

**Development,
Women, and War
Feminist Perspectives**

Oxfam GB

Oxfam GB, founded in 1942, is a development, humanitarian, and campaigning agency dedicated to finding lasting solutions to poverty and suffering around the world. Oxfam believes that every human being is entitled to a life of dignity and opportunity, and it works with others worldwide to make this become a reality.

From its base in Oxford, UK, Oxfam GB publishes and distributes a wide range of books and other resource materials for development and relief workers, researchers, campaigners, schools and colleges, and the general public, as part of its programme of advocacy, education, and communications.

Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International, a confederation of 12 agencies of diverse cultures and languages, which share a commitment to working for an end to injustice and poverty – both in long-term development work and at times of crisis.

For further information about Oxfam's publishing, and online ordering, visit www.oxfam.org.uk/publications

For further information about Oxfam's development, advocacy, and humanitarian relief work around the world, visit www.oxfam.org.uk

Development, Women, and War Feminist Perspectives

Edited and introduced by
Haleh Afshar and Deborah Eade

A Development in Practice Reader

Series Editor
Deborah Eade



First published by Oxfam GB in 2004

© Oxfam GB 2004

ISBN 0 85598 487 2

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

All rights reserved. Reproduction, copy, transmission, or translation of any part of this publication may be made only under the following conditions:

- with the prior written permission of the publisher; or
- with a licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd., 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE, UK, or from another national licensing agency; or
- for quotation in a review of the work; or
- under the terms set out below.

This publication is copyright, but may be reproduced by any method without fee for teaching purposes, but not for resale. Formal permission is required for all such uses, but normally will be granted immediately. For copying in any other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, prior written permission must be obtained from the publisher, and a fee may be payable.

Available from:

Bournemouth English Book Centre, PO Box 1496, Parkstone, Dorset, BH12 3YD, UK
tel: +44 (0)1202 712933; fax: +44 (0)1202 712930; email: oxfam@becb.co.uk

USA: Stylus Publishing LLC, PO Box 605, Herndon, VA 20172-0605, USA
tel: +1 (0)703 661 1581; fax: +1 (0)703 661 1547; email: styluspub@aol.com

For details of local agents and representatives in other countries, consult our website:
<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/publications>

or contact Oxfam Publishing, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, UK
tel: +44 (0)1865 311 311; fax: +44 (0)1865 312 600; email: publish@oxfam.org.uk

Our website contains a fully searchable database of all our titles, and facilities for secure on-line ordering.

The Editor and Management Committee of *Development in Practice* acknowledge the support given to the journal by affiliates of Oxfam International, and by its publisher, Carfax, Taylor & Francis. The views expressed in this volume are those of the individual contributors, and not necessarily those of the Editor or publisher.

Published by Oxfam GB, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, UK.

Printed by Information Press, Eynsham.

Oxfam GB is a registered charity, no. 202 918, and is a member of Oxfam International.

Contents

Contributors vii

Preface x

Deborah Eade

PART ONE

Introduction: War and peace: what do women contribute? 1

Haleh Afshar

The 'sex war' and other wars: towards a feminist approach to
peace building 8

Donna Pankhurst

Women and wars: some trajectories towards a feminist peace 43

Haleh Afshar

Developing policy on integration and re/construction in Kosova 60

Chris Corrin

Kosovo: missed opportunities, lessons for the future 87

Lesley Abdela

Training the uniforms: gender and peacekeeping operations 100

Angela Mackay

Palestinian women, violence, and the peace process 109

Maria Holt

Women and conflict transformation: influences, roles, and
experiences 133

Ann Jordan

Fused in combat: gender relations and armed conflict 152

Judy El-Bushra

Women in Afghanistan: passive victims of the *borga* or active social participants? 172

Elaheh Rostami Povey

PART TWO

Introduction: Peace and reconstruction: agency and agencies 188

Deborah Eade

Relief agencies and moral standing in war: principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and solidarity 195

Hugo Slim

Aid: a mixed blessing 212

Mary B. Anderson

Women and war: protection through empowerment in El Salvador 220

Martha Thompson and Deborah Eade

Sustainable peace building in the South: experiences from Latin America 238

Jenny Pearce

Training for peace 267

Glenda Caine

Making peace as development practice 272

Sumaya Farhat-Naser and Gila Svirsky

Building bridges for peace 294

Rola Hamed

Human security and reconstruction efforts in Rwanda: impact on the lives of women 301

Myriam Gervais

Mission impossible: gender, conflict, and Oxfam GB 315

Suzanne Williams

Resources 337

Index 365

Contributors

Lesley Abdela is a senior partner of Eyecatcher Associates/Shevolution and is Chief Executive of Project Parity. She holds an MBE for services to women in politics and public life, an Honorary Doctorate from Nottingham Trent University for her work on human rights, and is a previous winner of the UK Woman of Europe award for her contribution to the empowerment of women in Central and Eastern Europe.

Haleh Afshar is Professor of Politics at the University of York, where she teaches Politics and Women's Studies, and also teaches Islamic Law at the Faculté Internationale de Droit Comparé at the University of Strasbourg. Recent works include *Islam and Feminisms: An Iranian Case-study* (Macmillan, 1998) and (co-edited with Stephanie Barrientos) *Women, Globalization and Fragmentation in the Developing World* (Macmillan, 1999).

Mary B. Anderson is President of The Collaborative for Development Action Inc., Director of the Local Capacities for Peace Project, and Co-director of the Reflecting on Peace in Practice Project. She has published widely on gender as well as on international emergency assistance and supporting peace-building capacities.

Glenda Caine is co-founder and Director of the Independent Projects Trust (IPT) which has, since 1990, been undertaking facilitation, training, and research work with rural communities, schools, the police service, and other institutions in transition owing to social, political, and economic changes in South Africa. She has a particular interest in peace education and training in conflict resolution.

Chris Corrin is Professor of Feminist Politics and co-ordinator of the International Centre for Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. She works with women's groups internationally on issues of politics, human rights, and violence against women. Her recent works include *Women in a Violent World* (Edinburgh University Press, 1996); *Feminist Perspectives on Politics* (Pearson, 1999); and *Gender and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe* (Frank Cass, 1999).

Deborah Eade has over 20 years' experience in development and humanitarian assistance, and worked for Oxfam GB and other NGOs in Mexico and Central America throughout the 1980s. She has published extensively on these issues and is Editor of the international journal *Development in Practice*.

Judy El-Bushra has 30 years' experience in development work in both governmental and non-governmental bodies, with a particular geographical focus on Sudan and Somalia. Her main areas of professional interest have been research and training in gender and development, distance education, conflict analysis, and more recently culture and performance and its relevance for development.

Sumaya Farhat-Naser is Professor of Botany at the University of Birzeit and was co-founder and former Director of the Jerusalem Center for Women, the Palestinian branch of Jerusalem Link. She is a founding member of the Women Waging Peace Global Network and has received several awards, including the 1995 Dr Bruno Kreisky Prize for Human Rights, the 1997 Mount Zion Award, and the 2000 Ausberg Peace Festival Award.

Myriam Gervais is a Research Associate at the Centre for Developing-Area Studies at McGill University, where she conducts research on human security, governance, and civil society in Africa. She has published widely on development issues in Niger and Rwanda, and consults for and lectures to government agencies and NGOs involved in aid programmes.

Rola Hamed is a Palestinian-Israeli currently working for a German Foundation in Tel Aviv. She holds an MA in Peace and Development Studies from Gothenburg University through a joint programme for Palestinians, Israelis, and Europeans conducted at the Tantur Center in Jerusalem, and is on the board of Bat Shalom.

Maria Holt worked for several years at the Council for the Advancement of Arab–British Understanding (CAABU) before joining the British Council in London as a Parliamentary Officer. Her academic work has focused on Middle East politics, Islam, women, and violence.

Ann Jordan is a freelance writer, researcher, and trainer with a 40-year background in teaching, and a particular interest in cross-cultural understanding.

Angela Mackay is Chief of the Gender Affairs Office in the UN Mission in Kosovo. Prior to this appointment, she was responsible for developing, testing, and revising the training materials described in her chapter throughout the major UN peacekeeping missions.

Donna Pankhurst is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford. She has published on gender, democracy, and rural development in Zimbabwe; land reform and democracy in Namibia; and famine and the environment in Sudan. Her current work focuses on the causes of conflict, methods of its settlement, and peace building in Africa.

Jenny Pearce is Professor of Politics and International Development at the School of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford. She was previously Director of the Latin American Bureau, and has published extensively on Latin American issues. Her recent works include *Civil Society and Development* (co-authored with Jude Howell) (Lynne Rienner, 2001).

Elaheh Rostami Povey is a gender specialist and lectures in Development Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London. Her recent publications include *Women, Work and Islamism: Ideology and Resistance in Iran* (Zed Books, 1999), under the pen name Maryam Poya, and published in Farsi under her own name.

Hugo Slim is Reader in International Humanitarianism at Oxford Brookes University, Chief Scholar at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Geneva, and is a policy adviser to and trustee of several international NGOs, including Oxfam GB.

Gila Svirsky is a peace and human rights activist and former Director of Bat Shalom (Daughter of Peace), the Israeli branch of Jerusalem Link. She serves on the board of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, is co-ordinator of the Coalition of Women for a Just Peace, which brings together eight Israeli and Palestinian women's peace organisations, and is an active member of the Women in Black movement.

Martha Thompson is an independent consultant on development and humanitarian issues with over 20 years' practical experience in these fields, and teaches at Brandeis University in Boston. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s she represented a range of international NGOs in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, including Catholic Relief Services, Concern, Oxfam America, Oxfam Canada, and Oxfam GB.

Suzanne Williams pioneered gender and development work in Oxfam GB and has extensive experience in Brazil, Namibia, and South Africa. Author of *The Oxfam Gender Training Manual* (Oxfam, 1995), and co-author (with Deborah Eade) of *The Oxfam Handbook of Development and Relief* (Oxfam, 1995), she is currently Oxfam GB's Policy Adviser on Gender and Conflict.

Preface

Deborah Eade

After three decades of trying to get ‘gender onto the development agenda’, it is now widely recognised that, although the indicators of women’s subordination to men are universal, persistent, and fairly comprehensive¹, this does not mean that women constitute a homogeneous group. Nor does it mean that their interests or needs² are identical across social, economic, cultural, political, and other divides.

In the context of humanitarian work, however, and certainly in terms of how the issues are presented in the mass media, women are commonly seen in terms of their membership of a group or community. While terms such as ‘the plight of women’ (be they Afghan or Albanian or Angolan) distinguish them from men, this is at the expense of insisting upon their commonality as women in ways that invariably gloss over significant differences among them. The ensuing narrative either insists upon women’s victimhood and their helplessness in the face of suffering and adversity; or it stresses their resourcefulness, their ‘inner strength’, their stoical struggle to keep their families going, their ‘natural’ identification with peace. Men prosecute war to defend the homeland, and women bind the social wounds and keep the home fires burning. Men, in this dualistic portrayal, will negotiate only from a position of power that is ultimately based on violence, or the threat of violence; women will look for compromises that do not involve such zero-sum games.

This narrative finds it even more difficult to countenance the engagement of women in violence and destruction than to recognise that many men do seek peaceful dialogue rather than solutions that are based upon aggression: that suicide bombers should include women seems to turn the world upside down. But real-life problems arise when emergency interventions and post-conflict programmes are based on distorted generalisations that not only deny women and men the full

range of human agency, but may also lock emerging societies into ill-fitting roles that diminish rather than enhance their development potential.

This Reader comprises two parts. The first is introduced by Haleh Afshar and is based on her guest-edited issue of the journal *Development in Practice* (Volume 13, Numbers 2 & 3) published in May 2003. A feminist scholar and activist, and a prominent commentator on contemporary Islamic affairs, Haleh Afshar is Professor of Politics at the University of York. Contributors on the overarching theme of women, war, and peace building describe the work of women (some feminist, some not) who are actively engaged in trying to (re-) build equitable and sustainable societies in the very process of living through or emerging from war.

The second part of this Reader contains a selection of papers drawn from other issues of the journal and elsewhere focusing on the ways in which aid agencies often relate to the 'victims' of conflict, who are predominantly 'womenandchildren' (to borrow Susan McKay's phrase, quoted in Karam 2001:19), and considering how external agencies might best support these 'victims' and other civilians in their own peace-building efforts.

The experience of living or working in a situation of armed conflict defies generalisation: every war or situation of political violence has its own distinct characteristics. In terms of gender-power relations, there are grounds for guarded optimism in some cases, near despair in others. Human beings do adapt to new circumstances and will devise all manner of ways to secure their survival even in the most desperate of situations. It is a piece of aid-agency lore that social disruption can, in some instances, open up new opportunities for women that enable them to break out of restrictive gender stereotypes. The legacy of women's clandestine networks in Afghanistan described by Elaheh Rostami Povey is one such case, the growing political agency and 'self-protection' capacities of peasant women during the war in El Salvador chronicled by Martha Thompson and Deborah Eade is another. These and other experiences recorded in this volume show what women can achieve when they are able to organise autonomously, as women and as citizens. And yet, the overwhelming evidence is that, although women do characteristically take on additional burdens in order to secure the survival of their families, often assuming extra economic and public (including military) responsibilities over and above their reproductive work, these changes in gender roles are

generally contingent and context-specific, and as such fail to take root within a broader project of social transformation. So unless women are able to distinguish for themselves between the desirable and negative outcomes of social upheaval, and mobilise to defend what they perceive as improvements in their quality of life, the ideological undertow is all too likely to sweep away any fragile gains women may have experienced during wartime and may well usher in 'traditional' patterns of gender-power relations.

It is a sad reflection of the crisis facing political institutions throughout much of the contemporary world that this collection cannot be comprehensive in its coverage of existing armed conflicts, and that more will almost certainly have broken out than been resolved even before it goes to press. At the time of writing, the situation in post-war Iraq remains highly unstable, the peace processes in the Middle East and West Africa are at best precarious, the conflict in Colombia bleeds on almost unnoticed, and the 'war on terror' seems set to claim more lives. The need for new perspectives on conflict, new approaches to peace building and conflict resolution, could not be more urgent. If this volume helps readers to look at these issues in a more creative way, then it will have contributed in some small way to meeting that need.

Notes

- 1 UNDP's Gender-related Development Index (GDI) ranks countries according to the life expectancy, adult literacy, education, and earnings of women relative to men. Even in Norway, the highest-ranking country on both the Human Development Index (HDI) and the GDI, despite their higher average level of education, women still earn only two-thirds of average male earnings (UNDP 2003). The world over, from rural and urban sectors in developing countries to OECD nations, women generally work longer hours but earn less money than men. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) looks at women's representation in public and professional life. High-income Japan, which ranks ninth in the world in terms of human development, drops to thirteenth position on this index: women hold only 10 per cent of parliamentary seats, compared with 30 per cent in South Africa; fewer than 10 per cent of Japanese legislators and senior officials are women, compared, for example, with 36 per cent in Honduras; and while 45 per cent of professional and technical workers in Japan are women, countries as varied as Brazil, Philippines, and Poland all do significantly better on this score. In other words, a country's HDI ranking can mask considerable female disadvantage, while a low HDI or GDI ranking does not necessarily mean that women are absent from public life.

- 2 A reference to the pioneering distinction between strategic and practical interests, as originally defined by Maxine Molyneux (1985), and strategic and practical needs, the approach later developed by Caroline Moser (1989).

References

- Karam, Azza (2001) 'Women in war and peace-building: the roads traversed, the challenges ahead', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3(1): 1–25.
- Molyneux, Maxine (1985) 'Mobilisation without emancipation? Women's interests, state and revolution in Nicaragua', *Feminist Studies* 11(2): 227–54.
- Moser, C.O.N. (1989) 'Gender planning in the Third World: meeting practical and strategic gender needs', *World Development* 17(11): 1799–825.
- UNDP (2003) *2003 Human Development Report*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.