Dear Reader

First, a word of explanation about our title: we have decided to move from 'CCTS Newsletter' to 'CCTS Review' because we are not really in the news business and 'review' captures the reflective nature of what we do as a committee and what we write about. We shall not go back to the beginning in our numbering, since the nature of the publication is unchanged.

Our first edition under the new title is devoted to our recent seminar on 'Gender and Conflict Transformation'. It contains the paper by Diana Francis on which the seminar was based and, starting on page 12, a report of the seminar itself. We hope you enjoy it.

Gender and Conflict Transformation

A discussion paper by Diana Francis

This paper will be more of a polemic than a study, embodying a rather personal set of ideas. It will, however, be based on much experience and reflection. It will reflect what I learned while undertaking a gender study I undertook recently (2003) for the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies in Sri Lanka. More generally, it will be informed by years of work with mixed groups and all-women groups; by the thoughts expressed and information collated in different reports and studies on this issue, and by broader thinking and reading over many years (which will be taken further in my forthcoming book on peace and the institution of war, due out in July this year). My aim is not only to reflect on some of the current realities of men's and women's roles and the relative exclusion of women from power and on what can be done to address it. (I shall do those things, but far less thoroughly than others have done.) It is also to set those realities and challenges in a wider theoretical context, which we can debate, and in addition to bring them nearer home, to our own organisations and to ourselves.

I will begin with a clarification of terms. By *gender* I mean the socially constructed and entrenched roles of men and women, which exist in relationship, which involve discrimination on the basis of sex (biology). By *conflict transformation* I mean constructive ways of approaching conflict, which can include engaging in it nonviolently in order to bring about change. Within this approach, conflict itself is regarded as potentially positive, as well as inevitable. It is violence – cultural, structural and behavioural (Galtung, 1990) that is the problem. Structural and cultural forms of violence are oppressive. Addressing them is likely to involve conflict, though not necessarily violence. War is the concerted, large-scale use of violence to conduct conflict and achieve political and economic goals.

I shall first be looking broadly at war and violence and the culture and structures that support them and their relationship to gender. Then I shall discuss current realities of violent conflict and 'peace processes' and go on to relate conflict transformation to gender and the need to transform the roles assigned to men and women. Next I shall review where we have got to in translating our ideal of gender justice into practice in current attempts at conflict transformation and look at the impact of gender on those of us who work in this field. I shall comment on the unease around gender and culture and relate this to global power relations. In my final section I will suggest some ways forward.

The big picture: gender and the culture of domination

War is based on a dominatory approach to relationships (Eisler, 1990) in which the usual, overriding aim is to get the better of or overcome the other, who is framed as an opponent or competitor. By

contrast, conflict resolution is based on the notion of mutuality and co-operation. Where there is no readiness for conflict resolution and action for change is undertaken by one side, nonviolent conflict transformation still requires that all parties to a conflict are to be respected.

I want to argue that the institution of war is closely related to gender and in particular to the construction of masculinity. The apex of masculinity is the hero – a man who triumphs over something or someone, or dies in the attempt. The archetype of heroism is the warrior. Related female roles are subservient and instrumental to this: to encourage or support warriors, or to become a victim whose fate reinforces their power. As is widely recognised, it is not a coincidence or an unfortunate side effect of war that women are raped. Sexual prowess is an important element in constructions of masculinity and rape is a deliberate assertion of the dominant masculinity of the perpetrator. It is also an emblem of his triumph over the males associated with the victim.

The fact that in recent decades women and (particularly) children have been drawn into fighting roles does not alter the fact that war is founded in male gender construction. It means that within that framework children are forced to become instrumental in the agendas of men and that women sometimes choose and are allowed to participate in lowly positions in the currently prevailing model of power – within which they often, in fact, play servicing roles – particularly sexual ones.

I do not mean to suggest that wars are simply displays of masculinity and have no other causes. I do want to say that gender as we know it, which positions men as dominant and characterises them as aggressive and heroic, is fundamental to the culture of domination of which war is an expression. And I want to argue that war not only embodies the goal of domination (or resistance in kind to it) but is occasioned by dominatory (in contrast to co-operative) relationships and projects in the fields of politics, ideology, culture, and economics. These dominatory relationships have their own violent effects, leading to the shameful reality that millions live in want and squalor while others struggle to cope with a surfeit of opportunities and consumables.

The male-female axis of domination is enmeshed with others – such as those of age, wealth, class or caste, and ethnicity or cultural identity. In some ways it is nonsense to talk about women in a general way. How could one include in the same bracket, for instance, a prosperous young business executive in the UK and an old woman living in the mountains of Bolivia? But the pattern remains nonetheless, manifesting itself in different forms and intensities, in economic exclusion, political marginalisation, social control, sexual exploitation and cultural disrespect, as well as physical violence.

This is not to say that women are essentially nicer than men or that gender violence is the only structural violence there is. It is to say that prevailing gender constructions are based on the domination by half of the world's population over the other. I believe they are maintained by men's capacity, generally speaking, to prevail physically over women, as well as on culturally entrenched models of masculinity and femininity and related habits of subservience and bullying.

Not only are girls and women trapped and degraded by gender: boys and men are also imprisoned and diminished by it. They are coerced into ways of behaving, presenting themselves and relating to others, and into responsibilities and roles, that may be quite inimical to their otherwise potential identity, relationships and place in society. The suffering involved for gentle boys and men in fulfilling their gender roles must at times be terrible. The gender trap prevents boys and men, as well as girls and women, from achieving their full human potential.

As I write, the debate about 'combat stress' has been renewed by the case of a young US soldier court-martialled after reporting to his commanding officer that he needed support after being rendered incapable of action after seeing the corpse of an Iraqi. In most circumstances, killing clearly does not come 'naturally' to most men. It apparently has to be prepared for through initiation rites and military training that will suppress timidity and humane feelings and excite aggression. The culture and structures of domination create and maintain these destructive processes and keep us all trapped in their effects.

The direct physical abuse of women by men may have been outlawed and become, broadly speaking, culturally unacceptable in some societies, but even there it remains a serious problem. Elsewhere it is endemic. Of course women can be violent too, to their husbands or to the children and old people whose care is part of their assigned gender role. But the structural and direct violence against women

by men amounts to a global, chronic war, except that it is too diffuse and one-sided to qualify as such. Every 'real' war that is fought reinforces this reality and the patterns of domination of which it is a part and, at the same time, diverts attention from it.

If we are ever to achieve a systemic transformation of conflict, rather than continue with ad hoc and often ineffectual fire-fighting, we shall have to address this global reality within which specific patterns of violence and individual wars occur. We will need to transform the attitudes and assumptions, relationships and processes that perpetuate it, creating new forms of politics and economics. This will involve transforming the culture of domination and violence of which male-female relationships are not only an example but, I would argue, the foundation, developing a new understanding of gender, or rather of what it is to be human, male or female.

Current realities of violent conflict and 'peace processes'

Violent political conflicts, even when they are aimed at social change, not only destroy lives and livelihoods and ravage infrastructure and the environment; they prevent most social issues from being addressed and often exacerbate them. I have been told by women friends in different parts of the world where there is a sharp ongoing political conflict that this is used as a reason for them to 'be patient' about women's rights. The priority, they are told, must be to obtain justice for the whole group first. Women's rights can come once that has been achieved. Those who make (or accept) this argument clearly do not notice – or choose to ignore – the contradiction inherent in it: that justice cannot be achieved for the whole group while there is systemic discrimination and oppression within the group itself.

In practice, wars are often waged at least as much for personal agendas of greed (Berdal and Malone, 2000) or power as for social agendas of justice. Because violence is the basis of their power, warlords often have no desire to end a conflict and delay any serious negotiation for decades. Children, women, old people and those who are marginalised by their ethnic or cultural identity (like the Roma population in the Balkans) continue to suffer war's effects, as do those who get enlisted to fight for them. Since it is the 'men of violence' who are able to stop the violence, it is they who get the seats at the negotiating table. Negotiations to end violent conflict that are carried out in this spirit, and exclusively by those already dominant within society, are unlikely to produce outcomes that remove that dominance. Their negotiations tend to be the occasion for the continuation and often the intensification of intra-party battles between competing factions, rather than efforts to honour the variety of perspective and needs of the people who should be represented.

It is fruitless to argue whether it is more painful and degrading to be actively involved in the fighting, to become a passive victim of it, or be left to cope with its ravages. Men and women, young and old, are differently affected, but the toll of suffering for all is extreme. The terrible violence inflicted on civilians increasingly during wars is so much a part of our awareness that it hardly needs to be delineated here. It includes not only the direct effects of maiming, killing and rape, but also displacement with all its hardship, physical and psychological, and the loss of livelihood and protection – in addition to the emotional trauma caused by experiencing and witnessing brutality and by shocking, often multiple, bereavement.

Despite the laws that supposedly protect civilians and the rhetoric so often deployed about their care, little is done to protect them during war. Likewise their recovery needs are never addressed in any way that begins to approach what could be considered as adequate. This is because the negotiations to end wars, like the wars themselves, are – whatever the rhetoric – driven more by the wants of the powerful than by the needs of the powerless. Those who were not powerful in the conflict are not heard. Negotiations tend to be a continuation of war by other means. The co-operative and inclusive approaches that characterise the ideal of conflict resolution are absent and the needs of 'ordinary people' are neglected.

Women of all categories have inadequate opportunities to voice their needs and name their agendas and as a consequence these – if they are ever articulated – are addressed at best inadequately. Even women within the dominant social group or groups are, when it comes to political and military leadership, marginal. Those women who are the exceptions often achieve their positions by stepping

into male shoes and are disconnected from the realities of other women within their society and do not represent them.

Gender constructions also have a negative impact on the post-war recovery of men. Although the importance of demobilisation processes and the social and economic reintegration of fighting men is increasingly recognised, the psychological traumatisation and brutalisation of fighters is insufficiently acknowledged and addressed. That is because the very institution of war is built on the notion that men should be strong and take the inflicting and suffering of violence as part of their masculine role. As discussions in the West are beginning to uncover, this means that the human needs of men are disregarded. The sharp rises in male violence and suicide after wars are evidence of the ongoing effects of war on their psyches.

Moreover, war negates all the moral standards of peacetime. To become effective fighters, human beings must set aside the moral resources (Glover, 2001) that equip them as social beings. They learn to commit atrocities that would sicken them in civilian life. The ethical, as well as the physical, social and psychological fabric of life is torn by war.

The reintegration of women combatants is also not only neglected but extremely difficult, because although they may be lionised during war, they do not, in most societies, fit into the norms of day to day life. They have stepped out of their civil gender roles and cannot step back into them. Once they take off their uniforms they are likely to be seen as 'spoiled goods' and, as I heard from women in Sri Lanka, as insufficiently feminine and submissive.

Gender relations between combatant men and non-combatant women are also disrupted by war. The head of household and breadwinner roles normally filled by men are necessarily taken on by their wives while they are away. While much hardship is likely to be involved, this hiatus in social patterns creates a space for women to exercise abilities (and powers) that are not usually given any expression. This can be liberating for women, as well as tragic and taxing.

Men who are displaced with their families by war may also find themselves unable to provide for them in the ways that they have been used to and sink into a state of inertia. Their wives somehow find means of generating a meagre income in whatever way they can. In either case – displacement or war fighting – men find themselves excluded from the domestic positions they have been used to holding. This is dispiriting and disorientating for them and they may respond with depression or violence.

Not only, then, are the post-war needs of women – and consequently of children – neglected, but as a consequence of the psychological effects of trauma and social displacement and the disruption to family patterns brought about by war, domestic violence and social violence increase. General levels of sexual abuse against women and children also rise – another indication of the connection between violence, gender and sexuality. The human resources of moral sensibility and decency have been buried or seriously depleted. In addition, the impetus towards peace that is so necessary in the ending of violent conflict is diminished by the discouragement of half the population from active participation. Women's resources, influence and perspectives are vital to peacemaking.

Conflict transformation and its relationship to gender transformation

Conflict transformation is based on values and approaches that run counter to prevailing, dominatory models of masculinity and which if applied to male-female relations would transform them. The model of power on which it is based is not one of power over others but of power for and with them (Boulding, 1978). In situations of asymmetrical conflict, characterised by oppression, those who are disadvantaged may find it impossible to enter into a co-operative relationship with those who exploit or exclude them until they have increased their own relative power. However, transformative, nonviolent approaches to empowerment and conflict – as so eloquently expressed in the speeches of Martin Luther King – focus not on overpowering opponents but on getting into a relationship with them which is respectful and constructive. Their goal is an inclusive solution to the conflict, not the defeat of those currently in power.

The methods of nonviolent conflict transformation are themselves inclusive and based on the widest possible participation. They necessarily, therefore, involve those who in conventional terms are weak, as well as those who are strong. Physical prowess and the capacity to dominate are not the force on

which nonviolence relies. Nor is status in the societal hierarchy. Here at last, then, those who are marginalised in current power relations can take their place alongside those who are not, but who choose to divest themselves of dominatory power in order to seek solutions to conflict that are truly inclusive and transformative. In such processes women can take an equal place and the marginalised can join in or indeed take the lead.

Within the framework of nonviolence, women and men can work together as equals, co-operatively. There is a remedy for injustice that does not negate the humanity of the opponent, and that remedy not only permits but relies on the participation of people in all sectors and categories of society. The primary role is that of 'ordinary people' – those in the middle and grass-roots levels of Lederach's proverbial pyramid (1994) – who should as a consequence find a place at the negotiation table or at least be represented there.

If nonviolence is based on unconditional respect for all human beings, in theory it should, at a stroke, deconstruct gender. It must be admitted that neither Mohandas Gandhi nor Martin Luther King has a spotless reputation in terms of gender awareness. It is hard for anyone to step outside the social patterns and assumptions of his or her own time. It will be for women to take their place, not wait to be given it. I see that as positive rather than negative. Empowerment does not consist in waiting to be given power. Whatever their own human limitations, the values by which Gandhi and King lived and died are the values of unconditional human respect. Those values point away from gender, as a constraint that limits the expression of that respect or as an obstacle to the full expression of anyone's full human potential.

While conflicts disrupt prevailing patterns and are all too often extremely destructive, they do – potentially at least – create a window of opportunity for positive change – including change in gender relations. Prevailing win-lose models of conflict block such change and reinforce gendering. The values of nonviolence are in fundamental contradiction both to sex discrimination and to war. Addressing and transforming the violence of gender-based injustice will contribute to and be part and parcel of addressing war as the dominant mode for conducting conflict. And by the same token, questioning the humanity of war (as it is increasingly being questioned) and recognising its traumatising and dehumanising impact on men will contribute not only to our questioning of the institution of war but to deconstructing the current models of masculinity on which it is based. Since male and female gender constructions exist in relationship, the whole axis will shift, giving men and women the chance to reach a new understanding of who they are and the infinite variety of roles open to them as human beings.

Trying to put the theory into practice

Those of us who are in the business of conflict transformation wrestle constantly with gender issues. Not everyone will buy into the particular theoretical framework I have outlined, but the 'mainstreaming of gender' is an international project that none dares question. Even societies where gender constructions are particularly oppressive pay lip service to it. While this is progress and creates a space for gender to be taken seriously, in practice, most of the action that results from the declarations and logframes takes the form of programmes and add-on provisions for women, and attention to 'gender balance' in processes that are not of too much political significance. The fundamental connection between war and masculinity is not made – either in the donor countries, which in some cases are rather comfortable with their own wars and overwhelmingly male leadership, or in the countries where they promote 'conflict prevention' and 'peacebuilding'.

I suggested above that within the ethos of nonviolent conflict transformation gender should have no place. That might seem to imply that we should just ignore it and treat people we meet as equals. But that is to ignore the current reality. Injustice and exclusion cannot be removed by pretending it isn't there. It's like the old idea that we should be 'colour blind'. In our own relationships it may be possible, to some degree, just to assume equality, but not if we are to bring about change in wider society.

There is a dilemma in this. It is sometimes hard to know when one is challenging gender and when one is reinforcing it. For instance, women-only events or groups or sessions or meetings often cause unease and even anger. Not only do men feel excluded but often some women feel they are having imposed

on them a kind of female identity they do not like. Other women, in turn, will consider this view to be socially and politically unaware. It can also be (logically) argued that since gender roles are created and maintained in relation to each other they must be deconstructed together and therefore addressed by men and women working in conjunction. Although this is perhaps the ideal, it ignores the fact that those who are disempowered by a relationship usually need to act to address their own weakness before co-operation becomes a possibility.

Since one of the effects of current gender constructions is to prevent women in many social contexts from thinking concertedly together and, once they have done so, from articulating their findings in the public arena, I believe that helping to create the opportunities for them to do so is vital. Many women are disempowered by the presence of men and need to meet in all-women groups initially. From my own experience of working with both mixed and all women groups, I know how much difference such opportunities make to women's effective thinking and participation. I know too how much easier the communication is, how relaxed and uncompetitive participants usually are, and how much more fun we tend to have. I also feel sometimes that I, together with those I work with, am being ghetto-ised.

I feel sorry for men caught up in the weightiness of their current social profile. And I wonder how much they would gain from meeting without women. Would they find communication even more difficult or would it ease things and create a safe space similar to all women workshops? Here my experience is necessarily limited. Ideally one would do as in other bi-partisan contexts and have separate and joint meetings to talk about gender; but as always generalisations may be contradicted by specifics – not only specific contexts but specific sub-groups and individuals. From my viewpoint, the reality of current power-relations makes preparation on the part of women more important. But many of the women I have worked with have emphasised the need for women and men to come together to explore their relationships and look together at the nature and impact of gendering in their society.

In practice, the advances that have been made in addressing gender inequities, including those related to conflict and peacemaking, have been achieved largely, I suspect, through all-women endeavours, with the support of gender-aware men.

A list of civil society contributions to peace processes, for instance (based on the 13th issue of Accord, 2002, and supplemented by workshop participants) includes the following:

- Preparing the ground of public opinion for peace agreements and holding leaders to a peace agenda

- Raising public awareness and mobilising support for peace processes – forming a 'peace constituency' or movement

- Organising/ participating in informal, parallel processes

- Eliciting and channelling ideas/ proposals; building consensus for a settlement

- Representing different sectors in formal processes

- Ensuring that minorities and marginalised people have a voice – locally and nationally

- Generating broad 'ownership' of agreements reached

- Drawing on elements of history/ tradition/ culture that support peace

- Designing and implementing symbolic events for peace and reconciliation

- Devising and implementing local confidence-building measures

- Establishing local mediation capacities and helping to resolve local manifestations of the conflict

- Setting up local mechanisms (e.g. peace committees) to monitor the implementation of local and national agreements

- Local peacebuilding: facilitating and participating in processes to heal hostility and division, through dialogue, co-operation and reparation

- Supporting the development of participatory politics and co-operation on issues of common concern (like economic development)

- Upholding human rights and the rule of law

- Promoting and developing peace education within the school system and in society

All of these can be done by women and within a female constituency, so that women's perspectives and priorities can be brought into play and women's efforts and contribution maximised. Many such activities have been undertaken by women and have had an important impact. Sometimes, precisely because they are not trapped within existing power politics but marginal to them, women are able to act in ways that would be more dangerous for men. Because they are not seen as a threat, they are sometimes better able to exercise moral authority in a given situation and defuse aggression. They may also have a better perspective on what is happening for similar reasons.

The pages of different issues of Accord (the international review of peace initiatives published by Conciliation Resources) or the videos produced by Responding to Conflict (and many other sources) attest to both the capacity of women to contribute to peace, and their determination to do so. But they also indicate a pattern (with exceptions) of exclusion from the higher echelons of power. This is true of most countries across the world, in war or peace, as any glance at a local newspaper will confirm. To take one example, in an article on 'Women's contribution to peacebuilding in northern Uganda' (Oywa, 2002):

> 'Despite the fact that Acholi women have demonstrated both their motivation and capacity to be involved in peace initiatives, they continue to be marginalised from many of the official initiatives to address the war.'

And Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff (2000), writing about the work of the Sierra Leone Women's Forum, says:

> 'Women believed that their hard work in the democratization process would be rewarded by places at the negotiating table, but politicians recognized that the ideas and attitudes thrown up by the women's movement had the potential of destabilizing traditional politics, so they discouraged further participation by women in leadership.'

I believe the feminisation of politics would indeed be revolutionary – not because of profound fixed, inbuilt differences between women and men but because of a profound difference between 'masculine' values, approaches and strengths and 'feminine' ones. And I believe that a major shift in the balance between the two in our ways of doing politics could be highly beneficial, indeed transformative.

In the Accord article cited above, the author notes that 'the lack of an ideological framework to guide their peacebuilding activities blunted the movement's effectiveness. Forum discussions were long and inclusive, but the analysis was shallow and the consensual style prevented a clear and consistent long-term vision being elaborated'. Analysis and synthesis, differentiation and consensus, are complementary skills. Those who are used to exercising one set of abilities rather than the other can benefit from learning to adjust the balance. It is my experience that women given analytical tools and encouragement do an excellent job. They are often quicker at grasping the nature of a task than men are because, I think, they are less preoccupied with 'getting it right' and being seen to do so, more willing to enter into the process in an experimental way.

The international NGOs, government departments and donor agencies in which we work can support women's participation and be sensitive to the gender-related needs and possibilities of those who live in conflict zones. We can do everything in our power to support women in making their voices heard and in mobilising together for participation at every level. We can encourage men not only to make way for women but to learn from them.

Looking at ourselves

I think that we also, inevitably, embody to some degree the gendering of our wider societies. We need to recognise the gendered nature of our own field – look at the bibliographies, see how few women are represented in them and wonder why that is so. I would argue that it is because we are a male-dominated field, reflecting as much as challenging the norms of our own societies.

Our organisations have staff from different backgrounds and cultures, but they still tend to reflect the same, cross-cultural pattern of male ascendancy in their hierarchies of role and power. That may be because men have more often had the opportunities (and made the choice) to give total commitment to their work in an increasingly workaholic organisational culture. Women's lives, whatever the theory we espouse, tend to be more complex than men's – or at least we have stronger habits of recognising and honouring that complexity. We also have more social encouragement and biological pressures to do so. These realities are not specific to our field and this is not a contest of victim-hood. But women often cannot and do not wish to choose between work and other responsibilities and relationships. The more frenetic work-life becomes, the more this means that women will probably not end up at the top, unless they shift to adopting the traditionally male approach of prioritising work above all else.

I would be interested to discuss with fellow field-practitioners, male and female, what difference they think their gender makes to their practice – in terms both of their own approach and of the way others regard them and the work they are given or choose to do. I wonder, for instance, whether the higher level of women's participation in local, community level mediation, in contrast with male conflict transformers' predominant involvement in international and high-level work not only reflects the roles society assigns to them but also their own interests, lifestyles and sense of role.

I observe that some organisations apparently feel it is acceptable for there to be an all male facilitator team when the group to be worked with is mixed, but would not use an all-female team in such a group. And still 'peace processes', at the political level, are overwhelmingly male, not only in terms of those who 'come to the table' but of those who facilitate their deliberations. The argument for using male facilitators and mediators in these contexts is that women would not be respected in those roles by 'top' men. That could be true. I have seen men reluctant to accept women in a lead role and treat them with less courtesy than they would a man. Women who exercise the authority of an agreed role are often seen by men as authoritarian, when similar behaviour from men is considered perfectly proper. And when the ending or continuing of war is at stake it is hard to discount the importance of that. I believe, however, that respect can be won if a job is done properly. And I do not believe that mediator or facilitator 'acceptability' is the only reason for the imbalance.

I wonder if it is mostly men who get involved in work related to high-level negotiations because unconsciously they are attracted to that model of power. Is it because they see themselves more easily in that role? Perhaps the men amongst us are often more comfortable in and excited by high level political interplay than their female counterparts and like working with other men in those contexts. Sometimes they may be less irritated by what I regard as arrogance. On the other hand they may be more provoked by men who somehow press their own, male 'power buttons'.

For myself, I confess that I often feel irritated and patronised by men who are aware of their own importance. I find working with them particularly difficult and not easily rewarding. In a predominantly male group and in a predominantly male facilitation team I can feel quite isolated and sometimes angry, particularly if the women participants seem, by and large, to accept their gendered position. Yet most of the time I work very comfortably with male colleagues and find that we do not fall into gendered roles in the way we work together. It seems we are able to get beyond cultural constructs.

It is always hard to know what to put down to gender and what to see as a matter of individual personality, but there may be some generalisably different tendencies in men's and women's approaches to practice. The relative degree of attention given by women and men practitioners, on average, to psychological and emotional conflict dynamics on the one hand and political aspects of conflict on the other would, for instance, be interesting to examine and evaluate. Likewise relative emphasis on ideals and aspirations or on 'realpolitik'.

Another, perhaps related, comparison to make would concern relative tendencies towards synthesis – story-telling and consensus seeking – on the one hand and analysis and differentiation on the other. This supposed gender dichotomy, in which the former tendency is usually associated with women and the latter with men, is particularly interesting because this is also seen as a north-south cultural dichotomy. There is an assumption in the north that northern males are more supportive of feminist agendas than men in 'traditional' (southern) societies, who are represented as un-reconstructedly macho. This overlap between perceived female tendencies and perceived traditional (equated with

southern and eastern) cultural emphases, if there is any truth in them, suggests a more complex set of relationships and points to culture rather than biology as the explanation.

I think it is helpful to recognise that we are all caught in a place between our own rhetoric and ideals and the current realities of the wider world. We are not immune to its pressures and constraints but caught up in its dynamics. We want to do the very best we can in the short term, because the needs are urgent. If we waited till the world was fundamentally different the change would never happen. Yet I think that by working all the time with current realities on their own terms we may severely limit our potential impact for more fundamental change. We are in danger of becoming players in the process of war by other means, rather than in the process of 'positive peace' (Galtung in Miall et al., 2000).

Culture, gender and power

I have argued elsewhere (Francis, 2001) that cultural differences are sensitive not so much of themselves but on account of the asymmetrical power relations that they often correspond to and the arrogance of those advantaged by the asymmetries. The issue of gender, itself an issue of power, gets caught in this other global power battle. Modern/ post modern assumptions and feminist agendas provoke hostility. This is not only because they (in theory, though sadly little in practice) challenge local norms (including male hegemony and adherence to traditional male and female roles) but because those who live outside the West – or in cultural minorities within it – are tired of being dictated to. They must also observe that we do not practice what we preach, either in relation to the equality of men and women or in the matter of nonviolent approaches to conflict. But it is not really 'other'. Both axes, male-female and north-south (or West-Rest) are products of one globally prevalent culture of domination.

If we come from relatively powerful countries, or work for organisations based in them, or funded by them, that is bound to affect our relationship with those with whom we work. It makes it especially important that we are attentive to the cultural milieus of those with whom we meet. Any failure to be so will be seen as the unthinking or wanton arrogance of the powerful. But I believe that respecting others does not involve denying or hiding our own values. Furthermore, our 'cultural sensitivity' can seem patronising to those for whom it is designed. For instance, only one of the many women I met during the process of my gender study in Sri Lanka suggested in any way that a concern to challenge gender roles and male hegemony was a Western project rather than the goal of the women themselves. The rest expressed the view that to think so was somewhat insulting and ignorant of their home grown feminist history.

When I have facilitated mixed workshops and gendered assumptions have been expressed (usually but not always by men) I have not often had to wrestle with the decision as to whether or not I challenge what has been said. Given the chance, other participants (usually women) will launch their own challenge. The most I have ever done has been either to speak from my own experience or feelings or – more often – to ask a question (sometimes oblique) that has created a moment of reflection. I did find in one workshop (Francis, 2002) that I was accused by a male participant of instigating a female rebellion and ignoring his culture, but that is the only time when I have seemed to cause offence. The women in the workshop – who did not all have the same approach, but who respected each other – refused to be brow-beaten and took the discussion forward in a constructive way. I believe the episode was useful to all concerned.

The reality is that conflict transformation, as I have argued elsewhere (Francis 2002), is counter-cultural for all of us and therefore challenges our norms. It is not as if the West had overcome sexism and militarism and built a culture of unconditional respect and co-operation! I believe it is Western power, double standards and arrogance that are resented, rather than the values of conflict transformation. The more we put our espoused values into practice, the more we will be able to communicate them honestly and without offence. 'Parity of esteem' is at the heart of conflict resolution and transformation. That implies parity of esteem for men and women and therefore constitutes, in itself, a fundamental challenge to gender discrimination, as well as to all projects and manifestations of domination. The 'impartiality' so strongly associated with conflict resolution, in particular, cannot imply that it is value-free. At some points and in some roles in the wider processes of conflict transformation, that partiality will take all or some of us into partisan roles – for instance, in

support of human rights, or recognition of minority communities. Even within conflict resolution processes we should be seen to uphold the underlying values that underpin the roles we play.

I believe we need to look to our theory and recognise the depth of the relevance of gender to it: to see the fundamental link between gender and violence; to accept that current constructions of gender are not an adjunct to, but a cause of, the existing propensity to war, and of violence more generally, as an instrument of human relationships; to acknowledge that relationships based on the goal of domination cannot bring peace with justice. We need to identify the deconstruction of gender as necessary to the very notion of peace, to see dialogue on gender issues as essential to peace dialogue.

It is hard for us not to limit our attention to the behavioural corner of Galtung's violence triangle. When we are confronted by the immediate reality of wars and other violent conflicts our focus is naturally on the immediate related tasks of preventing or ending them and building peace. My argument is that to get to the root causes of violence and to address prevention from a wider perspective, we need to change the culture and structures within which war is all too frequently seen as an option or a necessity.

Ways forward

I think these can be seen as forming three strands. The first strand is to work for 'gender justice' (i.e. women's rights) in the short term, in and through conflict transformation. The second strand is to promote a broader challenge to current understandings about the nature, roles and relationships of men and women, and consequent societal inequities, recognising that during times of ferment there is a special opportunity for change. (It is vital that men as well as women should enter into this debate.) The third strand is to pursue the debate about war and violence as such, their relationship to masculinity and the oppression of women and the relationship between our thinking on this question and our approach to conflict transformation. (It is my feeling that we tend to avoid such fundamental issues in our work, preferring to stick with the more limited project of addressing specific manifestations of violence and not the underlying structures and culture of war.)

These three strands, like the corners of Galtung's violence triangle (referred to above), are mutually influential. The behavioural changes implied by the first are the prevalent focus of current practice (see for instance Peace Women Project 2003). They can be expected to have some impact not only on the possibilities for women's participation in the short term but also on the cultural assumptions that have so far supported the exclusion of women from any substantial participation in most peace processes. Change in this context is likely to contribute to a broader social shift, both cultural and structural.

At the same time, it is vital to challenge the assumptions that women and men make about their own and each other's roles in society, and raise awareness about the current dysfunctional aspects of male-female roles and relationships, relating them to the broader pattern of violent relationships, norms and acts at all levels. Such changes in thinking will be necessary to shift behavioural patterns at all levels and, in particular, to changing the relative roles of men and women in addressing conflict and creating positive peace.

Work at home and abroad to develop more co-operative and inclusive approaches to power – personal, societal and political – will stimulate and encompass the rethinking not only of ways of dealing with conflict but the gender issues that are part and parcel of all we do. This will expand and deepen the thinking that goes into agendas for peace. Education can take place in many contexts, in places of learning, for children and adults, in organisations, in communities and through leadership training. Opportunities for journalists to rethink these issues can lead to the dissemination of new thinking and perspectives.

Capacity-building workshops for women, to support them in building their own awareness, analysis and strategy and boost their confidence for participation will be fundamentally important. Extra efforts may be needed to ensure their inclusion in mixed events at every level, but those efforts should be made. And within all forums where women are represented every care should be taken to enable their full participation: care by facilitators to encourage them to speak in plenary; chances to work in groups with other women if they want to; challenging male 'put-downs' and so on. The presence of women facilitators is important, both as a model and as psychological support. (Many women participants in

mixed workshops or meetings where I have been a facilitator have told me afterwards how much it has meant to them that I was there in a lead role.)

Those of us with influence in the current dispensation must do our best to ensure women have a say in political negotiations. That will mean more than tacking on some 'gender committee' (as in Sri Lanka) – though such gestures and opportunities at the margins can be seen as better than nothing. They are at least signal that someone has had to pay at least lip service to the issue of women's exclusion and women's rights. We must not let go of the principle that negotiation processes should be designed with women in an equal position to men and held in circumstances that make them equally accessible to women – for instances in places and at times that are possible for them (Peace Women Project 2003) and with the possibility for them to bring small children with them. It should be incumbent on those who claim this to be impossible to justify those claims, rather than expecting women to make the case for women's equality with men in working for peace.

I believe that talks designed to lead to political settlement should be clearly separated from those surrounding cease-fires and bringing a halt to hostilities. It is necessary that the leading belligerents (who will nearly always be men) are involved in the latter. Indeed, it may in practice be impossible to exclude them from the peace process itself (as against the war-ending process). But their power should be subsumed in a far wider process in which the victims of war take their place along with those who have waged it and those who have so far had no place in the political process are brought in.

More important than the concessions of those who are currently powerful will be the efforts of women on their own behalf to claim their place. They will need to build on their existing positions and become ever more vociferous in their demands and more effective in their exercise of power. They must refuse to be victims and claim equality, challenging male hegemony and the culture and structures that perpetuate it. Otherwise they will continue to be excluded from the 'top level' of peace processes, which will go on recreating societies as we know them, with men trapped in a model of masculinity which restricts and degrades them, with power controlled by the few and militarism underpinning the whole.

Finally, this is not simply a question of what others should do. It is a challenge to all our organisations and departments and to us as individuals. What I deduce for myself from all this is that I should make sure I am not so much involved in my professional work in other people's countries that I neglect the exercise of my own power at home. I want to honour my responsibility as a human being for fundamental change in the politics and culture of my own country, Britain, which plays such an active role in perpetuating violence but which could play an equally important role for peace and justice. I want to behave in ways that are consonant with my values and stand up for equality in all contexts. I want to do my bit to restructure the way men and women think about themselves, relate to each other and live their lives. All of us who are 'peace professionals' are also citizens and carry our share of responsibility for the way the world works. We need to be advocates as well as mediators, actors as well as supporters and facilitators. We have our own part to play, not only in supporting others but in exercising our own power in every part of our lives to make possible the kind of peaceful coexistence in which men and women, young and old, can flourish.

Diana Francis. February 2nd 2004.

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Seminar report

Report of a seminar held on 18th February 2004 at Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, London

Introduction

The seminar, one of a regular series organised by the Committee for Conflict Transformation Support (CCTS) was attended by 25 people and facilitated by Celia McKeon and Bridget Walker. It was opened by Diana Francis, whose paper is reproduced above. She commented that, although there is a growing discourse within the conflict transformation community about 'mainstreaming gender' and the role and rights of women, it generally does not get to the heart of the issues that concern her. These issues are multi-layered, covering the broad structural linkage between gender and war, the place of gender issues in peace processes and conflict transformation, and the organisational and personal ways in which gender affects conflict transformation practice and practitioners themselves.

Diana described gender and war as inseparable – in that war is based on a model of power that is at the heart of traditional constructs of masculinity. This dominatory model is evident in the way that political leaders enter into wars – not just in support of national interests but also in awareness of the effect on their personal image and status as a 'war leader'. Consider, for example, the preoccupation with the Vietnam track records of the competitors for the current US Democratic Party presidential candidacy (and their attacks on George Bush's Vietnam war record). This, more than the pressing local issues of education, health or the economy, seems to define the type of leader that the USA is interested in electing.

In such a context those who are not part of the system of domination are marginalised. Peace processes are often little more than a continuation of war by other means. Though states justify their own violence they condemn the violence of other armed groups and the rhetoric is against their recognition and inclusion in the negotiations. In Northern Ireland, for example, it took several decades for the UK government to 'speak to the men of violence'. But since a cessation of violence cannot be achieved without their involvement they are, in the end, very often included. The voices and needs of 'ordinary people', however – including women, old people and children – are seldom heard. As a consequence, the 'peace' is too often simply a continuation of the old system of domination.

Although the work of Conflict Transformation depends on a very different value system, the organisations we work for have to engage with current realities and in those circumstances it is not easy for us to put our values into practice. Diana argued that as conflict transformation practitioners we should hold onto our goal of equality in the representation of men and women in our work, and ensure that we discuss within our organisations the effects of gender on our organisational culture and priorities and our personal styles.

Paradoxically, because the subject of gender is so all embracing it tends to remain invisible, or to be considered culturally immutable. Diana argued against such passive resignation, reasoning that cultures and social structures are formed by people and can be changed by them. She stressed the damage that current cultures and structures do to *all* people, not only to women, whose needs are so often overlooked and whose bodies are so often used as instruments by men in demonstrations of masculinity and of power by one group over another. Men also suffer, both from the horrors of the killing and maiming that they are expected to undertake and risk in wartime and from the 'macho', uncaring attitudes and roles allotted to them in peacetime.

Diana's presentation was followed by a brief interlude of discussion in small 'buzz-groups' and a plenary discussion session. During the afternoon participants divided into three groups to focus on each of the three 'layers' referred in Diana's presentation: 'Gender and war', 'Gender and conflict transformation' and 'Looking at ourselves', and then returned to a closing plenary report-back session. Plenary and group discussions are summarised below under these three headings.

Gender and war

Participants gave examples of the male domination of society in countries with which they were familiar. In Sudan there is a small, intellectual, female elite who have broadly equal rights with men (at least in terms of work and pay) while the large majority of women have little voice in the strongly patriarchal society. Similarly men have dominated both the civil war and the subsequent peace process in Sri Lanka, and local 'culture' (whether Tamil, Muslim on Sinhala) is used as a justification for excluding women, even by academics and intellectuals. In Angola, too, both conflict and the traditional methods of mitigating it are conducted through male social structures.

Women often perpetuate such structures – for example by how they behave as mothers in educating the next generation. One participant spoke of the desire expressed, particularly by young women, for education, fewer children and a greater political voice in many developing countries. Unfortunately, older women tend to perpetuate existing structures, for example by encouraging their sons to subjugate their wives.

Sri Lankan war widows are shunned, even by other women, compounding their isolation. And in the West, how often do we hear a son's bad behaviour being excused by comments such as "he's a real boy", when similar behaviour from a girl would not be tolerated?

Sadly, religion also plays a part in the subjugation of women. One participant spoke about the sanctioning of the sexual abuse of non-Moslem women by Islamic fighters in Sudan. And another remarked that it is impossible to reconcile gender justice with Sharia Law.

It could be argued that Human Rights incorporates Women's Rights, and that women need no additional protection. Certainly Human Rights legislation provides a vital base-line, but the problem is to get it applied to women. To try and address this problem, there are international resolutions and agreements that deal specifically with gender equality. CEDAW[1], the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, often described as an international bill of rights for women, defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. Similarly United Nations resolution 1325[2] on Women, Peace and Security (ratified unanimously in 1991) urges member states to ensure that women are represented at all levels in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, and in peacebuilding and peacekeeping measures.

As if to reinforce these resolutions, the current rhetoric of international politics makes much of gender issues. It would seem, therefore, that arguing for their full implementation *should* be like pushing at an open door. Unfortunately, reality is somewhat different. What more can we do to ensure that these resolutions are more effective in practice? A number of participants suggested that quotas should be built in to them, mandating the equal representation of women. (This might have been effective in Northern Ireland, for example, where women put themselves forward for involvement in the peace process, but were ignored.) Others felt that numerical equality was an inadequate goal: women also have to be able to contribute equally. But as one participant pointed out, an equal voice is difficult while women constitute 80% of the world's illiterate. And, although

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[1] see http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/

[2] see http://www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html

there are millennium goals for equal access to education, there is little funding available to achieve these goals, and little interest from international aid agencies. An additional problem in conflict regions is that, while there is no immediate prospect of stability, funding agencies are reluctant to finance programmes for women's education or more general capacity building, fearing that the money may be wasted. In reality, women's contribution will help to build a stronger peace constituency.

Even when funding *is* available to make resolution 1325 bite, the opportunity is sometimes missed. According to one participant, this was the case in Afghanistan, where UNIFEM was largely inactive and money allocated to gender mainstreaming was not spent. The result for Afghan women, according to a recent edition of New Internationalist[3], is that whereas, under the Taliban, a woman was liable to be flogged for showing an inch of flesh in the market place, now she was more likely to be raped.

One participant pointed out that international law is underpinned by the use of force, and argued that there was a valid, redemptive role for force in combating violence (for example, in stopping the massacres in Rwanda). How does this fit into the model Diana proposes? One of the problems is that ends are affected by means: a 'peace' obtained by military means perpetuates brutality and is inevitably less stable, and less transformative, than one brought about through negotiation and commitment to change. Thus in Afghanistan, for example, the War Lords, whose rule was so bloody that the Taliban once seemed preferable, were used in the latest war to remove them and are now, outside of Khabul, back in power.

An interesting recent change in the attitude to war (at least in the West) is a growing risk-averseness. The death of Western soldiers is increasingly deemed unacceptable (though the deaths of 'enemy' soldiers and civilians continue largely unreported). The traumatic effects of war on soldiers is also more widely recognised, though gender stereotyping still prevents it from being adequately dealt with. One participant recalled hearing an interview with a man who had been a prisoner of war in Japan during the Second World War. When he returned home he discovered that no one wanted to hear how he had suffered. As a result, he had carried the

[3] New Internationalist 364, January-February 2004

trauma of his imprisonment for twenty years before being able to talk about it. At least some progress has been made since then.

Another participant challenged the stereotype of the masculine 'hero' referred to in Diana's paper. She remembered seeing a warlord punching an elder (locally known as a white beard) in Tajikistan. In that culture the young warlord was not seen as a heroic figure, and his violence was deprecated. Diana readily agreed that the 'hero' is not the only stereotype, but stressed its general potency. One of the problems with discussing gender is that generalisations are unavoidable, but are also (obviously) wrong for some people.

Conflict transformation and gender

In international conflict transformation work, gender inequality is often accepted because of 'cultural sensitivity': we are afraid of being thought insensitive (though where does sensitivity end and prejudice begin?). One participant recalled an Italian woman facilitator in South India who had objected to eating after the men (which is the custom for women there) and in doing so had cause the Indian women deep offence. On the other hand, Diana recounted an incident in a workshop in Georgia, where she and her female co-facilitator were commanded to sit down by a male participant. Though they acquiesced, thinking that the incident was 'a cultural matter', Diana afterwards reflected that male facilitators would not have been put in this position and that it was not a good idea to give way to discrimination, at home or abroad. It is too easy to get caught in this culture-gender crossfire – and not only when working in other countries. Another participant recalled a UK meeting on gender mainstreaming where male participants overrode female contributions.

It was noted that culture becomes such a sensitive issue because the politically powerful West is imposing its own cultural paradigm in other countries. One participant felt that gender justice was often seen, in itself, as a Western preoccupation, and dismissed as irrelevant or trivial. Whether or not this is true (or simply another indication of a male-dominated society failing to recognise that a people cannot be liberated while half of them remain subjugated), it was widely felt that, as incomers, we too often assume that the society is patriarchal. There are

nearly always women already resisting gender injustice and we fail to notice, or to acknowledge, the extent of their influence. Examples were offered of the long history of women's action in Iraq, and of the powerful roles of female 'spirit advisors' on whom many male chiefs depend in Zimbabwe. It is easy for an outsider to miss the 'hidden transcripts'[4] of women networking with other women, particularly when that outsider is ignorant of the local language, has not lived in the country for any length of time in order to absorb its culture, and arrives with the alien agenda of an external organisation.

In a number of countries women are taking a fundamental role in peacebuilding. In South Africa, young women were very active in the anti-apartheid movement, and had sufficient authority at the time of its downfall to ensure 50-50 representation in the new parliament. The Rwandan parliament has the highest proportion of women of any in the world, according to a recent New Internationalist[5], and Rwandan women are taking the lead in rebuilding peace, particularly at the grassroots level, where women who lost their husbands or sons in the Hutu-Tutsi civil war are rebuilding relationships with the families of those who killed them. Unfortunately, men are driving these widows off the land that their husbands had owned and that they now depend on for their livelihood, re-imposing the old power bases that look set to destroy the peace again. In some cultures women seem to have certain advantages over men in challenging war, possibly because they are considered less of a threat. In the Philippines, for example, nuns were able to prevent some of the fighting because it would have been so unacceptable to everyone if they had been shot or run over by the tanks they were stopping. This isn't universally so, however: women in the Sri Lankan civil war were as brutalised as the men.

Traditionally women have had no place at the peace table, having had no direct role in the conflict. This has led some women to involve themselves more directly in the fighting, to justify their presence in the negotiations, though with mixed success. They are not infrequently ignored and, as already discussed, if the warring

parties (whether male or female) are there alone, without the representation of the wider civil society, any peace that is brokered is likely to be half-baked. UN resolution 1325 lays the groundwork for gender equality, and on occasion the international community has ensured that this has happened.

But, as has been noted, numerical equality is not enough: women representatives must also have something to say and the authority to say it. Education plays a vital role here, and a number of success stories were offered by participants. The Mothers' Union, for example, run women's education programmes (for negotiating and communication skills, as well as for literacy) in a number of countries, and finds that this empowers local women to take action for themselves. South African women have a higher level of literacy than in many African countries, and have been more successful than most at achieving political representation and power. RAWA (the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan), acknowledging the importance of women's education, run (often covert) literacy programmes in an effort to raise female literacy from its present estimated 5%. Education can also be useful in breaking down gender assumptions. In DRC (Democratic Republic of the Congo), for example, it is normal for girl pupils to clean the classroom, but after teachers were trained in gender justice they included boys in the task.

A common thread through all these examples is the necessity for the process to be driven by those experiencing the injustice. Western agencies should be wary of imposing their own values and structures, but work to understand and support local initiatives, providing resources, finance and capacity building to help to ensure that any programmes for change are locally owned and legitimised.

Another point of similarity is the emphasis on practical and realistic grassroots activity. One participant said that African women from the educated elite often find it particularly hard to work at the grassroots level. It seems that there are too many social hurdles between them and the 'ordinary', largely uneducated, women for their voices to be heard. Change is much more likely to be successful if it is locally motivated and led.

It was suggested that more could be done to mark the value of grassroots efforts. For example, instead of awarding the Nobel Peace

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[4] James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, Yale and London: Yale University Press, 1990

[5] New Internationalist 364, January-February 2004

Prize to a leader (thus reinforcing the hierarchical, 'male' view of the world), it could be awarded collectively to 1000 'ordinary' women who are working for peace in their own communities.

In post-conflict situations, local women often ask the international community to impose gender equality, for example by setting quotas for parliamentary seats, hoping for a 'leg up' in terms of women's representation. In Kosovo, for example, a mandatory one third of the members of the new parliament must be women, by international mandate. While such externally imposed equality has some benefits, it is obviously easier to oppose or belittle than if it were locally negotiated and agreed. It is a sad irony, too, that Britain is willing to impose equality of representation on others while having such a pitiful record itself.

The international community can also have a role in listening to the needs of the wider community and using their authority to ensure that a broader agenda is brought to the negotiating table. It can also strengthen the legal framework and institutional environment to make it easier for Civil Society Organisations to operate.

Forgiveness is seen as a feminine quality. One participant remembered a refugee, talking about the violence he had suffered, saying that the only thing he could do to change what had happened to him was to try to forgive, and being rounded on by his fellow refugees for an act of betrayal. Forgiveness is somehow perceived as 'selling out', and all the pressure is for demanding retribution. Perhaps this is one reason that forgiveness gets so little airtime in the male atmosphere of politics in general and peace negotiations in particular. Desmond Tutu suggested on Radio4 last week that Tony Blair and George Bush would get more trust and respect if they were able to apologise for asserting (it now seems wrongly) that Iraq owned weapons of mass destruction and that they posed an international threat. But in the adversarial context of Western politics, an apology seems unthinkable. In Northern Ireland, the notion that anyone was a victim was not even named until the peace process, and then it was assumed that only men were victims, with women at best seen as the mothers or wives of victims. We need to find a new way of negotiating peace that incorporates women. As one participant remarked, dealing with the past is an activity that benefits from 'gender spectacles'.

In Rwanda, many of the lesser crimes of the genocide are being heard at gacaca courts, in which the suspects are taken back to where they were said to have committed their crimes and heard by a panel of judges chosen by local people. These courts, which have a very high level of female representation, are concerned as much with forgiveness (and accepting people back into the community they have wronged) as retribution.

Looking at ourselves

A number of participants acknowledged the difficulties for men in currently accepted gender roles. Two mothers spoke of the distress suffered by their young sons at their exclusion from Greenham Common women's peace camp. They had realised, even as boys, that 'men could not do that' and hated the 'brash and brave' way in which they were expected to behave. One of the male participants echoed this discomfort when he spoke of how hard it is for men to talk about forgiveness.

It was widely accepted that it is up to us as individuals to challenge gender injustice by demonstrating through our own lifestyle that equality is workable and valuable. This applies in our private lives as individuals and as family members, as well as at work. Such action requires regular self-examination if one is to avoid falling unthinkingly into gender stereotypes.

Nurture continues to be seen as a female quality. Women are considered better at child-rearing because their biological make-up gives them a different, closer relationship with children. These assumptions tie women to the home more than men, as well as affecting their role outside the home – tending to make any paid work they do less important (and therefore worth less pay) than that of men.

At work women tend to be more comfortable in less structured, more community oriented roles, especially in male-dominated spaces – and this holds true for NGO work. Peace processes tend to be very formal, and NGO workers in this area are largely male. In this environment women (particularly young ones) find it hard to be taken seriously. It takes courage for a woman to challenge sexism, particularly if she has to do so without the explicit support of her male colleagues. Senior role models are as rare in conflict transformation as elsewhere at work:

very few NGOs have female directors – almost all are (white) men.

There *have* been positive changes in the perception of women inside and outside the professional environment. But gender stereotypes persist: one participant remarked on the different attitudes towards her as a professional peace activist and as a mother of a small child.

Gender is too often considered to be 'only' a women's issue (maybe even within the CCTS seminar-going community, given the uncharacteristically small number of men at this seminar). In reality, both men and women need to engage in the debate, and both need to change their attitudes and expectations.

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