every time something happened he'd come. But now, he said this ... Every time there are problems, he relies on me, he can only depend on me. And what was his message ... to not depend too much on him.

Interview with LI, November 2016

The training and support provided by this NGO was crucial not only for providing individuals with the courage to speak up and polish their political skills but also for organisational development. LI talks in particular about the importance of training.

The training, the paralegal training. See, we have never known the different forms ... once a fight, always a fight. And from before, we hadn't had a team for security, for records, for negotiations, or a camera team. Since then, some of the men have brought cameras and they have been used to it. And the records team, we hadn't had it, but with training we have started to understand.

Interview with LI, November 2016

Training from the Legal Aid Centre has also given the farmers a new vocabulary, allowing them to set out their arguments in the language of rights. Indeed, during the protests in 2001, the farmers went to the National Human Rights Commission in order to complain about human rights violations on the part the company, its 'spies' and hired 'thugs', and the police (interview with SA,

November 2016). And this language of rights is now providing women a powerful framing for their grievances.

SM: ... no matter what, I've got rights. This is the land where I was born, which I must defend for my children and grandchildren. If not, what will my grandchildren have in the future?

DF: ... Bu, earlier you said that you're not afraid because you have rights. Ibu SM, where did you learn that you have rights?

SM: I learned it from my parents, my grandfather, and my father, all of whom said that.

DF: What did your father say then?

SM: This is your birth land. This is where the land was cleared before, and where death will come.

DF: So you've been here for generations?

SM: Yes, over generations.

DF: Did you also take part in any training sessions? Or discussions with Pak HE?

SM: Owwww. Just considered it ... see, I didn't go to school, so I can't speak Indonesian. So I just give passion to the youths. 'Come on, child. You must fight for your future.' I only give that spirit to the young ones. I only help as I can, and I'm always involved.

Interview with SM, November 2016

SM knows that she has rights. NGO discourse may or may not have informed SM's arguments, but she defines her struggles through the language of rights. These are not rights bestowed by formal government law, but ones that come from having been born on the land. Her rights claims come 'from my parents, my grandfather and my father', who taught her that 'this is your birth land'. In other words, SM makes her argument drawing on customary law by which those who clear the land own the land (compare Bedner and Arizona, 2019). She is not alone in doing so. When we asked people in our focus group discussion whether anybody in the village opposed their struggle, they told us that, of about 1,000, 'at most there are only four people against it' (FGD with OP2WB, 24 July 2018). Thus, we can assume that SM's attitude is widespread.

SM performs citizenship. The struggle has shaped how she perceives herself and her community in the context of the Indonesian state and the Banyuwangi Regency. Like the other women active in the Wongsorejo resistance, she emerges as a rights-bearing subject who has learned to speak the language of national politics and makes claims drawing on notions of rights. In addition, some women have become leaders with increased political efficacy, knowing

how to strategise and organise efficiently, and gaining political skills and confidence. Through their activism, these women are changing the meaning of peace in East Java, sounding the final death knell of the gender-segregated violence of the New Order as they struggle for a more just future.

## 6 Conclusion

The anti-land grab activism of Wongsorejo tells the story of how social protest can anchor a different kind of peace—one not defined by harmony, but one that allows for an expression of clashing interests and a recognition of differences. It also tells the story of how gender matters in peacebuilding and how it participates to construct different kinds of peace: from New Order Ibuism, to the powerful and activist motherhood of the Reformasi, to the emergence of female political leadership. In these different scenarios, gender is both strategically deployed for political ends and generates unintended effects. Thus, the Suharto regime consciously sought to order gender relations for developmental ends; similarly, the activists in Wongsorejo strategically deployed gender, though for very different ends—that is, to manipulate the security forces. In both instances, gender constituted a strategic resource. In both instances too, the workings of gender spilled beyond their intended purposes: Ibuism came to support not just neo-liberal development, but also protests; and moving women to the front of protests not only made these less violent, it also served to empower women as political leaders. As activists, women are building new forms of peace that take note of their claims and enable their diverse (gendered) enactments of citizenship. Thus, peacebuilding emerges as a process rather than an outcome, as intrinsically political and as fighting violence in its multiple forms, from land grabs to poverty, and environmental pollution. Peacebuilding becomes dissident politics, and what makes such politics 'peaceful' are values such as non-coercion and the ability to see not enemies that need to be destroyed but opponents that need engaging with.

We interpret the protests of women activists in Wongsorejo as enacting such peacebuilding. This has entailed establishing themselves as opponents by strategising with men (to put women in the front), but also having 'passion' and being empowered to brave violence, having the courage to speak in public, applying their financial skills to maintaining the movement, and speaking the language of rights. It also has meant debating the uses of violence for movement activism—something that caused tension in the OP2WB as some criticised Bu NA for her violent tactics. As they have engaged in such politics, the women of Wongsorejo have participated in building a peace in which women

have a recognised and public role. This is not to say that they have achieved gender equality—plenty of gender-specific economic and political inequalities continue to characterise life in the district. However, the women activists of Wongsorejo have established themselves as worthy opponents and passionate citizens, and have engaged in shaping a more inclusive and egalitarian future for their community.

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# Umuada: A Sociopolitical Institution for Peacebuilding and Conflict Management in Nigeria

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## Abstract

The Umuada is a traditional sociopolitical kin group in the south-eastern region of Nigeria, and is comprised of the first daughter of each family, called the *Ada*. It is given the utmost respect and granted 'male' privileges and responsibilities. Using postcolonial indigenous feminist methodologies, including interviews, observation, and dialogues with key informants across three communities in Enugu State, this chapter explores the Umuada as a local peacebuilding institution perduring from precolonial to modern times. It analyses the question, 'What role does the Umuada play in de-escalating conflict and upholding peace in south-eastern Nigerian communities?'

The Umuada has historically served as a forum for women to voice their concerns, needs and desires. It is a vital pillar of the community, acting as an arbitration and de-escalation force and performing cultural roles men cannot. Furthermore, working closely with patriarchal institutions and occupying key cultural functions have allowed the Umuada to adapt to changing times and maintain a strong level of agency and respect in the community. These findings recommend the Umuada as a model of peacebuilding to women across Nigeria and beyond.

## 1 Introduction

This chapter interrogates the peacebuilding activities of a subgroup of women in the south-eastern region of Nigeria (Igboland), called the Umuada, a traditional sociopolitical institution consisting of the daughters of a community. Highly respected, the Umuada hold various roles as agents of peacebuilding and reconciliation and collectively as the vanguard of sociopolitical development. An institution that dates back to precolonial times, it has reinvented itself and continues to have relevance in modern Nigeria. In a country rent by conflict, its members constitute a valuable resource for conflict management. Women's peacebuilding is often interpreted in a dichotomous way as the powerless having to gain access to power structures. But there is a need for a more

critical and nuanced assessment of how women's identities are constructed historically. Written from the perspective of Nigerian women peacebuilders, this chapter engages with past and present nuances to examine women's peacebuilding leadership roles in Igboland.

Peacebuilding is generically understood as external interventions that are intended to reduce the risk that a state will erupt into or return to war. But peacebuilding is also an ongoing practice in all societies that have institutionalised various forms of conflict management and community building. This includes the promotion of institutional and socio-economic measures, at the local or national level, to address the underlying causes of conflict (Goodhand and Hulme, 1999). It also includes traditional justice mechanisms. The goal of this chapter is to explore the role of the Umuada as a local peacebuilding institution that can expand the space for women's participation in decision-making, adjudication, and formal peacebuilding processes.

Women are often discursively associated with peace, and in such associations they are seen to operate outside politics and power. The Umuada, however, assume the role of peacebuilders from a position of strength, which they derive from their unique sociopolitical role and high status in Igbo society. Colonialism has weakened this role, but the Umuada has reinvented itself as a hybrid institution that capitalises on its own cultural capital to contribute to building peace in Igbo communities.

The chapter seeks to introduce the Umuada in their complexity and outline the potential of indigenous women's peacebuilding agency. Taking a feminist postcolonial approach, I first situate the institution historically in colonial and precolonial contexts. Subsequently, I show the hybrid character of the institution today, highlighting the extent to which the Umuada have retained political influence. In a final step, I illustrate how the Umuada are active as peacebuilders within contemporary Igbo societies. My feminist postcolonial approach leads me to read the history and current practices of the Umuada through the narrations of its members and those of Igbo leaders. Before presenting my interpretations, I further outline this methodology in the following section.

## 2 Methodology

My team and I collected the primary data for this chapter over a period of two years across three communities in Enugu State, Nigeria. We had an entry person who helped us gain access to the communities, and we used a snowball sampling approach to identify other women who were members of the Umuada

in the communities, including the *Isi Umuada* (leader of the Umuada). We were sure to explain how the data would be used and obtained interviewees' approval before we started recording. I refer to the women we interviewed as my co-researchers in acknowledgement of their role in contributing to the data collection and analysis.

Our fieldwork included interviews, observation, life-story focus group conversations, and dialogues with key informants. We conducted six focus group discussions (FGDs) (two per community, with the Umuada and the male group respectively), and seven key informant interviews (two per community and a Nsukka woman peacebuilder in Abor). I used a postcolonial indigenous feminist approach to design the interviews and FGDs. These consisted of focused life-story interviews that invoke relational ways of knowing to guide the discussion towards ways in which people are connected with one another and the environment (Chilisa, 2012). They speak to the local reality and take into cognisance the historical and cultural reality of the study area, as well as topics absent from standard academic disciplines (Oyewunmi, 1997). This method can encourage a reflective narrative style where the interviewee sets the pace and the interviewer listens, clarifies, probes and possibly brings up topics that need to be discussed in the interview but have not arisen spontaneously (Chilisa, 2012; Elabor-Idemudia, 2002).

The three communities studied are located in Enugu State. They are the Eziam-Nike community of the Enugu East Local Government Area (LGA); Abor, a town in the Udi LGA; and Ifueke-Amaeke, one of the ten villages that make up Ngwo town, also in the Udi LGA. They are all of the Igbo ethnicity and share marked similarities in traditional practices. Annual social ceremonies serve to reaffirm community bonds, and the Umuada have a strong presence in all communities. Ifueke-Amaeke has unique social inclusion practices that create community citizens through marriage and involve women in land and economic property sharing. All three communities are majority Christian, and although there are some traditional worshippers (indigenous ancestral worship), most community members practice Christianity. Socio-economic conditions differ somewhat across the communities, with Eziam-Nike and Abor dominated by farming (in addition to trading and public services) and Ifueke-Amaeke somewhat more urbanised, with coal mining present since colonial times.

These socio-economic realities influence the types of conflicts the communities encounter. In Eziam-Nike and Abor there are intrusions by sometimes heavily armed herders onto farmland, leading to clashes. In Eziam-Nike there is also a growing feeling among residents that they are economically excluded from government infrastructural developments and interventions, and there

are land disputes between neighbours. In Ifueke-Amaeke, meanwhile, the main source of conflict is the struggle over who has access to and controls the income from national and international companies operating in the community's area. Other sources of conflict include land disputes with neighbouring communities and high rates of unemployment among the youth, making them tools in the hands of elites. The presence of vigilantes makes weapons readily available.

The state security apparatus is weak and there is considerable distrust towards the police, who are perceived as siding with herdsmen. Thus, the various governance organs in the communities—such as the *Igwe-in-Council*, *Ndi Oha* (the assembly of community members), the Umuada, and other women's groups—and youths act as arbitration agencies. They use oath taking, dialogue, and the imposition of fines, and in serious land cases call on the police to de-escalate violence and settle conflicts. The Umuada also engage in prayer and use persuasion tactics such as crying and returning to their premarital homes in protest, in addition to the mediation and arbitration techniques outlined below.

### 3 Precolonial to Postcolonial: The Changing Role of Women in Igbo Society

In precolonial society Igbo women were highly respected and gender relations were based on equality and non-discrimination. According to Uchem, 'they were not inferiorized, nor powerless; neither were they marginalized in the traditional setting. This was because of the Igbo dual-sex socio-political system, which provided gender power checks and balances' (Uchem, 2001, 113). Agbasiere (2000, 39) describes this system, which is still operative today:

Apart from their general role as advisers, women have their council of female elders, parallel to the council of male elders. In critical situations both councils could meet together for deliberation and consultation. Women may demonstrate their political pressure through their meetings, which may be inter-or intra-lineage in structure and usually operative under the aegis of the most senior married women.

In the south-eastern communities under study, women's groups actively engage in structured lineage subgroups and religious subgroups. Members hold regular meetings. Historically, these segregated meetings have enabled women to articulate their issues and protect the group interest, and have provided an

avenue via which to discuss communal and economic issues, such as market rules, the prices of goods, and other market processes (Afigbo, 1972). Until the present day, any discrimination, especially against fellow women, has been frowned upon; even in spaces where it was pronounced, such as in the domestic or the community space, women would engage whether invited to or not.

In precolonial times, women played key roles in the sociopolitical structure of the region. My co-researchers recounted that there are records from the nineteenth century and into the colonial era of women collectively organising through non-violent means to resist acts of discrimination, oppression and violence. The Aba women's resistance to colonialism in 1929 is a testament to women's strong organisational skills and political constituency in traditional Igbo society (semi-structured interviews (SSIs), woman peacebuilder, Nsukka, 2017). The Aba women's protest was the first documented case of women's resistance to imperialism in colonial Nigeria. Sparked by the imposition of direct taxation and the introduction of new local courts and especially warrant chiefs, the protest attested to the power women wielded in protecting their interests and pressing for social justice. It was instrumental in the abolition of the warrant chief system in the Igbo region (Afigbo, 1972). The women agitated against the system because the powers given to warrant chiefs by the British were unprecedented in precolonial times, as among the Igbos decisions were made through indigenous structures where the female and male groups would deliberate on issues and come to a general consensus. Also, the colonial officials used the warrant chief system to create a patriarchal society as only men were appointed as warrant chiefs. Most of the warrant chiefs were corrupt, and were arrogant with regard to the powers invested in them by the colonial officials, and they were deeply resented.

The Umuada was one of the organised women's group active at the time. As a result of its collective strength, it wielded great political influence (Kolawole, Abubakar and Owonibi, 2012). It participated in conflict resolution and transformation within the family and community. It commanded respect from the male members and often represented the interests of women in decision-making processes (Obasi and Nnamani, 2015). One of my co-researchers, a woman peacebuilder in Nsukka Enugu State, carefully articulated her understanding of the relational being of the Igbo woman and her historical identity. She asserted that in indigenous Igbo culture, women as daughters had respected positions within the community; they were a force with regard to political, legal, and social issues. Among the many forums designed to represent and protect their interests, the Umuada was one of the most important.

During another FGD, my co-researchers explained that in traditional Igbo society, in the precolonial and extending through part of the colonial era,

women greatly influenced certain spheres of community life and headed traditional spiritual orders, as many Igbo subtribes were matrilineal. Women attained social status by successfully trading, farming, native painting (*Uli*) and weaving. One of the co-researchers narrated the life experience of her grandmother: 'Women were rich traders that travelled to sell goods. I remember my grandmother, who would usually travel for five weeks or more to trade. She also had decision-making powers within the family and communities. She would sit with men to make decisions'. (FGD, women, Ugwuanni Abor, 2018).

Women's socio-economic power also protected them from male violence, and the co-researcher continued the story of her grandmother by reflecting on how much this has changed.

Traditionally men do not beat their wives, because of the value attached to women. If any man was seen or reported to have beaten his wife, he would immediately be stripped of his title, and if he was not a man with title, he would be punished. This had the effect of putting a check on domestic violence or violence against women. However, with the destruction of our traditional systems by the colonial rule, the growing rate of civilisation or development, most of our cultural values have been eroded and we are now witnessing more violence by men on women.

FGD, women, Ugwuanni Abor, 2018

A woman peacebuilder interviewed in Ugwuanni Abor added that women's traditional roles were not restricted to homemaking and child nurturing. She was visibly upset that current narratives present women in precolonial Igbo society as vulnerable, powerless and subjugated. She cautioned that present-day customs are not all rooted in historic traditions. There has been an infusion of Western culture adulterating the essence of some practices, creating confusion, as some current local practices are contrary to the historic purposes of the community's forebears.

Thus, colonialism has impacted the identities of women and men in Nigeria, influencing gender relations and creating alternative lifestyles. Men usurped most of women's traditional social rights.

Igbo women became divested of their traditional institutional power by the colonial policies, which marginalised women, perpetuated by the Igbo male elite and reinforced by the inherited Christianity [...] since those traditional structures which formerly protected women have been undermined by colonialism and Western Christianity. Igbo women

no longer have a collective political bargaining power for defending themselves.

UCHEM, 2001, 133

Though colonialism negatively affected the role of African women in general, and Igbo women in particular, arguably Western education has enhanced the lives of women and empowered them to know and affirm their dignity and rights. For Igbo women, social justice raises powerful images of decision-making, creating equal opportunity, rectifying the wrong, and restitution. But my co-researcher maintained that Western education also has created harm. It has destroyed communal education and lifestyle and fostered the individualism now present in Nigeria, with different impacts for common women, Umuada, and men. One major crisis is the migration of community members, especially men, from rural areas to the cities in search of white-collar jobs and greener pastures. A co-researcher said that these developments have deepened inequality and created different classes of people no longer bonded by a communal lifestyle (SSI, woman peace leader, Enugu, 2017).

Although colonialism has wrought major changes in Igbo society, traditional institutions continue to exist, albeit in hybrid forms. They provide distinctive opportunities for women's political participation.

#### 4 The Umuada: A Hybrid Sociopolitical Institution

The formal coordination and leadership of Igbo communities rests with the traditional indigenous cabinet that oversees the peacefulness of daily living. At the apex are the *Igwe* and the *Igwe-in-Council* (the king and his cabinet members.) In all three communities studied, cabinet membership is exclusively for men. As one of my co-researchers explained, 'It's the men that are doing their own. They are the leaders of this community; in terms of leadership they have the role. Women will not follow them'. (FGD, Umuada, Ezianya). My co-researcher explained that there was a distinctive women's indigenous governance system and that women honoured women's leadership in the community.

Despite male predominance, the governance structure in the individual communities consists of men and women grouped by gender into various associations, trades, or age-grade systems. These subgroups, including the Umuada, are all sites where power and decision-making can be practiced. Every Igbo woman belongs to at least one of these village-based groups irrespective of creed or social status. Although men hold the more visible leadership



positions, major decisions, conflict resolution and intercommunity dialogue also include women and youth.

The Umuada is an example of such a subgroup. It is a formidable power system and decision-making body respected by the king, his cabinet and the entire community. The Umuada are given ‘male’ privileges, such as sitting in cabinet<sup>1</sup> and can convene community and kindred meetings and participate in decision-making within the family, even when married outside their birth community. Linguistically, Umuada is a compound noun formed from two Igbo words, ‘*Umu*’ and ‘*Ada*’. *Umu* is a generic plural that conveys the sense of many. *Ada* is a name and means daughter. In general usage, every Igbo woman is ‘*Ada*’ and is recognised as such in her matrimonial home. In its particular usage in the Umuada, *Ada* refers to the first female child born of a family. Umuada denotes, therefore, ‘many first daughters in a social group of the same lineage’. These lineage ties can be a basis for claims to land and other kinds of property, to mutual assistance in the pursuit of common interests, to authority over others; they also entail obligations that complement these claims (Agbasiere, 2000, 90) The Umuada are different from the *Ndinyom*—or, the married wives—and are positioned above them in terms of status. Women who marry into the community from another community must respect the Umuada sometimes even more than they respect their husbands.

Hierarchically, the Umuada stand above all other women’s groups in the community, including the dance group. Depending on the type of leadership employed, this may divide or unite the women. One of my co-researchers, a member of the Umuada in Abor, explains:

There are some times [when] our women will like to scatter. For me to unite them, I impose [levies on] them. We get canopies, we get seats, we even build a container ...; my husband gave us up to ten shops we rent out and the end of the year we collect money and share. When you remember those things, you will like to make peace with your fellow human being even if it’s one naira [USD 0.0028] you are getting but I know that sometimes we get up to three thousand naira [USD 8.40] each when I know that my women strength is up to 200.

FGD, Umuada, Abor 2018

1 Sitting in traditional cabinet within Igbo communities is predominately a male privilege; however, because of the unique positioning of the Umuada, they are accorded that privilege when circumstances demand their presence, especially in decision-making processes.

The levies are imposed in two ways, on any woman who goes against the rules of the meeting. They take the form either of an agreed consensus on a fixed amount or the requirement to carry out a specific task that has a monetary value. The containers, seats, or canopies are rented out (at a discount to members or at full price to non-community members) during ceremonies, and the women make a profit from this and use the funds for community development or personal needs, depending on what has been agreed. By providing economic opportunities, the Umuada in Abor thus becomes a unifying force.

However, its dominant status also gives the Umuada the opportunity to persecute and take oppressive action against women in weaker positions—what Uchem (2001, 67) regards as internalised oppression. The Umuada at times align with the *Ndinyom*, especially at the funeral of one of their brothers. If it comes to light that the widow of the dead man had maltreated him when he was still alive, the Umuada will not make it easy for the widow. Some families force women to mourn their late husbands for up to a year instead of the normal six months. This happens especially when the wife is at loggerheads with the Umuada, and they use the period of the mourning to victimise the woman. In this regards the Umuada can also act as a conflict driver within the community. Women sometimes use the powers of their institution excessively.

The Umuada play several roles in sustaining their dominance and participation within their communities, ways that are integral to all social functions in Igbo society, from marital rights to burial ceremonies to title taking. They facilitate marriage ceremonies and burials and ensure compliance with community agreements. The Umuada and *Ndinyom* collectively make decisions concerning the economic aspects of the market, and cultural and religious necessities such as the cleanliness of village squares and shrines.

Participants in our FGD in Abor characterised the Umuada as a powerful sociopolitical setup and a functional forum for females (FGD, Umuada, Abor, 2018). The Umuada work towards conflict transformation and resolution within communities, and they carry out local peacebuilding initiatives that strengthen bonds within families and communities. They initiate family ceremonies, and homecomings (requesting that sons and daughters of the community come home), for instance for dance ceremonies or some other fun activity. The Umuada is among the most organised, peaceful and endowed of women's groups in Nigeria, garnering respect both within and outside the community. As individuals and in groups, its members occupy a vital community position, and their meetings provide women with access to power structures.

We create the Umuada hamlet by hamlet; we have meetings every Saturday. Afor [market day in Igboland], that is when we have meetings

and within the group we elect a secretary, who collects our monthly financial dues. From this money we get the Umuada uniform. The dues range from 200 or 300 naira [USD 0.56 to USD 0.84] each. The dues are also used to attend weddings of younger girls and any other needs that arise. During the meetings, we make plans of activities to carry out, discuss issues related to women and the general community.

FGD, Umuada, Abor 2018

Men also have subgroups, but not all subgroups have equal access to power. Through their interactions with leadership at the community level, the Umuada open doors for men and women alike. They are also a welcome implementing arm of the traditional structure and government as they use it to ensure that information is disseminated among groups, and that women and youths adhere to the decisions taken. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Umuada has become a structure used to engage women on the ground and to ensure compliance with COVID protocols within the communities.

In many Igbo areas, the Umuada make contributions to the development of their lineage by building town halls, maternity clinics or schools. Even those living in urban areas still make contributions, through their mothers-in-law or a neighbour's wife. In the past fifty years, 'home' and 'abroad' women's groups have emerged as important categories. This distinction exists in the Umuada and in other women's groups, such as professionals and market and cultural groups. The Umuada meet once a year at what is known today as the 'August Return', August general meeting, or 'Home and Abroad Meeting'. This is a general meeting via which different Igbo women's groups come together within their indigenous communities. Among the aims of the August Return are to resolve issues of conflict in the community, to address the welfare of women, and community development (Nwokafor, 2012, 33). The Igbo women raise lots of money in their August general meeting to uplift and empower underprivileged members of the group in their community. They offer scholarships to girls, build houses for widows and clothe the poorer members. They have undertaken the construction of churches, clinics, schools, town halls and markets, and the provision of water and electricity in towns and villages. Through these efforts, they empower their fellow women, enhancing their lives and creating social cohesion in the community (Carolyn, 2000, 158).

The Umuada's role has transformed significantly in modern times; this has not, however, taken away the sociopolitical powers of the institution. Rather, it has made the institution adapt internally to remain relevant in a changing society. The Umuada is still very important with regard to burials, marriages and conflict management. Members now often use a more conciliatory approach,

and to ensure their decisions concerning cases of conflict are respected they leverage the fact that their absence in major family or community ceremonies raises questions. The ability of the Umuada to raise funds and support community development also makes them relevant in modern times.

## 5 The Umuada as Peacebuilders

The Umuada is a powerful example of an indigenous institution of women peacebuilders. They derive their effectiveness from their traditional status and sociopolitical power, which provide them with the legitimacy to engage in mediation and arbitration. During FGDs in Ezianya and Abor, it became clear that the women felt part of the decision-making system of the community and that their men listen to them. A women leader from Ifueke confirmed the same:

Yes, even when they [men] want to [take decisions, they involve us]; like the last two months, they are talking about changing their constitution, they wrote to me. They even give me one of their constitutions that we should go through and suggest our own input. Our husbands, they are doing well.

SSI with women leader, Ifueke, 2018

My co-researchers were happy that their husbands consulted them, sought their opinions, and involved them in decision-making.

Men's groups in power work closely with the Umuada, as do male leaders. Not only the king's cabinet but also the town union leadership works with women. An *Ada* in Ifueke affirmed:

I have worked with like seven male presidents [of the union] and they carry us along. I worked with the late Igwe of Ngwo J.O A. He treated us well. So far, they are treating us well; they are giving us every share that the woman is supposed to get, including all the presidents, all the chairmen.

SSI with Ifueke Woman Community Leader, 2018

During the FGD in Abor, I was also told that the traditional ruler of the community, who is typically a male, would always confer and consult with the Umuada before any important decision is made. For him, the Umuada provide a venue for influencing their fathers and thus for forestalling conflict in the community.

What is different between the men and the women is if there was any problem in the village, the Umuada will go and make peace with their fathers and when they make peace, they will all live in peace. But if the fathers are not happy, there will be no peace. The Umuada ensure that they have peace with their fathers. That is when there will be peace.

FGD, Umuada, Abor 2018

Thus, even though the men lead the traditional community system, the Umuada play an integral role in sustaining the leadership structure through the behind-the-scenes peacebuilding roles they perform.

But the Umuada also engage in more visible peacebuilding. Indeed, they are often called in to resolve conflicts among the men: 'Sometimes, if we notice that there is quarrel within them, we women will join up and go and meet them, talk to them so that the quarrel will be solved' (FGD, Umuada, Eziama). More broadly, we found that the Umuada act as an arbitration and de-escalation mechanism in all the three communities studied. The communities look to them for the resolution of major conflicts, including domestic conflicts, inter-kindred conflict, and armed violence resulting from land boundary disputes. They mediate and help in resolving different types of conflicts between and within communities (Obasi and Nnamani, 2015).

The Umuada have two approaches to conflict management. The first is the conciliatory approach—they act as mediators. The parties in conflict are made to explore non-violent ways of resolving the issue and come to an agreement on the way forward. The Umuada ensure that the parties keep to that agreement through the second of their two approaches—that is, force and threats—by way of fines or other indigenous methods depending on the issue. It is important to note that before using the second approach the Umuada will have conducted exhaustive consultations and given several opportunities for a peaceful resolution of the conflict (Obasi and Nnamani, 2015).

The Umuada thus function as a traditional justice mechanism that not only mediates but also engages in fact finding and adjudication. Obasi and Nnamani (2015) advance that the Umuada will extract the facts, analyse them and decide appropriate measures of penalty to be apportioned on the guilty party. They de facto act as a 'court of arbitration' (though not with legal force). They can ask the guilty party to pay a fine, cook a certain part of a meal, or bring a cock, or ram, in addition to kola nuts, to facilitate reconciliation. Before this is done, guilt is apportioned, pardon obtained, and forgiveness accepted by the parties. The person offended is expected to grant forgiveness to the offender, and where there is recalcitrance from any of the parties the Umuada will sanction the most recent offender. The male members of the same lineage as the

disputing parties, along with the community, respect their roles as judges and enforcers, and their decisions are final.

All three communities considered women in the Umuada mediators and peacebuilders, and believed they had great influence in the domestic space. Participants in our men focus group in Eziamé confirmed that the Umuada could impact men's decision to escalate or de-escalate conflict. Their influence seems to be particularly strong with men of the same lineage or kin group:

The powers of Umuada [...] include the right of arbitration [...] within their natal lineage, settling of quarrels concerning political, economic and ritual matters that are beyond their male relative's power to settle. The task of disciplining disobedient relatives' wives also falls within their domain. The Umuada have the power to ostracise any proven incorrigible (male) lineage relative. In consequence, the funeral of such a person would be boycotted, which would initiate a ritual crisis, since the services of the Umuada in the funeral of a relative are regarded as indispensable.

AGBASIERE, 2000, 1-42

In conflicts concerning marital infidelity, mothers-in-law, or fathers-in-law, the Umuada intervene whether invited to or not. Their role is to bring lasting peace, eliminate subjugation and infuse in the conflicting parties the spirit of forgiveness and justice. In any such cases, the Umuada takes a neutral stand.

Regarding land issues, the Umuada can offer their opinions, but the final decision lies with the lineage male who are the custodians of the land. There are exceptions to this rule in parts of Igboland with matrilineal inheritance systems, such as Ohafia and some parts of Afikpo. In general, though men hold the most visible authority the community acknowledges that the Umuada wields enormous behind-the-scenes power, and it is often required to validate important decisions taken by the king and his cabinet (Amadiume, 1987).

## 6 Conclusion

The impacts of colonialism on the Umuada include the invisibilisation of women in the historic narrative, the transformation of the traditional governance system and the creation of a highly masculine system that excludes women

from the public space. But the Western perspective lacks an understanding of the gender reality in African societies when that perspective promotes a universalising narrative of women subjugated to men. This misconstrues the political power of women in Igboland and ignores their historical and ongoing contributions to peacebuilding.

One of my co-researchers highlighted the contradiction between current and traditional practices, saying that indigenous communities practice a fusion of cultures (SSI, woman peacebuilder, Abor, 2018). Similarly, the Umuada institution has had to reinvent itself, and its current structure is a fusion of past and present realities. Though it faces noteworthy challenges, it has remained relevant even in changing and uncertain times, drawing on its historical identity to expand women's participation in formal peacebuilding processes. In conversations with our co-researchers, one could feel their passion and commitment to the Umuada institution. Because its functions are intertwined with everyday life and cultural practices of marriage and burial, the institution has inbuilt sustainability. Currently, the Umuada is expanding while reserving certain powers, such as leadership and participation in high-level community delegations, for daughters of the community.

Even though women's participation in peace movements has increased in Nigeria, emerging tensions and conflicts and structural discrimination have been major obstacles to women's substantive participation in peace processes at different levels. The institutionalisation of rigid gender ideologies has created stereotypes of roles and gender-segregated professions, which also diminishes women's ability to participate in leadership and formal peacebuilding processes (Effah Attoe, 2002; Amadinwe, 1987).

Peacebuilding has become a global necessity that requires people of every race and all genders to join forces to bring about social development. There is therefore a need to include women and to mainstream gender in peacebuilding activities (Madu, 2015). The Umuada and other women's associations in south-east Nigeria should be given more attention and their roles further popularised, especially in communities where excessive patriarchal dominance and only minimal women's rights exist. The institution's formidable sociopolitical and socio-judicial advocacy status constitutes a powerful resource for effective peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The role the Umuada play in maintaining peace in Igbo communities could be a model of peacebuilding for communities around the country and beyond, empowering women to take up the role of working for peace among citizens.



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# Three Dimensions of Gender Mainstreaming in Economic Peacebuilding: Insights from Indonesia and Nigeria

*Christelle Rigual*

## Abstract

Recent contributions to feminist security studies have pushed to reshape the post-conflict women, peace and security agenda by taking the political economy of peacebuilding seriously. This chapter contributes to this scholarship by exploring how gender is mainstreamed in economic peacebuilding projects in Indonesia and Nigeria, and by providing a case study on how local beneficiaries have experienced one such programme in Indonesia. It analyses United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women documents, and interviews with project officers and beneficiaries of an economic peacebuilding initiative in Indonesia, along three dimensions: the adoption (or lack thereof) of gender in international organisations' programming, the meanings and shapes gender takes in the documents and programmes, and the possible governmental effects of these programmes. The chapter argues that while gender has been widely adopted in international organisations' strategy documents, its integration into local programmes is uneven. It illustrates how gender representations and stereotypes can guide the design and implementation of programmes, with effects ranging from the further entrenchment of conservative gendered norms to the perceived improvement of status for some beneficiaries. Regarding the third dimension, or governmental effects of gender mainstreaming in economic peacebuilding, the chapter highlights the shift of funds to preventing/countering violent extremism programmes and the overreliance on neo-liberal economic frameworks and reasoning.

## 1 Introduction

Economic reconstruction is one of the four pillars developed in UN Security Council Resolution 1325, joining the concerns of increasing women's participation in peacebuilding, enhancing their protection, and preventing sexual violence and war. In practice, however, a lot more attention has been paid to these latter concerns than to issues of economic reconstruction. This

marginalisation is also reflected in feminist scholarship on peacebuilding, which has long explored political reconstruction in post-conflict settings at the expense of development issues. But many scholars have lamented that policies and programmes fail to integrate security and political economy in post-conflict societies and have pushed to reshape what has come to be known as the UN's women, peace and security (WPS) agenda so that it takes the political economy of peacebuilding more seriously (Almagro and Ryan, 2020; Chisholm and Stachowitsch, 2017; De La Rey and McKay, 2006; Duncanson, 2016; Hudson, 2012; Rigual, 2018).

This paper contributes to this scholarship by exploring empirically how international organisations conceptualise and implement economic peacebuilding projects, and how such projects integrate gender. Drawing on desk and site research in Indonesia and Nigeria, it discusses United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women projects in these countries. It also offers an in-depth case study of an economic peacebuilding project in Indonesia, designed by UNDP and jointly implemented by the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Because the implementation of the WPS agenda has rarely focused on economic peacebuilding, and because economic peacebuilding rarely puts gender at its centre, my entry point to the topic is from the bottom up. Rather than identifying gender-mainstreamed economic peacebuilding projects top-down, I discuss peacebuilding projects in two conflict-affected regions, that is, the islands of Maluku in Indonesia, and the city of Jos in Plateau State in Nigeria, and assess the extent to which and the way they consider economic issues, and the way they implement gender mainstreaming. The research design of the Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development (r4d) project Gender and Conflict (see Chapter 1 of this volume) sampled peacebuilding projects initiated by international organisations in each of these regions. I analyse these projects to understand whether and how they engage with gender and economic peacebuilding.

The chapter is organised into three sections. The first lays the theoretical foundation: drawing on feminist and peacebuilding literature, I suggest analysing gender mainstreaming in economic peacebuilding discursive formations along three dimensions. The first dimension addresses the extent to which gender has been mainstreamed in programmes. The second examines how gender is conceptualised in these programmes and what effects these conceptualisations can have. The third dimension explores the governmentality effects of gender mainstreaming in economic peacebuilding discursive formations; that is, the way gender mainstreaming is embedded in the power relations of economic orthodoxy and security politics. In the second section, I analyse

documents and interviews with policy officers in international organisation (IO) headquarters to explore whether and how gender is integrated into UNDP and UN Women economic peacebuilding initiatives in the two case regions. In the third section, I draw on interviews with programme leaders in Jakarta and programme officers in Maluku and on focus group discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries to provide a case study of a UNIDO/ILO 'Peace through Development' project implemented in the aftermath of ethno-religious conflict in Maluku. I conclude with a comparative assessment of the initiatives of different IOs in the two countries under consideration.

## 2 Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks: The 'Three Dimensions' of Gender Mainstreaming in Economic Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a complex field of discursive practices embedding theoretical assumptions, performative discourses, and programming agendas. Key questions focus on how peace is conceptualised, what are considered to be the root causes of conflict, and hence, what type of remedy can peacebuilding programming offer (Rigual, 2018). Liberal peace projects adhere to the assumption that democratic states tend to be more peaceful, and hence attempt to introduce democratic institutions into post-conflict settings (Doyle, 1986; Newman, Paris and Richmond, 2009; Paris, 2010). Following political economists, many conflict scholars focus their attention on economic development and struggles against poverty as key pathways to conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery (Collier et al., 2003; Krause and Jütersonke, 2005). The link between development and peacebuilding is now well established, but its concrete integration into programme designs and implementations remains particularly difficult.

Feminist scholarship has inadvertently replicated the division between democratic institution building and development. On the one hand, the field of Feminist Security Studies has flourished since the late 1990s, with sustained attempts to 'gender' international relations (IR) security communities and their scholarship (Cohn, 2011; Prügl and Tickner, 2018; Sjöberg, 2009a; Sjöberg, 2009b; True, 2011; 2016). These academic efforts, in conjunction with the lobbying of feminist peace activists, have led to the mainstreaming of gender into international security policy, in particular with the landmark adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000. On the other hand, scholars have cautioned against the potential pitfalls of these feminist politics in the Security Council: they fear that mainstreaming gender into security fields runs the risks of compartmentalising feminist knowledge, of co-opting such knowledge into security logics, and of progressively silencing

the interplay between globalised militarised capitalism and internationalised armed conflict. As a result, scholars such as Carol Cohn, Claire Duncanson or Caitlin Ryan have called for a more systematic integration of political economy approaches into conflict studies and peacebuilding (Almagro and Ryan, 2020; Chisholm and Stachowitsch, 2017; Cohn, 2011; Duncanson, 2016).

Indeed, feminist activists and scholars have long sought to shape development practices, raising awareness of the complex web of gender relations in everyday lives and of the pivotal roles that women play in securing livelihoods. They have advocated for integrating gender into the design, implementation and monitoring of development programmes, in particular in post-conflict settings (Baliemoune-Lutz and McGillivray, 2009; Basu, 2017; Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead, 2006; Greenberg and Zuckerman, 2009; Marteu, 2011; Reysoo and Verschuur, 2017; Verschuur, 2017).

To bolster their arguments, scholars have shown how deeply embedded norms of marriage, inheritance, land ownership and the different economic roles of men and women can foster or prolong conflict and further gender inequalities (Baliemoune-Lutz and McGillivray, 2009; Bowen, Hudson and Nielsen, 2015; Caprioli, 2005; Chinkin and Charlesworth, 2006; Forsberg and Olsson, 2016; Hudson and Matfess, 2017). In addition, they have pointed to the role of neo-liberal capitalism in putting pressure on land and resources, with the effect of rendering already vulnerable populations poorer and further at risk of violent conflict (Basu, 2017; Ramnarain, 2013; Reysoo and Verschuur, 2017; UNRISD, 2005). Anti-mining campaigns in Indonesia, the issue of Fulani herders deprived of grazing lands due to increased land appropriations in Nigeria (Rigual, Udasmoro and Achakpa, forthcoming), or mineral extraction for technology industries in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Cohn, 2012, 27) are only some examples of the impact that globalised capitalism is having on livelihoods and violent conflict. Feminist scholars are wary of these dynamics, and fear that a focus on gender and security might preclude an analysis of the deep-seated economic power relations at the root of many contemporary conflicts (Basu, 2017).

Inspired by contemporary assessments of gender mainstreaming (Moser, 2005; Moser and Moser, 2005; Prügl, 2009), this chapter adopts a three-dimensional analysis of gender mainstreaming in economic peacebuilding. The first dimension of the analysis explores the extent of the *adoption* of gender terminologies in 10 programmes. The second looks more deeply into the gender constructions produced in these discourses: how are masculinities and femininities framed, presented and reproduced? Are the aims, goals and implementation steps potentially transformative? The third dimension of the analysis draws upon the governmentality framework (Dean, 2010; Foucault,

2004; Kunz and Prügl, 2019; Prügl, 2009 and 2011) to discern how patriarchal and other politico-economic power relations, such as neo-liberalism and security orthodoxies, are re/produced or hindered by gender and peacebuilding programmes.

I explore the three dimensions outlined by combining a discursive analysis of programmes implemented by UNDP and UN Women in Indonesia and Nigeria with an exploration of an economic peacebuilding initiative in post-conflict Maluku. Indonesia and Nigeria share some macro specificities, which allow for interesting explorations of variations in IO programmes in communities that have been affected by similar conflict patterns. In particular, they share a history of colonialism, with independence gained at roughly the same time, followed in both countries by lengthy periods of autocratic rule and by democratisation in the late 1990s. Additionally, these two countries have highly diverse populations and have experienced different types of conflict with similar patterns (resource-driven tensions, ethno-religious clashes, insurrectional movements) and that have been managed without UN peacekeeping operations (Krause, 2018).

We selected UNDP and UN Women as case organisations because they have a particularly active role in gender and peacebuilding programmes in the two countries. Extensive consultations with the r4d project team in Indonesia helped us identify an economic peacebuilding project that makes an attempt at gender mainstreaming and led us to select the UNDP/UNIDO/ILO Pela Gandong project for the in-depth case study. The analysis entailed a combination of methodologies. First, I conducted a discursive analysis of existing UNDP and UN Women economic peacebuilding programmes in the two case countries. Second, I explored the way policy officers articulated and implemented the Pela Gandong project and how beneficiaries received the initiative.

Exploring similar types of programmes in different countries allows me to illustrate a little explored phenomenon: the widely different and idiosyncratic approaches adopted by agencies in their implementation of gender and peacebuilding programmes in light of the WPS agenda. The theoretical and methodological frameworks facilitate nuanced insights into how gender is being mainstreamed in economic peacebuilding practices, by exploring contrasting contexts and particularly relevant programmes. The intent is not to assess the work of the IOs under exploration, nor to draw definite conclusions on gender mainstreaming in the two country contexts. Rather, by contrasting peacebuilding activities in different contexts, and exploring a specific programme in Indonesia, I seek to instigate reflection on the processes through which programmes are gender mainstreamed and the way in which certain designs can generate (unintended) outcomes and governmental effects. The following



section starts the empirical analysis with a focus on gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding programmes from UNDP and UN Women in Indonesia and Nigeria.

### 3 Gender in Economic Peacebuilding Programmes: UNDP and UN Women in Nigeria and Indonesia

UNDP and UN Women have a solid presence in Indonesia and Nigeria. This section analyses three specific aspects of these two agencies' peacebuilding programmes in the two countries: how aspects of economic reconstruction are integrated into 10 gender-mainstreamed peacebuilding programming, how gender is conceptualised in such programming, and how such conceptualisations inform the implementation of peacebuilding programmes.

In Nigeria, the work of the UN Women section that focuses on WPS has three core components: 1) engaging women in peace and security, 2) mitigating violence against women and girls, in collaboration with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Women Affairs, and 3) supporting the implementation of UNSCR 1325 at national, state and zonal levels.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly for an organisation whose mandate is gender equality and women's empowerment, a first-dimension analysis illustrates that UN Women has thoroughly adopted gender mainstreaming terminology, developed associated policies, and implemented related programmes. But with regard to peacebuilding, the work of the Nigerian WPS section focuses principally on the pillar of participation, with a project on 'Democratic governance and women's participation in politics'. While issues of economic reconstruction are not salient in this project, it is useful to explore it more deeply in order to gauge UN Women's approach to gender mainstreaming.

UN Women operates from a highly bottom-up perspective in terms of the design of its projects, conducting consultations with communities to gauge the needs, challenges, and best ways to address existing gaps in women's participation in peacebuilding (Achakpa and Onyesoh, 2018). One action the officers have been particularly proud of is the collaboration with traditional councils in northern Nigerian states. Traditionally, these informal but highly respected decision-making institutions at the sub-state level included only men. As the UN Women programme officer explained, this situation reflects local gender norms and a patriarchal culture:

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with programme officer, UN Women, Abuja, 16 February 2018.

For example, in the three states in northern Nigeria, women are supposed to be quiet, they are not supposed to be vocal, they are not supposed to speak before men and all that. And that is why the traditional institutions don't have provisions for women. So when there are violent conflicts in a particular state, it is the men that would sit, have a discussion, take decisions on what they need to do, without actually looking at the *gender dimensions, without actually looking at the perspectives of women* and how those conflicts affect women, without considering the fact that women have a role to play in peacebuilding processes. So they are ignored.

Interview with programme officer, UN Women, Abuja, 16 February 2018

It is thus clear that in northern Nigeria, UN Women works in a context where patriarchal gender norms infuse all aspects of peacebuilding, and where men are represented as the legitimate decision-makers regarding conflict management in their communities. Responding to this context, UN Women conducted rounds of discussion and awareness-raising activities directly with local chiefs, and enjoyed considerable success with these engagements (Achakpa and Onyesoh, 2018):

So we engaged the institutions very well, in three states in the north [...], and we succeeded, to a large extent. Because in these three states, now they have women appointed in their traditional councils. In Plateau when we started, there was zero, but today we have ninety-six women in the four LGAs [local government areas] we work in, who are now members of the traditional institutions and also advisers. And what that means is that any time the traditional institution will sit to take decisions, those women will be represented, and those women will bring their voices into those issues. That has given them the space to contribute to peacebuilding.

Interview with programme officer, UN Women, Abuja, 16 February 2018

So while gender is thus included in the thinking and strategising of UN Women Nigeria, the focus on political participation foregrounds a concern with women rather than gender relations. In other words, regarding the second dimension of my analysis, gender mainstreaming is mostly equated with the participation of women. The modality of implementation has been to focus on women's participation and training, although there are also efforts to include men in the programmes, in particular strong gatekeepers. The project can claim a quantitative success on the basis of the number of women included in traditional councils. This is a remarkable achievement, which significantly changes an

influential patriarchal institution. But the narrow focus on women also needs cautious attention, given existing critiques that warn against an essentialisation of women as natural peacebuilders and a tendency to instrumentalise women for purposes of peacebuilding that may forget goals of gender equality. Indeed, the inclusion of women in traditional councils leaves open the question of the roles women get to play in these councils. Are they tokens, or are they allowed meaningful participation?

With its exclusive focus on women's participation, the case of UN Women Nigeria exemplifies, at the time of the research, the very compartmentalisation of gender knowledge –into peacebuilding as a matter of politics, on the one hand, and as economic development on the other– criticised in the feminist literature. It also illustrates the difficulty of integrating these highly compartmentalised fields.

While UN Women embraced a gender agenda and foregrounded political participation in the implementation of WPS, UNDP Nigeria prioritised poverty alleviation and economic growth with little attention to peacebuilding. It also struggled to achieve the first dimension of gender mainstreaming—that is, its integration into programming from the start. For instance, in a project that sought to encourage access to international markets for small-scale agribusinesses, gender issues seemed to be acknowledged only to be subsequently dismissed. Programme documents deplore that in an initiative focusing on the production of cassava, which is dominated by men, '*gender may be an issue and the sector may not fulfil the requirements of UNDP to contribute to gender equity*' (UNDP Nigeria, 2013, 23, author's emphasis). This assessment illustrates that UNDP does not fully mainstream gender in all its programmes. Moreover, regarding the second dimension of gender mainstreaming, gender is mostly equated with the equal distribution of benefits to men and women in a particular economic sector rather than paying attention to deeper gendered dynamics in the sector. For instance, what gendered representations and constructions explain why the cassava sector is mainly occupied by men, and what kind of power relations are produced through such representations?

In Indonesia, meanwhile, international organisations more tightly connect economic issues and conflict. Both UN Women and UNDP have implemented projects addressing women's economic empowerment in conflict-affected regions of the country. UN Women has worked in many areas of Indonesia, but suffers from a lack of funding and is dependent on project-related financing.<sup>2</sup> As a result of a shift in donor interest towards preventing/countering violent

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of writing, its projects in Indonesia were funded primarily by Japan.

extremism (P/CVE), programmes are currently implemented exclusively in Java, to the detriment of other post-conflict regions such as Maluku or Aceh. One project, squarely focused on P/CVE, links women's economic empowerment and social cohesion:

The project begins from the premise that *women can be powerful partners in fighting violent extremism*. It investigates the impact that *women's economic empowerment and their leadership and participation* in local communities can have on social cohesion and efforts to challenge extremist ideology and related violence.

TRUE, 2018, 4, author's emphasis

Regarding the first dimension of gender mainstreaming, gender clearly lies at the heart of such kinds of programming. On the second dimension, however, these conceptualisations strongly encapsulate what feminist scholarship has criticised in the integration of gender into P/CVE programmes: the *essentialist* way in which women are depicted as mothers, sisters, and daughters, and the *instrumentalist* ways in which women are presented as intrinsically powerful actors for changing behaviour, ultimately bearing responsibility for countering radicalisation in their environment (Giscard d'Estaing, 2017; Ní Aoláin, 2016). Such tensions are well illustrated, for instance, in the following excerpt from a brief of the above-mentioned project:

In fact, *women can play a vital role in preventing the spread of extremist ideology and activity*. As community leaders, professionals, and as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters in family settings, *women shape the values of their community members*. Their roles are multifaceted and include shaping community and family values, influencing decision-making of potential recruits, *identifying and intervening at the early signs of radicalization that lead to extremism*.

TRUE, 2018, 5, author's emphasis

Illustrating the challenges of addressing intersectional feminist concerns in the global security agenda, this UN Women programme (even though it was advised by recognised feminist scholars) hence had difficulty departing from the essentialist equation of gender with women, and from the instrumentalist conception of women as resources for preventing and countering violent extremism.

While the connection of peacebuilding to women's economic empowerment appears promising in this project, from the perspective of analysing

gender mainstreaming's third dimension, it produces various unintended results. First, it seems to remain within a neo-liberal imaginary, as economic empowerment was translated mostly into 'support to saving-loan schemes and women's business development through women's cooperative groups' (Cueva-Beteta, 2018, 2). Second, as pointed out by postcolonial critical analysts and feminists alike CVE agendas tend to stigmatise specific (religious, ethnic) communities while silencing other (such as white supremacist) forms of violence (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006; Giscard d'Estaing, 2017; Ní Aoláin, 2016; Schmid, 2016). The stigmatisation of Islam in IOs' CVE programmes becomes particularly problematic when implemented in a country that is majority Muslim—as is the case in Indonesia—since it can contribute to crystallising and reifying religious identities, create tensions within and across groups, or leave the local peace activist and beneficiaries as sceptics or as simply opposed to the programmes. Third, the prioritisation of P/CVE and the refocusing of peacebuilding programmes to Java has financially starved activities in post-conflict settings such as Aceh, Maluku, or Sulawesi. Yet communities in Maluku interviewed in the context of this research emphasised that their regions and cities were in a state of 'negative peace' (Rigual and Rahmawati, 2019). There may be no eruption of violence, but neighbourhoods and villages are now segregated as a result of the ethno-religious conflict between Christians and Muslims (1999–2003), and people still do not feel comfortable crossing into neighbourhoods inhabited by the other group (Rigual and Rahmawati, 2019). Thus, although economic and political elements of peacebuilding were rhetorically integrated into the UN Women P/CVE project in Indonesia, it seemed to fall short of managing complexities that result from its embeddedness in economic and security orthodoxies, as well as in donor fashions.

To bring more depth to the analysis of the different dimensions of gender mainstreaming in economic peacebuilding programmes, the next section provides an examination of the UNIDO/ILO Pela Gandong project—implemented in Maluku from 2009 to 2012—that includes the perspective of its beneficiaries. Like the UN Women P/CVE project, it integrated peacebuilding and economic reconstruction into its design, but started from a development logic.

#### 4 The UNIDO/ILO Pela Gandong Project as an Example of a Gendered 'Peace through Development' Approach

Like UN Women in Nigeria, UNDP Indonesia adopts a strong commitment to bottom-up approaches in the design of activities, running workshops with conflict-affected populations at the outset of each project, with the goal of

assessing needs and specific pathways towards peacebuilding for communities. The ‘Peace through Development’ (PTD) programme is particularly emblematic of the way in which UNDP has connected economic development and peacebuilding.<sup>3</sup> As noted by the programme officer interviewed, the goal was less income generation than ‘creating social cohesion’ (interview with UNDP programme officer, Jakarta, 19 October 2017). The programme supported micro-production from local resources by providing material and training for the creation of local co-operatives. The peacebuilding component lay in the co-operation that was required across religious communities in neighbouring villages.

The Pela Gandong project followed a ‘Peace through Development’ design, and received some funds and training from UNDP. It was jointly implemented by the ILO and UNIDO and like the UN Women project was otherwise funded by Japan. An assessment of local resources and of the preferences of the communities in Maluku led to a focus on the production of nutmeg juice; participants would jointly collect the nutmeg and then produce the juice. The name of the project is borrowed from a tradition in Maluku, the *Pela Gandong*, a form of ‘cooperation and *brotherhood*’ tying two *men* from different villages across religious differences (Rahmawati and Udasmoro, 2015; UNIDO, MPG and ILO, 2012) (author’s emphasis).

As noted by one of the UNIDO officers responsible for the project’s implementation, the *gender component of the initiative did not necessarily exist from the outset*, but arose during the first stages of the implementation phase. Indeed, the officer noted that

Tradition of *women in Maluku to support the economy for their family is very strong, especially traditionally*. [...] And that is why when we introduced a programme to the selected villages, there was a *huge interest of the women, the mothers, and some young women to be involved in the project* because, I mean, especially for the villagers, *they are so keen to help with additional income for the family*. It’s somehow, [...], *it’s easier to work with them instead of... sometimes the men, the bapak [the men] [...]* it’s a bit difficult for them to be involved.

Interview with UNIDO programme officer, Jakarta, 19 October 2018

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3 For more information on this project and on its successor, ‘Peace through Development in Disadvantaged Areas’, see the dedicated UNDP webpage (UNDP Indonesia, 2016) as well as the final evaluation report, produced by Universitas Gadjah Mada (UNDP Indonesia and Gadjah Mada University, 2012).

One of the UNIDO officers in Maluku supported this view, and further explained why women ended up being strongly involved in the project's implementation:

We concentrated mostly on women, because there was one statement we believed greatly, *'If women are successful, then the family is prosperous'*. That was one of our points in intervention, working with women. That's why, in the groups, *women were more productive*. Those who dropped out of school and had no work, they were the ones we recruited as our participants. Interview with UNIDO programme officer, Maluku, 14 October 2017

During a test phase of the microfinance projects, the projects' officers saw women as more committed than men. The idea of integrating more systematically women more systematically was hence adopted for the implementation phase.

We made a microfinance group, and we made groups for men and for women. So, of about 30 groups, five of them were men's, while the rest were women. The women's groups all succeeded, but *only one of the men's groups succeeded*. We investigated it further and we found that the money we'd given had been used to buy cigarettes, etc. So *they were not productive*, and this answered our hypothesis, *that women would automatically bring prosperity to their families*.

Interview with UNIDO programme officer, Maluku, 14 October 2017

These stories illustrate two little-explored elements of gender mainstreaming in economic peacebuilding. First, in contrast to headquarter strategy documents, IOs do not systematically integrate gender into the *design* and *implementation* of their programmes. In the case of the Pela Gandong project, women were integrated into the project from the bottom up without this being anticipated in the design. Second, and pertaining to the second dimension of gender mainstreaming, the stories confirm the well-known finding that gender is frequently equated with women in development and peacebuilding programmes. Moreover, the two project officers construct stereotypical identities of women and men, portraying women as diligent, serious, committed and responsible in their use of their income while depicting men as less involved, not caring, reluctant to participate in women's groups, less responsible in their spending, and hence less 'successful' and 'productive' in the microfinance and micro-production groups set up by UNIDO. This informed how the Pela Gandong initiative targeted beneficiaries and explains why the projects ultimately ended up focusing specifically on women. Conversely, as an



unintended effect the initiative itself further *reinforced* existing understandings of Malukan 'machismo', forgoing an opportunity to challenge patriarchal gender relations. A more fine-grained gender analysis could have asked where men's reticence came from, and how gender norms could be problematised to perhaps mitigate their reproduction.

Also important to emphasise here, from a third-dimension perspective, is the influence of neo-liberal thinking. This appeared in the economic goals of the project, which focused on inserting the beneficiaries into market-oriented production and international value chains, without further exploration of the way in which this suited the modes of livelihood and development priorities of conflict-affected communities. It also appeared in the way the project judged success. While the economic effectiveness of the programme was not considered central in the design of the initiative, the assessment of success nevertheless employed the neo-liberal standard of productivity. Conversely, the role of the programme in decreasing inter-group tensions received little attention in assessments in spite of the fact that peacebuilding was a key component in the design of the project.

What were the effects of these arguably problematic approaches to gender mainstreaming for the beneficiaries of the Pela Gandong project? One of the co-operatives set up by the project was still in existence during our fieldwork. Fifteen women actively ran the co-operative, even though men sometimes contributed to some tasks. In interviews the women told us that their lives had changed in several ways. First, they were glad to have earnings, which allowed them to contribute to household incomes and be more independent financially and hence socially. Asked how they used the additional income generated by the co-operative, the women answered as follows:

First, it's got its own power, because if we ask for it from our husbands ... even if we earn only a little, *at least we make it ourselves*. If our children go to school in the morning, *usually we'd ask our husbands, but with this money we don't need to ask them anymore*.

FGD, beneficiaries of the UNIDO–UNDP Pela Gandong project, Toisapu,  
16 October 2017

Women hence describe the freedom they feel due to the opportunity to possess their own money and to use it for small, everyday expenses for their families without having to always ask their husband. Surpassing the amount spent or the fact that they now are in charge of spending some of their money to support their children, women describe their sense of autonomy in being able

to act without needing to ask, without being dependent on their husband's willingness to share money.

Second, the project also enhanced women's mobility and their confidence. They mentioned that before the project they had mostly been confined to their homes and kitchens, but that the implementation of the co-operative—from training to the installation of the production material to the running of all the aspects of production—led them to meet other people, to travel to Jakarta, to work outside the home:

Before there was this group, *our work was only in the kitchen*, but after the group was formed we have *often gone out for our activities* and as such if something happens in the family, we have the confidence necessary to explain it. For example, *if our husbands are wrong, we'll explain things* and try to help our husbands fix their mistakes. With training, *we've become braver, more confident in speaking*. At first I was surprised ... Oh, I can talk like that? But over time *our husbands could listen and understand*.

FGD, beneficiaries of the UNIDO–UNDP Pela Gandong project, Toisapu,  
16 October 2017

Thus, participating in the running of the co-operative did more than just improve women's income; it also empowered them to speak up. This perception was supported by another respondent:

Yes, it's true that, by often taking part in training activities, this has broadened our horizons and so we are more *confident in voicing our opinions*. Where before *we were only in the kitchen and taking care of our children*, by taking part in activities where we meet with outsiders, we've gained greater knowledge and that's made us *believe in ourselves more*. Because none of us have received much of an education, never gone to university.

FGD, beneficiaries of the UNIDO–UNDP Pela Gandong project, Toisapu,  
16 October 2017

Men are usually not involved in the everyday running of the co-operative, but they contribute if needed, by means that are in some cases indeed challenging existing gendered representations and role distributions:

Because [of] our activities here, in handling the nutmeg, *sometimes the men help us by taking care of the children at home*. Sometimes if there are problems, like the machines breaking down, we need the men to

come and help fix them. Whatever happens, *we still require our husbands' assistance.*

FGD, beneficiaries of the UNIDO–UNDP Pela Gandong project, Toisapu,  
16 October 2017

Women thus are not only empowered to speak up at home, it appears that the project also disrupted traditional gender divisions of labour in the household.

Yet this initiative did not change masculinist decision-making processes within the village. As noted by one of our respondents, 'We're always there, but our influence and our voices as women have yet to be given attention' (FGD, beneficiaries of the UNIDO–UNDP Pela Gandong project, Toisapu, 16 October 2017).

In spite of this continuing dynamic, a UNIDO officer insisted that there had also been change in decision-making at the village level, suggesting that it has 'improved local wisdom. It has *improved their relationship, improved their strength, what you call it ... their confidence, self-esteem.* So they [the women] are able to speak out loud on their own behalf'.

He went on to recount an anecdote in which the women had not received promised machinery from the head of the village:

Then, [...] suddenly the women went the office and they talked ... to the *raja* [king] or *kepala desa* [village head] [...] 'Why don't you ever get ...' *They're questioning. They're complaining.* And, there is some equipment or some tools have been missing. Then suddenly *they go to the head office and they check one by one and then suddenly they ask 'where is this item? We haven't seen this item'. [...]* So, they are complaining. And then the officer goes back and ... I don't know whether they bought the new one or ... *But at least there is confidence for them to go ask ... to protest ...*

Interview with UNIDO programme officer, Jakarta, 19 October 2018

Their voices may not be heard as a matter of routine, but clearly these women have gained the confidence to claim entitlements.

Even though women were an afterthought in the Pela Gandong project, the gender implications of the project were significant for the beneficiaries we interviewed, generating both economic and political empowerment. The stereotyping of women as successful and men as lazy and the neo-liberal focus on productivity may have contributed to women's sense of entitlement, given their success, regardless of the narrow focus on efficiency and the possibly essentialising effects of gender stereotyping. We are left to wonder what might have been possible had a more considered approach to gender mainstreaming

been adopted from the start. We also have to acknowledge that out of the various small co-operatives implemented in Ambon (around 20 in the context of this project) very few persisted or fulfilled their 'peacebuilding' objectives. Several community members in other villages informally reported to our team of local researchers not having seen their trust in their neighbours improve as a result of the project, and worrying about the sustainability of the programme's results.

## 5 Conclusion

The WPS agenda is widely recognised for successfully mainstreaming gender into the field of security, but also for stopping short of transformative effects and for neglecting the economic dimension of peace. Seeking to bring further empirical insight to feminist research on WPS, this chapter developed a three-dimensional approach to analyse how gender has informed, shaped, and affected (and was in turn affected by) economic peacebuilding in Indonesia and Nigeria.

Regarding the first dimension, it is noticeable that there is a good adoption overall of gender mainstreaming in official documents, with adaptations and different forms of prioritisation of the WPS agenda in documents produced in headquarters. But this does not translate evenly into programme reports and implementations. While UN Women embraces a focus on women and gender and the issue is central to its programming, UNDP has struggled to keep gender in focus in both case countries. Interestingly, the bottom-up design of projects by both UN Women and UNDP and in-depth consultations to allow affected populations to voice their needs and priorities at the outset of projects have resulted in a focus on women where this was not originally envisioned. Nevertheless, as various scholars have noted previously, gender is often still missing from the implementation phase of projects. In the UNDP project in Nigeria and the UNDP/UNIDO project in Indonesia, gender was not considered central at the stage of programme design.

When it comes to the second dimension of gender mainstreaming, the examples presented here show that gender is still often equated with women in economic peacebuilding strategic documents and programmes. In the UNDP/UNIDO programme in Indonesia, as much as in the UN Women programmes in both countries, what mattered was whether women were involved, whether they benefited from projects, and whether there was an increase in women's participation at the end of the project. This is obviously not an issue in and of itself, but as often noted by critics of gender mainstreaming it can become

a problem when the project inadvertently reproduces unequal gender norms and reifies gender stereotypes. Moreover, it is a problem when projects fail to address these in a gender analysis and forgo the opportunity to disrupt these norms and stereotypes during their implementation.

As illustrated in the case of the Pela Gandong project, gender representations and norms are productive: they inform, drive, guide and shape peacebuilding programming. First, the gender representations of policy officers and those conveyed by beneficiaries during consultation processes were taken for granted rather than reflectively explored, hence reinforcing existing stereotypes. Women's and men's *represented* roles served as a baseline for the design of the project, which then was assessed against these pre-existing arrangements. Gender stereotypes *informed* the design and implementation of the project, with women generally perceived as committed, serious, and responsible and men pictured as not interested and not serious when it comes to spending. The project failed to address these gender stereotypes.

On the other hand, in spite of multiple criticisms, these programmes also have positive effects. The UN Women project in Nigeria showed that a significant disruption of patriarchal institutions can be accomplished when women's empowerment is at the centre of project designs. Following the interventions of the project, women are now part of traditional leadership structures in the Jos Plateau. Yet even when women become the focus in a less planned manner, as in the Pela Gandong project in Maluku, they reported feeling greater entitlement, more autonomous regarding their income and spending, and empowered to speak for themselves if needed, and have experienced changes in their everyday lives, allowing them to shift their activities from the household to public spaces. At the same time, the more formal power structures of the community regarding, for instance, political representation have not changed much following the project, since existing gender representations remained unaddressed. A similar pattern emerged from the UN Women project in northern Nigeria, where the inclusion of women in traditional leadership councils—considered a huge success by the programme officer—might mask tokenism and a failure to assess ingrained gendered resistances.

Finally, regarding the third dimension of gender mainstreaming in economic peacebuilding I have highlighted the productive power of neo-liberal framings and of approaching insecurity in terms of violent extremism and the associated shift in the allocation of resources. Neo-liberal biases lead to a privileging of logics of productivity with regard to the goals of projects as well as to measurements of success. In addition, the shift of funding from targeting post-conflict peacebuilding to countering violent extremism risks the sustainability

of peace in post-conflict contexts as attention moves away from fragile situations where ethno-religious divisions have become entrenched.

Overall, examples of gendered economic peacebuilding programmes in Indonesia and Nigeria bring as much hope as they generate concern. Small-scale transformations perceived as positive by women are underway, but multiple and overlapping challenges will remain as long as projects continue to equate gender with women and to impose neo-colonial and neo-liberal market-oriented economic models for peacebuilding programming. Reflexivity and the co-constitution of knowledge and design with potential beneficiaries, both before and after projects, hold the promise of further removing the top-down reproduction of power relations, as well as the external imposition of neo-liberal economic agendas and stereotypical gendered constructs.

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# Conclusion. Seeing Patterns, Finding Diversity: Researching and Engaging with Gender and Peacebuilding in Indonesia and Nigeria

*Henri Myrntinen*

## Abstract

These concluding remarks sum up some of the key themes arising in this thematic volume's contributions, chapters that cover a breadth of different gendered aspects of peacebuilding in Indonesia and Nigeria, including the post-conflict experiences of women ex-combatants; women and land conflicts; arts, gender and peacebuilding; the gendered dynamics of post-conflict economic development; gender, spirituality and peacebuilding; gender-based violence; and the ethics of researching these issues and 'giving back'. Throughout this volume, we have documented a broad variety of ways in which gender interweaves with peacebuilding, but also similarities in the emerging patterns, around how gender and peacebuilding are understood, how integral gender is to identity and how gender is mobilised as a resource. These remarks also summarise some of the challenges and gaps we encountered, such as the risks of silencing and essentialising of gender identities, and the continued need to go beyond simplistic notions of 'adding gender' to peacebuilding process, practice and research.

## 1 Introduction

This volume on gender and peacebuilding in Indonesia and Nigeria marks the end of a seven-year research journey for the authors, one that, at the risk of sounding clichéd, was a journey of mutual learning and support, and one that also challenged us to go beyond our boundaries, both personally and academically. It forced us to confront some of the very real dangers faced by those engaged with feminist peacebuilding in conflict-affected societies, but also taught us how rich, varied, creative and effective such peacebuilding efforts are. The resulting research contributes to the growing feminist literature on gender and peacebuilding, and to an understanding of its complexities, paradoxes, silences and possibilities. Our research perspective explicitly

highlighted the local level, whilst also showing how closely and inextricably ‘the local’ is tied to national and global dynamics (Rigual, 2018; Shepherd, 2020; Tamang, 2020).

Twenty years after the passing of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000, and after many more decades of women’s peace activism and feminist peace research,<sup>1</sup> the need to include gender perspectives in peacebuilding has been firmly established, at least on paper. Local, national and international actors engaged with peacebuilding are now—at the very least—paying lip service to the need to integrate gender. As our research has shown, women active at the local level of peacebuilding in particular have often gone much further than such tokenistic approaches. As we show, women peacebuilders, sometimes together with male allies, have broadened the scope of what is understood as peacebuilding. Our research also underscored in how many different ways gender links with peacebuilding beyond merely bringing women’s voices to the negotiating table, and how essential gender is to engaging with conflicts and peacebuilding at all levels.

As we note in the introduction to this thematic volume, gender in peacebuilding is not only about differential impacts on, roles of, and expectations placed on different women, girls, men, boys and those identifying as other. Gender is also present simultaneously in much broader and deeper but less obvious ways, as a logic: as a structuring logic, as an identity logic, as a resource for peacebuilding (or, for that matter, conflict escalation) and as a form of governmentality. Gender thus works as a productive force to open certain possibilities for some based on their intersectionally gendered identities, and foreclose these for others. It works to create expectations on all of us, expectations that in conflict-affected and so-called post-conflict situations are difficult to impossible to achieve, but which paradoxically thus may become even more reified. Some of the ways in which gender is productive in peacebuilding are open and explicit, for example through the mobilisation of concepts of motherhood as a peacebuilding tool. At other times gender works slightly less obviously, influencing, for example, who gets to speak, who is implicitly spoken to and whose aspirations and visions of peace are prioritised when governments and the UN announce post-conflict economic development plans.

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1 See for example Cohn (2013), Confortini (2010) and Väyrynen et al. (2021).

## 2 The Diversity of Peacebuilding

As reflected in the thematic areas covered by the ten UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) since 2000, integrating gender into peacebuilding has often been conceived of mainly in terms of increasing women's participation in peace negotiations and peacekeeping, addressing the needs of women ex-combatants and civilian women, and preventing conflict-related sexual violence. As the contributions to this volume show, women peacebuilders in Indonesia and Nigeria are broadening this to also cover economic development and rights to land (Bulduk, Onyesoh and Achakpa; Udasmoro and Prügl; and Rigual), arts and peacebuilding (Kunz, Udasmoro and Rahmawati), and spirituality, local custom and religion (Udasmoro and Prügl; and Onyesoh), as well as the needs, hopes and frustrations of women ex-combatants (Rahmawati) and preventing all forms of gender-based violence (Rigual, Myrntinen, Rahmawati and Achakpa). We also reflect on how we as researchers, through our research design and practice, can be allies for peacebuilding and peacebuilders, helping local activists reach out to wider networks and navigate them (Myrntinen), but we also realise the risks of an inadvertent silencing of voices through our practices (Rigual, Myrntinen, Rahmawati and Achakpa, all references to this volume).

The peacebuilding initiatives covered here relate not only to major armed conflict such as in Aceh, Maluku, the Niger delta and Jos, but also to other types of conflicts such as land grabbing, environmental conflict, or inter- and intra-community tensions. The work of the activists and communities we researched often engages simultaneously with the very local, the national and the global levels. It engages with a variety of state and non-state actors; security forces, insurgents and vigilantes; with formal and informal power structures; and with private sector actors. It also involves bringing together 'tradition' and 'modernity', as diffuse as these categories are, be it in integrating local, customary imagery with contemporary art forms in Indonesia, using internet and other communications technology to allow for diasporic women to continue to engage with Umuada in Nigeria or bringing together communities and local and national government, as well as the UN system to engage with *pela gandong* in Maluku. Women involved in peacebuilding also weave together contemporary modes of resistance and conflict resolution with historical narratives, be they the histories of women's leadership among the Igbo or leadership in the anti-colonial struggles in Aceh. The global and national policy frameworks that cover gender in peacebuilding, such as the WPS Agenda, often do little justice to the breadth, depth, complexity and multiplicity of gendered peacebuilding on the ground. Here, in particular external

peacebuilding actors seeking to support local-level processes could do more to understand these dynamics, create spaces for the local actors, support them and—importantly—listen to them rather than seeking to prescribe how they should do peacebuilding.

### 3 Going beyond ‘Adding Women’?

Our research also highlights the need—so often stressed by feminist peace researchers and activists—to not see femininities and masculinities as homogenous, monolithic and unchanging (Cohn, 2013; Väyrynen et al., 2021). Rather, our research again shows the need to understand how gender identity intersects with class and social networks to create differences between former women combatants in Aceh (Rahmawati, this volume), or how it intersects with age, marital status and motherhood in both countries to create differing levels of authority (Bulduk, Onyesoh and Achakpa, this volume; Udasmoro and Prügl, this volume). Motherhood and how it is used strategically are especially pertinent to women’s engagement in both resistance and peacebuilding and, as our case studies show, defy simplistic categorisations. The case studies across each country also highlight how women are not merely passive victims of conflict or ‘naturally’ peacebuilders, but also engage actively and knowingly in conflict and resistance at all levels, be it as active participants in resistance movements or by encouraging and facilitating men’s participation in these. Nonetheless, in spite of this evidence to the contrary, policy actors such as UN agencies and national governments often still cling to essentialising and potentially harmful gender stereotypes, as highlighted by Christelle Rigual (this volume) in the case of UN Women’s approach to preventing and counter-ing violent extremism.

It is not, however, only national governments and UN agencies who conflated gender with women, and femininities with presumed victimhood and innate peacefulness. These notions also emerged in our interviews and discussions with respondents from conflict-affected communities as well as with local-level peacebuilders. While some of this could be classified as strategic essentialism, much of it also draws on deeply held beliefs regarding what women and men are ‘naturally’ like. This circling back to, and occasional insistence upon, innate characteristics linked to biological sex by our interlocutors posed a challenge to us as researchers. We were, for the most part, not directly part of the communities, activists, and movements, even if we engaged with them closely. The use of essentialising and homogenising notions of womanhood and manhood raised for us the question of whether, how, and to what



degree we as outsiders ethically should push for a questioning of locally held gender stereotypes and of local power imbalances, especially where these are being mobilised to increase women's participation more broadly.

Although we explicitly designed our research to take a comprehensive view of gender, we thus often found ourselves circling back to focusing on women and femininities. In part, this focus on women is intrinsic and necessary to efforts to improve gender equality, to better integrate gender into peacebuilding and to address the many unmet needs of conflict-affected women. Addressing these concerns requires, by necessity, a strong focus on women. A key challenge therefore is how to highlight women and girls as a broad category without essentialised notions of womanhood and losing sight of the different life experiences of conflict and peace that women of different ages, from different socio-economic and ethno-religious backgrounds, with different sexual orientations, and so on have (Cohn, 2013). A focus on women alone, however, also risks leaving men and masculinities largely unquestioned and unproblematised, rendering patriarchal privilege invisible (Myrntinen, 2019; Wright, 2020). It airbrushes out how patriarchal power dynamics are co-constructed by women and men alike (El-Bushra, 2012). An exclusive focus on women and girls also makes 'women's issues'<sup>2</sup> exceptional, distinct and marginalised, to be governed through special agendas like WPS, while those related to men, boys and masculinities are seen as general, ungendered and the norm (Charlesworth, 1994; Puechguirbal, 2010). With the exception of East Java, diverse sexual orientations and gender identities were commonly absent from policies and programming on peacebuilding, in part due to dominant social and religious norms (Rigual, Myrntinen, Rahmawati and Achakpa, this volume; Hagen, 2016).

#### 4 The Role of Gender in Peacebuilding—What Have We Learned?

As stated in the introduction to this thematic volume, our overarching question for the seven-year project was: How does gender inform peacebuilding initiatives in intersection with other social dynamics and identity categories and to what effect? As might be expected, there is no one, single answer, but several broad themes emerge, which are also areas in which feminist peace research and activism are engaged.

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<sup>2</sup> While the term 'women's issues' is commonly used in the peacebuilding and development sectors, we would like to stress that *all* issues are women's issues as they all have a direct or indirect bearing on women's lives.

First, there is a need to go beyond the comparatively narrow focus of the current UN and state-focused WPS agenda, which 20 years in is still mostly focusing on, and struggling to, increase women's participation in peace processes, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and the protection of women and girls from conflict-related gender-based violence. While work on all of these issues is important and needs to be accelerated, gender-responsive peacebuilding is a much broader, diverse, richer and complex field. Peacebuilding practice, policy and research also needs to be more cognisant of, and engage more with, what we term the productivity of gender, the ordering work it does, and how it is implicitly and explicitly mobilised as a resource, as well as the possibilities it thereby opens up and the silences and exclusions it produces.

Second, national-and international-level actors in particular, but also policy analysts and researchers engaging with conflict and peacebuilding, need to be more attuned to the local dynamics of gender. This is by no means a call to reify 'the local', to romanticise it or to see it as untouched by the outside world. Quite the opposite, the local is closely and intricately intermingled with the outside world, and has its own gendered biases and power imbalances as much as structures, institutions and processes at national and global levels do. However, peacebuilding efforts still too often continue overlook how local dynamics can escalate or de-escalate conflicts, how essential concrete positive change at the local level is to ensuring sustainable positive change more broadly, and the multiple ways gender acts and is acted upon in these processes.

Third, feminist peace research needs to continue its efforts to better understand how gender interacts with other social identity markers; how gendered power dynamics are co-constructed, maintained and challenged by people of all gender identities; and how this affects conflict and peacebuilding. Beyond intersectionality and relationality, it is perhaps this last dynamic that requires more attention from peacebuilding policy and research. Gender is not a static constant, and intersectionally gendered dynamics both shape and are shaped by peacebuilding initiatives, while at the same time some aspects of gender remain remarkably untouched by societal upheaval. As our own research showed, taking these dynamics, nuances and interconnections into account is not always easy, especially as gendered stereotypes and imaginaries are often so ingrained as to seem like natural, unchanging and unassailable 'truths'. Nonetheless, this complexity is necessary for building peace that questions patriarchy, that moves beyond unhelpful stereotypes, and ensures that those historically marginalised by dominant notions of masculinities and femininities are not further discriminated against.

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