

WOMEN-LED PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES IN POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LIBERIA, COLOMBIA, AND NEPAL

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Women's participation in peacebuilding has increasingly gained attention in international peace and security discussions. Despite being heavily affected by armed conflicts, women have historically been excluded from formal peace negotiations and decision-making processes. While previous research has documented women's contributions within individual conflict settings, comparatively fewer studies have examined women-led peacebuilding initiatives across different post-conflict contexts. This study addresses this gap through a comparative desk analysis of Liberia, Colombia, and Nepal. The study employed a qualitative research design based on secondary data from academic literature, policy reports, institutional documents, and peacebuilding studies. Guided by Feminist Peace Theory and Intersectionality Theory, the analysis examined women's roles in grassroots mobilization, formal peace negotiations, political participation, community reconciliation, and post-conflict reconstruction. The findings indicate that women have played significant roles in promoting dialogue, inclusive peace agreements, and post-conflict recovery. However, the effectiveness of women-led peacebuilding initiatives is shaped by grassroots activism, institutional support, political opportunities, and broader social structures, while patriarchal norms, political resistance, security threats, and unequal access to decision-making continue to constrain meaningful participation. The study concludes that sustainable peacebuilding requires both women's meaningful inclusion and supportive institutional environments that reduce structural barriers across post-conflict societies.

Keywords: *Women's Peacebuilding, Feminist Peace Theory, Intersectionality, Conflict Resolution, Gender and Peace, Post-Conflict Reconstruction, Sustainable Peace*

INTRODUCTION

Peacebuilding is a complex and long-term process that aims to prevent the recurrence of conflict and to advance peaceful coexistence in societies that have been impacted by violence. It includes reconstruction of the institutions and recovery of the social relations and the underlying causes of conflict like inequality, injustice, and political exclusion. Historically the political elites and military actors have dominated the peacebuilding, which has mostly hindered the participation of women in formal peace processes (Anderlini, 2007). Over the past few decades, there have been growing concerns towards the role of women in enhancing peace

and stability in societies contravened by conflicts. The armed conflict usually affects women as one of the most vulnerable groups by displacement, gender-based violence, economic and loss of family members. Meanwhile, women have also been proven to be significant in community leadership, conflict mediation and social reconciliation and therefore they must be included in attaining inclusive and sustainable peace (Porter, 2007). One of the significant achievements in understanding the place of women in peace processes was made when in 2000 the United Nations Security Council passed a Resolution known as Women, Peace and Security (UN Security Council Resolution 1325). This resolution highlighted the role of women in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction and demanded an increased representation of women in the decision making process (Cohn, 2013).

In spite of these changes, women are still underrepresented in official peace agreements and in political decision making. The studies state that women have been involved in a very low percentage of official peace negotiations in the whole world. This low involvement limits the capacity of peace processes to engage gender-related issues like sexual violence, economic marginalization and inequality. Research indicates that peace negotiations involving women have higher chances of becoming more comprehensive in their social impact and lead to more sustainable peace results (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Despite limited participation in formal peace negotiations, women often play important roles in grassroots peacebuilding through community organisations that promote reconciliation, restore trust, and support long-term social stability (Porter, 2007).

Regardless of these successes, women peacebuilders still experience serious problems such as political marginalization, culture, security threats, and access to resources. In most cultures, women are not allowed to participate in leadership and decision-making processes because of patriarchy and women activists may also be intimidated or subjected to violence because of their role in the peacebuilding efforts (True, 2012). Although a substantial body of literature has examined women's participation in peacebuilding, much of the existing scholarship has focused on individual country experiences or specific peace processes. Comparatively less attention has been given to understanding how women-led peacebuilding initiatives operate across different post-conflict settings and what factors contribute to their effectiveness under varying political, social, and institutional conditions.

As a result, there remains a need for comparative analyses that move beyond single-case studies and identify broader patterns as well as context-specific differences in women's peacebuilding experiences. The selection of Liberia, Colombia, and Nepal provides an opportunity to examine women-led peacebuilding across diverse geographical regions and peacebuilding contexts. Liberia represents a case of grassroots women's mobilization that directly influenced the termination of armed conflict. The case of Colombia shows women's involvement in formal peace negotiations and institutional peacebuilding processes. Nepal provides lessons on how women can contribute to post conflict reconstruction, political change and community reconciliation. The comparison of these cases will help to build up a deeper understanding of the effects of various modes of women's involvement in peacebuilding.

As such, the value of this research is not limited to focusing on women's own involvement in peacebuilding, but also on understanding the elements that enable or disable women's influence in various post-conflict societies. This study is a comparative analysis of Liberia, Colombia and Nepal that provides insight into the similarities and differences in the

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women-led peacebuilding efforts taking place in these countries, and that has helped to build the body of literature on WPS. This study builds on existing literature on WPS by examining the similarities and differences in women-led peacebuilding efforts across Liberia, Colombia and Nepal. It further examines the role of women in peacebuilding, analyses the factors influencing the effectiveness of their initiatives, and explores how different political and social contexts shape women's participation in post-conflict societies.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the role of women in peacebuilding initiatives in Liberia, Colombia, and Nepal.
2. To identify the major challenges and barriers faced by women peacebuilders in post-conflict societies.
3. To compare the different approaches and strategies adopted by women in promoting peace and reconciliation.
4. To analyse the factors that influence the effectiveness of women-led peacebuilding initiatives across different contexts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Women in peacebuilding is an issue that has received more and more attention in academic literature and in global policy making. Historically, political and military actors have dominated peace processes thus in most cases, this aspect has acted as a constraint to the participation of women in formal negotiations and decision-making structures (Anderlini, 2007). Nevertheless, academics and practitioners have been embracing the fact that women play an important role in resolving conflicts, reconciliation and peaceful rebuilding of communities. The involvement of women in peace processes is frequently associated with the general discourse of gender equality and social justice. According to research, in most cases, women carry different viewpoints and priorities in the peace building efforts especially in matters pertaining to welfare of the community, human rights and social inclusions. Women-led programs tend to engage in restoring confidence in their communities, assisting women who have been violated as well as facilitating communication between the warring groups (Porter, 2007).

One of the great changes in encouraging women to take part in peacebuilding was the introduction of a resolution of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. This resolution became significant in terms of participation of women in the prevention of conflicts, in peace negotiation and post-conflict reconstruction. It also highlighted the necessity to safeguard women against violence in armed conflicts and in the post-conflict period and urged governments to ensure that women are more represented in the process of peace (Cohn, 2013). Although United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 marked a significant shift in recognising women's participation in peacebuilding, scholars have argued that institutional discourses often continue to reflect patriarchal assumptions that limit the transformative potential of the Women, Peace and Security agenda (Puechguirbal, 2010). In spite of such policy undertakings, women are still underrepresented in formal peace negotiations across the world. Research indicates that women have been involved in very low percentages of official peace processes and in most cases, their presence in decision-making

systems is low. This omission can undermine peace deals since the gender-related needs like sexual violence, economic marginalization, and social inequality might not be effectively tackled (Paffenholz et al., 2016).

Even though women are often not included in formal talks, they usually assume very important functions at the grassroots of peacebuilding. Women organizations and civil societies play the role of resolving conflicts by ensuring that they organize community discussions, enhance reconciliation efforts, and demand social justice. The activities assist in mending trust and enhancing relationships in communities where violence has occurred (Porter, 2007).

Recent studies further indicate that women have continued to play an important role in Nepal's post-conflict governance and local political institutions following the federal restructuring process. The implementation of gender quotas increased women's representation in local government structures; however, challenges related to meaningful participation, decision-making authority, and inclusion of marginalized groups remain significant. Research also highlights continuing concerns regarding transitional justice, implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and the representation of Dalit, Indigenous, and rural women within political institutions (UN Women, 2022; International Alert, 2021).

In spite of this contribution women in the peacebuilding still encounter a number of structural difficulties. Social rules that are patriarchal in nature tend to restrict women in terms of leadership and political power. The other way in which women peacebuilders can be intimidated, harassed or even violated is because they are activists in conflict-prone settings. Such obstacles demonstrate the need to consider gender inequality in terms of peacebuilding mechanisms and support the participation of women on an institutional level (True, 2012). Altogether, the current literature points to the significance and difficulty of the women involvement in the peacebuilding processes. Even though the international systems and policy efforts have led to increased gender representation, there are real obstacles that curtail the involvement of women in most peace processes. The analysis of women-led peacebuilding efforts in various settings can thus be of much use in identifying the contribution of women in solving conflicts and what factors determine the success of their work.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is guided by Feminist Peace Theory and Intersectionality Theory to better understand the role of women in peacebuilding processes and the factors that influence their participation in post-conflict societies. Feminist Peace Theory sees peace as not only the lack of violence but also a state of social justice, equality and social participation in political and social institutions. The theory seeks to question the prevailing theory of peace building which privileges the experiences and voices of political elites and military forces and neglects women's experiences and contributions. Feminist scholars have suggested that the women often contribute to peacebuilding in alternative ways, such as considering reconciliation, the betterment of the community, social justice, and long-term peace (Cohn, 2013; True, 2012). In this sense, women must not only be identified as conflict victims, but as agents of peace and social change as well.

Furthermore, the study adopts the theoretical framework of Intersectionality Theory developed by Crenshaw (1989) that posits that women's experiences are affected by multiple

and overlapping social identities, including gender, class, ethnicity, religion and political status. The concept of intersectionality emphasizes that women are not a monolithic entity and may have varying experiences of conflict and peacebuilding in their different social positions. This is especially significant in post-conflict societies in which women with diverse backgrounds and resources may have different opportunities for political engagement, economic resources, and decision making. Feminist Peace Theory and Intersectionality Theory is an analytical lens that can be used to understand the role of women in peacebuilding processes and how structural barriers can affect their role in that process. These theories assist in understanding both the opportunities and constraints experienced by women in Liberia, Colombia, and Nepal and provide a framework for comparing similarities and differences across the three cases.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design chosen in this study is qualitative research design using a desk analysis and a comparative case study. Qualitative research can also be applied in studying more complex social process, including peacebuilding, since it enables the investigator to contextualize the social phenomena, institutional framework, and experiences of individuals in detail. As the aim of this study is to explore the issues and achievements of women-initiated peacebuilding efforts, the qualitative analysis presents a suitable method of studying these processes in various settings.

Desk analysis is defined as the critical examination and analysis of the available secondary literature in the form of academic literature, policy reports, institutional documents and case studies. This methodology enables the researcher to focus on trends and themes in various cases without going to the field (Paffenholz, 2015). Desk analysis is also common in peace and conflict studies to examine historical peace processes, social movements and institutional responses to conflict. The research is also based on the comparative case study methodology. Case studies allow studying the real life situation and assist a researcher in realizing how the social and political variables may affect the results in a particular situation (Yin, 2014). Through comparing different cases, the study determines the similarities and differences in the experiences of women-led peacebuilding efforts.

Conceptual Framework

The Feminist Peace Theory and Intersectionality Theory are used as the main analytical tools to guide the study. Feminist Peace Theory offers a way of understanding the roles women play in peacebuilding activities, such as community participation, conflict resolution and reconciliation, and social justice advocacy. The theory lays special focus on the process of inclusive participation and the transformation of gendered power relations within society in order to achieve sustainable peace (Cohn, 2013; True, 2012).

Additionally, Intersectionality Theory helps to understand that women's experiences of conflict and peacebuilding do not necessarily match or but are compounded by a range of social determinants including class, ethnicity, religion, political status and geographical location (Crenshaw, 1989). Theoretical lenses can be used to consider the roles of women and the institutional constraints that impact women's involvement in peacebuilding processes. The thematic analysis and comparative case study approach were guided by these frameworks to

identify patterns related to women's agency, grassroots mobilization, institutional participation, gender inclusion, and challenges faced by women peacebuilders across Liberia, Colombia, and Nepal.

Case Selection

The analysis is based on the three examples of women-led peacebuilding efforts: Liberia, Colombia, and Nepal. The cases were chosen due to the important roles of women in the process of peacebuilding in both situations, because the political environment and approaches were different. The example of Liberia, where women mobilization at the grassroots level helped to bring a civil war to an end. The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace was a movement which organized thousands of women to pressurize political leaders to negotiate an agreement that would terminate the civil war in the year 2003 (Gbowee, 2011).

Colombia is one example where women played a role during the formal peace negotiations by advocacy and institutionalization. The organizations of women managed to lobby the creation of a gender sub-commission in the process of peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) so that gender-related provisions would be included in the 2016 peace agreement (Bouvier, 2016).

Nepal is a post-conflict reconstruction site, where the feminine gender played out political reformation, economic restoration and community reconciliation in the country following the civil war that ended in 2006. Gender equality, political participation, and peacebuilding on the community level were encouraged by women organizations during the reconstruction period (Yadav, 2016).

These three cases are chosen to give the study a geographical variation, as well as to attempt to understand the various ways of women involvement in peacebuilding.

Data Sources

The research makes use of secondary data retrieved in the academic and institutional publications. These comprise peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reports of international organizations, policy documents, peace agreements, publications of the NGOs and civil society organizations. The major sources under consideration are the research about the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement, the analysis of the Colombian peace negotiations with FARC and the research about women involvement in the post-conflict rebuilding in Nepal. Triangulation enables the researcher to use several sources and enhance the credibility of the results.

Study Selection Process

In order to make a systematic selection of literature, PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework is adhered to in the study. The database searches in Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR, and Web of Science and report of international organizations and policy documents were performed to find the relevant studies.

The rest of the studies were filtered out by title and abstract to select those that were relevant in their concern of women participation in peacebuilding activities. Articles which failed to touch directly on the roles of women in conflict resolution or peace making were eliminated. The rest of the sources were judged by the full-text review to provide the relevance and methodological quality. The overall selection process is illustrated

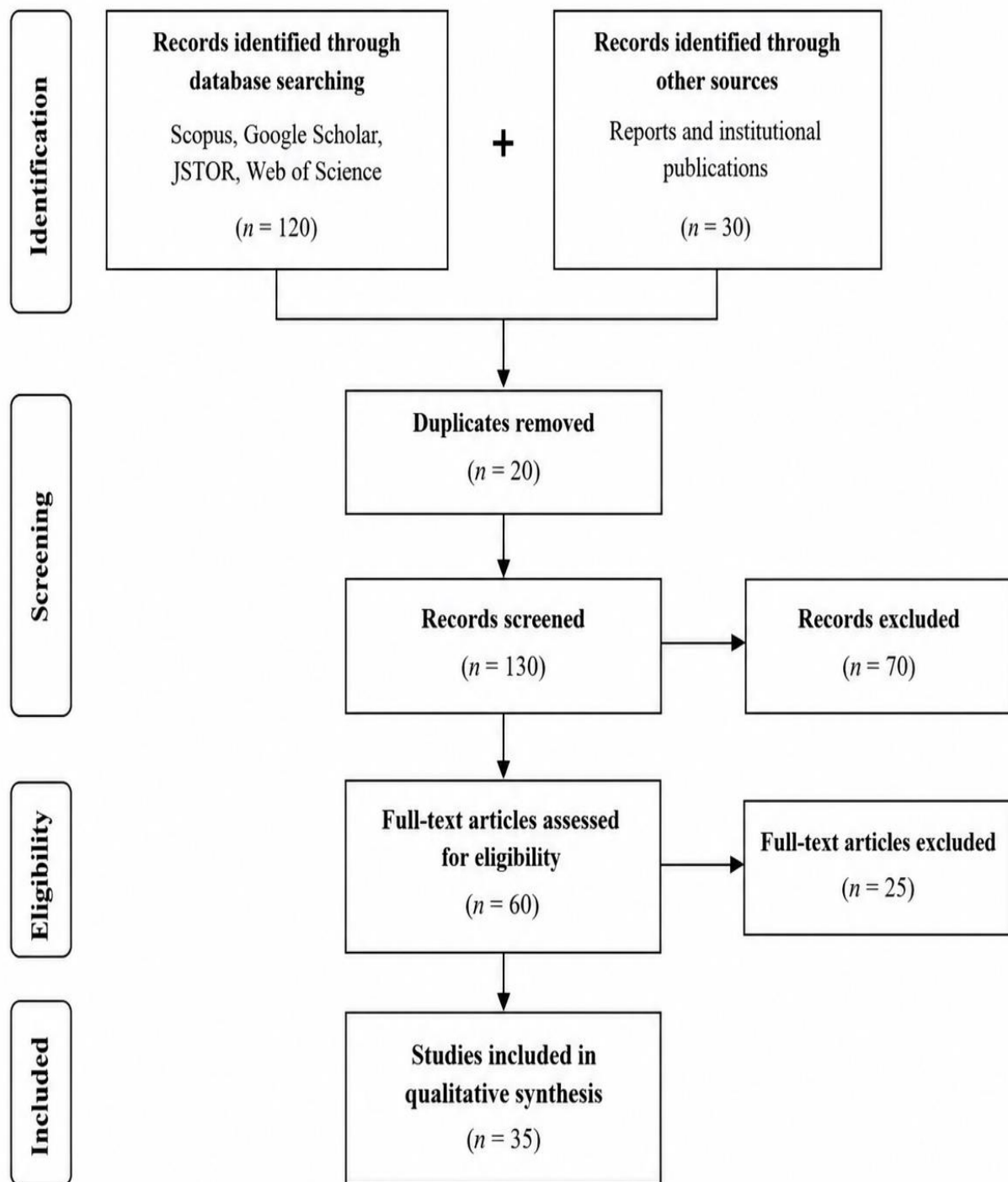


Figure 1. PRISMA-based flow diagram illustrating the study selection process.

Note. The study selection process was conducted following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework.

in Figure 1.

Data Analysis

The paper used thematic analysis to analyse the gathered information. A qualitative technique known as thematic analysis is used to identify and define patterns in information presented in a text (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This method enables the qualitative data to be categorized into significant categories in large volumes. The analysis was aimed at establishing major themes associated with women-led peacebuilding efforts in the cases chosen. These themes are the women leadership in peacebuilding, mobilizing grassroots and engagement with the community, institutional support and advocacy in the international arena, the issue of women peacebuilders, and success factors of women-led movements.

Through the discussion of these themes in Liberia, Colombia and Nepal, the paper establishes general trends as well as local variations in the experiences of women who engage in peacebuilding activities in their countries. The thematic analysis was informed by Feminist Peace Theory and Intersectionality Theory. These theoretical perspectives guided the identification and interpretation of themes related to women's agency, leadership, inclusion in peace processes, and the structural barriers affecting their participation. The application of these frameworks enabled the study to move beyond descriptive accounts and examine how gendered power relations and social contexts influenced women-led peacebuilding initiatives across Liberia, Colombia, and Nepal.

Limitations of the Study

This study relies solely on secondary data from the academic literature, policy reports, institutional documents, peace agreements and publications by international organisations. Thus the effects of the findings will rely on the availability, quality and extent of existing sources. The research is desk-based and does not involve primary data collection (interviews, surveys, field observation), which may hinder the ability to capture the current experiences and perspectives of women peacebuilders.

This study is on three post-conflict societies, chosen due to their important experiences in women-led peacebuilding: Liberia, Colombia and Nepal. These cases offer helpful comparisons, but may not reflect the full range of women's experiences of peacebuilding in all conflict-affected areas. Furthermore, there could be variations in the amount and availability of literature for each of the selected cases, which could have affected the level of analysis.

Notwithstanding these constraints, the comparative qualitative approach has a role to play in uncovering commonalities, contextual variations, and important variables that impact the effectiveness of women-led peacebuilding efforts in different post-conflict contexts.

Case Study 1: Liberia – Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace

Background of the Conflict

The small country of Liberia suffered two catastrophic civil wars between 1989 and 2003 that led to the outbreak of violence, economic meltdown, and caused untold human suffering. The war led to the loss of lives of about 250,000 individuals and displacement of a big percentage of the population. The war was brutal on civilians especially women and children who were displaced, sexually assaulted and also their livelihoods (Alaga, 2007). The Liberian women were also among the worst hit during the war. Such experiences encouraged most women to mobilize in groups and push the violence to an end.

Emergence of the Women's Peace Movement

A key peace movement that proved to be influential in Liberia was the Women of Liberia Mass Action of Peace that arose in 2003. Peace activist Leymah Gbowee led the movement and organized women of various religious and social orientations to promote peace.

The movement started initially as small prayer gatherings by the Christian women who were greatly concerned by the violence that was still going on in the country. Shortly after that, Muslim women became part of the movement which formed a large alliance of women who shared the same interest which was to end the civil war. This collaboration of the Christian and Muslim women was significant in enhancing the credibility and solidarity of the movement (Gbowee, 2011).

Strategies Used by Women Peacebuilders

Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement took a number of approaches to preach peace. Nonviolent protest was one of the most significant tactics. Women held sit-ins, marches, and open demonstrations to attract national and international attention to their desire to have peace. The other important tactic was grassroots mobilization. Community networks, religious and local organizations were utilized by women to organize participants in various parts of the country. This bottom-top strategy enabled the movement to enjoy massive support among the common citizens who were also the victims of the effects of the war. The women also advocated in terms of peace negotiations. In 2003, Liberian government and rebel groups peace talks were held in Ghana. Women activists went to Ghana and held protests outside the negotiation venue. Gbowee (2011) points out that women protesters at one time blocked the doors of the negotiation hall to avoid delegates leaving until some advancement was made in the talks.

Challenges Faced by Women

Even though the movement was successful, women peacebuilders in Liberia had to deal with a number of critical challenges. Security risks were one of the problems. The nation was in a state of violent war and political actors and armed groups against the actions of the activists threatened them. There were social and cultural barriers that women were exposed to as well. Political activism in most societies has been male dominated and women participation in mass protests was at times rebuked or dissuaded. These challenges notwithstanding, women were still taking an active part in the movement. The other problem was insufficient finances. The movement was run on a small budget and it was mainly dependent on volunteering and community assistance. Nevertheless, the simplicity of the strategies of the movement especially peaceful demonstrations and prayer meetings enabled it to work well with little financial resources (Alaga, 2007).

Impact of the Movement

Feminist movement Women of Liberia Mass Action of Peace also contributed greatly to the termination of civil war in Liberia. Their relentless campaigns provided a pressure of peace into the society, and played a part in signing Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003 officially ending the conflict. Moreover, the movement turned out to be a globally known model of successful women-led grassroots peacebuilding. It showed how the mobilization of the civil society actors especially women can affect national politics and play a part in the resolution of conflicts.

Analytical Insights from the Liberian Case

The success of women-led peacebuilding was not a result of just women's participation, but the confluence of several enabling factors as seen in the Liberia case. The first was the extensive grassroots mobilization, which brought together women from a variety of religious, social and economic backgrounds under a shared agenda. Its partnership with Muslim and Christian women added more legitimacy and social base, enabling it to garner public sympathy.

Second, by using nonviolent resistance, women were able to place a political pressure without adding to violence. Women were able to impact politicians through peaceful protest, public lobbying and engagement with the peace process even if they were not directly in the decision making process. This discovery reinforces Feminist Peace Theory which claims that women can find alternative channels of political influence and power outside of the mainstream (True, 2012).

The Liberian case, however, illustrates that women's engagement is not sufficient for the success of peacebuilding. The movement came in a time of general public disillusionment with war and growing international pressure to resolve war. In these political circumstances, opportunities arose for women's activism to take more effect. Therefore, the effectiveness of women-led peacebuilding appears to depend not only on women's agency but also on the broader political environment in which such initiatives occur. From an intersectional perspective, the Liberian case also illustrates how women from different religious and social backgrounds were able to overcome traditional divisions and develop a collective peacebuilding identity. This highlights the importance of understanding women as diverse actors whose cooperation can strengthen peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict societies.

Case Study 2: Colombia – Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations

Background of the Conflict

Latin America has had one of the protracted armed struggles in Colombia. The Colombian government war against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) started in 1960s and lasted over 50 years. More than 220,000 people died as a result of the violence, and millions of people were displaced, which made it one of the most serious humanitarian disasters in the area (Bouvier, 2016).

Women were not the focus of the formal peace talks, whereas they were initially largely sidelined, in spite of being the major casualties of the conflict. Peace processes in Colombia, like most other conflicts, traditionally were dominated by political and military actors. Nevertheless, the constant pressure by the women organizations over the years led to the inclusion of gender perspectives in the peace process.

Women Advocacy in Negotiating Peace

The role of women organisations in Colombia was very important as they advocated the inclusion of gender into the peace talks between the government and FARC. A number of civil society organizations toiled hard to make sure that the voices and experiences of women were heard through the peace process. Non-governmental organizations like Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres, Red Nacional de Mujeres, and Mujeres por la Paz enlisted both national and international backlash to have the gender perspectives included in the talks (Bouvier, 2016).

These organizations maintained that the peace agreement had to take into consideration the issues that were specifically experienced by women in the conflict. Such problems were

associated with sexual violence, rights to land ownership, political representation and the reintegration of female former combatants into the society.

Establishment of the Gender Sub-Commission

Among the biggest accomplishments of the advocacy of women in Colombia was the establishment of a Gender Sub-Commission in the peace negotiations in 2014. The sub-commission was created so that the gender attitudes could be included in the peace agreement and the concerns of women would be addressed properly during the process of negotiations.

The outcome of this process was that, the Final Peace Agreement signed in 2016 contained over 100 gender-related clauses, and it was the most gender-inclusive peace agreement in the globe (Bouvier, 2016). These provisions tackled matters like justice on victims of sexual violence, women land rights, and women involvement in the political and economic rebuilding.

Challenges Faced by Women Peacebuilders

Despite the fact that women made great milestones in the peace negotiations, there are some difficulties that they experienced in the process. Political opposition was one of the greatest. Certain political players and societal groups held the opinion that there was no need to incorporate gender perspectives into the peace talks and this brought about conflicts and arguments in the course of the negotiation. The other issue was that gender provisions were implemented in the peace accord. Despite all the promises of gender equality in the agreement, the implementation process of those promises has been slow and uneven. Women groups have also come up severally complaining of insufficient funds, institutional weakness and political resistance to some of the reforms.

Impact of Women's Participation

Notwithstanding these issues, participation by women had a great effect on the Colombian peace process. The consideration of the gender perspectives made sure that the peace agreement considered the special experience of women who were subjected to the conflict. This was a significant change in the manner in which peace talks are being undertaken. The Colombian peace agreement has since been popularly used as a case study on how gender perspectives can be incorporated in the peace negotiations. It proved that gender sub-commissions, as part of the institutional mechanisms, may be significant in providing women, in terms of their participation and influence in the peace processes.

Analytical Insights from the Colombian Case

The Colombian case illustrates a different pathway of women-led peacebuilding compared to Liberia. While the Liberian experience was primarily driven by grassroots mobilization, women in Colombia achieved influence largely through institutional engagement and policy advocacy. The creation of the Gender Sub-Commission illustrates the possibility of formulating mechanisms to provide opportunities for women's participation in the design of peace agreements and in ensuring that gender concerns are included in the agreements.

Through the lens of Feminist Peace Theory, the experience of Colombia emphasizes the need for institutional inclusion in the process of changing more traditionally male-dominated peace processes. Women's groups were also able to hold back the power structures and raise issues like sexual violence, political representation and women's rights in the peace treaty. They helped make the Colombian peace agreement one of the most gender-inclusive peace agreements in the world.

But the Colombian case also shows that the mere fact of participation does not ensure effective implementation. The peace agreement contained over one hundred gender-related provisions, but their implementation has been uneven, largely because of political resistance, security concerns, institutional problems, and the lack of resources. While women's participation in negotiations is a critical first step, this finding highlights the need for sustained political commitment and effective implementation mechanisms for any goal of achieving sustainable peace.

An intersectional perspective further reveals that women affected by the conflict did not experience peacebuilding in the same way. Rural women, Indigenous women, Afro-Colombian women, and female victims of conflict often faced distinct challenges and levels of access to political participation. Consequently, the benefits of peacebuilding initiatives were not distributed equally across all groups of women. The Colombian case therefore demonstrates both the opportunities and limitations of institutional approaches to women's peacebuilding. While formal inclusion can influence policy outcomes, the long-term effectiveness of such participation depends on the willingness of political institutions to implement and sustain gender-sensitive reforms.

Case Study 3: Nepal – Women in Post-Conflict Reconstruction

Background of the Conflict

The Nepalese Civil war was a decade long armed conflict that occurred in Nepal between 1996 and 2006. The Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) were at war. The causes of the war included the existence of long-standing socio-economic inequalities, political rejection, and discontent with the monarch and the form of governance in place. Over 13,000 individuals died in the process, and thousands became homeless (Yadav, 2016).

Following the end of the conflict after signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2006, Nepal was characterized by a stage of political change and reconstruction after the conflict. During this stage, women were very active in lobbying political reforms, social reconciliation, and economic revival in the areas that were affected by conflict.

Women's Political Participation

Another significant advancement was the Interim Constitution of Nepal adopted in 2007 that mandates women to get at least 33 percent representation in state institutions. This was a provision that gave women new avenues to engage in decision-making and take part in the administration of the country (Yadav, 2016). The presence of women in the Constituent Assembly where the new constitution was being drafted also improved following the peace agreement. This platform was utilized by women leaders and activists to bring changes in the form of policies that would guarantee equality between the sexes, ensure gender violence is prevented, and guarantee women their right to property and citizenship. They were involved in the activities that guaranteed that gender equality was considered a significant tenet in the political process of reforming Nepal.

Economic Empowerment and Community Recovery

To cope with these challenges, women organizations came up with cooperatives and microfinance initiatives that were geared towards empowering women economically. Through these endeavours, women were made accessible to financial resources, skills training as well as starting small businesses. These programs enabled the women to enhance their economic autonomy and restore their lives in the society after the war.

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Females were also involved in peacebuilding activities at a community level. Women organizations created forums among communities, helped to reconcile communities, and helped former combatants to integrate back into the society. These programs assisted in restoring confidence and enhancing societal unity following the war.

Challenges Faced by Women in Post-Conflict Nepal

The women in Nepal were still suffering some challenges during the aftermath of the conflict even after their efforts of initiating political reform and community restoration. The fact that social norms were patriarchal remained one of the greatest obstacles. The traditional mindset in most societies denied women a chance to hold leadership and decision-making roles.

Inaccessible land and property rights were another significant challenge. Despite the legal changes that were brought with the aim of ensuring equality among the sexes, women faced bureaucratic and cultural challenges whenever they wanted to assert any property or inheritance rights. These obstacles curtailed the economic safety and empowerment of the women in the long run.

Impact of Women's Participation

Nevertheless, the involvement of women in the reconstruction efforts in Nepal after the conflicts had a number of positive results. The advocacy of women played a role in enshrining gender equality in the political system of Nepal. They contributed to reforming the constitution, which assisted in making the rights of women acknowledged in the national laws. Women-led economic initiatives were also significant in empowering the local economies and community rehabilitation. These programs enhanced the capacity of women to provide for their families and be involved in the development of their communities by facilitating entrepreneurship and financial self-sufficiency.

Analytical Insights from the Nepalese Case

The Nepalese case shows that women's engagement in peacebuilding does not stop at conflict resolution, but continues in the promotion of long-term political change, community healing and even governance reforms. Women in Nepal were active in reconstructing after the conflict and in the democratic transition, as opposed to Liberia, where women were the main drivers of the termination of the conflict, and Colombia, in which women were given influence as a result of formal peace negotiations.

The Feminist Peace Theory approach shows that the Nepal case demonstrates ways for women to participate in peacebuilding activities through political engagement, constitutional changes, economic recovery and community reconciliation. Women's participation in political institutions after the peace agreement was a significant advance in achieving gender-responsive governance and women's greater voice in decision-making. The Nepalese experience, however, also points to the shortcomings of formal inclusion. There were constitutional and legal changes that broadened opportunities for women, but many obstacles to implementation. Women remained limited in their participation by patriarchal social norms, unequal access to resources and reduced engagement in higher-ranking decision making roles. This indicates that if legal reforms are to have an impact they must be coupled with social and institutional change.

The inter-generational cross-over also exposes the unevenness of the gains of post-conflict reforms for women. Women from less privileged social groups, such as ethnic minorities, rural and economically disadvantaged populations, and lower castes were more

likely to experience exclusion from participation than women from higher social status groups. Women's participation in peacebuilding and reconstruction was therefore very unevenly distributed within society. Thus, the Nepal example also shows that sustainable peacebuilding cannot be achieved without political representation, but must also break the cycle of structural inequalities that still prevent women from full inclusion in post-conflict governance and development.

DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis shows how women's contributions to peacebuilding are influenced by their participation as well as the political, institutional and social contexts they engage in. Women were also key players in the conflict transformation process in Liberia, Colombia and Nepal, but their role and mechanism of impact on the peacebuilding process were different in the three countries. The results are not intended as an attempt to provide a single model of women-led peacebuilding, but rather show that women's agency and the facilitation of governance structures play a crucial role in enabling their successful participation in peacebuilding.

One of the significant outcomes is that women's influence went in three different but complementary pathways. In Liberia, the main mechanisms for peacebuilding were grassroots mobilization, by which civic action as a collective pressure was used to influence political leaders in a time of national crisis. Women also exerted influence in Colombia, securing gender-sensitive mechanisms in the formal peace process. Nepal, on the other hand, is a post conflict country where women's role in political negotiation itself, however, increased in visibility in the process of political reconstruction and governance reforms. The differences illustrate that women's contributions are context specific and change over the course of and type of peace process.

The comparison also underscores that “grassroots” and “institutional” are not mutually exclusive strategies for building change. Rather, they seem to bolster themselves. Grassroots movements provide social legitimacy and social pressure, institutional mechanisms provide opportunities to move demands for policy and governance change. Liberia demonstrates how civic mobilisation can help put an end to violent conflict, while Colombia demonstrates the importance of institutional mechanisms – including the Gender Sub-Commission – in ensuring that women's priorities are addressed in formal peace agreements. Additionally, Nepal illustrates how political reforms can increase women's representation, albeit not necessarily effective in terms of women's influence in decision-making.

The other noteworthy finding is that structural barriers remained in all three cases. Women were subjected to patriarchal norms, unequal access to decision making, security threats, and institutional resistance, regardless of the political systems or history of conflict in the country. These impediments not only prevented women's involvement, but also long-term implementation of gender-responsive peacebuilding efforts. The results thus affirmed Feminist Peace Theory that suggests that change in the gendered power dynamics is needed to achieve sustainable peace and not symbolic representation of women in political processes. Likewise, the evidence shows that women experienced peacebuilding differently by ethnicity, class, geographical location and political position, which are consistent with the Intersectionality

Theory. Peace processes did not equally benefit women, and more often than not, marginalised groups faced higher barriers to participation than more privileged women.

The results are similar to those from earlier studies, which have shown that women's engagement can be linked to the development of more inclusive and sustainable peace processes (O'Reilly et al., 2015; Paffenholz et al., 2016). This study, however, builds upon the current research on the benefits of participation and demonstrates that it is not enough. In all three cases, the success of women-led peacebuilding was contingent on the combination of grassroots mobilisation, institutional engagement, political will and implementation capacity. The countries that integrated these components established more conducive environments for women to participate in peace talks as well as post-conflict reconstruction.

Overall, the comparative evidence suggests that women should be recognised not merely as participants in peacebuilding but as strategic actors whose contributions influence social reconciliation, institutional reform, and long-term stability. At the same time, the study demonstrates that meaningful participation requires more than numerical representation. Sustainable peace is more likely when women's engagement is accompanied by supportive institutions, political commitment, adequate resources, and sustained efforts to address structural gender inequalities.

CONCLUSION

This paper explored the issue of women in peacebuilding efforts by comparing three post-conflict nations, which include Liberia, Colombia, and Nepal, in a comparative desk analysis. The study findings prove that women have a significant and direct role in facilitating peace, reconciliation and social recovery within societies where there has been conflict. Women have played an important role in bringing peace both at communal and institutional levels despite meeting a lot of social, political and structural obstacles.

These are some of the examples that show that women are not victims of the conflict but rather, significant agents of peacebuilding and social change. They contribute to addressing other issues that are always ignored during the peace negotiation processes as a traditional approach, which include social justice, healing of communities, and development in the long term. The study, however, also mentions a number of issues that make women still incomplete participants of the peacebuilding processes. Social structures that are patriarchal, low access to political influence, insecurity threats, and poor institutional backing are still major obstacles in most post conflict societies. These are some of the challenges which show that attainment of effective gender inclusion within the peace processes cannot rely on symbolic participation only but requires organizational changes and political commitment.

The research results of this paper imply that the institutional structures and policy framework are vital in facilitating female engagement in peacebuilding. The opportunities to impact political decision-making by women can be provided because of legal changes, gender quotas, and institutional organizations, including gender commissions. Simultaneously, one can still speak about grassroots mobilization and the activism of civil societies which are crucial factors of change as it has been shown in all three cases. All in all, this paper demonstrates that the role of women in peacebuilding makes it more inclusive, sustainable, and community-oriented. The importance of acknowledging and enabling the role of women in conflict

resolution is therefore a guiding factor to the attainment of long term peace in the post conflict societies.

The comparative analysis in this study adds to the literature by showing that the impact of women's involvement in peacebuilding is shaped not only by engaging in women's participation but also by the political, institutional and social environment in which women participate. The analysis and comparison of these three cases indicate that the agency, institutional support and ability to overcome structural barriers all contribute to the influence of women in peacebuilding. Moreover, the results indicate that female engagement must not be considered a panacea for peacebuilding problems. Women have played important roles in all three examples, but their impact was different, depending on the degree of political commitment and capacity, of social acceptance, and of access to decision-making spaces. It emphasizes the need to go beyond symbolic inclusion to substantive participation, thereby allowing women to make a substantive contribution to the outcome of peacebuilding.

Future research may further examine the long-term impacts of women-led peacebuilding initiatives on political stability, social cohesion, and post-conflict governance. Additional comparative studies involving other post-conflict societies may also provide deeper insights into the conditions that facilitate or constrain meaningful women's participation in peacebuilding processes.

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