

conflict zones. The common post-war pattern the world over has been the re-creation of patriarchal dominance in new forms, whereas these chapters corroborate women's belief in the necessity of challenging the old order and creating new democratic institutions. The authors document and analyse women's survival strategies and post-war activities, enabling us to identify the seeds of transformation and showing us the important role of solidarity with women in conflict zones. In the aftermath it becomes incumbent upon us all to develop conscious strategies that help women build on their activities and find ways of incorporating new gender relations in democratic societies.

## CHAPTER 2

### Women in Conflicts, Their Gains and Their Losses

CODOU BOP

Africa is the continent most ravaged by wars in our time. Some wars have been fought over long periods, lasting, as in the case of Sudan, more than forty years. The bright lights of the media fall on a few, but many remain unknown and neglected. Wars of the poor, they use cheap but deadly arms such as land mines and light weapons, and their victims are counted in tens of millions.

Wars are the subject of numerous studies and conferences; their causes and their effects on regional and local economies and on populations are well known. Yet although the media repeatedly provide information that describes the tough conditions women endure to survive, particularly in refugee camps and on the roads of exile, they constantly ignore the actions women take as principal actors. The image conveyed, which endures in the onlooker's memory, is that of women as losers and victims. Such an image has serious consequences for a true awareness of the differential impact of conflicts on women and men and impedes the recognition of endogenous solutions that women propose.

Such a view explains the feeble actions taken to diminish the consequences of war for women, actions most often left to humanitarian aid organisations. The result is a continual marginalising of women, whose contribution researchers still largely ignore and whose influence official policies do not recognise.

It is widely accepted that women lose in wars, but important questions remain in need of answers. Are women always losers, and are they so collectively? Because they do not comprise a homogeneous

group, collectively deprived of power, do those women who belong to ruling classes or ruling ethnic groups make gains? In what circumstances can women achieve gains, and what are the nature and the duration of their gains?

Although it is true that women are almost never the initiators of conflicts, are never the leaders of conflicts, and are rarely at the negotiation table, they have participated in all wars as actors. Thanks to the active role they have played in combat, either by inciting men to fight or, more frequently, by undertaking multiple tasks to support war, they have been able to register gains.

### Social and Political Gains

The 1960s saw the majority of African nations peacefully attain independence. Others, such as the former Portuguese colonies (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique) and the countries under apartheid and white minority rule (Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe) waged long wars of independence, as did the settler colonies of Algeria and Kenya. Clearly there are great ideological, political and social differences between the wars of independence and the factional conflicts tearing Africa apart now. There is also a difference in the kind of society to be created, the nature of the commitment of combatants and the place given to women.

In colonised countries, people under the yoke of oppression developed a political consciousness that encouraged the most committed among them to organise in order to drive the coloniser out. Women, full-fledged members of society, were affected by the same processes of awareness. Some became involved in the organisations created, and, later, in the armed struggle for national liberation. Very few descriptions of the specific conditions of women soldiers are available. We know, however, that the majority of women participating in or supporting war played a secondary role, at the most an extension of their household work: providing fighters with fresh food, preparing meals and carrying supplies overland. But a relatively significant number of women became fighters, and among them, some, by virtue of their personality or their abilities, came to occupy important positions in the military hierarchy. In Africa, as everywhere in the world, the army, whether or not it is the liberation army,

symbolises force and power. To become part of it means that one belongs to a dominant group. The sense of power that goes with belonging to a dominant group has led women fighters to transform the way they perceive themselves. It has contributed to changing their traditional identity as wives and mothers to that of fighters and liberators of their country. Yet acceptance of this new identity, whether and how long it lasts after peace returns, and its place during the process of national reconstruction, all represent particularly difficult challenges for women and for society to handle in the post-conflict period.

As struggles for social and economic liberation, the wars of independence brought at least the theoretical promise of change in the power relations between classes and the sexes. In Africa, most of the leaders of political parties in the avant-garde of independence wars drew to some extent upon Marxist-Leninist ideology with its credo of ending social inequality. In the parties of the avant-garde, as in the ranks of the armies of liberation, education and consciousness-raising about the inequalities of class and sex were part of the theoretical training of militants and combatants. The parties asked people to struggle against inequalities of class and sex in their daily practice. Just as training in the handling of weapons, in ideology and in theories of war were common practices, the avant-garde also encouraged sharing of household tasks, with the goal of introducing changes in the perception of roles and social status. Drawing on developments during the war in Uganda, Joan Kakwenzire confirms the possibility offered by the wars of liberation, of creating and accepting new roles for women and men. She notes that

during the 30 years the war lasted, some women took an active part in the conflict either as combatants or in carrying out reconnaissance missions (espionage, logistical support). Furthermore, the roles of women in combat situations and in the home have dramatically changed and have had an impact on the relation between men and women. The multiple roles that women have taken on have engendered a new race of women. They have realised the potential of their own strength and this awareness has led some of them toward a more favourable socio-economic position. (Kakwenzire 1999)

Having opened the doors to public space – and hence to political space – to the committed, war first encouraged the emergence of

citizen consciousness among a relatively large group of women and later strengthened their will to participate in decision making. In fact, wherever women have fought, arms in hand, with the support of men at their side, they have sought (clearly with unequal results) to promote the active participation of women in the political life of the country. In the initial years of independence, the leaders accepted a greater presence of women in new institutions and the creation of resources aimed at improving their living conditions. For example, Chungue notes that in Angola

there is a percentage of women (although it does not satisfy us) in government. Women are asked for their opinion at important meetings. After independence, the women of Angola began to acquire skills they had previously not had and took positions they could not have held before. The OMA [Organisation of Angolan Women], which is the first organisation of women in the country, worked to influence the government in order to prove that women are capable of taking charge of important government functions. That took time but subsequently the government began to give work to women. (Faustina Naivele Chungue, conference participant)<sup>1</sup>

Becker notes the involvement of women in Namibian national affairs; she emphasises the changes occurring in the rural areas. According to Becker, Namibian women are making important advances in decision-making organs and in the traditional hierarchy in the rural areas of Owambo, in northern Namibia, which was an important centre in the war. In her view, the recent changes in women's participation in the structures of traditional authority are inextricably intertwined with the political changes that Namibia has experienced since the end of South African colonialism and the war. A new way of thinking about types of decision and how they are made has emerged in rural milieus since independence, particularly in Owambo, which widely consults on developments in the policy of the central government (Becker, this volume).

Finally, in societies where traditional religion, in which women play an important role, remains vital (for example, in Casamance in southern Senegal), women have strengthened their control as keepers of the fetiches believed to assure the protection of combatants. In this regard, the case of Alice Lakwena, a Ugandan priestess who was able to mobilise partisans and create an army that waged war against the

regular army of Uganda for several years before she withdrew, is particularly interesting (Behrend 1991).

Examining other types of wars, notably wars between factions or ethnic wars, we see that gains obtained by women are less important, and that women are primarily in the position of victims rather than active subjects. Less involved than combatants, they focus their actions on their family or their clan. We have been able to see the emergence and strengthening of a certain female leadership within their midst, however, extending even to the national and regional levels.

The movement of populations, the scattering of families and the expansion of families headed by women have created situations where women had either to participate in decision making or to make decisions themselves. At the local level, women have sought to strengthen solidarity among themselves. Associations bringing together women of varied ethnic groups, enemies only yesterday, have come into being; similarly, women have formed prayer groups in drop-in centres. In these associations the women jointly undertake income-producing work, or seek to heal the physical, moral and psychological wounds of war.

At the national level, women have developed survival strategies and reconstruction plans for communities destroyed by war. They have engaged in lobbying belligerents to lay down their arms, and they organise consciousness-raising campaigns to help women become more fully integrated into the decision-making structures of the peace process in which they invest more and more energy. In face of the painful abuse of which they are victims, particularly the assaults on their bodily integrity, women have learned to unite, to organise in order to bring about a collective solution to their problems, and to ask for assistance or to request protection of their rights by appealing to international authorities. They have understood the importance of awareness and of the support that other women and volunteers outside their national territory can bring. Many have learned how to use the media and the internet to make their problems widely known and to exert pressure on governments or regional and international institutions. They have learned how to organise important campaigns, at the national, regional and international levels, to make demands for such goals as: an end to the use of land mines, the enforcement of

treaties, an end to sexual violence, and recognition of specific acts of violence against women. The successes achieved are as yet limited, but women have obtained recognition of their right to bodily integrity and the judgement by the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda that crimes committed against women are crimes against humanity.

### Economic Gains

No one contests the economic basis of most of the wars now taking place on the African continent. The conflicts offer countless opportunities to get rich to arms vendors, to the suppliers of troops, to the fighters themselves, and to their leaders. The role of diamonds and precious metals in conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and that of oil in Congo (Brazzaville) and in Angola, is evident. In this connection it appears that certain long and deadly civil wars fail to become the subject of news coverage, or of peace negotiations, precisely because the countries concerned have no oil or mineral wealth and their strategic position is not considered interesting by the great powers, in particular the United States.

Generally one of the belligerent groups controls the economic fortunes generated by war. It is easier for women to have access to the riches if they themselves belong to these groups. But since the principle of unequal access to resources also operates in wartime, women's level of wealth remains far below that of men. Moreover women never control the production or marketing of oil and minerals. Yet some women know very well how to seize the opportunities at hand in order to make significant economic gains during conflict. Analysing cases of women involved in the 1998 civil war in Congo (Brazzaville), Martine Galloy observes:

the responsibility of provisioning the militia in power with fresh food was handed down to a woman on the select list. This operation, although it was an extension of domestic tasks, gave her access to the network that distributed payments of fees, permitting her to accumulate a real goldmine. On their end, the mothers and families of the militiamen profited from the war booty their sons reaped from the systematic pillage in force. (Galloy 2000)

But women were not content with these opportunities deriving from

their traditional role. Some became famous for smuggling on a small scale, including contraband arms and precious stones. They also sold illegal drugs for their own consumption or for the needs of the camp they supported in the war. In Senegal, there have been many reported arrests of women partisans of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance who agreed to sell cannabis in order to fund the rebellion.

As in the realm of politics, women have stepped out of their traditional roles to meet the economic demands of war. This movement between sex roles helped some women in sectors previously dominated by men and contributed to mitigating the prejudices preventing their advancement in economic and social spheres. In this regard, we have the example of changes in European countries during the Second World War, where women replaced men in factories and on farms, keeping their countries going by virtue of their productive work. In Niger, following the Tuareg rebellion, women had to face repression and displacement outside their traditional territory, as well as hunger and deprivation. According to Zara Mahamane (1999):

They learned to unite and organise, to take initiatives by working together in NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) in cooperative partnerships for development. They devoted themselves to commercial ventures, to the hotel business and the craft industry. At present they are attempting to restore herds of livestock and are looking for ways to work with sponsors in order to learn new development techniques. They have learned to fight in order to live – the wait and see approach is over. (Mahamane 1999)

Gains with an economic base seem to last longer than political gains, probably because they raise fewer questions about the relations of power between the sexes in families and in communities.

### The Loss of Identity

In Africa in general, the individual – man or woman – is tightly integrated into his or her clan, ethnic group and community. This integration is such that Western ethnologists have declared that in Africa the individual does not exist. Certainly colonisation, schooling and urbanisation have contributed to changing this situation and to the emergence of individualism in Africa. The family, the clan and the ethnic group still remain the cornerstones of society, however, and the

reference points for individuals. Their break-up, as a result of armed conflicts, is a wrenching experience for the many refugees and displaced persons living in Africa, now numbering 7.4 million according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The majority of refugees and displaced persons are women and children. Another consequence of the break-up of families and of communities is the disintegration, if not the end, of traditional interdependencies that permitted the poorest to survive. This disintegration exacerbates the precariousness of women's living conditions.

Exile also has its hazards: flight to a foreign country, death of close relations or separation from them and from one's community, and surviving in camps with strangers for indeterminate periods of time. Such events deprive individuals of all their points of reference, familial, clan and national. Women are particularly affected.

In countries where religious fundamentalism is rampant, especially in Muslim countries such as Algeria, Iran and Afghanistan, women experience another kind of identity loss that must be taken into consideration. Forced to wear the *hijab* (veil) or the *chador* (enveloping cloak) or else face punishment that can go as far as death, women find themselves constrained to adopt an identity, known as 'Islamic', which, in its attempt to make them invisible, to deprive them of their mobility and to relegate them to the private sphere, denies them their identity as subject and citizen.

### Loss of Bodily Integrity

Assault on the bodily integrity of women, of adolescents and of little girls is a central and universal fact of all wars. Despite the absence of statistics in Africa, where many countries do not yet permit complete and detailed reporting on this issue, accounts given by victims provide some idea of the extent of their violence. Gang rapes, countless sexual abuses, mutilation of limbs, forced marriages, forced sexual relations and pregnancies, forced labour, and summary executions were phenomena in all the clashes that have torn Africa apart.

In Rwanda in 1999, the Association of Widows of the Genocide, Agahozo, conducted a study on the kinds of violence suffered by women (AVEGA 1999). This study, based on a sample of 1,125 women living in the prefectures of Kigali, Butare and Kibundo,

revealed that 74.5 per cent had experienced sexual violence such as rape perpetrated by individuals or groups of men, incidents of forced incest (for example, rape of one's own child or parent), the cutting of genitalia, the insertion of cutting or piercing objects in the vagina, and rape by one or more men infected with the AIDS virus. Galloy reports the testimony of an old woman in Congo (Brazzaville) raped by her own son, a militiaman forced to commit this act by his comrades. 'My son no longer dares to look at me. It isn't his fault, it's the Ninjas who made him rape me. They fired on me so that I'd obey' (Galloy 2000).

### Adding to Women's Responsibilities

Wars are characterised by extensive mortality. Women are killed, lose their children, a husband or family members. The high mortality rate of men in wars, the displacements and migrations bring profound changes in families. One of the most significant is the formation of households headed by women who assume all responsibility for the household's upkeep. In Rwanda for example, '34 per cent of the households today are headed by women who, in most cases, have lost all (or almost all) their children and must take care of countless orphans left by close relatives or distant dead relatives' (Mukamulisa and Mukarubuha 2000). The high rate of dependency characteristic of this type of family adds greatly to women's vulnerability.

In addition to the growing number and size of households headed by women, the absence of men has serious repercussions on the capacity of women who remain in the village to gain access to resources. Men usually negotiate arrangements relating to access to land and work and, in their absence, women may lose both. Even when women have access to land, the lack of a male workforce has a very negative impact on the level of agricultural production, and hence on the availability of food.

The prejudicial assumption that only men are heads of families further weakens the households from which they are absent. This is true of all locations, whether urban or rural, and including refugee camps. Furthermore, most often, in the absence of men, official statistics count only households that are headed *de jure* by women, that is by widows or divorcees, ignoring those that are run *de facto* by women because their husbands have gone to war or have migrated.

The distributors of aid (food, tents, land, etcetera) may marginalise families headed *de facto* by women, who may therefore find them- selves in the most extreme destitution.

The precarious living conditions of women who head families force them to develop individual strategies for survival that are not without risk, such as prostitution or smuggling. In some cases, women agree to marry nationals of countries of refuge for the sole purpose of surviving. The women call this kind of marriage a 'marriage of hunger'.

### Economic Losses

Wars are one of the causes of the economic underdevelopment of the African continent. Wars contribute to the unravelling of the economic fabric at the local and national level, the flight of investment capital and human resources, the breaking up of local and national businesses, and unemployment. The extensive use of national economic resources to modernise armies, purchase arms and pay militiamen is a serious obstacle to developing social sectors such as education, health or job creation. At the end of the war, the national economy is so depleted that the new authorities have no alternative but to apply to international monetary institutions for loans, which are granted with so many conditions attached that they only serve to intensify poverty.

It is now widely recognised that wars and structural adjustment policies do not impact equally on women and men. In addition to their lack of competitiveness due to their weaker schooling and training, women's unequal access to resources, the impact of war and adjustment policies all heighten their vulnerability. In Burundi, for example, at the end of the conflict,

almost one million people live in conditions that cannot be more inhuman and they are threatened by all kinds of illnesses and by acute malnutrition. In this environment of extreme poverty aggravated by ruinous hostilities, there is a new category of persons, the disaster victims born of events: women represent 54 per cent of the total number. (Ntwarante and Ndacasinyaba 2000)

At the end of the war, on returning to their community in the rural area, women may lose already established property rights because they have become widows or because their land is given to a

demobilised combatant. Since women are the main producers of subsistence foodstuffs consumed by the family, this situation may lead to cases of famine. In the cities, salaried women may lose their jobs because the state or their former employer is no longer able to pay salaries. A woman may also lose her job because the state or the employer has decided to give priority to hiring men, justifying this choice in terms of the need to pacify men, who are quicker to show their anger or to make trouble. In such cases the women often turn to the crowded informal sector, an area already open to women in the past. The lack of capital and the presence of competition become insurmountable obstacles to their success.

At the end of the conflict, the new government generally declares a formal demobilisation accompanied by the surrender of arms and distribution of aid or land. Men are most often the beneficiaries of these measures while women combatants find demobilisation and the return to civilian life lead mostly to alienation and poverty. According to Jeanette Eno,

no one ever raised the question of reintegration in Sierra Leone. Female ex-combatants had intended to return to their homes. But in many cases, these women and their families could not return. The fact is that while they were doing their combat training along with the boys, the girls had also committed rapes, torture and murder and had taken drugs. Viewed in terms of traditional values, they had broken sacred laws and were considered impure. Besides, how would they earn their living? The young women who returned to their community were confronted by situations of extreme poverty and social degradation. (Eno 2000)

This account of the female ex-combatants in Sierra Leone could also apply to the Eritrean women described by Sondra Hale, who notes that

a great number of demobilised combatants were women. Among them, most came from rural areas. They had changed so much that it was impossible for many of them to return to their village. Of the 12,000 demobilised women combatants, half had divorced, a status that could have very negative consequences since their children could abandon them. They did not have much money, no work and little or no education, especially the rural women. Not only could they find themselves unable to return to their village, but they could also find themselves 'unmarriageable'. (Hale 1999)

Women in Niger faced similar problems. Mahamane (1999) observes: 'After the conflict, the men who have survived receive compensation. But women, the sisters, the mothers and grandmothers of the dead, what compensation have they had?'

The question of reintegrating women into their community of origin at the end of a war is an important one. Unfortunately, it has not received much attention from researchers and decision makers. If economic reintegration is important, social and psychological reintegration is crucial. In many African communities, for example, the murderer of an individual is obliged to offer a burial place for the remains in order for the soul of the deceased to rest in peace. If this obligation is not fulfilled, the assassin becomes unclean and can be cleansed of the stain only by carrying out particular ceremonies and by offering very costly compensation to the family of the deceased. The unclean individual can carry out these ceremonies with family support. But families discriminate between men and women in this regard: they are more likely to help men than women. In situations like this, persuaded that they are unclean, and rejected by their families and their clan, a large number of women ex-combatants decide to stay in the cities where, lacking work, they engage in prostitution.

### Women's Loss of Leadership

Women's loss of rights to exercise leadership on the political and social levels, rights won in periods of conflict, is the most extreme and most longlasting of their losses. In post-war periods, especially in countries where the situation is unclear and neither war nor peace prevails, authorities rarely give concrete expression to any hope of changing relations of power in favour of the socially subordinate. This was the case in Europe at the end of the Second World War; it has been the case following independence wars in Africa and elsewhere, and it has also been the case after factional wars.

No systematic analysis has yet explained why African women have lost the leadership positions they had previously won. One of the reasons could be that women themselves need to admit that their own interests as a group - meaning the struggle against inequalities between the sexes and against patriarchal ideology - take second place

to the struggle for national liberation. In this regard it is interesting to recall the Maoist concept of principal and secondary contradictions, which influenced many African groups and political parties that claimed this idea as their authority. According to this concept the principal contradiction is between the country and the foreign invader; all other antagonisms, including inequalities between men and women, are 'contradictions within the people' which, because they can be resolved more easily, may be put off to a more or less distant future. Women members of the groups and parties who accepted this system of ideas and practices may have committed a historical error by agreeing to give second place in their strategies to transforming social relations between the sexes; but perhaps they also erred in their assessment of the political and social situation of their country.

During the war, at its end and at the time of peace negotiations, authorities mainly emphasise issues relating to the conflict itself and to the sharing of power between the belligerents. Gender issues are virtually ignored. It should be no surprise that women encounter enormous difficulties as soon as reconstruction begins and that it is so hard for them to gain access to land and to property, to repeal an outmoded family code (personal law), or to win representation in decision-making spheres. Thus, despite their participation in the armed struggle, there are few women among the elected representatives in many African parliaments - fewer than 10 per cent in Angola, 18.1 per cent in Namibia, and 14 per cent in Zimbabwe.

The 'satellite' status of women's organisations inside the ruling parties illustrates the marginalisation of the issue of equality between the sexes. For decades, in fact, the parties in power have incorporated women's organisations. Their lack of autonomy has contributed to the absence of a political and ideological vision - focused on the specific interests of women - whose objective would be to transform gender relations. Women's loss of the rights they won on the battlefield, notably equality with men, is also mirrored inside families. Hale interviewed Eritrean former women combatants who recognised that society, men and women, continue to use tradition, religion and custom to prevent women from freeing themselves. Superficially, society accepts the [progressive] ideas, but underneath it does not accept equality. In

order to change our relatives, our society, we must change their ideas. When we try to explain this to them, they don't easily accept. When they saw us fighting against the enemy, they could accept that. Today, they tell us repeatedly that we must marry, have children, stay at home and take care of our children. (Haile 1999)

### Losses in Education

In periods of conflict, women and girls often lose access to education. At the end of the war, many young people find themselves with no education or training and with little chance of finding work. As Chungue emphasised,

the biggest difficulty is formal education. The girls have more problems than the boys. Some marry because it's the only way to survive. Many young people, from eighteen to twenty years old, have not had any access to education since 1975. Other young people, having completely lost their roots, stay in the cities. We do our best to educate them. But it's hard to start at twenty ... some young people are too traumatised to be able to learn. (Chungue, conference participant)

In Casamance, one of the most fertile regions of Senegal, a conflict begun in 1982 between the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance and the government has displaced rural people. The war has destroyed villages; land mines made cultivation impossible and were a cause of mass migration. Many people fled to the towns, where poverty has become a new problem for the women, and where children are not attending school.

Conflict can have unintended, contradictory effects, however. According to Manchanda (see her chapter in this volume), the Maoist insurgency in Nepal has affected school attendance in surprising ways. Parents are sending sons to study in Kathmandu, the capital, fearing the influence of Maoists and the sweeps of government militia who regard boys as obvious suspects. The number of girls studying in village schools has increased dramatically. Whereas few girls used to attend classes, they now make up 50 per cent of all students in some village schools. Under the influence of the Maoists, girls are learning an ideology that promotes women's liberation, in contrast to the traditional hierarchical structures of exclusion and sequestration that bind Nepali women.

### Losses in Health

Women run serious health risks during conflict. The most common concern physical handicaps and disabilities caused by the explosion of land mines buried in farmlands or in roads, the effects of which can last for years after the end of the conflict.

Mental health problems, relatively seldom taken into consideration, are equally important during conflict. They are caused by the traumas suffered after physical or sexual violence or by economic difficulties. Health workers rarely recognise them and rarely make the mentally ill the object of psychological, material or appropriate legal assistance.

The precarious nature of women's living conditions, especially the living conditions of those women who are heads of families, may lead them into practices that put their health, and even their lives, at risk. Prostitution, with no possibility of negotiating the use of a condom, can multiply the risks of HIV infection. A study of the acts of violence suffered by women in Rwanda indicates that 66.7 per cent of the women surveyed have AIDS (AVEGA 1999).

In other respects, by virtue of their reproductive role women are traditionally the guardians of the health of family members. The increase in the numbers of handicapped people, of invalids, and of the sick that results from conflict adds to women's responsibilities and has a negative impact on their own health.

### Conclusion

It is clear that the type of conflict, demographic changes, and membership of a particular class or ethnic group all have profound influences on the gains and the losses of women in periods of armed conflict. This analysis of various situations has shown the fragility of women's gains compared to the acuteness of their losses. The absence of a political perspective for transforming relations between the sexes may explain the precariousness of the rights women achieve. In fact, when they engage in the struggles described, women rarely seek to challenge the patriarchal practices and ideology that are the basis for inequality between the sexes. Reinforcing the changes in social roles that came about as a result of the conflict could be a first step. But the most



important is to build – before, during and at the end of the conflict – a strong women's movement, one that bears a plan to transform gender relations, one that is linked to civil society, one that is ready to struggle to strengthen democracy and to respect the human, economic and political rights of women.

### Note

1. The comments cited in this chapter were made in July 1999 at the Johannesburg conference on 'The Aftermath: Women in Post-War Reconstruction', in discussions held in the workshop on women's gains and losses, which was chaired by Codou Bop, interim co-ordinator of the African Women's Anti-War Coalition. Participants included: Fausina Naivele Chungue, executive director of Rural Women (Farming Women), Angola; Jennifer Davis, International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, Switzerland; Malathi de Alwis, Senior Research Fellow, International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo, Sri Lanka; Margaret Ling, Zed Books, London, UK; Ancil Adrian-Paul, International Alert, London, UK.

## CHAPTER 3

# Violence against Women in the Aftermath

ANU PILLAY

Women have come together all over the world, in different countries and at different times, to discuss the issue that plagues them everywhere – violence against women. Their exchanges have given birth to extensive descriptions of violence in peacetime, during war and afterwards. Indeed a veritable lexicon of violence against women has emerged as women talk to one another. Women at a workshop in Dakar, in December 1998, talked of explicit violence, implicit violence, violence in public, institutional violence, economic violence, and violence in the home. They reported that violence during war escalated into the most atrocious and heinous acts of brutality and torture and intensified in the aftermath of conflict. Mass rapes became gang rapes, mass murders turned into serial killings. Legitimising violence as a means to end conflict effectively legitimised the use of violence to resolve conflict in the home. Women in all these gatherings asked the same questions: What can we do to protect ourselves in the conflict and in the aftermath? How can we prevent violence against women? How can we help society heal from this trauma?

Papers presented at the 1999 conference on 'The Aftermath: Women in Post-war Reconstruction' held in Johannesburg confirmed that violence against women has reached unprecedented heights globally. Worse than ever before, it seemed still to be worsening – in prevalence, intensity and form. Despite the formal gains made, the national laws promulgated, the international focus represented by United Nations activities such as the 1995 Fourth World Conference