

WOMEN AS POST-CONFLICT AGENTS OF CHANGE ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND  
RECONSTRUCTION

by

Kristin Nicole Christakis  
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Committee:

Jeli Sucevic for Sandra Cheldelin Chair of Committee

Anna Kuzich

Jeli Sucevic for Omar Green

Samuel H. Stewart

Graduate Program Director

Andreas Santoli

Dean, School for Conflict Analysis and  
Resolution

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at George Mason University

by

Kristin Nicole Christakis  
Bachelor of Arts  
Georgia State University, 2007

Director: Sandra Cheldelin, Vernon M. and Minnie Lynch Professor  
School Conflict Analysis and Resolution

Spring Semester 2013  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA



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## **DEDICATION**

To the girls and women who are using their agency to make a positive impact on the world around them.

To my loving parents: for their unending support, encouragement, and love.

To my dear friends: for encouragement, coffee breaks, and lots of laughs along the way.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Armed Forces of Liberia.....	AFL
Basic Human Needs.....	BHN
ECOWAS Peacekeeping Force.....	ECOMIL
Economic Community of West African States.....	ECOWAS
Gender and Development.....	GAD
Gender Based Violence.....	GBV
Gender Development Index.....	GDI
Gender Empowerment Measure.....	GEM
Gender Inequality Index.....	GII
Government of Liberia.....	GOL
Human Development Index.....	HDI
Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia.....	INPFL
Interim Government of National Unity.....	IGNU
Internally Displaced Persons.....	IDPs
Liberian National Action Plan.....	LNAP
Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy.....	LURD
Liberian Women’s Initiative.....	LWI
Ministry for Women’s Conditions and Women’s Rights.....	MCFDF
Movement for Democracy in Liberia.....	MODEL
National Patriotic Front of Liberia.....	NPFL
Non-Governmental Organizations.....	NGOs
Truth and Reconciliation Commission.....	TRC
Revolutionary United Front.....	RUF
United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy.....	ULIMO
United Nations.....	UN
United Nations Children’s Fund.....	UNICEF
United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.....	UNESCO
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women....	UNIFEM
United Nations Mission in Liberia.....	UNMIL
United Nations Security Council.....	UNSC
United States Institute of Peace.....	USIP
Women in Development.....	WID
World Bank World Development Report.....	WBWDP



## DEFINITIONS

Agency: understood as the process through which women and men use their endowments and take advantage of economic opportunities to achieve desired outcomes (World Bank's 2012 World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development)

Feminism: the advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men; feminism can be thought of in terms of women being on equal terms with men; it is women not becoming subservient to men or pushed down in society by laws or by the culture in which women find themselves

Gender: the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits that are associated with a particular sex; with sex referring to the genetic differences between a man and a woman. The social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men". It can also be said of gender that it "determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a women or a man in a given context (UN Women).

Gender Equality: "refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men" (UN WOMEN).

Gendered Identities: "a combination of physical and behavioural characteristics which set apart boys from girls, men from women" (Ariyabandu, 2009: 6)

## **ABSTRACT**

Women as Post-Conflict Agents of Change on Civil Society and Reconstruction

Kristin Nicole Christakis, M.S.

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Thesis Director: Dr. Sandra Cheldelin

In the aftermath of the conflict in Liberia, as well as the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, women's movements emerged as agents of change in the realms of development and post conflict reconstruction. In investigating the role of gender following disasters and violence this thesis explores and analyzes the grassroots efforts and the impact of women's efforts in post-war Liberia and post-disaster Haiti. Women are commonly seen as victims of war—at much greater risk of rape and torture, and overrepresented as refugees—whereas in natural disasters women and men are likely to be affected equally as victims. In Liberia, the possibilities available to women were shaped by the protracted nature of the 13-year conflict whereas the possibilities in Haiti were shaped by the immediacy of the earthquake. This thesis is a comparative study to examine the similarities and differences of women's efforts at reconstruction and rebuilding their civil society in post-conflict Liberia and post-natural disaster Haiti.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Introduction**

The importance and value of gender and the contributions made by women in post-conflict and post-disaster circumstances have long been misjudged. In the aftermath of the conflict in Liberia, as well as the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, women's movements have emerged as collective agents of change in the realms of civil society redevelopment and reconstruction. Conflict and disaster alike deeply affect gender roles. Unfortunately, "...women are essentially and overwhelmingly portrayed as the *victims* of war" and disasters (Cheldelin and Eliatamby, 1: 2011). It is more common than not for women to be seen as sufferers of conflict and disaster with the "dominant narrative about women in conflict...[being that]...women are, for the most part, victims" (Cheldelin and Eliatamby, xvi: 2011).

It is imperative to counter the traditional view of women which is constantly espoused in post-conflict and post-disaster situations by exposing the accounts of women "demonstrating their capacities of agency—accessing their voice and engaging in action—adopting new roles that transform gender dynamics in the societies" from which they are a part (2: 2011). In Liberia, the possibilities for women were shaped by the protracted nature of the 13-year conflict whereas the possibilities of the women of Haiti were shaped by the immediacy of the earthquake. As Andrea Bartoli, Dean of the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University states, "today, no

serious, relevant, and sustained [reconstruction or development] process may be achieved without the input, influence, and debate generated by women” (xi, 2011). There is a growing body of literature establishing the gendered differences between war and peace consequently noting that women have different experiences, needs, and responses, yet somehow national policy makers overlook this detail in reconstruction and development, which leads to the neglect of the positive power of women’s agency in these sectors.

### **Objectives and Focus**

The objective of this thesis was to critically assess and analyze the available literature on the topic of gender, and more specifically, women’s agency using the case studies of post-conflict Liberia and post-disaster Haiti. I examined the complex nature of gender as well as women’s capacity for change. In investigating the role of gender in conflict, in particular women, this thesis explores and evaluates the efforts and the impact of women in post-conflict Liberia and post-disaster Haiti. When addressing development and reconstruction, three main categories of development were examined: economic, political, and social. *Women as Post-Conflict Agents of Change on Civil Society and Reconstruction* aims to contribute a dynamic understanding of women acting upon their own agency in post-conflict and post-disaster states. The objective is to critically assess the complex nature of gender and women’s capacity for change. *Women as Post-Conflict Agents of Change on Civil Society and Reconstruction* addresses the following questions:

1. Do women have more latitude and “authorship of change” in post-disaster situations or in post-conflict situations?

2. Why is gender a factor worth consideration in post-conflict and post-disaster states?
3. What allowed the women of Liberia and Haiti to become agents of change in post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction and civil society?
4. What are the conditions necessary for women to organize to bring about peace and solidarity after violence or disasters?

Chapter Two is the methodology and outline of the design of my thesis. This chapter explains how and why this thesis was written.

Chapter Three of this thesis defines gender, discusses how it is incorporated into the field of conflict resolution, and examines the purpose and viability of gender mainstreaming. It also gives insight to the context of Liberia as a country and provides the background of the protracted civil war. The context of Haiti, the second case study used in this thesis, and includes critical points regarding the devastating earthquake of 2010. This chapter also examines the role of women prior, during, and immediately after the conflict in Liberia and the disaster in Haiti.

Chapter Four focuses on my findings regarding women's agency on development and reconstruction in post conflict Liberia and post disaster Haiti. This chapter includes three main sections of development: political, social, and economic. It is also presents case studies that are further broken down by top-down approaches and bottom-up approaches to achieving gender equality and ensuring space for women's agency.

The final chapter (Five) summarizes the research findings for *Women as Post-Conflict Agents of Change on Civil Society and Reconstruction* and restates ways in

which this thesis positions itself to the already existing literature in the field of gender and conflict studies. This chapter explicitly answers my research questions. It also provides a discussion of what gender and women's agency means for the fields of conflict resolution and development.

This thesis assumes all women; regardless of age, class, race, or religion have similar interests in post-conflict and post-disaster development. I am fully aware that this is not always the case nor the dominant view in development and feminist literature, and that arguments can be made in favor of agency differing based on the classifiers previously mentioned. It is true that development policies will affect women different due to age, class, race, and religion, however that examination and analysis is outside the scope of this thesis. Therefore, I present this thesis with the assumption that women are women and there are no major distinctions made based on class, race, age or even religion moving forward. This allows for the opinion that the goals women desire in development cut across these divisions that happen to be socially constructed.

### **Unlikely Counterparts? Liberia and Haiti**

At first glance the two cases appear to be starkly different, however strong parallels between the two can be made. The contexts of the case studies and the similarities between the women of Liberia and the women of Haiti are further fleshed out in Chapter Two. However, in an effort to preface them, I have listed the likenesses, in some detail, which allows me to use these states as case studies for women's agency in post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts.

The first major parallel between Liberia and Haiti is that each state was originally built upon native populations that had a large slave population. They were both states where the indigenous people were systematically taken advantage of for the purposes, gains, and self-interest of larger, more powerful states. Haiti experienced this exploitation by refusal of recognition by the international system; this denial from the “sisterhood of nations” (i.e. the international community of colonizers) was carried out for 34 years. Liberia was also denied recognition from the international community, although it did have an easier time than Haiti mostly because of its close historical ties to the United States. The slave populations were a concern of the United States of America but the economical advantages each of these states provided for the American government to make its way to the forefront of those nations, and soon outweighed the disadvantages of recognizing Haiti and Liberia. Clearly, the similarities between the indigenous peoples of Liberia and Haiti, exploited by the international community, and each state being comprised of a majority of former slave populations, is beginning for the foundation needed to draw the comparisons between Liberia and Haiti.

The second comparison to be made, and of the utmost importance to this thesis, is the role of women in both the Liberian and Haitian societies. These two states run a similar vein in this regard. Liberian and Haitian women are both seen as the backbones of society and family life. They run the home, raise the children, and care for the elderly. These women also share the burden of being members of the lowest economic market.

The conflict and disaster, respectively, allowed the women in Liberia and Haiti to align, within their own countries, with similar goals, regardless of wealth, religion, or

marital status. Without the particular circumstances brought about through the war and the earthquake, it is possible to speculate that these women would have had other goals to be determined by factors such as wealth, which could have prevented them from forming their particular groups to influence and exert their agency during development processes in the way that they have. Each of the situations examined in this thesis resulted in the “breakdown of the social fabric and the fragmentation of society” (INSTRAW, 2009: 9). This collapse is what allowed for similar changes in the typical patriarchal societies to transform. When analyzing each of these case studies we must remember “we are dealing with very conservative and patriarchal societies where women have been traditionally represented in second position to men” (Badmus, 2006: 60-65).

Even with the transformation of social norms (discussed in detail in Chapter Three), both of these states remain among the most disadvantaged in the international communities. They also have women disproportionately clustered in the least productive sectors. It is argued by Sen that, “the family was not...an altruistic space of harmonious distribution of resources, but a deeply contested space where women suffered owing to the patriarchal social relations obtaining within the home and in the public sphere” (Rai, 2011: 31). Sen’s statement regarding the family, gender relations, and a lack of women’s agency, accurately describes family life in Liberia and Haiti. The home is a place where, yes, women had potential to make more of an impact in regards to raising children or caring for the family, but they have no voice on family planning or the distribution of income. Therefore, they possessed no real agency. This is just another similarity between these case studies, which sustains the comparative analysis presented in this thesis.

In Liberia and Haiti “patriarchy has negated processes of development” (Cockburn, 2007: 41). This traditional male-centric way of operating a society has been a detriment to positive development for women thus stunting their growth and their ability to act as agents of change.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Methodology and Framework**

*Women as Post-Conflict Agents of Change on Civil Society and Reconstruction* has been prepared solely on the foundation of preexisting written material. The research carried out for this paper was compiled through primary and secondary sources: including (but not limited to) academic resources, journals, books, and other published material, as well as information provided by national and international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN). Web-based data were also used in the composition of this thesis.

Through the course of this thesis, gender and women in Liberia and Haiti are used as independent variables whereas post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction and civil society redevelopment take the role of the dependent variables. This is to say that the research is looking at how gender and women acting on their agency affect the reconstruction processes. The synthesis of information regarding gender in post-conflict and post-disaster societies is used to analyze the impact of women and women's groups in Liberia and Haiti.

Working from a broad to narrow point of view and examining the impact of feminism, I begin with the definition of feminism as: 'the advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men'<sup>1</sup>. Expanding on this definition feminism can be thought of in terms of women being on equal terms with men;

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<sup>1</sup> Feminism: See Oxford-English Dictionary Online.  
[http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/american\\_english/feminism](http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/american_english/feminism)

it is women not becoming subservient to men or pushed down in society by laws or by the culture in which women find themselves. Becoming more focused in my point of view, I align similarly with Martha Craven Nussbaum<sup>2</sup> (2001) as she advocates for women being seen as an end in their own right as opposed to simply being a means for others' ends. This is a framework that I support as it serves as the guide for my analysis in this paper; I examine how women use their capabilities on their own behalf. By looking at women's agency in post-conflict Liberia and post-disaster Haiti, I explore what it means for women to be an agent of change and use this to answer my questions posed above. I also explore the ways in which top down plans assist in the process of women achieving their agency and impacting development and reconstruction. Nussbaum and the capabilities approach grows out of theories put forth by Amartya Sen<sup>3</sup>.

Sen's arguments are built off of Basic Human Needs (BHN) theorists, such as John Burton. These theorists of BHN reason that there are not only tangible needs, such as a minimum level of calorie consumption but also intangible needs (Rai, 2011: 30). There is the capacity to feel safe and secure with food and shelter in addition to the importance of having a voice. These intangible needs are "what Sen was to call 'agency achievements; - of participation, empowerment, and community life'" (30). These are the needs this thesis examines: to actively engage one's agency. The intangible needs of

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<sup>2</sup> Martha Craven Nussbaum: *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*, 2011. She "affirms a 'liberal' view that is compatible with the feminist affirmation of the value of women as persons" (Garrett, Jan. Martha Nussbaum on Capabilities and Human Rights. 29 April 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Capability Theory:

women include their participation in political life, social situations, and economic labor force, their empowerment as reached by their own abilities.

The work Nussbaum and Sen contribute to the field is known as the capability theory. Its framework as provided a basis and given attention to gender relations, thus allowing me to build upon that foundation as a reason to focus on women and their agency in terms of development and reconstruction.

To further solidify my personal context for this paper I would like to examine three conceptual frameworks that are used in the field of women, gender, and development. The first of these is known as Women in Development (WID), and the second is Women and Development (WAD), and the third is Gender and Development (GAD). Feminist developmental theories and policies use three reasons as the basis for their arguments and to provide explanation for why the subordination of women is so prevalent. The following three reasons give rise to the theories of WID, WAD, and GAD: the first being that “some feminist theorists see women as excluded from development planning and implementation” (Massaquoi, 2007: 15). Other “feminists argue that the impact of patriarchy and the capitalist mode of production undermine women’s role, status, and position in society (15)”. The third group of feminists, “suggest that the new international division of labor affects women and men differently, often leaving a negative impact on women” (15).

WID began in the early 1970’s as a response critiquing modernization theory, which was the dominant framework in development at the time. Modernization Theory had a focus on men and made the assumption that economic gain and success would

eventually “trickle down” to reach and benefit women (Beetham and Demetriades, 201). This way of thinking about development and women was developed primarily in North America and was based on a liberal feminist framework. The WID movement had significant influence from Ester Boserup<sup>4</sup>. Boserup argued that the development process almost entirely left women out of the equation. So with this, WID, “assumed that women’s subordination was directly linked to their exclusion from the formal marketplace” and supporters of the WID movement fervently advocated for development programs to integrate women into the process of economic development. Boserup “set strong analytical standards for engaging the multifaceted realities of this research and provided the foundation for the Women in Development perspective” (Turner and Fischer-Kowalski, 2010: 21964).

Other feminists involved in development theories used Boserup’s work as a building block in efforts to analyze the adverse affects women experienced in the field of development (Rai, 2011: 29). Even with the progress made under the WID framework, critiques arose with the main one being that the social and political structures, in which women lived, acted, and operated, were more often than not overlooked. Women’s impact and the development process could not simply group women together and write prescriptions to offer options on how to improve their situation in regards to men. In spite of these critiques however, it has been suggested that the framework of WID contributed three essential contributions to struggles to overcome patriarchy and end women’s subordination. The WID outline kindled the “focus on women as an analytical and

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<sup>4</sup> Ester Boserup: See Turner and Fischer-Kowalski, 2010: 21963.

operational category; it helped create separate organizational structures for women, and it helped developed female-specific policies and projects” (Massaquoi, 2007: 18). The feminization theories of development needed to focus on gender relations as opposed to solely focusing on women’s status. This critique made way for a semi-new framework of women and development, which is: WAD.

This theory follows similarly to the framework put forth by WID and it emerged in the 1970s to address the critiques and weaknesses found in WID. The basis of this new thought process was to create projects that were “women-only” as opposed to the goal of WID, which was to incorporate women into the traditional patriarchal society. These policies and projects were built on the foundation of the notion that “male dominated states cannot alter gender inequities” as well as a theory of dependency<sup>5</sup> (19). The surge of dependency theory grew out of the thinking of feminists in Latin America in combination with radical thinking feminists located in the west. This paradigm put emphasis on the “distinctiveness of women’s knowledge, work, goals, and responsibilities” (19). A downfall to the WAD theory is that it made the mistake of combining women together to form a homogenous group instead of taking into consideration such issues as ethnicity, age, religion, and class. With this critique, the Gender and Development framework was able to emerge. It formed as a critique to WAD and as a response to patriarchy.

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<sup>5</sup> Dependency Theory: “economic activity in the richer countries often led to serious economic problems in the poorer countries”. Also defined by Massaquoi as “wealthy nations in the west need a peripheral group of poorer states in order to remain wealthy” (19). See Ferraro, Vincent. "Dependency Theory: An Introduction," in *The Development Economics Reader*, ed. Giorgio Secondi (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 58-64.

The GAD proponents argue, “that a focus on the relationships that position women within society must be at the heart of political activity” (32). Gender and Development theorists were looking to expand past women gaining equality with men. Their vision was for full equity resulting in the context of new gender relations; they were looking to go “beyond equality to the transformation of social relations” (Meintjes, Pillay, Tershen, 2001: 17). The GAD framework “believe[s] that women must acquire fair access to resources in their own right, and that the struggle in the reconstruction period is precisely over the terms of women’s entitlements” (17). Their “desire is to describe the conditions that favour social transformation and to outline [their] vision of a society that respects women’s autonomy and bodily integrity” (17). This framework “encourages women to organize themselves into effective political voice in order to strengthen legal rights” as well as to increase women’s agency and participation in decision making effort (21).

The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) show the status of women and the equality of gender, providing a foundation for the conclusions drawn in the research. They each “highlight the status of women” in human development and were introduced in 1995 by the United Nations. The GDI focuses on expansion of capabilities and is essentially the equivalent of the Human Development Index (HDI) except that the GDI “takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men” (UNDP). The GEM, however, is concerned with the use of those capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities of life. In simple terms, GEM is a measure of agency. It evaluates progress in advancing women's standing in political and

economic forums. It examines the extent to which women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision-making. (Gaye, et al, 2010). GEM is useful for measuring agency on multiple levels.

While the GEM is useful in analyzing women's agency there are criticisms that must be noted. There are three indicators that determine how the GEM is composed and "each of the indicators in the GEM arguably suffers from urban, elite bias" (5). It has been noted in critiques that while "the economic component is measured by female share of economic decision-making positions, [that] does not include agricultural or informal work (in which most women around the world labour)" (5). Also not included in the economic component is the work done by women in the lower levels of the economy or work done by women which goes unpaid (5). It can therefore be noted that, "work-related aspects of empowerment are not measured for a broad part of the female population...and similar criticisms exist for other indicators in the GEM" (5).

Also used to examine the status and role of women within Liberian and Haitian society is the Gender Inequality Index (GII). GII "reflects women's disadvantage in three dimensions—reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market—for as many countries as data of reasonable quality allow" (Gaye, et el, 2010). This index is a combination of the GDI and the GEM; it takes into consideration the best and most accurate aspects of the previous indices and not "shows the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in these dimensions". Similar to other indices used in the field, the GII ranges from 0-1. The Gender Inequality Index takes into account all measured dimensions and produces the number (ranging from 0 to

1) which indicates how women fare within a state. They either fare well, meaning that equality and ability for agency is fairly equal between men and women, with the score of a 0, or they fare poorly earning the score of 1, meaning that gender equality and agency are at polar ends of the spectrum for men and women.

Each of the components used to calculate the GII are all relevant to women's agency in different respects. The first two of the three dimensions that are used in the calculation of the Gender Identity Index have two indicators whereas the third dimension has one indicator. The first dimension examined is in regards to health; the first component is the "maternal mortality ratio" and the second is the "adolescent fertility rate" (Gaye, et al, 2010). The second dimension is regarding empowerment and is comprised of "the share of parliamentary seats held by each sex" and "by secondary and higher education attainment levels" (Gaye, et al, 2010). Labor is the third and final dimension of the GII calculation and it is measured by "women's participation in the workforce" (Gaye, et al, 2010). This hybrid index is designed "to reveal the extent to which national achievements in these aspects of human development are eroded by gender inequality" while also providing "empirical foundations for policy analysis and advocacy efforts" (Gaye, et al, 2010). For this reason when analyzing the women of Liberia and Haiti and their roles in society along with their degree of agency the GII from 2011 is used. The world average rank on the GII is "0.492, reflecting a percentage loss in achievement across the three dimensions due to gender inequality of 49.2%" (UNDP). These measures and indices are used in Chapter Three to help make sense of the role women have in Liberia and Haiti.

### **Mainstreaming Gender and What This Means for Women**

Gender mainstreaming has been an effort on behalf of the international community in the form of the United Nations to strive to achieve gender equality. The UN entity 'Women Watch' provides the definition of gender mainstreaming as the following, "...process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. The achievement of gender equality is the definitive aim of the gender mainstreaming tactic. This strategy approach put forth by the UN "involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities" including "policy development, research, advocacy/ dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects" (UN WOMEN). Another way to break down gender mainstreaming is this: "the process of making the contributions, perspectives, and priorities of both women and men in an integral part of the design, implementation, and outcomes of development policies and programs" (Massaquoi, 2007: 14). There are multiple ways the United Nations works to put gender mainstreaming at the front of development for states.

Every level of policy and action in peacebuilding and reconstruction considers gender mainstreaming as it is "enshrined in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325" (Manchanda, 2005: 4743). Manchanda cites a 2004 UNIFEM assessment that "maintains that while women's role in peace building is recognised, there is little recognition of women as a resource for reconstruction...the reconstruction processes fail to tap one of the greatest untapped resources for stabilizing and rebuilding community life" (4744).

The concept of gender mainstreaming is the allowance for gender concerns to be seen as important at all levels of development and it is the result of the push in the 70s for feminist thoughts of development progress slowing and the need for a broader based institutional change that would directly address the dominance men possessed in societies. Gender mainstreaming requires not only the assistance of inside organizations such as the UN and its various branches but also the cooperation of outside groups such as women's organizations and movements.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Gender**

*Gender* is defined in general terms as being the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits that are associated with a particular sex; with sex referring to the genetic differences between a man and a woman. Expanding on the definition of gender the United Nations entity, UN Women has given this definition, “the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men”. It can also be said of gender that it “determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context” (UN Women, 2012). Gender as a concept “was developed during the 1970s to mean the roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, values, relative power, and influence society ascribes to men and women” (Bastik, 3: 2008). Differences in the functions of gender—“or gender roles—are not static; they vary across cultures and within cultures according to such factors as class, sexual orientation, and age” (3). Within academic literature on conflicts, gender as a central concern in development and reconstruction, has become much more widely adopted, especially in post-conflict and post-disaster circumstances. Gender has become a “viable issue for analytical consideration” (Jennings, K). Differences between the sexes, as previously mentioned are not “immutable and may change”, therefore using gender as a reference point highlights the fact that the roles of women and women asserting their

agency during times of conflict are important factors to be considered when examining development efforts (Jennings, K). The roles women take up are fluid and are constantly changing due to their surrounding circumstances.

As previously mentioned GAD grew as a critique of WID and led “to viewing women as agents who can be empowered to improve their position in society (Beetham and Demetriades, 200). Keeping this in mind, it is evident that a “gender perspective puts the spotlight on the social relations that exist between women and men, and on the laws and actions of the state” (Moghadam, 79: 2011). Using a gender lens for the breakdown of this thesis “places women at the center of analysis because the fact that, across history and cultures, women have been denied equality, autonomy, and power. (Moghadam, 79: 2011).

Issues of gender inequality are not the result or manifestation of a conflict or disaster but rather “are prevalent in society, operational and visible in daily life at the level of the individual, family, community, and society at large and reflected institutionally as well as in social and cultural norms” (Ariyabandu, 2009: 5). The post-conflict and post-disaster circumstance only allow those inequalities to become much more visible. Relationships in society between members of the opposite sexes “are broadly reflected in *gendered identities*: a combination of physical and behavioural characteristics which set apart boys from girls, men from women” (6). This gendered perspective definition goes deeper and can be expanded into three components: perceptions, attitudes, and status. When mentioning perceptions, “views as to how they [men and women] are differentiated in their roles as men and women” (6). “Actions

guided by the perceptions” is the meaning of attitudes in the definition of gendered identities, while status is defined as “the place occupied by men and women in the family, community, and society” (6). Women have taken a backseat in respect to equal rights and the ability to make rational choices to achieve their desired outcomes in the development process.

These “gender relations [have] evolved in such a way, [that it has] result[ed] in women occupying a subordinate status within the family, community, and society (6). This however challenges “gender-based prejudices and divisions in many societies [which] mainly affect girls and women” (6). These gendered identities “are based on views of them as physically and emotionally weak, inferior in comparison to men and boys” thus seen as “dependent, subordinate and a burden to family” (7). When looking at these “gender-based perceptions” it is evident that they “form the nature of interactions at personal, family, and institutional levels” while contributing “towards the formulation of gendered attitudes leading to observations, decisions and actions with family and society, as well as in the formal institutions of different kinds including the state” (7).

“In crisis, these pre-established views are extended to girls and women to identify them as passive and incapacitated victims who are in need of rescue and help” (7). It is a self-fulfilling cycle of gender inequality. In times of peace women are seen as inferior and then during times of conflict or disaster that socially constructed sense of inferiority that was established pre-conflict, translates into weakness or a lack of agency in post-conflict times. This, however, is proven to be an archaic view of women in crisis as will be demonstrated throughout the course of this thesis with the analysis and examination of

Liberia and Haiti. Patricia Maulden solidifies this supposition in saying, “protracted social conflict and violence...blur the boundaries between” traditional gender roles; thus making it possible for women to secure typically male dominated positions in the home and in the workplace (Maulden, 2011, 73). (sandys book).

### **Why Women?**

Often times a traditional approach to development generally overlooks “women’s knowledge by showing bias towards the male perspective” (Beetham and Demetriades, 199). This often times leaves women at a loss for action and excludes women and their capabilities from the reconstruction and redevelopment processes. When this happens not only do women lose, the society of which they are a part loses as well. Under-utilizing a segment of society in a post-conflict or post-disaster situation only poses as a detriment to rebuilding. Women are affected differently than men “by social, political, economic and environment changes” which is reason enough to examine the role of women’s agency outside of the role of gender in development (Sabel-Sheehan, 384). It is necessary to have an examination of women “in order to give justice to women’s participation” in development (384).

There can be an “enhance[d]...understanding of international development” if a perspective on women is given serious consideration (386). A perspective of this kind “can offer alternative solutions to issues on [a] global scale (386). Feminist theory and a focus on women in the fields of development and reconstruction “can ‘provide insight into the tension of theory and practice’” (386).

The United States Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton, clearly sums up the importance of women and does an excellent job of concisely stating the positive outcomes of investing in women and their agency. She states,

Let women work and they drive economic growth across all sectors. Send a girl to school, even just for one year, and her income dramatically increases for life, and her children are more likely to survive and her family more likely to be healthier for years to come. Give women equal rights and entire nations are more stable and secure. Deny women equal rights, and the instability of nations is almost certain.

An important component of reconstruction and development, women are still missing in the practice and implementation of these post-conflict and post-disaster frameworks. In the recent past the international community made an effort to redirect the way in which women are addressed in the development world. This effort comes in the form of a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, 2000. This resolution is known as UN Resolution 1325, or “1325”. According to the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) this particular resolution is a formal acknowledgement of “the changing nature of warfare, in which civilians are increasingly targeted, and women continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes” (USIP). UN Resolution 1325 is essential to the international community. It provides a “legal framework that addresses not only the inordinate impact of war on women, but also the pivotal role women should and do play in conflict management, conflict resolution and sustainable peace” (USIP). Resolution 1325 follows multiple efforts by the international community to ensure women’s rights and access. In 1946 the UN established the Commission on the Status of Women and in 1952 the draft of the Convention on Political Rights of Women was written. In continuing the lead up to

Resolution 1325, the UN International Women's Conference was held in Mexico City and was the kick off of the Decade for Women (1975-1985). Following this was the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1980 and in 1995 the UN 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women where women's rights were officially declared as human rights.

This resolution (1325) from the United Nations openly encourages women's empowerment and the ability of women to act upon their agency. It is a call from the international community to recognize that women are able to be authors of change. An Ambassador-at-Large from the US Department of State, Melanne Verveer, is an advocate of Global Women's Issues and she states that, "too often, women's roles are marginalized because they are not seen in terms of their leadership. We must see women as leaders, not victims. We must also view their participation not as a favor to women, but as essential" to reconstruction and development (USIP). This resolution is the first of its kind; it is "the first Security Council resolution to focus in detail on the unique vulnerabilities and needs of women and girls in conflict" (MGD: 2012). This example of the international community focusing on women further solidifies my foundations in looking at women from a gendered perspective.

Another implementation for improving women's agency is the creation of The Millennium Development Goals, also set forth by the United Nations. They "form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions" to meet the needs of the poorest populations in the world (UN). The third Goal listed is in regards to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The primary

target of this particular goal is to “eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education, no later than 2015” (UN Fact Sheet, 1: 2010). This is another example of the concern of the international community and the status of women and their ability to act as agents of change. The UN has recognized that the way to make this transition from a male dominated development field is through the education and empowerment of women and girls.

Women’s standpoints and capabilities should be included into the overarching, traditionally male driven agenda of post-conflict and post disaster development and reconstruction. Progress has been made on the front of women’s agency, however women still “continue to bear the brunt of poverty and are consistently seen as victims, and for this reason women need to be placed in a new light” (The Women, Gender, and Development Reader). This new light needs to be one which “exposes their ability to drive change” in the reconstruction and development sectors (The Women, Gender, and Development Reader). Because in the “brief outlines of the origins of development” presented in the Gender and Development Reader it is evident that development is insensitive to the power relations of genders. Investigating the debates on gender, women, and agency in terms of development and reconstruction allows for the reflection of the complex relationship between these factors as well as the impact these factors can have upon each other.

Gender equality and women’s agency are not topics that can be put off until tomorrow or next year, or sometime in the future. Women are at the forefront of

humanitarian disasters, whether they come in the form of civil wars and conflict or earthquakes and natural disasters. “Women have valuable knowledge and experience in managing and coping with disasters [and conflicts], often formed by living with regular seasonal disaster cycles and managing the associated risks” (Ariyabandu, 2009: 7). For these reasons, women are an integral piece to be studied in the field of development. The mentality of women in Liberia and Haiti was that “masculinity in men has led us into trouble, so there’s a crisis of confidence in masculinity. That’s why it makes sense to examine women and their ability to be agents for change.

Women have the skills to promote change and further development; they are mothers, they are caregivers, they are nurturers, and women have love and compassion. Women have insight, which allows them a unique opportunity to persuade and influence people. Liberian and Haitian women advocated as the women they were, as mothers, daughters, and nurturers. These roles that are played out every day by women not only in Liberia and Haiti, but all over the world in all conflicts and disasters are reasons why women need to be examined in detail and outside the typical pairing of ‘men and women’. “As women you’re noticed in particular way by the public” which is exactly what is previously mentioned (Cockburn, 2007: 156). The women knew that they were perceived differently than the men who were essentially thwarting the ability of women to act in ways of reconstruction and make positive developmental advances.

Typically, in the female narrative during times of war and natural disaster, women are not on the frontlines of conflicts wielding weapons; nor are they “in positions of

formal leadership” (Hunt, 2011: 106) Due to this perception, regardless of whether or not it is misguided, “those in power consider them [women] less threatening, allowing them to work unimpeded” (106). Women “hold up families, not rifles”. Women “reach across conflict lines” and more importantly “women use their identity as mothers to cut across international borders and ethnic enclaves” as is seen in the case studies of Liberia and Haiti (Hunt, 2011: 106).

### **Women’s Agency**

Gender differences arise when boys and girls, later men and women, have unequal opportunities to exercise their agency. The World Bank’s 2012 World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development states that “agency can be understood as the process through which women and men use their endowments and take advantage of economic opportunities to achieve desired outcomes” (150). Keeping this in mind, it becomes evident agency is the crucial point for understanding how gender differences emerge in society and how they are equal or unequal.

The 2012 Development Report lists five “expressions of agency” which exhibit the outcomes of women’s ability to choose. The first expression or outcome listed is in regards to the control a woman has over resources. The World Bank measures this outcome by “women’s ability to earn and control income and to own, use, and dispose of material assets” (150). The second outcome is measured by the ability of women to move freely and to decide their movements inside and outside of the home. The third outcome deals with women’s ability to make decisions regarding family formation, for example, the ability of women and girls to “decide when and whom to marry, how many children

to have, and when to leave a marriage” (150). Next, the World Bank focuses on the outcome of women being free from the risk of violence and the fifth outcome or expression of agency is women’s ability to have a voice in society and the ability to influence policy. These expressions of agency are extremely significant, especially in the realms of post-conflict and post-disaster development. If a woman has this power she is more likely to further the education or become involved in the economic sector by learning a skill, which will then provide her with economic agency. Whether or not these outcomes are present sets the tone for the reconstruction process and either helps or hinders any potential impact the women in these circumstances can make.

Economically, women’s agency has significant benefits for women and societies as a whole because, “growth can improve the material conditions for exercising agency—through higher incomes, greater access to services, and expanded infrastructure” (World Bank, 2012: 150). While this seems a promising note, women’s ability to author their own lives will not happen solely with economic growth—women need to be able to earn their *own* income. Having their own form of monetary income “increases their bargaining power within the household and their ability to accumulate autonomous assets” (World Bank, 2012: 150). By allowing women to work and contribute to the economic sector of their state, the margin for development greatly increases. The economic empowerment gives women the ability to make financial decisions, and in the cases of conflicts and disasters, many times women are left as the providers for families, so this economic agency is an asset. “Agency is in this way the link between democracy and the market, both of which is privilege and analysis of society in terms of the empowered individual

endowed with social, political, and economic rights” (Chabal, 2009: 9).

Similarly to economic reasons, “women’s political participation results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and more sustainable peace” (Wollack, 2010: 1). By allowing for women’s agency in political processes, “the range of policy issues that are considered and the types of solutions that are proposed” are affected and tend to be much more varied, allowing for the push of women’s empowerment (1). The increase of women’s agency in post-conflict and post-disaster development can be attributed to “strong evidence that as more women are elected to office, there is also a corollary increase in policy-making that reflects the priorities of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities” (1). So, by empowering women and increasing their agency in the sphere of politics, women can continue the cycle of increasing women’s agency through their “political participation...[and its]... profound positive and democratic impacts on communities, legislatures, political parties, and citizen’s lives” (1).

One of the most prominent reasons women lack agency in post-conflict and post-disaster circumstances is due to an absence of their access to justice. “Establishing gender-sensitive procedures can ensure stronger implementation of rights” (World Bank, 2012: 167). The lack of access to justice affects men and women, but “it is likely to affect women more because of their lower literacy, lower incomes, lower mobility, and less extended social networks” (168). “Women are often reluctant to pursue justice where outcomes are not predictable, where legal institutions are gender biased, and where legal

actors themselves victimize complainants, resulting in a double victimization” (168). This holds true in Liberia and Haiti, especially when women are attempting to use their agency to gain access to justice in the cases of Gender Based Violence (GBV).

Women’s agency is affected by socially constructed norms as they influence behaviors, values, laws, and expectations; and “as such they can prevent laws, better services, and higher incomes from removing constraints to agency” (168). The constraints and definitions of the space in which women can operate and exercise their agency is limited due to social norms. They have the ability to impose negative consequences on women who either stray from the norms or those who do not actively enforce the norms (169). Social norms also have impact on economic agency. They have the ability to “determine whether women’s higher independent incomes translate into greater bargaining power within households” (169). A woman’s identity and agency limitations are largely based on the social norms of the society in which she finds herself.

It is in the zones relating to power and control when social norms are most prevalent and the most resilient and people who have much to lose (those in power or those with control) are typically the people who actively resist changes in social norms regardless of the situation (conflicts, disasters, etc) (172). When the fighting ended in Liberia the social norms changed from those of wartime to those of peace making, with clearly an initial fragile peace. Due to this switch, difficulties arose for the women’s organizations. The men who were fighting were afraid of losing their illusion of power and the women who were pushing for peace had to adjust to men and boys coming home

and wanted to reassume their position of ‘breadwinner’ in the home.

Self-confidence and self-efficacy further exacerbate the existence of negative social norms. “Indeed, scientific evidence shows that individuals’ perceptions of their abilities and their likelihood of success are important to their actual performance” (World Bank, 2012: 173). The claim can be made that “a social norm suggesting that women are less able than men to perform a particular function (be a leader in politics or business, or be successful in scientific careers) will likely be internalized by girls and women” (173). This internalization will then lead to those women and girls having their abilities further questioned thus promoting a cycle of negative reinforcement which will maintain the status quo of negative social norms in gender relations.

Due to the nature of the conflict in Liberia and the earthquake in Haiti, the self-efficacy and self-confidence of women in each country increased tremendously and social norms have changed, thus allowing agency of women to surge. With more women’s movements encouraging girls and women to use their abilities to become agents of change, the internalization process no longer tells women and girls they are not good enough but instead tells them that they are capable of authoring change in reconstruction and development. From this cycle it then becomes plausible that girls and women will be more unlikely to develop aspirations for the particular functions that require agency.

Patricia Maulden states, “over time, [in a conflict or disaster,] an alteration of attitudes and behaviors can result, [such as women stepping into roles usually possessed by men] which, again over time, can become normalized” (2011: 73). This is to say that

the social norms during a conflict or immediately after a disaster become stabilized and are seen as ordinary; “when the violence stops, however, the social and political tendency is to return the domain structure to its origin configuration, with power...returning to the hands of” men (73). It is this exact situation that needs to be avoided. Women who employ their capacity for change during times of conflict or disaster need to continue developing that agency in times of reconstruction and development in order to break down antiquated social norms that triggered structural difficulties in society. The empowerment of women and women’s agency usually begins as being “visible in spontaneous and sporadic interventions to protect their families from immediate violence, in campaigns against human rights abuse and for justice; in building trust and reconciliation across the conflict divide” (Manchanda, 2005: 4741).

### **Women’s Movements—Providing a Definition**

A women’s movement is distinguished from other movements “in that it is initiated and carried out by women” (Romanova and Sewell, 2011: 224). A definition provided by Romanova and Sewell is: “a form of collective action that encompasses a variety of formal and informal actions that take place periodically or consistently throughout a period of time” (224). This definition is consistent with the organizations and efforts of women examined in Liberia and Haiti. A women’s movement is a platform that allows women to mobilize, politically, socially, and economically; it can be comprised of multiple women’s groups with varying sets of priorities but together they focus on an all-encompassing goal of improving lives (224). In summation a women’s movement “can be described as a diverse ‘spectrum of people who act in an individual way’” (224). In

addition, these movements are, ““organizations or groups who are working to ameliorate diverse aspects of the gender subordination on the basis of sex”” (224). To be slightly more specific the movements that are covered in this thesis are considered women’s peace movements, according to Romanova and Sewell (2011), on the basis that they are focused on assisting civilians in post-conflict reconstruction.

### **Context of Liberia**

“In 1822 the American Colonization Society, a private organization, initiated the process of sending former slaves from the United States of America to the 36-mile long strip coastline of West Africa” (INSTRAW, 2009: 6). This coastline became the independent nation of Liberia in 1847, however it only gained recognition from the United States in 1862 (6). “The colony became home to over ten thousand settlers and freed slaves known as Americo-Liberians who...constitute[ed] just five per cent of the population...” (6).

Tensions between native Africans and the Americo-Liberians grew quickly and a political dichotomy was formed with the Americo-Liberians proving to be the elite. Until 1904, the indigenous Africans were completely excluded from political life, which occasionally led to violence. This exclusion of indigenous Africans continued under the True Whig Party, which established itself at the encroachment of the British and French in the early 1900s, until April of 1980. At this point Samuel K. Doe, a native Liberian Master Sergeant, seized power through a coup d’état.

Doe’s forces executed the president of Liberia at the time, William R. Tolbert. With this execution and the killing of many of Tolbert’s government officials, mostly those of Americo-Liberian decent, the one hundred and thirty-three years of political

domination ended and the People Redemption Council was formed taking full control of power within the state. This led to Doe promoting members of his ethnic group, Krahn, into political and military positions, which raised ethnic tensions within Liberia.

During the conflict in the 1980s The Federation of Liberian Women's Organizations was banned for being political. When this umbrella group for women's groups was banned, "the vehicle through which women's voices could be heard in unison no longer existed, and women's issues were placed on the backburner" (African Women and Peace Support Group, 2004: 17). In October 1985 Doe won elections that were heavily characterized by extensive fraud, according to spokespeople from United States' Department of State). After the elections, Liberia saw a mass wave of human rights abuses, corruption, and further stress on ethnic tensions, all which led to a rapid deterioration in their standard of living. Doe's former procurement chief, Charles Taylor, led a small assemblage of rebels to attack Liberia from the neighboring state of Cote d'Ivoire. This invasion by militant dissidents occurred on 24 December 1989. Taylor and his band of rebels, also known as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) garnered much support and reached the peripheries of Monrovia within six months.

### **Conflict Breaks Out**

By the time the NPFL reached Monrovia in 1989 the country was underway in a bloody civil war. More than 200,000 lives were taken and more than a million others were displaced into refugee camps and neighboring states between 1989 and 1996 (US Department of State). During this 7-year time span the Economic Community of West African States intervened and help to keep back Taylor's forces from capturing the

capital in 1990. By September of that same year the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) was formed by a former member of Taylor's NPFL. The INPFL successfully captured and killed former president Doe and moved into the neighboring state of Sierra Leone for protection. While hiding out in Sierra Leone and other adjacent states, former soldiers of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) established a new insurgent group known as the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO). This new rebel faction in the Liberian civil war made violent strides to stop Taylor and his NPFL. During this conflict period, "women took the lead in demanding peace" through their organization known as The Liberian Women's Initiative (African Women and Peace Support Group, 2004: 8). In 1994 this group of women issued a position statement on the war in which they proclaimed themselves as the mothers of the land. The statement proceeded to list the ways that Liberian women were important to the society; women soothe pains, are primarily responsible for their children, husbands, and elders, and women are the healers and peacemakers (8).

In 1997 a special election was held and Charles Taylor won with an overwhelming majority; mostly in part to the fact that the Liberian people feared another outbreak of violence if he was not elected. Prior to this special election, however, there were dozens of failed peace accords and with the backing of ECOWAS (an accord set in Gambia), the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) was established. The rebel factions refused to cooperate with the IGNU but soon Taylor realized his military power was failing and agreed to a transitional government consisting of five officials. During the time Taylor was in office the quality of life of Liberians did not improve and

eventually the state erupted into violence once again; creating essentially the second civil war in Liberia.

While Taylor ruled, not only were the Liberian citizens seeing no improvement, Taylor was throwing his support behind Sierra Leone's rebel group, Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Gradually Taylor's support became disjointed and by 2003 new groups were formed from his former supporters. These two groups are known as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). A third group that formed at the onset of this second outburst of violence was the grassroots movement known as Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held peace talks in Accra, Ghana in 2003 in order to incite dialogue among the Government of Liberia, civil society, as well as the LURD and MODEL rebel groups. "Civil society organizations such as the Women in Peacebuilding Program (WIPNET) among others were formed from the peace initiatives led by women, which have decisive input in the development of gender policies in post-conflict Liberia. Another initiative has been the Mano River Women of Peace Network (MARWOPNET) that joined to form the women of the Mano River region (Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone) at the focal point of the crisis in Liberia" (INSTRAW, 2009: 8).

The women of Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace mobilized their efforts using nonviolent tactics in order to force a meeting with President Charles Taylor and obtain a promise from him to attend the peace talks in Ghana and negotiate with the

rebels. These negotiations led to a ceasefire, which the Government of Liberia, LURD, and MODEL all unsuccessfully upheld. Fighting broke out once again leading to the implementation of a peacekeeping force (ECOMIL) by ECOWAS.

### **After the Fighting**

Finally, the Liberian Government, rebel factions, civil society, and political parties signed a peace agreement. After the signing of this comprehensive peace settlement, a transitional government was put into place and ECOMIL was absorbed into a United Nations peacekeeping force, UNMIL. In 2005, Liberia experienced its first, free, fair, and democratic elections leading to Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf taking over the presidency; she is the first woman to be democratically elected in Liberia, as well as in Africa.

Under the authority of Johnson-Sirleaf, Liberia and its citizens participated in a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) where the exorbitant number of human rights abuses that occurred in Liberia between the ending of the True Whig Party in 1979 and the signing and implementation of the peace agreement in 2003. The results of the TRC were published and released in on 3 December 2009. As recently as 2011, Liberia experienced legislative and presidential elections, putting into power, not without claims of fraud and a runoff election, Johnson-Sirleaf.

Under the Johnson-Sirleaf administration there have been multiple steps taken to allow for the women of Liberia to continue acting on their agency which gained momentum during the peace process. There are two relevant steps to be acknowledged on this front. The first being the establishment and undertakings of the Ministry of Gender and Development. The second aspect to be noted is a process which is spearheaded by the

Ministry of Gender and Development—National Action Plan (LNAP)—to implement UN Resolution 1325 into the Liberian society and government. Early on after the adoption of 1325 many efforts were made by various, independent stakeholders in an attempt to implement the new resolution.

Through an Act of the National Legislature, the Ministry of Gender and Development was established in 2001. According to the Ministry of Gender and Development, these independent efforts mentioned above were met with “varying degrees of success” (United Nations, Government of Liberia (GoL). The Ministry is “mandated to advice Government on all matters affecting the development and welfare of women and children as well as any other matters referred to it by Government” (MGD: 2012). Among many issues relating to human rights and women and girls, this Ministry created, staffed, and housed a Secretariat “to coordinate and report on the implementation of the LNAP/1325” (MGD : 2012). The Government of Liberia has expressed its commitment to achieving gender equality and women’s rights as a means to maintaining peace, reducing poverty, enhancing justice and promoting sustainable development. (United Nations, Government of Liberia (GoL).

### **Women in Liberia**

While it can definitely be said that the war in Liberia wreaked havoc on the lives of women, the war was also an opportunity for them to establish a united front and to clearly demonstrate their capabilities and their acquired political ambitions. The “legitimacy of women’s claims to power and political participation at both national and local levels” has increased in post-conflict times (Fuest, 2008: 214).

In Liberia, women “comprise 54 percent of the labour force in both the formal and informal sectors” (UN Fact Sheet). In Liberian society “women had always played important roles” as farmers marketers, politicians, lawmakers, entrepreneurs, managers, special elders (zoes), members and leaders in religious and other civil society organizations, and as mothers in charge of large and complex households” (African Women and Peace Support Group, 2004: 7). Liberian women play vital roles in outside of the family in their communities and society: farm workers, wage earners, cabinet members, senators, doctors and president. To achieve a more precise understanding of the gender inequality that persists in the country, the 2011 Gender Inequality Index for Liberia<sup>6</sup> is below.

**Table 1 Gender Inequality Index, 2011 | Liberia**

Gender Inequality Index and related indicators														
HDI rank	Gender Inequality Index		Maternal mortality ratio 2008	Adolescent fertility rate 2011 <sup>a</sup>	Seats in national parliament (% female) 2011	Population with at least secondary education (% ages 25 and older)		Labour force participation rate (%)		REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH				
	Rank	Value				Female	Male	Female	Male	Contraceptive prevalence rate, any method (% of married women ages 15–49)	At least one antenatal visit (%)	Births attended by skilled health personnel (%)	Total fertility rate	
	2011	2011				2010	2010	2009	2009	2005–2009 <sup>b</sup>	2005–2009 <sup>b</sup>	2005–2009 <sup>b</sup>	2011 <sup>a</sup>	
182	Liberia	139	0.671	990	142.6	13.8	15.7	39.2	66.6	75.8	11.0	79.0	46.0	5.0

Liberia’s GII for 2011 is 0.671 which is equal to 67.1%; when comparing this number to the world average of 49.2%. Liberia is evidently experiencing extreme gender inequality even in what seems like a time of achievements for women.

<sup>6</sup> GII: Gender Inequality Index. See [hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/LBR.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/LBR.html)

However, the transformation is incomplete as evidenced by the GII above. Even as the numbers of women in highly visible positions increase, Liberia is far from achieving full gender equality and women empowerment (MDG report). Despite these roles, during the conflict rebel fighters showed no regard or respect for women as is evidenced through accounts of rape, strip-searches, torture, and other sexual violence.

Liberian women are exposed to gender based violence, sexual exploitation and HIV/AIDS; this is especially true among young girls. Vicious and systematic acts of sexual violence were perpetrated against a significant number of Liberian women throughout the years of simmering conflict and overt war. Following the official end of the war, rape and sexual violence remain an ongoing problem (United Nations, Government of Liberia (GoL).

As of 2010, adhering to a political frame of reference, women “occup[ied] 5 out of 21 Cabinet positions, 5 out of 36 legislator positions, and 5 out of 15 county superintendent positions” (Ministry of Planning and Government Affairs, 2010). On an educational level, “42% of women never attended school (Ministry of Planning and Government Affairs, 2010) and 8% of women have completed secondary school of higher (Ministry of Planning and Government Affairs, 2010). Actively “women have sought to strengthen solidarity among themselves” (Bop, 2001: 23). The progress women have made on a local level is evidenced through the numerous women’s organizations that emerged during and after the war. Among these women’s organizations and movements are “associations [aimed at] bringing together women of varied [religious] groups” exist in Liberia (23). An example of one such group is MARWOPNET. This

group is a combination of Christian and Muslim women who joined together to work for peace and to exercise their agency. MARWOPNET is further discussed in Chapter Four along with other initiatives. The women of MARWOPNET along with other initiatives. The women of MARWOPNET and other organizations “mobilized for peace using a variety of collective action methods and demanded that their voices be heard” (Romanova and Sewell, 2011: 223).

### **Context of Haiti**

Haiti is an island nation approximately the size of Maryland (USA) and it occupies the western half of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. Its neighboring state on the island is the Dominican Republic. From the first settler establishment on the island of Hispaniola in 1492—by Christopher Columbus—the country experienced changes in power and conflict. Near the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century French Huguenots began to settle on the coast. At the turn of the century the Spanish king, who was ruling the island, gave control of the western part of the island to the French. The western, French controlled part of Hispaniola was prosperous due to slavery, with slaves producing coffee and sugar. This production was 40 percent of France’s foreign trade at the time (Watkins). In 1791 Haiti became the first black republic (New York Times, 2012). During the 18<sup>th</sup> century many slaves escaped to form new communities in the wilderness; these escaped slaves were called maroons and were quite often evoking conflict which led to increased violence and guerilla warfare on the island. At the time of the French Revolution changes were not only happening in France, but in the French colonies as well and Haiti was no exception. There were slave rebellions with the death toll in the thousands and the devastation to

plantations being great. Between this period and the declaration of independence in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, fighting continued between all groups (blacks, whites, mulattos<sup>7</sup>, maroons<sup>8</sup>).

After independence in 1804 from France, a former slave and black general, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, declared himself emperor of Haiti, only to be assassinated two years later leaving Haiti to be divided into two regions, the north and south, with the north being controlled by blacks and the south being ruled by mulattos. This separation lasted until 1818 when Pierre Boyer reunified Haiti. During this reunification process Boyer excluded blacks from gaining government power. Boyer was in a position of leadership until 1843. From this point on, Haiti experienced much economic and political turmoil with many government changes in a relatively short period of time. In 1915 the United States invaded Haiti following friction buildup between the blacks and mulattos. The US saw this friction as a point of contention that could have the potential to endanger its investments and property in Haiti (BBC, 2012). Soon after the invasion the US withdrew troops from the island nation but they maintained their fiscal control. In the early 1950s a doctor practicing Voodoo, Francois Duvalier, also known as “Papa Doc”, seized power of Haiti through a military coup, and maintained his power following elections a year later. During his rule as president, Duvalier declares himself president for life and rules Haiti under a dictatorship with the assistance of a militia.

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<sup>7</sup> Mulattos: A word used to describe a group of persons having one white and one black parent. See: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/mulattos>

<sup>8</sup> Maroons: enslaved African slaves who escaped into the wilderness to form their own separate communities. See: <http://thepublicarchive.com/?p=79>

Papa Doc died in 1971 and was succeeded by his son, Jean Claude, otherwise known as “Baby Doc”. He followed in his father’s footsteps and continued to rule as a dictator, thus declaring himself president for life as well. It became clear that the population was growing discontent with Baby Doc and he subsequently fled the country leaving a lieutenant-general as head of government. Only two years later, in another coup, the lieutenant general was ousted from the presidency and a civilian government was put into place, monitored by military rule. Haiti saw its first free and fair elections in 1990. During this brief time of peace Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected into power. Unfortunately for Haiti the peace was extremely short lived and Aristide was overthrown in yet another coup that took place in 1991. This coup and bout of violence led to the involvement of the international community in the form of sanctions from the United States as well as a return to the civilian government, overseen by the US. Eventually the US troops were replaced by United Nations Peacekeepers. The late 1990s saw various leaders in short amount of time and this eventually led to a governmental deadlock. Aristide was again elected as president of Haiti in 2000. He ruled until 2004 when he fled when the celebrations of 200 years of independence turned into uprisings.

Between 2004 and 2009 an interim government was in place and this led to a new democracy for Haiti (BBC, 2012). During this time period Haiti experienced extreme flooding causing the island a loss of life and infrastructure and leaving Haiti and it’s people in a state of disaster. Efforts put forth by the interim government as well as the international community through forms such as aid donations and UN Peacekeepers did not seem to make the impact expected and violence continued resulting in the loss of life

due to the conflict as well as natural disasters. The violence and small-scale disasters were short lived due to the devastating impact of a massive earthquake in 2010.

### **Disaster Strikes**

On January 12, 2010 a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti at 4:53 PM, 15 miles west, southwest of Port-au-Prince (USGS). The earthquake left “316,000 people [dead], 300,000 injured, 1.3 million displaced, 97,294 houses destroyed and 188,383 damaged in the Port-au-Prince area and in much of southern Haiti” (USGS). While these numbers can still be debated, they are official estimates. A study was produced by the Inter-America Development Bank, which “estimated that the total cost of the disaster was between \$8 billion and \$14 billion, based on a death toll from 200,000 to 250,000. That number was revised in 2011 by Haiti’s government to 316,000” (New York Times, 2012). The disaster struck a country that was already insecure due to poor politics, bad governance, poverty, weak infrastructure and the earthquake worsened these conditions and “ created a severe lack of safety and security, especially for women and girls living in camps, worsening the already grave problem of sexual violence” (Gender Shadow Report, 2010: 1). Not only did the earthquake destroy buildings and roads, and compound the problems of poor leadership but it “exacerbate[d] existing inequalities, rendering it not just a natural disaster, but also an example of massive injustice” (1).

### **After the Earthquake**

The earthquake proved to be a leveler in terms of breaking down class barriers for the women of Haiti. This is not to say class distinctions have vanished as a result of the earthquake, but to show that the disaster affected women equally regardless of whether or not

they were women of affluence or women of the farms. This disaster deepened the gaps in gender inequality and lessened the opportunities and impacts for women's empowerment. A natural disaster, such as the earthquake, "may be regarded as the [trigger] of destruction, the people's vulnerability is rooted in structural inequalities embedded within national and international socio-economic systems" (Fordham, 2009: 177)-disaster book

Today, two and a half years after the quake, a major housing crisis remains. There have been billions of dollars donated in reconstruction aid, however the urgent need for stable, secure, and safe housing for IDPs has not yet been met. The New York Times (2012) reports that a World Bank document states that over \$400 million in solutions to this crisis are planned. These solutions are meant to be permanent and large-scale, including new houses, home repairs, and reconstruction of infrastructure. In some cases a few of these solutions have been completed. However though, this report does not appear to be accurate, as most of the reconstruction budget has been consumed by temporary, small-scale, transitional housing. Following the quake the Haitian Government, with provisions from the World Bank commanded an ambitious project examining and assessing needs post-disaster, thus creating an operational outline for the reconstruction process. This assessment uncovered gaps in society and offered details and recommendations for post-disaster development, however like the majority of development plans women were left out of the strategy discussion and vision for getting Haiti back on its feet (Gender Shadow Report, 2010: 2).

In politics post-disaster, Haiti saw an election run-off between two conservative candidates in March of 2011. The outcome of this presidential election led to a former

music star, Mr. Michel Martelly, gaining control of the government, beating out his opponent, Mirlande H. Manigat. As with every president and dictator before him, Martelly faced immense challenges. Haiti is still, quite obviously, very heavily reliant on humanitarian foreign aid that is dispersed among the NGOs in Haiti essentially comprising a shadow government of sorts. This secondary form of government has made it extremely difficult for the Haitian government to operate or for the Haitian people, specifically women to exert their agency in reconstruction and development efforts.

Four out of five people in Haiti live in poverty while more than half of Haitians live in abject poverty. Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. After the earthquake, “Haitians complained that the politically connected were benefiting most from the scant reconstruction work and that crime was returning” thus perpetuating the cycle of the poor remaining poor (New York Times, 2012).

To add to the troubles the disaster brought, Haiti experienced an outbreak of cholera in late 2010. The disease spread through the country killing over 7000 people and sickening more than 5 percent of the population (New York Times, 2012). The outbreak became the “the world’s largest cholera epidemic despite a huge international mobilization still dealing with the effects of the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake (New York Times, 2012).

The women in Haiti have not seen much improvement post-earthquake. They have however been a vital instrument in “coordinating with newly formed IDP and tent communities and helping to identify and recruit camp residents to help protect women and girls from violence” (Gender Shadow Report, 2010: 9). The Gender Shadow Report

of 2010 on Haiti makes note that women, post-earthquake, have been actively using their social agency to advocate “for collective cooking and feeding strategies” as well as to encourage “relief providers to buy local food from Haitian market women vendors in order to help deliver more nutritious food to residents” and promote women’s economic agency (9).

The United States Institute of Peace makes note, in a 2012 Peace Brief regarding women and reconstruction in Haiti, that women have seen minimal improvements in living conditions and that they still face daily violence, especially for those women and girls who remain trapped in tent cities for IDPs. Women have no access to credit, which is extremely detrimental to not only women but to Haiti as a whole, seeing as how Haitian women shoulder the informal economy by way of microcredits and small businesses. The brief goes on to further state Haitian women remain underrepresented in governance and politics. The Prime Minister of Haitian Parliament acknowledged in October that only 0.7 percent of appointed and elected officials are women; of the 30 elected Senate members, only one is a woman. There has been approval of a constitutional amendment that calls for a minimum quota of 30 percent of legislature seats to be for women, however this amendment has yet to be ratified (Maguire, 2012: 3).

### **Women in Haiti**

Women in Haiti are called the ‘*poto mitan*<sup>9</sup>’ or the pillar of society. Many women in Haiti have been successful in small ways despite the circumstances surrounding them. Through

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<sup>9</sup> Poto Mitan: ‘Center posts’. Pillars of Society. Haitian women play pivotal roles in matters of family, education, health, commerce and the economy, and agriculture;

political turmoil, natural disasters, army of NGOs, and an unwavering domination of society through patriarchy, women in Haiti have managed to remain strong. The image promoted of Haitian women being passive victims, helpless, is an inaccurate portrayal of their achievements and agency. It not only ignores the efforts made by women in the post-earthquake period but the efforts put forth by women to abolish violence since the time of Duvalier. In the last 25 years Haitian women have continuously promoted their agency; “women have formed organizations, spoken out, demonstrated for their rights, voted in elections and sought redress against gender-based violence” (3).

At the local level they use that strength to work in farming and in crafts, low wage earning positions in Haitian economic life. It is apparent that “Haitian women are very involved in the workforce but like all women in the world Haitians are first and foremost producers of non-marketed goods” (Merlet, 2001: 167). While displaying their agency by working, they are also responsible for managing the household and caring for children and elders. Prior to the earthquake of 2010 the United Nations reported “almost half of all households were led by women (NPR, 2010).

As explained previously the GII shows the status of women and the equality of gender, providing a foundation for the conclusions drawn in the research. For this reason the most recent GII statistics<sup>10</sup> relating to Haiti can be found below.

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therefore they are seen as the center posts of Haitian society.

<sup>10</sup> 2011 GII statistics for Haiti. See [hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR\\_2011\\_EN\\_Table4.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2011_EN_Table4.pdf)

**Table 2 Gender Inequality Index, 2011 | Haiti**

Gender Inequality Index and related indicators														
HDI rank	Gender Inequality Index		Maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent fertility rate	Seats in national parliament (% female)	Population with at least secondary education (% ages 25 and older)		Labour force participation rate (%)		REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH				
	Rank	Value				Female	Male	Female	Male	Contraceptive prevalence rate, any method (% of married women ages 15–49)	At least one antenatal visit (%)	Births attended by skilled health personnel (%)	Total fertility rate	
	2011	2011	2008	2011 <sup>a</sup>	2011	2010	2010	2009	2009	2005–2009 <sup>b</sup>	2005–2009 <sup>b</sup>	2005–2009 <sup>b</sup>	2011 <sup>a</sup>	
158	Haiti	123	0.599	300	46.4	4.2	22.5	36.3	57.5	82.9	32.0	85.0	26.0 <sup>9</sup>	3.2

The GII for Haiti in 2011, according the table above, is 0.599, which equates to 59.9%, over the world average in 2011 of 49.2%. This percentage indicates the degree of gender inequality in Haiti which supports arguments in this thesis that the patriarchal society and poor government institutions are preventing women from taking advantage of opportunities to increase their position in society.

In an interview with the United States’ National Public Radio (NPR) in 2010, Danielle St. Lot, Haiti’s former Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry agrees that Haitian girls and women need to be educated as one regardless of class. She stated, that with universal Haitian education girls, women “can really modernize the way they do politics, the way they do business, and to be able really to build a strong network of businesswomen, of women politician” (NPR, 2010). Danielle St Lot also commented, “few reconstruction efforts are targeting the long term redevelopment of the women’s livelihood or ability to care for their families in a safe environment” (St. Lot, 2011). With a lack of reconstruction efforts it is apparent that the Haitian government has women on the backburner for reconstruction policies.

Haitian women constitute 52 percent of the total population and 42 percent are girls under the age of 15. The average lifespan for women in Haiti is 54 years and only 60 percent of Haitian women are literate (Zanelli, 2012). It has been said that, “women are clearly ‘the backbone of the informal economy.’ They are also the ‘family bank’ and in agriculture, ‘they do everything.’ Business savvy, acute determination and the ability to reproduce make women in Haiti the protagonists of family, community and national development” (Zanelli, 2012). Unfortunately however, “Haitian women and girls are disproportionately susceptible to social inequities, discrimination and violence because of limitations on their access to economic and other resources (IJDH). Progress for women is obstructed due to attitudes, culture, institutions and structural impediments.

Much like the women in Liberia, Haitian women face violence every day. This phenomenon is one that occurs in all patriarchal societies. Haitian women must face these situations “both in the isolation of their home and in public places” (Merlet, 2001: 164).

Haitian women are most often the sole providers for their families but they suffer from a feminization of poverty-threatens well beings of families hampers certain models of development based on globalization and structural adjustment policies (168). Which is an interesting point when contrasted with the fact that “surveys reveal that some sectors of Haitian society consider Haitian women to be drastically undervalued” (Zanelli, 2012). Women within Haiti have been, and continue, to join together in order to achieve solidarity. It is common to see upper class Haitian women reaching down, and back, in order to connect with the middle to lower class women. These women come together to do business with one another, to strengthen each other. This is evidence of a unified

category of the population who realizes their worth and the need for their voices to be heard. However, “too often, for those who fall into a social group that is marginalised [, such as women,] within the dominant society, we find that their needs are not met, their rights are not recognised and that they have fewer opportunities to contribute actively or professionally to managing a disaster or reducing its risk” (Fordham, 2009: 178). This has been the case in Haiti, the women there have been pushed to the sidelines and they have not had the chances to utilize their capabilities.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Development and Reconstruction**

Women have to be heard during the development and reconstruction advancements to “ensure equal rights...[and] to safeguard against discriminatory personal law regimes that take away these rights” (Manchanda, 2005: 4743). The concept of development is relatively recent, and can be seen as a “purposeful project – with ‘resources, techniques and expertise ... brought together to bring about improved rates of economic growth ...’ (Kabeer 1994: 69)” (Rai 2011: 16). This definition, while valid and useable, is insufficient for this thesis. Development not only includes economic growth, but political growth and social growth as well. This is to say that the development of a state after a conflict or disaster cannot be fully measured by only using economics as a foundation. Development needs to be addressed and analyzed holistically with the inclusion of political and social factors as well as economic.

Development and reconstruction are processes that need to be ongoing. Therefore they need to be sustainable and not just a one time effort to secure some economic or political gain to improve conditions in a post-conflict or post-disaster context. The women of Liberia and Haiti understand this concept. When looking at this model through the definition of sustainable development, it is evident that short-term and long-term goals need to be the focus of reconstruction. Rai defines sustainable development in a way in which builds upon his previous definition of development alone. He states that

sustainable development is, “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (31).

Focusing on women’s agency both through top-down and bottom-up efforts will have significant short-term, medium-term, and long-term impacts on reconstruction and development in post-conflict and post-disaster states. Gender equality and women’s empowerment in these situations will benefit all citizens in opening up the possibility for them to play more active roles and positively influence reconstruction and development processes. When women make the moment of changing social norms last, such as is the case in Liberia and Haiti, then the government begins to perceive its people (specifically women) differently and the citizens (again, specifically women) will begin to view their government differently. Instead of the government being an entity that is against women and women’s agency, a transformation has potential to occur where the government will be seen as an establishment that can be trusted to serve the interests of women and uphold their rights.

Post-conflict and post-disaster development has been influenced heavily by the actions of women and women driving change and according to a paper published in the Human Development Report Paper Series, “gender equity is an intrinsic dimension of human development” (1: 2010). This same paper claims, “if girls and women are systematically denied freedoms and opportunities, this is not consistent with human development” (1). This chapter addresses the multitude of ways in which women have influenced development in Liberia and Haiti on political, social, and economic fronts.

Women in Liberia and Haiti have organized to form groups that promote and advocate change, peace, and sustainable development in the forms of political, economic, and social advancements. It is through this organizing that women have gained support from their peers as well as the international community. They do this for themselves and on behalf of their nations. The bottom-up, grassroots “process for planning and decision making...need[s] to be used and women would be the key to the altered framework” (Hunt, 2011: 99).

This is the first sign of women acting upon their agency and the starting motions of women taking charge and becoming authors of change. In other words, “social change from the ground up is required to prevent renewed hostilities” and the Liberian and Haitian women were in unique positions to organize for this change. These groups were mostly formed during conflict, such as the case with Liberia, or prior to, such as the case with Haiti. This practice of agency, the formation of groups, is one that can be examined in detail, however for the purposes of *Women as Post-Conflict Agents of Change on Civil Society and Reconstruction*, I now examine how these women and groups are using collective agency to advocate for development.

### **Development and Women in Liberia**

Post-conflict development in Liberia has seen progress not only as a result of the women’s movements but in part because the government of Liberia and the international community have taken steps to implement action plans and UNSC Resolutions such as 1325 (previously mentioned in Chapter Two). These progressions towards the involvement of women and the capitalization of women’s agency have given Liberia the

benefit of women positively impacting development. Liberia has initiatives on paper, such as bills, laws, and National Actions Plans, as well as government organizations, however there are still gaps in the ability of women to act on their agency in development. These have been only “small, small”<sup>11</sup> steps forward.

Even though steps forward are being made, there remain challenges to the process of championing women’s agency and empowerment: female poverty, early motherhood and lack of family planning, lack of access to equal education, traditions and culture, SGBV, and inadequate access to health care, among many others. The government of Liberia has recognized the challenges as well as the potential for progress through empowering girls and women, as is evidenced through the following organizations and initiatives.

### **Top-Down Initiatives**

Liberia has a development agenda that includes elements to “combat the cultural and social norms” (Ministry of Planning and Government Affairs, 2010). These “include outreach and advocacy, skills building, and explicit inclusion of women and girls as planners, implementers and participants in public programs and projects” (Ministry of Planning and Government Affairs, 2010). The development and reconstruction agency put forth by the Government of Liberia “continues to put strong emphases on gender equality” and the “critical socioeconomic strategies” in the agenda “target the empowerment of the vulnerable, including women” while the agenda calls for “poverty reduction objectives include increasing girls’ education and skills development”

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<sup>11</sup> “Small, small”: an expression that is used in Liberia, meaning “slowly, but surely”. See: <http://www.ndi.org/small-small-improvements-Liberia>.

(Ministry of Planning and Government Affairs, 2010).

It is the GOL's priority to address impediments to progress with solutions that are scientifically based, high impact, and reflects best practices" (Ministry of Planning and Government Affairs, 2010). With the GOL making these plans to address inequality in gender, then theoretically women's agency should increase, which should then allow legislature such as The Fairness Bill to pass and be implemented quickly and successfully. This particular Bill was "provides a minimum of 30% representation of women as national elected officers and heads of the principal and subsidiary organs and structures of each registered political party, was introduced to the legislature" (Ministry of Planning and Government Affairs, 2010).

Continuing with top-down plans for increasing women's agency the construction of schools that would be 'girl-friendly' were proposed by the Ministry of Education. These 'girl-friendly' schools would have awareness and outreach campaigns, child-care centers, and mentoring programs for young girls. (Ministry of Planning and Government Affairs, 2010). The Ministry of Gender and Development has programs that support the well-being, security, and safety of women in Liberia, through "gender-sensitive national budgeting and strong gender-based-violence laws" (Ministry of Planning and Government Affairs, 2010). The Ministry of Gender and Development also has allocates "funds targeting girls' education" and "economic issues affecting women, such as land tenure, are being addressed" by the Ministry as well. There are many other government programs aimed to make the participation of women and women's agency a priority;

these range from adult education to microfinance grants and lending. Other initiatives have included a National Rural Women's Program in 2008 which provided "20,000 women with infrastructure, seed distribution, tools and new processing equipment" as well as Land Reform Commission that works to remove barriers to women's land ownership (Ministry of Planning and Government Affairs, 2010)

As mentioned in Chapter Three (under the section 'Conflict in Liberia', sub section 'After the Fighting') the National Action Plan is a top-down governmental approach to securing women's agency and gender equality. The Secretariat for the LNAP is built on four pillars, Protection, Prevention, Participation and Empowerment, and Promotion.

The first pillar of Protection is comprised of three strategic issues, those being: "Provide psycho-social and trauma counseling to women and girls, Protect the rights and strengthen security for women and girls, Increase access to quality health education for women and girls with a specific emphasis on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS" (Ministry of Gender and Development). The second pillar includes: "Prevent all types of violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence" (Ministry of Gender and Development). The third pillar set forth in the Secretariat is "Promote women's full participation in all conflict prevention, peace-building and post-conflict recovery processes, and Empower women through increased access to housing and natural resources and strengthen their participation in the management of the environment" (Ministry of Gender and Development). The fourth and final pillar, the

pillar of promotion is to, “promote the involvement of women’s groups in the implementation of the LNAP and advocate for increased access to resources for both the Government and women’s groups” (Ministry of Gender and Development). This fourth pillar also works to encourage girls to participate in conflict prevention through learning about “early warning, peace, security and post-conflict recovery issues through education and training” (Ministry of Gender and Development). The “institutional capacities of government and civil society actors, including women’s groups” work “to effectively implement the LNAP” (Ministry of Gender and Development). Promote the full involvement of governmental and civil society actors, including women’s groups in the monitoring and evaluation of the LNAP” (Ministry of Gender and Development).

Another top-down plan implemented by the international NGO, The Carter Center, partnered with the Ministry of Justice in Liberia to create and establish a SGBV Crime Unit. Through this, cutting down on SGBV and implementing a path for women to report crimes committed against them. Through this women’s agency is expanded. Reporting crime is a form of political and social agency for women. The Liberian government recognizes this and through its partnership with The Carter Center there is the hope that new social norms are being created that will benefit women.

This and other top-down initiatives enhance women’s ownership of their agency and increase their stake in their government, allowing for easier routes for women to act as agents of change in the post-conflict context of Liberia.

### **Bottom-Up Initiatives**

Women used the concept of GAD, whether knowingly or unknowingly, in order to change the relationship between the genders in Liberia during and after war-time. Their movements and organizational efforts at acting on their agency has allowed for change and has given them better access to resources in their own right, as women, instead of for being seen as victims of violence only caught in a fleeting position of social norm changes.

One economic initiative is the Liberian Women's Sewing Project; it is "a pilot enterprise of Chid Liberty's 'Made In: Liberia', a promising new business to manufacture apparel that would be fair trade certified and a source of employment" (Wales, 2010). It is a movement of grassroots efforts of women that allows them to earn an income and to network with other women, ultimately leading to growth which increases women's bargaining power in the household. This economic empowerment, that comes from the participation in 'Made in: Liberia', gives women the ability to impact development by making goods and creating a market for those goods.

In Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, a market operates for women to buy and sell goods. This market is "funded by the Sirleaf Market Women's Fund" and is called the Nancy B. Doe Market and "each woman who opens a stall at the Nancy B. Doe Market...is required to open a savings account at the ECO Bank branch located within the market". Each woman is then "given access to daily literacy classes within the market walls" (Wales, 2010). Literacy classes not only allow women to advance in their business and economic ventures, but it also affords women the ability to be educated on their

rights. With knowledge of their rights, as granted by the Government of Liberia and the international community women are able to organize in ways to promote women's.

Through the process of women and girls becoming educated about their rights they are able to display even more agency, as they will be more likely to take advantage of changing social norms, organize, and become involved in the political processes of the state. The literacy lessons given to women through this market setup also carry the potential to impact future generations of not just women but girls and young boys as well. The women who improve their literacy have a higher likelihood of educating their children, thus beginning a cycle of empowerment and education. This market set-up allows women to act upon their economic agency in such a way that they are productive in the post-conflict period for themselves, their families, and for the state as a whole

West Point is the largest slum in Liberia. The women here have self-organized in an effort to use their agency to improve their living conditions; making impacts on post-conflict reconstruction and development. Their organization is 'West Point Women for Health and Development Association'. Each of the women who are members of the association contribute to the finances of the organization by paying monthly dues of thirty Liberian dollars, which equates roughly to forty US cents. The money they collect through membership dues then goes to "fund grassroots efforts to improve health and sanitation, reduce gender-based violence, provide literacy classes, reduce prostitution—and see to it that the police do their jobs" (Wales, 2010). When the police fail to perform, which unfortunately is not a rare occurrence, the women of the association exercise political agency and they take the situation to the highest authorities.

This display of agency in the organization crosses the borders from being strictly political to social and economic as well. This allows women to become involved with the organization all multiple levels according to their particular skill set and the needs of the group. The association has become a channel for women to network among themselves as well as to unify their voice and make demands of their government. Currently the association is operating with a \$10,000 budget. With this money and outside “funding, they would like to expand their skills training to teaching a woman to drive a car. Newly empowered with that skill, she could be a taxi driver and make a living for her family” (Wales, 2010).

MARWOPNET or the Mano River Women’s Peace Network is an “alliance [that] was founded with the help of the Africa Women’s Committee for Peace and Development (AWCPD) of the Organization of African Unity, the West African Women’s Association (WAWA) and of Femmes Africa Solidarité (Cockburn, 2007: 37). This organization was formed in May of 2000 and was originally formed by 56 participants coming from three different countries in the region (African Women and Peace Support Group, 2004: 44). The organization came about through the efforts of an earlier group called LWI or the Liberian Women’s Initiative.

The LWI was formed in 1994 as a response to an impasse in the peace process and soon became a movement of inclusive peace. Mary Brownell, the president of the movement recalls the beginning of LWI, stating,

I saw other women’s groups engaged in relief activities, taking food and clothes to displaced people. But I said that we the women should do a little more than that because there were still atrocities all around....And so, this

wild thought came to me that instead of sitting down and saying the men should play the major role [in the political peace process], we women should do something also, because they were the ones who brought about the war. Even though we are the weaker sex, [with] voices joined together as one we could make an impact on the Liberian society and the international community... (16).

Brownell and the other participants of the movement knew that it was the moment for women to act as agents of change in order to move through the peace process and begin establishing reconstruction for Liberia. They used collective agency to form their pressure group; the women organized to use their voice to impact political policies. Not only was this a pressure group but it was also a space for women to network. Through this networking aspect, women representing LWI were invited to Addis Ababa in 1999 where Femmes Africa Solidarité was part of the organization process of a conference. At this conference Femmes Africa Solidarité called for a side meeting with the involvement of LWI and other women's groups from the Mano River region. They spoke of the formation of a regional women's group for the promotion of peace within their countries and women's agency. At a follow-up meeting the women established MARWOPNET.

MARWOPNET is comprised of women from not only Liberia, but also neighboring states including Sierra Leone and Guinea. The women involved were campaigning for a culture of peace in the Mano River basin region; they were advocates for establishing an environment of security through the monitoring of trafficking of small arms, planning programs that assist those traumatized by violence, developing programs to aid child soldiers and help in the disarmament process, and most importantly these women organized for encouraging women to be self-reliant. The aspect of encouraging

women was manifested through training in entrepreneurial skills (44). On the political front of supporting women MARWOPENT made propositions to ECOWAS to allow for three positions for women at high levels.

Their efforts continued as the war began to come to an end and they held peace talks in 2001 with refugee women located in the Kissidougou region of neighboring Guinea where they worked to secure solidarity and support for the refugee women's full support in restoring peace to Liberia. In order to achieve solidarity, and promote women's agency Africa-wide, MARWOPNET attended a conference in April of 2001. They were active participants in the consultation process of enhancing women's participation in peace building. The UN Economic Commission for Africa and the UN Division for the Advancement of Women sponsored this consultation. There were also delegates from ten African states that had been affected by conflict and violence. With regional support from other women's organizations, MARWOPNET grew stronger and gained more members through training sessions held in the summer of 2002. Women performed numerous responsibilities in preserving lives during the conflict that were unprecedented in Liberian society; they were going out to find food, keeping their children and families safe, and in some instances hiding men and boys from the violence and danger of war (African Women and Peace Support Group, 2004: 9).

### **Development and Women in Haiti**

Women are a vital component for post-disaster development on political, social and economic fronts, because, "economic empowerment will allow women to overcome patriarchal hierarchies that facilitate and encourage violence" (IJDH). Furthering this

thought, “legal empowerment will increase access to justice to combat impunity, which has reinforced aggressors’ perception that they can inflict violence without punishment” (IJDH). For these reasons, “it is not optional to power Haiti’s ‘poto mitan’. It is vital” (Maguire, 2012: 3). Haiti has the opportunity to rebuild its previously broken government and society or it can use this disaster, as a chance to reconstruct Haitian life for the benefit of its citizens, doing this “requires that Haitian women’s groups and other grassroots organizations participate effectively and play leadership roles in reconstruction” (Gender Shadow Report, 2010: 2).

### **Top-Down Initiatives**

UN Women “immediately teamed up with women’s organizations and the Government to train more than 100 young men and women so that they could go into 70 temporary settlements and raise awareness about the vulnerability of women and girls to violence” (Mangones). Education and awareness in this form empower women to share their newfound knowledge with others. In turn, that is an act of agency. Sharing and educating others is a way for women to take advantage of an opportunity opened up to them through changing social norms and is a way for them to spread information regarding sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). Expanding on this, it can be supposed that once women are educated on SGBV they will be more likely to report occurrences and possibly even more likely to guard themselves against the attacks.

In March of 2012, Haitian First Lady, Ms. Sophia Martelly, opened a conference called The National Forum on the Issues of Haitian Women. This Forum took place from 6-8 March 2012. The theme of this discussion was “the Haitian women at a time of

national reconstruction” (Haiti Libre, 2012). This forum was sponsored and organized by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Women’s Rights (MCFDF). It was an opportunity for the government of Haiti to show their commitment to improving women’s agency and empowerment in the reconstruction and development process. Over 600 “delegated departmental of MCFDF, women's groups and organizations, donors and representatives of agencies of cooperation with Haiti and members of the Legislative body, some from the Parliamentary Bloc for decentralization” were present along with thousands of Haitian women and girls (Haiti Libre, 2012). This organization of women and women’s groups in Haiti is a monumental step in the evolution of Haitian women.

Unfortunately conferences of women are not enough to increase women’s voice in Haiti; there must be a change in the political processes that govern the republic. Currently the Ministry of Women’s Affairs is moving ahead with legal reforms and is drafting a law to introduce to parliament. This draft law will provide new protections against Gender Based Violence and to women in the community, workplace, and within their own homes (Klasing, 2012).

During a meeting with female politicians and women’s rights organizations in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, Ambassador Kim, the president of the UN Women’s executive board and Permanent Representative to the Republic of Korea, raised the issue of the implementation of a recent constitutional amendment favoring the establishment of a 30 per cent minimum quota pertaining to women working in public administration (UN Women, 2012). This meeting, and hopefully the subsequent enactment of this constitutional amendment, will further expand upon Haitian women’s agency and their

ability to exercise their voice to push for positive development changes on behalf of women and their country as a whole.

Other international, top-down efforts at improving the path for women's agency in Haiti include policy tools such as UN Resolution 1325, as explained in the top-down initiatives taken in Liberia, as well as UN Resolution 1820<sup>12</sup>. Each of these resolutions "seek increased representation of women in decision making levels especially to prevent, manage, and resolve conflict" (Maguire, 2012: 3). The implementation of these two resolutions is yet to be seen, however. Haiti has also used top-down efforts such as direct support from prominent women and organizations such as "Michaëlle Jean, the UN special envoy to Haiti for UNESCO; Michelle Bachelet, Chile's former president and now head of UN Women; Hillary Rodham Clinton, the US Secretary of State, and even the Hollywood actress, Maria Bello" (2).

A domestic initiative from that could prove to be a tool in the development of Haiti and the promotion of agency for Haiti's women is the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which was founded in 1994, as it "offers established mechanisms for integrating gender equality measures into new post-earthquake governance structures" (Gender Shadow Report, 2010: 5). While the ministry attempted efforts to promote women's agency and call for gender equality, those efforts failed and proved to be insufficient. During this period of development however, they should be examined and possibly used as a legal

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<sup>12</sup> UN Resolution 1820: A follow up resolution to UN Resolution 1325. Adopted in June 2008. The Resolution "confronts sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations". It "recognize[s] a direct relationship between the widespread and/or systematic use of sexual violence as an instrument of conflict and the maintenance of international peace and security" (US Department of State).

precedent for government led proposals to incorporate women into the development process.

### **Bottom-Up Initiatives**

From grassroots efforts Haiti has seen “groundbreaking work...being done to promote the rights of women and girls -- who have suffered immeasurably in Haiti's disasters and instability...” (Klasing, 2012). Currently though, it is difficult to measure the potential for positive development at the inclusion of women and the embracing of women as authors of change and actors with agency due to the recent nature of the disaster.

However, Haitian women’s organizations “are attempting to make the best they can out of the difficult situation that Haiti has endured for more than a decade, in order to build something else. On grassroots levels women have conducted consciousness-raising activities, contributing to a very widespread dissemination of information...women’s organizations are systematizing the recording of violent attacks and processing the data. (Merlet, 2001: 164). By collectively joining their voices and “their prior experiences and connections to diverse sources” together, “the women demonstrated their capacity to overcome obstacles” (Massaquoi, 2007: 92).

A bottom up initiative jointly founded by Haitians, Haitian Americans, and Americans is The Lambi Fund. This was an enterprise that started in 1993-94 to support projects run by women in Haiti. The fund targets women’s development projects because when women can increase their agency and improve their economic status they in turn promote a cycle of betterment for their families and for society in ways such as improving security of food and decreasing the occurrences of sexual and gender based

violence. Lambi's approach to achieving its goals is through a "symbiosis between the inductive method of popular education and a "bottom-up" relationship with the grassroots communities" (Lambi Fund Executive Report, 2012). Under the Lambi Fund Haitian women organize to develop workable solutions to their problems, making them the authors of their lives and the authors of change for their lives. The Lambi Fund focuses its work on five issue areas including: sustainable development, environment, organizational and leadership training, animal husbandry, and microcredit.

In terms of post-earthquake work, the Lambi Fund supports women who survived through their microcredit<sup>13</sup> loans that the women then use to fund and grow small businesses. Through the micro-lending women exert economic agency. A project Lambi has supported is one that allows Haitian women's organizations to own and operate (collectively) grain mills. Through this initiative women are keeping a greater portion of their income and are able to use the grain as a staple in their diets, allowing them to better raise their children and provide for their families, increasing the economic development post-disaster (Lambi Fund, 2012).

In terms of networking the Lambi Fund hosts "conferences and seminars for peasant women around the country where they learn about their legal rights and gain invaluable leadership and management skills" (Lambi Fund, 2012). These facilitations are aimed at helping women to emerge and develop as leaders in their community so that they are capable of strengthening the "grassroots movements for development and

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<sup>13</sup> Microcredit: See [http://www.lambifund.org/about\\_mission.shtml](http://www.lambifund.org/about_mission.shtml) - "Members of a community organization band together to form collective micro-enterprise funds to provide one another with much needed capital to start self-sustaining community projects"

democracy in Haiti” (Lambi Fund, 2012).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Conclusion**

Women in development have been consistently and systematically ostracized from the development and reconstruction process post-conflict and post-disaster. However, the case studies presented in this thesis of Liberia and Haiti are examples of situations where women capitalized on their circumstances in order to bring about empowerment and to act as agents of change. Supporting women's development and reconstruction efforts and their ownership of agency helps sustain the fragile peace in Liberia and Haiti, and in all post-conflict and post-disaster states.

Haitian women have obviously not experienced the same amount of authorship of change as their counterparts in Liberia, however this is in part due to Haiti and the women there lacking regional support, whether that be moral, economic, political, or social. Another factor which has played a role in hindering the women of Haiti from acquiring developmental change and acting forthright on their agency is the copious amounts of NGOs which have flooded the nation, both before and after the disastrous earthquake. With the influx of outside organizations creating their own form of a shadow government for the distribution of aid and to make decisions as to who should be helped with, it becomes difficult for Haitians to mobilize themselves for a cause. These women have a lot to learn. Danielle St Lot states, "We have to learn from women from Rwanda - they have been able to recover after genocide - from Liberia, from Benin. And that's why

now we are, you know, getting prepared for next elections to run some seats in Congress, and also for municipal election” (NPR, 2010). This is a sentiment that is carried by the majority of Haitian women. They realize they have setbacks and they know how they would like to utilize their agency, in ways similar to their counterparts in Africa, in Liberia.

Women in conflict do not have more authorship over change in development and reconstruction as opposed to women in disaster situations. Through these case studies, the contrary may seem true, but the reason the women of Liberia were able to experience such a degree of latitude in social, economic, and political development and reconstruction is in huge part due to the regional support and organization of the women of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire, and others. Without the encouragement of women in the West African region, I argue in favor of the sentiment that the women of Liberia would have had such a deep-rooted effectiveness at exacting their agency for developmental change in the country post-conflict. According to Boserup, forces of globalization have increased the need for international and regional networks. The case study of women acting on their agency for development and reconstruction in Liberia could not be a better example of this statement. While it is true that these women made efforts that were completely their own, I argue that they would not have had the success at influencing politics, economics, and social settings had it not been for the support of regional women’s organizations.

The question of whether women in post-conflict situations or post-disaster situations have more authorship of change or ability to act on their agency is difficult to

answer, and I have found to an extent unfair to ask. There are many cases of disasters where women have effected development and reconstruction in incredible ways. However in each of these situations it is important to note that there was always a system of support from other women's movements throughout the region.

The regional groups of Liberia were previously exemplified, however in dealing with the natural disaster in Haiti and my claim that with regional women's support groups and movements they would have had more success, I look to the example of the earthquake in Gujarat<sup>14</sup> in 2001 where local women learned from and took as an example the help of their peers from Maharashtra and from the experiences of the Turkish women from the Marmara region (Yonder, Akçar, Gopalan, 2009: 204). One year after the earthquake, women leaders from the Marathwadi (India) and Marmara (Turkey) regions, coordinated by SSP<sup>15</sup>, met with Gujarati women to help them evaluate whether the recovery program was meeting their needs (Yonder, Akçar, Gopalan, 2009: 205). Women can learn collectively through the successes and failures of others, promoting a global movement for change, empowerment, and the expressions of women's agency (Hunt, 2011: 107). Wars and disasters are "paradox[es] that...offer opportunities for women to transform their lives in terms of their image of themselves, their behaviour towards men and towards their elders, and their ability to live independently" (Meintjes, Pillay, Turshen, 2001: 7).

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<sup>14</sup> Gujarat: a state located in Western India

<sup>15</sup> SSP: a NGO that "works to build the capacities of rural women's groups to access and manage development resources and participate in decision making" See- Yonder, et al.

It has been evidenced throughout this thesis the importance of women, most specifically, but also gender considerations, in post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction and development. Examining development and women's impacts through a gender lens is not an option but a necessity in order to fully utilize citizens for a full recovery process complete with equality for women (Valdés, 2009: 25). In dealing with economics women and the promotion of women's agency increases the likelihood that children will attend school, family planning becomes a priority and women have access to financial gains which not only stimulates their personal economic situation, but also improves the economic atmosphere as a whole in a post-conflict or post-disaster setting. Almost no progress can be made without women as demonstrated in the case studies presented in this thesis. Socially, "if current educational disparities persist, girls will remain unprepared and be disadvantaged to compete in the future labour environment, including participation in political and economic decision-making processes" (INSTRAW, 2009: 10).

There are clearly many aspects which led the women of Liberia and Haiti to become agents of change, however a few of the most noticeable are how women were viewed in the society both before, during, and after the situation in each state, as well as the government institutions which supported them. This is an area however, which needs more research. Based on my research of these two case studies I do not believe that there is a set criterion that will allow women to be successful in becoming agents of change in development. There are, however, widespread misconceptions about women's groups at the grass level as being "small-scale, passive and low tech, despite considerable evidence

to the contrary” as was shown through the case studies of Liberia and Haiti (Yonder, Akçar, Gopalan, 2009: 208).

This transitions smoothly with answering the final question this thesis presents which is, ‘what conditions are necessary for women to organize?’ As previously mentioned one condition that I have found to be absolutely necessary is a support group of women outside of the case being studied. For example, the women of Liberia and the help they received from other women experiencing similar situations from neighboring countries in the region. Also this is similar to the examples of disasters and networks in Chapter Three. It has been said there is power in numbers, and in the development world for women; this statement could not be truer.

Gender equality is essential during post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction and development because women are at the forefront of humanitarian disasters, whether that disaster presents itself in the form of a bloody civil war or a destructive earthquake (UN Women). Every aspect of reconstruction and each step of development should consider the needs of women and girls. The approaches should be holistic, and all data gathered should show the affects of conflict or disaster on women and girls (Klasing, 2011). Gender equality is not a topic that can be put off for a later date, or for another organization to tackle; it is an issue that must be addressed by all parties involved in the development field with clear avenues designed for the participation of women (Klasing, 2011).

Further research on the questions posed in Chapter One would lead to a deeper and more holistic understanding of women as agents of change on development and

reconstruction; especially in the context of post-disaster Haiti as the earthquake is still quite recent. Unfortunately the field is currently lacking substantial literature and analysis on the role of women's agency and development within Haiti. It should be said, as evidenced through the analysis of these two case studies, that the promotion of the value of women's role as agents of change, and women's contribution to the wellbeing of their families and their communities is of the utmost importance in the development and reconstruction processes.

Through the devastation caused by civil wars and natural disasters, a focus can be gained to lead governments, citizens, and organizations to improving their future development (Yonder, Akçar, Gopalan, 2009: 189). Liberian and Haitian women found that focus and have organized in efforts to change their lives and the lives of others (Fordham, 2009: 186). The terrible destruction done to infrastructure and life opened doors of possibility for women to "channel and leverage investments to upgrade the living standards...[and] to enable the most marginalised, [such as women], to establish dialogue mechanisms" to enable them to become agents of change on development and reconstruction (189).

This paper used the experiences of Liberian and Haitian women to highlight the ways in which post-conflict and post-disaster conditions can be opportunities to empower women and let them act on their agency in order to initiate holistic forms of change and sustainable development, thus producing more resilient communities and a more stable peace (Yonder, Akçar, Gopalan, 2009: 206). Liberia and Haiti as case studies suggest "that grass-roots efforts can, if supported, rapidly mobilise a critical mass of actors" (209).

When “women can acquire non-traditional skills and take on information-giving roles” that are typically considered to be male dominated occupations the women and women’s agency can “overcome male opposition and skepticism, and take on active leadership to rebuild their communities (209).

Using the confines of the examples of top-down and bottom-up initiatives in the promotion of women’s agency, I will now briefly analyze the ways in which Liberia and Haiti are and have been doing in aligning with the expressions of agency set forth by the World Bank’s World Development Report of 2012, as outlined in Chapter Three.

Examining Liberia first, it can be speculated and drawn out from the bottom-up initiatives of the Nancy B. Doe Market and West Point Slum, that women are making improvements in the realm of the first expression. They are earning an income that they have control over. That income is then used to improve the economic stability during the reconstruction process of the country. Continuing using the market and the association from the slum, and also including MARWOPNET I argue that Liberia is improving at least in the expression of free movement for women. With economic freedom comes freedom of movement due to the need of women to commute to the locations of their business ventures. The sentiment could also be reversed, with women allowed to move freely, they are more likely to become involved in economic activities. Regardless of which way this is looked at, the women of Liberia are making positive movements in the second expression of agency.

In regards to the third expression of agency, I argue that through the examples explored in this thesis of bottom-up and top-down projects it is not fully possible to

speculate on whether women's agency in making decisions over the formation of families has improved. With more research the results can be drawn out and it could be seen that women's agency and control over family planning could lead to positive development of post-conflict Liberia because women would have less children, therefore they would be able to send those children to school and care for them more efficiently, thus drawing back on the infant and maternal mortality rates as well as the SGBV instances. Looking forward to the expression of agency that women are free from violence is another issue which, in respect to the organizations examined, I would venture to say is not in the scope of this thesis per say. However using analysis from other points and movements of agency it appears that SGBV still occurs with frequent occurrence and that there are possibly steps being taken through government entities to end this. The fifth expression of agency to examine in the case of Liberia is that of women having a voice and they ability to impact and influence policies. This is an issue that can be examined from either side.

While the initiatives laid out in this thesis, both top-down and bottom-up, give indication that women have had a voice and influenced policies in post-conflict Liberia, the signs of this holding true are not always clearly visible. A collective voice has been established and it is growing louder but women are not always making direct impacts on the way policy is written and enforced. It appears, through analysis, that the policies adopted internationally affect the policies adopted within the Liberian government and in turn the implementation or lack thereof of those trickledown policies help or hinder women's agency in post-conflict development and reconstruction.

Turning to the second case study of Haiti, I will address how it adheres to the World Bank's 2012 World Development Report's expressions of agency as is evidenced through the examples given in the Chapter Four. I will preface the following analysis by saying that the occurrence of the earthquake is still too recent to be able to fully determine how effective Haitian women have been in meeting the five expressions.

As mentioned the first expression of agency is of earning income and it appears through the Lambi Fund that women are certainly meeting this. Women use the income produced through their loans from the Lambi Fund to achieve the second expression. However due to the extreme devastation caused by the earthquake, free movement of women is not necessarily possible in all areas. This hindrance could be explained through the government and misallocation of humanitarian aid as well as through the earlier mentioned shadow government of NGOs and aid groups. The third expression of women in the report is in regards to family formation, but similar to its counterpart, Liberia, not much can be drawn from the agency initiatives examined by this thesis. Although based on sexual and gender based violence in either country along with traditional patterns of men and the thought process that stems from patriarchy it is plausible that no significant progress has been made on women's agency in this regard; however it can be argued that slight improvement has occurred.

Unfortunately women are not free of violence even with efforts at education and training along with government entities addressing reports of violence towards women. SGBV is still prevalent in Haitian society and needs to be addressed to secure a stable route for sustainable development in post-disaster Haiti. The fifth measurement of

women having a voice and an ability to affect policies is emerging slowly. Not to say that women have not always had a voice in Haiti, but to note that post-earthquake their voice is emerging as a collective, organized, scream to establish their place as agents of change in the development process.

These expressions are the framework and guide for women to build upon to further the progress they have made in achieving agency in a post-conflict or post-disaster domain. While the above analysis is broad in scope and encompasses a vast array of women in each case study, the statements are relevant to the work at hand as they allow for a holistic picture of activities taking place, the influence top-down initiatives have on women, and the impact women have in development.

Throughout the entirety of this thesis it has been stressed that “women need to participate fully and effectively in Liberia [and Haiti’s] peacebuilding, reconstruction, recovery, and development processes” and that this participation needs to occur “at all levels including decision-making levels through economic, political, and other types of empowerment” (INSTRAW, 2009). “Equitable and sustainable policies require a better understanding of the links between women’s household survival strategies, livelihoods and larger scale economic, social, environmental, and political processes. Much current work on gender and development shows the need to transform the objectives of and strategies for development” (Boserup, 2007: xxiii). With this said it is hoped that with international action, such as UN Resolution 1325, and national action, such as the Ministry for Gender and Development in Liberia or the Lambi Fund in Haiti, along with grassroots enterprises for ensuring women’s agency in the development process the

strategies currently in place will transform for the better. Liberian and Haitian women have proven themselves as being capable of playing important roles in conflict and disasters, and more importantly in times of reconstruction and development. The challenge now is to ensure that the empowerment of women remains on national agendas in Liberia and Haiti as well as on the agenda of the international community.

In order for society to move forward after a conflict or a disaster it is in the best interest of the international community, state, NGOs, and citizens “to look at [their] development and determine that women’s participation, women’s empowerment” is the most critical element to reconstruction and the procurement of a sustainable development policy (African Women and Peace Support Group, 2004: 54). Without a voice and without agency women’s concerns will fall by the wayside and will not be prioritized or resourced. The women of Liberia and Haiti have been unwilling to let this happen and struggle every day to make the necessary changes to act as agents of change on the development and reconstruction of their states.

### **Relevance to the Field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution**

Within the conflict field “women offer a vital perspective in...analysis...as well as providing strategies toward peacebuilding that focus on creating ties across opposing factions” and they also offer insights on how to achieve holistic, sustainable development in the reconstruction period (USIP). During times of conflict and disaster “many women desire to use the opportunities that arise...remove traditional gender restrictions permanently” (Meintjes, Pillar and Turshen, 2001: 3).

This study has a broad range of applicability and its audience can include those in the field of gender and conflict analysis and resolution, whether as scholars, students, researchers, or activists, non-governmental organizations and grassroots movements, policy makers, or other individuals with interest in gender, post-conflict or post-disaster states, Liberia, or Haiti. It is with great anticipation that *Women as Post-Conflict Agents of Change on Civil Society and Reconstruction* provides useful information and proves to be an effective piece of research to add to the growing body of work in this field.

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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Kristin Nicole Christakis graduated from Harrison High School in Kennesaw, Georgia in 2007. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a concentration in International Affairs from Georgia State University in 2011. She moved to Malta in September of 2011 where she lived and studied for 11 months pursuing her Master of Science in Conflict Analysis and Resolution and her Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution and Mediterranean Security through a collaborative program with the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University and the Mediterranean School for Diplomatic Studies at the University of Malta. She is currently undertaking an internship in Atlanta, Georgia at The Carter Center where she is pursuing her research interests in access to justice for Liberia.