

"Reconstructing Women? Post-conflict Security and the Return to "Normal" in Sierra Leone"

Megan MacKenzie
University of Alberta

Introduction

The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program in Sierra Leone was seen as one of the key elements of the country's transition from 10 years of civil conflict to peace. Approximately 75,000 former soldiers went through the disarmament camps that were set up during the last 3 years of the conflict. The three phases of the DDR were designed with the understanding that peace will not result merely from the removal of guns from the hands of combatants; rather, a regimented process of rehabilitation and societal reconstruction is a prerequisite for a secure nation. This linkage between policies designed to immediately secure Sierra Leone at the end of a conflict to those designed to reintegrate soldiers and reconstruct their communities is indicative of the growing conflation of security and development. Duffield calls this conflation the 'radicalization of development.' This is the idea that security is no longer a prerequisite for development; rather, development is a prerequisite of security.

Using the Copenhagen School's understanding of security, the radicalization of development has meant that development has become securitized. What becomes important to investigate then, is if there are certain aspects of development that have been securitized and not others; and, if so, what actors have prioritized these development issues and what are the implications. I am particularly interested in how former female combatants have been 'processed' through DDR programs; how this inclusion and exclusion relates to the securitization of male soldiers; and, how post-conflict programs and policies dictate and restrict girls' and women's¹ courses of reintegration and development. I argue that the process of securitization has largely prioritized women in Sierra Leone out of development policies. Issues that are relevant to the experiences and destinies of women are rarely considered "high politics" or security matters. The ranking of political issues offered by Waever- from securitized concerns, to 'normal politics' to the domestic realm (the "private") has very much been a process where the female subject has been relentlessly reordered to the latter category.

In post-conflict Sierra Leone, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and aid agencies have funding, networks, and influence that garner them positions of power in comparison to Sierra Leone's shaky government. As a result of this power, these organizations possess the ability to selectively securitize matters. Given the radicalization of development, NGOs and aid agencies have a particular stake in designating a societal phenomenon a security concern requiring immediate attention. Securitizing an issue is an effective method of garnering funding and support as it indicates that an urgent response is required in order to restore peace. I argue that throughout the process of prioritizing security interests in Sierra Leone, the concerns of women have consistently been ranked not only out of the category of security, but also out of the category of "normal politics." Using the DDR as a case study for both of post-

¹ Although my work indicates that both women and girls have been excluded and restricted by DDR policies, the majority of my research has focused on women over the age of 18. Therefore, for the remainder of the paper, I will only refer to women.

conflict policy making, I point out that even when women participate in the activities of “high politics,” such as conflict, NGO and government policies indicate a concerted effort to shuffle them back to the domestic realm.

I will examine specific political impacts of this categorization process for women post-conflict after first reviewing the Copenhagen school’s definition of security and its implications for development policies and programs. Second, I will briefly discuss Duffield’s explanation of the radicalization of development. Third, I will bring in Jaqueline Stevens work on the family and the state as a vehicle to identify how security and development discourses are implicated in the construction of the family and in the subordination of women. In particular, Jaqueline Stevens’ understanding of the construction of the state depending on the construction of the family provokes questions such as: What does the notion of liberal peace assume about women’s roles in this secure world?; If we understand the process of development to be key to security, how exactly are societies expected to develop?; and, How do notions of family become enmeshed in discourses of development?

Security and the Radicalization of Development

According to the Copenhagen school, security is constructed by members of the elite through the speech act of naming something a security concern. Identifying a particular issue as a security concern, or, securitization, is seen as a “particular kind of social accomplishment” due to the incipient political implications.² Once a matter has been securitized, it is prioritized above “normal politics” and “extraordinary means” are necessary to address the concern.³ As a result of this prioritization, securitization “has clear political implications.”⁴ Recognizing some events or issues as security concerns heightens their profile and increases the amount of attention given to the issue in terms of policy-making, funding, and media attention. One of explanations for why women continue to be “securitized out of development” include the argument within the Copenhagen school that only certain members of a political society have a role in naming security concerns. Abramson explains, “not all claims are socially effective and not all actors are in equally powerful positions to make them.”⁵ Women, particularly in the developing world, rarely have the positions of power required to securitize matters; therefore, the decisions about what is securitized, what is politics, and what is “other” are often made absent of their expression.

The Copenhagen understanding of security and securitization bodes well with Mark Duffield’s analysis of the shift in security priorities to include development and reconstruction. Duffield argues that the underdeveloped South has increasingly been viewed as a source of international instability “through conflict, criminal activity and terrorism.”⁶ This represents a shift in the focus of security studies from traditional interstate wars to development and reconstruction as a source of insecurity. Duffield calls this the “radicalisation of development,” or, “the incorporation of conflict resolution and societal reconstruction within aid policy- amounting to a commitment to transform

² Abrahamson, Rita. “Blair’s Africa: the Politics of Securitization and Fear” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* Volume 30, 2005: p, 8

³ Ole Waever in Abrahamson, *ibid* p, 8

⁴ *Ibid.* p, 68

⁵ *Ibid.* p, 58

⁶ Duffield, Mark “Globalization and the New Wars”(London: Zed Books) 2001. p, 2

societies as a whole.”⁷ The radicalization of development does not represent a mere blurring of the lines between development of security; rather, it is a declaration that there is no line between the two: “[there is a] convergence between the notions of development and security...achieving one is now regarded as essential for security the other.”⁸

Those in the business of development are no longer simply encouraging social and economic improvement; their recent mandates include transforming entire societies. Given this new agenda, a pertinent question becomes: ‘transformation to what kind of society, and for what ends.’⁹ Duffield answers this question through his exploration of the concept of liberal peace. He argues that part of the framework of the radicalization of development assumes that not only must societies be developed to achieve security, but that they must be developed in a particular way. Duffield explains that the coupling of “liberal” and “peace” has meant that liberal policies and structures are correlated with stability: “liberal values and institutions have been vested with ameliorative and harmonizing powers.”¹⁰

The consequence of this forced marriage between liberal and peace has been that aid is not only aimed at emergency relief, but is also concerned with “conflict resolution, reconstructing social networks, strengthening civil and representative institutions, and security sector reform in the context of a functioning market economy.”¹¹ Aid agencies and NGOs that have typically been given the task of assistance are now endeavouring to reconstruct and reorder societies according to liberal principles. Thus, the conflation of development and security has pushed aid agencies and NGOs operating development programs from distributors of philanthropic donations to political directors and governors, or, the organizers of liberal political society.

Unfortunately, Duffield does not take this point further to examine how development and reconstruction produces or depend on specific gendered identities. Neither his work, nor the Copenhagen school, offers a gender analysis of the relationship between speech acts, the liberal influence of the radicalization of development, and the female subject. Jacqueline Stevens’ work proves valuable in identifying convergences in both the process creating political societies and in creating liberal female subjects. For Stevens’ gender roles are not determined by sex; rather, gender “is what occurs through very specific rules a political society develops as it reproduces itself.”¹² Both Stevens and Butler press for an examination of the “‘materialization’ of the ways that Foucauldian regulatory powers produce, in this case, sex.”¹³ Taking this understanding, the reconstruction of a state post-conflict becomes an optimal moment to study the construction and reconstruction of gender roles.

Stevens argues that the construction of political societies, or, in the case of development, the reconstruction of political societies, depends on the construction of the family: “political societies and families require each other. To be born into a family is

⁷ Ibid. p, 2

⁸ Ibid. p, 16

⁹ Stiglitz (1998) in Duffield p, 40

¹⁰ Duffield p, 16

¹¹ Ibid. p, 11

¹² Jacqueline Stevens. “Reproducing the State.” (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press) 1999. p, 210

¹³ Ibid. p, 23

always to be born into a larger group that made possible the family form as such.”¹⁴ Stevens argues that the family is not, and has never been a naturally occurring unit; rather, governing policies have produced the family as natural. In other words, the construction of the state requires the construction of the family: “the state reproduces itself through highly elaborated practices of familial reproduction. The state appropriates the script of matrilineality, attempting to match the certainty of identity that follows from maternal knowledge (by the mother of her child)....”¹⁵ In effect, policies, laws, and regulations sustain the distinction of political society in comparison to pre-political or “natural” families.

Steven’s assertion that “...the overlaying patterns of familial and political membership rules are the ones crucial to the reproductions of the nation”¹⁶ is extremely useful in critiquing post-conflict reconstruction and development policies for women. Understanding non-governmental organizations and aid agencies to be ‘regulatory powers,’ I am curious about how, post-conflict, women are consistently constructed by these organizations as peaceful, natural mothers despite the fact that their experiences during the conflict and their desires post-conflict often stand in stark contrast to this construction. DDR programs, in particular, identified female combatants as aberrations and developed programs for them which assumed that their natural roles were as mothers and wives. The organization of the DDR process and how it managed female soldiers is a prime case study exemplifying how the reconstruction of society post-conflict depends on the construction of the family unit including a peaceful, nurturing, liberal female.

The Case Study

The formal process set up to receive former soldiers in post-conflict Sierra Leone was called the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration process (DDR). The most common definitions of each of these three phases are as follow: first, *disarmament* is “the collection of small arms and light and heavy weapons within a conflict zone; second, *demobilization* is the “process by which parties to a conflict begin to disband their military structures, and combatants begin the transformation into civilian life,” and, finally, *reintegration* is “the process which allows ex-combatants and their families to adapt economically and socially to productive civilian life.”¹⁷ Following Sierra Leone’s ten year civil conflict, close to 75, 000 soldiers were received at the 70 centres for disarmament in Sierra Leone.¹⁸

The DDR process in Sierra Leone has largely been viewed as a success and is seen as a model for future DDR programs.¹⁹ Despite its praises, one of the “lessons

¹⁴ Ibid. p, 10

¹⁵ Ibid. p, 45

¹⁶ Ibid. p, 213?

¹⁷ Isobel McConnan and Sarah Uppard, “Children not Soldiers- Guidelines for Working with Child Soldiers and Children Associated with the Fighting Forces” (Save the Children Fund: <http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2002/sc-seven-dec01.pdf>

¹⁸ Sanam Anderlini and Dyan Mazurana, “Boys and Girls Who Also Carried Guns: Forgotten in the peace,” *International Herald Tribune* op-ed March 12, 2004

¹⁹ See “The World Bank, Sierra Leone: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in The World Bank’s engagement Africa Region · Number 81· October 2002; The “Good Practice Infobrief” series is edited by P.C. Mohan, Rm. J5-055, Knowledge and Learning Center, World Bank, Washington D.C.; Olara Otunnu’s speech to the ECOWAS meeting cited in Peace Women, “WOMEN’S

learned” from the DDR for children has been its treatment of women and girls. Numerous reports of lessons learned from the DDR in Sierra Leone also indicate, “it is vitally important that further commitment is put forward to ensure that women and girls are included in [DDR] activities and that the pleas for increased support to ‘reintegration’ are answered.”²⁰ The exact number of women and girls involved in the fighting forces is unknown; however, estimates range from 30% up to 50% for the number of women and girls in various armed factions.²¹ These numbers are not reflected in DDR statistics. Of the approximately 75,000 adult combatants disarmed, an estimated 24,000 were females. The number of girls that went through the children’s DDR was abysmal; of the 6,845 child soldiers disarmed, 92% were boys and only 8% were girls.²² The Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children described Sierra Leone’s DDR process as “largely gender-blind” and criticized it for “not take into sufficient consideration the varied roles women and girls played among fighting forces and thus... not adequately provid[ing] for their specific DDR-related concerns and rights.”²³ UNICEF has admitted “DDR programmes have consistently failed to attract female combatants...Sierra Leone was no exception.”²⁴

Both women and men acted in so-called “traditional” combatant roles: carrying guns, shooting and killing people, and commanding armed groups. Likewise, both men and women acted in so-called support roles: spying, looting, cooking, and acting as sex slaves. Despite the fact that *both* men and women carried out a variety of roles during the conflict (and have in most conflicts in history), women and girls were mainly categorized as non-combatants. Instead of calling women combatants, a variety of identities, categories, and titles were created for them, such as: ‘camp followers,’ ‘abductees,’ ‘sex slaves,’ ‘domestic slaves,’ or ‘girls and women associated with the fighting forces’ and ‘vulnerable groups associated with armed movements’²⁵

Why was so much attention given to categorizing combatants and non-combatants? Why were female soldiers assumed to be dependents, captives, or acting as domestic or sex slaves? Why, despite the plurality of roles, were some female combatants

COMMISSION RESPONDS TO UN OFFICIAL'S REMARKS”

<http://www.peacewomen.org/news/SierraLeone/newsarchive03/WCRWC.html>

²⁰ Mr. Julien Temple, Preparatory Committee For the 2006 Review Conference

On the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF, 13 January, 2006, New York

²¹ Women Waging Peace, Sulay Sesay (Director of reintegration programming in Sierra Leone, first person interviews with former female soldiers 12-19 December 2005; Sanam Anderlini and Dyan Mazurana, “Boys and Girls Who Also Carried Guns: Forgotten in the peace,” *International Herald Tribune* op-ed March 12, 2004

²² UNICEF, The Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Children Associated with the Fighting Forces: Lessons Learned in Sierra Leone 1998-2002, UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office, Emergency Section, June 2005 px

²³ Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children-press release, 21 February 2003 <http://www.peacewomen.org/news/SierraLeone/newsarchive03/WCRWC.html>

²⁴ UNICEF, The Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Children Associated with the Fighting Forces: Lessons Learned in Sierra Leone 1998-2002, UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office, Emergency Section, June 2005 p16

²⁵ Breaking the Silence: Girls Forcibly Involved in the Armed Struggle in Angola; Vivi Stavrou; Canadian International Development Agency, Christian Children’s Fund p, 99

not considered to be “real soldiers?” A review of the capacities, ranks, and services of any army reveals that a variety of duties and contributions are required for almost all combat operations; however, typically there are few who question if officers who fulfill roles in areas such as medical operations or communications are “real soldiers.” While great effort was made by post-conflict policy makers to name women and girls something other than soldiers, “men involved with the military in support functions are defined as soldiers, and not as ‘men involved in armed groups or forces,’ or as men directly associated with the war;’ or as dependants of male or female combatants.”²⁶

In fact, even major international organizations that helped oversee the DDR process have been reluctant to name women and girls as combatants. For example, UNICEF Sierra Leone coordinated the DDR for children and has admitted that they failed to address the needs of girls. After the conflict, UNICEF set up a program to cater to girls and women who were eligible for the DDR but never went through the process. Despite their recognition that more women and girls should have benefited from the DDR process, many UNICEF documents avoid naming girls and women soldiers.²⁷ Instead, the program is called “the girls left behind.” In an hour-long interview with Glenis Taylor, a senior director at UNICEF Sierra Leone, she never used the term soldier to refer to these women and girls. Instead she identified them as “girls with the fighting forces” and “girls who were involved with the fighting forces.”²⁸

What may seem like a small semantics issue has great political significance. As Peterson and Tickner (1992;1992) have noted, the gender politics of categorization “reflects the power and politics of defining or ‘bounding’ public and private.”²⁹ They argue that “it is this process of ‘bounding’ –as opposed to the absence of an explicit recognition of ‘gender-related persecution- which depoliticises women’s experiences of persecution and obscures their relationship with the state for definitional purposes.”³⁰ More specifically, as development grows evermore concerned with people and issues deemed to be security concerns, naming females as non-combatants excluded them from the immediate attention of post-conflict programs.

The political impact of how male and female soldiers have been categorized has had several interrelated impacts post-conflict. First, accounts of the war that help to contradict gendered stereotypes of the roles of men and women during war have effectively been silenced by policies that only respond to cases that confirm stereotypes of peaceful females and chivalrous males. Second, stripping women and girls of their titles as soldiers depoliticised their roles during the conflict, distinguished them from ‘true’ or ‘real’ combatants, and, in effect, largely excluded them from the benefits of the DDR program. Third, identifying men and boys as gun carrying soldiers and girls and women as dependants, domestic workers or sex slaves, resulted in a two-stream process of reintegration. The reintegration process for men and boys was securitized, that is, the reintegration of males was framed as a process that was a necessary component of

²⁶ Ibid. p, 99

²⁷ UNICEF extended the age eligibility for this program to 25 to account for women who were soldiers as girls.

²⁸ Personal interview. 5 December 2005

²⁹ Peterson and Tickner in *States of Conflict: Violence and Resistance*. London: Zed Books. 2000. p, 89-90

³⁰ Ibid. p, 89-90

achieving security post-conflict. In contrast, the reintegration of girls was largely framed as a process of socialization or ‘returning to normal.’

In terms of the first impact, there is still a great deal of silence about the diversity of women’s experiences and roles during the conflict in Sierra Leone. Of all the lessons to be learnt from the testimonies of women and men who experienced the 10 year civil conflict in Sierra Leone (and there are many), one of the most striking is the lesson that almost all social stereotypes, norms, rules, and structures were violated, destroyed, and invalidated during the conflict. Specifically, evidence of women acting in combat roles, commanding armed groups, ordering rapes, abandoning their children, and using amputation en masse contradicts age old binaries relating to the roles that women and men typically fulfill during conflict. Assumptions that men are natural warriors and soldiers and women are naturally peaceful and nurturing were radically challenged by the Sierra Leone case; despite this, post-conflict programs and policy has largely ignored any ‘aberrations’ to so-called “typical” roles and experiences for men and women during conflict.

One only has to peruse the literature on conflict to find evidence of the gendered assumption that men make war, women make peace.³¹ War, in general, has been described as “a masculine endeavour for which women may serve as victim, spectator, or prize.”³² War has been seen as a masculine endeavour because of the perception of man’s “natural” qualities of courage, chivalry, and strength in comparison to women’s “natural” virtues of compassion, cooperation, and nurturing.³³ Women’s peaceful nature and their “averse to risk”³⁴ are often seen as stemming from their natural role as mothers.³⁵ Jodi York explains: “Women inherently concerned about peace because of their special connection to life preservation and moral guardianship.”³⁶ When this argument is taken further, it has been concluded

“That great conservator of woman’s love, if permitted to assert itself as it naturally would in freedom against oppression, violence and war, would hold all these destructive forces in check, for woman knows the cost of life better than man does, and not with her consent would one drop of blood ever be shed, one life sacrificed in vain.”³⁷

These assumptions about the natural qualities of men and women have resulted in the following conclusion: men are natural soldiers and women are not. Roles that are depicted as ‘natural’ for women during conflict are associated with their reproductive

³¹ Turpin, Jennifer. 1998. Many faces: Women confronting war. In *The women and war reader*, edited by Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin. New York: New York University Press: p, 3

³² Francine D’Amico. “Feminist Perspectives on Women Warriors.” in *The Women and War Reader* by Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer E. Turpin. New York: New York University Press. 1998. p, 119

³³ See Jodi York in Lorentzen and Turpin (1998); April Carter; Daly 1984, Elshtain 1986, Griffin 1981, Ruddick 1989; Tina Johnson in Caprioli, Mark A. Boyer/*Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45, no. 4 Aug 2001 503-518, sage publications; De Groot, 2002

³⁴ Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace- Commonwealth Secretariat, edited by Rawwida Baksh, Linda Etchart, Elsie Onubogu, Tina Johnson 2005 p21

³⁵ Daly 1984, Elshtain 1986, Griffin 1981, Ruddick 1989

³⁶ Jodi York. “The Truth About Women and Peace” in *The Woman and War Reader* edited Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin. New York: New York University, 1998 p, 19

³⁷ Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1775- 1852) in *Women and the Use of Military Force* edited by Ruth H. Howes, Michael R. Stevenson. Boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner publishers, 1993

capacities and their ability to nurture, cooperate, and sustain life. Therefore, instead of soldiering, women's primary roles during conflict include "wives, girlfriends, and mothers, waiting for their soldiers to return and caring for wounded."³⁸

Characterizations of women as naturally peaceful and unfit for combat situations persevere despite various reports of women taking active roles during conflict throughout the world. As Tina Johnson notes, "while it is often suggested that women are naturally no-violent, they have been active participants in modern warfare, especially in civil and liberation wars."³⁹ Feminist international relations scholars in particular have highlighted the contributions of women during war historically.⁴⁰ In Africa in particular, women "have had a long history of participation in the liberation struggles of their continent" including organized resistance movements, protests, and bearing arms.⁴¹

In particular, during the conflict in Sierra Leone women and girls took part in all aspects of conflict. One of the facilitators of the DDR program admitted, "women were just seen as camp followers even though some were active combatants and some went through military training. Some went to places like Burkina Faso for training."⁴² Interviews with a sample group of 25 women "associated with the fighting forces" help to shed light on the multiple roles and activities of women during the conflict. All 25 women responded positively to the question: "Would you define yourself as a former soldier?" Women were quick to point out which armed group they were a part of, what rank they held, and what roles they carried out. For example: one woman identified herself as a commander with the RUF; another woman specified that she was a soldier "because [she] was given one week training on how to fire a gun and subsequently became active;" another woman identified as a soldier because she "took part in most of the horrible activities of the evil conflict in SL;" and, several women admitted that they voluntarily joined a particular faction.

The duties carried out by this group of women were incredibly diverse. When asked "what were your role(s) during the conflict," 19 of the 25 women declared that they were involved in active combat duties. The variety of responses to this question indicates the range of the roles carried out by women during the war. These responses include: "leading lethal attacks," "screening and killing pro-rebel civilians," "combatant," "poison/inject captured war prisoners with either lethal injection or acid," "I trained with [the AFRC] bush camp how to shoot a gun," "killing and maiming pro-government forces and civilians," "gun trafficking," "killing," "planning and carrying out attacks on public places," "do execution on commanders of my age group," "fighting," "murdered children," "weapon cleaner." Although many of the women admitted to acting as sex slaves, the vast list of duties carried out by these women defied any strict gendered

³⁸ April Carter. "Should women be Soldiers or Pacifists?" in *The Woman and War Reader* edited Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin. New York: New York University, 1998 p, 33

³⁹ Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace- Commonwealth Secretariat, edited by Rawwida Baksh, Linda Etchart, Elsie Onubogu, Tina Johnson 2005 21

⁴⁰ See for example Enloe 1982, ** Caprioli, Mark A Boyer 2001

⁴¹ Women and the Use of Military Force edited by Ruth H. Howes, Michael R. Stevenson. Boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner publishers, 1993; Women, Resistance, and the Use of Force in South Africa Patricia T. Morris 185

⁴² Personal interview: Director of COOPI Sierra Leone 12 December 2005

notions about the roles of women during conflict. In fact, Edward* from CEDAW reported “some of the most vicious soldiers and commanders were women.”⁴³

When one talks to former female soldiers in Sierra Leone there is little doubt that they participated in all aspects of conflict; however, post-conflict policies and programs primarily identify their female beneficiaries as camp followers, sex slave, domestic slaves, and abductees. Why is it that there has been so little acknowledgement of women and girls’ participation in aspects of conflict traditionally deemed to be ‘men’s realm?’ Why does it seem easier to understand women and girls acting in domestic or sexual roles but not in violent or aggressive ones? Women and girls as domestic and sex slaves confirm pre-existing notions of what women ‘do’ during war. Women and girls as violent aggressors are not as comprehensible and cannot easily be streamed through existing programs. By focusing on the domestic and sexual work contributed by females, women and girls remain in the ‘private’ realm of war; they may have been associated with a military group but they were not part of the political or public activity of conflict.

Thus, the effort that is made to distinguish women and girls from ‘real’ soldiers is a political act designed to depoliticize their roles during the conflict. When men are involved in active combat they are fulfilling their accepted roles during conflict, yet when women fill these roles they are ‘aberrations’ or exceptions. When men act as porters, cleaners, domestic help, or messengers during war they are soldiers, yet when women fill these roles they are not. Stavrou notes, “Not labelling the work of non-combatant women soldiers as soldiering, continues the gender discrimination of the division of labour whereby critical work that is essential for survival, is simply considered a natural extension of women’s domestic obligations and hence neither worthy or remuneration nor significant enough for women to qualify for training and livelihoods programs.”⁴⁴ By assuming that women and girls’ only contributions to war were ‘natural extensions of their domestic obligations,’ they could be excluded from programs aimed at facilitating post-conflict transitions. In Sierra Leone in particular, the gendered assumptions that the DDR policies were based on not only served to exclude women and girls based on the notion that their contributions were ‘natural,’ but also served to silence accounts of women and girls fulfilling traditional combat roles during the conflict.

One of the consequences of the assumption that men are naturally violent and adept at combat in comparison to peaceful and nurturing women has been that post-conflict programming has largely focused on reintegrating men- in the name of security. Post-conflict programs designed to address the destruction of social networks provide an interesting example of how males are securitized post-conflict. NGO and aid agency documents often refer to the destruction of social networks and norms as one of the most significant outcomes of the 10year civil conflict in Sierra Leone. Although the destabilization of the community is described similarly in various agency documents, the declared impacts of this condition for men and women are different. The term ‘idle’ youth or young men is often used to characterize large cohorts of men and boys who have been displaced during the war and lack employment opportunities. Idleness is described as a problem in relation to men and boys; specific concerns include the fear that these

⁴³ Personal interview: President of CEDAW Sierra Leone 8 December 2005

⁴⁴ Breaking the Silence: Girls Forcibly Involved in the Armed Struggle in Angola; Vivi Stavrou; Canadian International Development Agency, Christian Children’s Fund. p, 99

men and boys will reorganize or “let loose”⁴⁵ and instigate another conflict or participate in organized crime. Some reports have even argued that the existence of idle men was the reason for the outbreak of war in Sierra Leone in the first place, and “idleness could lead again to war.”⁴⁶ Details of this were found in a World Bank report: “the displacement caused by the conflict... separated from families and traditional ties, resulting in a breakdown of communal traditions and family bonds.”⁴⁷ The World Bank has defined the term ‘youth’ in this context as referring to “predominantly men who are excluded, unable to provide for a family and are perceived as a potential *security threat*.”⁴⁸ If men are seen to be naturally violent then it follows that if they are left to their own devices, they may take up arms again or join in organized crime.

There has been similar reporting and analysis on the impacts of social disorder caused by the conflict in Sierra Leone for women and girls. There are reports of displaced and unemployed women and girls; however, they are not characterized as security threats. Instead, the concern for women and girls is that poverty, combined with the lack of social norms and regulations will encourage women and girls turn to prostitution. One account of post-conflict Sierra Leone indicated, “because of extreme poverty, the dislocation of families and the breakdown of social structures during the war, many girls, and some boys, are engaging in prostitution and sex in exchange for economic and other benefits.”⁴⁹ Another report noted that it was “particularly those displaced from their homes and with few resources [who] resorted to prostitution as a means to support themselves and their children.”⁵⁰

While there is concern that idle men will become violent, the greatest concern regarding idle women and girls seems to be their participation in prostitution. These characterizations sustain gendered binaries associated with conflict: men are naturally aggressive and may manipulate this power in desperate situations whereas women are naturally nurturing and may manipulate their bodies in desperate situations. Put another way, under conditions of collapsed or absent social regulations, men will become violent while women will become overtly sexual.

Viewing former male soldiers as a security concern drastically impacted policy-making post conflict. First, males were identified as the primary beneficiary of most programs designed to meet the needs of former soldiers. Second, the reintegration process for women and girls was largely seen as a social process that aimed to return females back to their communities and back into more “traditional” roles. Third, the two streams of reintegration for men and women acted as indicators for communities as to what were “normal” for men and women post-conflict. Finally, by encouraging women and girls to return to their ‘places’ in the community, any new roles, or positions of authority that they may have held during the conflict were effectively stripped from them.

⁴⁵ Christian Children’s Fund official, Freetown

⁴⁶ Christian Children’s Fund official, Freetown

⁴⁷ World bank- draft consultation with youth in Sierra Leone. emphasis added

⁴⁸ World bank- draft conflation with youth in SL emphasis added

⁴⁹ Participatory Research Study with Adolescents and Youth in SL www.Womenscommission.org/reports/sl/06.shtml

⁵⁰ Country report on Human Rights Practices 2003 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Feb 25, 2004

This discrepancy in the benefits offered by reintegration programs demonstrates that the process was not positive for all people post-conflict. In fact, as Barakat and Ozerdem note, “‘post-conflict’ is a misnomer for women, so too are the notions of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Both concepts assume an element of going back, restoring to a position or capacity that previously existed.”⁵¹ They go on to argue that what is never considered is that some women may not want to give up positions of power they may have held during the war and “return to the status quo.”⁵²

NORMAL

Historically, conflict has been described as a time where gender roles are challenged and patriarchic structures are destabilized. Women take up new roles during the conflict and, theoretically, post-conflict “provides an opportunity for women to challenge traditional gender roles, create spaces for new identities and imagine new possibilities for themselves.”⁵³ Despite the prospect war inspiring a rethinking of gender orders, in many cases “gender liberation” is not lasting.⁵⁴ As Handrahan notes “when women are allowed or encouraged to participate, it is male leaders who are controlling and creating the conflict within which women are given a temporary’ place. This ‘temporary’ place is usually manifested in the form of revolutionary action and then rescinded during post-conflict consolidation and an attempt to ‘return to normal.’”⁵⁵

April Carter has conducted research on nationalist movements such as the Chinese Communist movement in the 1930s and 1940s and the African National Congress struggle in the 1970s and 1980s.⁵⁶ She found that emancipatory these types of social and national movements “have given women symbolic status as fighters in varying cultural contexts;” however, “once in power, emancipatory movements tend to move women back into more traditional activities.”⁵⁷ Susan McKay has also observed how, even when gender relations have been challenged during a conflict, women may be marginalized again during the reconstruction process.⁵⁸ International and historical examples of women being told to ‘return home’ during the process of reconstructing the nation demonstrates that “nationalistic loyalties are more highly valued than is gender equality.”⁵⁹

⁵¹ *Women will naturally reintegrate- focus on social norms and returning to normal*

After the Conflict: Reconstruction and Development in the Aftermath of War ed. Sultan Barakat I.B. Tauris London 2005 37

⁵² *Women will naturally reintegrate- focus on social norms and returning to normal*

After the Conflict: Reconstruction and Development in the Aftermath of War ed. Sultan Barakat I.B. Tauris London 2005 37

⁵³ (Baksh-Soodeen, 2003) 32

⁵⁴ Rehn & Sirleaf in *Coinflict, gender, ethnicity and Post-Conflict Reconstruction*, Lori Handrahan, *Isecurity Dialogue*, Sage Publications vol 35(4) 2004 429-445

⁵⁵ (Bennett, Bexley & Warnock 1995)** in 438??

Re-constitution of the state in post-conflict societies

Coinflict, gender, ethnicity and Post-Conflict Reconstruction, Lori Handrahan, *Isecurity Dialogue*, Sage Publications vol 35(4) 2004

⁵⁶ Should women be Soldiers or Pacifists? April Carter 34 See also Susan McKay, National Committee for Development Education 1994; Seidman 1993; **Sultan Barakat and Alpaslan Ozerdem in Sultan Barakat I.B. Tauris London 2005; Lori Handrahan 2004**

⁵⁷ Should women be Soldiers or Pacifists? April Carter 34

⁵⁸ The Psychology of Societal Reconstruction and Peace: A Gendered perspective Susan R. McKay 350

⁵⁹ The Psychology of Societal Reconstruction and Peace: A Gendered perspective Susan R. McKay 356

For the case of Sierra Leone, the reintegration process for women and girls was largely seen as a social process, a 'returning to normal' that would either happen 'naturally,' with time, or through sensitization- meaning talking to communities and families about the need to take these women and girls back. While men were offered training in various trades and given positions as apprentices in the city, women were left with the children that had been born during the conflict and were expected to restore social order by reconstructing the family: "women who have held family community and country together during a war, are all too often left out of post-conflict development plans and decisions by both international and national male leaders, and told to return to their "normal" activities, those of the private citizen largely concerned with domestic life."⁶⁰ Seen in this light, the reintegration process was as an opportunity for men while the reintegration process for women presented a new set of restrictions and expectations for women.

Stevens' argues, "to 'naturalize' is to express the necessity of a form of being or practice, to make something seem impervious to human intention and immutable."⁶¹ Understood this way, 'naturalizing' the process of reintegration for women mean that organizations were absolved from providing any programs or services in this regard. Instead, the main activities aimed at reintegrating women were principally associated with restoring the family structure. In particular, there was great concern about the "marriagability" of female soldiers largely because it was assumed that they had been raped, or they had given birth to children out of wedlock. In some cases, grandmothers offered to raise the children of former soldiers so that they could marry without men having to worry about supporting 'rebel children.' Also, some organizations that dealt with former female soldiers encouraged them to marry their rape perpetrators in order to avoid shame and to readily blend into the community.

Stevens' work on the 'phenomenology of the artificial as natural' is useful in exploring the activities of reintegration and the presentation of motherhood and marriage as the natural identities of the female subject. For Stevens, "the meanings of the most apparently "cultural" or "natural" roles of mother and father still are constituted by and through the state."⁶² Post-conflict, it appears that NGOs operating the DDR took on the role of constructing the natural roles of mothers and fathers. If the process of reintegration was supposed to be "natural," why were there such concerted efforts to encourage women to marry? Marriage is a necessary relationship in the liberal family. According to Stevens, married couples are the foundation of political society and that the state works to portray this unit as natural. Presenting women with the option of marriage or shame; having grandmothers raise grandchildren to help persuade men that their daughters are worthy of marriage; hiding the paternity of children born of rape; encouraging women to marry their rape perpetrators...none of these practices appear natural or 'normal.' Rather, each of them demonstrates the intensity of the effort to create family units post-conflict.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

There is still a need for greater critical analysis of the limitations placed on women and girls in the name of returning to "the status quo." Women and girls who may

⁶⁰ Rehn & Sirleaf in 2002, Bouta & Frerks 02, Cockburn & Zarkov 02, 441??

⁶¹ Jackie 22

⁶² Jackie 213

have gained positions of authority are expected to return to their accepted roles within the family; single mothers who may be victims of multiple rape are encouraged to marry; and women are expected to care for their children even if they have no support from the fathers and even if they may be the products of rape. In this sense, reintegration does not indicate progress and opportunity for the entire society. In fact, as Krug explains “it is rarely considered that encouraging a return to what is considered ‘normal’ after a conflict may reflect the patriarchal order before the conflict where women’s rights might have been routinely violated. Or that the international community’s definition of ‘normal’ tolerates high levels of violence against women in their own societies.”⁶³

Further examination into the reordering that takes place post-conflict in the name of development and security must be taken in order to expose the vast canyons of silence that continue to surround women’s experiences. There is also a desperate need to determine why feminists have been so reluctant to theorize about violent women. Further, as NGOs and development agencies take on the role of the state, it is essential that these organizations be scrutinized as political bodies and held accountable to the impacts of their actions. Finally, the liberal family cannot continue to be upheld as a natural, pre-political entity.

CONCLUSION

The securitization of development represents a dramatic shift for the roles of NGOs and aid agencies operating development programs. This is particularly true given that security has increasingly been equated to ‘liberal peace.’ Two of the greatest consequences of the radicalization of development for development organizations and policy makers are that they now possess the capacity to determine what issues become securitized and they have also been imparted with the task of reconstructing entire societies post-conflict. Given the weight of these two tasks, and the power and influence associated with both, it seems curious that post-conflict and development agencies and organizations are often still viewed as benevolent, philanthropic organizations. NGOs and agencies are reconstructing societies in accordance with liberal principles; yet, their actions are rarely scrutinized as political.

Post-conflict programs, particularly the DDR, affirmed that the roles men carried out during the conflict were acceptable and natural extensions of their masculine qualities. In contrast, the DDR excluded and shamed women who were participants in the conflict. Men were offered various training opportunities, and were encouraged to seek employment opportunities. Women were given few choices in choosing their reintegration process: limited training, marriage, motherhood, or returning to their families. Each of these choices was seen as an opportunity to hide their identities as soldiers and to ‘blend in’ to the community. While women continually experienced shame throughout the reintegration process, men were offered opportunities and the prospect of starting life anew. DDR programs, for example, neither attempted to shame men for, or educate them about, the illegality of rape nor encouraged men to take responsibility for children they may have fathered during the conflict.

Securitizing post-conflict development, or the ranking of development issues from securitized to ‘normal politics’ to ‘the domestic realm’ requires that a domestic realm exist. In order to identify a particular set of concerns as a priority, they must be seen as having priority *over* some other set of issues. In post-conflict Sierra Leone, the

⁶³ (Krug 2002) not

securitization of male soldiers was possible only in contrast to the naturalized female and the naturalized family unit. It was necessary to restrain and rehabilitate male soldiers for the sake of the rest of society. In this way, the construction and reconstruction of the state post-conflict requires the construction of the family. Women were obliged to marry, to raise their children, and to fuse into some kind of family unit. This process was called 'a return to normal' or a return to the status quo despite the obvious policies and restrictions that relegated it. Post-conflict, society is reordered in a way that traditional issues of 'high politics' (men and states with guns) are prioritized as security concerns in comparison to 'low politics' (sex, domestic work, childbirth, and the family). The reality is that the two categories cannot exist without the each other.