

# Dismas Ndayikengurukiye

## *Assessing Post-conflict Effects of the Gendering Peace Process in Burundi*

### **Aims and Hypothesis**

This research seeks to assess effects of the gender-sensitive aspect of the peace process in Burundi, from the 2003 Arusha Peace Accords to date. It attempts to find answers to the following two questions:

1. What are the effects of the gender perspective that has been applied in Burundi peace process?
2. To what extent the gender perspective of the peace process in Burundi has contributed in addressing gender inequalities in the post-conflict Burundian society?

This research will test the following hypothesis:

While the gender-sensitive approach applied in the Burundi peace process has enabled an increase in women's post-conflict political participation than before the war, it has not succeeded in addressing patriarchal norms that still hinder gender equality in Burundian society.

### **Justification**

Concerted efforts pushing for the inclusion of women in all levels of the formal peace processes initiatives have resulted in the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security in 2000. Though women remain underrepresented, the UNSCR 1325 has contributed in promoting gender-sensitive approach to peace processes and slightly increased the number of female participants in peace processes. However, many scholars have argued that in most cases, the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 has just been the trend to apply the 'add women and stir' approach, which assumes that solely the presence of women in peace processes is not only necessary but also sufficient to elicit favorable peace outcomes for both men and women (Chang et al, 2015:20).

It can be argued that the move for women's inclusion in peace processes has been a worthwhile start. But it should be a means towards the end – the post-conflict social transformation which is achieved by addressing power imbalance that define gender relations. This is explained by the fact that the hardships that women and girls face during conflicts and their marginalization in peace processes are in some ways related to the underlying gendered inequalities and power dynamics that are rooted in a given society. Therefore, the aim of gendering peace processes should be addressing gender inequalities and power dynamics not only by just adding women in formal peace processes, but also by considering other factors. This is can be illustrated by the Burundi peace process. 2

Despite Burundian women's exclusion at the table of negotiations at Arusha, Burundian women were successful in pushing for the inclusion of provisions addressing gender issues in final agreements, which has enabled them to secure their representation in the post-conflict institution.

One month before the signing of the Peace Accord, in parallel to the "men's official peace talks", 50 women delegated by political parties gathered in an All-Party Burundi Women's Peace Conference and issued recommendations for including provisions related to women's rights in

the peace agreement. Most of the women's proposals were included in the Arusha Peace Accord which was signed in August 2000, (Strickland & Duvvury, 2003) and the Constitution adopted in 2005. It is worthwhile to note that, due to the recognition of women's rights in the Arusha Peace Accord and the Constitution, 30% of the seats in the parliament and government are allocated to women since 2005. For instance, the 2010 elections produced 32 per cent female representation in the National Assembly, 46 per cent in the Senate and 42 in the Cabinet (Siobhan & Allison, 2012).

Gender lenses in the Arusha Peace Accord and Constitution have made Burundi relatively successful in terms of formal representation of women, but it still falls short in terms of the efficacy of female representatives, as well as in its ability to deal with deeper structural inequalities, (Siobhan & Allison, 2012). In fact, "traditional gender ideologies have remained strong", (Myrtilinen & Nsengiyumva, 2014); women are still considered as illegitimate or token politicians and party culture expects women politicians to follow the lead of their male counterparts, (Siobhan & Allison, 2012). Moreover, as noted by Siobhan & Allison (2012), the implementation of laws against sexual, gender-based violence is still weak; and women are still excluded from land inheritance.

Therefore, it can be argued that gendering peace process in Burundi has not succeeded in achieving post-conflict social transformation. The case of Burundi seems to be a vivid example showing that applying gender perspectives in peace processes is not all about having women at the table of peace negotiations, but it should also be about inserting in peace agreements and subsequent law provisions advocating for women's rights and most importantly ensuring gender equality in post-conflict institutions and society.

### **Methodology**

This paper will make use of qualitative research approach. Academic works on women participation in peace processes will be explored. In order to get the necessary data on Burundi peace process, this research will draw on different reports on women participation in peacebuilding, women and girls rights, women participation in decision-making in Burundi from different local and international organizations. In order to complete secondary sources and get in-depth insights into the topic under research, semi-structured interviews with some female political actors or activists, especially former female fighters, will be conducted. 3

### **References**

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