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The Need for a Participatory Approach in UN Peacebuilding

The Case of South Sudan

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to study the gap between the theory and practice of the framework implemented by the United Nations Security Council 1325 (UNSCR 1325), which concerns the importance of women's role in peacebuilding. Within the case study of South Sudan, this thesis analyzes the main challenges in the implementation of UNSCR 1325, addressing both the implemented policies and the living conditions of women in South Sudan after the civil wars in their country.

The main question of the thesis will analyze the roles women played in the peacebuilding scenario after South Sudan's civil wars. This question will be addressed within the context of how the conflicts in South Sudan impacted women, as well as the roles they played during these conflicts. The goal is to explore whether or not women had a meaningful participation in the peacebuilding context of South Sudan, as well as to understand what influenced the degree of their inclusion.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter examines the nature of "new wars" and other key concepts in conflict and women studies. The second chapter analyses the history and implementation of UN's frameworks surrounding women's roles in peacebuilding. In the third chapter, the case study on peacebuilding in South Sudan is analyzed and discussed to better understand the importance of women's participation in the process, and the consequences that both their inclusion and exclusion can have. The main goal of this thesis is to study the cruciality of inclusive peacebuilding, and to understand which obstacles stand in the way of their achievement.

Resumo

O objeto desta dissertação é a lacuna que existe entre a retórica e a implementação da Resolução do Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas 1325, dedicada à importância da participação das mulheres nos processos de *Peacebuilding*. Dentro do estudo de caso do Sudão do Sul, analisaremos os maiores obstáculos à aplicação daquela resolução, abordando as medidas implementadas e as condições nas quais as mulheres Sul-Sudanesas vivem, após as guerras civis no seu país.

A questão principal da tese incide sobre os papéis que foram concedidos às mulheres nos processos de paz que decorreram durante a fase de *Peacebuilding* após as guerras civis no Sudão do Sul. Esta questão será estudada tendo em conta o impacto que os conflitos no Sudão do Sul tiveram nas mulheres, assim como os papéis que por estas foram desempenhados.

O objetivo dessa tese é analisar se as mulheres participaram significativamente no contexto de *Peacebuilding* no Sudão do Sul, assim como perceber quais os fatores que influenciaram a medida dessa inclusão. Esta dissertação está dividida em três capítulos. O primeiro capítulo examina a natureza das alegadas “novas guerras” e outros conceitos-chave dos estudos sobre conflito e género. O segundo capítulo descreve a história da participação das mulheres nos processos de *Peacebuilding* das Nações Unidas. No terceiro capítulo, o estudo de caso sobre o *Peacebuilding* no Sudão do Sul será discutido de modo a mostrar a importância da participação das mulheres naquele processo, assim como as consequências que a sua inclusão – ou a falta dela – podem ter. Este estudo procura aferir a importância de processos de *Peacebuilding* inclusivos, e perceber quais os obstáculos que impedem a sua concretização.

List of Abbreviations

- ARCSS** Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan
- CPA** Comprehensive Peace Agreement
- DDR** Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
- ECOSOC** United Nations Economic and Social Council
- GNU** Government of National Unity
- HLRF** High-Level Revitalization Forum
- ICC** International Criminal Court
- IGAD** Intergovernmental Authority on Development
- ILO** International Labor Office
- JEM** Justice and Equality Movement
- NCP** National Congress Party
- NGO** Non-Governmental Organization
- R-ARCSS** Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan
- SLM/A** Sudan Liberation Movement/Army
- SPLM/A** Sudan People's Liberation Movement or Army
- SPLM/A-IO** Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition
- UN** United Nations
- UNDP** United Nations Development Programme
- UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UNICEF** International Children's Emergency Fund
- UNIFEM** United Nations Development Fund for Women
- UNMISS** United Nations Mission in South Sudan
- UNSCR** United Nations Security Council Resolution
- USAID** United States Agency for International Development
- WAV** Women Aid Vision
- WHO** World Health Organization
- WILPF** Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
- WPS** Women, Peace and Security
- WPT** Women Peacekeeping Team

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Introduction

*“Women belong in all places where decisions are being made.
It shouldn’t be that women are the exception.”*
(Ruth Bader Ginsburg, 2009)¹

United Nations (UN) missions have been deployed across the globe in order to help rebuild war-torn communities. However, the processes involved in the peacebuilding period still exclude women. It was against this background that the UN began to acknowledge the need for a gender-oriented approach in conflict resolution and peacebuilding missions. On October 31st, 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1325² (UNSCR 1325), containing a framework to enhance women’s roles in the peacebuilding arena. This document served as the foundation for the UN’s Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, that works at a global level to “promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.”³

Though this resolution was a watershed moment for women in conflict-affected states, by formally recognizing the differences in the consequences and challenges conflict and post-conflict scenarios bring into men and women’s lives, its rhetoric wasn’t satisfactorily brought to life. Ten years ago, “women’s issues” were treated as marginal to the main peacebuilding agenda. Nowadays, on the UNSCR 1325’s twentieth anniversary, women continue to be excluded from formal peace processes, and their contributions are frequently devalued.⁴

¹US News. “Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Experience Shows the Supreme Court Needs More Women.” Online. Available at: <https://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/mary-kate-cary/2009/05/20/ruth-bader-ginsburgs-experience-shows-the-supreme-court-needs-more-women> (accessed 4/2/2021)

²UN Security Council Resolution 1325, October 31st, 2000. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed 18/9/2020)

³ Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. “Why Women, Peace and Security”. Available at: <https://www.peacewomen.org/why-WPS> (accessed 28/5/2020)

⁴Stacie Beever, “Women’s Role in Peacebuilding: Nicaragua, El Salvador, And Guatemala Compared”, (MA Dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, Canada, 2010: 21)

1. Context and Research Question

Although there has been a decrease in interstate war, we continue to witness numerous situations of conflict and violence. The changing nature of war meant the entities responsible for resolving conflicts and establishing a lasting peace had to adapt.⁵ The UN is primarily in charge of such tasks. In Chapter VI of the UN's Charter⁶ and other provisions in its diplomas, we can find the UN Security Council's responsibility for the maintenance of international peace. This mission is carried out by preventing conflict, bringing warring parties to peace, and creating conditions for this peace to be sustained. UN peacebuilding missions have been incredibly useful in achieving the latter, namely by helping countries rehabilitate their conditions of health and security. To accompany the decline of traditional wars in the post-"Cold War" world, the Agenda for Peace by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the UN Secretary General at the time, was implemented in 1992. It defined peacebuilding as "action to solidify peace and avoid relapse into conflict."⁷ Its framework was meant to keep up with the surge of deaths outside the battlefield, the inclusion of nonstate actors in wars, and other factors leading to state vulnerability. From then on, UN missions included non-military operations and adopted "multidimensional missions", as opposed to the previous mandates, composed of mediation between nation states.

As the line between the civil and military spheres is blurred, civilians are not spared from violence. Everywhere in the world, ethnic conflicts, genocide and drug trade are on the rise, or at least we have more information about it, mostly because of new technological possibilities

⁵ Mary Kaldor, "In Defence of New Wars," *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2, no. 1 (July 2013): p. 4, <https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.at>.

⁶United Nations Charter. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/> (accessed 14/12/2020)

⁷ More recently, peacebuilding has been defined as involving "a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives." (Source: Decision of the Secretary-General's Policy Committee, May 2007)

for mobility and communication, in general. Notwithstanding the efforts made in order to adapt to the new reality, peace is still intangible for millions of people, most of them women and children.⁸ Given this scenario, it seems clear that a different approach is needed, one with an all-encompassing vision, adapted to the local context and, more specifically, the gender-sensitive and participatory approach that UNSCR 1325 calls for. This approach, as UN Women puts it, “sees women as multi-faceted actors in conflict and post-conflict situations, and promotes women’s participation at all stages of peacebuilding.”⁹

UNSCR 1325

During the last century, movements worldwide were able to bring attentions to women’s vulnerability in conflict and post-conflict scenarios. Whilst conflicts affect the whole community, the preexisting unequal gender roles and relations make life even more difficult for women and girls. Evidence suggests that women and girls are often the targets of gender-based violence during conflict, which is used as a weapon of war.¹⁰ Their vulnerability is exacerbated by “inadequate access to health services and welfare, fewer economic opportunities as well as diminished political participation.”¹¹

However, during the conflict, traditionally believed to be fought by men, women take on different roles and responsibilities. The absence of men for long periods of time allows women to develop a new set of skills and abilities, since they are forced to assume different roles. They get to experience life outside of their daily routine, which consists of taking care of their homes and children, and start participating and discussing public affairs, most of them for the first time

⁸ Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, “Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters” (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), 16.

⁹ UN Women, “UN Volunteers supporting gender-responsive peacebuilding on the ground”, October 31st, 2016. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/10/un-volunteers-supporting-gender-responsive-peacebuilding-on-the-ground> (accessed 9/9/2020)

¹⁰ Ann Kangas, Huma Haider, Erika Fraser & Evie Browne. “Gender: Topic Guide.” (Revised ed.) Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham, UK. 2014.

¹¹ South Sudan 2017 Human Rights Report. Online. Available at: <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1056181/download> (accessed 14/12/2020)

ever. They develop critical skills and knowledge that can be extremely valuable in the processes that peacebuilding entails. Nevertheless, these are frequently overlooked.

The importance of women's participation in peacebuilding was recognized by the UNSCR 1325, yet women in war ridden communities are still struggling for their perspectives to be included in formal peace talks. Women's voices are continuously marginalized and ignored in formal missions, as reports from UN Women show.¹² This limits their impact on formal peacebuilding, as Nicola Pratt and Sophie Richter-Devroe examine in their article "Critically Examining UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security," (2011: 490-5). Despite that, there has been a marginal increase in the number of women involved in formal peace talks. Peace initiatives in countries such as Burundi¹³ and Colombia¹⁴ have had grassroot women's associations as their backbone.

South Sudan

Soon after South Sudan became an independent state, in 2011, internal conflicts struck, leading to a humanitarian crisis. The civil war that began in 2013 stemmed from tensions between President Salva Kiir and his opposition forces, made up of soldiers whose loyalty lied with the former Vice-President Riek Machar. Since both parties were supported by the ethnic divides in South Sudan, war took over the country when rebels targeted the President's ethnic group (Dinka), and government military attacked Machar's side, Nuer. Both sides attended peace talks in Ethiopia in 2014, and, under threat of international sanctions and several rounds of negotiations, signed a deal in August 2015.

¹² Pablo Castillo Diaz and Simon Tordjam. "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence." UN Women (2012): 1

¹³UN Women, "Women mediators promote peace in Burundi". Online. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/1/women-mediators-promote-peace-in-burundi> (accessed 30/6/2020)

¹⁴UN News, "Women the 'driving force' for peacebuilding in Colombia: Deputy UN chief". Online. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/10/1076522> (accessed 1/11/2020)

Machar returned to South Sudan after a two-year exile to be sworn as vice president. Soon after, violence between government forces and opposition factions returned. Between 2017 and 2018, cease-fires were negotiated and then violated between the two main actors and other factions.

In December 2013, the deployment of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was authorized by the UN Security Council.¹⁵ Its mandate has been consecutively extended and is now meant to last until March 15th, 2021. It has shifted from nation-building efforts to civilian protection. On February 2020, an official end to the civil war was reached, when President Salva Kiir swore Riek Machar as his deputy, and created a transitional government, which will lead the country to elections in 3 years. Although South Sudanese most likely have little faith that this peace will last, we believe there are reasons to be hopeful about their new government, namely the fact that, as of 2021, a Hybrid Court to prosecute human rights violations was established. It might be a small step, but it was taken in the right direction, and it might bring some much needed closure to the victims of these conflicts.

Extreme human rights violations, including the targeting of civilians, recruiting of children, rape, sexual violence, and the economic decline caused by damaged infrastructures caused around 383,000 deaths and the displacement of over 4 million people.¹⁶ As in most conflicts around the world, the women and girls of South Sudan were disproportionately affected by the civil wars. Sexual and gender-based violence¹⁷ reached unprecedented levels, and they saw their

¹⁵ UNMISS Fact Sheet. Online. Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unmiss> (accessed 14/9/2020)

¹⁶ Council on Foreign Relations, "Civil War in South Sudan | Global Conflict Tracker," Online. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/civil-war-south-sudan> (accessed 30/6/2020)

¹⁷ Gender-based violence can be described as "violence directed against a person because of that person's gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately." It can include "violence against women, domestic violence against women, men or children living in the same domestic unit." Source: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-based-violence/what-gender-based-violence_en (accessed 5/2/2021)

homes and communities fall apart.¹⁸ Most of the displaced people were women, girls and children. The case study of South Sudan inspired an interest, not only because it went through a phase of peacebuilding quite recently, but also because it is, from our point of view, a nation whose culture grossly undervalues their women, which, curiously enough, are the backbone of their families, communities, and of their whole country.

Burdened with having to look after their families in these dire circumstances, South Sudanese women were eager for the civil war to come to an end, so that attentions would be drawn towards rebuilding a cohesive community and nation, as reports from UN Women show.¹⁹ However, most of them were left out from peace talks, which took away their opportunity to make any significant progress to mitigate gender inequality and discrimination in the post-civil war society.

Considering this context, this dissertation seeks to answer the central question of **which roles women played within the peacebuilding scenario, in the wake of South Sudan's civil wars.**

This question must be understood within the context of how the conflicts in South Sudan impacted women, and the roles they played during the conflict.

As possible hypothesis to this question, we could consider that:

- a) Women were excluded from formal peace talks in South Sudan
- b) Women participated and helped consolidate peacebuilding in South Sudan

Other findings connected to our research would suggest, for example, that there was a difficulty implementing UNSCR 1325 to the circumstances in South Sudan and that there were major obstacles withholding women from partaking in peace processes.

¹⁸ Addis Ababa, "Building Peace and Security in South Sudan: The Central Role of Women and Girls". Online. Available at: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/central-role-women-girls/id2363971/> (accessed 20/9/2020)

¹⁹ UN Women, "New report from UN Women unveils far-reaching alternative policy agenda to transform economies and make gender equality a reality", April 27th, 2015. Online. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/4/press-release-new-report-from-un-women-unveils-far-reaching-alternative-policy-agenda> (accessed 20/9/2020)

2. Motivation

The case study will focus on the economic, social, cultural, and political roles that women played in peacebuilding in South Sudan. It intends to make the need for the amplification of women's voices in peace processes clear, as well as to show the necessity to adapt peace processes to this realization. South Sudan was chosen as the case study because its government adopted measures to promote women's participation in public life, under guidance from UNMISS, which seemed like a good place to start the post-conflict period.²⁰ Namely in the transitional Constitution, provisions were taken towards this goal. However, South Sudanese women are still neglected. Their roles in the economic, cultural, and political fields in post-conflict development are undervalued, notwithstanding the government's commitment to gender equality.

The object of this study was inspired by Cynthia Cockburn's literature, who mentions that "to be fully effective the peace movement itself requires gender awareness. Some women clearly feel they must oppose war not only as people but as women." (Cockburn, 2013: 23) She is amongst those authors who bring attention to the cruciality of the gender aspect in peace studies, hence the inclusion of her work in this study.

As we will show in this dissertation, the extent to which women are involved in formal peace talks directly affects how their lives will play out after the conflict resolution has finished, which means their involvement in those processes is crucial.²¹ With this study, we want to show that gender equality is not a "trend", nor something we should forget, because it has already been achieved. We might be led to believe, that women no longer have to struggle to have their voices heard by their husbands, by their bosses or by their government, or that they have full

²⁰ UNMISS Fact Sheet. Online. Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unmiss> (accessed 14/9/2020)

²¹ Report of the Secretary-General on enhancing mediation and its support activities. Online. Available at: <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Cote%20d'Ivoire%20S%202009189.pdf> (accessed 20/9/2020)

power over how to live their lives. But we have to see further than our own “bubble.” We might be able to leave the house without any permission, to apply for any job, to travel anywhere, to marry anyone, to chose to not have kids, but girls across the Mediterranean, who have just recently survived years of war, are not allowed to leave their houses by their older husbands, and are forced to live a silent life they’ll never have the opportunity to change. Our empowerment as women does not mean much unless it reaches every woman. As poet Audrey Lorde said, “I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.”²²

3. State of the Art

UNSCR 1325 refers to women’s participation as their roles and equal partaking in processes of prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in peacebuilding. It recognizes how these roles must be enhanced. Ever since it was released, in 2000, by the United Nations Security Council, arguments were raised for women’s participation in the peacebuilding arena, given its positive impact on its processes and results.²³

The UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), regarding the importance that women can have in peacebuilding, has shown that one of the reasons why they should be involved in the post-conflict reconstruction is the difference between men and women’s experience in conflict and in everyday lives, which impacts how they view peace processes. When women take part in conflict transformation, there is a deeper, more thorough understanding of the background of the conflict, as well as solutions for it. These solutions have a higher chance of creating a sustainable peace, since they address more issues, as reports from Kavitha Suthanthiraraj and

²² Audre Lorde, “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism.” Online. Available at: <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1981-audre-lorde-uses-anger-women-responding-racism/> (accessed 7/2/2021)

²³ Lisa Schirch and Manjirika Sewak, “The Role of Women in Peacebuilding,” Issue Paper, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. European Center for Conflict Prevention, Utrecht. 2005.

Cristina Ayo showed.²⁴ Including women in peace negotiations would make them richer and more reflective of the problems each nation struggles with.²⁵

The difficulties regarding women's inclusion in peacebuilding stem from struggles women have found in participating in their communities prior to the conflict, mostly caused by socio-economic inequalities and exclusion.²⁶ The lack of democratic representation they feel means their interests are excluded from how society, justice, development and politics are managed.²⁷ Full participation is still withheld from women, either because they lack resources and education, have time-consuming familial obligations, or due to a non-inclusive leadership. In South Sudan, this is particularly worrisome, given the high numbers of illiteracy, early marriage and high maternal mortality, which worsen the alienation of women from public life.²⁸ Since women play a crucial yet hidden role in the South Sudanese society, keeping them away from the reconstruction process can seriously hinder it.

Research has shown how the full and meaningful participation of women is intricately linked to higher odds of achieving sustainable peace, and economic and social development.²⁹ Some women have been able to participate in their community reconstruction (Suthanthiraraj and Ayo, 2010: 5). However, for most women in conflict-affected countries, patriarchal cultures, cultural barriers and lack of resources keep them from using their knowledge and experiences

²⁴ Promoting Women's Participation in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies How Women Worldwide are Making and Building Peace. Online. Available at: http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/NGO/part_promotingwomen_globalaction_2010.pdf (accessed 25/9/2020)

²⁵ Antonia Potter, 2008, Women, Gender and Peacemaking in Civil Wars. In: Darby J., Ginty R.M. (eds) Contemporary Peacemaking. Palgrave Macmillan, London: 105-19

²⁶ Niamh Reilly, 2007. Seeking gender justice in post-conflict transitions: towards a transformative women's human rights approach. *International Journal of Law in Context*, 3 (2), 155-72.

²⁷ Karambu L. Ringera. *Excluded Voices: Grassroots Women and Peacebuilding in Southern Sudan*. (2008): 102.

²⁸ Friedrike Bubenzer and Orly Stern, *Hope, Pain & Patience. The Lives of Women in South Sudan*. Auckland Park, South Africa: Fanele (2011): 160

²⁹ Jane Namadi, "Taking on new challenges: South Sudanese women in service delivery" in . Hope, Pain & Patience. *The lives of women in South Sudan*. Auckland Park, South Africa: Fanele (2011): 163-8

in the formal peacebuilding arena.³⁰ Their initial efforts to voice their concerns in security, social, civil and economic matters don't reach the final stage of the process, and aren't reflected in the formal frameworks that are created afterwards.

The peace processes and the negotiations they entail aren't meant to just put an end to a conflict. They create windows of opportunity to change a whole country, including its politics.³¹ By bringing women into the discussions, their quality and chances of success are increased, since they enhance the chances of creating a society based on values of justice and equality.³²

Another argument comes from Elisabeth Porter³³, who tells us that the skills that women develop in civil society should be promoted, since peace supported at grassroots is more likely to last. When women realized they wouldn't be allowed a place in leadership positions or in political structures, they channeled their efforts towards an informal community. This was the case in South Sudan, where grassroots organizations focused on informal peacebuilding made efforts to rebuild society. Women in these associations work towards building peace from the bottom upwards. They help each other recover their living conditions, through the provision of healthcare services, food, shelter, education and support, in cases of sexual and gender-based violence. These associations are also used as platforms for discussion on topics that concern women and girls, such as early pregnancy, insecurity caused by rebel groups, and income generating activities, as reports by Women and Peacebuilding in Africa show.³⁴

³⁰ Elisabeth Porter, "Women, Political Decision-Making, and Peace-Building," *Global Change, Peace & Security* 15, no. 3 (2003): 245-62

³¹ Miriam J. Anderson, 'Windows of Opportunity: How Women Seize Peace Negotiations for Political Change. New York, NY: Oxford University Press (2016): 11-30

³² Elisabeth Porter "Women, Political Decision-Making, and Peace-Building," *Global Change, Peace & Security* 15, no. 3 (2003): 245-262.

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Women and Peacebuilding in Africa. Institute for Security Studies. Online. Available at: <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/WomanPeaceNov08.pdf> (accessed 28/9/2020)

Women can bring different points of view and concerns to conversations, which can help reconciliation and set the precedent for other societies. As Ban Ki-Moon mentioned³⁵, women must be represented in peace processes not only as participants and observers, but also in agenda-setting – in both its discussion and implementation - to change pre-conflict gender inequalities, so that the new society can be socially just. For this to happen, women must be welcomed into formal peace structures, and allowed to participate in negotiations and agreements as mediators and signatories. This can help war-torn societies stray from the status quo that existed prior to the conflict, and that led to it, as Sanam Naraghi Anderlini mentions.

Furthermore, a final argument in order to support women’s participation in peace processes is that “inclusiveness is necessary to ensure the legitimacy of the decision-making process, to encourage a broad base of participation and to make sustainable peace and development possible”.³⁶ It seems clear that all those affected by the conflict should have a say in its resolution (Anderlini, 2007:17). Otherwise, knowledge and resources would be lost, resulting in a compromise of the peace process.

Women’s exclusion doesn’t only affect politics in the post-conflict society (Porter, 2003: 262), but social, economic, judicial fields, as well. The challenges South Sudan has found in the post-conflict era cannot be used as an excuse to overlook gender inequality issues. They should, instead, says Nada Mustafa Ali, be used as a platform for discussion, so that security, peace, and economic development can be achieved, by allowing a reconsideration of gender roles and the empowerment of women (Ali, 2011:1). Women’s rights and gender equality can help South

³⁵ Report of the Secretary-General on enhancing mediation and its support activities. Online. Available at: <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Cote%20d'Ivoire%20S%202009189.pdf> (accessed 20/9/2020)

³⁶ UN Women, “Securing the Peace: Guiding the International Community towards Women's Effective Participation throughout Peace Processes”. Online. Available at: http://www.unifem.org/attachments/products/Securing_the_Peace.pdf (accessed 14/12/2020)

Sudan maintain a functioning state and set an example for countries that have been destroyed by armed conflict.

However, many criticize the agenda that was started by UNSCR 1325. While some criticize the resolution itself for its shortcomings³⁷, others blame a lack of commitment from the UN and other humanitarian organizations for their failure to implement it. Some claim that the reason behind the lack of development in this field is the absence of an entity that assures the responsibilities created by UNSCR 1325 are being fulfilled.³⁸ Therefore, although we can argue for a gender-focused approach to conflict resolution and to peacebuilding, this approach isn't without flaws. Those in charge of implementing its programs often fail to adopt them or do it in a manner that isn't context-specific, which can be harmful.

4. Methodology and Case Study

The dissertation is predominantly based on a qualitative research design, through which the dimensions of women's participation in peacebuilding will be assessed. It is also based on theoretical frameworks from various authors relating to the topic of women's participation in peacebuilding, namely International Relations feminist theory and Empowerment theory. The qualitative method will allow an understanding of women's inclusion in conflict resolution, by showing the underlying obstacles and challenges. Whereas Empowerment theory will allow us to understand how important it is that women proactively make decisions and choices to change their lives, International Relations feminist theory will allow us to see the cruciality of the inclusion and influence of women in decision-making processes. Both these theoretical

³⁷ ACCORD, Resolution 1325 in 2020: Looking Forward, Looking Back (2010) Online. Available at: <https://www.accord.org.za/publication/resolution-1325-in-2020/> (accessed 15/9/2020)

³⁸ UN Women, UN strategic results framework on women, peace and security: 2011–2020. Online. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/docs/2011/7/un-strategic-results-framework-on-women-peace-and-security> (accessed 28/9/2020)

frameworks are relevant to this study in the sense that they focus on enhancing women's role in society and promoting their rights across every sphere of public life.

The data used will be collected from secondary sources, mainly UN documents and reports, academic journals, newspaper articles, working papers, books, and relevant online sources. Although using this method won't allow control over the quality of the data, it allows more time to focus on its analysis. To gather some conclusions concerning the main challenges in this field, we will address both the frameworks and policies in place, as well as the circumstances women face in South Sudan.

The civil wars in South Sudan are some of the many conflicts that can be used to analyze the roles that women play during conflicts and their resolution, as well as the impact these have on their lives. In South Sudan's case, given its history of conflict, gender inequality deeply affects women, who suffer from low literacy levels, lack of socio-economic opportunities, and poverty. Furthermore, their cultural traditions worsen this scenario, namely the commonly held belief that instead of pursuing education, women should marry at a young age. As we will see, this inhibits women from influencing the reconstruction of their country.

Given this background, it seems important to study South Sudan's case. In a region deeply scarred by gender inequality, the issue of women's participation in conflict resolution is especially pressing.

5. Dissertation Structure

The structure of this thesis follows: Chapter 1 will provide an insight into contemporary conflicts, and how women are affected by them. It will also look into the theoretical framework

of Empowerment theory, International Relations Feminist theory and gendered perceptions of conflict and post-conflict scenarios. Chapter 2 will investigate how the UN has dealt with the issue of women's participation in peacebuilding, how UNSCR 1325 came to be and how it has been implemented. Chapter 3 will present an overview of South Sudan's past conflicts, and the effect these had on women's rights and gender equality. It will also present the difficulties in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the South Sudanese context. Lastly, the conclusion will analyze the findings and trace them back to the theoretical frameworks of Chapter 1.

As the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the second female justice of the United States' Supreme Court, mentioned in an interview with USA TODAY, women should be involved in decision-making.³⁹ In this, she is accompanied by many young women, namely Malala Yousafzai, who believes that, as a historically excluded and discriminated group, if women continue to be the exception in leadership positions, our development as a free and equal society is stalled, because "we cannot all succeed when half of us are held back."⁴⁰

³⁹ US News. "Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Experience Shows the Supreme Court Needs More Women." Online. Available at: <https://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/mary-kate-cary/2009/05/20/ruth-bader-ginsburgs-experience-shows-the-supreme-court-needs-more-women> (accessed 4/2/2021)

⁴⁰ Malala Yousafzai's speech at the Youth Takeover of the United Nations. Online. Available at: <https://theirworld.org/explainers/malala-yousafzais-speech-at-the-youth-takeover-of-the-united-nations> (accessed 08/01/2020)

Chapter 1

Key Concepts in Conflict and Women Studies

“Women are leaders everywhere you look—from the CEO who runs a Fortune 500 company to the housewife who raises her children and heads her household. Our country was built by strong women, and we will continue to break down walls and defy stereotypes.”
(Nancy Pelosi, n.d.)⁴¹

Debates have been held across the academic fields of political theory, international relations, political economy, and sociology surrounding the topic of transformation of war. Traditional conceptions of war have changed, some argue, and should be replaced with others that are more fitting, given the characteristics of contemporary conflicts. These mutations have, of course, impacted theoretical frameworks of war, international law, and humanitarian interventions. However, these haven't exactly been able to keep up with the changing times, which has caused them to fall short on their functions to prevent and mitigate warfare.⁴²

1.1 International Conflicts Today

The organized violence we have come to witness in the 21st century has been at the center of debates regarding the changing logic of war. “New wars”, a concept developed, among others, by Mary Kaldor, represents an analytical approach, conceptualized in order to understand more recent conflicts. According to Kaldor, new wars can be described as a social condition that entails diverse features, such as the multiplicity and complexity of actors, the non-distinction between civilians and the army, and long lasting, decentralized violence. In regards to the actors, they include those trying to put an end to the violence – for example, international organizations, civilian police, and humanitarian

⁴¹ “What Students Should Know About Women’s History Month”. PhD Studies. Online. Available at: <https://www.phdstudies.com/article/what-students-should-know-about-womens-history-month/> (accessed 5/2/2021)

⁴² Michael von der Schulenburg, “Keeping or Building Peace? The Challenges of Solving Armed Intra-state Conflicts”, Center on International Cooperation, New York University (2014): 2

aid workers, and protagonists – such as terrorists, organized criminal gangs, and armed groups. These actors operate across time, space, and state borders.⁴³

The violence that takes place in these new wars happens at both the local and transnational level and is commonly perpetrated for the sake of identity – either tribal, religious or ethnic, instead of geopolitical goals or ideological motivations. Nonstate actors, such as religious, liberation and ethnic groups are very often involved in these conflicts. Their goals don't concern resources or ideology, like the war in Vietnam or the "Cold War". Instead, they overlap and sometimes mesh.⁴⁴

These wars are supported by a predatory political economy, oftentimes caused by lack of natural resources, pillage, looting and smuggling. Violence directed at civilians is frequently brought into play as a means for political control, which terrorizes populations and causes mass displacement. However, Kaldor highlights how these characteristics are not what makes "new wars" new; their newness comes from the logic they result in. These propositions stand in contradiction to the idea that war theorists tend to cling to, which derives from the works of Carl von Clausewitz. This Prussian strategist's idea of war is made up of a political contest between two (or more) sides, either states, or a state and one or more rebel groups, in the case of a civil war.⁴⁵ Whereas old wars were characterized by high levels of violence, perpetrated by all sides of the battle trying to win, in new wars, there is a logic of continuing and spreading violence, hence why they last longer than old wars. For example, as of 2020, conflicts in Afghanistan have been going on intermittently since 1978.

Kaldor's concept of new wars is best understood if seen as a mutual enterprise, during which the parties involved have more to gain from continued violence than from trying to defeat the other side and terminate the conflict.⁴⁶ Kaldor observes that, while in old wars there were clear distinctions

⁴³ Mary Kaldor, "New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era" (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 10.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 28.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 94

⁴⁶ Christine Chinkin and Mary Kaldor, "International Law and New Wars" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 7.

between the time and space of the conflict, nowadays, we can't tell where the battlefield begins and where it ends, nor can we be certain that a war is over. The actors involved in the war are diverse and the networks between them are complex, which means there are very few, if any, safe zones.

Whilst Clausewitz described how some participants would be very undisciplined and, at times, cruel, he didn't see these men as soldiers. *On War* (1976) [1832], Clausewitz's book which still serves as a foundation for studies on armed conflict, depicts soldiers⁴⁷ as rule-abiding, focused and honorable men, as we can see in his own words: "The end for which a soldier is recruited, clothed, armed, and trained, the whole object of his sleeping, eating, drinking, and marching is simply that he should fight at the right place and the right time." (Clausewitz, 1976: 95). In direct contradiction to them, Clausewitz puts terrorists and other criminals and clans that would kill and sack, following no rule or principle, merely acting out of pure instincts of rage of violence.⁴⁸

Nowadays, states are not the sole or primary actors in war. They are now accompanied by non-state forces, such as ethnic and religious groups, who no longer fight each other in one central, decisive encounter.⁴⁹ Relating to this consideration is Herfried Münkler's position, expressed in his book *The New Wars* (2003), that recognizes the tendency of new wars to last longer than ordinary ones. Just as Kaldor⁵⁰ acknowledges the interests that are at play in new wars, both political and economic, that tend to make it last for long periods of time (Kaldor, 2012: 90–1), so does Münkler see a "long war of endurance" (Münkler, 2003: 9), without a set beginning or

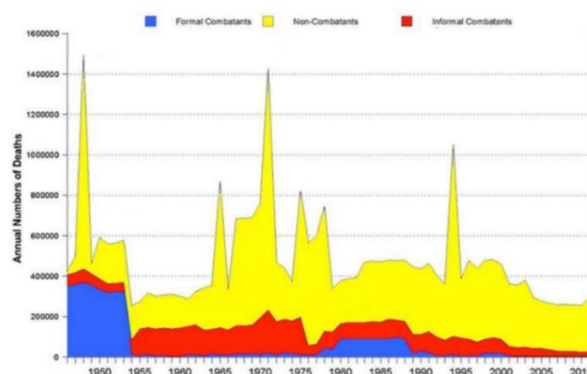
⁴⁷ Carl Clausewitz, "On War." Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Ed., Trans. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 76.

⁴⁸ Carl Clausewitz, "The Arming of the People," Clausewitz on Small Wars. Christopher Daase and James W. Davis, Eds, Trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 205.

⁴⁹ Mary Kaldor, "Inconclusive Wars: Is Clausewitz Still Relevant in These Global Times?," *Global Policy* 1, no. 3 (2010): 275.

end. There isn't constant violence, but intermittent bursts of it, spread apart during a period much longer than that of Clausewitzian wars. As Kaldor explains, these wars last longer due to interests at play: "The inner tendency of such wars is not war without limits but war without end. Wars, defined in this way, create shared self-perpetuating interest in war to reproduce political identity and to further economic interests," (Kaldor, 2010:275).

The conflicts between them do not revolve around the goal of achieving a specific military victory, but are more related to achieving political control and pursuing economic interests, through terror and violence. Civilians, who used to be spared by military forces, are now oftentimes the main targets. Kaldor theorizes that when the "Cold War" ended, the erosion of the Clausewitzian framework of interstate war began, and a new concept of war, marked by civilian terror, took its place, something which Martin von Creveld also defended, in *The Transformation of War* (1991).⁵¹ As we can see in the chart, the features of war changed strongly in the last decades.



(Source: Center for Systemic Peace⁵², 2014)

⁵¹ Martin Von Creveld, "The Transformation of War" (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 40

⁵² According to their website, the Center for Systemic Peace is a not-for-profit corporation that supports scientific research and quantitative analysis in matters "related to the fundamental problems of violence in both human relations and societal-systemic development processes." Online. Available at: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/mission.html> (accessed 08/01/2020)

Here, it becomes evident how civilians are no longer left out of the conflict but are very often victims. The warring parties merely want to keep a constant state of war in order to achieve profit, and, oftentimes, have no goal to achieve besides continued violence. The wars that we are currently witnessing, as opposed to the 19th and 20th centuries wars that took place in Europe, are “inconclusive, long lasting and have a tendency to spread.”⁵³ Kaldor believes that this shift occurred because the inner nature of wars has changed. Kaldor, then, dismisses these Clausewitzian beliefs by stating that “the use of military means to defeat another state”⁵⁴ as well as his state-centric approach to warfare are no longer the most reliable framework through which our present-day conflicts can be studied.⁵⁵

Within the context of new wars, there is a need for a deeper understanding about gender constructions and roles of women, something which, as we will address, might help create solutions that support a sustainable peace.⁵⁶

1.2 Perspectives on Women in Post-Conflict Scenarios

When studying International Relations, feminist theorists go beyond framing international politics in terms of inter-state politics. Gender, as they put it, shapes world politics. Women have been mostly invisible in global politics, something which feminist theories have tried to explain. Although they have been involved in international politics, women have often been assigned to social movements, rather than inter-state policymaking. Apart from this, they are merely victims or observers in international politics, but rarely the protagonists.

⁵³ Mary Kaldor, “Inconclusive Wars: Is Clausewitz Still Relevant in These Global Times?,” *Global Policy* 1, no. 3 (2010): 271.

⁵⁴ Mary Kaldor, “Elaborating the ‘New War’ Thesis,” in Isabelle Duyvesteyn and Jan Angstrom, eds., *Rethinking the Nature of War* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 221.

⁵⁵ The object of this study is not to analyze the contrast between Kaldor’s and Clausewitz’s theory, hence why this theme cannot be further developed within the scope of this dissertation.

⁵⁶ Christine Chinkin, Mary Kaldor and Punam Yadav, “Gender and New Wars”, *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 9(1), (2020): 1. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.733>

Although they have often been ignored by those with powerful positions, women's lives are impacted by their decisions. The violence, death, poverty, and scarcity that have affected most women and children in contemporary conflicts can only be understood if conflicts and their transformation are viewed through women's perspectives.

When we use gender to analyze conflicts, as International Relations feminist theorists do, we see how masculinity-associated characteristics are valued in global politics, and that women, as a group, suffer certain exacerbated insecurities by virtue of being women. This neglect happens often in peace settlements and post-conflict programs, for example, in programs of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR).⁵⁷ These programs tend to focus on male ex-combatants, but not on girls and women who developed accessory roles during conflict.⁵⁸

By taking this approach, it becomes clear how global policymaking and the economy affect women. To do this, as V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan say, we must wear "our gender-sensitive lenses" (Peterson and Runyan, 1999:2). If we do, we can recognize how gender shapes concepts, practices, and institutions. We will also see our preconceptions surrounding, for example, who we think are significant actors and which attributes they should have.⁵⁹

Gender-sensitive lenses are used by feminist theory to explain the subordination of women in global politics. They are embedded into international relations theories, such as liberalism, critical theory, constructivism, post-modernism, and post-colonialism, and use gender to analyze women's absence from leadership roles in global politics. Although those theories all result in different reasonings, they converge in the sense that they recognize the existence (and the importance) of the global actors' gender identity, and the fact that gender is common to all

⁵⁷ According to the UN, DDR consists of "removing weapons from the hands of members of armed groups, taking these combatants out of their groups and helping them to reintegrate as civilians into society," Online, Available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration> (accessed 24/9/2020)

⁵⁸ Matthew Levinger, *Conflict Analysis: Understanding Causes, Unlocking Solutions* (United States Institute of Peace, 2013): 51

⁵⁹ V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, "Global Gender Issues." 2 ed. (UK, Westview Press, 1999) 1-2

global processes. For example, when it comes to matters of security, gender lenses allow us to see how war and masculinity are associated. In military training, for example, feminine characteristics are “purged” from the man for him to become a soldier. The soldier must be a warrior who sacrifices himself to protect women, children, and other vulnerable people who can’t protect themselves. As Bobbi Gilder explains, “while soldiering is considered a masculine activity, peace and the need to be protected are typically defined as feminine” (Gilder, 2018: 153).

Men take life and women give life. Men protect and women are protected. Men are strong and courageous and women are weak and emotional. Men are responsible to the state and women to their family. Men are motivated to function in the horror of war by the thought of returning to the normalcy of the home as symbolized by mother, wife, sweetheart, and the nurses who care for them in battle. (McSally, 2011:149)

Through this quote, used in Gilder’s study, we can see how, when it comes to security, masculine characteristics are preferable, whereas feminine traits are something to avoid. When threats to national security occur, this militarized masculinity is the first solution that states opt for. Conciliatory policy-making takes a back seat, making it harder for women’s voices to be deemed legitimate in matters of security policy.

In *The Globalization of World Politics* (2012), security is defined by feminist theory as “the diminution of all forms of violence, physical, economic, and ecological.”⁶⁰ The states’ conception of security, on the other hand, is defined in masculine terms and prioritizes military strength, over the physical and economic security of citizens. As we’ve shown, women’s subordination has been enhanced by the gender inequality that taints global issues.

Gender roles and relations have an enormous impact on how women live, on their development and empowerment. Stereotypes and beliefs surrounding women often keep them away from

⁶⁰ John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens, “The Globalization of World Politics” (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 512.

several areas of public life. Whether in the political arena, peacebuilding work, or any powerful role in society, women are denied, and their abilities are frequently overlooked and undervalued.

As we will argue, the gender perspective must be taken into consideration in peacebuilding processes. The post-conflict period is a delicate time. There are many changes to the identities of both the people who fought the war, and the ones who stayed home and kept their communities going. The identities women developed during conflict may clash with the pre-conflict gendered roles that combatant men left them with.⁶¹

Throughout this study, we will refer to gender, in contrast to sex, as “the historical and social construction of role differences between men and women” as defined by Oliver Ramsbotham et al.⁶² As they’ve mentioned, this description “implies a relationship of power, which has a pervasive effect on all areas of behavior and in all social institutions and practices.”⁶³

It’s important to acknowledge that, although we will focus mainly on women’s issues, gender is not to be taken exclusively as a women’s concern. As Antonia Potter tells us, “the consideration of women’s gendered roles in conflict and its aftermath is incomplete without the consideration of the gendered roles of the men with whom they share and must rebuild their societies.”⁶⁴

One frequent critique that feminist theorists make of peacebuilding concerns its gender blindness. Literature on international relations, armed conflict and peacebuilding has, for many

⁶¹ Antonia Potter, 2008. “Women, Gender and Peacemaking in Civil Wars.” In: J. Darby and R. Mac Ginty, “Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Peace Processes and Post-War Reconstruction” (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 105-19.

⁶² Oliver Ramsbotham, “Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts” (Cambridge: Polity, 2011): 305

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Antonia Potter, 2008. “Women, Gender and Peacemaking in Civil Wars.” In: J. Darby and R. Mac Ginty, “Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Peace Processes and Post-War Reconstruction” (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 109.

years, not acknowledged the presence of women in conflict and post-conflict scenarios. However, international relations are argued to be the starting point for feminism, which was able to give women some visibility, namely in the post-conflict arena, from the 80s onward.⁶⁵ A myriad of experiences and activities that women went through in several contexts were addressed for the first time and the difference between the effects that war had on men and women was brought up.

When sexual violence was recognized as one of the most brutal forms of violence suffered by women during armed conflict, the peacebuilding processes and studies surrounding them focused on women as victims. Women became a one-dimensional entity, whose character was marked only by the suffering they endured. Although sexual violence hasn't been linked to any underlying cause, its complexity and origins have been thoroughly analyzed by feminist theorists. The literature they have created has helped shed light on women's issues and concerns. First, it brings attention to the structural nature of the violence that women suffer during the conflict. Additionally, it argues that the justice mechanisms that take place during the transitional period have set a "gendered hierarchy of abuses" that ignores "socioeconomic injuries suffered predominantly by women as internally displaced persons, heads of households and refugees."⁶⁶ Feminist scholars have also helped shed light on the inability of institutional mechanisms to address the effects of war on women, given the narrowness of the testimonies gathered, which often relate to public violence⁶⁷ perpetrated in specific spaces.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Judith Ann. Tickner, "Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security" (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1992), 15.

⁶⁶ Christine Bell & Catherine O'Rourke, "Does Feminism Need a Theory of Transitional Justice? An Introductory Essay," *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 1 (2007): 23-44

⁶⁷ Brandon Hamber, "Transforming Societies After Political Violence: Truth, Reconciliation, and Mental Health." (London: Springer, 2009): 323-26

⁶⁸ Annemick Richters, "Violence, health and human rights: Challenges for medical anthropology," *Medische Antropologie*, 16 (2004): 157-181.

Women are also often misrepresented as “natural” peacemakers. Cynthia Cockburn regards this misconception as a “a dangerous political force”, that perpetuates the system of “women victim, male warrior.”⁶⁹ In fact, women have been found to develop different, at times risky strategies, and to challenge authorities during peacebuilding processes.⁷⁰ This shouldn’t be understood as a biological instinct, but as an active, conscious effort.⁷¹

As Catia Confortini mentions, the role of gender in the social construction of violence was not addressed by most feminist authors.⁷² Other feminists have also emphasized how gender is an important analytical tool to reveal the distribution of power, since its analysis tends to reveal an unequal distribution of privilege and power that leads to the escalation of conflict.⁷³

Recognition that women must be incorporated into both conflict and post-conflict tactics has risen through the years. Important milestones have been achieved thanks to feminist scholars and practitioners. One of the most significant ones was UNSCR 1325. This document formally recognizes women’s place in the peacebuilding field, as well as the importance of their inclusion into peace processes. This inclusion, however, has been the focus of much criticism by feminist authors.⁷⁴ The disapproval is sustained by the claim that a transformative feminist approach is needed, one that allows a different set of priorities, namely socioeconomic issues, to emerge.

⁶⁹ Cynthia Cockburn, “The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict.” (London : Zed, 1998), 13

⁷⁰ Selimović Johanna Mannergren, Brandt Åsa Nyquist, and Jacobson Agneta Söderberg, “Equal Power - Lasting Peace: Obstacles for Women's Participation in Peace Processes” (Johanneshov: Kvinna till kvinna, 2012), 13.

⁷¹ Cyril Selzner, “Woman as Peacemaker or the Ambivalent Politics of Myth,” *Miranda*, 2 (2010):7-8.

⁷² Catia Confortini, “Galtung, Violence, and Gender: The Case for a Peace Studies/Feminism Alliance,” *Peace & Change*, 31 (2006): 335

⁷³ Simona Sharoni, “Conflict Resolution: Feminist Perspectives”, *The International Studies Encyclopedia*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 4-9

⁷⁴ Christine Bell & Catherine O’Rourke, “Does Feminism Need a Theory of Transitional Justice? An Introductory Essay,” *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 1 (2007): 30

By crossing peace and conflict studies with feminist theories, it becomes clearer that gender has a great influence on the processes that peacebuilding entails. In order to make a country a place where people can peacefully coexist, these gender issues must be addressed, something that the inclusion of women can help achieve.

1.3 Gendered Perceptions of Conflict and Post-Conflict scenarios

Women play several roles during and after the conflict. Though there are blatant differences in discussions about women's involvement in conflict and post-conflict scenarios, it has been found that "women are rarely mere passive victims of conflict and should not be treated as such. Women play different roles in a conflict. They can even play active roles in the events that lead to fighting and instability, and even in combat itself."⁷⁵

1.3.1 Women as Victims

Most literature regarding conflict and post-conflict has depicted women as passive, innocent victims.⁷⁶ It's commonly mentioned that "most humanitarian aid reports and documents depict women as helpless victims in need of protection, irrespective of the different roles that women can play in times of war."⁷⁷ Government propaganda and the media have helped the persistence of this belief. Although other parts of women's participation in war are progressively making themselves known, the focus remains on their suffering.

Studies on how women are impacted by violence in war generally concentrate on matters such as large-scale displacement, killings, forced marriages and sexual violence.⁷⁸ In this sense, this

⁷⁵ Women & Conflict. An introductory guide for programming. USAID (2007): 2

⁷⁶ Donna T. Pankhurst, "The 'Sex War' and Other Wars: Towards a Feminist Approach to Peacebuilding". In: H. Afshar and D. Eade, *Development, Women, and War: feminist perspectives*. (Oxford: Oxfam, 2003), 3.

⁷⁷ Medina Haeri and Nadine Puechguirbal, "From Helplessness to Agency: Examining the plurality of women's experiences in armed conflict," *International Review of the Red Cross*. Volume 92 Number 877 (2010): 106

⁷⁸ Cheryl Hendricks, "Gender and security in Africa. An overview," (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika Institutet, 2011), 13

literature portrays women's inclusion in peace negotiations and mediation as necessary, given that those experiences and concerns must be reflected in the field of post-conflict reconstruction.⁷⁹ Other studies justify women's inclusion in peacebuilding by saying they have unique female interests.⁸⁰

The belief that women are, by nature, more peaceful than men, stems from feminist theory in the 70s and 80s. It was highly criticized at the time⁸¹ for reflecting gendered dichotomies and power hierarchies. It was also accused of perpetrating an idea of masculinity that depends on conceiving women as passive and in need of protection. Several feminist researchers have found that saying men being innately more violent can be used as justification for women's subordination. It can also serve to keep women away from powerful military and political positions.⁸² Therefore, deeming women as naturally peaceful can be harmful. It disempowers women and male peacemakers, who are considered "emasculated", since they are taking a position usually occupied by women.

It has been argued that the diversity of women's experiences in conflict has failed to be recognized at the international level. Even if we have distanced ourselves from mainstream literature, which depicts women as desperate victims in need of help or peaceful heroes who can solve all conflict, there is much work to be done to allow women's diverse roles to be acknowledged by international actors.

⁷⁹Cheryl Hendricks, "Gender and security in Africa. An overview." (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika Institutet, 2011), 7-9

⁸⁰ Ibid, 12

⁸¹Catia Confortini, "Galtung, Violence, and Gender: The Case for a Peace Studies/Feminism Alliance," *Peace & Change*, 31 (2006): 333

⁸² Ibid: 343

Women's contributions to peacebuilding processes are often overshadowed by their victimization and other stereotypes regarding their lives during conflict.⁸³ Most of the research in the field of women's participation in post-conflict reconstruction focuses on their roles as victims and passive aid beneficiaries. They often lack a point of view where women's input in peacebuilding is something valuable, that contributes to higher chances of success.⁸⁴ UNSCR 1325, on the contrary, refers to women's roles in conflict beyond victims. It considers women to be equal participants in peacebuilding and peacemaking issues.

Gender-based violence has been used by combatants and perpetrators in conflicts around the world as a weapon of war. Girls and women are singled out for imprisonment, torture, rape and execution.⁸⁵ Rape has been used as part of war strategy in conflicts such as the one in Congo, Sierra Leone and Liberia.⁸⁶ UN agencies' data shows that in all of these conflicts together, more than 300,000 women were raped.⁸⁷ More recently in Libya, troops were reported to have raped women as a tactic used against Libyan rebels.⁸⁸ Shortly after the Arab Spring, when Libya's leader toppled and the country was swarmed by chaos, as rival factions fought over its control and oil reserves, systematic rape was also often used as a weapon. Libyans, as well as refugees

⁸³UN Women, The Power of Women Peacebuilders. Online. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/10/compilation-the-power-of-women-peacebuilders> (accessed 24/9/2020)

⁸⁴ Theodora-Ismene Gizelis, "A Country of their Own: Women and Peacebuilding," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 28 (5) (2011): 520

⁸⁵Fatuma Ahmed Ali, "Women and conflict transformation in Africa," *Feminismo/s*, 9 (2007): 70 ISSN 1989-9998. Available at: <https://feminismos.ua.es/article/view/2007-n9-women-and-conflict-transformation-in-africa> (accessed: 18/11/2020)

⁸⁶ Pilar Estébanez, "Women in armed conflicts and wars", *The Role of women and Gender in Conflicts*. Spain Ministry of Defense. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE). Granada University – Army Training and Doctrine Command Combine Centre (2012): 258.

⁸⁷ Background Information on Sexual Violence used as a Tool of War. United Nations. Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/about/bgsexualviolence.shtml>. (accessed 30/8/2020)

⁸⁸ Lucinda Marshal, "Rape as a Weapon of War in Libya: New Permutations on an Old Theme." *Peace and Freedom* 71 (2) (2011): 24.

and migrants from Africa and the Middle East, who were passing through Libya, confessed to activists that they had been victims of sexual violence.⁸⁹

Given this background, several measures have been taken at the international level to grant some protection to victims of sexual violence in times of conflict. The International Criminal Court (ICC) judges crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes. Its jurisdiction reaches those who are directly responsible for committing these crimes, as well as those who aid, assist, or abet in the commission of the crimes. Together with Article Seven of the Rome Statute, which established the ICC, the jurisdiction of the ICC can help assure that crimes such as sexual violence don't take place within the territories of signatory states. This system has paved the way to create a criminal justice system to ensure justice is served within the rule of law (Rome Statute, 1999).⁹⁰ The Rome Statute also considers every form of sexual violence (such as rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization) as crimes against humanity, equating it to murder, extermination or enslavement.

This fight to eradicate gender-based violence, however, is far from over. In several regions affected by conflict, the rule of law isn't respected. In the Human Rights Watch's 2019 World Report⁹¹, several accounts of rape and sexual violence by soldiers were documented, but the governments of the countries in question, namely South Sudan, never addressed accountability for these crimes.⁹²

⁸⁹ Unspeakable Crime: Rape as a Weapon of War in Libya. Online. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/episode/2019/9/7/unspeakable-crime-rape-as-a-weapon-of-war-in-libya/> (accessed 29/9/2020)

⁹⁰ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/resource-library/documents/rs-eng.pdf> (accessed 26/9/2020)

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch World Report (2019): 536-40. Online. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/hrw_world_report_2019.pdf (accessed 25/11/2020)

⁹² South Sudan: Government Forces Abusing Civilians, Human Rights Watch. Online. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/04/south-sudan-government-forces-abusing-civilians> (accessed 26/9/2020)

As we've seen, we have substantial grounds to believe that women are victims of conflict. Estimates from UN Women point to a percentage of around 90% of war casualties being civilians, "the majority of whom are women and children".⁹³ Besides rape, sexual assault, forced prostitution, early and/or forced marriage, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization, and so on, women face several other concerns before, during, and after armed conflict,⁹⁴ such as unequal access to health services, especially infant and maternal healthcare resources. Their decision-making capacity is also limited, given their restricted access to education and financial resources.⁹⁵ This relates to the theory developed by Johan Galtung in the 1960s, which became extremely relevant in peace studies and was later used in the formulation of the concept of "peacebuilding", included in Boutros Boutros Ghali's "Agenda for Peace."⁹⁶ Galtung's work emphasized the importance of looking beneath the direct violence in order to find indirect violence, which is a product of structural and cultural violence. From then on, studies and policies started including cultural and structural change into reconciliation and peacebuilding process. This holistic approach has been the starting point for many feminist theorists, who have questioned the violence present in capitalist and patriarchal societies.

The "continuum of violence" is a concept often mentioned by feminist scholars. It mentions how the violence perpetrated against women during armed conflict isn't only committed by the enemy, nor does it begin and end when the conflict does.⁹⁷ Cockburn explains how the continuum of violence is a time continuum (pre-war, post-war, peacetime), of place (home,

⁹³ Women and Armed Conflict. Fact Sheet No. 5. UN Women. Online. Available at:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/session/presskit/fs5.htm> (accessed 26/9/2020)

⁹⁴ Jeanne Ward, Violence Against Women in Conflict, Post-Conflict and Emergency Settings. UN Women. (2013), 14

⁹⁵ Pilar Estébanez, "Women in Armed Conflicts and Wars", *The Role of Women and Gender in Conflicts*, Spain Ministry of Defense. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE). Granada University – Army Training and Doctrine Command Combine Centre. (2012): 444

⁹⁶ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, An agenda for peace : preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping. Online. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/145749> (accessed 23/9/2020)

⁹⁷ Cynthia Cockburn, "The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict." (London : Zed, 1998), 13

street, battlefield), and of scale (from military and paramilitary abuse to the institutional control over women's bodies).⁹⁸

During armed conflict, preexisting inequalities between genders are heightened. The beliefs surrounding women persist, including their identities as nurturers, mothers, wives, and guardians of culture. These gender roles and identities transform into perceptions of women as victims who need to be protected. They also make women more likely to become targeted by combatants. When women already suffer discrimination during peacetime, they become "particularly susceptible to marginalization, poverty and the suffering engendered by armed conflict,"⁹⁹ says Charlotte Lindsey.

Since they are considered the carriers of the community's spiritual and cultural values, women are often targets of ethnic cleansing and gender-based violence.¹⁰⁰ After being victims of sexual violence, women are ostracized by their community. This means that rape does not only constitute an attack on the fabric of a community, but also to the women's family and culture. As we've mentioned, since the civilian population is now more prone to getting caught amidst an armed conflict, women's vulnerability is exacerbated, since they have to sustain the family in the middle of a battlefield.¹⁰¹ Although we have strong evidence that women are, in many ways, victims during wars, the literature on this matter tends "to exaggerate the extent to which they play stereotypical gender roles in armed conflict".¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Cynthia Cockburn "Don't talk to me about war. My life's a battlefield", Open Democracy (2012). Available at: <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/dont-talk-to-me-about-war-my-lifes-battlefield/>> (Accessed 21/9/2020)

⁹⁹ Charlotte Lindsey-Curtet, "Women Facing War," ICRC Study on the impact of armed conflict on women. Geneva, Switzerland (2001): 10

¹⁰⁰ Amani El Jack, "Gender and Armed Conflict: Overview Report" *BRIDGE Development – Gender* (2003): 6

¹⁰¹ Ibid: 104-5

¹⁰² Ibid: 6

1.3.2 Women as Actors

Other parts of the literature have shed a light on how women might experience armed conflict as activists and combatants. This point of view is especially useful when it comes to DDR, programs which, as we've seen, tend to overlook girls' and women's concrete needs.¹⁰³

In different non-state conflicts around the world, women have participated as combatants. It happened, for instance, in the 2011 Syrian war. Although there is no official count, around 30% to 40% of Kurdistan combatants were believed to be women.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, many states, including Denmark, Australia, Canada, and the United States have women serving as combatants in their armies.¹⁰⁵

A lack of research in the area of female combatants in armed conflicts has been recognized, namely by the International Labor Office (ILO). Their reports included the impact of gender-based violence during and after the war. They found that the ever-growing number of women on the battlefield intensifies the need to further study the subject of women as combatants.¹⁰⁶ The stereotype that only men fight in wars, and that all women are peaceful and/or victims of violence is incorrect and an oversimplification of how things play out in a conflict.

Another conclusion that ILO reached was that the success of the process of DDR depends on the inclusion of women combatants after conflict. Lydia Stone's argument is also relevant here, since she mentions how useful the needs and concerns of women and girls who were female combatants is in DDR.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Lydia Stone, "We were all soldiers": Female Combatants in South Sudan's Civil War". In: F.Bubenzer and O. Stern, "Hope, Pain & Patience. The Lives of Women in South Sudan" (Auckland Park, South Africa: Fanele, 2011), 44-5.

¹⁰⁴ Women. Life. Freedom. Female fighters of Kurdistan. Online. Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/01/27/homepage2/kurdish-female-fighters/index.html> (accessed 11/12/2020)

¹⁰⁵ National Geographic News. Online. Available at: <<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/13/130125-women-combat-world-australia-israel-canada-norway/>> (accessed 11/9/2020)

¹⁰⁶ Girl combatants "Women warriors fight their way back into Liberian society", *World of Work*, 54 (2005): 10-1

¹⁰⁷ Lydia Stone, "We were all soldiers": Female Combatants in South Sudan's Civil War". In: F.Bubenzer and O. Stern, "Hope, Pain & Patience. The Lives of Women in South Sudan" (Auckland Park, South Africa: Fanele, 2011), 44-5.

Besides serving as combatants, women are involved in conflict in ways other than those traditionally associated with them, such as caring for children and injured fighters. What often happens is that “women take over the roles that society usually attributes to men such as providers, care givers, and social and political administrators[...].”¹⁰⁸ They also usually serve as peace mediators, as they did in Syria, for example.¹⁰⁹

In some countries, the mobilization of women for peace and human rights is nothing new. In Burundi and Colombia, for instance, the peace processes have largely been sustained by women’s associations. In these countries, they have tackled conflicts at the community level¹¹⁰ and have been taking lead roles in peace processes.¹¹¹ From these examples, it appears that “women are far more resilient and less vulnerable to the impacts of armed conflict than is suggested in much of the current humanitarian aid.”¹¹²

Even if, as we’ve addressed, they adopt various roles during conflict, women’s perspectives are mostly deemed invaluable. This lack of recognition of women’s contributions is usually attributed to the fact that a post-conflict society has different needs from a society at war.¹¹³ Although, during the conflict, women take on similar roles to those played by men, when the conflict’s over, gender roles return, and women are kept away from significant and powerful positions that could allow their input to have meaningful impact in their communities.

¹⁰⁸ Pérez Villalobos, María Concepción and Nuria Romo Avilés, Equality and Gender, Basic concepts for the application in the fields of security and defense in *The Role of women and Gender in Conflicts*. Spain Ministry of Defense. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE). Granada University – Army Training and Doctrine Command Combine Centre (2012):33-4

¹⁰⁹ “How Syrian Women Landed at the UN Peace Talks and What It All Means.” Online. Available at: <https://www.passblue.com/2016/05/10/how-syrian-women-landed-at-the-un-peace-talks-and-what-it-all-means/> (accessed 10/12/2020)

¹¹⁰ UN Women, “Women mediators promote peace in Burundi”. Online. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/1/women-mediators-promote-peace-in-burundi> (accessed 30/6/2020)

¹¹¹ UN News, “Women the ‘driving force’ for peacebuilding in Colombia: Deputy UN chief”. Online. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/10/1076522> (accessed 1/11/2020)

¹¹² Human Security Report 2005: Assault on the vulnerable, University of British Columbia, Canada, Part III, (2005): 102

¹¹³ Elise Fredrikke Barth, “Peace as a Disappointment: The Reintegration of Female Soldiers into Post-Conflict Societies: A Comparative Study of Africa.” (Oslo: PRIO, 2002): 2

As we will show, women's input in peacebuilding has been undervalued or ignored in several regions. Notwithstanding the roles they play, they never seem to be considered active players, be it in society or politics.¹¹⁴ Therefore, it is crucial to look at women's participation in peacebuilding in South Sudan and see to what extent their efforts and the roles they have undertaken have been valued and acknowledged.

In this dissertation, we will see in which fields women contribute to peacebuilding. We will also address which aspects of society tend to lead to the undervaluation of women's roles. More precisely, we will look at how women partook in peacebuilding in the wake of the South Sudanese civil strife, and address how and if their opinions were considered during the negotiations and processes that took place afterwards.

1.4 Empowerment in Post-Conflict Scenarios

As Confortini mentions, our social life is organized by gender in hierarchical, mutually exclusive categories, which are in a relationship of sub/super-ordination to one another.¹¹⁵ Feminist literature tells us that the unequal relations between men and women happen due to an oppression of the former by the latter, that gave men a position of domination over women. The real and perceived biological differences between the two recognized sexes (male and female) lead to an "alleged biological inferiority of women."¹¹⁶ Patriarchal institutions have perpetuated this belief.¹¹⁷ Beginning in the family, with a father's leadership, men's position of power echoes throughout the entire social order. This order is then heightened by several institutions, including religion or legal systems.

¹¹⁴ Anne Itto, "Guests at the table? The role of women in peace processes", *Accord*, 18 (2006): 59

¹¹⁵ Catia Confortini, "Galtung, Violence, and Gender: The Case for a Peace Studies/Feminism Alliance," *Peace & Change*, 31 (2006): 335

¹¹⁶ Alda Facio, "What is Patriarchy?" Translated by Michael Solis, (2013), 1

¹¹⁷ Nicola Denham Lincoln, Cheryl Travers, Peter Ackers and Adrian J. Wilkinson, "The Meaning of Empowerment: The Interdisciplinary Etymology of a New Management Concept," *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 4 (2002): 5

The concept of “patriarchy” wasn’t discovered by feminist theorists. In the 19th century, social scientists referred to it as a “more civilized or complex form of organization compared to primitive matriarchies.”¹¹⁸ Engels considered it “the world historical defeat of the female sex.” Though it was believed to be merely “a form of political organization that distributed power unequally between men and women to the detriment of women,”¹¹⁹ feminist theorists studied and advanced the notion of patriarchy in the late 20th century. Nowadays, patriarchy is commonly referred to as an “unjust social system that subordinates, discriminates or is oppressive to women.”¹²⁰ It can take the form of mental, social, spiritual, economic and political structuring of society, which is caused by the institutionalization of gender relations. These relations are created and reinforced by several institutions who establish a consensus on the lesser value of women and their abilities. This creates a society which is more concerned with the needs and interests of a few powerful men. This description, given by Alda Facio, seems to be a good starting point to a discussion about what empowerment means.

Aware of this imbalance of power, several organizations and governments have decided to commit to empowering women.¹²¹ The word “empowerment” in itself holds “different meanings in each context and for each individual or group”¹²², and the problem remains when concerning women’s empowerment. Likewise, the concept of women’s empowerment can be confused with others like it, such as women’s self-determination, since there is no general definition to it. The absence of a definition stems from both the lack of a consensus sustaining it, but also from its fluidity according to the culture and time period.

¹¹⁸Alda Facio, “What is Patriarchy?” Translated by Michael Solis, (2013), 1

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Zoë Oxaal, and Sally Baden, “Definitions, approaches and implications for policy,” *Bridge Development – Gender*, 40 (1997): 8-10

¹²² Cecilia Luttrell and Sitna Quiroz, with Claire Scrutton and Kate Bird, “Understanding and Operationalising Empowerment”, *Overseas Development Institute* (2009): 3

Several international organizations, alongside the UN, see women's empowerment as a process that allows women to gain control over their lives. Some entities add elements to this definition. For UN Women, being empowered involves awareness, self-confidence and the power of choice. It also includes access to and control over resources and actions to transform the organizations and structures that perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination.¹²³

The World Health Organization (WHO) adds that “empowerment is a multidimensional social process. Therefore, the strategies for empowerment often challenge existing power allocations and relationships to give disadvantaged groups more power.”¹²⁴

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) definition is also very important, since it splits empowerment from gender equality, though recognizing they are related:

(...)to be empowered, women must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), they must also have the agency to use those rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions (such as those provided through leadership opportunities). (UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017: The Future We Want: Rights and Empowerment, 27)

Feminist theorists point towards the fact that empowering women should bring about a release from oppressing belief systems and ideologies. It is not meant to replace or destabilize other empowerments, but to create a society where each one, regardless of their gender, can realize their potential to build a better world for all.¹²⁵

¹²³ Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) United Nations, Definitions and Concepts. Online. Available at:

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm> (accessed 27/9/2020)

¹²⁴ World Health Organization, Defining sexual health: report of a technical consultation on sexual health, 2002, Geneva. Online. Available at

https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/sexual_health/defining_sh/en/ (accessed 27/9/2020)

¹²⁵ Rhoda Reddock, *Why Gender? Why Development?*, International Development Research Centre (2000): 47

The literature on women's empowerment is extensive. However, most contemporary authors believe that there are three crucial elements to the process of empowerment: change, choice and power. They also often mention how empowerment goes beyond changes in the person experiencing it. It also implies a reset of society and its structures of domination.

One central takeaway from these definitions of empowerment is how disadvantaged people must proactively change their living conditions. It is not about being empowered by someone else, but about developing critical skills, learning, and unlearning certain ideals, and rearranging how they feel and think about themselves and their lives. In short, it consists of gaining new perspective in order to overthrow subordination and find self-identity.¹²⁶ This will be the concept of empowerment we will refer to throughout this study, though it will be adapted to the local context in South Sudan.

Moreover, UN Women reminds us that men cannot be left out of this transformation. Giving more rights to women does not mean giving less to men or anyone else. The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) definition helps us understand this. It claims that, although empowerment comes from within, when individuals are empowered, so are their cultures, societies, and institutions.¹²⁷

We can conclude that throughout the years, feminist theories have shed light on the power relations between gender and how gender identities are constructed.¹²⁸ They have been continuously evolving and have developed different explanations to these matters. Since, as we've addressed, "new wars" took over, it became even more urgent to understand the types of violence that women are suffering, given the exorbitant level of civilian terror those wars entail.

¹²⁶World Vision. Gender Training Toolkit second edition. (2008) Online. Available at:

http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Gender_Training_Toolkit.pdf. (accessed 29/9/2020)

¹²⁷USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy. (2012): 3. Online. Available at: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/GenderEqualityPolicy_0.pdf (accessed 30/9/2020)

¹²⁸ Annica Kronsell, Feminism. In: Jacob Gustavsson & Jonas Tallberg, *Internationella Relationer* (Danmark: Studentlitteratur, 2006), 106

As we will show, there is a need, not only to study the gender roles imposed on women, but to also understand this effect is different, depending on the time and space we are studying. As so, we strongly believe that it is crucial to address peacebuilding, not only with gender-sensitive lenses, but also with the notion that women around the world don't live the same lives or have the same concerns. Accordingly, and since, in this study, we will focus on women's rights in an African context, other schools of thought are called for, as we will see in Chapter 3.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Ruvimbo Goredema, "African feminism: the African woman's struggle for identity", *African Yearbook of Rhetoric*, Volume 1, Issue 1 (2010): 33

Chapter 2

United Nations Peacebuilding and the Participation of Women

“There is no greater force for change, for peace, for justice and democracy, for inclusive economic growth than a world of empowered women.”

(Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, n.d.)¹³⁰

Gender equality is one of the core values of the UN’s work. Their Charter and, nowadays, most any international document that concerns human rights mentions gender issues.¹³¹ Looking at the amount of commitments within international law, one could assume that things have changed, and that women have just as much of a chance as men do to occupy powerful decision-making positions, for example, in peacebuilding processes. However, as we will see, these commitments are often nothing more than words on paper. Gender inequality and discrimination still keep women at the sidelines of lead roles in their communities in many countries.

2.1 The Importance of Women’s Participation in Peace Processes

UNSCR 1325 sets the goal of equal participation of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in peacebuilding. It also calls for the full involvement of women in the maintenance of peace and security. Additionally, and, we believe, more importantly, it highlights how crucial it is to give women substantial decision-making roles in the fields of conflict prevention and resolution.

¹³⁰ Strengthening Efforts Towards Gender Equality (2020) Online. Available at: <https://www.clgf.org.uk/whats-new/news/strengthening-efforts-towards-gender-equality/> (accessed 5/2/2021)

¹³¹ For example, The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, rules of European Directives on Equality and Discrimination, Council of Europe’s Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, The African Union’s Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, The Millennium Development Goals and The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women

The inclusion of women in peacebuilding has been defended by several authors, who aim to show the positive impact it can have. Anderlini is amongst those authors, whose work underlies the importance of implementing UNSCR 1325.

Yet, in acknowledging women's experiences of violence, we cannot overlook or ignore their resilience, sense of self-dignity, desire for survival, and struggle to move beyond passive victimhood. In the words of one United Nations officer, "in crisis situations, the women are the best humanitarian workers." They are also among the most committed peacebuilders. We must recognize, respect, and support their efforts. (Anderlini, 2007: 7)

In 2005, UNIFEM¹³² wrote that women in South Sudan could have an important role in peacebuilding, given that their experiences of war and peace were very different from men's. Women bring different perspectives to the discussions and, therefore, can raise issues that would otherwise go unnoticed. This, as UNIFEM tells us, fosters reconciliation and sets an example for other societies moving forward.¹³³ Therefore, a common argument for the inclusion of women is that they can improve the peace processes' effectiveness since they have distinct priorities and expectations regarding their results.

Gender mainstreaming must be mentioned in this study since it closely relates to women's participation in peace processes. It was endorsed at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women as "a critical and strategic approach for achieving gender equality commitment."¹³⁴ The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defines it as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. With its goal of gender equality in mind, it seeks to embed both men and women's concerns into policies and programs across the political,

¹³² UNIFEM, *Towards Achieving the MDGs in Sudan: Centrality of Women's Leadership and Gender Equality*. Compiled by Iselin Danbolt, Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda and Kari Karamè, (2005): 17-8. Online. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/towards-achieving-mdgs-sudan-centrality-womens-leadership-and-gender-equality> (accessed 26/9/2020)

¹³³ *Ibid*, 9-10.

¹³⁴ UN Women. *Gender Mainstreaming*. Online. Available at: < <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/gender-mainstreaming> > (accessed 26/9/2020)

economic, and societal spheres. The importance of this strategy in post-conflict scenarios and peacebuilding is brought up by several international entities and movements. Its relevance stems mainly from the fact that it works towards recognizing the different impact that war has on men and women.¹³⁵ The peacebuilding work that women can achieve is directly connected to their daily struggles. The socio-economic inequalities and the overall exclusion from public life that women face motivate them to have meaningful participation within peace processes. It has been found that the trauma they suffer during conflict makes them more eager to rebuild their community and their lives.¹³⁶

Not only is the quality of the peace talks improved when women are included, but, as we can see in the graph, so are the odds of the talks leading towards a lasting peace.



(Source: “Reimagining Peacemaking: Women’s Roles in Peace Processes”, Marie O’Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin, and Thania Paffenholz, 2015)

When we allow women to participate in peace processes, we have a more complete understanding of what caused the conflict, and possible ways to resolve it. This aids the

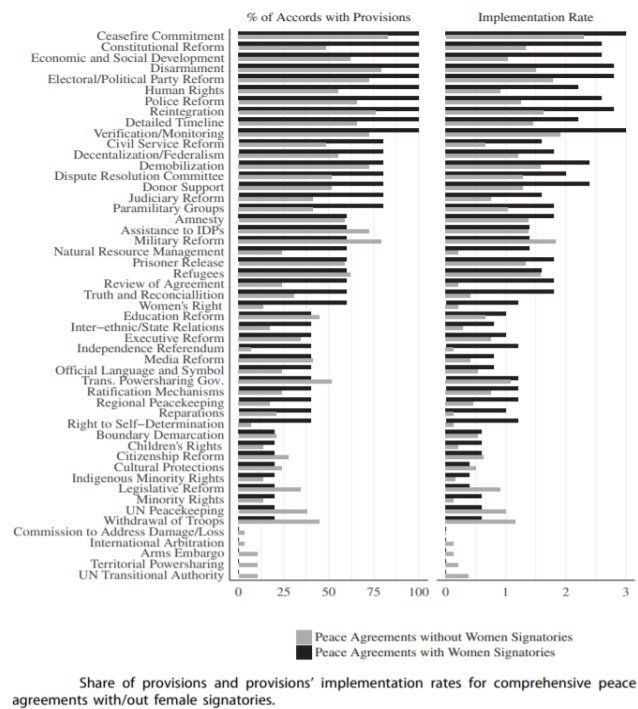
¹³⁵ Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. National Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) in Latin America: Key Areas of Concern and Model Plan for Action (2010): 23. Online. Available at:

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/wps/Final_report_on_needs_assessment.pdf (accessed 26/11/2020)

¹³⁶ Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, “Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peace-building.” UNIFEM (2002): 9

implementation of solutions that encompass diverse needs. It also enhances the odds that peace will be sustained over time since it will have a wider range of supporters.¹³⁷

Studies have shown that “women’s participation in peace negotiations with voice and influence leads to better accord content, higher agreement implementation rates, and longer lasting peace.”¹³⁸ which this graph corroborates, showing how a peace agreement is more likely to be implemented if it includes female signatories.



(Source: Jana Krause, Werner Krause & Pii Bränfors, Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace, International Interactions, 2018)

By allowing women meaningful participation, peace processes become richer and more in tune with the real needs of their society.¹³⁹ UNIFEM mentions how the legitimacy of decision-

¹³⁷ Kavitha Suthanthiraraj and Cristina Ayo, “Promoting Women’s Participation in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies.” Retrieved on 12th August 2020 from International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (2010): 35

¹³⁸ Jana Krause, Werner Krause & Pii Bränfors, “Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace, International Interactions,” 44 (6) (2018): 1005

¹³⁹ Kavitha Suthanthiraraj and Cristina Ayo, “Promoting Women’s Participation in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies.” Retrieved on 12th August 2020 from International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (2010): 35

making is assured through their inclusiveness. Only by reaching the whole population can decision-making processes “encourage a broad base of participation” and “make sustainable peace and development possible.”¹⁴⁰ Sanam Anderlini says ignoring women results in an insurmountable loss of capacities and resources, which undoubtedly hampers the success of the peace process (Anderlini, 2007:6).

The lack of democratic representation of women is deeper than it may seem. Their whole community is affected when their interests are ignored or disrespected. For example, given that agricultural jobs are mostly performed by women and girls, they could be a source of income after the conflict. When the conflict is ended, several economic opportunities could be seized on that field, if women are heard in the planning of projects and budgets.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, women’s increased workload after the war (from the additional responsibility of providing for their families) can take a toll on their wellbeing and health. Ignoring these effects can cause repercussions on their children, households, and ultimately, the entire community.¹⁴² As we’ve tried to show, ignoring women can then snowball into an endangered development, justice, and political stability of the whole society.¹⁴³

What happens in many countries after a conflict, is that, although women are active parts of peacebuilding in their community, their skills are not recognized at the formal level.¹⁴⁴ Before any formal negotiations take place, there is a phase of informal conflict resolution and

¹⁴⁰ UNIFEM, *Securing the Peace: Guiding the International Community towards Women’s Effective Participation throughout Peace Processes* (2005): 3. Online. Available at: http://www.unifem.org/attachments/products/Securing_the_Peace.pdf (accessed 4/10/2020)

¹⁴¹ Jane Koch, “Does Gender Matter in Fragile States?”, *DIIS Policy Brief*, Danish Institute for International Studies (2008): 2

¹⁴² *Ibid*

¹⁴³ Katica Roy, *How Fewer Women in Politics Impacts Policy and the Economy*. Online, available at: <https://www.pipelineequity.com/katicas-voice/women-politics-impacts-policy-economy/> (accessed 11/12/2020)

¹⁴⁴ Elisabeth Porter, 2003, “Women, Political Decision-Making, and Peace-Building”, *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 15 (3) (2003): 246.

relationship building in which women participate substantially. Within that period, women are comfortable enough to show any concerns they have:

Women call attention to specific issues related to family needs of food, water, shelter, education, and health. For example, the participation of women in the Guatemalan process resulted in specific commitments to women on housing, credit and land, health, attempts to locate children and orphans, penalizing sexual harassment, and the creation of the national Women's Forum. (Elizabeth Porter, 2003: 250)

They discuss political, social, civil, economic, and judicial matters with each other, even though, most of the time, these deliberations don't make it to the negotiation table.

The negotiations, both formal and informal, as well as peace processes, provide a unique window of opportunity for significant change. This change doesn't only affect the country's peace and security, but also its politics and economic bearings, as mentioned by UNSCR 1325: “[peace agreements] provide a unique opportunity to transform institutions, structures, and relationships within society, and can affirm gender equality through constitutional, judicial, legislative and electoral reform.”¹⁴⁵

When these agreements reflect gender issues, they can transform certain habits and prejudices that are harmful towards women and girls. They can also help change institutions and systems that perpetuate discriminatory practices, such as the legal system.

Peace negotiations pose “an opportunity to contribute to the foundations of a reconstructed society based on justice, rights and equality.”¹⁴⁶ In countries dealing with the aftermath of conflict, enhancing women's participation in decision-making processes can be a turning point away from the status quo in which they lived, and that lead the society to conflict.¹⁴⁷ As

¹⁴⁵ Annotated Security Council Resolution 1325. Online. Available at:

<http://www.wunrn.org/news/2006/02_26_06/022806_un_security.htm> (accessed 8/11/2020)

¹⁴⁶ Elisabeth Porter, 2003, “Women, Political Decision-Making, and Peace-Building”, *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 15 (3) (2003): 250.

¹⁴⁷ Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, “Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters.” (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 2007), 17

Elisabeth Porter puts it, including women is more than a matter of social justice. Keeping them away from peace processes means excluding a significant part of the population from their country's reconstruction, something which can jeopardize the creation and implementation of post-conflict politics.¹⁴⁸

What oftentimes lacks in post-conflict times is a determined political will for the peace processes to allow women to reinvent their roles in the community. Nada Mustafa Ali considers this would create a whole new world of possibilities for the participation and empowerment of women (Ali, 2011:1). Involving women in peace processes and creating an environment where gender equality and the rights of women are respected could provide countries with better odds of becoming fully functional states, therefore setting an example for other countries in the same circumstances.¹⁴⁹ In this study, it is important to observe that there is a root problem beneath our arguments: the lack of representation of women in peacebuilding processes and how it negatively affects the path towards sustainable peace.

We have many examples to choose from when it comes to women participating in the process of transforming conflict. Women from Yemen, to Iraq, Kenya, and Colombia have proved that they are more than capable of participating effectively in peace processes.¹⁵⁰ In Colombia, for instance, women were in charge of the broader agenda, the cease-fires' negotiation, and increased accountability in the peacebuilding processes.¹⁵¹ The historic peace talks that began in October 2012, between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (People's Army), included 16 women as gender experts. The important role of

¹⁴⁸ Elisabeth Porter, "Women, Political Decision-Making, and Peace-Building", *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 15 (3) (2003): 249

¹⁴⁹ Nada Mustafa Ali, "Gender and State building in South Sudan", United States Institute of Peace (2011): 12

¹⁵⁰ UN Women, "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace", A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. (2005): 51 Online. Available at: https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy_EN_Web.pdf

¹⁵¹ Council on Foreign Relations, Women's Participation in Peace Processes: Colombia. Online. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/blog/womens-participation-peace-processes-colombia>

women in the post-conflict period was recognized by both parties, which led the President to appoint two women with decision-making power at the talks.

A delegation of survivors of the armed conflict was created, where women made up more than 60 per cent of participants and could discuss violations of their rights, including sexual violence and displacement. Peace talks also included representatives of women's organizations, who were able to present solutions for peace and a possible post-conflict scenario. In September 2014, a gender subcommittee was established within peace talks to ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective and women's rights across all agreements. As UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka mentioned, the work that has been done by Colombian women during their peace processes has improved their country and shown the impact that women can have in this field.¹⁵²

Even with these findings, some considerable barriers continue to stand between women and their full participation in peace processes (Ali, 2011:5). They lack resources and educational opportunities, most of their time is consumed by familial obligations, their leaders defend non-inclusive programs, and their governments don't implement gender equality policies. Notwithstanding, and as we will further argue, women around the world are trying to overcome these obstacles, by creating and sharing initiatives.

Even though the literature surrounding conflict has been slowly developing towards the inclusion of women, women are often still not allowed at the table when it comes to peace processes. This stems from the aforementioned assumption that women are victims, who cannot hold leading positions in peace processes. The participation of women in these processes has

¹⁵²“Women take the reins to build peace in Colombia” UN Women. Online. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/5/women-build-peace-in-colombia> (accessed 19/1/2021)

been described as “an untapped resource”¹⁵³, which could help prevent and eliminate suffering in the wake of conflicts.

Over the years, women’s participation has been acknowledged as an important part of peace processes by several resolutions, international institutions, and state commitments. The connection between women, peace, security, and the importance of women’s participation was formally recognized in UNCSR 1325. So was the importance of this participation in leadership and decision-making processes.

The stance we take towards the importance of including women in peacebuilding has been displayed across the Secretary-General’s 2003 Report on women’s participation in peace processes, which focuses on how it can serve as a tool to promote gender equality. It acknowledges that while some progress has been made, and notwithstanding the recognition of the contributions women can bring to peace processes in recent years, women are still largely excluded from peace processes, especially at the formal level.¹⁵⁴ This report drew attention to the lack of efforts directed towards assuring women’s full and effective participation in those processes.¹⁵⁵

The report on mediation that Ban Ki-Moon, UN’s Secretary-General at the time, published in 2009 helps us better understand the importance of women’s representation in peace processes. He points out the need for the representation of women as participants and observers in peace processes, but also highlights other forms of participation, such as agenda-setting discussion

¹⁵³ Fatuma Ahmed Ali, “Women and conflict transformation in Africa,” *Feminismo/s*, 9 (2007): 67 ISSN 1989-9998. Available at: <<https://feminismos.ua.es/article/view/2007-n9-women-and-conflict-transformation-in-africa>> (accessed 18/11/2020)

¹⁵⁴ Women and peace and security – Secretary General Report. Online. Available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-184172/> (accessed 20/1/2021)

¹⁵⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Women’s equal participation in conflict prevention, management, and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding. (2003) Online. https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/unsg_womenequalpartconfprevent_dec2003_0.pdf (accessed 25/11/2020)

and implementation, to which women's gender expertise is crucial. Women's participation, Ban Ki-Moon says, can help communities heal from the inequality they have suffered from in the past, and create new institutions that can "provide greater social justice for all."¹⁵⁶

To fully comprehend the contents of UNSCR 1325, we must first look at how the perception of women and their empowerment has evolved in the field of humanitarian action. A significant shift has occurred in the way the role of women during and after a conflict is perceived by the humanitarian aid community.

2.2 Background to UNSCR 1325

"If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, it is that human rights are women's rights. And women's rights are human rights. Let us not forget that among those rights are the right to speak freely. And the right to be heard. Women must enjoy the right to participate fully in the social and political lives of their countries if we want freedom and democracy to thrive and endure."
(Hillary Clinton's speech at the UN Fourth World Conference in Beijing, 1995)¹⁵⁷

The Geneva Convention, established in 1949, included a broad stipulation about how countries were obligated to protect civilians in conflict, although it did not include any distinction or consideration for the sexes or gender roles. As time went by, the effects of conflict on women were gradually acknowledged. So were women's determinant roles during conflict and peacebuilding processes.

The UN's Charter (1945), as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) were the first official worldwide recognitions of women's equality towards men, as well as of non-

¹⁵⁶ UNSC Report of the Secretary-General on enhancing mediation and its support activities. (2009): 9

¹⁵⁷ Remarks while First Lady to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Plenary Session in Beijing, China: 5 September 1995. Online. Available at: <https://academyatthelakes.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/HillaryClintonWomensRightsareHumanRightsExcerpts.pdf> (accessed 19/1/2021)

discrimination based on sex.¹⁵⁸ However, this was not immediately accepted in the humanitarian aid sector. Between the 1950s and 1970s, women were seen as passive beneficiaries of aid. Their only roles were as wives and mothers, so their main concerns were thought to be related to access to food, contraceptives, nutrition, and health care.¹⁵⁹

The feminist movements of the 1970s and 1980s brought several advances concerning women's equality. Several World Conferences brought women's rights to public roles and development into the spotlight. However, the change of perspective from humanitarian aid actors¹⁶⁰ only came about a decade later, in the 90s, when several declarations and platforms were established,¹⁶¹ and the need for women's empowerment truly became noticeable. At the time, the development programs that were created focused on women's issues, which were treated as a matter of gender and gender equality. These advances made humanitarian aid organizations realize the crucial role women play in humanitarian aid assistance. They also recognized that the organization's responses to disaster or conflict should consider both women's and men's needs, vulnerabilities, interests, capacities, and coping strategies.

The UN followed in these footsteps, and, with conferences and adaptations to their principles and priorities, a body of framework concerning women's issues began to grow. Networks at the regional and international levels were formed, and women's peacebuilding capacities were recognized by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and donors. WILPF (Women's

¹⁵⁸ Centre for Development and Population Activities CEDPA. *Gender Equity: Concepts and Tools for Development*, Washington, D.C (1996), 10.

¹⁵⁹ Vanessa Martins Lamb. "The 1950's and the 1960's and the American Woman: the transition from the "housewife" to the feminist" (2011), 28

¹⁶⁰These have "different objectives, principles and modi operandi" and "intervene in situations of armed conflict and internal violence in order to alleviate the plight of the victims of those situations". Tori Pfanner, "Editorial: Human Actors", *International Review of the Red Cross*, (2007)

¹⁶¹ For example, the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the 1993 Human Rights Conference, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, and the Regional Preparatory Conferences and the 1995 Fourth World Conference

International League for Peace and Freedom) coordinated a group of international NGOs called the Women and Armed Conflict Caucus. Women's concerns were transferred to the main agenda and were no longer treated as a separate issue.¹⁶² In 2000 the Caucus became the NGO Working group on Women and Armed Conflict, and carried out intensive lobbying during the months leading up to the signing of UNSCR 1325.

Although UNSCR 1325 focuses on several other matters (such as using a gender perspective in peacekeeping missions, the protection of women and girls in armed conflict, and gender mainstreaming in the UN reporting and implementation system), we will focus on how it addresses women's participation in peace processes. In this resolution, member states were called upon to involve more women in decision-making processes. The resolution also urged for gender considerations to be included in Security Council missions, through consultation with local and international women's groups. In this sense, UNSCR 1325 underlined how pressing it was to include and support local women's peace initiatives in the negotiation and implementation of peace processes.¹⁶³ It also recognizes how women's potential, as well as their roles in peacebuilding, aren't sufficiently understood. Similarly, the overall lack of information about the peacebuilding activities that women develop in their communities was mentioned.

The importance of understanding the impact of conflict on women, as well as the cruciality of their participation in peace and security, is embedded into UNSCR 1325, as well as UNSCR 1889, which was adopted 9 years later, concerning the same topics. The latter encourages member states to implement UNSCR 1325, underlining how "effective institutional arrangements (...) guarantee their [women's and girl's] protection and full participation in the

¹⁶² Cynthia Cockburn, "From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis" (London: Zed Books, 2007): 140

¹⁶³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, paragraph 8.

peace process, particularly at early stages of post-conflict peacebuilding.” It also mentions how these arrangements can help “the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.”¹⁶⁴

The underrepresentation of women and the obstacles they face when trying to get involved in conflict prevention, resolutions and post-conflict life is acknowledged in UNSCR 1889. In this sense, the resolution mentions the problems that women face in their communities, such as the lack of access to education, socio-economic inequality, cultural discrimination, and a lack of security and rule of law.¹⁶⁵ It recognizes women’s needs in post-conflict scenarios and notices how undermining these can jeopardize the achievement of sustainable peace.

SCR 1889 urges for an increased number of women at all decision-making levels in prevention, management, and resolution of conflict. It also calls for local women’s peace initiatives to be involved in conflict resolution, peace agreements, and Security Council missions. Beyond being protected, women must be empowered through peacebuilding, which can improve the efficiency of post-conflict peacebuilding, as well as international peace and security, as mentioned in this resolution. Furthermore, both the mentioned resolutions underline the need to recognize and finance women’s capacity to engage in public decision making. The empowerment that these resolutions call for can only be achieved with the funding of women’s early recovery. Overall, these documents by the UN Security Council highlight how crucial it is to involve women in peacebuilding.

The subsequent resolutions also added some important aspects to this general goal: Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) recognized sexual violence as a threat to international peace

¹⁶⁴ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1889, paragraph 8.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid

and security and the subsequent follow-up resolutions, 1888 (2009), 2016(2013) 2122 (2013) focused on the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence.

After addressing the evolution of perspective towards the inclusion of women in international peace and security, we will now assess whether these resolutions have been taken into account in reality.

2.3 Implementation of UNSCR 1325

To fulfil women's rights, several mechanisms were established by the UN.¹⁶⁶ Overall, the UN and its State members have shown their commitment to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. This commitment has translated into the creation of UN Women. This organization's goals include the assurance of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of humanitarian action.¹⁶⁷ We must also praise the fact that the UN and other humanitarian action organizations have created guidelines and manuals to facilitate the incorporation of a gender perspective in their activities.¹⁶⁸

Even though there have been several developments in the field of humanitarian aid over the last two decades, the written commitments haven't been fully brought to action. Gender equality and empowerment are still foreign concepts for many women across the globe. Confusion surrounding what it means to work with a gender perspective is partly to blame for this stagnancy within the UN system and other humanitarian aid organizations. The lack of agreement regarding central issues and ways to approach them has hindered the integration of gender issues into humanitarian action.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Women, Peace and Security. Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. United Nations. 2020 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/PeaceAndSecurity.aspx> (accessed 10/9/2020)

¹⁶⁷ UN Women. Humanitarian Action. Online. Available at: <<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/humanitarian-action>> (accessed 10/9/2020)

¹⁶⁸It was implemented, for example, in The Community & Individual Development Association (CIDA), The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and The Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM).

¹⁶⁹ Elizabeth Olivious, "Three Approaches to Gender in Humanitarian Aid," *Department of Political Science & Umeå Centre for Gender Studies* (2014): 1

When gender equality isn't fully integrated into humanitarian actions, they continuously reflect gender stereotypes, prejudiced norms, and attitudes.¹⁷⁰ The marginalization of women in conflict and post-conflict scenarios is perpetuated not only by their communities, which are deeply marked by gender inequality, but also, as we can see, by those meant to help them.

The stereotype of women as victims keeps them away from decision-making processes, leaving them disempowered and on the sidelines of humanitarian action.¹⁷¹ On the other hand, the overall lack of understanding of the local context often collides with the plan in action. Each organization has its own agenda and vision of what empowerment means. This definition isn't always compatible with the local women's beliefs and priorities, which can harm the whole process and hinder their empowerment.¹⁷² Therefore, we believe there is a need to adapt the implementation process to local circumstances.

UN Women recognizes its failure to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment at both the policy and the operational level.¹⁷³ The lack of progress on these issues, say Melinda Wells and Geeta Kuttiparambil, can also be traced to a lack of commitment to the goals present in the WPS Agenda (Wells and Kuttiparambil, 2016:21).

There has been an overall failure to eliminate gender inequality and to encourage women's empowerment within the world of humanitarian assistance. More importantly, the UN, although incredibly supportive and understanding of the need for improvement in this field, has not been implementing enough change. The number of women who've participated in peace processes

¹⁷⁰ UN Women. Humanitarian Strategy 2014–2017, Page 4. Online. Available at: <<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2014/strategicplan-2014-2017-brochure-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1453>> (accessed 15/9/2020)

¹⁷¹ Medina Haeri and Nadine Puechguirbal, From helplessness to agency: Examining the plurality of women's experiences in armed conflict. *International Review of the Red Cross*. Volume 92 Number 877 (2010): 109

¹⁷² UN Women. Humanitarian Strategy 2014–2017. Pages 3-4.

¹⁷³ UN Women, "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace", A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. (2005): 28. Online. Available at : https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy_EN_Web.pdf (accessed 15/10/2020)

illustrates this lack of commitment.¹⁷⁴ When it comes to mediation, it's hard to find examples of women who've been included, even among UN mediators. A report from 2015 found that one of the goals of the WPS Agenda (ensuring that at least 15% of UN-managed funds in support of peacebuilding are dedicated to projects whose principal objective is to address women's specific needs and advance gender equality)¹⁷⁵ has not been completed. Most UN entities funding projects don't report on the use of gender markers, and those that do are far from reaching the 15 % target.¹⁷⁶

There is a clear gap between the commitments that were made and their implementation when it comes to including women in post-conflict peace processes. Over the last two decades, the dialog has been more inclusive, involving conversations on how women's rights can be protected and promoted. Although significant progress was achieved, most commitments never evolved from being mere words on paper. Although the UN and government leaders have recognized the cruciality of women's empowerment, most of the time, their actions don't match their words. Thus, we cannot rely on written commitments to ensure that women participate in peacebuilding processes. Instead, we should focus on identifying barriers for their implementation, and removing them.¹⁷⁷

It was also found that, apart from a lack of commitment, which has led organizations to generally ignore the frameworks they adopted, the lack of implementation can be traced back to an absence of accountability and monitoring. Although it is international law, UNSCR 1325

¹⁷⁴ UN members criticised for failing to include more women in peace talks. Online. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/oct/14/un-members-criticised-for-failing-to-include-more-women-in-peace-talks>> (accessed 15/10/2020)

UN Women, "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace, A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325." (2005): 381.

¹⁷⁶ UN Women, "Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace: Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325" (2014): 380-1.

¹⁷⁷ Kavitha Suthanthiraraj and Cristina Ayo, "Promoting Women's Participation in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies." Retrieved on 12th August 2020 from International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (2010): 10

is not covered by Chapter VII of the UN Charter, therefore, its provisions cannot be enforced, nor can non-compliance be penalized. There's also no entity in charge of assessing the UN's performance in these matters or defining responsibilities for progress. Although many resolutions have been taken to implement these goals, there is a lack of structures to assure them.¹⁷⁸ Without an institution or entity to keep those in charge accountable, most commitments fall flat, and women cannot reach leadership roles. Violations of women's rights in conflict and post-conflict persist, as well as impunity when it comes to sexual violence. Ten years after adopting UNSCR 1325, the UN designed a strategic framework and adopted a mechanism to track the resolution's implementation. However, this framework does not hold any specific entity responsible for achieving outcomes.¹⁷⁹

Besides having no clear indication as to who, within the UN system, is responsible for evaluating the implementation of UNSCR 1325, the UN's agenda for gender equality can also be criticized for how fragmented it is, between the UN and its agencies. In 2015, the page count of the biggest UN reports on women's issues was over a thousand, and there is an enormous overlap¹⁸⁰ of initiatives and studies these stemmed from. This is worsened by a lack of harmonization between different agendas, such as the one for development, human rights, and peace and security. For example, women in regions affected by conflict weren't mentioned in the Progress of the World's Women report, which depicted progress on the economic and social

¹⁷⁸Kavitha Suthanthiraraj and Cristina Ayo, "Promoting Women's Participation in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies." Retrieved on 12th August 2020 from International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (2010): 7

¹⁷⁹ Secretary-General's Report on Women, Peace and Security, 6 April 2010, S/2010/173

¹⁸⁰ There is, for example, UN Women's *Progress of the World's Women in 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (2015), UN Women's *Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace: Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325* (2015) and the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics*, (2015), all within the same year, although they concern the same issues.

dimensions of gender equality.¹⁸¹ Another example concerns the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹⁸², adopted in 2015, which didn't seem to mention the WPS Agenda.

UN Women¹⁸³ acknowledges these shortcomings. It has also recognized that this inability to prioritize women's recovery needs has worsened with their segregation from peace talks. Key decisions are made during peace negotiations. When they're absent from discussions about development, power-sharing and socio-economic recovery, it's unlikely they will participate in the resulting plans.

Given this scenario, we must recognize the challenges ahead. Without women's full participation in peace processes, these are incomplete. UN Women has worked for years towards the promotion of women's full and equal participation in both formal and informal conflict resolution dialogues and peace processes. It has also tried to draw attention to this issue, to develop women's negotiating and mediation abilities, and to push for gender-sensitive programs and policies.

However, the overall underachievement in these matters has led women to find other pathways to achieve their goals. Most turn to informal community structures to have their voices heard. These structures are responsible for assuring that the rights and perspectives of women are embedded in their programs. The lack of representation that women have faced within political structures and the hardships that have kept them from leadership positions led women to depend on these networks to have their concerns heard and addressed. It's important to note how

¹⁸¹ UN Women, "Progress of the World's Women in 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights." (2015)

¹⁸²The Sustainable Development Agenda. Online. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/> (accessed 20/1/2021)

¹⁸³ UN Women. Conflict Prevention and Resolution (2013) Online. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/conflict-prevention-and-resolution> (accessed 24/8/2020)

UNSCR 1325 recognizes and endorses the part that civil society plays across peace processes, by allowing women to organize and NGOs' efforts to be formally recognized.¹⁸⁴

Within these associations, other resourceful women with strong advocacy skills can help women in need to achieve their objectives. The obstacles they usually face, such as the traditional patriarchal cultures and cultural barriers, become more manageable when they are provided with enough resources and significant legislative support. Formal peacemaking and peacebuilding arenas are designed in a way that inhibits women from transforming their knowledge and experiences into formal recognitions. Informal institutions, on the other hand, can aid women in turning their efforts into something valuable.¹⁸⁵ Additionally, studies have shown that peace efforts, when supported at the grassroots level, are more likely to be sustainable than the ones negotiated amongst the elites.¹⁸⁶

We can thus conclude that the inclusion of women in peace processes must begin with providing them access to formal peace processes and structures. Women must have their seat at the table as an important part of the negotiations and agreements. They must be given meaningful roles, such as those of mediators and signatories. Only then can gender perspectives, as well as women's expertise on several crucial issues be used to their fullest potential.¹⁸⁷ Additionally, the measures taken should be context-specific. The expectations and stereotypes around how women experience times of conflict need to be forgotten for women to be allowed to resourcefully promote peace. Despite this seemingly dire scenario, women have been able to

¹⁸⁴ UN Women. Conflict Prevention and Resolution (2013) Online. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/conflict-prevention-and-resolution> (accessed 24/8/2020)

¹⁸⁵ Kavitha Suthanthiraraj and Cristina Ayo, "Promoting Women's Participation in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies." Retrieved on 12th August 2020 from International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (2010): 14

¹⁸⁶ Azza Karam, "Women in War and Peace-Building. The Roads Traversed, the Challenges Ahead." *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 3 (1) (2001), 12.

¹⁸⁷ Kavitha Suthanthiraraj and Cristina Ayo, "Promoting Women's Participation in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies." Retrieved on 12th August 2020 from International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (2010): 122

push for their influence to be felt in peace negotiations around the world. Kenya, Liberia, and Yemen are a few of the places where they were able to partake in formal negotiations and make sure their voices were heard.¹⁸⁸ Some served as gender advisers, others as Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, and some as deputy heads of mission. These positions allowed gender concerns to be embedded into formal peace processes and helped women and their communities rebuild their lives in the wake of conflict.

In this chapter, we've tried to show that alienating women from peacebuilding can hinder these processes. This, in turn, can hamper the development of a prosperous democracy. With half the population missing, the peacebuilding process can never create a vision of a unified state that encompasses the needs of all citizens.¹⁸⁹ As Sara Batmanglich shows, the more influence women have in peace processes, the more likely it is for an agreement to be reached and implemented.

Relation between the influence of women in peace processes and processes' outcomes and implementation

Influence of Women in the process	Ongoing negotiations	No agreement reached	Agreement reached/ No implementation	Agreement reached/ Partial implementation	Agreement reached/ Implemented	Agreement reached/ Ongoing implementation
None to weak		Ache Colombia Georgia Abkhazia Moldova Cyprus	Rwanda Turkey Armenia Israel Palestine Geneva process	JP-Oslo Mali	Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan
Moderate	Turkish-Kurdish	Egypt Sri Lanka	Eritrea <u>Somalia I</u> <u>Somalia II</u> Darfur Somalia III Togo	Solomon Island Macedonia Nepal	Afghanistan Benin <u>El Salvador</u>	
Strong		Fiji		Guatemala Mexico (Chiapas) Burundi <u>Mali Northern</u>	DR Congo Kenya Liberia N.Ireland PNG <u>Somaliand</u> <u>South Africa</u>	Yemen

*underlined cases were completed before the passage of Resolution 1325

(Source: Sara Batmanglich, "Independent Review of Peace and Development Advisors and the Joint UNDP/DPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention," 2014)

¹⁸⁸ Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, "Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters." (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 2007), 6

¹⁸⁹ Friederike Bubenzer and Elizabeth Lacey, "Policy Brief: Opportunities for Gender Justice and Reconciliation in South Sudan," *The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation*, 10 (2013): 1-2

Jane Namadi also brought this issue up, mentioning how unlikely it would be for South Sudan to fully achieve sustainable peace, as well as economic and social development, if women were not allowed full and effective participation (Namadi, 2011: 189). According to statistics from the Council on Foreign Relations, this level of participation still seems to be the exception in peace processes around the world.¹⁹⁰

Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted, on average, 13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators, and 6 per cent of signatories in major peace processes worldwide. About seven out of every ten peace processes did not include women mediators or women signatories (Council of Foreign Relations, 2019)¹⁹¹

The 2015 Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 corroborates this data, showing the reduced number of peace agreements that have mentioned and included women. These numbers demonstrate, as we will remark throughout this study that, overall, UNSCR 1325 has not been implemented in peace processes. Although, by reading the resolution and how strongly it defends the importance of women's participation in peacebuilding, we might be led to believe that it is easy for women to be integrated in these processes, the truth is that, as the numbers show, the full implementation UNSCR 1325 is far from being achieved: "Since the adoption of resolution 1325, only 27 per cent of peace agreements have referenced women, and in 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011, only nine per cent of negotiators were women." (Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325', UN Women, 2015)

¹⁹⁰ The Council on Foreign Relations is "an independent, nonpartisan membership organization, think tank, and publisher dedicated to being a resource for its members, government officials, business executives, journalists, educators and students, civic and religious leaders, and other interested citizens in order to help them better understand the world and the foreign policy choices facing the United States and other countries." Online. Available at: < <https://www.cfr.org/about> > (accessed 18/1/2021)

¹⁹¹ Women's Participation in Peace Processes. Council of Foreign Relations. Online. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/explore-the-data> (accessed 18/1/2021)

Wars leave countries with numerous challenges to face. However, these challenges shouldn't be used as justification to shun gender issues at such a crucial time. This habit completely disregards the fact that, as we've stated, the participation of women has been argued to help not only peace and security but also to strengthen the economy, which are the usual priorities during the post-conflict period.¹⁹²

To further understand the overall poor implementation of UNSCR 1325, the next chapter will look closely at the circumstances under which women live and participate in peacebuilding in South Sudan.

¹⁹² Nada Mustafa Ali, "Gender and State building in South Sudan", United States Institute of Peace (2011): 1

Chapter 3

Case Study: Participatory Approach in South Sudan

“Girls are one of the most powerful forces for change in the world: When their rights are recognized, their needs are met, and their voices are heard, they drive positive change in their families, their communities, and the world.”
(Kathy Calvin, 2013)¹⁹³

After the Republic of South Sudan’s independence and civil wars (2013-2020), violence and marginalization (both political and socioeconomic) continued to ravage the country. This scenario has particularly affected women. Although the peacebuilding phase can create opportunities to reverse these consequences, several other requirements (such as infrastructures, political will, and a clear strategy) must be met for this to be achieved. Without these, a war-torn country, such as South Sudan, might fail in achieving peace or even a sturdy economy, and continue to perpetuate the discrimination of their citizens, specifically of women and girls.

We will now analyze the roots of the conflict in South Sudan. This will allow a closer look at the issues felt in the country, which impact the living conditions of women, and their opportunities to be involved in peacebuilding. We will go through the background to the north-south Sudanese conflict, as well as the situation after the cessation between Sudan and South Sudan, although, for this purpose of this study, we will focus on the latter.

3.1. Contextualizing Conflict in South Sudan

The conflict in South Sudan began in the 1950s when Sudan gained its independence, and became a country containing more than 150 ethnic groups who spoke more than 50

¹⁹³ Kathy Calvin, “Celebrating International Day of the Girl”. Online. Available at: <https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/celebrating-girls/> (accessed 5/2/2021)

languages.¹⁹⁴ Some claim that the conflict stems from the division that the British rulers made between the north and the south of the country.¹⁹⁵ Whereas the northern Arab and dominantly Islamic side was given political power,¹⁹⁶ the African and dominantly Christian south was marginalized.¹⁹⁷ Since then, the country has been marked by recurrent war. During these conflicts, 2.5 million people were killed and 4 million displaced.¹⁹⁸ The following map illustrates the divisions in the country:¹⁹⁹



The first civil war in Sudan occurred when Southern insurgents, who fought for greater autonomy rebelled against the Government of Sudan. These insurgents got together to form the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement or Army (SPLM/A). After twenty years of war and 5000,000 deaths, in 1972, the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement was signed, granting regional

¹⁹⁴ Stephanie Riak Akuei. “Informal Remittance systems in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries: Sudan Country Study.” ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (2005). Online. Available at: https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/media/ER-2005-Informal_Remittances_Sudan.pdf (Accessed 27/1/2021)

¹⁹⁵ Girma Kebede, “Sudan: The North-South Conflict in Historical Perspective,” *Contributions in Black Studies: A Journal of African and Afro-American Studies*, 15 (1997): 17

¹⁹⁶ Douglas Johnson, “The Root Causes of Sudan’s Civil Wars: Peace or Truce.” (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, LTD, 2011), 5

¹⁹⁷ International Crisis Group. December 2010. Sudan Conflict History. Online. Available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/horn-of-africa/sudan.aspx>, (accessed 15/10/2020)

¹⁹⁸ CIA, The World Fact Book: Sudan. (January 2012) Online. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/su.html> (accessed 14/11/2020)

¹⁹⁹ Map retrieved from: <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/sudan2.htm> (accessed 5/2/2021)

autonomy to South Sudan.²⁰⁰ That autonomy was taken and Sharia law was imposed by the Sudanese government in 1983, which led to a second civil war.²⁰¹ Besides fighting against the application of Sharia law, and for secular reform, southern grievances also involved the oppression they felt by Al Bashir's government, the underdevelopment of the south, and the harsh policies being implemented on southerners, which led to their economic decline.²⁰² Most of the economic, political and administrative development of the country was concentrated in the north, which created enormous socio-economic disparities between the two regions.²⁰³ Whereas the north had a political platform and was open to the world, the South was closed and shunned from the possibility of engaging in education, politics and the economy. The south remained a predominantly rural region, with a subsistence economy. They were restricted to missionary education, that discouraged them from engaging in the political sphere.²⁰⁴

They also felt the northern side was trying to impose Arab-African culture on them. The north wanted to integrate the south into a single state structure, designed according to northern values, disregarding the fact that the south had a completely different culture, caused by the "dualist" system in place, left by the British rule: whereas Arabism and Islam were reinforced in the North, development along indigenous African lines, Christian missionary education and fundamentals of Western civilization were implemented in the South.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Darlington Mutanda, "The Genesis, Dynamics And Effects Of The Civil War In South Sudan." *International Journal of African Society Cultures and Traditions* Vol.3, No.1 (2015): 20.

²⁰¹ Shahnawaz Laghari, "Young Nation in War: Root Causes of South Sudan Conflict." (2014):3.

²⁰² Darlington Mutanda, "The Genesis, Dynamics And Effects Of The Civil War In South Sudan." *International Journal of African Society Cultures and Traditions* Vol.3, No.1 (2015): 21.

²⁰³ Mansour Khalid, "War and Peace in Sudan: A Tale of Two Countries" (London: Kegan Paul International, 2003), 21.

²⁰⁴ Ibid

²⁰⁵ Francis Deng, "New Sudan in the Making: Essays on a Nation in Painful Search of Itself." (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, Inc., 2010), 68.

The Sudanese central government created the Popular Defence Forces to fight the SPLM/A²⁰⁶ in 1989. After years of war, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between SPLM/A and President Omar al-Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP) in 2005.

The central government in Khartoum had eyes on the oil fields (their greatest source of revenue)²⁰⁷, mostly concentrated on the southern part of the country. The CPA determined a 50/50 share of the oil between southern Sudan and the central government, but Darfur was left out of the agreement, which brought a new dimension to the conflict in this region, where the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), who fought for Darfur's interests, and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebelled against the Sudanese government, due to a marginalization of the non-Arabs living in the region.²⁰⁸

Although, before the CPA was signed, several attempts to negotiate a unity agreement were held between the Khartoum-based Sudanese government and the SPLM/A, none was reached, mostly due to issues surrounding self-determination and Sharia law. Whereas the Sudanese government believed that Sharia law was unnegotiable, and that self-determination was not a principle that should guide decisions, the SPLM/A defended the inalienability of that principle, as well as a discussion of Sharia law. Under these circumstances, the only viable outcome was to consult the Southern people about their independence.²⁰⁹ A referendum was mentioned in the CPA, which was set to take place in 2011, and would determine whether the South would become independent from the North.

²⁰⁶ Darlington Mutanda, "The Genesis, Dynamics And Effects Of The Civil War In South Sudan." *International Journal of African Society Cultures and Traditions* Vol.3, No.1 (2015): 21.

²⁰⁷ Zach Vertin, International Crisis Group. "Now the Real Work Begins in Sudan." (2011) Online. Available at: < <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/now-real-work-begins-sudan> > (accessed 16/11/2020)

²⁰⁸ BBC News: Profile: Sudan's President Bashir (2003) Online. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3273569.stm> (accessed 27/1/2021)

²⁰⁹ Shahnawaz Laghari, "Young Nation in War: Root Causes of South Sudan Conflict." (2014): 3.

Between January 9th and 15th of 2011, ninety-eight percent of South Sudanese voters chose their country's independence. Following this result, South Sudan and Sudan became two independent states, with an independent government and constitutions.²¹⁰ The SPLM/A was incorporated into the Government of National Unity (GNU). The national deputy of the SPLM/A, General Salva Kiir, was devoted to the South Sudanese, which made him popular amongst them. On the other hand, Riek Machar was handpicked by John Garang (leader of the SPLM/A and President of South Sudan) to handle the civil strife in the country.²¹¹ Salva Kiir took over the country's presidency, with Riek Machar as Vice-President, a smooth transition following Garang's death, in 2005.

After the cessation, violence between the two states resumed over the oil-rich region of Abyei in 2011. With the UN's intervention, they came to a mutual understanding.²¹² This peace, however, did not last long in South Sudan. Tribalism, corruption, and nepotism created several tensions within the country and the government. These tensions led to a civil war within South Sudan,²¹³ mostly caused by a rivalry between Kiir and Machar, who belong to different tribes (Dinka and Nuer, respectively).

In April 2013, Salva Kiir rearranged the cabinets within his government and dropped several ministers, including Riek Machar. Although Salva Kiir argued it was merely a question of saving resources, tensions escalated, since Riek Machar was rumored to be planning on running for a leadership position. Violence erupted²¹⁴ between the largest ethnic groups in South Sudan; whilst soldiers from the Dinka side partnered with Kiir, those from the Nuer group aligned with

²¹⁰Shahnawaz Laghari, "Young Nation in War: Root Causes of South Sudan Conflict." (2014): 4.

²¹¹Junior William Deng, "In History: Retracing the Genesis of the Current South Sudanese Civil War" (2017). Online. Available at: < <https://paanluelwel.com/2017/04/26/in-history-retracing-the-genesis-of-the-south-sudanese-civil-war/>> (accessed 16/11/2020)

²¹² Ibid

²¹³Darlington Mutanda, "The Genesis, Dynamics And Effects Of The Civil War In South Sudan." *International Journal of African Society Cultures and Traditions* Vol.3, No.1 (2015): 21.

²¹⁴Daniel Howden, South Sudan: the state that fell apart in a week, (The Guardian, 2013). Online, Available at: < <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/23/south-sudan-state-that-fell-apart-in-a-week>>

Machar. Civilians were targeted during this conflict, children were recruited into ranks, rape and sexual violence were committed, as well as looting. According to UNMISS reports, these crimes were perpetrated based on the victims' ethnicity, but were also suffered from indiscriminate attacks: "There have been attacks on hospitals, churches, mosques, and United Nations bases. All parties to the conflict have committed acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence against women of different ethnic group" (Conflict in South Sudan: A Human Rights Report, 2014: 4).

After two years of civil war, under threat of international sanctions and several failed cease-fires, a peace agreement was signed by President Salva Kiir and rebel leader and former Vice President Riek Machar. The agreement collapsed the following year, and Machar fled the country.²¹⁵

Renewed peace talks were supported by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), an African trade bloc, in 2016. After years of negotiated and violated cease-fires between both sides and other factions involved, power-sharing agreements, and attempts to create a transitional government, on February 22nd, 2020, Riek Machar was sworn in as Vice President of the unity government, which put an end to the civil strife.

The struggle for power within the ruling party in South Sudan was exacerbated by ethnic and faith differences and suspicions of nepotism and corruption. The Dinka and Nuer tribes, both pastoral communities, have clashed several times in the past, mostly over cattle raids, land, and wells. Tribes steal each other's cattle to restock herds they lost during regular droughts. In these communities, owning cattle indicates social standing and wealth. Water and land are crucial for pastoral communities in South Sudan, especially during the dry season, when they have to migrate to have access to resources, often infringing on land claimed

²¹⁵ Ed Cropley, "South Africa holds South Sudan rebel Machar as 'guest'" (2016) Online. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-safrica-southsudan-exclusive-idUSKBN1421YZ> (accessed 15/12/2021)

by other communities. Over the last couple of decades, with global climatic change, warmer weather and more frequent droughts, the tension created by this conflict has been exacerbated.²¹⁶

Apart from this contention between both of South Sudan's largest tribes (Nuer and Dinka), there are tensions stemming from how smaller tribes, namely the Equatorians, view both of them. These minority groups don't feel represented in their government and believe the Dinka and the Nuer are monopolizing power, which creates an environment of political tribalism.²¹⁷ Added to this are suspicions of nepotism and corruption, The political and economic life of the country was mostly led by people belonging to the Dinka tribe, something that the Nuer and other smaller tribes contest. They believe the government's priorities are determined according to Dinka's interests and exclude other groups.²¹⁸ This has been exemplified by nepotistic practices, such as the demotion of highly qualified members of office for less skilled people who belong to the Dinka tribe.²¹⁹

The destruction of property, displacement, torture, poverty, famine, death, and insecurity the civil wars caused had an enormous impact on the country. Besides the civil conflict we've summarized, other regional and local conflicts have stained the past of South Sudan, specifically, those among rebel factions and between rebels and government-backed militia.²²⁰ Another key-driver of the conflict is the underdevelopment (or nonexistence, in some cases) of crucial institutions, such as schools and hospitals, in areas of conflict. There is also a lack of roads and telecommunication. These challenges, alongside those stemming from the aftermath

²¹⁶ Tom Richardson, "Pastoral Violence in Jonglei." American University (2011): 1-3

²¹⁷ Hannah Bryce, "The Dangers of Tribalism in South Sudan" (2013). Online. Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2013/12/dangers-tribalism-south-sudan> (accessed 26/1/2021)

²¹⁸ Lauren Ploch Blanchard, "Conflict in South Sudan and the Challenges Ahead", Congressional Research Service Report (2016): 21

²¹⁹ Andrea L. Levy, "Southern Sudan at the Crossroads: Citizen Expectations, Aspirations and Concerns about the Referendum and Beyond", National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (2010): 33

²²⁰ Samson Wassara, "Rebels, militias and governance in Sudan." (2010), 262 – 3

of the conflict (such as integrating displaced people returning to South Sudan)²²¹ have worsened the arduousness of the reconstruction process.

As we can see, the government of South Sudan has come a long way since its independence. Although its people would expect South Sudan to get right back on its feet after gaining independence from the Sudanese government, the expected economic growth and development they thought their resource-rich country would achieve has yet to become a reality. South Sudan continued to face several challenges, long after the conflicts with Sudan were terminated. Their weak institutions, who are not able to hold governments accountable, have made the South Sudanese people feel hopeless in times they have been subjected to suffering by their own leaders and armies. Although the war of independence was terminated, the South Sudanese communities never felt the subjugation, suffering and inequality were really over, due to the intermittent periods of violence. A displaced woman in Jonglei State, South Sudan, asked, “What was the point of independence if we are still destitute and in chaos?”²²²

In order to make their population trust them and their plan for the nation, we believe the South Sudanese government must show their commitment to serve and protect their people, and to create a future based on justice, equality, and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

3.2 Empowerment in an African Scenario

As has been pointed out by feminists from African countries, the field of women’s issues isn’t free from imperialism or racism. Feminism is also not universal. Like every other body of social theory, it holds a diversity of issues.²²³ African feminism is fundamentally different from its

²²¹ Kari Karamé and Lillian Prestegard, “Sudanese Women and the Peace Process: Priorities and recommendations for women’s inclusion and empowerment Conference in Oslo 13-15 January 2005,” *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs* (2005): 31

²²² Nyagoah Tut Pur, “9 Years on, South Sudan Still a Nation in Waiting” Human Rights Watch, 2020. Online. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/09/9-years-south-sudan-still-nation-waiting#> (accessed 27/1/2021)

²²³ Noëlle McAfee, "Feminist Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/feminist-philosophy/> (accessed 20/11/2020)

Western strand. They raise different issues because they have different origins.²²⁴ In Africa, feminism is deeply marked by the strife against Western hegemony and the effect it had on their culture. Though Susan Arndt found that many African women reject feminism²²⁵, she clarifies how this dislike is “not directed against concrete feminist factions, but against feminism as such.”²²⁶ Since they found that their specific problems were overlooked, African women distanced themselves from the Western concept of feminism.

Studies have shown that feminism has always existed in Africa, though in a different manner than in the Western world. It revealed itself in women’s struggles to improve their living conditions, their families and societies.²²⁷ Whether it concerns the oppression that African women are victims of, or the conditions they live in, African feminism is just as valid and relevant as its western version, since it helps African women find their power. As Arndt mentions, the “globally valid basic definition of feminism” is “modified and contextualized within each given society to which it applies.”²²⁸ Sexism, as well as patriarchal structures and institutions are also present in Africa, alongside several other types of discrimination (neocolonialism, religious fundamentalism, socio-economic oppression, etc.)²²⁹ Women’s issues present themselves within a set of other challenges, not as an individual concern.

African feminists defend that women’s lives should expand beyond being a mother and wife.

The issues they address involve woman-to-woman discrimination, and how to facilitate

²²⁴ Eyayu Kasseye Bayu, “A comparative analysis on the perspectives of African Feminism Vs Western Feminism: philosophical debate with their criticism and its implication for women’s rights in Ethiopia context,” *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* (2019): 55

²²⁵ Susan Arndt, “The Dynamics of African feminism: Defining and classifying African-feminist literature.” (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002), 21

²²⁶ Ibid, 207

²²⁷ Ruvimbo Goredema, “African feminism: the African woman’s struggle for identity”, *African Yearbook of Rhetoric*, Volume 1, Issue 1 (2010): 35

²²⁸ Susan Arndt, “The Dynamics of African feminism: Defining and classifying African-feminist literature.” (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002), 64

²²⁹ Ibid, 66

women's workload at home.²³⁰ Early, often arranged marriages, polygamy, widowhood, and circumcision are some of the traditional forms of discrimination that African women suffer.²³¹ Other problems African women deal with include health matters, as well as basic needs, such as water, food and shelter. These issues, which, as Arndt argues, haven't been traditionally defined as feminist, are part of African feminism. From what we've gathered, it seems clear that the situation in South Sudan should not be viewed through the lens of Western feminist theories. Only by using an African feminist approach will we get a comprehensive view of the patriarchal structures and gendered roles in South Sudan.

The issues that South Sudanese women face go beyond gender inequality and include struggles affecting their daily lives, and, ultimately, the odds of them partaking in any meaningful decision-making, such as the ones in peacebuilding. Their struggles include traditional customary laws and stereotypical gender roles which not only harm their empowerment, but also their education and their healthcare. Their substandard infrastructures, overall poverty and lack of telecommunication also add to their post-conflict concerns.

As we mentioned in Chapter 1, a broader approach of analysis is called for, one that distances itself from the Euro-American discourse, which has painted African women as a homogenous group of people, marked by illiteracy and powerlessness.²³² Their problems must be met with an African feminist perspective. This perspective²³³ focuses on discrimination in the form of socio-economic oppression, as well as domestic discrimination and patriarchal social structures. These issues translate, as we have addressed, into a difficult day-to-day life for women, who struggle to improve their living conditions, as well as their families' and community's.

²³⁰Susan Arndt, *The Dynamics of African feminism: Defining and classifying African-feminist literature*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002),64

²³¹ *Ibid*, 146

²³² *Ibid*, 27-8

²³³ *Ibid*

3.3 Obstacles to the Participation of Women in Peacebuilding

The effects of the civil conflicts have been particularly harsh on women in South Sudan. Violence, forced migration, food shortages, lack of social assistance and an increased burden of care due to war-related injuries have hindered women's education, health, and development.²³⁴ These structural issues have led to criticism of UNSCR 1325. This has mainly been targeted at how gender mainstreaming was undermined, and how UNSCR 1325 was unaddressed in the South Sudanese context.²³⁵

We believe these flaws related to a lack of the gender sensitive approach we defended in Chapter 1. Had it been adopted, the obstacles that inhibited the application of UNSCR 1325 to the South Sudanese context could've been addressed, and the Resolution's goals could've become more accessible.

From our point of view, to assess the participation of women in peacebuilding in South Sudan, we must first understand the circumstances under which women live, and the structural problems that harm their improvement. Therefore, we will address the practices, beliefs, and systematic challenges that hampered the implementation of UNSCR 1325:

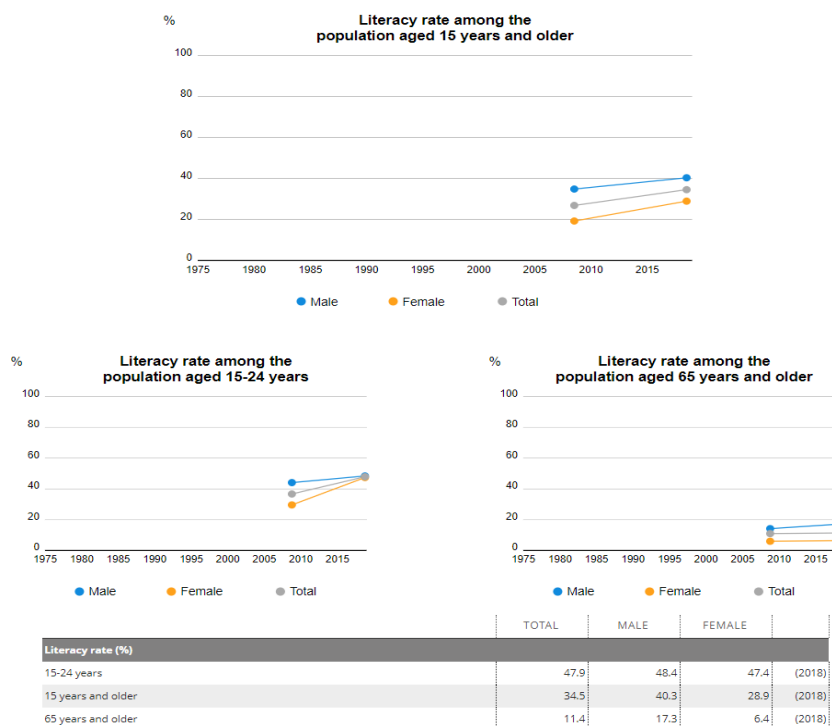
1. One major issue relates to the exorbitant **illiteracy rate** witnessed among women in South Sudan, as shown in the graph, which has led to their unemployment or low-paying jobs. This lack of education has been mentioned as the main obstacle to women's participation in decision-making processes. Many women aren't even able to comprehend written information.²³⁶ Most

²³⁴ United Nations. "Women Count for Peace: The 2010 Open Days on Women, Peace and Security." (2010) Online. Available at: < <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/media/publications/unifem/womencount4peaceopendaysreporten.pdf?la=en&vs=1024Z>> (accessed 20/11/2020)

²³⁵ ACCORD, Resolution 1325 in 2020: Looking Forward, Looking Back (2010). Online. Available at: < <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/resolution-1325-2020-looking-forward-looking-back>> (accessed 20/11/2020)

²³⁶ Jane Kani Edward, "Women and political participation in South Sudan. Sudan Tribune" (2011) Online. Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/Women-and-politicalparticipation,40086> (accessed 20/11/2020)

do not get any formal education and very few have access to higher education.²³⁷ To make the situation worse, schools are usually situated in towns, which means that people from small villages cannot attend them, given the long distances and lack of roads and/or transportation.²³⁸ Many schools were also destroyed during the war.²³⁹



(Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2019)

Illiteracy and lack of education become an even bigger concern when we note that they translate into women’s unawareness of their rights. From our point of view, access to proper education should be at the center of peacebuilding processes. Not only is it linked to improved maternal health, reduced infant mortality and fertility rates to increased prevention against HIV and AIDS, it also reduces the probability of infant mortality by 5-10 per cent.²⁴⁰ Access to education led to a

²³⁷ Kari Karamé and Lillian Prestegard, “Sudanese Women and the Peace Process: Priorities and recommendations for women’s inclusion and empowerment Conference in Oslo 13-15 January 2005,” *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs* (2005): 31

²³⁸ Tayseer AL Fatih Mohamed and Amna M. Badri, “Sudanese Girls and Women Educational Attainment”, *Respect, Sudanese Journal for Human Rights’ Culture and Issues of Cultural Diversity*, 9th Issue (2008):14

²³⁹ Jane Kani Edward, Women and political participation in South Sudan. Sudan Tribune (2011) Online. Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/Women-and-politicalparticipation.40086> (accessed 14/11/2020)

²⁴⁰ “Global Monitoring Report 2011. The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education, Paris and UNESCO.” *World Atlas of Gender equality in education*. (2012)

reduction of child deaths between 1990 and 2009.²⁴¹ Every year they spend in school, women and girls are improving their opportunities and increasing the options they will have in life.

Without proper education, neither girls nor women know about the inner workings of political systems or crucial documents such as UNSCR 1325 and the CPA.²⁴² Furthermore, it is in school that people develop several basic aspects of their personality. Social skills, imagination, critical thinking are all aptitudes which derive from time spent studying and playing with peers. When girls are robbed of these experiences, there is a whole part of their character that is stunted.

Education can help girls realize they can become self-sufficient and don't need to be dependent on their father and/or their future husbands. It empowers them to make their own decisions when it comes to deciding their life path. Having an education can help broaden the horizons of girls, whose lives are mostly restricted to helping their mothers' look after their families and homes. Being in school helps girls realize there is more to life than that and recognize the gender stereotypes they are forced to abide to. If they want a different life for themselves, being educated helps them challenge those norms. Education can also help girls and women enter the workforce. This can have a huge impact, not only in their (financial) independence but in their country's economy. When men leave to fight in the war, women must support their families, which is hard to do, given the lack of jobs for women.

The sense of empowerment we discussed in Chapter 1 can be implemented through education. When women learn, they feel more confident to make decisions in their lives according to their own dreams and expectations, instead of settling for the life their community imposes on them.

²⁴¹ "Global Monitoring Report 2011. The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education, Paris and UNESCO." *World Atlas of Gender equality in education*. (2012)

²⁴² Kari Karamé and Lillian Prestegard, "Sudanese Women and the Peace Process: Priorities and recommendations for women's inclusion and empowerment Conference in Oslo 13-15 January 2005," *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs* (2005): 25

This effect can ripple through generations to come and permanently change the way South Sudanese communities perceive women. As a famous African proverb says, “If you educate a man, you educate an individual. But if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.” We believe education is the most powerful tool of change in a country, be it before or after a conflict.

2. **Cultural perceptions surrounding gender roles** limit women’s lives, including their education. They are expected to marry early and to take care of the house instead of pursuing formal learning.²⁴³ In South Sudanese tradition, marriage can be equated to a business transaction. Women and girls are traded between families, with no account as to what they want to do.²⁴⁴ Men pay a “bride price” to receive a wife, which is often in the form of cows, money, or other assets gifted to the women’s family. The bride’s beauty, height, and age determine her price, but her education does not. This system heightens gender inequality and normalizes treating women as property to be managed through violence and abuse. After the marriage, men become fully in charge of women’s access to shelter and education. Thus, in their family’s eyes, girls are unworthy of an education, because it adds no value to the transaction that will eventually occur between them and her future husband. These mores reinforce the marginalization of girls, who, generation after generation, are forced into early marriages and denied educational opportunities.²⁴⁵

For women to be involved in politics is a fairly new phenomenon in South Sudan.²⁴⁶ Their culture entails certain practices, patriarchal power structures, and stereotypical gender roles that tend to reduce women’s lives to domestic responsibilities. This poses an obstacle to their

²⁴³ South Sudan National Women’s Strategy (2016): 17

²⁴⁴ Women’s Economic Participation in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Settings (2016): 20

²⁴⁵ Ibid

²⁴⁶ Jane Kani Edward, “Women and political participation in South Sudan. Sudan Tribune” (2011) Online. Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/Women-and-politicalparticipation,40086> (accessed 14/11/2020)

participation in the public sphere. Additionally, politically active women are often labeled as “unfeminine” and “irresponsible wives and mothers.”²⁴⁷ Moreover, single women cannot hold governmental positions, since it is the family of the husband who nominates the woman to parliament.²⁴⁸ Ali illustrates these cultural attitudes with the example of “a female former minister of information in one of the states [who] said that during her tenure the governor often asked a male subordinate to deliver strong statements, but blamed anything that went wrong in her ministry on her being a woman.”²⁴⁹ These negative stereotypes surrounding politically active women pose another barrier between women and their political participation.

The South Sudanese culture assigns boys and girls a very specific role from birth, and often leads girls into a position of submission towards her father, and later, her husband.²⁵⁰ Their customary laws make it harder to break this pattern.²⁵¹ These laws, which are different among more than 50 tribes in South Sudan, share patriarchal and discriminatory values that hinder women’s development.²⁵² They also stunt their economic empowerment by not allowing them any property, even if it is inherited.²⁵³

²⁴⁷Jane Kani Edward, “Women and political participation in South Sudan.” Sudan Tribune, 2011. Online. Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/Women-and-politicalparticipation,40086> (accessed 14/11/2020)

²⁴⁸Friederike Bubenzer and Orly Stern, “Hope, Pain & Patience. The lives of women in South Sudan.” (Auckland Park, South Africa: Fanele, 2011), 7

²⁴⁹ Nada Mustafa Ali, “Gender and State building in South Sudan”, United States Institute of Peace (2011): 5, Retrieved on 21st August 2020 from United States Institute of Peace: www.usip.org/files/resources/SR298.pdf

²⁵⁰Friederike Bubenzer and Orly Stern, *Hope, Pain & Patience. The lives of women in South Sudan*, (Auckland Park, South Africa: Fanele, 2011), 7

²⁵¹ Jane Kani Edward, Women and political participation in South Sudan. *Sudan Tribune* (2011) Online. Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/Women-and-politicalparticipation,40086> (accessed 14/11/2020)

²⁵² Amel Aldehaib, Sudan’s Comprehensive peace Agreement viewed through the eyes of the Women of South Sudan. Fellows Programme Occasional Paper 3. Wynberg, South Africa: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (2010): 6

²⁵³Kari Karamé and Lillian Prestegard, Sudanese Women and the Peace Process, “Priorities and recommendations for women’s inclusion and empowerment Conference in Oslo 13-15 January 2005,” *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs* (2005): 23

3. Another practice which harms women's rights in South Sudan is the overall **social acceptance of violence**.²⁵⁴ The normalization of violence begins when, during conflict, most men and boys walk around holding weapons. The abundance of these weapons makes it seem as though those holding them can be violent without suffering any consequences. This triggers a cycle of revenge killing and rape, conducted in order to "avenge" those hurt or killed by the perpetrators, which can go on long after the conflict is terminated.²⁵⁵ The prevalence of weapons in a community and the violence and criminality it brings is believed to lead to an increase of sexual assault. Key informants have confessed that the perpetrators of sexual violence are not punished seriously, and that "there is the idea that people can rape and they will get away with it."²⁵⁶ Furthermore, when men return from conflict to find their traditional roles as heads of family have changed, they often turn their frustration into violence.²⁵⁷ This situation is intertwined with the educational issues we have mentioned, as well as health concerns, namely in the reproductive field, which make women feel trapped.²⁵⁸ This happens because, as a response to the added insecurity, men prevent their wives and daughters from leaving the house or attending school.

4. Within the domestic sphere, women suffer from **forced and early marriages, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and are burdened with enormous amounts of domestic work**.

According to Girls Not Brides²⁵⁹, 9% of South Sudanese girls are married by 15, whereas 52%

²⁵⁴Liv Tønnessen, Anne Sofie Roald, "Discrimination in the Name of Religious Freedom: The Rights of Women and Non-Muslims after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan" Bergen, 2007.

²⁵⁵Care International: a Lifetime of Violence for Conflict-Affected Women and Girls in South Sudan. Main Results Report (2017), 39

²⁵⁶Ibid, 33

²⁵⁷Amel Aldehaib, "Sudan's Comprehensive peace Agreement viewed through the eyes of the Women of South Sudan." Fellows Programme Occasional Paper 3. Wynberg, South Africa: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (2010): 5

²⁵⁸Kari Karamé and Lillian Prestegard, Sudanese Women and the Peace Process, "Priorities and recommendations for women's inclusion and empowerment Conference in Oslo 13-15 January 2005," *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs* (2005): 24

²⁵⁹A global partnership of more than 1500 civil society organisations committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfil their potential. Online. Available at: <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/> (accessed 27/01/2021)

are married by 18, giving the country the eighth highest prevalence of child marriage globally.²⁶⁰ As wives, “women and girls do most of the work in the community such as cooking, grazing, cultivating, grinding, milking, feeding children, preparing beds and fetching water and firewood.”²⁶¹ Although there is a lack of statistics on domestic violence in South Sudan²⁶², some studies carried out since 2005 by several organizations have shown that domestic violence, marital and non-marital rape has increased since the CPA was signed.²⁶³

5. Another very serious concern surrounds **poor sanitation and lack of health facilities**. A 2018 report by the Humanitarian Needs Overview found that 90% of South Sudan's population “has no access to safe sanitation, making it the country with the lowest access rates. Fewer than half of the country’s primary schools have access to safe potable water and only 17 percent have acceptable latrines.”²⁶⁴

Although health concerns are a priority, that tend to push gender issues to the back of the agenda, we believe them to be interdependent, and, therefore, should be addressed together. The South Sudanese society encourages women’s reproductive roles and responsibilities, but women barely have access to reproductive health, or to information about family planning, contraception methods and sexually transmitted diseases. Poor sanitation and difficulty to access health facilities put the whole society at risk of disease and death. However, we mustn’t ignore the unique health needs of women and girls. Doing so would only worsen their marginalization.

²⁶⁰Child Marriage in South Sudan. Online. Available at: <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/south-sudan/> (accessed 27/1/2021)

²⁶¹OXFAM South Sudan Gender Analysis (2017), 51

²⁶² Despite a lack of specific data on statistics relating to domestic violence in South Sudan, especially after South Sudanese civil, many studies and reports show an increase in violence, such as the ones we will further address.

²⁶³ Sudan’s Comprehensive peace Agreement viewed through the eyes of the Women of South Sudan. Fellows Programme Occasional Paper 3. Wynberg, South Africa: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (2010): 1

²⁶⁴ Malteser International. South Sudan: Safe water, sanitation and hygiene. Online. Available at: <https://www.malteser-international.org/en/our-work/africa/south-sudan/south-sudan-safe-water-sanitation-and-hygiene.html> (accessed 27/1/2021)

6. In South Sudan, the **maternity mortality rate** is one of the highest in the world, which reflects their poor living conditions.²⁶⁵ These health concerns are connected to their economic empowerment: since women financially depend on men, their health care bills might not be taken care of if their husband refuses to pay for them. If we address this issue with the “gender-sensitive lenses” we mentioned in Chapter 1, we can see that established gender roles have an enormous impact in women’s health, namely the exorbitant amount of maternal deaths, as shown in the table.

Year	Maternal mortality ratio (MMR) ^a	Maternal deaths ^c	HIV-related indirect maternal deaths ^c	Live births ^b	Proportion of maternal deaths among deaths of female reproductive age (PM, %) ^{a,c}
	Per 100 000 live births (lb)	Numbers	Numbers	Thousands	
2000	1730 [1320-2250] ^e	4600	17	265	42
2005	1490 [1160-1890]	4600	57	310	33
2010	1100 [834-1460]	3900	86	358	25
2015	1110 [781-1590]	4200	84	383	25
2017	1150 [789-1710]	4500	74	386	26

^a MMR and PM are calculated for women 15-49 years.
^b Live birth data are from United Nations, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2019, New York: UN Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019.
^c The uncertainty intervals (UI) for all estimates refer to the 80% uncertainty intervals (10th and 90th percentiles of the posterior distributions).
^d This was chosen as opposed to the more standard 95% intervals because of the substantial uncertainty inherent in maternal mortality outcomes.
^e Figures presented in the table are estimates based on national data, such as surveys or administrative records, or other sources, produced by the international agency when country data for some year(s) is not available, when multiple sources exist, or when there are data quality issues.

Annual rate of reduction based on estimated MMR (%)	
2000-2017	2.4 [0.1, 4.5]
2010-2017	-0.7 [-3.6, 2.1]

(Source: Global Health Observatory²⁶⁶, 2019)

As we’ve addressed, the vulnerabilities that women are prone to in the South Sudanese context are exacerbated when conflict breaks out, and their healthcare infrastructures are further overwhelmed, endangering lives.

In conclusion, not only does conflict create barriers to women’s development, it also aggravates preexisting ones, such as domestic violence, and lack of education and health care.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ 789 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to WHO. Online. Available at:

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/136881/ccsbrief_ssd_en.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed 25/11/2020)

²⁶⁶ Global Health Observatory is a World Health Organization initiative, whose aim is to share global data on specific diseases and health measures. Online. Available at: <https://www.who.int/data/gho> (accessed 11/01/2021)

²⁶⁷ Kari Karamé and Lillian Prestegard, “Sudanese Women and the Peace Process: Priorities and recommendations for women’s inclusion and empowerment Conference in Oslo 13-15 January 2005,” *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs* (2005): 26

Given this scenario, South Sudanese women's empowerment is a necessity on an economic, political, and cultural level.²⁶⁸ As we mentioned in Chapter 2, UNSCR 1889 encouraged countries in post-conflict situations to address conditions that limit women's empowerment, according to the message in UNSCR 1325. To be able to turn this rhetoric into reality, we believe these abovementioned issues should, first and foremost, be taken care of, since they harm the possibilities of women's empowerment.

This background helps us understand how important it is to adopt the "gender sensitive lenses" we discussed on Chapter 1 when we are addressing peace processes. Although we aim for a full participation of women in peacebuilding, we cannot forget what gender roles might hold them back from an effective political participation. We might grant women seats at the table when it comes to formal peace talks, but, if those women are busy taking care of their homes, or forced by their husbands to stay home, we will never get to hear their voices.

As we see it, a gendered analysis of peace and security is fundamental. For women, the absence of war is not synonym to peace. As Cockburn has studied, the continuum of violence – in this case, suffered by women – goes beyond times of conflict. In this sense, and in order to achieve a real peace, we believe it is crucial to use gender perspectives throughout every post-conflict process, peacebuilding included. The family structures, power relations within a home and community, and gender roles (both old and new) must be considered in order to create a solution that allows women to achieve decision-making power across both the private and public sphere. It seems clear to us that, under the conditions we've mentioned, women's empowerment is decisive. South Sudanese women are, most of the times, powerless when it comes to deciding how to live their lives, including what job to have, or when to get married. The sense of

²⁶⁸ Kari Karamé and Lillian Prestegard, "Sudanese Women and the Peace Process: Priorities and recommendations for women's inclusion and empowerment Conference in Oslo 13-15 January 2005," *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs* (2005):18

empowerment we mentioned in Chapter 1, when applied to their situation, could allow them the power and freedom of choice to see that they can do more and be more than what their husbands and families want them to. Involving women in peacebuilding efforts is a starting point to that empowerment.

Women's involvement in peace and security efforts are interlinked with the gender roles that the society in which they live imposes on them. Given the South Sudanese women's living conditions, we need to assess whether or not it is realistic to expect them to participate in peacebuilding at the formal level, especially given the low awareness about UNSCR 1325 in the country.²⁶⁹ We will now discuss the extent to which this participation took place or not, as well as the effects it had.

3.4 Women's Specific Role in Peacebuilding in South Sudan

Opportunities for women in peace processes can be accessed through various manners. International support is one of them. UN Women, for example, has encouraged the active participation of women in peace processes. Another very important strategy is the sharing of information. By creating a pathway between women from civil society and those involved in formal peace talks, trust is created, and women can influence the processes from which they are often left out of.

Informal peace processes contribute immensely to formal ones. As we've mentioned, cultural practices, illiteracy, and health concerns stand in the way between South Sudanese women and formal peace processes. However, local peacebuilding initiatives are frequently accessible to involve them in peace activism. This is made possible by several groups and associations of

²⁶⁹ Kari Karamé and Lillian Prestegard, "Sudanese Women and the Peace Process: Priorities and recommendations for women's inclusion and empowerment Conference in Oslo 13-15 January 2005," *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs* (2005): 25

women, for example, Search for Common Ground, who gives women the experience they need to tackle more formal roles in peacebuilding.

Political campaigns on a local and national level can also make great tools in this matter, by promoting women's rights and their relevance to peace processes. They bring into play people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Within these programs, women feel heard and empowered to contribute with their ideas, which are often very useful for peace processes.

This informal approach has been embraced in peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan. Local initiatives have given women the skills and knowledge needed for peacebuilding. These activities have shown them the importance of proper healing and meaningful reconciliation within the community to the peacebuilding process.

Although they are willing to be involved in peacebuilding initiatives, women are often unfairly and underrepresented in them, due to the culture in which they live.²⁷⁰ We will address how regional initiatives and the international community helped the government of South Sudan include women in peacebuilding, namely in the economic, political, and cultural fields. In *Seeking Gender Justice in Post-Conflict Transitions*, Niamh Reilly addressed this matter: "The full and equal participation of women in political decision making and policy design and implementation [...] requires positive measures to counter gender inequality across the board: economic, social, cultural, legal and political" (Reilly, 2007:163).

In this sense, women's right to participate in political decisions can never be realized until "gender-sensitive lenses" are adopted in peacebuilding. As we've discussed in Chapter 1, this is crucial not only to perceive how institutions and practices are shaped by gender, but also to identify any preconceptions that the policies and frameworks we use contain surrounding women and the roles they play or should play.

²⁷⁰ Women's Participation in Peace Processes. Online. Available at: < <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/>> (accessed 24/11/2020)

Against the odds, South Sudanese women have been able to engage in peacebuilding at grassroots levels and, although less frequently, at the national level. Opportunities for women's empowerment can be found in several policies and frameworks²⁷¹ which have been adopted by the government, with the support of the UN.

The first time women were included in South Sudanese peacebuilding was in 1999, when it was required that one of the three delegates each county nominated was a woman.²⁷² A watershed moment occurred during the peace processes that led to the CPA, when a 25% women's quota was demanded. It was posteriorly increased to 35 percent in 2018.

At the grassroots level, there are over 200 women's organizations and networks²⁷³ across South Sudan responsible for creating opportunities for women to participate in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

During the processes that are developed within the peacebuilding period, it is crucial to consider empowerment theory. Those processes must be developed bearing in mind that they should give women more decision-making power, in their personal lives and communities. We will now analyze the extent of this participation, at both the grassroots and the national level.

3.4.1 Women's Participation in Democracy in Peacebuilding

To enhance women's political leadership in their country, women legislators created the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus.²⁷⁴ They share information between them and communicate

²⁷¹ Including the National Gender Policy, the South Sudan UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan (NAP) (2015-2020), South Sudan Vision 2040, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) 2018 and standards within the amended Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan.

²⁷² Kennedy Tumutegereize "Is peace possible in South Sudan?", *Peace Insight* (2017). Online. Available at: < <https://www.peaceinsight.org/blog/2017/09/peace-possible-south-sudan/>> (accessed 22/10/2020)

²⁷³ Such as Search for Common Ground, South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network and the EVE Organization for Women Development.

²⁷⁴ Caucus Advocates for Greater Role for Women in South Sudan, International Republican Institute (2013). Online. Available at: <https://www.iri.org/web-story/caucus-advocates-greater-role-women-south-sudan> (accessed 25/10/2020)

with powerful decision-makers in charge of important policies. For instance, the National Women Parliamentary Caucus pressed for states to facilitate communication and flow of information between the national level and the states. This platform helps women at the grassroots join forces with women at national decision-making levels, allowing the former to participate in peacebuilding, for instance, through the sharing of documents, such as public reports or press releases.

As is common all around the globe²⁷⁵, women's participation in the South Sudanese peace process was quite low. Although their participation is crucial, it's not often carried out where it matters the most. The peace processes starting in 2013 were mainly conducted by the warring parties. Women were only present when these peace negotiations were reaching an end, meaning their representation didn't influence their final agenda.

When war broke out in South Sudan in 2013, the IGAD called an extraordinary summit to discuss the situation. All of those appointed to command the peace processes were men. They were assisted by 32 advisors, 8 of whom were women. After noticing this, women from civil society lobbied for IGAD, in charge of mediating the peace talks, to address this issue. The solution they offered consisted of admitting women as a stakeholder group in the peace process if all women's organizations (from all sides of the conflict and civil society) could come together in a single group.²⁷⁶ With much difficulty, this was managed, and the Women's Bloc was created, and worked across divisions to promote dialog.

In the first peace negotiations in 2013, the SPLM/A-IO (Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition) had a 10-person negotiating team, 3 of which were women. The Government of the Republic of South Sudan only delegated men to the peace process

²⁷⁵ Between 1990 and 2017, women only made up 2% of mediators, 8% of negotiators, and 5% of witnesses and signatories in all major peace processes (UN Women Facts and Figures: Women, Peace and Security)

²⁷⁶ Our Search for Peace: Women in South Sudan's National Peace Processes 2005–2018, *Born to Lead*, (2020): 5

(ministers, government officials, parliamentarians, and generals). Only 9% of the witnesses of the peace negotiations were women. In the second phase of these negotiations, 3 women were included by the government in the negotiating team. This progress was the result of the perseverance of South Sudanese civil society, as well as international pressure. Notwithstanding, women only made up 7% of witnesses and 8% of negotiating teams in this phase.²⁷⁷

Before the 2015 peace deal, commonly known as ARCSS (Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan), women pushed for 40% of representation within the Transitional Government of National Unity. However, they had to settle for 25% representation within the national assembly. Other positions were offered to them, such as ministerial posts and presidential advisers', though this seemed to be just for show, as these are not considered powerful or even influencing positions.²⁷⁸

As the ARCSS was continuously violated, the IGAD stepped in. It directed the mediation of the High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF)²⁷⁹, from June 2017 to September 2018. The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was signed in 2018. In the last round of negotiations, South Sudanese women held meetings so they could converge their concerns and influence the peace talks. They consulted with IGAD and demanded the inclusion of (at least) 25% of South Sudanese women in the processes.²⁸⁰ The 50

²⁷⁷ Our Search for Peace: Women in South Sudan's National Peace Processes 2005–2018, *Born to Lead*, (2020): 5

²⁷⁸ Tolulope Jolaade Adeogun and Janet Muthoni Muthuki, "Feminist perspectives on peacebuilding: The case of women's organisations in South Sudan," *Agenda*, 32(2), 2018: 83-92

²⁷⁹ A peace initiative endorsed by regional leaders, intended to revive the 2015 ARCSS.

²⁸⁰ Tolulope Jolaade Adeogun and Janet Muthoni Muthuki, "Feminist perspectives on peacebuilding: The case of women's organisations in South Sudan," *Agenda*, 32(2), 2018: 83-92

women-led organizations that make up the South Sudan Women Coalition sent out a team of South Sudanese women experts²⁸¹, although their influence was limited.²⁸²

Despite the notable progress in the numbers, the women involved filled roles with little decision-making power, and were kept away from the positions of chairperson and spokesperson.²⁸³ All in all, although there were some improvements when it came to including women in their peace processes, the depth of this inclusiveness fell short of the mark. The inclusiveness was considered a “token measure to gratify the demands of effective track-two diplomacy by women’s groups.”²⁸⁴ Furthermore, the full potential of civil society was far from being used in these processes. Forcing women from different tribes, religions and ethnicities to converge in a bloc is an impossible task, which most likely meant that several interests were left out of the peace talks.

Consultations between women at the table and those left out of the negotiations allowed for the transfer of information between them. This helped keep women knowledgeable about what was being discussed, and helped those at the negotiating table make more informed decisions. The partnership also led to the creation of several documents, such as an agenda called The South Sudan We Want.

Formal consultations in 2017 also pressed for IGAD mediators to consult with women before peace negotiations took place, and to represent women’s interests in the peace processes. Thanks to coalition-building, and the transfer of information between women, these consultations proved very effective, helping IGAD mediators consult with women from specific

²⁸¹ Organization for Responsive Governance, Evaluation Report: The High-Level Revitalization Forum and Implication on the Implementation of the R-ARCSS, October 2018.

²⁸² Ibid

²⁸³ Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, 2019

²⁸⁴ Apuk Ayuel Mayen, “Women in Peacemaking Processes,” *Sudd Institute*. (2013):7 Online. Available at: <https://www.suddinstitute.org/publications/show/women-inpeace-making-processes-in-south-sudan> (accessed 30/10/2020)

groups. Additionally, women from different associations carried out the decisions that stemmed from the consultations.²⁸⁵ The Women’s Agenda for Peace and Sustainable Development in South Sudan, for example, pressed for the inclusion of gender advisers in key institutions, a demand that was met during the 2018 peace processes.

Throughout these processes, women continued to be excluded from key decisions. The patriarchal values in the South Sudanese society were mostly to blame for their marginalization. In the ARCSS, for example, female delegates were sexually harassed by their male counterparts. Although the 25% and 35% quota showed commitment towards women’s engagement in peace processes, neither was ever fully met.²⁸⁶ Women still felt insecure, threatened, and intimidated. We believe these issues, alongside a lack of funding, must be focused on for women’s political participation to make a difference in South Sudan’s peacebuilding.

Although, in these processes, women served as witnesses to agreements that include a few gender-sensitive provisions, the truth is that South Sudan was far from accomplishing the overall goal that the South Sudan National Action Plan 2015-2020 on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and Related Resolutions set out to achieve, which was to “reduce the impact of conflict on woman and girls and increase women’s representation and participation in decision-making.”²⁸⁷ There was a steady increase in the number of women in peace talks, textual changes to adapt to women’s concerns and an increase in quotas to achieve parity in government, but the prevalence of violence, illiteracy and patriarchal power structures still kept women from achieving their fullest decision-making potential. These constraints that

²⁸⁵ Our Search for Peace: Women in South Sudan’s National Peace Processes 2005–2018, *Born to Lead*, (2020): 28

²⁸⁶ *Ibid*: 45

²⁸⁷ South Sudan National Action Plan 2015-2020 on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and Related Resolutions

exist “beneath the surface” are oftentimes overlooked by the men who create the plans and frameworks in place. If those challenges aren’t addressed before a quota of women in peace talks is established, then women’s representation will not be effective. Oftentimes, in order to participate in the discussions of peace agreements, women make personal sacrifices:

I knew that instead of sitting there, I should have been in a hospital treating patients, but there I was because my country was not in the best condition. The search for peace had taken precedence over other things—including my medical career. (Our Search for Peace: Women in South Sudan’s National Peace Processes 2005–2018, *Born to Lead*, 2020: 42)

Their participation might also come at the cost of their families’ and their own security. This is why we believe “gender-sensitive lenses” to be so crucial. In order to help women achieve decision-making power, we must first grasp a full understanding of what their lives are, instead of using a “one size fits all” strategy.

I was threatened with arrest because of my engagement in the peace process. I was falsely accused of being an agent of the West, in particular the Troika, and of being anti-peace. (Our Search for Peace: Women in South Sudan’s National Peace Processes 2005–2018, *Born to Lead*, 2020: 42)

As exemplified in this quote, our blindness to women’s lifestyles and surroundings might cost them their lives.

3.4.2 Economic Participation of Women in Peacebuilding

Women’s economic empowerment has been defined by the World Bank Gender Action Plan²⁸⁸ as making markets work for women and allowing women to compete in markets. In this sense, economic empowerment should entail access and control of economic resources (such as credit and land) as well as skills. These would ease access to economic opportunities, more specifically, the labor market. A greater labor force then results in higher income. If women

²⁸⁸ World Bank, *Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan*. (Washington DC: World Bank, 2006): 5

can control their income, their strategic choices are broadened, and so is their economic empowerment.

Obstacles to this empowerment can be external (concerning the economic environment and functioning, such as poor infrastructure and high levels of unemployment), which affect all people. Other obstacles stem from the gender bias in social norms and institutions, such as a discriminatory legal system, (which prevents women from owning land, for example) or illiteracy. However, it has been remarked that access to resources per se does not automatically turn into economic empowerment.²⁸⁹ Women must be able to have freedom of decision on how to use the rewards of their work.

Additionally, economic empowerment is not isolated from other areas of women's lives, but it is interlinked with the social, psychological, and political dimensions of empowerment, mutually reinforcing each other. For instance, if a society is free from discrimination, women will more easily enter the labor market, have an adequate income, and invest it or spend it however they want. If women have decision power within their families, it will be easier for them to choose to work, or how to use their income.

Countries that are dealing with the consequences of conflict have a unique economic environment that should be considered when addressing the issue of women's empowerment. South Sudan's economy has suffered heavily from years of strife. Low employment opportunities and volatile currency fluctuations have marked their economic environment in the past years of instability.²⁹⁰ As essential goods and services became more expensive, famine

²⁸⁹Emily Esplen and Alyson Brody, "Putting Gender Back in the Picture: Rethinking Women's Economic Empowerment," *Bridge Development-Gender* (2007): 1

²⁹⁰KPMG, "South Sudan Economic Snapshot H2, 2017," (2017). Online. Available at: https://home.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/za/pdf/2017/12/KPMG_South%20Sudan_2017_V2.pdf. (accessed 16/11/2020)

and food insecurity skyrocketed. Criminality has also increased, especially theft and burglary.²⁹¹

South Sudan has enormous potential for economic growth, thanks to its natural resources.²⁹²

What has happened in the past is that the variety of resources, such as fertile soil, freshwater, and workforce potential are overlooked, which makes their economy extremely reliant on oil production. This means the state of their economy is deeply intertwined with the constant fluctuations of the international oil market. This is dangerous for any country because it makes their development conditional on external and uncontrollable factors, such as global demand and supply.

Within the post-conflict scenario, women have adapted to the new gender roles in their community. In most of South Sudan's territory, women's labor became the primary source of income, since men were fighting in the war, or had died during the conflict.²⁹³ However, even as women became the breadwinners, there were still barriers between them and any chances of economic empowerment. For instance, they were denied any formal ownership of property (even as widows or in the absence of any other male relative).²⁹⁴

Generating income is also a very difficult task, illustrated by the fact that, as of 2016, around 90% of women in South Sudan weren't employed in the formal sector.²⁹⁵ Those who are employed earn less than their male counterparts. Most of those who are unemployed are not remunerated by their domestic labor, which means they have no source of income. In most of these female-headed families, their sustenance depends on crop farming. In times of conflict,

²⁹¹South Sudan 2017 Crime & Safety Report, *United State Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security*. Online. Available at: <https://www.osac.gov/Pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=21796> (accessed 24/11/2020)

²⁹² UNDP, Millennium Development Goals. Workshop on the Natural Resources of Sudan, Organized by the National Council for the Environment, Natural Resources and Socio-Economic Parameters, by Mohamed El Amin A. Rahman and Prof. Mohamed Osman El Sammani. 2006.

²⁹³ Gaby Rojas Pérez, "Conflict in South Sudan: How Does It Affect Women?" *Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust*, (2014). Online. Available at <<https://www.hart-uk.org/blog/conflict-south-sudan-affect-women/>>

²⁹⁴ Search for Common Ground, (4 August 2017).

²⁹⁵ Women's Economic Participation in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Settings (2016): 20

carrying out farming activities becomes life-threatening. With their husbands away in conflict, many women cannot nurture their families.

Most of the South Sudanese population live below the national poverty level.²⁹⁶ Whether in the formal or informal workforce, there is a low number of women employed, due to the high levels of illiteracy among them and their time consuming domestic obligations.²⁹⁷ Those low educational levels amongst those who became heads of the household directly affect the family's income.²⁹⁸

Women's representation is very low in the entrepreneurial force (less than one percent).²⁹⁹ South Sudanese women are, therefore, in dire need of employment. This shows how crucial their economic empowerment is for the country's sustainability, given that "enhancing women's economic agency creates tangible benefits that reverberate outward to families and communities."³⁰⁰ However, several requirements need to be met for a new business to be successful, most of which are unavailable to women, such as capital, education and business guidance, as well as social and business networks.³⁰¹ Unfortunately, due to the prevailing patriarchal culture, the lack of resources is insurmountable for most women, which has kept them away from business opportunities.³⁰²

All genders should be encouraged to pursue business initiatives to boost the nation's economy.³⁰³ To remedy the absence of women in entrepreneurship, they have to be empowered

²⁹⁶ UNDP, Human Development Report (2016): 195

²⁹⁷ Ibid: 53

²⁹⁸ Nada Mustafa Ali, "Gender and State building in South Sudan", United States Institute of Peace (2011): 6, Retrieved on 21st August 2020 from United States Institute of Peace: www.usip.org/files/resources/SR298.pdf

²⁹⁹ Katrina Manson. South Sudan's hunger for entrepreneurs. Financial Times, (2011). Online. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/347a6cd0-2fc6-11e0-91f8-00144feabdc0> (accessed 8/12/2020)

³⁰⁰ Women's Economic Participation in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Settings, The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (2016): 24

³⁰¹ Frances Stewart, "The fourth domain for gender equality: Decision-making and power. Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Strengthening Development Cooperation." Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination. (2010): 31-2

³⁰² Ibid

³⁰³ Elaine Zuckerman and Marcia Greenberg. "The Gender Dimensions of Post-Conflict Reconstruction: An Analytical Framework for Policymakers." *Gender and Development*, (2004): 264.

through policies and programs that equip them with the skills they need to seek better job opportunities. Involving women in the South Sudanese economic life does not only mean better chances of growth and sustainable development, but also of durable peacebuilding.³⁰⁴ Expanding women's economic power benefits their families, as well as their communities, affecting the bigger picture.

A study from the World Bank, held across 20 developing countries found that “women's ability to work for pay...may be one of the most visible and game-changing events in the life of modern households and communities.”³⁰⁵ The World Economic Forum found that women's economic empowerment influences economic growth. They also recognized a strong association between gender equality and per capita gross domestic product.³⁰⁶ The World Bank's Gender Equality Action Plan for 2007-2010 recognized the benefits of this empowerment:

The global community must renew its attention to women's economic empowerment and increase investments in women...Increased women's labour force participation and earnings are associated with reduced poverty and faster growth; women will benefit from their economic empowerment, but so too will men, children and society as a whole... (World Bank's Gender Equality Action Plan 2007-10, 2011: 2)

These remarks help make the case for the cruciality of economic empowerment to a country's development, and have helped shed a light on the relationship between this empowerment, women's autonomy, and the effect that changes in these can have in women's living conditions and social status.

UN's goal in this field was to help the South Sudanese government create a gender responsive approach that would improve the living conditions of women, and enhance the odds for their

³⁰⁴ UN Women (2015) Online. Available at:< <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/eastern-and-southern-africa/south-sudan>> (accessed 28/11/2020)

³⁰⁵ Ana Maria Munoz, Patti Petesch and Carolyn Turk, “On Norms and Agency: Conversations about Gender Equality with Women and Men in 20 Countries,” World Bank. 2012.

³⁰⁶ The Global Gender Gap Report, World Economic Forum (2014): 39-43

economic independence.³⁰⁷ The path towards this aim was to help the government's institutions, focusing particularly on the agricultural sector, which is female-dominated.³⁰⁸

The South Sudanese government has also stepped up to the task of economically empowering women. In 2011, the 109 women who owned small businesses were awarded grants by the Ministry of Gender in South Sudan, with the help of the World Bank.³⁰⁹ A women's vocational training institute was created by the government in the districts of Aluakluak Payam.³¹⁰

As of 2020, UN Women has been able to train South Sudanese women on business management and helping them adapt their commerce to the COVID-19 pandemic.³¹¹ Women were taught to seek their financial independence, to feel empowered to take on economic ventures and to properly save and manage their money.³¹² This has helped women gather resources, allowing them and their children more security throughout the conflict and the financial instability that took place afterwards.³¹³ This resulted in lower poverty levels and higher food security for families.

Despite these honorable efforts, women have still found obstacles in trying to influence the country's economy, and some turned to civil society groups to improve their situation. Search for Common Ground, for example, was able to equip South Sudanese women with financial

³⁰⁷ UN Women (2015) Online. Available at: < <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/eastern-and-southern-africa/south-sudan> > (accessed 28/11/2020)

³⁰⁸ Another one of their goals was to assist and protect displaced women and girls living in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps. It also meant to promote the growth of the female-owned business, by providing their owners with business development services and behavioral skills. Unfortunately, there is not enough data how this was achieved. However, the UN Women website presents some important information in this field that gives us a good overview on how this issue was handled. Source: <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/eastern-and-southern-africa/south-sudan> (accessed 28/11/2020)

³⁰⁹ Nada Mustafa Ali, "Gender and State building in South Sudan", United States Institute of Peace (2011): 6 , Retrieved on 21st August 2020 from United States Institute of Peace: www.usip.org/files/resources/SR298.pdf

³¹⁰ Manyang Mayom, "Women's Vocational Center Opened in Lakes State," *Sudan Tribune* (2011). Online. Available at: <https://sudantribune.com/Women-s-vocational-center-opened,38736> > (accessed 16/11/2020)

³¹¹ UN Women Deputy Country Representative Paulina Chiwangu. Online. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/7/feature-south-sudan-small-businesses-face-covid-19> (accessed 30/11/2020)

³¹² Women's Economic Participation in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Settings, The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security: 12

³¹³ Ibid

literacy and business development skills.³¹⁴ Subsequently, they awarded them grants, alongside technical expertise, which helped promote female-owned businesses. As a result, 284 women-led households were able to launch their micro-businesses, and “mothers were able to afford new furniture and improve housing conditions, and children resumed education.”³¹⁵

The lack of opportunities for women’s economic empowerment harms their confidence, which goes on to harm their involvement in decision-making processes.³¹⁶ Both UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 1889 make it clear that there is a link between women participating in peace and security matters and the development of the country. In this sense, without their economic empowerment, their effective participation in peace processes is jeopardized, and so is the future of South Sudan.

According to South Sudan’s Minister of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare in 2011, Agnes Lasuba, the devaluation of women and girls is one of the key contributing obstacles to the country’s stability and forward development.³¹⁷ Their economic empowerment could bring about meaningful change in many institutions in this matter, and remove the bias from gender issues. This happens because the process of (economic) empowerment makes women question and challenge the discrimination they suffer on behalf of social institutions. This phenomenon has taken place before when women were incorporated into the workforce during and after World War II in developed countries. It led to a reconsideration of women’s role in societies. We believe that, in the long haul, this change will help banish some of the obstacles that have come between women and their economic empowerment, and help the next generation of

³¹⁴ Peacebuilding and Economic Resilience: Empowering the Women of South & West Kordofan. Online. Available at: <https://www.sfcg.org/empowering-women-kordofan/> (accessed 29/11/2020)

³¹⁵ Ibid

³¹⁶ Friederike Bubenzer and Orly Stern, “Hope, Pain & Patience. The lives of women in South Sudan.” (Auckland Park, South Africa: Fanele, 2011), 70

³¹⁷ UN Women, Q&A: South Sudan’s Minister of Gender, Child and Social Welfare on Africa’s Newest Nation and its Women (2011). Online. Available at: < <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2011/7/q-a-south-sudan-s-minister-of-gender-child-and-social-welfare-on-africa-s-newest-nation-and-its-wo>> (accessed 29/11/2020)

women have easier access to resources, and to benefit from economic opportunities.³¹⁸ When their decision-making power is enhanced, women's overall self-esteem, psychological wellbeing, legal and political literacy are increased. So are the numbers of non-discriminatory institutions and social rules.³¹⁹ With better commitment in this field, the country's post-conflict journey towards stability could be easier.³²⁰

From what we've gathered, gender norms, yet again, pose an obstacle to women and girls' economic empowerment. We believe the first step in order to tackle this barrier is to address the vicious cycle that keeps women and girls from achieving their full potential. This approach must empower women to take on the labor market and to become financially independent. To achieve this, women's access to training and to decent work opportunities should be granted. The issue of gender-based violence and discrimination in the workplace must be addressed. We believe these concerns make the need for a gender-sensitive approach in peacebuilding even clearer. To achieve women's effective economic inclusion, we must adopt a strategy that transforms their gender roles, and that helps women defy the stereotypes they've been victim of, showing them that they can pursue any career they want.

3.4.3 Cultural and Social Participation of Women in Peacebuilding

The destruction caused by the civil war in South Sudan exacerbated the lack of infrastructures, the limited access to health facilities, and human resource scarcity.³²¹ Health concerns (especially around reproductive and maternal health) and high levels of illiteracy have posed obstacles for women's participation in peace processes, as Ali regards, before the conflict even

³¹⁸ Women's Economic Empowerment in Conflict and Post-conflict Countries, *Sida Policy* (2009): 9-10

³¹⁹ *Ibid*: 9

³²⁰ Mayesha Alam, Ségolène Dufour-Genneson and Rebecca Turkington. "Security, Basic services, and Economic Opportunity in South Sudan: Perspectives of Women Post-Independence and Pre-Civil War" (Georgetown: Georgetown University, 2014): 16

³²¹ Ngatho Mugo, Anthony B. ZwiI, Jessica R. Botfield, and Caitlyn Steiner, "Maternal and Child Health in South Sudan: Priorities for the Post-2015 Agenda", *Sage*, 2015: 8

began (Ali, 2011:10). South Sudan's high level of maternal mortality³²² is related to the extreme shortage of health professionals, noticeable across all categories, especially physicians (1 per 65,574 people) and midwives (1 per 39,088 people).³²³ Given these numbers, villages without proper medicines and clinics turn to people without the appropriate education and skills to administer maternity services.

Due to South Sudan's past of conflict, it has been difficult to improve the state of the healthcare system. The same can be said about the educational system. The lack of formal education amongst women and girls hinders their effective participation across all fields of decision-making, including peacebuilding.³²⁴ It makes it harder for them to communicate through written form and to process written information, both crucial in peace processes.

Several civil society organizations have helped women pursue an education, such as My Sister's Keeper. The Ministry of Education has also promoted admission into primary and secondary schools and has established girls-only teachers' training institutions. When women pursue an education, they are more likely to be involved in the decision-making roles that peacebuilding entails. They become better equipped to fight for what they believe in and to feel empowered to ask for change, as we've addressed.³²⁵

Due to the patriarchal structure of communities in South Sudan, gender issues are often overlooked. With proper education and training, South Sudanese women have realized how crucial gender issues, and their participation are in times of post-conflict peacebuilding.

³²² Ashrita Rau, Reducing the Maternal Mortality Rate in South Sudan (2015). Online. Available at: <https://www.borgenmagazine.com/maternal-mortality-south-sudan/> (accessed 30/11/2020)

³²³ World Health Organization, "Strengthening human resources for health through information, coordination and accountability mechanisms: the case of the Sudan" (2015) Online. Available at: <http://158.232.12.119/bulletin/volumes/91/11/13-118950/en/> (accessed 25/11/2020)

³²⁴ Nada Mustafa Ali, "Gender and State building in South Sudan", United States Institute of Peace (2011): 10, Retrieved on 21st August 2020 from United States Institute of Peace: www.usip.org/files/resources/SR298.pdf

³²⁵ Phillip Mbugo and Filip Andersson, "Women In Yambio Discuss Means to Increase Participation in Conflict Resolution," UNMISS. (2017) Online. Available at: <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/women-yambio-discuss-means-increase-participation-conflict-resolution> >

Training organized by the International Centre for Transitional Justice, located in Juba, showed women how they could create a sense of national unity and a new culture for their nation by, for example, addressing ethnic differences between them.³²⁶

UN Women is also developing a holistic, community-focused approach, which has supported the construction of several Women's Empowerment Centers. It also partnered with UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and the Skills for South Sudan³²⁷ initiative to provide adult literacy programs in communities.³²⁸

Several movements have tried to challenge gender stereotypes in South Sudan. Their work entails the encouragement of demobilization and reintegration of female soldiers in the society (who are stigmatized due to the use of sexual violence by the government military and insurgent groups) and educating communities against this preconception. Given South Sudan's customary laws and cultural practices, which allow early, arranged marriages, and prohibit property ownership and inheritance rights, women need encouragement to look beyond their cultural background and feel empowered to make a change. Women for Women International is one of the many organizations that have helped empower women in this sense.³²⁹

In Yei, for example, women came together in social support networks to help each other resolve issues relating to farming, housebuilding, and childcare.³³⁰ Former leaders met with women from all over the country in the Women Peacekeeping Team (WPT) and discussed ways to address the conflict and the issue of gender-based violence in meetings across all districts of

³²⁶ Jok Madut Jok, "Diversity, Unity, and Nation Building in South Sudan" (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2011), 4

³²⁷ A charity initiative whose main activity is the Education and Training of the people of South Sudan in the public service, civil society, and the private sector for the development of South Sudan (Register of Charities, 2019). Online. Available at: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/3990393/full-print> (accessed 11/01/2021)

³²⁸ UN Women, South Sudan: strengthening women's role in the new nation (2013). Online. Available at: < <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/7/south-sudan-nationhood>> (accessed 25/11/2020)

³²⁹ Women's Economic Participation in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Settings, The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (2016): 17

³³⁰Ibid: 23

South Sudan.³³¹ Believing that women need to be involved in peace processes, they held workshops to improve the community's skills and to help women understand concepts connected to conflict and violence. It helps them feel capable of defying discriminatory practices and cultural norms. With the help of The International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)³³², the WPTs made enormous progress within the fields of social welfare and law enforcement (at the national and local level).³³³ They taught women how to use their knowledge to protect themselves and their communities. Afterwards, they became role models for their children and grandchildren and wanted to teach the younger generations the need for a peaceful communal life.

WAV (Women Aid Vision) is a civil society group that has helped women manage the aftermath of violence.³³⁴ They aim to create a society where gender equality, peace, literacy, justice, and freedom from corruption prevail, and poverty is extinguished. They give women the tools to overcome post-conflict challenges. They also promote conflict resolution through traditional methods.

Women Friendly Space is one of the civic groups dedicated to fostering collaboration between women from different tribes. They discuss women's concerns and ways to expand their roles in the community. Talks about peace, conflict issues and economic opportunities are also held, with the objective of peaceful coexistence.³³⁵

³³¹ Tolulope Jolaade Adeogun, "Exploring The Impact of Women's Organizations in Peace building in Africa: A case study of Women's Organizations in South Sudan" (PhD Dissertation, 2015): 68-69

³³² Rebecca Fordham South Sudanese Women Take the Lead in Local Peace Building (2012). Online. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan-republic/south-sudanese-women-taking-lead-local-peace-building> (accessed 25/11/2020)

³³³ Culture of Peace News Network. Online. Available at: <https://cpnn-world.org/cgi-bin/read/articlepage.cgi?ViewArticle=905> (accessed 25/11/2020)

³³⁴ World Aid Vision (WAV). South Sudan Insight on Conflict (2014). Online. Available at: < <https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/south-sudan/peacebuilding-organisations/wav/>> (accessed 26/11/2020)

³³⁵ Dominc Iyaa & Katie Smith, "Women and the Future of South Sudan: Local Insights for Building Inclusive Constituencies for Peace" (2018), 14. Online. Available at: < <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/women-and-future-south-sudan-local-insights-building-inclusive-constituencies>> (accessed 26/11/2020)

This kind of shared space allows women to build relationships, share interests, and build trust with each other.³³⁶ Bringing women together and showing they have the same interests and concerns encourages them to participate in governance and local dispute resolution. The work that civil society groups create allows the sense of empowerment we discussed in Chapter 1 to take place. Instead of making decisions for women, they equip women with the resources they need order to take the lead and proactively change their lives.

This process can bring about more meaningful involvement and action of women in local peacebuilding around the country. Dialogs around sensitive conflict issues have also been held through theater. Participatory theater allows gender-based violence, forced marriage, and domestic violence to be addressed in a non-violent manner. Women attend and act out their perspectives and solutions concerning those issues.³³⁷ Shedding light onto those issues has resulted in a significant transformation. In Mingkaman, more girls attended school, and more women became employed thanks to the values they portrayed in their performances. Those who participated reported that “the rate of rape and domestic violence have been reduced in the community and now women are being considered when decisions affecting the whole community are being made.”³³⁸ Most of the attendees showed an enhanced understanding of human rights issues and nonviolent transformation to conflict and access to justice.³³⁹

336 Katie Smith, “Building a Constituency for Peace in South Sudan. Report”, Search for Common Ground (2017): 6 Online. Available at: < <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Building-a-Constituency-for-Peace-in-South-Sudan.pdf> .> (accessed 28/11/2020)

337 Dominc Iyaa & Katie Smith, “Women and the Future of South Sudan: Local Insights for Building Inclusive Constituencies for Peace” (2018), 15 Online. Available at: < <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/women-and-future-south-sudan-local-insights-building-inclusive-constituencies> > (accessed 26/11/2020)

338 Dominc Iyaa & Katie Smith, Women and the Future of South Sudan: Local Insights for Building Inclusive Constituencies for Peace (2018), 12. Online. Available at: < <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/women-and-future-south-sudan-local-insights-building-inclusive-constituencies> > (accessed 26/11/2020)

339 Ibid, 13

Since it was invented, the radio has served as a crucial source of information, which is also the case in South Sudan.³⁴⁰ For many women, it is the primary source of any legal and human rights information.³⁴¹ Radio access is linked to positive attitudes and practices of social cohesion and conflict. Where the content was related to peacebuilding, listeners became more tolerant towards other tribes and showed a greater understanding of conflict resolution practices.³⁴²

Radio talk shows have been able to incorporate several perspectives on community issues that concern women, such as forced marriage, girls' education, helping widows and orphans, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution.³⁴³ Women have requested that those shows be developed specifically to engage women's issues affecting them at the local level.³⁴⁴ This has been particularly effective when linked with other peacebuilding activities, such as participatory theater or community dialogs.

These projects have helped women observe which values guide their lives and cultures, and how much they want to change it. Women who undergo these processes of empowerment and education feel confident to voice their doubts and concerns, and then go on to network with other women, building strong and meaningful bonds which can help the whole community. Not only are their individual lives changed, but their whole culture, since they learn how to take control of their relationships within their families and communities.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁰ Dominc Iyaa & Katie Smith, *Women and the Future of South Sudan: Local Insights for Building Inclusive Constituencies for Peace* (2018), 13. Online. Available at: < <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/women-and-future-south-sudan-local-insights-building-inclusive-constituencies>> (accessed 26/11/2020)

³⁴¹ *Women, Peace, & Security: South Sudan Snapshot* (2020), 2. Online. Available at: < https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Search_for_Common_Ground_WPS_Snapshot_2020.pdf> (accessed 29/11/2020)

³⁴² Dominc Iyaa & Katie Smith, *Women and the Future of South Sudan: Local Insights for Building Inclusive Constituencies for Peace* (2018), 13, Online. Available at: < <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/women-and-future-south-sudan-local-insights-building-inclusive-constituencies>> (accessed 26/11/2020)

³⁴³ Ibid

³⁴⁴ Ibid

³⁴⁵ Tony Calderbank, "The Women of South Sudan", *British Council*. Online. Available at: < <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/empowering-women-south-sudan>> (accessed 30/11/2020)

These networks of peacebuilding that are built at the local level allow the true potential of women to come out. With improved knowledge and skills, their courage and leadership abilities outweigh their insecurity. For example, women who engaged in local peacebuilding activities were able to convince young men in cattle camps to stop violence towards other ethnic groups.³⁴⁶ When there are no bureaucratic restrictions, such as those created by international frameworks, there is much closeness to the local context, allowing for greater adaptability and responsiveness.

Women have remarked how the South Sudanese culture changes after the conflict, so they can decide which traditions to keep. As the political and social scenario in South Sudan is changing, so are their culture and values.³⁴⁷ There is no better opportunity than this transformation to empower women to take up more roles in conflict resolution and peace processes.³⁴⁸ The social and cultural spaces created during the post-conflict phase have proven to be extremely helpful in opening up space for political dialog about what brings South Sudan together as a nation. This can be used as a platform to change women's roles and turn the country into a nation committed to gender equality.³⁴⁹ We believe this is decisive in order to have an effective peacebuilding process. Women must have a space where they feel comfortable to talk about what they feel, what bothers them, and what they think should change. If we don't hear what they really want, and only implement words that have been written years ago, in another continent, by people with different perspectives of empowerment, then we are blind to their problems, and can even worsen their situation.

³⁴⁶ 'Portals 2 Peace and National Action Plan Evaluation report, 2019', *Assistance Mission for Africa and PAX* (2019): 138

³⁴⁷ Tony Calderbank, "The Women of South Sudan", *British Council*. Online. Available at: <<https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/empowering-women-south-sudan>> (accessed 11/11/2020)

³⁴⁸ Nada Mustafa Ali, "Gender and State building in South Sudan", *United States Institute of Peace* (2011): 6 , Retrieved on 21st August 2020 from United States Institute of Peace: www.usip.org/files/resources/SR298.pdf

³⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 4

The interaction between social-cultural values with gender perceptions is partly to blame for South Sudan's view of women as mothers, maids and caretakers. When a girl is born, she will automatically be socialized into the inevitability of her future as a mother and bride. The question we need to ask is whether these cultural gender norms can only lead to gender inequality. Is there a way to break this cycle where women are consistently being put at the sidelines of their communities? We chose to believe that changing beliefs surrounding women, economically empowering them, and giving them an education might break the tendency that patriarchal norms have established through the years.

Although influencing people's beliefs is a very difficult task, we believe it must be a priority, especially in peacebuilding processes. Given the amount of violence that young men lean towards nowadays (demonstrated by the prevalence of new wars, as we described in Chapter 1), which enforces domestic violence and other harmful practices, we think changes in the socio-cultural sphere must be an urgency. These changes, however, must come from the people themselves, and not be imposed upon them. This means that, first and foremost, the "cultural agents of change" must be found: the activists, the community leaders, and the youth, especially. Students in schools are potential future leaders, and their education on gender equality and women's empowerment is of utmost importance.

It might seem as though to think this education and activism will shift socio-cultural patterns is wishful thinking, but we believe that, nonetheless, it makes sense to hope for change in the future. Indeed, it might be too early to try to evaluate what kind of changes will derive from trying to make people rethink their culture. But it is not too early to say that, if patriarchy and gender-based discrimination and violence prevail, they will continue to take the hopes and lives of women and girls.

Including women in peace processes can change social and cultural opinions. This is why we believe that empowering women in peacebuilding is so important. Women must realize that they are just as valid as men, and so are their opinions. When we achieve this, in the long run, we can rid them of several gender discriminatory norms and beliefs that have been haunting them all their lives. However, this cannot be achieved if governments and international organization only talk about women's empowerment instead of implementing it. From our point of view, their priorities should be, first and foremost, to address the obstacles that are keeping women from being empowered, or, in other words, that are preventing UNSCR 1325 from being implemented.

Conclusion

And when they dare to tell you about all the things you cannot be, you smile and tell them “I am both war and woman and you cannot stop me” (Nikita Gill, 2018)³⁵⁰

After South Sudan became an independent state, in 2011, a struggle for power among the country’s leaders, corruption and ethnic tensions led to conflicts within the new country. These conflicts deeply affected South Sudan and disrupted people’s lives by destroying their property, causing death and displacement, insecurity, poverty, and economic decline.

The conflict’s aftermath impacted men and women differently, given the gendered aspect of several forms of violence that took place during (and after) the conflict. Women had to fend for their families while their husbands were fighting, which put them under great emotional and mental stress. They also suffered sexual violence and exploitation.

In South Sudan, these experiences exacerbated the vulnerability that women bear in their daily lives. Their specific situation must be addressed with their needs and concerns in mind. Therefore, it is crucial that women are involved in the post-conflict scenario, when measures are taken to alleviate the suffering caused by the conflict.

In *Opportunities for Gender Justice and Reconciliation in South Sudan*, Friederike Bubenzer and Elizabeth Lacey note that, given the importance women have in the South Sudanese society, keeping them from these processes harms the peacebuilding project.

The marginalisation of women in these processes limits the extent to which they are able to voice their concerns and interests, in the process excluding and alienating them from the nation and the state. Despite their relative marginalisation within a highly patriarchal society, women – constituting as they do half the population of South Sudan – play a crucial role in society. (Bubenzer & Lacey, 2013:2)

³⁵⁰ Nikita Gill, “An Ode to Fearless Women”. Online. Available at: <https://www.herself360.com/articles/ode-fearless-women> (accessed 5/2/2021)

Over the years, the cruciality of women's role in peace processes has been acknowledged at the international level. Time and time again, in times of conflict, the effects of their participation (or of the lack of it), have made themselves known. It is no longer a matter of recognizing the need of women's participation, but of bringing this rhetoric to life.

UNSCR 1325 was a landmark in the field of women, peace and security studies and practical approaches. In it, the UN acknowledged the importance of including women in peace processes, remarking how their presence in formal peace talks improves the quality of the agreements achieved, and increases the odds of a successful implementation. Although this progress is applaudable, women living through a post-conflict scenario continuously have their decision-making power cut short, through exclusion and marginalization. The framework set by UNSCR 1325 still hasn't been satisfactorily implemented on the ground. The commitments that were made in order to promote and encourage women to participate in peace processes to rebuild their countries have frequently remained words on paper, such as, for example the 35% quota established to ensure gender parity in the government of conflict-affected countries.

Under these circumstances, we think it's understandable that women do not trust their leaders when they say they are dedicated to changing their situation. After years of war ignited by their leaders' personal interests, as we have shown in Chapter 1, South Sudanese women have felt as though things will never get better:

Nothing will change for the women of South Sudan. After independence, we thought it would be peaceful, but now it is worse... The women of Lakes States got together in a meeting and wrote a letter to the president to ask for disarmament. We are tired of being raped. We met with the chiefs and raised our concerns. We have had no response yet. (Care International: A Lifetime of Violence for Conflict-Affected Women and Girls in South Sudan. Main Results Report, 2017:79)

Testimonies about their hopelessness are abundant and truly disheartening. However, the commitments have been made, the laws have been laid out and the quotas have been established. The lack of implementation of those measures must be held against those responsible. The responsibility to adopt a gender sensitive approach across the peacebuilding process must no longer be seen as just a “box to tick”, but part of the post-conflict work’s core.

With reference to the purpose of the study, which was to explore whether or not women had meaningful participation in peacebuilding in South Sudan, we have found shortcomings in the implementation of UNSCR 1325’s normative rhetoric in the country, meaning that, for the most part, women were not able to have a meaningful impact in the peace processes. This shortcoming has been worsened by several challenges faced by South Sudanese women, namely several cultural and social obstacles, and a lack of will and accountability in the implementation of UNSCR 1325. High illiteracy levels, early marriage, lack of infrastructures, and strong patriarchal values make women’s participation in the political, economic and social sectors of peacebuilding an even more difficult goal to achieve.

In spite of these challenges, women have shown resilience, and a strong will to participate in peace processes, by creating methods to overturn obstacles that stand between them and their rightful inclusion. Either in association with others or by themselves, women have found ways to foment their knowledge and skills and turn them into valuable tools for peacebuilding, for instance, in creating local solutions and bonding with other tribes and ethnicities in workshops held by organizations, such as Springboard Women’s Development Programme, where they hear and learn about each other’s stories.³⁵¹

³⁵¹ Tony Calderbank, “The Women of South Sudan”, British Council. Available at: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/empowering-women-south-sudan> (accessed 30/11/2020)

These workshops have helped women feel encouraged to decide what they value in their lives and cultures, and which cultural biases they want to change. They feel empowered to talk about their doubts, concerns and aspirations. By hearing stories of success of other South Sudanese women, they also discover that it is possible to take to lead of their own lives, relationships, families, communities and workplaces.

We can say that many objectives from UNSCR 1325 are yet to be met in South Sudan. Although efforts have been made to enhance women's role in the political, economic and social dimensions of peacebuilding, not all of them have had a significant impact, as we have seen in Chapter 3. Similarly to what we have commented before in a general appreciation, it is very clear that illiteracy, early and often forced marriages, poor health and sanitation, rape and gender-based violence continue to taint the lives of several women and girls across South Sudan. These problems, adding to the longstanding patriarchal cultural bias that prevails in South Sudan continue to keep women from achieving any significant decision-making power.

Women must be granted important roles in peacebuilding processes. If we look at what women have been able to accomplish at the grassroots level, we can detect skills such as adaptability and resourcefulness, that could be incredibly useful in peace processes, but that are frequently ignored or underestimated in formal peace negotiations.

They are the majority of the population ... but because of ignorance, they are trodden upon, kept in the kitchen and made to procreate.... But time has come for us to equally dance with our men in the political arena. No man is born a politician and no woman is born a cook! (Pamphlet, New Sudan Women's Association, 1999)³⁵²

As we've shown in Chapter 1, women play crucial roles during the conflict, when their husbands are away, and afterwards, when their communities are torn to pieces. Their input is

³⁵² Nada Mustafa Ali, "Endangering peace by ignoring women", Forced Migration Review. Online. Available at: <https://www.fmreview.org/sudan/ali> (accessed 29/1/2021)

just as valuable as men's, which should mean they get just as much recognition in peace processes as men do. However, that has never been the case in South Sudan, as we've argued through this study. As of February 2020, the Transitional Government of National Unity was formed in South Sudan. Out of the list of 8 governors under consideration for office, 1 of them was a woman.

There are several recommendations that can be made towards the enhancement of women's participation in peacebuilding. First and foremost, **the principles enshrined in UNSCR 1325 must be attuned to the challenges felt by South Sudanese people**, otherwise, it might continue to fall short of the mark. This can be achieved by informing policymakers and practitioners of the local context in South Sudan. Local leaders, civil society groups and women's organizations could help in this process, by informing those in charge of formulating programs, strategies and policies about their communities' necessities. Peacebuilding theories have informed policy practitioners about theoretical guidance for local support. One of the most important theorists in this field was Paul Lederach.³⁵³ As he suggested, the local context must be the starting point from which international peacebuilders engage with communities. We agree with Lederach's stance, and believe that the diversity and complexity of civil society must be put to good use during peacebuilding, and its incredible potential should be taken seriously by all actors involved in peace processes.

To guarantee women's political participation, the government, aided by international partners, should grant them **seats across all levels of governance**, and include their concerns in their priorities. This can be achieved through policies and legislation, that should instigate women's involvement in decision-making processes. These measures can include training and education

³⁵³ John Paul Lederach, "Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies" (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 39.

to change perspectives towards women's role in governance and politics. After having managed to keep their communities running during conflict, in the absence of their husbands, and sustaining for their families during the hardships that post-conflict brings, as we've described in Chapter 1, women should be given deserved recognition. Time and time again, they've demonstrated they are more than victims, mothers and housekeepers. They are their own people, who can fend for themselves, and make important decisions, even when the world is falling apart around them.

When it comes to creating **new laws**, women from all types of different groups (ethnic, religious or social) should be able to give their input, enshrining the new laws with a commitment to women's rights and gender equality (Ali: 2011, 7). In UN Women & Elections, this issue is addressed: "Post-conflict countries often establish new political systems, constitutions and laws and are therefore given a rare opportunity to institute fundamental changes that can advance the rights and electoral participation of women" (UN Women & Elections, 2005: 21). The field of law reform can be especially beneficial in assuring women's participation in the post-conflict society. If the new laws determine transparency within political parties, there is a higher chance that women will enjoy greater opportunities of political participation. This participation can also be enhanced through the creation of laws on freedom of expression, as well as laws on personal status and citizenship. Discriminatory laws, should as those preventing women from ownership, should be altered.

Together with UN agencies, South Sudan should ensure women's participation across all relevant legislative initiatives, something that women's organizations can help with by developing a plan that includes the views and needs of all women across South Sudan (Ali, 2011:11).

The **new institutions and structures** within the country should adopt a gender perspective into their planning, development, budgeting and policy making. Resources must be allocated towards efforts to implement gender mainstreaming and equality, and every sector should be trained on these matters. Their progress should be measured from time to time (Ali: 2011, 7). Women's organizations and civil society groups, such as those that came together to form the South Sudan Women Coalition for Peace and Development, should be involved in monitoring them, ensuring nonbiased evaluations. With a special focus on the **judicial system**, women's rights should be advocated for and defended, through prosecution of abuses, namely in the instances of gender-based violence. As several women have remarked: "We cannot expect citizens who lost their loved ones, or whose loved ones have been killed, to forgive and move on without healing and accountability. This is unrealistic and will only encourage conflict." (UN News, 2020).³⁵⁴

How can we ask women to leave their houses to join meeting and discussions, if they know their rapist or abuser is out there, running free, without having answered for his crimes? If most women are still traumatized from the violence their loved ones suffered, and cannot bear to leave their houses, how can we request them to leave their villages to join meeting groups? We cannot possibly expect women to join the workforce or to participate in peace talks when their own wounds haven't healed. This is why we believe transitional justice to be crucial, especially when it comes to rape and other types of gender-based violence. Those who committed these crimes must be held accountable in order for women to begin healing from the suffering and resentment they feel.

With regards to **women's economic empowerment**, the government of South Sudan, with help from international partners, should help women meet their basic economic needs and consider

³⁵⁴ UN News, "South Sudan: Progress on peace agreement 'limps along', UN envoy tells Security Council," (2020) Online. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1072502> (accessed 29/1/2021)

them in the economic sector. Women should get access to economic opportunities, be allowed more opportunities in the workforce, and be granted a more significant role in the agricultural sector (Ali, 2011:6). Offering women opportunities in the economic field helps the country's economy, but also assists them in providing for their families. The country's healing process can also be facilitated through this, since women can interact with other tribes and ethnicities in their businesses.

Economic empowerment is interlinked with social, political and psychological empowerment. One cannot happen without the others and, when one is achieved, it becomes easier to achieve the others. Economic empowerment can enhance women's decision-making power in their household and their community, improve their political and legal literacy, their self-esteem, psychological wellbeing, and sense of inclusion and entitlement. When women are allowed into a workforce that does not discriminate them based on their sex, they can earn an income, which allows them the power to make important life choices, like sending their daughters to school.³⁵⁵

For women to enjoy these rights, a **prosperous environment** should be created. To achieve this, the complex issue of gender-based violence must be tackled. The needs of victims of this violence are usually not dealt with, something that police training on women's rights and needs could help with, as well as guidelines for their clinical management. Psychosocial support should also be granted to survivors of gender-based violence. Consulting grassroots organizations, such as Search for Common Ground, could help shed light on how to address this issue. These organizations have worked closely with women who have been victims of gender-based violence and, therefore, are familiar with the dynamics that are at play in those

³⁵⁵ "Women's Economic Empowerment in Conflict and Post-conflict Countries." Sida Policy (2009): 9

situations. For example, they know better than to report rape cases to the police, who will probably tell the victims to go home and settle the issue with their families.³⁵⁶

The **role of grassroots organizations must be enhanced**, starting with increased funding and technical assistance. Women should be able to share ideas, information and experiences in safe and open spaces, created by networks of women's groups and associations. This can allow women from rural areas to be heard, and common concerns to be identified. The government should include these networks' understandings when formulating policies that address gender issues. A relationship between the government and these networks can, in the long run, enhance the adoption of a holistic approach towards the promotion of women's rights and result in a greater awareness about gender equality, and the effect it can have in building a functional state. These organizations must be seen as allies of the government in their search for sustainable peace, instead of opposition.

After a conflict, there is a unique window of opportunity that can allow some meaningful changes to take place within the state. The vision that South Sudanese people, including women, have for their country might become a reality, if the country's new plans, strategies and budgets take their aspirations and needs into account. Within peace processes, gender equality and women's empowerment could become tangible. South Sudan, alongside its international partners, must give women space to voice their concerns and to participate in the crucial process of peacebuilding. Clearly, this cannot happen in a society where women face obstacles across every sector of their lives. Thus, the South Sudanese government should create an environment that allows women to thrive, starting with improving their access to health and education, and freeing them, to the best of its ability, of all forms of violence.

³⁵⁶ "Women and the Future of South Sudan: Local Insights for Building Inclusive Constituencies for Peace." Search for Common Ground (2019), 10-1

The concept of empowerment we addressed in Chapter 1 can only be fulfilled in an environment where women don't live in fear of gender based violence, and where they have access to health and education, and the means to proactively improve their living conditions.³⁵⁷ Higher levels of education will allow women to stand for themselves and demand respect for their rights, whilst also enhancing the odds of their successful participation in peace talks. As Nobel laureate Amartya Sen mentions, "Education makes us the human beings we are. It has major impacts on economic development, on social equity, gender equity. In all kinds of ways, our lives are transformed by education and security" (Wide Angle, 2004).³⁵⁸ Sen's work³⁵⁹ showed how women's literacy and education impacts how they are respected and regarded. Even women's mortality rate, which leads to "such terrible phenomenon as a hundred million of 'missing women') seems to go down sharply, and may even get eliminated, with progress in women's empowerment, for which literacy is a basic ingredient."³⁶⁰

Integrating women in the process of peacebuilding, in an open and free space, where they have access to resources that can improve their participation, can bring benefits to the whole South Sudanese nation. With a strong will to achieve the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment, and according actions, not only will South Sudan be on par with the framework of UNSCR 1325, but it will also increase its chances of achieving a stable economy and a lasting peace.

³⁵⁷ World Vision. Gender Training Toolkit second edition. (2008): 289. Online. Available at: http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Gender_Training_Toolkit.pdf. (accessed 29/9/2020)

³⁵⁸ Time for School Series, Interview: Amartya Sen, Wide Angle, 2004. Online. Available at: <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/interactives-extras/interviews/time-for-school-interview-amartya-sen/1477/> (accessed 29/1/2021)

³⁵⁹ Unfortunately, it is not possible to develop this interesting insight, because of the word limits of this dissertation. His full speech can be found in The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2003/oct/28/schools.uk4> (accessed 5/2/2021)

³⁶⁰ Amartya Sen's speech to the Commonwealth education conference in Edinburgh. Online. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2003/oct/28/schools.uk4> (accessed 5/2/2021)

Although it might seem to some people that the inclusion of women is a whim, or is not as important other aspects in peacebuilding, we believe that their participation must be a central concern. Not only is gender equality a predictor of peace,³⁶¹ it is also an obligation that states must assure, ever since they signed UN's fundamental diplomas. Ensuring gender equality and justice in a country during peacebuilding means to create unity in a country, instead of a structure where men dominate women. It means that, regardless of gender, everyone can help fulfill a vision of security and peace for the country they have seen conflict decimate. From the personal to the political sphere, gender equality can help banish discrimination and violence, and, therefore, diminish risk of instability, disputes and conflict.

The issue of integrating women in peacebuilding processes has gained momentum on the international level, but the fight isn't over: women must continue to be made aware of their rights, to be mobilized to take action and to be included in the processes that are meant to protect them. As we've tried to show throughout this study, the participation of women in peacebuilding is essential in order for South Sudan to achieve a lasting peace and a sustainable economic and social development. We believe that, as activist Zainad Salbi said, "we need to invest in peace and women, not only because it is the right thing to do for all of us to build sustainable peace today, but it is for the future."³⁶²

³⁶¹ Valerie Hudson, Donna Lee Bowen, and Perpetua Lynne Nielsen. "We Are Not Helpless: Addressing Structural Gender Inequality in Post-Conflict Societies." *PRISM* 6, no. 1 (2016): 122-39.

³⁶² Zainad Salbi, "Women, Wartime and the Dream of Peace" (2010) Online. Available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/zainab_salbi_women_wartime_and_the_dream_of_peace/transcript (accessed 5/2/2021)

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