The Role of Women in Post-Conflict Reconstruction

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Abstract

This article explored the definition of post conflict reconstruction and evaluates various efforts and lessons learnt from post conflict reconstruction globally, across the African continent and in Uganda more particularly. Four main subject areas were covered, including firstly an understanding of peace building and post conflict reconstruction, drawing from the global experiences and locating it within the African context. It explored key writings that constitute an understanding of post conflict reconstruction, its meaning, aims and objectives and how states have conceptualized post conflict reconstruction policies. Further it investigated the role of different actors, including women in post conflict reconstruction with a view to understanding the politics behind most post conflict reconstruction actions.

Introduction

The evolution of peace building is linked to the 1992 United Nations Secretary General's report "An Agenda for Peace"[3]; where peace building was defined as 'action to identify and support structures that strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict (1992). In addition to post conflict peace building the other strategies adopted by the United Nations for conflict resolution include: preventive diplomacy; peace keeping and peacemaking. For Miall et al peace building refers to 'the attempt to overcome the structural, relational and cultural contradictions which lie at the root of conflicts' (1999:36). Both definitions lay emphasis on supporting structures and avoiding future conflicts. Peace building is often related to Galtung's three prong approaches to peace they include: peace keeping, peace-making and peace building.

Miall et al (1999) differentiated the three approaches thus; peace keeping are action that seek to halt and reduce violence through the use of military forces in a forceful way. Peace making includes actions that reconcile political and strategic positions through mediation, negotiation, arbitration and conciliation mainly at elite level. Peace building are actions and proposals that address the practical implementation of peaceful social change through socio economic reconstruction and development. These definitions can be linked to the concept of positive and negative peace. Miall's et al (1999) definition of peace keeping and peace-making have the potentials to result to negative peace as both do not address the root causes of conflict; while peace building on the other hand seems to embrace a more holistic approach that could lead to addressing the root causes of conflict and build sustainable peace. Peace keeping prevents resumption of fighting and occurs after conflict while peace making involves stopping an ongoing conflict.

Courier (2003) on the other hand argues that the conceptual inconsistency in defining the word peace building may be as a result of the complicated nature of peace building itself, in which 'transitions from war to peace is a complex process involving making a country safe and secure, protecting the population, reintegrating displaced population and refugees, rebuilding infrastructures, re-launching the economy, promoting good governance, establishing political dialogue and restoring social capital' (Courier, 2003:8).

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[3] The report was prepared on the request of the Security Council for recommendations to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations for preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace keeping.

For Ismail (2008) the conceptual complexity in peace building emerges from existing practices that conceive peace building only in terms of post-settlement activities and rebuilding of institutions and infrastructures, in other words post conflict reconstruction. It is however difficult to separate peacekeeping from peace building as some of the actions overlap as illustrated earlier on; and post conflict reconstruction is a component of peace building that happens in the post conflict phase, thus peace building includes all actions geared towards social, political and economic development of a post conflict country that would ultimately lead to lasting peace.

Post Conflict Reconstruction

The very definition of "reconstruction" is problematic. To define it as the rebuilding of what had been present before the fighting had erupted is to risk supporting a status quo that may violate human rights, privilege particular groups, and in the long run, encourage conflict. If external actors define reconstruction, problems of dependency and external domination arise. If internal elites define reconstruction, they may construct programs to advance their own political purposes, making reconstruction efforts a political tool (Ismail, 2008). Various authors have defined post conflict reconstruction differently; three main areas have been used, time of end of conflict, activities involved in post conflict reconstruction and the ultimate goal of post conflict reconstruction.

Using timing of the end of conflict Nkurunziza (2008) defined the concept post conflict as a period following the end of a conflict in a given country. He however argued that using time to define post conflict is problematic as it is difficult to determine the precise date when a conflict is supposed to have ended. He identified two major events that could be used to determine the beginning of a post-conflict period. The immediate period following a landmark victory by either warring parties, and the date of the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (Anderlini and El-Bushra), even when such an agreement does not necessarily end all acts of violence. For example, the signing of the Comprehensive Peace agreement in Liberia and Burundi signified the end of the war.

At the same time, it is difficult to determine the end of post conflict reconstruction. Nkurunziza proposed that post conflict period should end when all attributes inherited from the conflict cease to have influence on the population. Some scholars like Collier and Hoeffler (2004) gave this period as 10 years following the end of conflict. However, Ismail (2008) argued that fixing the period that post conflict reconstruction should take place to 10 years is problematic as post conflict peace building requires a long period in order for a country to fully recover, he suggest that 10 years could be used to assess the interventions in order to provide an early indication of the extent of achievement of set objectives. However, the practice of the UN seems to adopt the short term approach, which does not give time to make lasting impact, they simply resurrect the institutional base of the state and guarantee the stability of the regime in power. A good example is the withdrawal of the United Nations Missions from Sierra Leone and other actors less than two years after the elections. Two years does not provide enough time for stability in post war situations (Ismail, 2008:20-21)

In defining post conflict reconstruction using activities involved in the process of reconstruction, Kumar (1997) and Barakat and Zyck (2009) describe post conflict reconstruction to involve building or rebuilding both formal and informal institutions, through the creation and restoration of physical infrastructure and facilities, minimal social services and structural reform and transformation in the political, economic, social and security sectors. At the same time, scholars like Wessels and Monteiro (2001) defined post conflict reconstruction using its ultimate goal of transition from widespread violence to peace.

From the foregoing, it could be said that post conflict reconstruction includes steps taken to prevent or interrupt ongoing cycles of violence, humanitarian assistance, building or rebuilding of both formal and informal institutions, creation and restoration of physical infrastructure and facilities, social services, structural reforms and transformation in the political, economic, social and security sectors of a war torn country (Ball, 1997; Zuckerman and Greenberg, 2004; El-Bushra and Naraghi, 2002). This research will adopt this definition, which describes the activities involved in post conflict reconstruction, to enable the analysis of post conflict health reconstruction. A common trend in all the definitions which is reflected above is that post conflict reconstruction involves transformation in political, economic, social and security sector to create a peaceful environment that will prevent relapse into violence (Hamre and Sullivan, 2000; Cowen and Coyne, 2005; Barakat and Zyck, 2009). These activities are described.

Economic reconstruction undertakings include rebuilding damaged infrastructure, such as homes, roads and bridges, health centres, and schools. Other activities include currency stabilization and monetary reform; demining; agricultural reestablishment; job creation; establishing financial and economic systems and other means of addressing poverty, which war amplifies (El-Bushra and Naraghi, 2002; Ball, 1997; Kumar, 1997).

Political reconstruction includes actions geared towards creating a legitimate government and includes review or design of new constitutions, conducting regular elections; political discourse; building norms of political participation; settling political disputes and security sector reforms (Ball, 1997; Kumar, 1997; Ismail, 2008:19). Security sector reform involves disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR); the creation of new security sector institutions and the prevention of the re-emergence of repressive state security institutions appropriate to intervene in politics, economy and society; and rebuilding accountable, efficient, and effective security forces (Williams, 2000:2-3).

Social reconstruction includes rebuilding civil society; resettlement and reintegration of displaced population; revitalizing the community; establishing awareness of and support for basic human rights; and creating social trust across the lines of conflict. In all of these tasks, a high priority is the establishment of *social justice,* transforming patterns of exclusion, inequity, and oppression that fuel tensions and fighting (El-Bushra and Naraghi, 2002; Christie et al, 2001; Ball, 1997; Kumar, 1997).

Frameworks for Post Conflict Reconstruction

Many frameworks have been developed by global and regional organizations; such as the World Bank; Multilateral Development Banks (Including the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the American Development Bank Group); United Nations entities (including the United Nations Development Programme, the UN Women and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations); the African Union and donor agencies as guidelines to inform post conflict interventions. In this section, I describe the World Bank and African Union frameworks for post conflict reconstruction.

The World Bank Post Conflict Reconstruction framework

Historically, the World Bank was established to support the reconstruction of Europe following World War II. To date except for India and China nearly a quarter of the commitments by the International Development Association (IDA) are going to countries that have undergone or are emerging from intrastate conflict (World Bank, 1998). Although the World Bank has historically focused its support on rebuilding infrastructure, over the years the Bank has learned that this focus is not enough. The new areas include economic adjustment and recovery address social sector needs, and build institutional capacity; other activities include demining, demobilization, reintegration of ex-combatants, and re-integration of displaced populations.

The guiding principles of the World Bank's intervention are stated in its Articles of Agreement, they include; finance and facilitate reconstruction and development in its member countries; assist peace efforts directly through development activities (the bank is not in charge of peace-making or peace building); the bank does not question or interfere with the political affairs of member states; it operates in the territory of a member with the approval of that member; assist in reconstruction and development by financing investments for productive purposes and promoting international trade through loans and guarantees. The Bank's Articles of Agreement emphasize that the Bank must take steps to ensure that activities it supports 'do no harm' and avoid aggravating existing inequalities in fragile situations (World Bank, 1998).

The World Bank's main objective of post conflict reconstruction is to facilitate the transition to sustainable peace after hostilities have ceased and to support economic and social development(World Bank, 1998). The core focus is on economic recovery, which is dependent on the rebuilding of the domestic economy and restoration of access to external resources. These objectives imply an integrated package of reconstruction assistance to: -

- Jump-start the economy through investment in key productive sectors; create the conditions for resumption of trade, savings, and domestic and foreign investment; and promote macroeconomic stabilization, rehabilitation of financial institutions, and restoration of appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks
- Re-establish the framework of governance by strengthening government institutions, restoring law and order, and enabling the organizations of civil society to work effectively
- Repair important physical infrastructure, including key transport, communication, and utility networks Rebuild and maintain key social infrastructure; that is, financing education and health, including recurrent costs

- Target assistance to those affected by war through reintegration of displaced populations, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, revitalization of the local communities most disrupted by conflict through such means as credit lines to subsistence agriculture and microenterprises, and support for vulnerable groups such as female-headed households
- Support land mine action programs, where relevant, including mine surveys and demining of key infrastructure, as part of comprehensive development strategies for supporting a return to normal life of populations living in mine-polluted areas
- Normalize financial borrowing arrangements by planning a workout of arrears, debt rescheduling, and the longer-term path to financial normalization (World Bank, 1998)

The World Bank recognizes the risk associated with working in post conflict settings as a result of limited government capacity and extreme time pressures that exacerbate the risks of reversals, setbacks and failures. To manage the risks as a principle, the Bank can only move into post conflict countries in concert with other international actors such as bilateral donors, the European Union and United Nation agencies; but restrict itself to its areas of comparative advantage such as rehabilitation of infrastructure, advice on economic policy, aid coordination, institution building and investment in the social sectors (World Bank, 1998).

The World Bank developed a five-staged guideline for the timing and scale of involvement in post conflict reconstruction corresponding to various phases:

Stage 1: A watching brief in countries in conflict where there is no active portfolio, to keep track of developments and build a knowledge base that will inform preparations for effective and timely interventions. The objectives of this phase is to develop an understanding of context, dynamics, and needs so that the Bank is well positioned to provide appropriate investment portfolio; to evaluate the comparative advantage of institutions, including non- governmental organizations operating in the relief phase, in order to identify implementing partners in reconstruction; to consult with humanitarian agencies on the long-term implications of short-term relief strategies; and to counter the adverse economic and environmental problems resulting from refugee and other spill-over effects on neighbouring countries in conflict (World Bank, 1998).

Stage 2: Preparation of a transitional support strategy as soon as resolution is in sight. Entails the process of initiating a detailed assessment and planning that would culminate in a strategy. In most cases the Bank would participate in preparing a national recovery plan in collaboration with the government and other major partners in reconstruction (World Bank, 1998).

Stage 3: Early reconstruction activities, proceeding as soon as field conditions allow and would be small scale activities that can be undertaken relatively quickly in partnership with UN agencies or NGOs. Most of the activities respond to urgent needs, can function as pilot activities that enhance learning for the design of later, large-scale programs. Activities may include urgent repair of vital infrastructure; urgent demining; demobilization and re-integration of ex-combatants; design social safety nets; small-scale and microenterprise credit schemes to start production and promote employment; technical assistance to restore central and local government capacity; and planning and implementation of programs to create the conditions for reintegration of population displaced by conflict (World Bank, 1998).

Stage 4: Post-conflict reconstruction (under emergency procedures), this may be carried out under normal or emergency procedures. Support includes physical reconstruction, economic recovery, institution building, and social integration. This stage allows for incremental, flexible approach that allows funding to start before other donor funding is available. Funding would shift from special to regular sources – that is to loans or credits from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and IDA (World Bank, 1998).

Stage 5: A return to normal lending operations: Once the emergency phase is over normal operations resume under lending procedures. At this stage it is important to develop a document that spells out what is needed to ensure that future operations do not exacerbate existing tensions and also contribute in a positive way to growth with equity (World Bank, 1998).

From experience the time of engagement and the nature of the state determines the success of the Banks interventions, for example late start of the process and insufficient political consensus on the objectives of reconstruction in El Salvador and Nicaragua made it difficult to achieve quick results. However, in Uganda where the government was popular and cohesive it was easy to manage transition through the combined Bank-led assistance for macroeconomic policy formulation, civil service reform, demobilization, and programs targeted to vulnerable groups hastened recovery.

The World Bank recognize the importance of involving women and women's associations, but did not elaborate on how this could be done or how this has been done in the past (World Bank, 1998).

The African Union Policy on Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD)

The African Union/New Partnership for Africa's Development (AU/NEPAD) in their African Post Conflict Reconstruction Policy Framework defined post conflict reconstruction as a complex system that provides for simultaneous short, medium and long term programs to prevent disputes from escalating, avoid a relapse into violent conflict, and consolidate sustainable peace (NEPAD, 2005). The framework identified three phases of post conflict reconstruction to include: the emergency phase; the transition phase and the developmental phase. However, the boundaries between these phases are blurred and are context specific.

The emergency phase is the period that follows immediately after the end of hostilities and focuses on establishment of a safe and secure environment and an emergency response to the immediate consequences of the conflict through humanitarian relief programs. The transition phase involves the development of legitimate and stable security institutions. The focus shifts from emergency relief to recovery. The development phase entails the consolidation of local capacity, through the reconciliation, boosting socio-economic reconstruction and supporting on-going development programs (NEPAD, 2005).

The AU/NEPAD post conflict reconstruction policy identified five dimensions of post conflict reconstruction systems to include the following (1) Security; (2) Political transition, governance and participation; (3) Socio-economic development; (4) human rights, justice and reconciliation; and (5) coordination, management and resource mobilization. These various dimensions need to be programmed simultaneously, collectively and cumulatively develop momentum to sustainable peace (NEPAD, 2005).

The AU/NEPAD policy framework emphasized that all post conflict reconstruction interventions must be internally driven with the full participation of those who post conflict reconstruction are meant to support to create a lasting impact (NEPAD, 2005).

Global Perspective on Post Conflict Reconstruction

Following decades of economic, political, and ecological distress, effective assistance in rebuilding often comes from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), U.N. agencies, and inter-governmental institutions such as the World Bank (Minear& Weiss, 1993; Weiss & Collins, 1996).

The practice has been for immediate humanitarian assistance to support countries recover and begin to plan for reconstruction. The different phases between the cessation of hostilities and recovery have always been from outside the conflict country. Many frameworks have been developed by global and regional organizations; such as the World Bank; Multilateral Development Banks; United Nations entities; the African Union and donor agencies as guidelines to inform post conflict interventions. An overview of the policies and practices of international community engagement with post conflict reconstruction by Anderlini and Brusha (2004) reveals that these organizations mostly focus on addressing security, governance and justice issues as well as economic development and social wellbeing. These activities are carried out within three distinct post conflict phases including: the initial response phase (characterized by humanitarian services, stability and military intervention); the transition phase (a period of legitimatizing local capacities; restarting the economy and physical reconstruction); and the final stage or the period of fostering sustainability.

Aderlini and Bushra (2004) observed that these phases are usually overshadowed by international actors, the commitment and capacities of the local population and government to maintain the process is important for effective and sustainable reconstruction. The roles of government, civil society and the general population within these processes are questionable. Most literature suggests that international financial institutions play key roles in determining the future economic growth of post conflict countries. The nature of international support to post conflict reconstruction is usually short term, with overlap of activities, fragmentation and gaps that are not addressed. Furthermore, most pledges made by donors are not fulfilled in their entirety (Anderlini and El Bushra, 2004). At other times, as in Afghanistan a small percentage is spent on major projects and a larger amount on immediate humanitarian relief (US/GAO, 2003).

The Marshal Plan developed by the US to support reconstruction of Europe is the first post war reconstruction plan. The plan involved a long-term commitment in the development of Europe through financial and investment resources to post-war European countries to re-build their economies. The Plan states in part 'our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Its purpose is the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of conditions in which free institutions can exist".

The plan gives recognition to the role of leaders of receiving countries to guide post conflict recovery so as to control resources in order to solidify their power relevance (Wexler, 1983). Post war governments in Europe like France, Italy and Germany adopted many policies favoured by the left, extending welfare states they took on larger roles in national economies (Wexler, 1983).

The major reconstruction priorities in Germany were reopening the coalmines, restoring basic transportation, replacing the damaged bridges, reopening sea-ports and rehabilitating the roads and reviving the economic structure, including currency and fiscal reforms. In the case of Japan, the U.S. provided large-scale humanitarian assistance in the earlier phase of reconstruction followed by major supports for political reform and economic reconstruction.

In both Germany and Japan, the political reform processes were preceded by large-scale external reconstruction assistance. The economic advancement in both of these countries were well developed and helped consolidate the countries as the public embraced democracy. All of Japan's political reforms were in place by 1947 (Wexler, 1983).

However, Fagen (2005) argued that the post-conflict reconstruction priorities adopted in Japan and Germany may not be of great help given the fact that the situations of Japan and Germany were basically different than the situations faced by today's post-conflict countries. Contrary to current post-conflict countries, which have human and institutional resources and limited aid absorption capacity, Germany and Japan had strong institutional capacity. In Germany, aid was channeled through strong and tested institutions and experienced government bureaucracies. Furthermore, the rebuilding process rested on an already existing structure of democratic governance, law and market mechanisms (Fagen, 2005). Similarly, political institutions were robust and stable in Japan, with large capacity for industrial production, which was diverted to the military production during the pre-second world war period. However, many experts argue that the cases of reconstruction of Germany and Japan are distant past but the international experiences in rebuilding several war-torn countries during the 1990s could greatly contribute in formulating policies for future intervention.

Since the early 1990s, a plethora of international interventions-from Mozambique to East Timor to Afghanistan—have expanded the knowledge related to post-conflict reconstruction (Fagen, 2005). These experiences are important to understand the case of Uganda, in drawing comparison of best practices and challenges.

Actors in Post Conflict Reconstruction

The domineering role of external Western actors in the strategic direction of peace building and post conflict reconstruction hampers its ability to deliver peace and security to the population, as most of them have different goals, leading to uncoordinated efforts and ineffective and inefficient delivery of post conflict reconstruction activities (Ismail, 2008; Paris, 2004; Bello, 2006). The use of different strategies underlined by different interest in supporting post conflict interventions have implications for countries caught up in such international politics; in addition, most post conflict countries lack the capacity in terms of resources to pursue their own development leading to over dependency on aid and external support. It is therefore not surprising that some of the post conflict reconstruction policies and programmes are not consistent with the needs of the population especially those most affected by the conflict.

Most of the actors in post conflict countries are international development institutions, such as the World Bank, the IMF, the International Development Association, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), Embassies located in the country capitals and other non-governmental organizations. International development institutions that have played key roles in post conflict reconstruction in Uganda include the following; the World Bank, the European Union and International Development Agency. Others include United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Office of the High Commission on Human Rights (UNHCHR), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), International Rescue Committee and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID). Embassies include; Norway, Japan, Belgium, Sweden, America and many others. Significant civil society organizations operate in northern Uganda and contribute to post conflict reconstruction, they include Norwegian Refugee Council, Care International, Oxfam, War Chile Canada and Holland, World Vision, Action Against Hunger and Refugee Law Project.

The World Bank's efforts in Uganda can be traced back to the first five years after the conflict, specifically the period between 1987 and 1992. During the period the World Bank supported approximately 25 lending operations amounting to over US$1 billion.

The funds were used to strengthen the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank, removal of the monopoly of the coffee board, assisting in sugar rehabilitation, and rebuilding the country's roads (World Bank, 1998). This is in line with the Banks policy on reconstruction which focuses on roads, transportation, power, telecommunications, basic housing, and water and sanitation. Most of the Banks reconstruction efforts globally have attempted to address these areas. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the Banks reconstruction efforts which started in 1996, (before financial normalization and membership of the Bank was concluded) focused on infrastructure and social sectors, employment and support for institutional development (Kreimer et al, 2000). In 2002, the World Bank supported the NUSAF, while the European Union funded the Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programme (NUREP) and the Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Plan (KIDDP) both programmes were then incorporated into the PRDP (GoU, 2007).

Judy El-Bushra and SanamNaraghi(2004) provided an overview of the policies and practices of the international community as they engage in post conflict reconstruction, specifically looking at economic regeneration and highlighted the impact of policies and programs on women, the challenges and opportunities they encounter in establishing social and economic reforms that women need and how women's organizations have overcome these problems (El-Bushra and Naraghi, 2004 pg. 52). They identified economic dimensions of reconstruction to include: restoring internal security, including the reintegration of displaced populations, disarming, demobilizing and reintegration of former combatants; building administrative and governance capacities; refurbishing physical infrastructure (including building homes, roads, bridges, restoring water and electricity, rebuilding schools and hospitals); establishing financial and economic systems; establishing credible and functioning judicial systems; and ensuring social wellbeing (including health care, food security and providing social services).

El-Bushra and Naraghi (2004) observed that for most international development agencies supporting post conflict reconstruction, interventions are planned after the conduct of the needs assessment that usually inform the post conflict development agenda for such institutions (2004 page 60). They acknowledged that there is no defined approach to post conflict reconstruction, but major international institutions have similar approaches to defining priorities and setting strategies (pg. 60).

Post Conflict Reconstruction in Africa

Africa is a major site for post conflict reconstruction and peace building due to the regions bad record of insecurity, civil wars and state collapse since the 1960s. These conflicts have become the basis for the development of foreign policies by Western countries, which see the emergence of conflict in the region as a threat to world peace. Thus peace building and post conflict reconstruction have become buzzwords in international development arenas.

In discussing the experience of post conflict reconstruction in Africa, Ismail (2008) argues that most peace building and post conflict reconstruction processes in Africa treat the causes of conflict superficially as they mostly focus on stabilization and security of the post war government. This increases the risk of the return of post conflict societies into vicious circles of pre-war situations, putting at risk an already fragile post conflict 'peace'. In addition, the methodology of adopting neo-liberal economic policies and aid conditionalities are unlikely to achieve sustainable peace and transform the structures of violence inherent in certain interactions. Ismail called for "more studies to explore the potential benefits of indigenous forms of participatory peace making and peace building that should emphasize post conflict transformation is based on genuine democratically rooted practices, taking into account issues of civic empowerment, national ownership, capacity building at all levels, and an equitable and sustainable peace" (2008:41).

Ismail's (2008) argument rightly points to the concerns that most of the post conflict reconstruction programs are not locally developed, and so lacks the requisite to address the root causes of conflict. Probably, this may be one of the reasons efforts to build post conflict societies lack ownership and tend to ignore the interest and real needs of the population, particularly those most affected by the conflict.

In Africa, some successes have been recorded in Namibia, Mozambique and probably Liberia, but results have been rather scanty especially with regards to the establishment of self-sustaining institutions (Englebert and Tull, 2008). Reconstruction efforts have typically involved bringing all violent actors together in power sharing agreements, re-asserting the integrity of failed states, organizing elections and aid support (Englebert and Tull, 2008). Many times African leaders adopt policies that maximize their power and material interest; ignoring attempts by Western donors to transfer democratic principles into their countries.

The assumption that such principles could work in Africa is flawed as most countries lack the necessary prerequisite to operationalize democracy; most African countries have never had very effective institutions neither have they ever generated sustainable growth, most times donors agenda for reconstruction are inconsistent as they lack the political will for long-term cost effective efforts; these factors are responsible for the lack of successful reconstruction in the continent (Englebert and Tull, 2008).

In East Africa, the post conflict reconstruction experience is not very different from the African scenario. Most of the countries focused on power sharing agreements between conflicting parties through elections, and adopting economic liberalization to achieve economic development. Barakat and Zyke (2009) discussed the impact of heavy-handed aid conditionalities that heightened conflict in Sudan in 1985 and in Rwanda in the 1990s (Rugumamu and Gbla, 2003). In the East African region, most of the post conflict interventions were carried out with limited knowledge of the historical, political and socio-economic context; Rugumamu and Gbla (2003) discussed the nature of reconstruction in Rwanda as an example, describing the recovery program as ad-hoc, haphazard and donor driven.

Post Conflict Reconstruction and Women

In most societies, the roles performed by women and men is differentiated and determined by the social construction of what a man or woman should do. In addition to the different roles performed by women and men the roles performed by women are also differentiated as a result of their positions within the family and society and how such women are perceived by their cultures and religions. These existing roles influence how women's role in conflict and peacebuilding is perceived.

Despite women's active roles in conflicts and wars, either as fighters or care givers, these contributions are unrecognized after the war has ended. Men who fought wars and those who were in the internally displaced people's camps return home to take up their traditional responsibilities; the women who became household heads as a result of the absence of their husbands during the period, immediately relinquish such roles when the men return. The strength and skills of women during the war are usually not utilized in the post conflict period. This could be as a result of how security is defined in the post war period. The exclusion of women from peace and security policies has remarkable consequences for women and girls (Hentschel,)

From Bosnia to Liberia, in the post war period where reconstruction is said to be taking place, the violations of women's rights continue unabated, particularly women who suffered sexual violence. Globally, women have continuously agitated for justice for the crimes committed against them, these very important human rights violations have completely been ignored in the post conflict stage. According to Amnesty International; successive governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina have failed to provide justice for thousands of women and girls who were raped during the 1992-1995 war (Amnesty, 2009).

In analyzing the myths of women's absence from wars and post conflict reconstruction Afshar observed that 'in post-conflict periods, ideas of national security are redefined in terms of safeguarding the political and social status quo, rooted in the practical and symbolic mobilization of gender identities, roles, and bodies, in the service of the new polity' (Afshar, 2003:185). She argues that after the war women are expected to make the necessary adjustment and resume their traditional roles as care givers, these ideologies do not change during wars; they are simply suspended (Afshar, 2003). But it is important to find out what happened to these roles generated by the absence of men during the conflicts, and how women and men negotiate new roles and partnerships in the aftermath of conflict (Greenberg and Zuckerman, 2009). This form of attention to gender relations points to the role of conflict on socially-determined roles, responsibilities, and access to power and resources: that they often change both during and after conflict (Greenberg and Zuckerman, 2009).

If women played active roles during wars and conflicts, why is it that such strengths are not considered as useful in the post war period? Maintaining the status quo seems to be beneficial to men, the power relation and the need to ensure that the 'man' is in charge and can protect his family tends to contribute to maintaining the 'male power' over the family notion.

Wars which are fought along racial, ethnic or religious lines such as those in Bosnia, Ethiopia and Lebanon manipulate identities and make it much harder for women to maintain their positions in society long after the wars have ended (Afshar, 2003). However, it is important to relate the inequalities that existed before war to the post war period. In Uganda for instance, it is well known that gender inequalities existed since the creation of the country and continued even after independence. Such injustices and inequalities (both cultural and structural) are not easily eradicated due to its long history and how it has influenced the way people think and act.

Although it is well known that men are the ones who design what is culture and this usually is to their advantage, but women remain the custodians of culture as a result of their role as educators within the home and community; accepting and instilling oppressive cultural practices on their children particularly the female children (Waliggo, 2002).

Most post conflict reconstruction financial assistance is driven by commitment to bring about economic and political changes towards strengthening peace prospects. As Anderlini and El-Bushra (2004) argued such support should contribute to addressing the historical causes of discrimination against particular sectors, including women. All post conflict reconstruction programs and projects affect women directly. Therefore, if women do not participate in decision making processes and if gender perspectives are not integrated in assessment, planning and implementation of post conflict reconstruction, it is most certain that their needs and concerns will be neglected and their capacities undermined (Anderlini and El Bushra, 2004).

Gender roles add extra burden on women that also plays against their participation in post conflict peace building. Although in some cases such as Bosnia, Heregovina and Rwanda women's organizations successfully advocated for specific funds to support women and promote their participation in reconstruction (Abdela, 2004). Similarly, in Iraq women's advocacy led to the allocation of funds for women's empowerment from the aid package approved by the US Congress. In Kosovo, an initiative by women's organizations led to the appointment of six women in the interim transitional council (Abdela, 2004).

In post conflict periods, many countries like Rwanda established the Ministry of Women's Affairs whose mandate is to promote women's empowerment and work with other Ministries to ensure that gender perspectives are fully integrated into post war recovery development programmes (Anderlini and El Bushra, 2004).

Given that post conflict assistance tend to focus on infrastructural development, it overlooks the specific role that women may have played during the conflict or ways in which they may have helped mitigate conflict. The general needs of the population are usually overwhelming in countries emerging from conflict, and the priorities of aid organizations and funding institutions (for example the World Bank discussed in another paper) may not align with the needs of citizens, in the process gender issues are side-lined, thus leading to increased marginalization, discrimination and inequality. Most post conflict health care services lack provisions of reproductive health services, these increases maternal and child mortality. Despite the knowledge on the detrimental effect of trauma on reconstruction, a very small percentage of post conflict reconstruction funding covers programs to address mental health (USAID, 2007).

After wars and conflicts the violence shifts to the home, in many cases as was the case in northern Uganda, homes where attacked, even the camps which were supposed to have maximum protection were attacked. Thus in the post conflict period, the family/home becomes the critical point that requires to be protected including the women and children, who are often portrayed as the most vulnerable. Thus the protection of the home and family becomes central to peace building (Afshar, 2003). This notion of the vulnerabilities of women and children during and after war therefore positions their post conflict needs within the family and home. It could also be the reason why many of the post conflict plans are more focused on protection and more funds spent on security sector reforms. The sense that women must be protected and seen as weak and needing support explains why women have never been given the opportunity to participate effectively in peace building and post conflict reconstruction.

Women In Post Conflict Reconstruction

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1324 (2000) (UNSC, 2000) demands that women are included in formal peace processes to build greater post-conflict gender balance and a more inclusive peace. According to Sheckler (2002) women's participation in the peace process and mainstreaming their involvement into peace accords lay the groundwork for engendering post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. Wilford and Miller (1998) note that politics, the state, nationalism and the army are fundamentally masculine notions that are characterized by patriarchal practices and values that cannot easily be changed. According to Meintjes (1998) such framing informed the South African national discourse that described women as 'mothers of the nation' using their gender roles to define their spheres of action.

As observed by various feminist peace researchers most peace processes are male dominated with limited female representation (NaraghiAnderlini, 2000; Bryne, 1996; Sorensen, 1998; Porter, 2003), thus denying women the process of women's perspectives and inputs. As rightly observed by Cock (2001) it is during the peace accords that foundations for a future society are set, it is where important gender issues should be addressed and where a gender perspective on peace should be incorporated.

NaraghiAnderlini (2000) provide evidence of how women's participation in peace talks widens the popular mandate and lead to concrete gender equality actions, such as: ministries for gender equality and women's affairs in Afghanistan, separate units within ministries to address gender issues in Liberia, equal rights to vote and participate in political processes in Cambodia, and changed attitude to women's leadership and decision-making capacities in Northern Ireland. Similarly, women's participation in the peace talks in Guatemala (1991-96) resulted in efforts to ensure more equal access to land and credit, a special health program for women and girls, a family reunification programme, legislation penalizing sexual harassment, and the creation of the National Women's Forum and Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women (UN, 2002).

However, experience from El Salvador shows that the presence of women at the peace table did not automatically guarantee that gender equality issues were incorporated. Despite the fact that nearly one-third of Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) negotiators were women, gender equality was not incorporated in El Salvador's peace agreements, it actually included some discriminatory provisions against women (UN, 2002). As a result of such discriminatory clause, the violations of women's right continue in the aftermath of conflict. For example, Conaway and Martinez (2004) research in El Salvador showed that women faced constraints in accessing land in the post conflict phase.

In some instance, in post war periods ideas of national security are redefined in terms of safeguarding the political and social status quo, rooted in the practical and symbolic mobilization of gender identities, roles, and bodies, in the service of the new policy. Women are expected to make the necessary adjustments to go back to their traditional role of homemakers. This implies that ideologies do not necessarily change during wars; they are simply suspended (Afshar, 2003:54). Even when women have been active participants in liberation struggles, they usually retreat back to their confinement in the domestic sphere where it is assumed they will be 'protected'. However, this protection has never been achieved as increased violence is observed in most post war communities even though protection becomes a major focus of peace-building (Afshar, 2003).

Corrin (2003) describes how the reconstruction process in Kosovo was gender blind. All senior posts in the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) OSCE and the UN Missions In Kosovo were held by men, who had excuses for the none inclusion of women. In addition, most had military or diplomatic background; and had never had any substantial gender awareness training or experience.

'During my time in the field with the OSCE in Kosovo, I realized that this exclusion of women from the senior decision-making structures of the OSCE and United Nations, combined with the very damaging gender ignorance/blindness of the senior men posted to these missions, were key contributing factors to the chaotic and costly mess that ensued in the civilian reconstruction process. The men in the United Nations and the OSCE missions were deeply imbued in an old-fashioned, male-as-leader culture that was clearly ignorant of the female majority and therefore particularly ill-suited to face the imposing challenges ahead. The men in the OSCE in Kosovo justified excluding women by saying that the situation was 'complicated enough without having to think about representation of women as well', and that women in leadership posts would be 'alien to local culture and tradition.' (Corrin, 2003)

This excuse played down the role of the gender advisor. Due to the resistance, women did not enjoy the same respect as male survivors of conflict did – men wounded in conflict were perceived as heroes, while women raped in conflict are seen as shameful and were expelled by their communities (Corrin, 2003). Holt (2003) discussed how the conflict experienced by Palestinian women influenced their participation in the peace process. Routine and systematic use of violence over a prolonged period of time has had the effect of placing women at a disadvantage when it comes to imagining and constructing the future state.

Women's participation in post conflict reconstruction has usually been as a result of the gender roles, particularly in social reconstruction. Education and health services face challenges in the immediate post conflict and usually rely on unpaid work of women and men and on donor contributions (Bouta et al, 2005). Studies on Eritrea, Ethiopia and Rwanda showed that women due to their extended social networks, played important role in rehabilitating schools and health clinic (Sorensen, 1998). Examples from Sierra Leone show that women mobilized their own resources to rebuild schools destroyed during the war to help ensure their children's education, particularly girls (UN, 2002). In Rwanda, women's organizations contributed to girls' education, by organizing workshops and media programs to raise awareness of girls' education. They also launched a research programme to determine why girls drop out of school and to develop action programmed to sensitize girls and their parents to the importance of girls continuing their education (Newbury and Baldwin, 2001).

Similarly, in northern Uganda women's roles in post conflict reconstruction is mainly through socio-economic activities, where women took over the role of heads of households in the absence of men who died due to the conflict, or men who are alive but absent as they take on alcohol. Thus, women's role in providing basic needs of the family including education and health has been significant in rebuilding war torn communities (Jendia, 2020). Majority of the activities towards women's participation is being carried out by non-governmental organizations, who train women and enable them to form self-help groups, such as the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA). With such interventions NGOs broadened women's participation in post conflict reconstruction processes, that enabled women leaders to take lead in community engagements and contribution to building socio-economic infrastructure. Participation in VSLAs enhanced women's negotiations skills and their ability to engage with local authorities and actors to put in place social services such as water points, schools and health facilities (Ochen, 2017).

Challenges of Post Conflict Reconstruction

The huge destruction during conflict presents huge tasks for post conflict countries to carry out reconstruction. The process of reconstruction is faced with challenges from the timing of post conflict to the actors and the approaches for reconstruction. The timing for most conflict reconstruction is usually a challenge particularly for long term conflicts. It is difficult to determine when the conflict has ended and the risk of new conflicts are usually high in the aftermath of wars (UNDP, 2008). There are various stages in peacebuilding including cessation of hostilities, signing of peace agreements, demobilization, disarmament and reintegration; return of refugees and internally displaced persons, establishing a functional state, initiating reconciliation and societal integration, establishing the foundation of a functioning state and economic recovery (UNDP, 2008). Each of these phases is complex and are not necessarily sequential, and may interact in complex ways that affect post conflict reconstruction. This affects the ability of donors to determine the appropriate volume, sequencing, allocation and disbursement modalities of aid to post conflict countries (Ndikumana, 2015). In some instances donors have withdrawn funding before all these activities have taken place, thus creating a gap in peace building. The society and local actors are not adequately prepared to take on the responsibilities related to the consolidation of durable peace. Thus, politically and economically stable states return to conflict once the foreign aid is reduced and international experts leave the country (Filipov, 2006).

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, for example, managed to establish durable peace. Even though minor clashes between factions did occur right after the conflict, the regions have been characterized by political and economic stability and social development, thus eradicating almost entirely the causes of the intrastate conflict, and practically eliminating the possibility of conflict reoccurrence. Others, such as Sierra Leone and Liberia constantly return to violence and still have a long way to go before they reach a final peace agreement that will satisfy all parties involved in the conflict (Filipov, 2006).

As seen from the comparison between Bosnia and Herzegovina and El Salvador, the challenges facing the post-conflict peacebuilding strategies and their relative effectiveness differ significantly. While Bosnia attempted to revolutionize identity-based incentives for conflict reoccurrence through extended peacebuilding operations, political and economic stabilization, and advances in the public health and education systems, El Salvador worked towards the elimination of the politico-economic causes of conflict by opening the market to international trade, fortifying the political stability by the inclusion of format combatants and legitimization of guerilla forces as official political parties, and slow, but steady improvement of both public health and education. El Salvador had indisputably made progress in all areas that are pertinent to the establishment of durable peace (Filipov, 2006)

Generally, international support to post conflict reconstruction is usually short term, despite efforts by international donors to coordinate efforts with national governments, what is experienced is overlap, fragmentation and gaps that are not addressed. Furthermore, most pledges made by donors are not fulfilled in their entirety (Anderlini and El Bushra, 2004). At other times as in Afghanistan a small percentage is spent on major projects and a larger amount on immediate humanitarian relief (US-GAO, 2003).

Most post conflict countries have weak capacity to mobilize domestic resources so they largely depend on donors from outside. This also comes with challenge as most of the funding come with strict conditions and pre-determined notion of what post conflict reconstruction should focus on (Ndikumana, 2015). Another challenge is the donor driven agenda of CSOs who are key actors in post conflict reconstruction.

Usually, CSOs are turn between reconciling donors interest with the needs of communities, although many adopt participatory and experimental approaches to recovery, some of the findings conflict with donors interest, yet due to the lack of their own resources, CSOs tilt programmes towards donors interest to the detriment of community needs (Musinguzi, 2019).

Conclusion

In this article, we explored the definition of peacebuilding and its complexities and linkage to post conflict reconstruction. we also discussed the definition post conflict reconstruction, although problematic, researchers have provided different ways of understanding and defining post conflict reconstruction particularly the definition based on activities carried out is specifically useful for this research. Furthermore, we evaluated different experiences of post conflict reconstruction at the global, regional (Africa) and national (Uganda) levels; and discussed actors in post conflict reconstruction processes. We then discussed women in peace building and post conflict reconstruction, noting that women's participation in peace building is important for their roles in the post conflict phase. Finally, we discussed the challenges of post conflict reconstruction, for states, donors and civil society organizations.