



Sahel and West Africa Club/OECD &  
Economic Community of West African States



## **WOMEN AND POST CONFLICT: the need for women to be at the negotiation tables**

**Mrs. KAUDJHIS-OFFOUMOU**

Lawyer  
Côte d'Ivoire

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The views expressed in this document are those solely of the authors and do not necessarily the views of the Sahel and West Africa Club/OECD.

**OFEP** (Organisation des Femmes d'Eburnie pour la Paix<sup>1</sup>) and its newly more expanded branch, FIFem (Fédération internationale des Femmes pour la Paix<sup>2</sup>), organised rallies and marches for peace and reconciliation notably "**The Torches for Peace and Reconciliation.**" With the **Women's Network of the Mano River Region** bringing together women from Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, these organisations contribute to seeking peace in the sub-region. Through these initiatives, they insist that non-violent actions can stand up to conflict.

States would benefit by making official these informal and female-led initiatives in support of peace. These women, family and social educators, can more easily bring the antagonists closer together and advocate for their peaceful co-existence. When favourable, they should be included around the official negotiation tables. It would be unfair to see those who have waged war holding high level positions and neglect those who have carried out actions for peace. Women do not need to be combatants or militants of a political party so that their action leads them to the negotiation tables. For women to have access to the negotiating tables they must be united and speak in one voice.

**In any case, women should be able to actively participate in the creation of a new government and in negotiations for peace so as to improve their living conditions and have their practical and strategic needs taken into account for sustainable peace.**

**Gender equality** must be respected. Negotiations and the management of interim government institutions can be handled by women. There is no reason to exclude them from these functions knowing that the decisions benefit those who make them.

Each government should be aware of and take into account the regional and international legal instruments related to human rights as well as the international and regional declarations on women and in the implementation of their institutions with a view to true democratic governance in a post-conflict period.

### **THE IVOIRIAN POST-CRISIS CONTEXT**

#### ***- On the social level, women's situation has deteriorated:***

As illustrated by human and food security: the war-provoked upheavals changed relations between people. Roles shifted. Many women became heads of family but without the sufficient means to neither feed and care for their family nor educate their children.

#### ***- Violence against women continues:***

Prior to and during the crisis, female circumcision was practiced and still is. The law banning this procedure has no dissuasive effect. Traditional practices such as early and forced marriage, dowries or customary widowhood are still prevalent as well as sexual slavery, prostitution and violence against women.

Families' financial situation is becoming evermore precarious, domestic violence is on the rise. This violence can be explained by the fact that men have changed. They have lived through the atrocities of war; they are no longer sensitive to suffering. They have developed a violent side and put it into practice within their households.

The chamber of matrimonial affairs of the Court of First Instance is constantly full. The war was an excuse to justify the number of cases of infidelity and abandoned families or households which were grounds for divorce.

Heavy as well as light weapons continue to circulate and attacks are being committed.

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<sup>1</sup> Eburnie Women's Organisation for Peace

<sup>2</sup> International Federation of Women for Peace

## **GIVEN THESE SITUATIONS, HOW CAN POST-CONFLICT BE BETTER MANAGED?**

Some ways forward:

- Take into account the issue of gender equality to promote the recognition of women's rights; taking this into account in the planning and budgeting of post-conflict;
- Undertake institutional or other necessary reforms; revise codes and laws to eliminate all discrimination and create new laws to fill in the gaps notably making rape during wartime a qualified "crime";
- Produce, in a transparent manner, the reconstitution of vital statistics destroyed by the war: identification, population surveys, drawing up of electoral lists of various constituents;
- Develop a human rights, democracy and good governance culture, to limit abuse and prevent rampant impunity in a context where corruption has become a canker sore;
- Denounce gender-based violence of which women are systematically victims. Demand the application of Resolution 1325; monitor and sanction violations of women's rights;
- Convert international or regional legal instruments into national laws and apply them in their jurisdictions;
- Support the private sector affected by the war;
- Support micro-credit/micro-financing initiatives and strengthen women's capacities through literacy and training;
- Compensate victims;
- Reduce taxes, if need be during times of war / crisis because with their imposition, no one can afford their basic needs;
- Review the employment policy taking into account gender;
- Renovate health, education, and social protection structures deteriorated by the conflict.

## **CONCLUSION – RECOMMENDATIONS**

Post-conflict requires a truth, justice and reconciliation phase in order to pardon which is the basis for peace. The State has enacted numerous amnesty laws. Confidence needs to be restored because only in a climate of confidence can victims be totally secure to express themselves.

To **strengthen peace and anticipate the resurgence of hostilities**, some arrangements must be made, in particular:

- Create reform or strengthen some national institutions; the monitoring of elections, protection, defence and promotion of human rights; complete the reinsertion and DDR programmes; seek conditions for re-launching the economy and development; pursue humanitarian activities and business development in order to exit from crisis;
- Assure public security;
- Facilitate access to essential social equipment at short notice;
- Finance development by investing in women;
- Encourage coordinated international action to ensure the coordination of actions by combining various organisations' forces;

- Observe good governance in public administration, the economy, justice, etc. by combating all forms of corruption;
- Practice genuine democracy;
- Create an environment conducive to investment and economic growth;
- Encourage social development and social justice;
- Eliminate all types of discrimination against women;
- Restructure international aid;
- Reduce the debt;
- Open up to international markets;
- Support cooperation and regional integration;
- Harmonise international and bilateral initiatives underway and mobilise the necessary political will.

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