

Abstract

Armed conflict affects men and women differently due to their previous roles in the society. For instance, it often crucially changes the status of women and enhances their emancipation. Therefore, women should be included in conflict resolution as well as in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction, to ensure sustainable peace. Examples from many African countries driven by conflict denote that women are not automatically included in these processes. This single intrinsic case study documents the work of women peace mediators in Burundi. At the theoretical level, the study argues for an elicitive endogenous approach to peacebuilding, embedded in the conflict transformation theory by John Paul Lederach. Nevertheless, theoretical concepts are not emphasized because they tend to limit the mediators' agenda which actually involves a wide range of conflict handling mechanisms. The main part of the study is based on semi-formal questionnaires filled out by women peace mediators in Bujumbura. The goal of the research is twofold: First, it is aimed to introduce the mediators and to understand their motivations to mediate. Second, it documents their everyday work by analysing official reports. The findings show that an "average" mediator is a married woman, with children, with at least secondary school completed, working in the social sector, and is human or women's rights activist. Furthermore, given the local character of the conflict in Burundi, the study shows that peacebuilding at the grassroots level has crucial implications for national security because it prevents community-based conflicts from spilling over to higher levels.