Gender-Inclusive Peacebuilding and Changes in Gender Equality
A Comparative Case Study: Rwanda and Sierra Leone

Danielle Fulmer
Department of Sociology
dfulmer@nd.edu

Course: International Peace Research
Professor: Dr. Peter Wallensteen
Fall 2013
Gender-Inclusive Peacebuilding and Changes in Gender Equality

* A Comparative Case Study: Rwanda and Sierra Leone

Parameters (from the course syllabus):
The participants are expected to write a paper using a systematic approach on a pertinent peace research topic, preferably one covered in the course. The participants may choose between a comparative and a statistical approach. In either case, the task is to limit the study so that it can be carried out during the time available. The topic is chosen in consultation with the teacher (approximately 6000-8000 words).
Gender Equality and GIP: Rwanda and Sierra Leone

Table of Contents

I. Introduction
   a. Defining the puzzle
   b. Defining the terms

II. Relevant literature
   a. Gender equality as a prerequisite for peace
   b. Gender-inclusive peacebuilding (GIP)
   c. Critique of contemporary GIP practices

III. Methodology
   a. The independent and dependent variables
   b. Case selection
   c. Sources

IV. Case descriptions
   a. Rwanda
   b. Sierra Leone

V. Analysis
   a. Statistical indicators
   b. What were gender relations like in the society prior to the conflict?
   c. How did women participate in the conflict?
   d. How did women participate in the peace process?
   e. What are gender relations like in the society presently?

VI. Discussion, critique, and alternative explanations

VII. Implications

VIII. Conclusions
I. Introduction

Defining the puzzle

It is generally accepted that fostering positive relationships across gender, ethnic, class, religious, and racial identities transforms social patterns that produce violent conflict, even when this is not addressed in practice.\(^1\) Gender is currently a predominant focus in peacebuilding, international development, human rights, and humanitarian assistance, both because of this assumption and because of research demonstrating that societies with high levels of gender inequality are more likely to experience violent conflict. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 institutionalized the centrality of gender-inclusive peacebuilding, and while peace scholars and practitioners have embraced “gender mainstreaming” in peacebuilding broadly, they have failed to critically evaluate the processes necessary for inclusive peace that encompasses gender equality.

The goals of gender equality and peace have become inextricably linked to the point that it is unclear whether gender-inclusive peacebuilding (GIP) seeks to affect gender equality, peace, or both. - We do not understand the causal relationship between peacebuilding and gender equality. If we argue that gender equality is important for sustaining peaceful social relations, it is necessary to understand the best practices for GIP and whether or how these processes contribute to lasting changes in gender relations at both the macro and micro levels of society, including shifts in social norms, values, and institutions. In this paper I will use a comparative case study to explore whether the inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes promotes gender equality.

Defining the terms

Gender is defined as a social and cultural construct that differentiates between the roles and expectations of men and women in a given society, distinct from biological differences.\(^2\) Gender equality is present when men and women have equal opportunities and protections, both legally and in practice. Peace is the absence of violent conflict, where the social relations and institutions in the society provide adequate alternatives to violence as a redress for grievances. Gender-inclusive peacebuilding (GIP) is a process of social transformation following violent conflict that includes both men and women at the micro and macro levels. Women are included in both the “mainstream” peace process and in special processes that target their unique needs and experiences of the war.

II. Relevant Literature

Gender equality as a prerequisite for peace

Gender equality as a prerequisite for peace is compatible with positive peace, the idea that overcoming structural violence is a necessary condition for a peaceful society.\(^3\) Recently, Confortini argued for an alliance between Galtung’s philosophies of positive peace and a

---


feminist perspective on violence, as structural violence demonstrates the inherent linkages between the constructed identities of masculinity and femininity that interact with social institutions. Some scholars argue that feminism provides a useful framework for thinking about violent conflict and point out the shared normative objectives of peace studies and feminism, such as Arino, who argues that peace studies is a useful basis for studying feminist objectives because they share a political commitment to social transformation. Critical analysis of gender inequality creates space to challenge entrenched values based in masculinity and examine other forms of social discrimination based on socioeconomic, religious, or ethnic factors.

Some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that gender inequality is more important than other forms of structural violence in predicting and resolving conflict. Caprioli argues that gender inequality is a stronger predictor of intrastate conflict than economic inequality. States characterized by gender inequality feature norms of violence and structural hierarchy that increase the likelihood of conflict. Melander built on Caprioli’s work by demonstrating that economic development impacts gender equality and therefore the relationship between economic development and peace may be spurious, mediated by gender equality.

**Gender-inclusive peacebuilding (GIP)**
Research suggests that the disruption of normal social patterns and the shift towards democracy provides an opportunity for changes in gender relations in society. Smet notes the entropic nature of war and the role that this plays in weakening community structures that support discriminatory practices, while simultaneously creating space for women to try new roles and for women’s organizations to build capacity. Of course, GIP efforts do not always maximize this potential. Brewer discusses the tendency to relegate women to traditional gender roles in peacebuilding, understanding them only as victims or healers. Brewer notes that women also have important roles as combatants and social transformers. We will see that women’s fulfillment of both of these roles shaped the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Rwanda. While women’s participation in peace processes is consequential, equality is only achieved when women also engage in social transformation

6 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
Gender Equality and GIP: Rwanda and Sierra Leone

to "transcend the constraints and limitations of cultural notions of femininity."14

There are three main feminist approaches to gender and peacebuilding. The first is the essentialist approach, which posits that women are naturally peaceful while men are naturally violent. This approach is problematic because it reinforces gender stereotypes, making women morally superior but politically weaker than men. A second approach ties women’s interest in peace to motherhood, arguing that women are concerned with peace because they wish to promote their family’s well being. Some GIP initiatives rely on the salience of women’s identities as mothers to unite them across intergroup divisions. However, this approach also reinforces traditional patriarchal notions, diminishes women’s autonomy, and serves to exclude women who do not identify as mothers.15

The rights-based approach argues that women should be included in peace talks and processes not because of any inherent or unique characteristic that they embody, but because of the simple fact that they are half of the population.16 This argument complements the concept of the liberal democratic peace. The fourth feminist approach to peace and war "emphasizes that women’s agency for peace is connected to their exclusion from the public sphere and from war, rather than their biological nature or experiences as mothers."17 Women can exercise autonomy in the realm of peace even though they are excluded from other public and political realms.18

Critique of contemporary GIP practices

It is not enough to assume that injecting women into traditional peace processes will facilitate social change if the underlying institutions, norms, and values remain unchanged. Cockburn argues that “unless purposeful steps are taken to interrupt and change the social shaping of genders, the gender regime that emerges from war is likely in the short run to disturb the peace with continuing violence, and in the long run to maintain militarism and war-readiness.”19 Cohn argues that gender mainstreaming is complicated because women are not a homogenous category, and there are important power differentials among them, for example as a result of class and ethnicity, that affect their experiences of war and concerns in the post-conflict environment.20 She cautions against creating a false dichotomy in which women are either victims or agents of war.21 Because women are not a

14 Ibid.
18 In Women Against Weapons: A Leading Role for Women in Disarmament,” (2000) Mansaray states that “...women represent the best bet for peace, not because they are ‘naturally’ or ‘inherrently’ peace-loving human beings...but because women are usually excluded from the male-dominated political groups which take war-like decisions.”
21 Ibid.
homogenous group, it is unreasonable to expect that female representatives in a peace process represent the interests of all women.\textsuperscript{22} For example, in Rwanda observers state that female parliamentarians are more likely to represent the interests of their political party than of their male or female constituents.\textsuperscript{23}

Gizelis questions the causal nature of the relationship between peacebuilding and gender equality, arguing that UN peacekeeping missions are most likely to succeed in societies where women already have a high social status, as this is an indicator for social capital and domestic capacity.\textsuperscript{24} In this view, gender equality is a predictor rather than an outcome of a successful peace process. Other scholars suggest that current GIP practices are not effective for achieving social change and may even have deleterious effects. In Afghanistan, a focus on gender has led to exclusion of men from peacebuilding initiatives, and is correlated with increased domestic violence and militant group participation.\textsuperscript{25} An overemphasis on GIP can generate new tensions if women or victims of certain crimes, such as gender-based violence (GBV), are treated preferentially.

While these theories tell us a lot regarding the potential benefits of GIP for peace, they do not tell us whether or how inclusion affects gender equality. If we theorize that gender equality is a necessary condition for lasting peace, then it is important to know whether GIP results in gender equality in practice.

\section*{III. Methodology}
\textit{The independent and dependent variables}

This project is a comparative case study of gender equality and peacebuilding in Rwanda and Sierra Leone. The comparative case study method was selected because it is the appropriate tool for studying phenomena, such as gender equality, that cannot be quantified or are measured by proxy.\textsuperscript{26} I hypothesize that gender inclusion in peacebuilding will improve gender equality in the society, and that these effects will be greatest when gender inclusion is implemented at both the macro and micro level. Ideally, GIP includes men in a way that facilitates change in social norms and institutions that perpetuate gender inequality.

The independent variable, gender inclusion in peacebuilding, will be measured by analyzing the formal and informal mechanisms by which women participate in peacebuilding at all levels of society. This information will be obtained by surveying the primary and secondary literature on gender and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and Rwanda.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Jennie E. Burnet, “Women Have Found Respect: Gender Quotas, Symbolic Representation, and Female Empowerment in Rwanda,” \textit{Politics & Gender} 7 (2011), 303.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, \textit{Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences}, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), 43.
\end{itemize}
The dependent variable is gender equality. Caprioli argues that measures of gender equality should capture political, economic, and social discrimination. The World Bank provides a database of international statistics related to gender equality, although the data has not been collected for both cases every year. For this project I will track changes in gender inequality in Sierra Leone and Rwanda by measuring (1) fertility rates, (2) male-to-female school enrollment ratios at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, and (3) proportion of seats in the national parliament held by women, both before and after the conflict. I will focus primarily on qualitative analysis of GIP and gender relations gathered from primary and secondary academic and news sources, discussed below. To better understand the causal mechanisms operating between GIP and gender equality, I ask the following: (1) what were gender relations like in the society prior to the conflict, (2) how did women participate in the conflict, (3) how did women participate in the peace process, and (4) what are gender relations like in the society presently?

Case selection
I examine one case in which gender inclusion was a primary focus of the peace process (Rwanda), and one in which it was not (Sierra Leone). Sierra Leone is viewed as a “missed opportunity” for GIP, and there was less focus on initiatives at both the micro and macro levels than in Rwanda. To decrease variation, I choose two intra-state conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa that occurred within ten years of one another. GBV was prevalent in both conflicts, and gender inequality was a social issue in both Rwanda and Sierra Leone prior to conflict onset.

Sources
The primary sources for this project are reports from both national and international governmental and nongovernmental organizations, as well as media coverage from national and international outlets. Rwandan news coverage is primarily from The New Times Rwanda, a daily English-language newspaper that publishes national and local news online. The newspaper was established in 1995, after the genocide, and online archives are available from August 2007. It is important to note that The New Times Rwanda has been accused of providing a state-centric message that serves the Kagame regime. This is especially concerning in light of the recent questioning of the regime’s motives for pursuing gender-inclusive policies. Rwandan online news sources are limited, so I must use this source but will consider potential bias in my interpretation. The legitimacy of most Sierra Leonean news outlets is also contested. I reference multiple Sierra Leonean newspapers,
which were found online via The Sierra Leone Web, primarily the independent news sources Politico and Awoko.\footnote{For information on Sierra Leonean internet news sources please see Sierra Leone Web \url{http://www.sierra-leone.org/links2.html}.} For all news coverage I take the perspective of the source and the potential for bias under consideration in my analysis. I extensively reference peer-reviewed journal articles. Secondary sources include scholars who have completed fieldwork in Sierra Leone or Rwanda as well as those who apply theoretical analysis to quantitative or qualitative accounts of the peace processes.

\section*{IV. Case Descriptions}

\subsection*{Rwanda}

The Rwandan genocide occurred between April and June of 1994, when armed groups composed primarily of Hutus killed approximately 800,000 Rwandans, mainly Tutsis.\footnote{Some scholars have contested the classification of the Rwandan conflict as genocide and suggested that there may have been a simultaneous civil war, or that the overall conflict might be better classified as a civil war, due to the large number of Hutus also killed and the geographical patterns of violence. (See Davenport “Rethinking Rwanda,” (2010), \url{http://vimeo.com/17943487}).} The genocide began with the murder of Hutu Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, but has roots in the practices of Belgian colonialism. While Hutus and Tutsis are historically very similar and lived as neighbors, the Belgian colonists changed this dynamic. They generated ethnic tension by elevating the status of Tutsis, resulting in better jobs and education for Tutsis and a culture of resentment among Hutus. In 1959, the tension erupted in a series of riots in which 20,000 Tutsis were killed and countless others fled to neighboring countries.\footnote{“Rwanda: How the Genocide Happened,” BBC News, December 18, 2008, \url{http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/1288230.stm}.}

When Rwanda claimed independence in 1962, Hutus took political control and the social order was reversed. Simultaneously, Tutsi refugees in Uganda, alongside moderate Hutus, formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) under the leadership of Paul Kagame, the current Rwandan president. The goal of the RPF was to overthrow Habyarimana and reinstate Tutsi rule in Rwanda. When Habyarimana was murdered in 1994, the RPF was blamed and the presidential guard recruited participants from all over the country to engage in mass slaughter of Tutsis as part of the militia known as Interahamwe. The government used radio propaganda and incentives such as land, money, and food to encourage participation in the Interahamwe, which had 30,000 members at its largest. The international community did very little to intervene and the conflict continued until the RPF captured Kigali in July 1994. At this time many Hutus fled to the Democratic Republic of Congo, where Hutu militias contribute to ongoing instability in the region.\footnote{Ibid.}

\subsection*{Sierra Leone}

The Sierra Leone civil war began on March 23, 1991, when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) crossed the border from Liberia into southeastern Sierra Leone with the goal of overthrowing the Sierra Leonean government. Despite the population and RUF’s shared dissatisfaction with the governance of the All People's Congress (APC), the vast majority of Sierra Leoneans considered the RUF a threat to society. In April 1992 President Momoh
was removed from power in a military coup led by the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). Most Sierra Leoneans supported the coup, believing that this would force the RUF to end their attacks. As the new ruling party, the NPRC clashed with the RUF in their attempts to seek legitimacy in the wider population. The NPRC distrusted the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and sided with the Civil Defense Forces (CDF), a group of fighters consisting of traditional hunters, for military support. The NPRC retained power until 1996, when elections were held and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) took office. Despite intervention attempts by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the United Nations, fighting amongst these splinter groups continued until January 2002, even after the signing of the Lome peace accord in July 1999.

The Sierra Leone civil war was characterized by the use of child soldiers and widespread human rights violations by all fighting forces. Unlike many other wars in Africa at the time, the Sierra Leone civil war was not embedded in ethnic or religious tensions, but rather in political and economic grievances, as well as destabilization by outside actors who were interested in the mineral wealth of the region. The United Nations summarizes the conflict as “deeply embedded in governance policies that promoted land disputes, encouraged corruption, non-accountability, inequality and discrimination across gender, but especially against women, by various leadership and actors at all levels of society.”

V. Analysis
Statistical indicators
Fertility rates in Rwanda and Sierra Leone are listed in Table 1. Prior to conflict onset, Rwanda had higher fertility rates than Sierra Leone, and as of 2010, rates were very similar. From 1990 to 2010, Rwanda’s fertility rates decreased by 34.2% and Sierra Leone’s decreased by 24.6%. In 2000, when Rwanda was several years post-conflict and fighting continued in Sierra Leone, fertility rates in the two countries were the same. This probably reflects the presence of international organizations working with women on empowerment and family planning in Rwanda. In Sierra Leone, the explanation is less clear, as violent conflict could have negative effects on fertility, if women and their partners are displaced or participating as combatants, or positive effects, if women are experiencing sexual violence and decreased access to family planning resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rwanda</th>
<th>Sierra Leone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The female to male primary school enrollment ratios in Rwanda and Sierra Leone are listed

37 Ibid, 46-47.
in Table 2. The fact that females in Rwanda were enrolled in primary and secondary school at approximately equal rates to males in 2011 reflects legislation promoting universal education and might also suggest underlying cultural shifts. Sierra Leone has also prioritized education of girls, and all primary school fees and the first year of secondary school fees are waived for female students, but continuing cultural devaluation of girls’ education has limited the success of these policies. Prior to the civil war, girls in Sierra Leone were educated at a much lower rate than boys, and most women and girls were illiterate both because girls dropped out of school once married or pregnant and because of cultural practices privileging the education of boys. As of 2011, the primary school enrollment ratio was 93 percent, suggesting that education policies were starting to make progress against these cultural barriers.

As Maclure and Denov warned, the “ideal of education as a catalyst for women’s empowerment...” is dangerous because it “...entails reform in curricula and pedagogy, and in the organization and administration of schools.” Therefore, while we should be cautious of the assumption that more equal school enrollment will lead to lasting social change, especially when these changes reflect policy rather than value shifts, it is an important first step.

Table 2: Female to Male School Enrollment Ratios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rwanda</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Sierra Leone</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>103%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>105%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: -- signifies data unavailable; I used 2011 rather than 2010 values as there was more data available for 2011

Data on the percentage of seats held by women in the national parliament was not collected until 2004. As of 2004, women composed 49 percent of the national parliament in Rwanda, and this figure increased to 56 percent in 2008. In 2004, women composed 15 percent of the national parliament in Sierra Leone, and this figure increased to 13 percent in 2007 and dropped to 12 percent in 2012. The higher figures in Rwanda reflect the quota requirement for 30 percent women in all decision-making bodies, although it is interesting to note that there are many more women in the positions than required by the quota. Some

40 Burnet, "Women Have Found Respect," 318.
41 Coulter, Bush Wives, 74.
42 Ibid, 153.
have pointed out that men are now underrepresented in the Rwandan parliament. In Sierra Leone, representation levels are higher at the local level (18.9 percent) but attempts to pass legislation setting a quota for female representation in politics have been unsuccessful.

What were gender relations like in the society prior to the conflict?

In Rwanda, women were traditionally subservient to men. They were not supposed to speak in public unless they were head of the household, did not have the right to own or inherit property, and their business activities were controlled by their husbands or fathers. Married women could vote, but husbands controlled their wives’ participation in commerce, entrepreneurship, land ownership, and judicial affairs. Unmarried women had full legal status under Rwandan law, but were under the control of their fathers and brothers in practice. In theory, widows had the best legal and social status of all women in Rwanda prior to the conflict, as they were considered head of household, allowing them to speak in the community and make decisions without the permission of a husband or male family member, although in reality the situation of widows was often very precarious, as it continues to be after the genocide.

Belgian colonial rule in Rwanda worsened existing gender inequality by excluding women from the formal education system, and most women who did attend school learned to fulfill domestic duties for the new Rwandan elite. In a study of the status of Rwandan women prior to the genocide, Jefremovas found that while the situation of women varied based on economic and social status, even wealthy women had very limited autonomy. Gender relations in the private sphere tended to mirror the clear gender hierarchy of the public sphere, and women, while responsible for the majority of both subsistence and market agriculture, did not have control over land or profits. Women could only control small amounts of the income they generated, while men controlled any income not required for family subsistence.

In Sierra Leone, women were traditionally treated as minors and had very few rights legally or in practice. The constitution failed to delineate a clear hierarchy between customary and written law. Section 27 of the constitution states that all citizens are equal under the law except in regards to marriage, divorce, adoption, burial, devolution of

\[\text{References}\]

49 Ibid, 383.
50 Ibid, 381-382.
Gender Equality and GIP: Rwanda and Sierra Leone

property upon death, or other issues of personal law, in which customary law predominates.\(^{53}\) 85 percent of the population lived under customary law and were subject to deeply patriarchal gender practices.\(^{54}\)

Women in Sierra Leone continue to belong to secret women’s societies called Bundu. The primary functions of Bundu are to provide a forum for women’s political and social interests, and to initiate girls into adulthood through a ceremony that occurs in a secluded place. The ceremony prepares girls to serve as wives, and activities include instruction on domestic skills, morality, and sexuality. Most Bundu societies practice female genital cutting (FGC) as part of the initiation process, with over 90 percent of Sierra Leonean women undergoing FGC prior to the civil war. Girls are considered eligible for marriage as soon as they have been initiated into the Bundu society, and are forced to marry as early as age twelve.\(^{55}\)

Historically, there were examples of women in empowered positions in Sierra Leone, specifically in the role of local mediators known as mamy queens and as chiefs or sub-chiefs in some tribes. Elders in Sierra Leone state that changes in gender norms and relations were already occurring prior to the civil war.\(^{56}\) Overall though, most women in both Rwanda and Sierra Leone had very limited rights and autonomy prior to the conflicts.

**How did women participate in the conflict?**
The experiences of women and men during conflict vary based on numerous factors, including ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic setting. Therefore, in both Rwanda and Sierra Leone there were women who had very different experiences of the conflict than those described here. In addition, there were also many men victimized in both of these conflicts, which resulted from the same patriarchal system and ideologies that harmed women.

Rwandan women participated in the genocide as combatants and fled in large numbers as refugees. The Rwandan genocide is known for the widespread use of rape as a weapon of war, meant to destabilize entire communities and achieve ethnic cleansing. The United Nations estimates that at least 250,000 women experienced sexual violence during the genocide, including individual and gang rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage and labor, and sexual mutilation. In many cases women were killed immediately after experiencing these abuses.\(^{57}\)

In Sierra Leone, women participated in the conflict as armed combatants on a large scale. The situations of female soldiers in Sierra Leone were varied and while practically all female combatants were victimized, most also had a certain degree of agency. Many women

---


\(^{54}\) Smet, “A Window of Opportunity,” 152.

\(^{55}\) Ibid, 151-152.


who made instrumental decisions to participate as combatants later claimed that they were forced in order to escape public shame and social repercussions. Most female combatants experienced extensive sexual violence. Unlike in Rwanda, sexual violence in Sierra Leone, while widespread, was not used as a strategy of ethnic cleansing, but rather as a tool of terror and destabilization. Women who were selected as the “bush wives” of commanders often felt gratitude towards the bush husband for reducing the sexual abuse she faced, even though in many cases he continued to inflict physical and sexual abuse. Many former female combatants experienced Stockholm syndrome following the war, especially once rejected by their communities, families, and partners.

Women also played activist roles during the conflict. In the late 1990s women were central to pro-democracy campaigns that promoted elections following the overthrow of the government by the AFRC and the RUF. Women’s organizations exposed AFRC and RUF participation in arms deals and diamond smuggling, as well as the international partners supporting these activities.

How did women participate in the peace process?
There were three accords as part of the Rwandan peace process, and women were virtually absent from the table at all negotiations. The primary peace agreement, the Arusha Accord, states that “vulnerable groups, ie women, children, the aged...shall be specifically taken care of” during the repatriation process. While it is true that vulnerable groups have special needs during resettlement processes, the fact that this was the only mention of women is problematic, as it defines them purely as victims and fails to recognize their range of legal, social, and economic needs and potential contributions in the post-conflict environment. While there were few references to women in the Arusha Accord, there were many more in the new constitution, which drew from international guidelines laid out in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action. Such legal changes will be discussed in more detail later.

Due to the number of people killed in the genocide, as well as the imprisonment of perpetrators, women headed 36 percent of Rwandan families in 2001, compared to 21 percent in 1992, according to a survey by the Rwandan Ministry of Health and the National

62 When their voices are heard, women have much more to say about these economic, legal, and social needs and contributions. Diaz and Tordjman (2012) for UNIFEM found common themes in women’s recommendations for peace processes, including the recognition of GBV as a violation of the ceasefire, GBV training as part of security sector reform and DDR, participation in the peace process and in both local and national politics (often in the form of quotas), and economic empowerment of women in the post-conflict reconstruction phase.
Population Office. Many of these women faced extreme poverty, so the government instituted a Fund to Assist Genocide Survivors (FARG) that worked with civil society organizations to assist genocide survivors, widows, and spouses of those imprisoned for crimes in relation to the genocide. There were fewer female combatants in Rwanda than in Sierra Leone, but the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process tried to reach the women involved, and 407 women participated as of March 2010.

Women actively participated in peacebuilding at the local level, where they formed grassroots networks that brought together Hutus and Tutsis to reconstruct local capacity. National Women Councils from the grassroots to the national level were designed to mobilize and educate women for participation in politics with the goal of shifting the social, economic, and political atmosphere for women at all levels of Rwandan society. Women served as judges in the Gaccaca courts, which played an important role in the peacebuilding and justice process, as many genocide crimes were prosecuted at the local level in order to facilitate reconciliation and reduce the burden on the justice system. Civil society organizations, including women’s organizations, were an important component of grassroots peacebuilding in Rwanda that was necessary to rebuild community infrastructure and relationships. Women’s associations, which were limited before the genocide, are now organized under the umbrella organization Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe. There are over 43 of these organizations registered today, compared to 13 in 1994. Pro-Femme Twese Hamwe won the UNESCO award for Peace and Tolerance in 1999 because of the pressure that they put on the Rwandan government, in coordination with other women’s networks in Rwanda, to include women as equal partners in development.

Women struggled to participate in the formal peace process in Sierra Leone, and informal opportunities for women’s engagement were less widespread than in Rwanda. A common argument against the inclusion of women in peace processes is that because they do not participate in conflicts as armed combatants, they do not have a stake in peace. This suggests that in situations such as Sierra Leone, where women made up a significant proportion of the fighting forces, they should be active participants in the peace process, but this was untrue. There were only two women participating in the delegation for the negotiation of the Lome Peace Accord between the RUF and the Government of Sierra, one on each side. These women were observers, not active participants.

---

65 Gizelis, “Gender Empowerment and UN Peacebuilding,” 510.
66 Kantengwa, “The Will to Political Power,” 74.
67 Kantengwa, “The Will to Political Power,” 76.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
The Lome Accord was the primary agreement, and in the “post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction” section, it states, “given that women have been particularly victimized during the war, special attention shall be accorded to their needs and potentials in formulating and implementing national rehabilitation, reconstruction and development programs, to enable them to play a central role in the moral, social and physical reconstruction of Sierra Leone.”73 This is the only mention of women or gender in the Lome Accord, and little has been done to implement it. Like the Arusha Accord, the Lome Accord only portrays women as victims, which is especially problematic as it fails to recognize the complex multitude of roles that Sierra Leonean women played in the war, as combatants and victims of forced labor, marriage, sexual servitude, and rape. By defining women purely as victims, it undermines their agency and the contributions that they can make in the post-conflict phase.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission made numerous recommendations regarding reforms to support women, including quotas in political decision-making positions and reform of sexual assault laws, which have been implemented slowly or not at all.74 An important part of post-conflict reconstruction in Sierra Leone was reform of the police sector. Government reforms required all police and military troops to be trained on UNSCR 1325 and human rights laws, including gender-based crimes.75 The Special Court for Sierra Leone has highlighted GBV, for example by stating that forced marriages that occurred during the civil war can be prosecuted as crimes against humanity under the Rome Treaty, but such efforts have done little to confront serious issues such as the continuing forced marriages that women face in Sierra Leone.76 The government has avoided responsibility for gender inequality by devolving control of gender issues to local councils while the national Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s and Children’s Affairs provides training and technical assistance.77

The Sierra Leonean DDR process, largely considered a successful model for other countries, failed former female combatants for numerous reasons. Most women believed that the program required former combatants to surrender a weapon in order to receive support, and women often did not have access to weapons, as they had been taken away by commanders and given to young men and children who wanted to participate in DDR.78 Coulter argues that the DDR process in Sierra Leone did not take the unique security and social needs of women into account, and that women were instead encouraged to share narratives of victimhood if they wished to receive material benefits, despite the fact that most female combatants had been both perpetrators and victims of violence.79

---

75 Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, "Women Count: Sierra Leone," 104.
78 Coulter, Bush Wives, 158
79 Coulter, Bush Wives, 177.
people in Sierra Leone stated that female combatants were more vicious than male combatants, a perception that is likely due to female combatant’s greater transgression of social norms, and which complicated their reintegration. Some communities generated alternative methods designed to reintegrate girl soldiers, for example with rituals of song, dance, and prayer that served as a process of forgiveness and reintegrated the young women into their communities. The situation was dire for adult women, most of whom state that women’s organizations, rather than the formal DDR process, assisted them in reintegrating. Civil society and community groups were important for filling the gaps in legal and political protections that women in Sierra Leone faced. Many women fell through the cracks and remain stigmatized, often poor or forced into prostitution.

Women organized throughout and following the conflict to promote peace and democracy. The Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW) organized the Sierra Leone Women’s Forum as an umbrella organization in 1994. Two forum members, the Sierra Leone Women’s Movement for Peace (SLWMP) and Women Organized for a Morally Enlightened Nation (WOMEN) were at the fore of these efforts. They worked for public awareness of gender issues and unsuccessfully demanded 50 percent representation in any peace talks as well as female representation in all decision-making bodies. As one researcher stated, “Sierra Leonean women’s activism was not given due recognition either by the state or the international community as they were not recognized as actors and agents of change and peace. Rather, they were seen as victims who should be protected and taken care of.”

What are gender relations like in the society presently?
The Rwandan Government has made gender equality a priority in the post-conflict context and has attempted to institutionalize their expectations. The new constitution, adopted in 2003, requires all decision-making bodies to be composed of 30 percent women. Administrative groups called “women’s councils” exist at all levels of society to represent women’s perspectives on social issues. As of 2013, 64 percent of the lower chamber of parliament is composed of women, which is more than any other country. Women are also represented in the justice sector, making up 70 percent of high court judges, 35 percent of Gaccaca (lower court) judges, and 10 percent of the police force. Between 2009 and 2012 the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion and the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission engaged in outreach campaigns to sensitize the public to GBV, its prevention, and related laws, targeting students, military, civilians, and public opinion leaders.

---

81 Hudson et. al, *Sex and World Peace*, 189.
82 Gizelis, "Gender Empowerment and UN Peacebuilding," 512.
Rwanda’s gender ministry works to ensure implementation of laws to promote gender equality. Since the genocide, legislation has been passed regarding: matrimonial freedoms, gender-based discrimination and violence, representation of women in political parties and organizations, and women’s right to succession of property and land ownership. Rwanda’s Chief Gender Minister recently wrote an article for All Africa outlining the progress that Rwanda has made towards gender inclusion in politics, economics, and education. She points out that women make up 46 percent of civil servants and the proportion is closer to 50 percent for workforce members under age 35. Recently, Rwanda required national land registration and as of August 2013, 26 percent of registered landowners were women, 18 percent were men, and 54 percent were jointly owned properties, which signals huge progress from prior to the genocide, when women could not own property. While most women (81 percent) rely on agriculture and women are overrepresented in the informal sector, there have been important gains, including low-interest credit and socioeconomic programs for rural women, which have contributed to a 20 percent reduction in female poverty in Rwanda since 2003.

These legislative changes are important, but there are some limitations and criticisms. Female national legislators have not done nearly enough to pass laws that benefit women, as most of them owe allegiance to the authoritarian RPF regime rather than to the interests of Rwandan women. Both external observers and Rwandans have argued that the progress made in women’s leadership has not filtered down to the lower levels of government or other sectors and question the prudence of increasing female representation in parliament when the needs of the population, especially poor women living in rural areas, are neither represented nor addressed. One Rwandan journalist notes that at many provincial, district, and sector levels the 30 percent gender quota has not been met. Others note that rural women who are elected to positions face economic and time constraints while urban women mainly benefit from serving in public office. This is significant because 90 percent of Rwandan women are rural subsistence farmers.

Another concern is the high level of GBV that Rwandan women experience. One in three women have experienced violence in their communities, and one in two women are estimated to have been victims of domestic violence. While there is a law against gender-GBV, traditional social norms contributing to GBV remain unchanged. The prevalence of

---

87 Ibid, 85.
88 Rwabuhiti, "Women- Driving Transformation."
89 Burnet, “Women Have Found Respect,” 303.
92 Burnet, “Women Have Found Respect,” 305.
95 A recent newspaper article from The New Times states that while there is political will to end gender-based violence, additional support from civil society organizations is necessary to achieve change. See Susan Babijja, “Civil Society Urged to Fight GBV,” The New Times, (October 6, 2013), http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?a=14158&i=15502.
GBV is concerning as it suggests that cultural and social norms regarding women have not changed, and might even suggest a backlash against forced top-down measures of gender equality.

Despite the limited gains made by female legislators and the continuing prevalence of sexual violence, studies show that women in Rwanda have made other advances that may signal deeper shifts in cultural and social norms. Following 24 months of ethnographic research over a period of 12 years in Rwanda, Burnet found that women are experiencing increased respect from family and community members, greater voice in public forums, more autonomous decision-making in the family, and increased access to education.\(^{96}\) Organizations like the Rwanda Men’s Resource Center (RWAMREC) are working to include men in the process of changing gender relations.\(^{97}\) One woman stated that because she now contributes to the family economically through her basket weaving business, her husband no longer beats her, stating “if he does it anymore, I will leave him because things have changed; I can survive without him.”\(^{98}\)

Sierra Leone has experienced smaller gains in gender equality since the end of the civil war. Women’s groups have succeeded in passing three laws: the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, the Domestic Violence Act, and the Devolution of Estates Act.\(^{99}\) The Mano River Women’s Peace Network (Marwopnet) is a joint initiative of women peacebuilders from Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea that started in 2000 and focuses on human security and the social and economic empowerment of women at a regional level. Marwopment was one of the groups lobbying for legal reforms such as the ones mentioned here, focusing on laws that promote women’s rights in traditional marriages, property inheritance, and sexual assault.\(^{100}\) However, calls to include women in decision-making bodies at a more proportional level have not been successful.

As discussed, many female combatants experienced difficulty reintegrating into their communities, and this continues to create challenges today. “Because many girls were among the children who were kidnapped, drugged, and forced to commit atrocities...and because so many women and girls had been kept as sex slaves, many Sierra Leoneans began to believe either that women and girls had caused the violence, or, because they had been abused or violated, were unworthy.”\(^{101}\) The formal processes in place did little to

---

\(^{96}\) Burnet, “Women Have Found Respect,” 303.

\(^{97}\) RWAMREC’s mission is “…mobilizing Rwandan men to support women’s leadership; to contribute to the eradication of men’s violence against women; and to serve as role models for the promotion of positive masculine behaviors. Building alliances and partnership with women organizations to promote women’s rights and interests is central.” See [http://rwamrec.org/mission/](http://rwamrec.org/mission/) for more information.


Gender Equality and GIP: Rwanda and Sierra Leone

recognize the special needs of women and girls or to alleviate these struggles, so many women continue to suffer in terms of poverty, health, and stigmatization.

As in Rwanda, GBV remains a concern in Sierra Leone, where monitoring organizations have noted an increase in crimes against women and girls since the end of the war, including domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and human trafficking. The justice system has failed to address such crimes, and in rural areas, families and chiefs often discourage victims from pursuing formal justice mechanisms in favor of settling the issue within the community. Sexual violence recently became a crime in Sierra Leone under the Sexual Offences Act of 2012, but only the rape of a virgin is viewed as a serious offense in practice.

Despite these challenges, there has been progress. Human rights education has made women more aware of their rights, even where there are not sufficient mechanisms for redress, and has demonstrated to many that women make strong leaders, even where cultural norms do not support this belief. Following the recent rape of a young girl by a government minister in which he offered to pay her school fees in return for sexual favors, a community member reflected that, “as a nation we tend to be quite keen to tick the right boxes and secure funding from international donors to promote the rights of women.” This is an important recognition, and if advocates can influence gender change in Sierra Leone as a result of grassroots movements rather than an authoritarian regime that “checks the boxes,” as in Rwanda, it is possible that the changes will be much more pervasive.

VI. Discussion, Critique, and Alternative Explanations
While this study suggests that GIP impacts gender equality, it is possible that I would have reached different conclusions if I had examined different cases. The conflicts in Sierra Leone and Rwanda were very different in terms of length and cause, and there are different social, economic, and cultural factors at work in each case. I might have reached different conclusions if I were able to find a peace process in which GIP was not present at all, but because gender is currently such an important issue in peace and development, this was not possible. If I had access to a broader range of primary and secondary sources, for example government reports from the provincial and local levels, in-person interviews, and additional media coverage from Sierra Leone and Rwanda, this might also have affected my interpretation. I attempted to fill this void by including sources from organizations and individual researchers that have completed fieldwork in each country. Finally, the scope of this project was limited, and a more in-depth analysis could demonstrate a murkier delineation between GIP and gender outcomes in Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

104 Human Rights Watch, "We'll Kill You if You Cry," 5.
Because gender inclusion was gaining momentum in both Rwanda and Sierra Leone prior to the conflicts, it is difficult to say whether changes are related to the conflict or simply a continuation of these policies. There may be reasons besides the focus on GIP that made changes in gender relations more successful in Rwanda than Sierra Leone. It might be easier to facilitate social change in societies that are recovering from ethnically based conflicts, as opposed to resource and politically-based conflicts, because of the other social transformations already occurring in the society. The length of the conflict in Sierra Leone might also have degraded the social and financial resources available from both internal and external sources so that infrastructure reconstruction had to be prioritized over social issues. Of course, one could argue that gender inclusion is also important for political and economic development.

It is indisputable that the conflicts in Sierra Leone and especially in Rwanda brought international attention and resources that were crucial for advancing gender equality. If changes result from pressure to conform to the demands of international funding agencies, it remains to be seen whether these can result in sustainable social transformation. Forcing social change at the institutional level can be harmful if the society's norms and values are not prepared to support these shifts. For example, political representation enforced by quota systems may help women to overcome structural inequality, but they are largely ineffective unless these are supported by congruent cultural beliefs.107 Cockburn noted that when legislative gender quotas are removed, female representation might collapse.108 Therefore, it is possible that current progress in terms of gender equality in Rwanda is due to the greater pressure and support of outside actors, including funders and non-governmental organizations, and might not be permanent. Alternatively, we might view this in a positive light, as providing the incentives and capacity necessary for sustained momentum in social change.

Enduring change requires a complete retransformation of existing social norms and patriarchal institutions, and a dichotomous perception of women as victims and men as perpetrators fails to achieve this objective. In Rwanda, women were very clearly painted as “victims” against whom horrific atrocities had been committed, while in Sierra Leone the dichotomy was less clear, which might have made it more difficult for the population and the international community to commit to a concerted effort towards GIP. On the other hand, if the push for gender equality in Rwanda was embedded in a perception of women as victims, it remains to be seen how sustainable any changes in gender relations are.

Even where we observe changes in gender relations, these shifts do not affect all women in the same way. Women of different ages, rural and urban women, and those of different socioeconomic status and ethnic background have different needs and experiences. Much of the progress in relation to gender equality in Rwanda and Sierra Leone

disproportionately benefit middle to upper class, urban women. The policies have often failed to reach poor women living in rural areas, in some cases making their lives more difficult. Any social change takes time, and it might be too soon to see results in Sierra Leone and in rural Rwandan communities. The Rwandan government has acknowledged that there is sometimes initial local resistance to new gender laws that decreases over time. It remains to be seen whether top-down policies will need to become more conservative to reach equilibrium with social and cultural norms or if more time is needed for changes at the institutional level to trickle down.

VII. Implications
Understanding the effects of GIP on gender equality has important policy implications. If we suspect that GIP results in top-down change but fails to affect social norms and disproportionately benefits urban and middle to upper class women, it is important to implement peacebuilding programs that have more pervasive and equitable outcomes. It is also important to learn what types of national policies most effectively cross these demographic boundaries and promote changes in social norms, and ensure that these are legislated in post-conflict societies experiencing gender inequality. In the doubly normative realm of peacebuilding and feminism, it is essential to combine policy with academic research. An excellent example of this is the suggestion that the longitudinal effects of policy change on women should be monitored. I argue that this sort of longitudinal research is also necessary for understanding the effects of peacebuilding on women and gender relations.

Future research should examine additional case studies as well as quantitative indicators to learn how gender inclusion in peacebuilding processes contributes to both gender equality and the success of the peacebuilding process. It would be useful to prioritize indicators of gender equality by importance or the order in which they occur, and learn whether these tend to differ by context. Another consideration is how necessary or appropriate the post-conflict environment is for achieving social change such as shifts in gender relations. Perhaps it is actually easier to achieve these sorts of changes in a non-conflicted society, and such changes only occur in post-conflict settings due to international pressure and resources. Finally, researchers might explore non-Western concepts of gender equality accepted by local populations in various societies and study how these can be utilized to improve peacebuilding success and the status of women.

VIII. Conclusions
I find that in Sierra Leone, there has been limited political will for social change in relation to gender relations. Women are both victimized and vilified due to their roles as female combatants and bush wives in the civil war, and continue to be marginalized in general. In some places, community and civil society organizations have stepped in to fill the gaps that

---

109 Wallace et. al (2008) discusses political congruence theory, which states that institutions and structures should reflect the political culture of the population, and that if they do not, an equilibrium will eventually be reached. This is playing out in Rwanda, where shifts in gender relations have caused tension, including increased marital disputes, withdrawal of males from politics, and conflicts between female and male siblings.


111 Hudson et. al, Sex and World Peace, 154.
women are falling through, but both cultural and institutional change has been largely elusive. This lack of institutional support has discouraged the formation of grassroots women’s groups, because groups that have organized found that their voices went unheard. In Rwanda, there has been extensive top-down pressure for GIP and a push towards gender equality. These policies are a core tenet of the autocratic RPF regime and have attracted a great deal of international attention and funding, but have done little for the vast majority of poor Rwandan women living in rural areas. These programs are complemented by extensive grassroots efforts, which are able to reach more women. Changes in social and cultural norms are slowly starting to appear, and it remains to be seen if the top-down pressure for changes in gender relations in Rwanda will translate to effective social change.

Based on the cases examined here, we can conclude that GIP based in political will for gender equality and international support is an important but not sufficient step in reaching gender equality. It is crucial to continue researching the policies and programs that will most effectively assist all women in achieving their potential in post-conflict societies. This will involve engaging with government, civic, and grassroots organizations to achieve pervasive social and cultural change that is supported by political and legal reform. It is only through such radical transformation that GIP will result in enduring changes in gender relations, which will ultimately result in a more inclusive and sustainable peace.
Bibliography


Gender Equality and GIP: Rwanda and Sierra Leone

Gender Equality and GIP: Rwanda and Sierra Leone