Review of Social Studies (RoSS) is an interdisciplinary journal. The principal purpose of the journal is to publish lucid and well-documented peer-reviewed articles that discuss significant social, legal and political issues in an international context. Wide-ranging in scope, the journal welcomes scholarly essays that cut across disciplinary boundaries, and reflect original and critical thinking on the latest developments in the theory and practice of social sciences. These areas include, but are not limited to, the fields of anthropology, sociology, law, politics, history, international relations, culture, gender, migration, diaspora and ethnic studies.

RoSS publishes two issues a year (Spring and Autumn). One of these may be a special issue composed of selected conference papers. RoSS has also a book review section which reflects academic and intellectual diversity in recent social science publications.

RoSS is published by the London Centre for Social Studies (LCSS). LCSS is a non-profit, independent organisation that was established in 2004 by a diverse group of academics in order to generate thinking and debate on pressing social issues amongst academics, activists, policy makers, practitioners, media and civil society organisations, at both national and international levels.

Editorial Office address: LCSS, 4th floor, Cornhill House, 59-60 Cornhill, London, EC3V 3PD, UK
Tel.: 0044 (0) 20 7936 3118
Website: http://www.rossjournal.co.uk
ISSN No. 205–448X (Online)
Correspondence concerning editorial content and potential submissions should be addressed to the editor: latif.tas@rossjournal.co.uk

Disclaimer: Each author has full responsibility for their work. The publisher, Review of Social Studies (RoSS) and the Editors of this journal cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of information contained in this journal. The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Publisher, RoSS or the Editors; nor do they constitute an endorsement by the Publisher, RoSS or Editors of the views or any products mentioned.

Apart from fair dealing for the purposes of research and private study, or criticism or review, and only as permitted under the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988, this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, only with the prior permission in writing of the Publishers.

Editorial Board
Editor in Chief:
Dr. Latif Tas, SOAS, UK

Deputy Editor:
Ufuk Ucar, LCSS, UK

Associate Editors:
Dr. Sibel Safi, Gediz University, Turkey
Dr. Leigh Graham, Columbia University, USA
Ian Kalman, McGill University, Canada
Seref Kavak, Keele University, UK
Tania Khojasteh, SOAS, UK
Samantha North, Independent Researcher
Selcuk Aydin, King’s College London, UK

Academic Advisory Board
Prof. Werner Menski, SOAS, UK
Prof. Ralph Grillio, University of Sussex, UK
Prof. Nadje Al-Ali, SOAS, UK
Prof. Yasemin G. Inceoglu, Galatasaray University, Turkey
Assist. Prof. Yuksel Sezgin, Syracuse University, USA
Assist. Prof. Vildan Iyigungor, Marmara University, Turkey
Dr. Antonio De Lauri, University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy
Dr. Aisling Lyon, Independent Researcher, UK
Dr. Edyta Roszko, Durham University, UK
Dr. Julie Billaud, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (MPI), Germany
Dr. Katrin Seidel, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (MPI), Germany

Special thanks for their contribution to the previous issue:
Dr. Zeynep Kaya, LSE, UK
Dr. Matthew Whiting, University of Kent, UK
CONTENTS

ARTICLES
A Gendered Analysis of Refugee Peacebuilding: Transnational Networks for Peace
Anna Snyder 1

Overcoming obstacles through hidden nuptial paths: Foreign Muslim purported spouses marrying in Italy
Federica Sona 25

Bilingualism and Gender in the Literature of Iranian Women in the Diaspora
Leila Samadi Rendy 55

Returning ‘home’ after retirement? The role of gender in return migration decisions of Spanish and Turkish migrants
Anita Bocker and Anoeshka Gehring 77

Consequences of Feminised Migration on Families: The Case of Filipino Women
Caridad T. Sri Tharan 99

BOOK REVIEWS
The Oxford Handbook of Refugee & Forced Migration Studies (by Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Gil Loescher, Katy Long and Nando Sigona (eds.))
Bahar Baser 119

Institutional Change in Turkey: The Impact of European Union Reforms on Human Rights and Policing (by Leila Piran).
Elsa Tulin Sen 124

State, Faith and Nation in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Lands (by Frederick F. Anscombe).
Selcuk Aydin 127
A Gendered Analysis of Refugee Peacebuilding: Transnational Networks for Peace

ANNA C. SNYDER
Menno Simons College at University of Winnipeg, Canada

Abstract

This article analyses the activities of three refugee women’s organisations from Tibet, the Sudan, and Burma/Myanmar, concluding that it is strategically important to support women’s transnational networks and facilitate contact between diaspora, refugee, and local women’s organisations interested in conflict transformation. A gendered analysis of refugee peacebuilding capacity reveals gaps in peacebuilding capacity approaches that become evident when female diasporas are the focus of the research. The women’s refugee organisations show the capacity for transnational bridge building, that is, the capacity to build and sustain networks across geographical, social and political boundaries with the aim of bringing about nonviolent social change.

Keywords

peace building, gender, refugee, Myanmar, the Sudan, Tibet, capacity

Introduction

In the last decade, the advocacy of global women’s movements at the United Nations created a global mandate to include all women in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding and the protection of women through UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and several other related resolutions. National Action Plans for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security followed in 46 countries around the world. In 2010, the Canadian government introduced Canada’s Action Plan. However, refugee women were not included in Canada’s Action Plan as partners in peacemaking. They were mentioned only in sections referring to protection and post-conflict reconstruction. Instead, the Action Plan discusses refugee women in the way that refugees are often referred to, that is, as passive victims in need of humanitarian aid and also as post-agreement returnees. As such, refugee women are not made an integral part of peace making efforts.

In this paper, I argue that with the support of the international community, refugee women’s organisations can develop transnational bridge building
capacity, which makes them important partners for peacebuilding\(^1\) in the context of protracted conflict. This study analyses the activities of three refugee women’s organisations from Tibet, the Sudan, and Burma/Myanmar. These organisations show the capacity for transnational bridge building, that is, the capacity to build and sustain networks across geographical, social and political boundaries with the aim of bringing about nonviolent social change. Transnational bridge building encompasses: 1) the organisational capacity to develop, operate, and sustain both local and transnational social networks; 2) the capacity to address conflict constructively within their grassroots constituencies, communities in conflict, and transnational networks; and 3) the capacity to lead social change, that is, to empower.

A gendered analysis of refugee peacebuilding capacity reveals gaps in current peacemaking approaches that become evident when female conflict-generated diasporas\(^2\) are the focus of the research. Although the literature on diaspora peacebuilding is growing with the recognition that in conflict-affected settings diasporas may act on the international stage\(^3\), many models of peacebuilding capacity do not take into account the unique potential for, or the challenges of, refugee peace activities. Studying the capacities of diasporas, as well as the broader political opportunity structures within the country of origin and the host country, is important for understanding the impact of refugees on any given conflict situation (Smith 2007). However, very few such studies exist and those that do tend to be gender-blind (Al-Ali 2007). Moreover, gender mainstreaming literature inadvertently reinforces images of the female refugee as a passive victim by focusing primarily on the protection rather than the potential agency of women, who, like the majority of refugees, are not in an emergency but are trapped in protracted refugee situations characterised by long periods of exile (Loesher et al. 2007). Despite the great variety of capacity, context, and obstacles, historical examples do exist of women’s refugee organisations leading peacemaking and/or post-agreement peacebuilding, such as in El Salvador and Cambodia (Fagen and Yudelman 2001; Kumar and Baldwin 2001).

This study contributes to gendered theory on diaspora peacebuilding capacity. It highlights the strategic importance of supporting women’s transnational networks, facilitating contact between diaspora, refugee, and

---

\(^1\) A broad definition of peacebuilding will be used that includes actions that directly affect peace processes as well as actions that can indirectly promote and maintain long-term peace.

\(^2\) Conflict-generated diasporas are defined as diasporas that originate in conflict and emerge through forced migration.

\(^3\) A literature review of diaspora peacebuilding literature is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suggested reading includes: Bercovitch 2007; Cochrane, Basar and Swain 2009; Loesher et al. 2007; Pirkkalainen and Abdile 2009; eds. Smith and Stares 2007; Werbner 1999; Zunzer 2004.
local women’s organisations interested in conflict transformation. The transnational networks solidified transnational and grassroots leadership, provided the women with the resources to resolve conflict in multiple contexts, and equipped the women to lead peaceful change. As such, without support for the transnational networks, transnational bridge building may not have been possible.

**Defining Transnational Bridge Building Capacity**

Studying the actual activities of refugee women’s organisations reveals the peacebuilding potential that refugee organisations can develop over time with the assistance of both international governmental and non-governmental agencies. The study of three women’s refugee organisations - the Tibetan Women’s Association (TWA) headquartered in India, the Sudanese Women’s Voice for Peace (SWVP) based in Kenya, and the Women’s League of Burma (WLB) located in Thailand – shows the capacity of women’s refugee organisations for transnational bridge building. Transnational bridge building is defined as the capacity to build and sustain networks across geographical, social and political boundaries with the aim of bringing about nonviolent social change/conflict transformation. Transnational bridge building encompasses the organisational capacity to develop, operate, and sustain both local and transnational social networks, the capacity to address conflict constructively within their grassroots constituencies, communities in conflict, and transnational networks, and the capacity to lead social change, that is, to empower. Bridge building is thought to be a unique and important aspect of diaspora peacebuilding.

**Grassroots and Transnational Organisational Capacity**

The organisational capacity of diaspora organisations are critical for understanding the extent to which diaspora communities can engage in peacemaking (Sinatti 2010; Zunzer 2004) Over the years, all three organisations learned how to develop and sustain organisations that impact the lives of thousands of women. This included setting up organisational structure, developing and training leadership and staff, obtaining funding and other material resources, identifying goals and constituency needs, and creating programs often in very challenging foreign contexts overcoming enormous obstacles. Each organisation developed the capacity to deliver services in more than one geographical or national context setting up branches or services in numerous locations within host countries. All of the organisations focused on gender specific needs – from maternal health, to counseling for survivors of rape and torture, to income generation projects
for women. Offering services and training to many women created a grassroots constituency that gave all three NGOs a strong grassroots base.

Moreover, each NGO developed the capacity to work transnationally in the international arena. All three organisations learned how to build and use transnational networks, connecting with transnational diasporas, North and South, national political groups (sometimes conflicting), both international governmental and non-governmental organisations, and global women’s movements. This transnational networking required gaining an understanding of international frameworks, such as the human rights, women’s rights and/or equality conventions (e.g. CEDAW), and how to use them in their own context. This helped them to build transnational coalitions and alliances with other NGOs in global women’s movements and transnational issue-focused networks based on common grievances and indigenous documentation. Working transnationally meant familiarising themselves with international organisations, specifically the United Nations. Furthermore, they learned how to communicate globally using websites, email, cell phones – and in new languages. Finally, they developed the capacity to write proposals for NGO and government funders in foreign countries adapting to foreign organisational structure, agendas, and values.

Conflict Resolution Capacity

The second key aspect of transnational bridge building is conflict resolution capacity. The capacity to create and maintain both grassroots and transnational networks is not enough to define transnational bridge building capacity because conflict parties may also become adept at grassroots and transnational networking; peaceful strategies of engagement are critical (Sinatti 2010; Zunzer 2004). Each of the three organisations developed the capacity to address conflict within their female constituencies, refugee communities, and with their partners internationally. All three increased their capacity to negotiate at the national constitutional level and two of the NGOs received gendered legal and constitutional training from international sources.

Moreover, refugee women’s organisations learned how to build strategic relationships and connections with people in different languages, material circumstances, education levels, and with differing convictions, identities and values across national boundaries, a capacity critical for conflict resolution (Porter 2007). Each NGO increased their skill in collaboration. “...Collaboration becomes an indicator of the ability and willingness of a particular diaspora group to discuss, negotiate and overcome ideological, ethnic or religious differences and cleavages that might be at the basis of
Conflict situations in the country of origin” (Sinatti 2010: 19). Building coalitions requires the ability to find common ground and set agendas, pinpoint values and decision-making systems that resonate broadly, build social infrastructure, and develop mechanisms or ways of resolving conflicts that arise within the networks (Snyder 2003). Finally, the three organisations increased their capacity to strengthen cultures of peace by using cultural resources and reinforcing values that reduce violence and normalise nonviolent responses to conflict.

**Leading Social Change: Empowerment**

The third transnational bridge building capacity focuses specifically on conflict transformation. Conflict transformation addresses the roots of conflict moving beyond the cessation of conflict (Lederach 1997; Rupesinghe 1998). Empowerment, Lederach (1997) maintains, is at the heart of peacebuilding capacity. Each of three NGOs provided leadership in the transformation of society by working to improve the status of women altering structures and relations at the root of the conflict. The transformative leadership of TWA, inspired Butler (2003) to argue that, “as a women’s organisation and a part of the Tibetan nationalist movement, TWA spans culture and politics in a way which is unique within the exile community, and is therefore particularly well placed to consciously contribute to, or even lead, community debate about the way in which the Tibetan exiles might integrate cultural survival and political progress in the coming years – both at the local and the global levels” (Butler 2003: 232).

Each refugee women’s organisation worked to improve the status of women, learning long-term strategies and processes at the individual, family, community, and structural levels – all critical to women’s empowerment (Kabeer 1999). Their work involved increasing formal and informal education levels of refugee women (and children), which in turn increased their status in the family and in the community. Grappling with cultural values under attack and foreign rights-based and gender equality frameworks, they offered training that expanded their constituencies’ thinking about gender roles and new opportunities for personal and community development. Despite overwhelming obstacles, they attempted to create a political voice for their constituencies that had been marginalised. Directly and indirectly, they improved their involvement in decision-making within the community through domestic violence intervention, camp governance structures, governments-in-exile, peace negotiations and constitutional development. Their empowerment work was ambivalent; that is, in the context of forced migration, strategic life choices that clearly narrow rather than expand (Rajasingham-Senanayake 2001). Nevertheless,
even as some refugees faced lack of health care, malnutrition, rape, and so forth, the organisations led social change in their communities.

**Methodology**

Following is an analysis of the transnational bridge building capacity of the three refugee women’s organisations\(^4\). The three organisations were chosen for different reasons although what they have in common is that they have all persisted for nearly two decades in the context of protracted conflict (the ethnic organisations that make up the WLB existed nearly a decade before the coalition formed). The Tibetan refugees are cited as the most ‘successful’ refugees and are waging a nonviolent, political struggle for the liberation of Tibet. I was introduced to the SWVP in Senegal in 1994 at the African Regional Preparatory Conference for the 4\(^{th}\) UN World Conference on Women, and am thus familiar with the NGO (Snyder 2003). In 2007, I conducted qualitative research with women from Burma in exile in refugee and migrant worker camps and became familiar with the work of the WLB (Snyder 2011). Each of the organisations is situated in a complex and unique context but all three exhibited similar capacities although to varying degrees. For the purposes of this paper, I will highlight each capacity with an analysis of a different organisation, rather than covering all three capacities for each organisation.

**Transnational Transnational Bridge Building Part I: Capacity for Grassroots and Transnational Organisation of the Tibetan Women’s Association**

Tibet was occupied in 1949 by China, when thousands of soldiers from the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) took over the independent country in order to unify the ‘motherland.’ The Tibetan Women’s Association (TWA) was born out of an act of political resistance - the Tibetan Women’s demonstration of March 1959 - a supportive act to the larger male dominated uprising in Lhasa. Although founded in the 1980s, it represents the continuation of a women’s movement started in 1959 by women ‘martyrs’ (Thonsur 2004). TWA is the only Tibetan women’s organisation in exile. It is a mass organisation with a membership of over 10,000 women and 38 regional branches in India and abroad. TWA’s stated goals include to raise public awareness of the abuses faced by Tibetan women in Chinese-occupied Tibet and to feature the contributions Tibetan women make toward the preservation and promotion of the distinct religion, culture and identity of the Tibetan people (Tibetan Women’s Association 2014).

\(^4\) This paper does not attempt to provide an evaluation of the impact of the NGO activities as this would require additional data not available at this time.
Although autonomous from the government in exile, it started by establishing its legitimacy and usefulness as a support organisation (Butler 2003).

TWA has played an important role in the national struggle against the occupation of Tibet bringing women in as active participants. As a result, other goals such as gender equality sometimes become secondary to the larger nationalist cause. According to Kunchok, a TWA employee, the Dalai Lama established gender equality for the Tibetan people so gender requires less attention (Thonsur 2004). Nevertheless, their goals include ensuring women’s access to educational information, health care, family planning and childcare. Preserving and promoting Tibetan religion, culture and identity are central to their work. Their tailoring projects assist women and girls from disadvantaged families and new arrivals with income generation. TWA also provides social services to single parents, the disabled, and the sick and elderly (Thonsur 2004). Most importantly, TWA offers specialised settlement services to escaped Tibetan nuns and has founded educational institutions and nunneries that have dramatically increased the formal and theological education of the nuns. Since the 1987 uprisings, young nuns have demonstrated in and organised many public protests. Fifty percent have been arrested and subject to imprisonment without trial and to severe torture (Havnevik 1996).

Grassroots and Transnational Organisational Capacity

The TWA epitomises the organisational capacity to build and operate social networks in and across local and global contexts. According to Butler (2003), no women’s organisations existed in Tibet prior to Chinese occupation. Tibetan women learned how to set up NGO structures and developed skilled female leadership over the years – beyond the valued symbolic leadership of the Tibetan elite and the Dalai Lama’s family. Despite cultural constraints around self-promotion, they devised their own election process that represents their ethnically and regionally diverse membership. They initiated programmes and campaigns such as the Beijing campaign. TWA learned how to raise funds; the sponsor a nun programme that finances the Tibetan Nuns Project supports the health healing and education of escaped nuns in India. Furthermore, TWA found the structural, material, and managerial resources to deliver services to women in settlements across India and Nepal. They provide assistance to new refugees, health and educational services for women and children, and income generating programmes, in addition to the specialised support for refugee nuns. Moreover, they communicate with their chapters around the world and coordinate TWA events like the Tibetan Women’s National Uprising Day.
The result is a strong grassroots organisational base in India and Nepal that has survived for nearly 30 years.

At the same time, the TWA developed the capacity to work transnationally in the international arena. Their capacity is perhaps best exemplified by the story of how they became the first Tibetan group to protest on Chinese soil at the 4th UN World Conference on Women (FWCW) in 1995. TWA’s goal in attending was threefold: 1) to raise awareness of women inside Tibet; 2) lobby UN bureaucrats, national government delegates and NGO representatives for support for the right of Tibet women in exile to attend Beijing and passing resolutions to that effect; and 3) to impact the official document to include wording that would assist Tibetan women. Their strategies included petitions, appeal letters, lobbying, networking and documentation in addition to attendance at all 20 major preparatory meetings and conferences for Beijing (Butler, 2003).

Through their efforts to attend the official FWCW and the parallel NGO Forum in Beijing, TWA became experts in understanding and navigating the United Nations structure. Although both the application for UN accreditation and for registration at the Beijing NGO Forum were unsuccessful despite years of letter writing and lobbying, ten Tibetan women, now citizens of Western countries, applying as members of sympathetic non-Tibetan NGOs, did obtain visas. Upon arrival in Beijing, nine Tibetan and six non-Tibetan supporters immediately formed a Tibetan Women’s Delegation with their own letterhead, media and materials for distribution. The demonstration staged by the nine Tibetan women on September 1, 1995 is perceived by Tibetans as the first Tibetan protest on Chinese soil and received more international media coverage than any other group.

Operating effectively at the UN meant learning how to use the conceptual framework developed by UN and government agencies and women’s organisations over the 20 years since the first UN World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975. TWA needed to present evidence and express its concerns about the situation of women in Tibet within the context of the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 1985 consensus document, Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. As a result, TWA built up a substantial and unique body of knowledge about the situation of women inside Tibet. TWA’s first of three reports compiled earlier documentation of human rights abuses, specifically the torture used by security forces and prison authorities against Tibetan Buddhist nuns in the resistance movement (Lawasia 1991; Schwartz 1994).
The third report, which documented the economic, social and cultural conditions inside Tibet that forced women to escape in the mid-1990s, used refugee interviews requiring a high level of technical skill in research, writing, editing, design, and production.

TWA’s political strategy required transnational coalition and alliance building. In order to build coalitions, they needed to demonstrate their cause on the one hand and on the other acknowledge and understand the injustices suffered by other women. Moreover, the alliances had to be based on issues formulated in the unfamiliar language of UN documents. Isolated in India, TWA discovered that their cause was one of many struggles. According to a TWA leader:

I learned a lot by attending the different international gatherings, how we as women should work together, not just as a Tibetan but, you know, work with the whole international women’s community, and then exchange our ideas. We actually felt that Tibetan women only suffered a lot inside Tibet but that’s not true. After getting involved with these women from other sections, I learned that suffering is taking place in all parts of the world (Butler 2003: 187).

As a result of the coalition building, the Tibetan Women’s delegation framed their grievances as the consequence of foreign occupation and its negative effects on women’s lives. Together with their international allies, they succeeded in persuading government delegates to include more than ten references to women living under foreign occupation in the Platform for Action (PFA) (Butler 2003).

In addition to alliances with women’s groups around the world, TWA mobilised politically active Tibetan women in exile outside South Asia, forming a new transnational network. Some of the women were members of TWA chapters but others were members of Tibet Support Groups (TSGs) – independent organisations of Tibetans and non-Tibetan supporters. For example, TWA garnered material and political support from the International Campaign for Tibet and the International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet (Butler 2003) The TWA President, designated the International Campaign coordinator, provided symbolic leadership for the network as the legitimate representative of Tibetan women in exile and of Tibetan women inside Tibet (as first responders to current women refugees from Tibet). It proved challenging to represent diaspora whose life experiences varied profoundly from those of the majority of Tibetan exiles in South Asia, including the leaders themselves.

Developing the capacity to communicate and thus to strategise transnationally with their Western and Tibetan networks was very difficult. At the local grassroots level, TWA officials worked in a context
characterised by poor and erratic communication systems, Tibetan as the common language, and lack of access to governmental and non-governmental structures of the host society and to the international media. On the other hand, Tibetan and non-Tibetan women living in the West are unified by more or less instantaneous telecommunications technology, a common language (English), and operate in similar and relatively open governmental and non-governmental structures and a global media (Butler 2003). Often the Tibetan women were pressured by Western supporters to proceed in ways that were not comfortable or natural in an effort by Westerners to offer expert knowledge and skills on the UN process. TWA overcame many obstacles, learning how to operate in a style and using a strategy that would meet the expectations of Western Tibetan women and supporters.

Transnational Bridge Building Part II: Conflict Resolution Capacity of the Sudanese Women’s Voice for Peace

For more than two decades civil war between the government of Sudan in Khartoum and armed opposition movements has divided the predominantly Arabic-speaking, Muslim North from the Black African Christian and Animist South. During the war, the Sudanese Women’s Voice for Peace (SWVP) was one of the most prominent women’s organisations representing women from southern Sudan (Abusharaf 2009; Chimbura 2005; Hunt and Posa 2009; Mazuranna and McKay 1999; Snyder 2003; Nebenzahl 2003). Based in Nairobi, SWVP evolved from a meeting of wives of political leaders organised by an East African NGO, the People for Peace in Africa. They were asked to approach their husbands to break an impasse in negotiations but the women decided they wanted to form a Sudan-wide women’s movement for peace, emphasising the central role of women in the resolution of the conflict. In 1994, the group founded the SWVP. They saw themselves as a part of a larger movement for the self-determination of Southern Sudan.

In its first year, SWVP organised several events on the plight of women and children in the war with modest support from NGOs. With support from the Swedish Life and Peace Institute and from UNIFEM, the NGO was launched internationally at the FWCW in 1995. SWVP developed a three-step approach to empowering women through training, establishing local capacities for peace, and advancing participation in conflict resolution and the promotion of a culture of peace. Their goals included: networking and reconciling with grassroots organisations; promoting peace negotiations; developing information banks on the impact of the war; and initiating women’s self-help projects in food production, healthcare delivery and
income generation, specifically for refugee women (Snyder 2003). In the late 1990s, SWVP attracted a large grant from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a programme it lacked the organisational capacity to carry out, resulting in withdrawal of international support (Horst and Leeuwen 2005). But SWVP persevered, earning numerous awards and international acclaim for its leaders.

**Conflict Resolution Capacity**

SWVP members developed their conflict resolution capacity early in their history through conflict resolution skills and gender participation training. The Wajir Peace and Development Committee, a community-based group in northeastern Kenya composed primarily of women, assisted the SWVP in making critical international links during its formation so that the fledgling organisation could obtain non-violence training, office support and funding (Anderson 2000). In the early 1990s, Life and Peace Institute formed a partnership with SWVP that produced a training manual and materials for peacebuilding and conflict transformation training and civic education at the grassroots community-level across the Sudan. Teody Lotto, a SWVP founder, describes how they trained women trainers:

> When we come to an area we ask the women to select the women with influence in the village. These leaders are trained in non-violence and reconciliation, so they can train others. We teach women to promote traditional peacemaking, to bring different villages to forgive one another (Anderson 2000: 36).

Lotto maintains the trainings and workshops led to village women feeling empowered to begin dialogue with guerrilla leaders who were raping, looting and burning houses.

Early on, SWVP initiated and participated in grassroots peace conferences that strengthened traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. SWVP participated in the People to People Peace Process, which culminated in the Wunlit Nuer-Dinka Peace and Reconciliation Conference. By 1999, the peace process had ended the bloody hostilities between the Dinka and Nuer peoples of south Sudan exacerbated by the 1991 split in the SPLM/A. When the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) mediation efforts between military leaders did not succeed, NSCC began a grassroots peacemaking process focused on tribal chiefs, traditional religious leaders, and women. A number of accounts indicate it was the female members of NSCC, also SWVP members, who began the grassroots peace efforts taking a leading role (Duany 2001; Hunt and Posa 2009). Women from both sides of the split continued to visit one another, maintain communication and provide a
forum to discuss issues that affected their communities (Kelleher and Johnson 2008; Palmberg 2004).

With the support of NGOs and governmental organisations, SWVP and its members dramatically increased their capacity to negotiate. Prior to the formal peace negotiations, Sudanese women were invited to a peace forum in Maastricht, Netherlands sponsored by the EU, OAU, the Arab League, and the UN to begin lobbying for the participation of women in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) peace process (Abusharaf 2009). As a result, during the 2002 Machakos Protocol peace talks, many women’s organisations registered as observers with the sponsor, IGAD, and presented technical papers to negotiators. However, they were not formally invited to the negotiations. Nevertheless, a delegation of women travelled to where the discussions were taking place. Once there, they sang and danced loudly until a mediator emerged from the conference. Refusing to leave, their leaders were finally allowed in as observers (Chimbiru 2007). Despite their efforts, the women had little impact in 2002. Even the female SPLM/A delegates (including SWVP founder Awut Deng Acuil), recruited at the last minute, were ridiculed and intimidated by seasoned politicians (Itto 2006). They did, however, influence the policies concerning women in the Government of Southern Sudan, which officially supports women’s equality.

In 2003, when the Government of Sudan (GOS) prevented women from boarding a plane to take them to the Naivasha peace talks in Kenya, women from the South joined Northern women to formally protest their exclusion, once again, from the peace process. Once in Naivasha, women’s organisations were forced to present their recommendations to the parties by pushing them under the closed doors of the negotiation room (Abusharaf 2005). In November 2004, two months before the final Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in January 2005 in Naivasha, the US-based Institute for Inclusive Security (IIS) rallied Sudanese female peacebuilders and government delegates in Washington, D.C. (Abusharaf 2009). Despite their efforts, the women’s organisations were excluded from the CPA. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and later IIS and UNIFEM, sponsored two more conferences. The women drew an unprecedented amount of attention to women’s issues in the reconstruction of the Sudan at the 2005 Oslo conference (Danbolt et al. 2005). In her opening address to the 2008 consortium, UN Deputy Secretary General Asha-Rose Migiro stated that the women’s contributions were critical to progress in Sudan and highlighted their priorities (Koppell and O’Neill 2008).
In addition to negotiation skills, SWVP developed the capacity to forge common identities across enemy lines and look for common ground with Northern Sudanese women and between Muslim and Christian women (Tripp et al. 2009). SWVP developed strategies to bring ordinary Muslim and Christian women together because they saw that they face the same problems of displacement, poverty and lack of education; for example, they arranged annual meetings at the embassy in Kenya occasionally facilitated by the Dutch government. When asked what it is like relating to women from the North, Deng stated in an interview:

To be honest, it's not easy. When we meet, we scream and shout at each other for the first two days. Then on the third day, we say, this is enough. We make them understand that the government and the successive governments of the north have been very oppressive towards the people of the south. They have been killing our children and taking our children to war (Majtenyi 2003: 1).

Building common identities required finding common ground as women as well as learning to accept differences (Okwaci cited in Nakamoto 2006).

SWVP’s capacity to collaborate is evidenced by years of collaborative work with Sudanese women’s groups, regional networks including Sudanese diaspora in Kenya, Egypt, and northern Sudan, and global movements. For over fifteen years, these activist networks, often including women from North and South, travelled the world with international support, advocating for peace and drawing international attention to ‘the forgotten war’ (Snyder 2003; Wilson and Sughrue 2010). Beginning in 2007, My Sister’s Keeper Sisterhood for Peace Initiative, with the support of USIP and IIS, brought women’s diaspora to the Sudan to link with Sudanese grassroots women building trust and developing collaborative problem solving skills.

Transnational Bridge Building Part III: Leading Social Change – Capacity to Empower of the Women’s League of Burma

Since its independence from Britain in 1947, Burma has experienced civil war and authoritarian military rule. After independence, armed communist and ethnic groups that maintained they were under-represented in the 1948 constitution challenged Burma’s fledgling democratic government. The autonomy promised to minority states was never granted. In the 1990s on the Thai/Burmese border, women from Burma developed a grassroots network of women’s NGOs that grew out their experiences of gendered conflict. Mary O’Kane (2006) has documented how women’s experiences as refugees, migrant workers, and student activists made them more aware of gender relations. In the refugee camps, women leaders noticed the male control of political and military decision-making and weaponry, women’s
experience of rape and sex abuse, increased domestic violence, and growing maternal and infant mortality. Female activists, who had helped to organize the 1988 non-violent uprising led by Aung San Suu Kyi, were told they could become medics or teachers. Migrant women were called to hospitals and police stations over and over again to assist women in sexually, physically, and psychologically abusive situations. Their heightened awareness led to the formation of ethnic women’s associations (O’Kane 2006).

Eventually, in 2000, the women’s activities led to the formation of the WLB, bridging differences among the twelve ethnic women’s organisations. WLB connected with global women’s movements, networking on issues such as trafficking of women. Although the international connection meant renewed opposition from male political leaders, participating in global networks presented many opportunities including the experience of attending UN international and regional conferences. Currently, WLB offers training and services in refugee and migrant worker camps and documents the status of key gender issues including maternal health, HIV/AIDS and gendered violence, focusing primarily on rape by the Burmese military. The aim and the objectives of the WLB are: 1) to work for women’s empowerment and advancement of the status of women; 2) to work for the increased participation of women in all spheres of society; and 3) to work for the increased participation of women in the democracy movement, and peace and national reconciliation processes.

**Leading Social Change: Empowerment Capacity**

WLB has exhibited leadership for social change, empowering women at the individual, family, community, and national levels. Over the decades, the women in the camps have increased their political influence and agency by forming collective gender-based organisations and by joining together across ethnicities to consolidate their power. They have equipped their gender-based grassroots constituency with human rights, women’s rights, leadership, and conflict resolution training that has enhanced their status in the community and opened up new opportunities. They have influenced informal and formal community decision-making processes. They have sought international support and attention, gaining leadership experience and knowledge and alliances with funders that increased their resources. They have documented and published their grievances, strengthening their position. Moreover, the WLB has learned to use global mandates such as UNSCR 1325 and CEDAW as leverage with their male counterparts in the governments in exile and in their communities as they pursue gender
equality agenda. As such, WLB illustrates the third aspect of transnational bridge building capacity – leadership for social change.

The WLB network provides additional social resources through the trainings that increase the informal power of some women in the camps and create discursive alternatives for many (Snyder 2011). At the individual level, many of the women experience an increase in confidence. According to Amartya Sen (1993), women’s own perception of their value is as critical to increased empowerment as is their perceived value by others. As a result of the services (social resources) provided by indigenous women’s organisations, they have been introduced to new ideas and opportunities that changed their perceptions of what was possible and brought about new confidence. Fundamental changes in perception are indicators of an inner transformation (A. Sen 1999; G. Sen 1993; Kabeer 2001).

At the family or household level, the trainings provide informal educational opportunities that the women felt increased their status. The trainings had an impact similar to that of formal education, increasing their status in the eyes of their husbands and, in their minds, changing perceptions of equality in the marriage. Their increased informal power assisted them in their negotiations with their husbands when it came to further attendance at trainings and camp meetings (Snyder 2011).

Furthermore, the trainings initiated the use of human rights/women’s rights discourse altering perceptions of gender relations and gender roles. The existence of gender equity is disputed in the Burmese context (Khiang 1984; Spiro 1993; Belak 2002). The military government claims that women in Burma are equal to men in contrast to contemporary analysis that indicates the authoritarian, conservative, military regime undermines women’s status and independence (Mills 2002). Nevertheless, the women maintained that the new rights-based discourse changed their expectations of what was possible and/or desirable. Now it was within the realm of possibility that their husbands take over typical female household chores and support their increased mobility in order to attend informal educational events available to them in the camps (Snyder 2011).

Although their own families had been too poor to send them to school for long, education for their daughters was a viable option in the camps, which Kishor (2000) maintains is a direct indicator of empowerment. Rates of literacy for Mon and Karenni women, which are between 50 and 60 percent, generally decrease with age, indicating that more young women have gained access to education (Burmese Border Consortium 1995). In farming communities, women’s literacy in their mother tongues was considered
unimportant and women are thought to belong in the home, meaning a girl’s education is seen as a waste of resources (Belak 2002). Moreover, the government discourages literacy in ethnic languages. The women believed that their communities now validated the importance of education for both boys and girls indicating, in their minds, a shift in value preferences (Snyder 2011).

At the community level, the women felt newly empowered by the change in community level procedures that put the women’s NGOs at the forefront of family conflict resolution and changed attitudes and responses towards domestic violence in three ways (Snyder 2011). First, the conception of domestic violence transformed from a private family issue to a social problem. Domestic violence is now seen as a threat to the community as a whole. Second, the camp procedures and structures for responding to domestic violence altered how it was dealt with in their villages at home. The procedures differed from camp to camp but all of the systems involved women at the forefront. Third, women are now encouraged to speak up about violence in the home. A Karenni NGO leader maintained, “Women suffer from domestic violence. Before that [in Burma], they didn’t speak out because they were shy and afraid of their husbands but now they share with their friends how they suffer.” (Interview with Mae Hong Son, April 2007)

The structure of the refugee and migrant worker camps opened up new opportunities for women to participate in community governance (Snyder 2011). The refugees experience a high level of autonomy running many components of the camp assistance and governance programs (Bowles 1997). Nevertheless, the international NGOs (INGOs) that support the camps have influenced camp structure. The INGOs require a quota of women to be elected to the camp committee providing a few women with leadership roles. According to a female Karen camp committee member:

> Men are cooperating with women and giving women a chance to work and advice on how to work. This means equality. The advantage of women’s leadership is that women understand women more (Interview with Mae Sariang, May 2007).

In addition, women’s NGOs and women’s sections played an active and important role, which in turn presented some opportunities for women in terms of employment, community participation, and training.

---

5Some of the women thought domestic violence decreased as a result of the trainings. I am unaware of camp-specific data that would confirm or refute their perceptions. An estimated 60 percent of Karenni women in the Mae Hon Son Camp were exposed to gender based violence with domestic violence the most common form of violence (Ward 2002).
At the national level, with international assistance, WLB successfully advocated for the inclusion of a 30 percent quota for women in the Draft Constitution for a Democratic Burma and recognition of Burma’s obligations under CEDAW. In 2002, the Swedish International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, held workshops with the leaders of WLB and several other women’s NGOs, and invited senior male movement leaders in order to strengthen the capacity of women to participate in and shape the national reconciliation process. As a result, WLB was included in the development of the Proposal for National Reconciliation. Later, WLB put their 2006 training in international law to use at the constitutional convention of the Burmese Government in exile. According to Yee Htun, “No other organisation was as prepared as we were, and we blew them away and this time many men couldn't just dismiss us” (Htun cited in Global Justice Center 2007: 1).

Conclusion

This study of women from Tibet, Sudan, and Burma in exile reinforces the need to strengthen women’s transnational networks, facilitating contact between diaspora, refugee, and local women’s organisations interested in conflict transformation. Examining the transnational bridge building capacity of the three organisations shows how they developed strategic transnational networks that allowed the organisations to become partners in peacemaking and in conflict transformation. Over the long term, as refugees in the context of protracted conflict, each organisation was able to develop on their own and with the assistance of international governmental and non-governmental organisations, the capacity to build and sustain networks across geographical, social and political boundaries with the aim of bringing about nonviolent social change.

Each organisation demonstrated aspects of transnational bridge building capacity. Over the past twenty-five years, TWA built a mass grassroots organisation and expanded their networks transnationally to the Tibetan diaspora and non-Tibetan supporters in order to heighten international awareness of and influence on the nonviolent transformation of the conflict in Tibet as well as gendered aspects of the conflict. SWVP, since its inception in 1994, has trained women in conflict resolution skills, initiated and participated in regional grassroots reconciliation, built bridges across enemy lines using their identities as women, set up and joined numerous transnational women’s coalitions, and developed skills essential for participation in national level peace talks. WLB, since 2000, has offered services and trainings and become both informally and formally part of community and national decision-making processes increasing the social
resources and informal power of their constituency, challenging gender roles, and setting the stage for future constitutional reform in Myanmar/Burma.

As refugee diaspora organisations are more fully recognised as key players in peacemaking and conflict resolution, ongoing research will assist with exploring important questions about refugee participation given the complex and very diverse circumstances that they face. Understanding how women refugees affected by armed conflicts may help to facilitate peacebuilding not only addresses some of the needs of refugees but also develops the new theory, policy and practices necessary to address contemporary ethno-political conflict.

References


Information for Authors

RoSS is a peer-reviewed journal. New, original and unsolicited articles are welcomed. Articles should be submitted to the Editor in Chief, Dr. Latif Tas, via email at latif.tas@rossjournal.co.uk in a Word document. Authors may expect that a decision about publication may take between two to three months. Authors of accepted articles will be asked to transfer copyright to the Review of Social Studies (RoSS).

Paper Submission Guidelines

Guidelines for preparing and submitting your article to the Review of Social Studies (RoSS) are provided below. Please ensure you refer to these instructions if you are preparing a manuscript to submit to the RoSS.

Article Preparation

- Articles are only accepted in English. Articles should be 7,000 – 9,000 words including footnotes and references. On a separate sheet, please provide the author’s name, address, a brief biographical note, a 150-200 word abstract, acknowledgements, and a word count (including footnotes and references).
- Authors should not refer to themselves by name in the text of their submission. Your identity should not be revealed explicitly or implicitly on any page of the article.
- The Harvard referencing system should be used for bibliographical references in the text and footnotes. Notes should be kept to a minimum. A bibliographical reference list should be included at the end of the article, starting on a new page.
- Submissions must be double-spaced throughout, including footnotes and the list of references. Margins should be at least one inch on all sides and the text should be no smaller than 12 point font (Times New Roman).
- Figures and tables can be included either as part of the main manuscript, or in separate files. The author must obtain any necessary permission for the reproduction of any illustrations or tables already published.
- Pages in the manuscript should be numbered.
- Quotations should be enclosed within double quotation marks. Substantial quotations of 40 or more words should be indented without quotation marks. Any alteration in a quotation should be acknowledged, for example: (Al-Ali 2002: 75, emphasis added).
- Dates should be given in the form ‘1 July 2014’.
- Foreign language text should be italicised. Spelling practices should follow British spelling conventions and be consistent throughout the article. Authors for whom English is a second language are strongly recommended to have their manuscript professionally edited before submission.
- The full name of a person, organisation, or programme should be used when mentioned for the first time, and titles and explanatory phrases should be provided when appropriate.
- Using the Harvard referencing system, references should be presented as:

  Book:

  Book chapters:

  Journal articles:

  Journal articles from an electronic source:

  Websites/online material:

Review Process, Copyright and Publication

- All articles submitted to the RoSS will undergo a peer review process: this is a critical element of scholarly publication in ensuring the appropriateness and quality of research. The review process will be conducted confidentially and anonymously. Recommendations from the reviewers will be provided to the author. Editors will use review recommendations in making decisions on the publication of any manuscript.
- Manuscripts should be original work and must not be submitted elsewhere whilst under consideration by the RoSS. Only contributions that have not already appeared in print can be accepted. If the article is accepted for publication it should not be reproduced elsewhere without the written permission of RoSS and the London Centre for Social Studies (LCSS).
- Authors will be required to sign a License Form for papers accepted for publication. Signature of the licence is a condition of publication. An appropriate form will be supplied by the editorial office.
- One hard copies of the issue containing the article will be supplied free of charge to the corresponding authors. Authors will also receive a PDF offprint of their article.

Book Review Submission Guidelines

Those interested in writing a book review should email Dr. Latif Tas at latif.tas@rossjournal.co.uk for a list of selected books available for review.

Reviews should involve both a non-evaluative overview of the content and a critical assessment. Please note that the publication of reviews submitted to RoSS is at the Book Review editor’s discretion.

The name/s of author/s of the book should be quoted at the top of the first page followed by the full title and subtitle of the book, the publisher, year of publication, number of pages and price (paperback/hardback) as follows:


The reviewer’s name and institution should be placed at the end of the review on the right hand side of the page.

- Reviews for edited and non-edited volumes should be between 1,000 and 1,200 words.
- Submissions must be double-spaced. Margins should be at least one inch on all sides and the text should be no smaller than 12 point font.
- Footnotes should not be used in reviews. Instead, please include a citation in the text itself, followed by a full reference at the end of the review in the Harvard style.
- All quotations from the book reviewed should be followed by the page number from which they have been taken; for example, (p. 34).
- The full name of a person, organisation, or programme should be used when mentioned for the first time, and titles and explanatory phrases should be provided when appropriate.
- Dates should be given in the form ‘1 July 2014’.

Website:
CONTENTS

ARTICLES
A Gendered Analysis of Refugee Peacebuilding: Transnational Networks for Peace
Anna Snyder

Overcoming obstacles through hidden nuptial paths: Foreign Muslim purported spouses marrying in Italy
Federica Sona

Bilingualism and Gender in the Literature of Iranian Women in the Diaspora
Leila Samadi Rendy

Returning ‘home’ after retirement? The role of gender in return migration decisions of Spanish and Turkish migrants
Anita Bocker and Anoeshka Gehring

Consequences of Feminised Migration on Families: The Case of Filipino Women
Caridad T. Sri Tharan

BOOK REVIEWS
The Oxford Handbook of Refugee & Forced Migration Studies (by Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Gil Loescher, Katy Long and Nando Sigona (eds.))
Bahar Baser

Institutional Change in Turkey: The Impact of European Union Reforms on Human Rights and Policing (by Leila Piran).
Elsa Tulin Sen

State, Faith and Nation in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Lands (by Frederick F. Anscombe).
Selcuk Aydin