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For further information, including guidelines for contributors, please visit www.review.upeace.org.

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Editorial Note

Of the several changes we have made for this Spring 2009 issue, perhaps the most significant is the creation of this full pdf copy, allowing us to standardize certain key elements across the journal, especially pagination. Feel free to save a copy and pass it along to your contacts, as we are fully committed to the principles of open access and broad participation in scholarship.

Like all interdisciplinary fields, peace and conflict studies is characterized by the interplay of theoretical perspectives and academic conventions -- the overall effect of which, we hope, is a dialogue unconstrained by the traditional boundaries of academia, flexible enough to forward meaningful analyses for the improvement of human society through peace and justice. In addition, the point of intersection between theory and practice has become particularly important to the field, and to the work we do at the University for Peace, as theoretical discussions between disciplines are increasingly tested and developed by the work of peace practitioners.

Our Spring 2009 issue of the *Peace and Conflict Review* reflects this interaction between theorists and practitioners, addressing philosophical issues of methodology and socio-political analysis as well as practical ways for protecting human rights and facilitating sustainable and equitable development on the ground.

Eric Brahm's conceptual review of Truth Commissions, described as a "brush clearing contribution to the field" by one reviewer, is a theoretical piece written with an ease and accessibility that is rare among legal scholars. To this effect, Brahm's article offers a thoughtful discussion of the confusion around various processes claimed to be "truth commissions", the interests behind such claims, and some helpful suggestions for clarifying scholarship on the issue.

Continuing the legal discussion, and addressing specific questions about how national legislation can be used to protect human rights beyond national boundaries and the responsibilities on states imposed by international law, Craig Brannagan presents a tightly researched and practical argument for using Canadian civil law to answer allegations of human rights abuses facilitated by the actions of Canadian corporations abroad. Brannagan illustrates his argument with an ongoing suit in the Quebec Superior Court, filed on behalf of citizens in the Palestinian village of Bil'in who have been negatively affected by the Israeli separation barrier in the West Bank.

Swinging the pendulum even further towards the practical, Shastry Njeru speaks to the immense potential of information and communication technology for connecting and empowering segments of society that have been divided and displaced by conflict -- focusing especially gender and peacebuilding in Africa. Challenging the gender stereotypes that have complicated women's access to information technology in the past, Njeru calls for greater equality of access and education so as to coordinate and support the efforts of all peacemakers, regardless of sex or location.

Our final article of this issue, Daniela Corti and Ashok Swain's analysis of the entangled US-led wars on drugs and terror in Afghanistan, challenges the logic behind forced eradication policies in that country and argues persuasively for an informed policy of illicit drug control that recognizes the livelihood concerns of Afghans and the broader security dynamics of the region.

As always, submissions and feedback from our readers are highly encouraged, and should be directed to editor@review.upeace.org.

Ross Ryan
Managing Editor

Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Gender, and Peacebuilding in Africa: A Case of Missed Connections

Shastry Njeru*

This paper posits that marginalizing women is retrogressive in the peacebuilding process, and that information and communication technology (ICT) can be used to mitigate this problem in Africa. In most of the African continent, women constitute the majority of the population, yet they remain marginalized in knowledge, networks, and economic and political matters. As a result, a lot of energy is left out of the processes of national healing and peacebuilding in post-conflict societies. Peacebuilding processes could be strengthened if organizations, people, and regions connect in effective multi-sectoral and peace building networks, and are provided with active and open knowledge banks. The inter-operability and use of ICT can provide such connections, bridging communication gaps between peace process stakeholders. ICT can be used to facilitate women's participation in this process, from the grassroots upwards.

Introduction

United Nations Resolution 1325 dealing with “Women, Peace and Security”¹ was ground breaking for women’s peace activism in the sense that it provided a coherent policy framework for promoting women’s involvement in the wide array of issues related to peace and security (Crisis Group 2006). However, the impact of this resolution has been more limited in countries where leadership remain hostile to a greater role for women in peacemaking and peacebuilding. What can be done to dismantle the barriers that prevent women from greater participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict governance? Yet, women peacebuilders, often without formal support, are trying to bring security to their communities, countries and regions. What can be done to recognise and support the role and capacities of women in preventing and mitigating conflict so that it does not remain an afterthought? Against a backdrop

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¹ The UNSC resolution 1325 provides “the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and ... the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security”. It also mandates that states “ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict”.

of persistent violence, exclusion and decaying social services, many see improving the status of women as an issue to be addressed further down the road, in a time of peace. Consensus is not strong around the view that women in Africa need to be empowered through gendered information and communication technology, which would enable them to be involved confidently in their nations' peacebuilding programmes.

Just like many institutions in Africa, ICT has not escaped the problems of gender discrimination. The belief that technology knows no gender is openly challenged in Africa where technology is not only framed in a masculine way but is refusing to change. Women have watched the benefits of technology accruing to men for a long time from a distance. Even in economies like South Africa, only "17% of women have access to ICT related services" (Huyer and Sikoska 2003). In the majority of cases, women have been left out as a result of their gender rather than supposed incompatibility with ICT. There is a group of critics who argue persuasively that in Africa women need clean water, adequate food, health rather than worry about ICT. They do not see the connection between these necessities and ICT.

On daily basis, in a normal, peaceful African state, structural conditions are pitted against the empowering of women. During times of war, women suffer all kinds of violations, and in post-conflict peace times the cultural stakes are set against them. Some women are married off early in their lives to cover family debts, they are forced out of school to give way to sons, and they are enslaved and kept illiterate because they are women. In violent conflicts that have taken place in modern times in Africa, women have suffered more than their male counterparts because of their "biological fate" or what has been called the "anatomy of destiny", despite their numeral superiority. One example is Zimbabwe where women constitute 52% of the population (CSO 2006). They have suffered the discomfiture of poverty, drought, hunger, imprisonment and degradation.

The inclusion of women in the ICT spheres is necessary for national growth and prosperity (Chamberlain 2002). Yet again they remain marginalized in knowledge, networks, and economic and political matters. Closing and making inaccessible the information management and frameworks to key all stakeholders, particularly women, undermines the ability of ICT to save lives in a crisis situation. Women need to know where they can get information, food, medicines, protection, and networks. ICT can help in this. By inter-operability of information, access will be made possible to all as digital barriers are pulled down by availability of information. Guarantees that systems, tools and mechanisms to exchange information seamlessly, securely and sustainably, need to be put in place.

Those in power must have the political will to achieve peace and to share the information that can be used in peacebuilding and in meeting everyday life challenges. The politicians in Uganda have recognized the importance of ICT in curbing the rural-urban migration and gave it the attention it deserves. They believe that ICT will not only provide rural employment but will stem the urge to migrate into major towns by the youths. The Ugandan government has been very instrumental in setting up telecentres in rural areas under the Rural Communications Development Fund (RCDF). However, despite this effort, the rural communities are yet to benefit fully from this movement. In many places, Internet access and call centres are unavailable because of lack of electricity (Nabwowe 2008). This is a challenge in most of Africa, and it is women who have suffered the worst, since the technology that is available is often monopolized by their male counterparts who have craft competences and literacy to use it. Women have little exposure to education to find this technology of any use to them.

Unfortunately, the ICT revolution has left out many in Africa given the absence of basic infrastructure, high costs of ICT deployment, unfamiliarity with ICTs, dominance of the English language in Internet content, and indeed, the lack of demonstrated benefit from ICTs to address ground-level development challenges. Where ICT is provided, it is heavily barricaded by masculinity in ways that I now seek to explain. These barriers pose problems for women, who are more likely to be illiterate, unfamiliar with English, and lack opportunities for training in computer skills (Gurumurthy 2004). Masculinity is writ large when parents have to choose male children over females to send to school when resources are limited. Domestic responsibilities, cultural restrictions

on mobility, lesser economic power as well as lack of relevance of content to their lives, further marginalise them from the information sector.

Supporting ICT for peacebuilding and conflict transformation is premised here on its ability to facilitate “virtual collaboration” (Hattotuwa, ud) or alternative public space for women. Women can meet and discuss issues and solutions collaboratively on the World Wide Web. ICT can augment this socio-political process and explore further networking options, although virtualisation of peacebuilding is not the final panacea. Peacebuilding still exists within the emotions and problems of the real world, but problems discussed are problems half-solved. Women are naturally disposed to discussing intimate issues with their confidantes, and ICT can allow such discussions to include a wider group of women. Further, ICT for peacebuilding can address gaps in communication within and between multiple tiers of the fabric of society and polity that are party to the peacebuilding process. To succeed, ICT should connect progressive elements of the socio-political fabric that under-gird sustainable peacebuilding including, but not limited to women, children, youth, grass-root communities and rural peace activists, while being careful to avoid extremist and corrosive elements that are detrimental to peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

It is important to note, however, that ICTs can only help in crisis management and peacebuilding if they are based on open standards and are interoperable, facilitating use even in difficult conditions and engendering staff by-ins (ICT4Peace Foundation 2008). The peacebuilding processes could be strengthened if organizations, people and regions connect “in effective multi-sectoral and peace building networks and provided with active and open knowledge banks – with instant access to effective peace building approaches and case studies” (Hattotuwa, 2004). The public, including women, can participate in this process from the grassroots upwards.

This paper argues that sharing information provides women with a platform to engender a culture of open information sharing, where the approach to conflict transformation is one that is holistic, inclusive, and participatory. By supporting the creation of “shared spaces”, a gendered ICT initiative will help the process of conflict transformation.

A Gendered Approach to Information Technology

As inanimate, technology has been viewed as gender and value neutral (Gurumurthy 2004) and having the ability to traverse human cultural barriers. Yet this is not always the case. Feminist literature reflects that women have been “excluded from science, creation, design and use of technology” (ibid: 4). Women are socialized toward non-technical careers (Huyer and Sikoska 2003). Thus, it is patently dangerous to accept that technology works everywhere and provides solutions to development challenges by itself. The effectiveness of technology is dependent on the culture under whose frames it was negotiated and can be transformed.

Women are cultural as well and have multiple identities that interact with gender to define their access to technology. To undo unequal gender relations depends largely on understanding the complex gender interactions and the will to transform them for the better. It is easy for a well to do sophisticated woman to have easy access to the Internet, but unthinkable for the feudal rural woman to have that access to the public telephone, yet they are all women who are driven by different socio-historical circumstances that dictate their daily factors of existence. Such realities are at the heart of the gender and technology discourse. Gurumurthy (2004) reminds us that men and women from the same social context may not have equal access to technology. For instance, if household assets may have unequal ownership, what guarantees that ICT can stand unaffected by gender? Simple technology like a radio may be fully masculine. I remember my father had a tiny radio in the 1970s that my mother had no leisure to listen to, nor was she allowed to join to sit around as men did outside the house. When he left for the city he took it with him or it was safely tucked somewhere waiting for his eventual return. He joined the guerrilla movement for a long time and his radio waited for his long return. By hindsight, it made me think that radios, TVs and computers are masculine assets and microwaves and cookers are feminine.

Historically, technology has been a male preserve, suggesting that the appropriation of the technology by women is a political project that they must fight for with their blood and sweat. Over the decades it has been shown that without explicit attention to gender in policy, gender issues are not considered in implementation (Hafkin 2002:3). Governments argue that they already have gender policies in place and this should obviate the explicit mentioning of gender in every project. To the contrary, evidence shows that, in the technological fields, “policy making ignores the needs, requirements and aspirations of women and girls unless gender requirements are included” (Marcelle 2002: 39). Without specific attention and action, women and girls are always left out (Hafkin, op cit).

The presence of gender issues rarely extends to information and communication technologies. Unlike fields such as health, education, economics, agriculture and rural development, where it is rare to find projects that fail to take into account gender issues, the ICT sector has yet to open to a gender perspective. A recent study of hundreds of development projects, with either ICT as the major sector or with substantial ICT components, showed that more than one-third of all projects had a high degree of awareness of gender issues, but that the gender-sensitivity carried over to the ICT components is only 10 percent of the projects (Ibid: 4).

Persistent gender specific structural inequalities constitute barriers to women’s access to technology. Such barriers are imbedded in education, tradition, economic inequalities, etc (Huyer and Sikoska 2003). In fact, ICTs are designed and created within the male dominated environments and therefore do not necessarily correspond to specific needs of women (ibid.). This is the “gender digital divide”.

Technological Barricades

ICT has become a potent force in transforming social, political and economic life globally. It is viewed as an “intrinsic part of nation building” (Hattotuwa 2003), and has the potential to carry “the new global knowledge based economy” (Huyer and Sikoska, op cit). ICTs “may reshape, reorganize, and restructure working methods” through its “generic advantages of efficiency, information sharing, storage, faster knowledge accumulation, dissemination [which] can permit new and collaborative work methods” (ibid.). Further, ICT can improve “the quality of human life” and can afford “new types of education modalities such as distance learning and online training” (ibid.). ICT is a tool for the transformatory empowerment of women.

Development strategists are encouraging the developing countries to embrace ICTs to avoid further social and economic marginalisation (Ahmed et al, ud.). The uneven distribution of the use of information technologies across the societies is called the “digital divide” and reflects a division between the information “haves” and “have-nots” between and within countries – structured along lines of race, ethnic group, class, age, region, and gender – separating those who have access to abundant information resources from those who do not.

Women within developing countries are in the deepest part of the divide. They are further removed from the information age than are the men whose poverty they share. Bisnath (2005) attributes the barriers in the path of women to gender inequality and technical. These are resource endowments, infrastructure, telecommunication policies, skills and educational levels, socio-cultural norms, positions of men and women in production and reproduction, and digital preparedness of the country in question. Huyer and Sikoska (2003) reiterate that the same problems always stand in the way of women’s progress: unequal educational access, glass ceilings in industry and research, lack of financial resources resulting from the women themselves or choices made by their families.

The gender gap in the digital divide is of increasing concern; if access to and use of these technologies is directly linked to social and economic development, then it is imperative to ensure that women in developing countries understand the significance of these technologies and use them (ibid.). The lack of access to information and communication technologies is a significant factor in the further marginalization of women from the economic, social, and political mainstream of their

countries and of the world. Without full participation in the use of information technology, women are left without the key to participation in the global world of the twenty-first century (ibid.). Due to these problems, it is important to challenge the apparent lack of visibility of women as users and developers of ICT. The starting point is to pull down perceptions that “women are less suited to or interested in working with technology” (Huyer and Sikoska 2003). The truth is that women’s lack of engagement is due to gender inequality than “women’s lack of compatibility with technology”.

ICT and Peacebuilding in Divided Societies

Boutros-Ghali (1995) defines peacebuilding as “comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well being among people”. It is hard work, demanding everyone’s contribution in disarming, repatriating refugees, restoring institutions, retraining security personnel, monitoring elections, reengineering political institutions for democratic governance, and protecting civil liberties and human rights. Of course, this requires more than men’s contributions. Women need to take part because they were involved actively in the conflicts as combatants, victims or supporters. Leaving them out is an opportunity cost, yet they face barriers to full participation ranging from the physical to the social.

In Africa as elsewhere, peacebuilding must go beyond sorting “political and institutional deficits” (Llamazares 2005) to healing lives damaged by protracted conflicts. Many people have had their sense of self-respect and esteem violated by conflict and have been left scattered across the rural areas as Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and left in refugee camps. Cognizant of the geo-location of most women in Africa in rural settings, the use of ICT can enable them to be reached and participate in peacebuilding efforts without having to relocate them to urban areas.

Women in post-conflict societies share common issues that they can creatively transform through ICT platforms. ICT coffers a great deal of potential to connect women that are separated by language, stereotypes, distance and mistrust, even though they still share fears and hopes for peaceful futures. If ICT is neutral as suggested by some, then it can catalyse intra- and inter-communal dialogues, create powerful people-led foundations that can act as a bulwark against regression. Yet this is not the case when it comes to involving women in real issues of peace and nation building, as ICT has been kept as a male preserve.

Peacebuilding has become profoundly multidimensional, taking in humanitarian workers, Non Governmental Organisations, United Nations bodies, governments, global financial institutions, and from the bottom up, peace activists, women and children. This requires “multilevel approaches” to increase inter-connectedness (Lederach 1997). ICT can be used to reach out to all forces in peacebuilding including women, and embraced for its potential in advocacy and dissemination of information and policy alternatives. However, this potential can be seriously hampered by the usual “lack of funding to purchase equipment or services, lack of skilled staff, little time and interest” (Hattotuwa 2003:3). But despite the challenges, in Zambia, mobile phone networks are used to advocate women’s rights; in Douala the Internet is available to women entrepreneurs in textile industries; in Uganda, ICT and mobile phone businesses are used as instruments of change by rural women; and even professional women in Kenya are fast reaping the ICT benefits.

In some cases, available websites are carelessly designed to be of little use to rural women. Some lack the content that can capture the attention of these women and in most of the cases they are written in a language that is difficult to understand. A good site is the Centre for Women Research (CENWOR) of Sri Lanka www.cenwor.lk that serves as an information source for the Sri Lankan women. The site is interactive and provides critical information facing women, and action taken by the government and other agencies. It also provides a communication platform transcending all types of boundaries for women and women’s organizations striving to realize women’s rights (ibid.). This platform is effectively eroding the gender barriers pitted against women in the country.

The corpus of conflict resolution literature proffers that it is possible to transcend conflict if parties can be helped to analyse, explore, questions and then reframe their interests and positions (Hottotuwa 2004). ICT can energise the creative dynamics of societies to fully engage with paradigm shifts necessary for envisioning a state without protracted conflicts. ICT fertilizes the process of peacebuilding itself (ibid.) by engendering subtle changes in the socio-political relations through interacting protagonists who may not be able to meet face to face in the “real world” through virtual spaces. INSTRAW virtual seminars demonstrate the potential of ICT in engaging women (Huyer and Sikoska 2003) in e-democracy.

Recommendations and Best Practices

ICT for peacebuilding should form the repository for documents, press releases and other information related to the peace process. Hattotuwa (2006) suggests ICT instruments that can be used to embrace all. He identifies community podcasting and Internet radios, Skypecasts, micro-grants for blogging, cheap digital cameras, oral histories, and establishing women, children and youth media houses as instruments that can be profitably used by rural women in Africa for peacebuilding. Community podcasting and internet radios are often required in conflict to capture the voices and hope of people in support of peace.

Through “new media such as digital audio / video / mobile video / MMS, it is possible to link community driven production of media that addresses local issues. Community radio stations often find that they are prey to legislation that often restricts their freedom to broadcast issues seen as too sensitive by the incumbent government. Internet radio and websites by-pass these restrictions” (ibid). Internet radio for grassroots involves those who cannot read or write. Literacy is not a requirement for digital media production that seeks to capture the views of those who may not be able to read and write, but through their life experiences may have valuable insights into conflict transformation and related issues such as reconciliation, transformative justice and co-existence.

This technology is sustainable as long as existing technology (such as mobile phones) is thoroughly exploited, rather than creating a whole new technology for reaching out to the marginalised women and communities. The ICTs can help to revitalise stagnant dialogues and sustain difficult processes of peacebuilding by providing spaces for sustained dialogue even when Track One processes have run aground (Hattotuwa 2006). Through the internet and radio broadcasts, the efforts of peacebuilders are augmented by enhanced channels, avenues and possibilities for communication, information and knowledge sharing, collaboration, empowerment and discussion in virtual spaces, even when physical, real world meetings are impossible on account of geographical distance or political sensitivities.

The skypecasts allow a large audience to participate, using Skype as well as PSTN phones, in discussions that can be on any topic. Skype is free, Skype to Skype calls are free, and for Skype to work, all that is required is a decent ISDN connection. Rural women may only need to purchase the ISDN connection and the equipment for them to broadcast. Donors need to be motivated to support women’s projects that can enable their voices to be heard. In areas which are not on national electricity grid, solar energy driven with rechargeable batteries need to be made available for easy access for women.

Women can exploit their access to these technologies to “create Skypecasts on peace from the grassroots itself” – say a village meeting with a global audience including members from the diaspora chipping in. Such a series of recorded Skypecasts can be a useful way to capture community driven ideas for peace with international and regional voices in support of such ideas. Shared and borderless sources of ideas will not only improve the quantity and quality of information the women may have, but even their self-esteem. If women knew that people were listening to their arguments across the globe, it would empower and engender in them a new spirit.

There is need to provide women micro-credit for blogging in Africa. Blogging is an urban phenomenon and there is need to take to the rural areas where the majority of women live. If

blogging engenders democratic dialogue, it needs to go into places outside of the cities. Blogs that are based in the grassroots itself, and can promote voices of the community, can be a useful way of capturing voices in support of peace. The emphasis here should be on blogs that promote a multiplicity of voices, particularly that which ensures diversity and gender participation.

Women need also to be provided with digital cameras to capture the world around them as they see it along with their thoughts on the challenges of peacebuilding. CD-ROMs based on the lives of an activist in conflict zones, an activist in an urban centre, a web based activist and an activist in the diaspora may be produced as reference material for the people in bureaucratic decision levels to fall back on when crafting nation and peacebuilding policies. The Ugandan CD-ROM project based on the Nakaseke and Buwama telecentres explained by Mijumbi (2002) provides a good starting point for African women. The women who used the CD-ROM have become more confident, knowledgeable, prepared to experiment with new approaches, and more willing to compare situations for joint solutions (Huyer and Sikoska 2003). Further, women emerged not only with greater knowledge but also with enriched self-esteem.

Oral histories need to be recorded from the people who participated in making that history. However, conflicts often erase voices. Peace needs to preserve voices. However, when voices are captured, only the voices of those with power are captured. Poor women's voices, those who suffered the tragedies of the conflict are left out. Digital media offers unique ways through which voices that are important and most vulnerable, can be captured and promoted, so as to protect valuable ideas for social change even if their authors are killed. Simple recording devices can be given to communities (keeping in mind gender, age, ethnic, economic, class, caste, religious diversity) and capture their voices that support peace.

Women, youth and children need to be supported in setting up their own small media production houses. National regulations may need to be relaxed, particularly in Africa where alternative sources of information are viewed by the governments with scepticism. With the help of donor financial support, acquisition of new technology would make setting up the houses reasonably inexpensive. Women and youth media bring very different perspectives to peace and conflict reporting as well as general programming. Children and youth have much more access to political leaders than do adults and can get away with asking some seemingly simple but precise questions that go to the heart of peacebuilding.

Innovative websites need to be created in vernacular languages to reach women who are often not educated in foreign languages like English and French. Since most women are impeded by lack of education to engage effectively with ICTs, there is a need to ensure "soft access" to the less literate and educated by developing appropriate software applications and content. For example, Web 2.0 mash-ups that tell the narratives of those involved in peacebuilding through the use of Flickr photos, audio / podcasts, GIS (Google Maps), blogs, mobile video, MMS or SMS (like myspace.com, but geared for peacebuilding) can be used. Projects such as www.witness.org use digital media to record human rights violations. When all these are made accessible to women, great strides may be made in solid peacebuilding in Africa.

There is no need to continually blame the victims by feeling "that women are reluctant to invest either their time in learning how to use the technology or financial resources needed for access" (Huyer and Sikoska 2003). Women have been too severely battered by the weight of masculinity to take further blame for their problems. They have been frequently disadvantaged by culture and inequitable access to all kinds of resources.

Challenges

There are challenges for ICT in peacebuilding in spite of its phenomenal potential to augment the interventions of individual women in many areas of peacebuilding process like rebuilding trust between communities, creating dialogues within and between ethnic groups, giving voice to the marginalized women and youth, and enabling grassroot participation in the dialogues

related to peacebuilding. What discourages wide and regular use of ICT are the high capital and recurrent costs which most of the women and their organizations cannot meet. This dovetails into the problem of access. By elbowing women out of ICT through bad policies, this disempowers them from having a voice in the peacebuilding processes when in fact, ICT must be able to facilitate the building of social capital that can empower women and “local communities to grapple with conflicts in a non-violent way” (Hattotuwa 2004).

The other challenge is the trust that people can conduct critical discussion in virtual spaces while being assured of confidentiality of shared content. This is important in countries where terror and violence is heavily embedded and people cannot afford to trust the next person. How would it be possible to trust a worldly technology that one does not control? Next is sustainability of the ICT in a world where equipment can be novel today and obsolete the next day. The question of compatibility is important as well. There are the issues of breakdowns and back up the problems; of viral invasions and proper software to clean may be discouraging challenges for women who are financially weak due to structural gender imperatives. Further challenges like vernacular content/interface/questions of accessibility, connectivity/infrastructure/ bandwidth, lack of IT knowledge and lack of finance to buy the hardware and software remain prominent. While some of the challenges may be addressed by donor funds, the question of sustainability needs more than donor support but the strengthened arm of the beneficiary.

Finally, the lack of technological ownership by women is a huge challenge to be overcome if women are going to take a lead in peacebuilding. A sense of ownership is an important precondition for overcoming the barriers to women’s access to and use of ICTs. To achieve this fullness of ownership, “it is important that ICT tools are tailored to the specific needs of women” (Huyer and Sikoska 2003) and this feat can only be overcome by serious advocacy by the women themselves for other women. Women need to curve inroads into the realm of policy making to influence the ICT policy making for a gender perspective.

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