

WOMEN AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Perspectives from
the Ground



GIJTR

Global Initiative for Justice
Truth & Reconciliation

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION OF SITES OF CONSCIENCE

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) is a global network of museums, historic sites and grassroots initiatives dedicated to building a more just and peaceful future through engaging communities in remembering struggles for human rights and addressing their modern repercussions. Founded in 1999, the ICSC now includes more than 300 Sites of Conscience members in 65 countries. The ICSC supports these members through grants, networking and training.



International Coalition of
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Cover photo: A 2018 GIJTR exhibition of body-maps in Conakry, Guinea.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Founded by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR) is a Consortium of nine organizations around the globe dedicated to multi-disciplinary, integrated and holistic approaches to transitional justice.

Published in November 2020, this toolkit, *Women and Transitional Justice: Perspectives from the Ground*, draws on the lead author's interviews with five key respondents from ICSC's member sites and partner organizations in Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Sri Lanka, Algeria and Guatemala, as well as ICSC's and GIJTR's ongoing work with diverse organizations engaged in truth, justice and reconciliation efforts. It aims to explore the multiplicity of roles occupied by women during conflict and periods of authoritarian rule, as well as how these roles impact on women's needs post-conflict; highlight the ways in which women have been involved in transitional justice processes and the impact of their involvement; investigate obstacles to the inclusion of women in transitional justice processes; and share recommendations from women-led grassroots organizations for meaningful inclusion of women in transitional justice processes.

Acknowledgements

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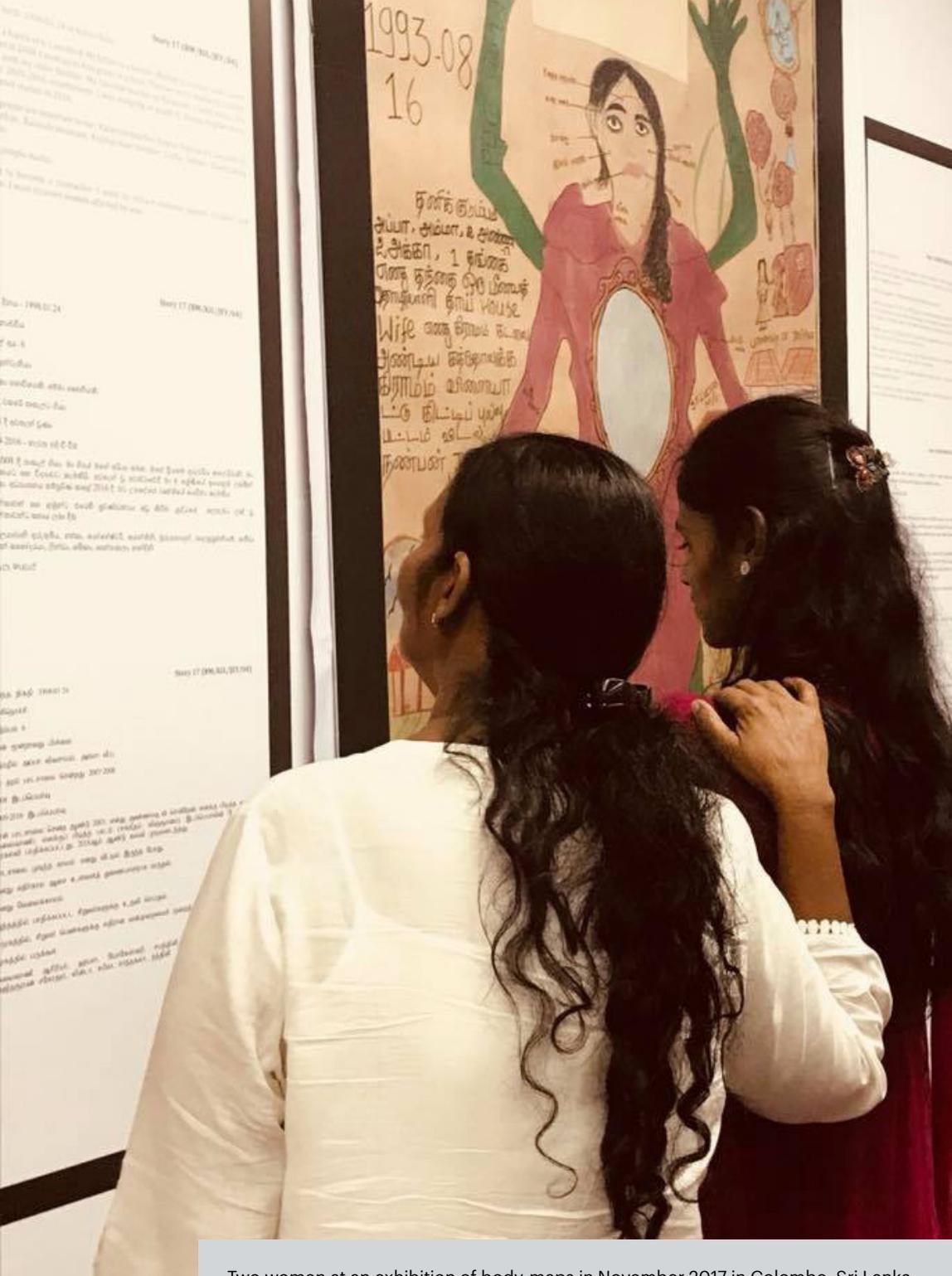
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Two women at an exhibition of body-maps in November 2017 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR JUSTICE, TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION CONSORTIUM

Around the world, there is an increasing call for justice, truth and reconciliation in countries where legacies of grave human rights violations cast a shadow on transitions. To meet this need, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) launched the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR) in August 2014. The goal of GIJTR is to address new challenges in countries in conflict or transition that are struggling with their legacies of past or ongoing grave human rights violations.

The GIJTR Consortium (“the Consortium”) is comprised of the following nine partner organizations:

- International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, in the United States (lead partner);

- American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI), in the United States;
- Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR), in Indonesia;
- Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), in South Africa;
- Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), in Cambodia;
- Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF), in the United States;
- Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala (Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala – FAFG), in Guatemala;
- Humanitarian Law Center (HLC), in Serbia; and
- Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG), in the United States.

In addition to leveraging the different areas of expertise of the Consortium partners, the ICSC draws on the knowledge and longstanding community connections of its 275-plus members in 65 countries in order to strengthen and broaden the Consortium’s work.



The Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala (FAFG) applies multidisciplinary forensic scientific methodologies to investigations into the circumstances, whereabouts and identity of missing and disappeared persons to provide truth to victims and their families, assist in the search for justice and redress, and strengthen the rule of law. Photo credit: Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala

The Consortium partners, along with the ICSC's network members, develop and implement a range of rapid response and high-impact programs, utilizing both restorative and retributive approaches to criminal justice and accountability for grave human rights violations. The Consortium takes an interdisciplinary approach to justice, truth and accountability. On the whole, the Consortium partners possess expertise in the following areas:

- Truth-telling, memorialization and other forms of historical memory and reconciliation;
- Documenting human rights violations for transitional justice purposes;
- Forensic analysis and other efforts related to missing or disappeared persons;
- Advocating for victims, including for their right to access justice, psychosocial support and trauma mitigation activities;
- Providing technical assistance to and building the capacity of civil society activists and organizations to promote and engage with transitional justice processes;
- Reparative justice initiatives; and
- Ensuring and integrating gender justice into these and all other transitional justice processes.

Given the diversity of experiences, knowledge and skills within the Consortium and the ICSC's network members, the Consortium's programming offers post-conflict countries and countries emerging from repressive regimes a unique opportunity to address transitional justice needs in a timely manner while simultaneously promoting local participation and building the capacity of community partners.



Participants at a GIJTR workshop in Conakry, Guinea learn about self-care while assisting survivors with trauma.

INTRODUCTION

My name is Alaa Salah...My journey to you was forged by a long line of Sudanese women who have fought for peace and justice in our communities for decades...

Women and young people were at the forefront of the recent protests, often outnumbering men and accounting for 70% of protestors. ...Women led resistance committees and sit-ins, planned protest routes, and disobeyed curfews, even in the midst of a declared state of emergency that left them vulnerable to security forces. Many were teargassed, threatened, assaulted, and thrown in jail without any charge or due process. Both women and men also faced sexual harassment and were raped. Women also faced retaliation from their own families for participating in the protests.

...Despite this visible role, despite their courage and their leadership, women have been side-lined in the formal political process in the months following the revolution.

...women's representation in the current governance structure falls far below our demand of 50% parity and we are skeptical that the 40% quota of the still-to-be formed legislative council will be met.

For the last 30 years, women's bodies and our rights have been policed; backlash has been swift and violent when patriarchal norms have been challenged.

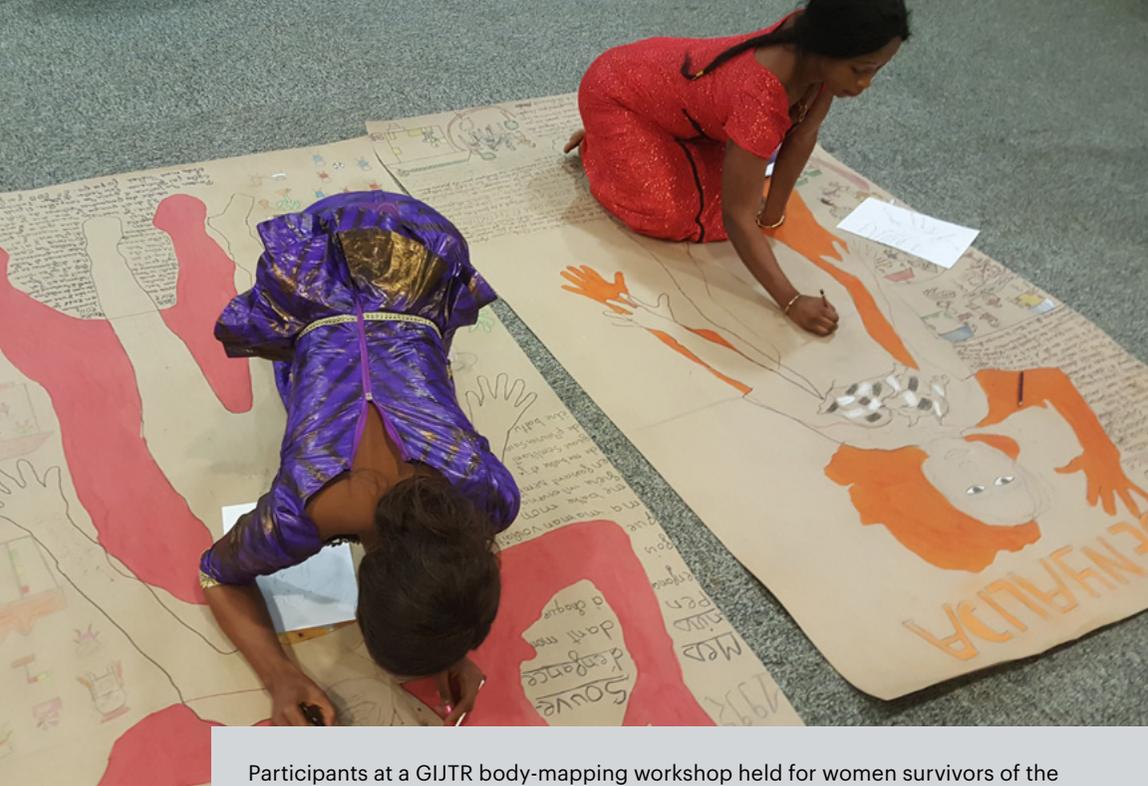
If we are not represented at the peace table, and if we don't have a meaningful voice in parliament, our rights will not be guaranteed, and discriminatory and restrictive laws will remain unchanged, continuing the cycle of instability and violence. (Alaa Salaah 2019)

These are the powerful words of 22 year old activist, Alaa Salaah, as she addressed the United Nations Security Council open debate on women, peace and security (Salaah 2019). In her bold, assertive statement she speaks to women's meaningful participation and the protection of women's rights in peacebuilding processes. Her speech encapsulates the multiple, varied roles that women assume as well as the numerous ways in which women are policed, harassed and marginalised, both in times of conflict and peace. She references patriarchal systems that continue to render women voiceless even when women repeatedly and loudly raise their voice, calling out human rights violations and structural violence. Her words echo the experiences of women involved in almost every conflict across the globe, in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East. What is apparent across these diverse contexts, is that women are not without voice and agency, but are rendered inaudible by systems and structures that deny their agency and presence. In post-conflict and post-authoritarian contexts, women's voices in transitional justice processes

are often framed within the archetypal image of the victim or survivor: amplified to bear witness to the suffering and pain caused by conflict and to mobilise empathy and other political agendas but rarely heard or recognised as experts or political agents (Shackel & Fiske 2019).

This persistent negation of women's capacity continues in spite of the United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (UN Security Council, 2000). This resolution adopted in 2000, with the precise purpose of affirming the centrality of women's unbiased participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction (Shulika 2016), calls for member states and warring parties to acknowledge women's specific experiences of conflict, protect women in conflict areas and ensure that women are equally represented in peace and security processes. In the 20 years since this resolution has been passed and despite the fact that conflicts disproportionately impact the health, safety and human rights of women (Mader 2018) remain at the periphery of transitional justice processes.

Progress with regards to the UNSCR 1325 has been uneven, with the pace of change in some contexts 'glacial' (Chang et al. 2015, p.13). Few women have held official roles in peace agreement processes since 2000, with research suggesting that they constitute four percent of all signatories, 2.7 percent of chief mediators and less than nine percent of negotiators in official peace processes (Chang et al. 2015; Coomaraswamy 2015, Paffenholz et al. 2016). In a review of peace agreements from 1990 to 2016, Jamar and Bell (2018) show that only 3% of transitional justice provisions incorporated any gender-related approach and conclude that the gender-sensitivity in these processes is meagre in comparison with existing discussions and policy awareness in this regard (p.3). The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (NGOWG – WPS) (Mader 2018) found that the UN Security Council is not meeting its women, peace and security (WPS) targets, its approach, 'remains superficial, ad-hoc and inconsistent; subject to the individual efforts of Security Council members rather than being systematically integrated into



Participants at a GIJTR body-mapping workshop held for women survivors of the civil war in Sri Lanka in August 2018.

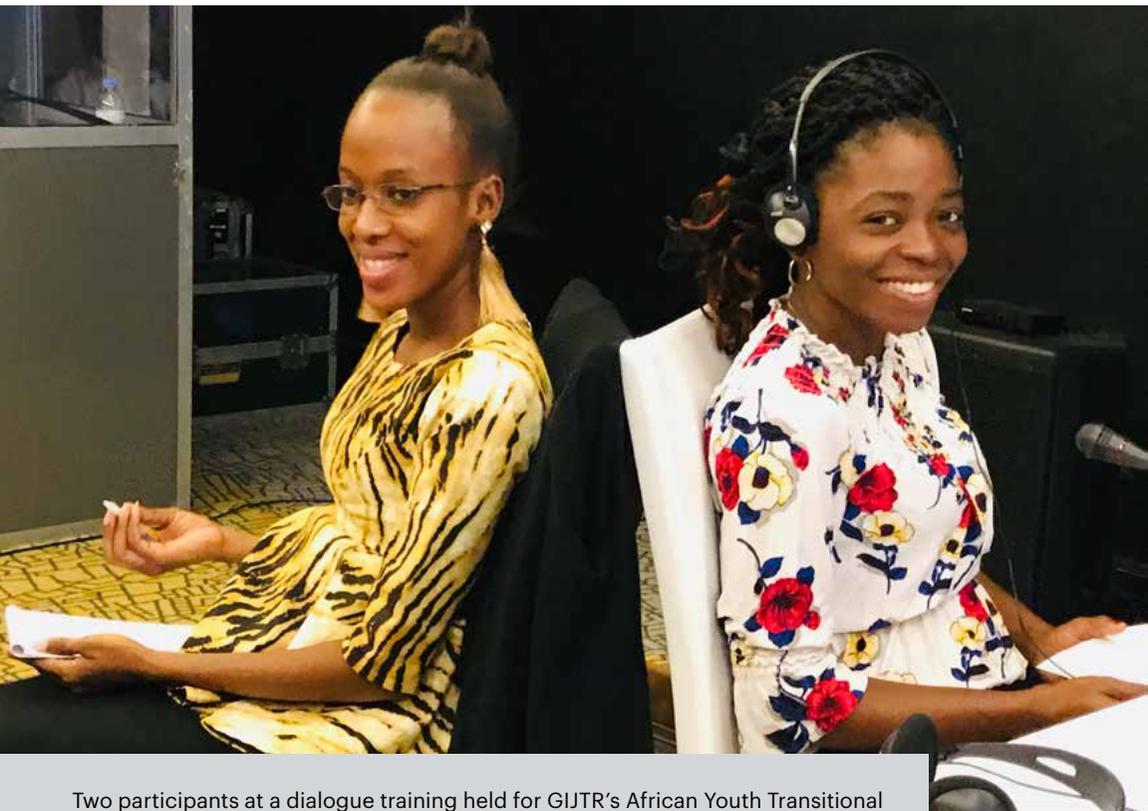
Council action; and reflects a lack of willingness to tackle the harder and more complex issues under the WPS agenda. Its approach is defined by a lack of accountability for failure to fully implement all provisions of the ten resolutions that constitute the WPS agenda’ (Mader 2018, p. 1).

When women are given a seat at the table, their inclusion tends towards tokenism, with presence and limited representation masked as participation. Including women in these processes allows for a diversity of perspectives, solutions and contributions and a more inclusive peace process (Jamar & Bell 2018).

ICSC’s previous work has highlighted the many subversive ways in which women are also intentionally and unintentionally excluded from transitional justice processes. For example, in The Gambia, inadequate planning meant that women were largely excluded from providing input during the state’s consultations

in 2018 which preceded the launch of the country’s Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC). In this instance consultations were hosted at times and spaces that were inaccessible to many women. Another example from both The Gambian TRRC as well as others, is the failure to consider and make available safe spaces for women to give testimony. A breadth of research and evidence speaks to the specific emotional and psychological needs of women who have been abused and/or traumatised, however there continues to be little provision made to ensure women’s anonymity, privacy and safety; this failure is a further deterrent to participation.

Verveer (in Chang et al. 2015) notes that when the potential contributions that women are able to make in transitional justice



Two participants at a dialogue training held for GIJTR’s African Youth Transitional Justice Academy in July 2019 in Kigali, Rwanda.

processes is left untapped, they are silenced while society is further disadvantaged in the pursuit of peace and prosperity. Negotiations in post conflict societies tend to look at women's participation and gender equality as secondary to ending the violence, yet as Jamar and Bell (2018) note the two are inextricably linked.

Research shows that the inclusion of women in post conflict transitional justice processes results in a greater uptake of such initiatives and increases the sustainability of the peace process (Paffenholz et al. 2016). The inclusion of women ensures that the gender dynamics of conflict and its impact on women are considered, and opportunities to understand and address multiple forms of gendered harm are made possible. Inclusion also opens up spaces to address structural dimensions and root causes of conflict, including gender inequality (Jamar & Bell 2018). Guthrey (2010) adds that even as post conflict nations transition out of war, women continue to be subjected to the structural violence that characterised their experiences before the conflict. She (Guthrey 2010) adds that by failing to include women and denying women spaces where they can be heard, transitional justice shuns the possibility of gaining invaluable input from key role-players while also denying them access to justice, opportunities for healing and confidence in the new government.

The exclusion of women, while largely rooted in patriarchal constructions of women's roles in society, is also justified by state and other actors through erroneous suggestions that inclusion of women may hamper delicate reconciliation processes and is also justified by political pragmatism, with a view that women's gender equality is a secondary and apolitical concern to stopping the war (Jamar & Ball 2018; Taylor 2018). For example, in the Yemen formal peace talks in December 2018, the Women's Technical Advisory Group established by the UN was purposely excluded and women's rights and gender provisions were completely excluded from the resulting Stockholm Agreement; the excuse for this gross oversight was that inclusion of women or women's rights are secondary to "getting the conflict parties to the table," "stopping

the fighting first” or “saving lives” (Mader 2018, p.2). These exclusionary practices and unfounded justifications undermine human rights, sustainable peace and development. Interestingly, these same objections are not raised with regards to the inclusion of men. Paffenholz et al (2016) maintain that a central challenge is the lack of evidence-based knowledge on the precise role and impact of women’s inclusion on peace processes.

Through this project, our aim is to address this gap by sharing the experiences of gender activists working on the ground. We draw lessons from ICSC’s existing work with a diverse number of organisations engaged in truth, justice and reconciliation efforts as well as through interviews with five key respondents from ICSC’s member sites and partner organisations in Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Sri Lanka, Algeria and Guatemala. We look at how these grassroots organisations and women have negotiated inclusion, representation and presence and the continuous challenges they encounter in this work. We end by sharing some of their recommendations towards greater inclusivity. In drawing on these real experiences, we acknowledge the agency and capacity of local organisations and the women as knowledge makers, political subjects and active agents (Shackel & Fiske 2019).

We are mindful as Keyes (2019) points out that there is no toolkit or singular approach in transitional justice processes, instead processes need to acknowledge the complexity and resources available in each context. We are hopeful however that findings from this brief review may be distilled to inform current and future processes.



A GIJTR participant tours an exhibition of body-maps with her family in Colombo, Sri Lanka in November 2017.

Objectives of this Review

- To explore and describe the multiplicity of roles occupied by women during conflict and periods of authoritarian rule as well as how these roles impact on women's needs post-conflict
- To explore the ways in which women have been involved in transitional justice processes and the impact of their involvement
- To explore obstacles to the inclusion of women in transitional justice processes
- To share recommendations from women-led grassroots organisations for meaningful inclusion of women in transitional justice processes

Methods

To obtain a more nuanced understanding of women's inclusion in transitional justice processes, the project employed a qualitative case study design (Yin 2009). Key respondents were purposefully selected based on their contribution to their countries' transitional justice processes, their personal experiences as well as their in-depth understanding of women's rights within their post conflict or post-authoritarian countries.

The country contexts that the participants speak to are also at different stages within the transitional justice process, in this way offering further process orientated insights. These five member sites and partner organizations in Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Sri Lanka, Algeria and Guatemala were selected due to their geographic and contextual diversity, the range of transitional justice processes and local needs and goals with which they engage, and their deep community knowledge and longstanding connections.

A structured qualitative questionnaire was used to gather information on the experiences and perspectives of these key role-players. A

literature review, including scholarly research, commentary and blog posts was undertaken, supplementing interview findings. Here we draw attention to the expanding breadth of excellent research that focuses specifically on issues of gender inclusivity. It is not within the scope of this report to cover all the current debates and expanding dimensions of gender inclusivity; instead, we touch on aspects of this field as it resonates with the experiences of our respondents.

Limitations

This report is limited by the number of respondents included. Our intention is to provide a snapshot of the ways in which women, in ICSC projects and at ICSC member sites, engage in transitional justice processes. In sharing findings from the interviews with the respondents, this report relies heavily on the words used by the respondents. This not only contributes to the credibility and richness of the findings but it also recognises the expertise of these respondents, as knowers of and doers in, their context.

Respondents

As mentioned above, we purposefully selected key respondents; all of whom we have engaged with in our existing projects in these five countries. We asked each of the respondents to share some of the activities they engaged in. In this description of the respondents, we begin by highlighting the ways in which women are involved in transitional justice processes – as you read, you will note that while these women are all activists in their countries, advocating for women’s inclusion and recognition, their experiences all differ. To ensure the safety of our respondents we have not included names or identifying information.



Participants in GIJTR's African Youth Transitional Justice Academy during a workshop activity in Rwanda in July 2019.

Respondent 1: Gambia

Respondent 1 is a leading figure in a national civil society organization (CSO). In addition to a wide range of other activities, she is actively involved in advocating for and ensuring an inclusive, context based and a gender-sensitive approach to the Gambia's Truth Reconciliation and Reparation Commission (TRRC). Through her work, she organizes and coordinates women-only listening circles. These initiatives are intended to be safe spaces for women, allowing them to voice their experiences during the former president Yahya Jammeh's 22-year dictatorship, as well as their concerns and expectations from the TRRC and the transitional justice process as a whole. She is also actively involved in documenting the challenges and abuses faced by women during Jammeh's regime and is engaged in identifying alternative ways to support women to participate in the TRRC.

The Gambia – Background to TJ process

The December 2016 election of opposition candidate Adama Barrow in The Gambia marked an end to more than two decades of authoritarian rule under former President Yahya Jammeh and ushered in the initiation of transitional justice processes. Since the beginning of his rule, the Jammeh regime was characterized by gross human rights violations, including torture, enforced disappearances, detention without trial, and extrajudicial killings (Human Rights Watch 2015). Carried out by the security forces, notably the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and a paramilitary group called "The Junglers" – an unofficial unit largely drawn from the Presidential Guard – Jammeh aimed to silence all dissident voices, particularly journalists, human rights defenders, student and religious leaders, political opposition members, judiciary officials

and security force personnel. Many eventually fled the country out of fear. Jammeh also committed massive financial corruption and targeted people living with HIV, LGBTI persons and some rural communities, who were accused of witchcraft and members were detained, tortured and forced to drink poisonous concoctions. Jammeh's regime created a deep chasm between different ethnic groups, fuelling underlying rivalry between the minority Jola people and the majority Mandinka.

The change in government in December 2017 set in motion a break with the authoritarian regime and an opportunity for Gambians to identify ways in which they could come to terms with the past and promote truth, justice and reconciliation (Amnesty International 2017). In December 2017, the National Assembly passed a bill establishing a Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC), mandated to investigate and establish, over two years, an impartial historical record of the nature, causes and extent of violations and abuses of human rights committed during the period of July 1994 to January 2017. In January 2019, the TRRC began operating, starting with public hearings relating to the 1994 coup which brought Jammeh to power.

The government is also pursuing security sector reform and facilitating an ongoing national commission to investigate allegations of state corruption. A Constitutional Review Commission released a final draft Constitution to the general public and parliament in March 2020 for comments. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was also established as a permanent, independent body to promote and protect human rights in the Gambia; monitor, investigate and consider complaints of human rights violations, and recommend appropriate remedial action to the

government. It is expected to take over the monitoring of the implementation of the TRRC recommendations once the TRRC publishes its final report in 2021.

ICSC's Work in The Gambia

GIJTR partners ICSC and the South Africa-based Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), with local partners Gambian Centre for Victims of Human Rights Violations (VC) and Women in Liberation and Leadership (WILL) have worked together in a phased approach since January 2019 to contribute to post-conflict truth, justice and reconciliation efforts by ensuring that multiple stakeholders are supported to actively and knowledgeably engage in the transitional justice process, and by bringing diverse groups together to



A Gambian participant of the African Youth Transitional Justice Academy discusses her plans for an advocacy campaign in her community.

build consensus on common issues and begin a process of trust-building and healing for the many victims of the Jammeh regime. Since then, partners have trained a core group of Gambian CSOs in skills around civil society engagement with transitional justice processes, designing and implementing participatory awareness-raising and advocacy initiatives and using community psychosocial support strategies. They also led TRRC staff through a reflection process that provided the opportunity for staff to identify lessons learned from the Commission's first year of work and strategize improvements for the final year.

Through its ongoing work, GIJTR partners aim to promote a coordinated and inclusive approach to implementation of the TRRC's recommendations and a sustained commitment to transitional justice goals, such as supporting the development of a national strategy to implement and integrate the recommendations of the TRRC into comprehensive transitional justice goals and objectives, as well as popularize them among the general Gambian public; strengthening the capacities of a core cohort of Gambian CSOs in engaging meaningfully with the post-TRRC transitional justice process, both in the short- and long-term; creating opportunities for women and other marginalized Gambians to document and share their narratives of human rights violations beyond the close of the TRRC; facilitating all survivors' access and engagement with the transitional justice processes, while supporting healing, reintegration and community reconciliation; and reinforcing the capacity of Gambian organizations to provide psychosocial support and ensure the sustainability and relevance of the national mental health and psychosocial support referral network established in earlier project phases.

Respondent 2: Sierra Leone

Respondent 2 is part of a national organisation that has been instrumental in brokering peace and engaging warring factors in peace talks in Sierra Leone. She has over 15 years' experience supporting survivors of sexual violence as well as documenting and collating evidence. She has been actively involved in monitoring the operations of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) itself and later in the dissemination process, engaging in awareness raising and education on the findings and recommendations of the TRC. As part of the reparative processes, she was involved in the design, implementation and monitoring processes and assisted in the identification and registration of sexual abused victims, women amputees and war widows so they are able to benefit from the reparations program. She has also been active in facilitating civil society especially women's participation in the constitutional review process which was an imperative recommendation of the TRC.

Sierra Leone – Background to TJ process

The eleven-year civil war in Sierra Leone began in 1991, following a political coup attempt by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). When the conflict officially ended in 2002, more than 50,000 people had been killed. The war was characterized by forced displacement, maimings, rape and other forms of gender and sexual-based violence. As part of the Lomé Peace Agreement, a general amnesty was granted for all crimes committed during the civil war (Koko 2019).

The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created in 1999 and operated between

2002 and 2004 to establish an impartial record of violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights that occurred during the civil war from 1991 to 2002, to provide a forum where the needs of victims could be addressed and to facilitate reconciliation, healing and non-recurrence of future violations (Svärd 2010).

At the same time, the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) was established in 2002, at the Sierra Leonean government's request to the United Nations, to prosecute those responsible for serious crimes of international humanitarian law, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as specific crimes under domestic law committed during the civil war.

ICSC's Work in Sierra Leone

Through its African Regional Network of Sites of Conscience, ICSC works closely with its two member sites in Sierra Leone, Campaign for Good Governance (CGG) and the Sierra Leone Peace Museum. The Peace Museum is a legacy project of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. It is an independent national institution dedicated to preserving the history of the country's decade-long conflict and the story of the peace process, aimed at breaking the culture of silence around this part of the Sierra Leone's history. This ensures that the country learns the lessons necessary to prevent a recurrence, and that the memory of the war's victims is kept alive. The first phase of the Peace Museum consists of three components: a) The Introductory Exhibition, featuring the work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the TRC, war-relic artifacts and photos, photos and



Participants in GIJTR's African Youth Transitional Justice Academy discuss their pilot projects.

stories of war amputees, contributions from the TRC's National Vision Project and a documentary, *Seeds of Justice*; b) The Archives, a resource for research into the nation's conflict, featuring the records of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and TRC; and c) The Memorial Garden, a place for reflection and remembrance.

Formed by leaders of the pro-democracy movement in 1996, the Campaign for Good Governance (CGG) is a Sierra Leonean NGO in Freetown that advocates for good governance, democracy and increased and informed citizen participation in governance through its capacity-building, advocacy and civic education programming. In partnership with ICSC, in 2009 CGG facilitated a series of educational youth dialogue programs, utilizing the SLSC site, to discuss and openly debate tensions around forgiveness, reconciliation and justice. The dialogue programs led participants to make connections between their country's history of conflict and the contemporary culture of violence in which they lived, and encouraged youth to become active and informed citizens in shaping the future vision of their country.

Respondent 3: Guatemala

Respondent 3 has been involved in the transitional justice process as both an activist and survivor. She has advocated for the human rights of women, victims of war and indigenous peoples and acts as a representative of women whose partners were forcibly disappeared during the country's internal armed conflict. She has survived the loss of a number of close relatives. She has been actively involved in organizing women against the demilitarization of communities, defending young people from compulsory military service, joining women in their search for their relatives as well as in supporting women to heal from the past. She has also participated in the National Reconciliation Commission and the civil society assembly.

Guatemala – Background to Transitional Justice Process

Guatemala's protracted internal armed conflict between the government and leftist guerrilla groups from 1960-1996 was characterized by violence perpetrated by state forces towards civilians, such as extrajudicial executions, disappearances and massacres. Military dictatorships submerged Guatemala in violence and fraud during this period (United States Institute of Peace). Peace talks began in 1987, ultimately leading to the Accord for Firm and Lasting Peace, which was signed in 1996 by the government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), which was at the time an umbrella organization representing principal left-wing guerrilla groups. In 1994, Guatemala's Commission for Historical Clarification (La Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, or CEH) was established. Between 1997 and 1999, the Commission

aimed to ascertain human rights violations during the decades-long conflict, preserve the memory of victims and promote a culture of human rights, peace and tolerance. According to the Commission's final report, over 200,000 people were killed in the conflict, including 40,000 forcibly disappeared, and 83% of the victims were Mayan. The report also revealed that 93% of the recorded violations were committed by state forces and affiliated paramilitary groups. Victims also included street children, religious workers, academics, indigenous activists, and trade unionists (Guatemala Commission for Historical Clarification 1999).

ICSC's and GIJTR's Work in Guatemala

ICSC's five Guatemalan member sites preserve the memory of the country's internal conflict in order to influence contemporary political culture and prevent all forms of authoritarianism in future generations. These sites include Memorial para la Concordia/Guatemala, a project that seeks to dignify all victims of armed conflict in Guatemala; promote reconciliation and harmony in a space for dialogue, conflict resolution and prevention; and contribute to building a society wherein peace and the rule of law prevail. Member site International Institute of Learning for Social Reconciliation (IIARS) develops and disseminates learning methodologies and materials that contribute to the work of classroom teachers as well as democracy-building efforts. These educational materials foster discussion about the societal issues that Guatemalans must address to achieve social reconciliation, such as facing the country's long history of racism and social exclusion. The Casa de la Memoria "Kaji Tulam", another ICSC member site, is a youth-focused public space that communicates and

exhibits Guatemala's history of structural problems and oppression, in order to provide new meaning to history and rebuild the country's collective memory, as well as Guatemalans' sense of personal and collective identity. Discussion-based tours of the space aim to shed light on civilians' experiences of both human rights violations as well as resistance. ICSC member site Memory Center of Monseñor Juan Gerardi, named for a Guatemalan Roman Catholic bishop and human rights defender involved in the drafting of the 1998 Guatemala "Never Again" (Guatemala Nunca Más) Report, aims to make its archives of the country's history accessible and useful to academic, religious and public research, both nationally and internationally. The Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional, an ICSC site, is committed to the process of organizing and digitizing the massive, once-hidden collection of historical and administrative documents belonging to the former National Police of Guatemala. These documents speak to the country's period of internal armed conflict in which families, survivors and human rights organizations identified the National Police as major perpetrators of human rights violations.

Drawing on the expertise of ICSC's Guatemalan member sites and rooted in GIJTR partner Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala's (FAFG) forensic capacity, GIJTR has hosted a multidisciplinary Forensic Academy since 2018 that aims to support and build the technical capacity of CSO and government representatives in the area of forensic investigations, while providing participants with a holistic framework for supporting and meeting the specific needs of families of the disappeared. Together with ICSC's and Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation's (CSVR) expertise and experience working internationally,

the Academy provides a unique learning platform for participants and partners to share experiences and best practices on using forensics, psychosocial support and community memorialization and truth-telling activities to support families' searches for their disappeared loved ones. Trainings are also complemented by visits to ICSC's Guatemalan member organizations to generate participant discussions on applying evidence and forensics in memorialization and truth-telling initiatives as alternative justice processes in a society where impunity prevails.

Respondent 4: Sri Lanka

Respondent 4 has over 20 years' experience in the transitional justice process in Sri Lanka. She works with women from across religious and geographical areas; the focus of her work spans capacity building and support of women at the grassroots level as well as advocating for policy change and liaising with international human rights organisations and aid agencies.

Sri Lanka – Background to TJ Process

Following a thirty-year ethnic war that ended in 2009 with the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), in which an estimated 100,000 people were reportedly killed and both sides committed serious human rights violations, Sri Lanka remains a divided country. The “victory narrative” of the conflict's conclusion, together with ongoing structural inequalities in policy and practice,

continue to marginalize a Tamil-speaking minority based mainly in the North and East of the country, in favor of the majority Sinhalese community living mainly in the South (Thapa 2018). Additionally, Sri Lanka has suffered other recent periods of violence, like the 1980s government's response to a leftist political party's armed rebellion, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), which also resulted in tens of thousands of disappearances and deaths.

Beginning in 2015, the government of Sri Lanka, under President Maithripala Sirisena, initiated a range of transitional justice initiatives, including the creation of special ministries and a Consultation Task Force (CTF).



GIJTR body-mapping exhibition, Colombo, Sri Lanka, November 2017.

The CTF solicited nationwide submissions on the proposed mechanisms outlined in Human Rights Council Resolution 30/1, in which the Sri Lankan government promised to deliver justice, accountability, and reconciliation. Additionally, the introduction of the 19th Amendment enabled the formation of independent commissions including an electoral commission and a human rights commission. Despite intentions to rebuild Sri Lanka as a democracy that was based on the rule of law and human rights, the 2015 coalition government slowly dissolved due to disagreements between the president and the prime minister.

Towards the end of 2019, elections were held leading to the win of Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Following his victory and the appointment of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa as prime minister, the president noted that there was no need for a transitional justice process in Sri Lanka (The New Humanitarian 2020). In an address to the Sri Lankan Bar Association, the president advised that the judiciary should not block his executive powers and highlighted the possibility of revising the 19th amendment which restricted his powers.

The lead-up to the election saw a spate of communal violence, particularly attacks against the Muslim minority, fueled by politicians and extremist Buddhist monks. These attacks were related to the earlier 2019 Easter bombings, which had revived anti-Muslim sentiments in the country but also provided momentum for the Rajapaksa campaign, which focused on the need for increased national security. Under this banner of national security, there were also restrictions placed on civil society organizations (CSOs), while human rights defenders and the media have been openly harassed and surveilled (Amnesty International 2020).

GIJTR's Work in Sri Lanka

GIJTR's previous work in Sri Lanka focused on awareness-raising and capacity building around transitional justice issues, based on a comprehensive needs assessment conducted from 2015 to 2016 to identify and understand the priorities of relevant stakeholders – including communities, survivors and government authorities – and assess existing initiatives from both government and civil society. The needs assessment was followed by a set of truth, justice and reconciliation workshops targeting both civil society and local officials around the country, as well as government officials in Colombo. Subsequent support focused on archiving, psychosocial support and training for families of the disappeared and capacity-building trainings on memorialization. More recently, the GIJTR's work has prioritized the promotion of social cohesion and violence prevention through the lens of arts and dialogue, and by linking peace to sustainable development. It is well-documented that, if strategically used with the objective of peacebuilding, creative art and cultural activities have the potential to complement social cohesion and ease atrocity risk factors, contributing to building a sustainable peace. In addition, dialogue fosters a space for discussion and active listening among opposing groups to rebuild relationships and overcome feelings of animosity. Ultimately, the goal of the program is to ensure that stakeholders, especially those at risk of committing crimes or being victimized, can actively take part in a peacebuilding process that promotes diversity, tolerance and quality.

Respondent 5: Algeria

Respondent 5 began her journey as an activist in 1994 in response to her own personal loss; following the disappearance of her husband she began an intensive search to find answers. In this process she met other women with similar stories of loss and together they formed an association for families of the disappeared. Through this association, they documented cases of the disappeared, provided legal assistance and liaised with international aid organizations. This contact capacitated her to increase her knowledge of TJR processes. She has since been a leading figure in a national NGO.

Algeria – Background to TJ Process

The civil war in Algeria began in 1992 between the state security forces and Islamist armed groups, following a military coup to prevent the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) from defeating the National Liberation Front (FLN) party in the second round of parliamentary elections, and lasted for seven years. Although both parties were implicated in enforced disappearance of civilians during this period, a large number of the abductions occurred during the government's "war against terrorism" between 1994 and 1995 (Khettab 2018).

Following his 1999 election, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika passed a law granting partial amnesty to insurgents who surrendered their weapons, and in 2001, he launched the National Human Rights Institution. Two years later, President Bouteflika established the Ad Hoc Inquiry Commission in Charge of the Question of Disappearances (active between 2003

and 2005) which aimed to clarify the fate of at least 7,000 people who were forcibly disappeared and draft reparations measures for victims' families (Human Rights Watch 2005). Although the Commission's final report submitted to President Bouteflika in 2005 was not made public, Farouk Ksentini, the chairman of the Commission, publicly stated that the Algerian army is responsible for more than 6,000 disappearances.

In September 2005, voters approved President Bouteflika's referendum on the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation. Entering into force in 2006, the Charter expanded former conditional amnesties for crimes perpetrated by members of armed groups, exonerated security forces and state-armed militias, and offered some compensations to victims and their families who were willing to accept a death certificate for their loved one, instead of pursuing the truth about their fate (United States Institute of Peace). Victims and their families were barred from pursuing truth-seeking mechanisms or investigation into crimes of the past in Algerian courts, and even public debate around crimes was criminalized.

GIJTR's Work in MENA

GIJTR launched the MENA Transitional Justice Academy program (TJ Academy) in 2016 as a holistic and integrated approach to addressing MENA civil society organizations' truth, justice and reconciliation capacity needs. Informed by the expertise of GIJTR partners' work in the fields of forensics, law, sociology, psychosocial support, memorialization and human rights, the first TJ Academy successfully brought together activists and practitioners from seven MENA states — Algeria, Egypt,

Morocco, Tunisia, Iraq, Syria and Yemen — to gain in-depth knowledge of the key debates in the field related to peace and justice, share experiences of successes and challenges in their work and broadly increase their common knowledge base of transitional justice. The TJ Academy is the first course of its kind, undertaken in English and Arabic, to combine theoretical modules, practical strategy development sessions focused on the region as a whole and in-country program support, incubation and development in high-risk environments, with an emphasis on security and sustainability. The first and second TJ Academy program reached substantial results. A total of 37 MENA practitioners, non-traditional actors and academics improved their



Participants discuss conflict analysis and security at a GIJTR workshop in Yemen.
Photo credit: Fahd Saif

knowledge of transitional justice mechanisms and understanding of how these mechanisms can be applied to their contexts, as well as identified opportunities to work together as an advocacy group in the region for the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms that accord with international best practices and focus on local context and needs. Through the sub-grant process, and based on community consultations, both Academy cohorts' designed and implemented truth, justice and reconciliation projects in eight countries in the region. Local communities, including survivors of conflict, youth, women, and activists, benefited from community-based projects, which included documentation projects in Tunisia and Syria, reparation and community consultation in Iraq, a memorialization project in Morocco, an awareness raising project on the role of the judiciary in the accountability and prosecution of perpetrators in Yemen, and an advocacy project on gender equity and women's economic independence in Libya. For many participants, a key outcome from the TJ Academy was their ability to share lessons with their peers, build a sustainable network of support for themselves along with Consortium partners, and pilot innovative truth, justice and reconciliation projects with communities in need of such initiatives. Based on these successes, GIJTR launched a third TJ Academy in 2020, adopting a virtual curriculum and training materials (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) that mirrors past Academies' methodology, combining a theoretical framework, practical case studies, working group sessions and project development and support.

As illustrated by the country examples and respondents' experiences described above, it should be noted that while this report frequently references "post-conflict" truth, justice

and reconciliation processes, the same general findings and recommendations around women's inclusion apply to reconstruction efforts after a period of dictatorship or authoritarian rule, such as in The Gambia. For brevity this report will commonly refer to women's post-conflict experiences and activism as both post-conflict and post-authoritarian rule.

Needs Analysis

Respondents were asked to draw on their individual experiences and share what they felt is needed to ensure that transitional justice is inclusive of women, recognising specific needs and experiences. Below is a summary of responses.

1. Economic and Material Support

Women need economic and livelihood support. In many post conflict societies, women are forced to provide for both the emotional, financial and physical well-being of families. Scholars (Bell and O'Rourke 2007; Lemaitre and Sandvik 2014; Rubio-Marin 2006) concur, maintaining that ensuring material gains for women is essential for transitional justice mechanisms.

2. Access to and Availability of Services

Respondents indicated that access to services, like legal, medical and psychosocial is essential and services specific to the needs of women, need to be prioritised. For instance, high rates of infant mortality in many post-conflict countries warrant greater availability and access to maternal health care. In addition to this, women need information on where

and how to access assistance. Often information is not filtered down in comprehensive ways; respondents from Guatemala and Algeria indicated that as a result of poor communication, certain groups of women often don't know what services and resources are available.

3. Protection Against Gender-based Violence

Structural inequalities are exacerbated by conflict. For women across all five contexts, issues of gender-based violence is a primary concern and women need protection and support. One respondent pointed out that women are vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence in families and communities and in their interaction with humanitarian workers.

4. Greater Representation in Political Structures

Respondents urged for greater representation of women in all spheres of governance. One respondent pointed out that as women make up more than 50% of the population, they have a right to equal representation, through this, they will be in a better position to articulate and proffer solutions for themselves and on behalf of the women's constituents.

5. Spaces to be Heard

Women need to be given a platform during truth commissions, in order to tell their stories in the way that allows them to take ownership of their narratives and which demonstrates their agency. Safe, supportive, easily accessible spaces need to be made available. One respondent indicated that a provision needs to be made for private in-camera testimonies in lieu of

public hearings, which may expose survivors and their families to stigma or shaming.

As indicated above, this report grew out of a workshop with country partners in The Gambia. At this workshop a session on gender mainstreaming within transitional justice processes highlighted the importance of promoting inclusion, especially for vulnerable groups, as an integral component of the Gambia Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) process. The workshop session also created a space for deep thinking around to what degree the TRRC process has been gender-inclusive to date, from the perspective of successes, challenges, and lessons learned. Participants also considered what can be done differently to ensure the TRRC is an accessible safe place for survivors moving forward, and began to strategize on how gender inclusion can be prioritized beyond the TRRC. This report is intended in part to be a resource for other state-led transitional justice mechanisms grappling with these questions, as well as funders, international organizations and others who aim to support local women leaders in their work on truth, justice and reconciliation issues.

SECTION A

Women, Conflict and Intersectionality

The experiences of women during, before and after conflict, may be understood on a continuum, through this, patterns of discrimination and marginalisation become apparent. Valji (2007) writes that ‘women’s experiences of injustice during conflict are also a result of existing inequalities’ (p.13). Even prior to the conflict women in these five countries and across many others, were not considered equal and were instead subjected to different forms of violence and discrimination (Applebaum & Mawby 2016). Patriarchal, hegemonic belief systems, that see man as superior to women, validate the unequal role that is assigned to women. In contexts where women are seen as less than, violence against women is normalised and exclusion is unquestioned. Studies show that gender inequality is an important indicator of conflict and instability; increasing the likelihood of conflict (Mader 2018). Lemaitre & Bergtora-Sandvik (2014) note that women’s subordinate status in society has important implications for transitional justice processes. While women and men may experience similar violations during conflict and post conflict, the impact on women is determined to a large extent by the pre-existing socio-economic and legal status of women in society as well their positions within patriarchal societies (RubioMarin 2006). Rubio-Marín (2006) refers to the intersectionality of multiple forms of discrimination against women.

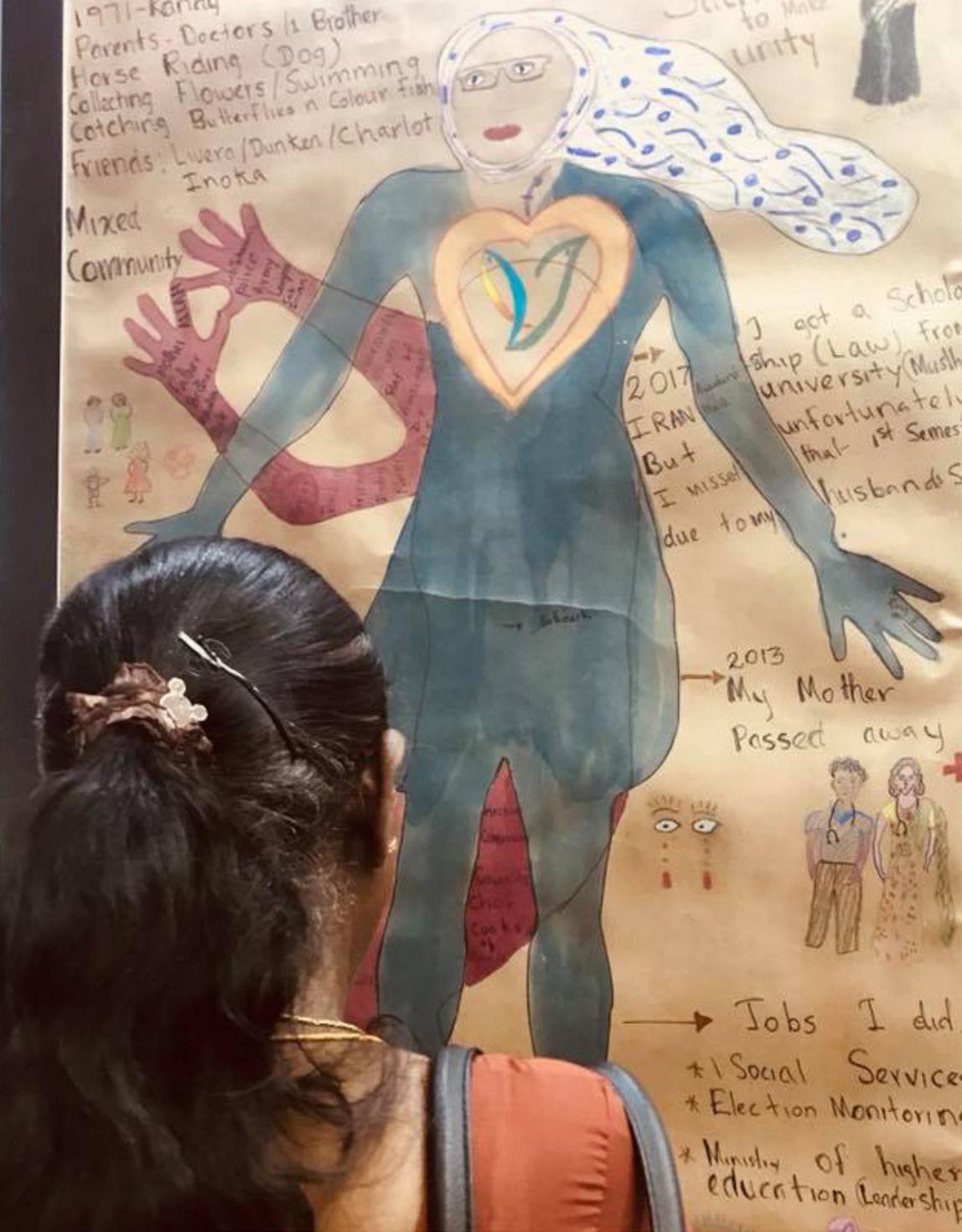
Respondents in this project similarly spoke to the pre-existing cultural, social, economic and political status of women in their communities; embedded within patriarchal belief systems (Turano 2011). For example, Respondent 1, noted that in The Gambia, patriarchal, religious and cultural norms ensure that women have

a *'low status in the society compared to men.'* As a result, acts of violence are normalised, women and girls have limited access to education and a high prevalence of gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation and early and forced marriage, hindering the potential of Gambian women and girls. A range of structural inequalities, such as *'poverty, high maternal mortality rates, high illiteracy rates and lack of representation at decision making positions'* compounds women and girls experiences and heightens their vulnerability. This echoes existing research, which suggests that while both men and women suffer in times of conflict, the impact and ensuing harms are different (Turano 2011).

Referencing the socio-cultural rootedness of this inequality, Respondent 5, noted that *'Women are expected to be obedient to the community from birth. In rural areas, women are still considered minors at age 70... Often, Algerian society perpetuates the image of a man who decides and has the power, and a woman who is sinful and submissive.'* She added that women are not only faced with social and political constraints, but they are also subjected to gender violence within their own homes.

Respondent 2, reported that in spite of changing gender roles and some representation of women in public and political spaces in Sierra Leone, in some contexts women continue to be confined by traditional ideologies that see them *'as chattels and ascribes roles that confine them to the back place and seen only as important for domestic efficiency,'* adding that to be a *'woman is to be an afterthought, to be compromising, to succumb to all forms of abuse and to be subservient to men'.*

All respondents appeared to have defied the spaces that patriarchy and tradition assigned to them. We see this in the next section, which looks at the various roles that women take on at different times.



Sharing experiences at a body-mapping exhibition in Colombo, Sri Lanka in November 2017.

Multiplicity and Diversity

In every society, women juggle numerous roles and shoulder many burdens, occupying a multiplicity of identities. This is no less true for women in conflict zones, where the roles that women take on, expands, often by necessity and becomes even more varied. Shulika (2019) notes that the different demands placed on women by conflict impels them to adopt diverse roles as breadwinners of their families and communities, combatants, and most importantly drivers and builders of peace initiatives, influencing the resolution of conflict (Kaufman & Williams 2013). Friedman (2016) drawing on her work in Sri Lanka notes that conflict transforms women's role in society, in ways that are contradictory and paradoxical. This is consistent with the experiences of women in other conflict areas, in South Africa, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Liberia (Shulika 2016). Within this context, it is also important to note that conflict has differential impacts on women. As Meintjies et al (2002) note, women who live through a conflict do not all share the same experiences. There is however a tendency to generalise women's experiences, without consideration of the impacts that geographic locations, socio-economic status, education and ethnicity may have on their experience (Simic 2016).

When women are acknowledged in transitional justice processes, it is often within the limiting confines of victimhood which fails to consider the diversity of roles that women fulfil during the conflict and post-conflict period. Research shows that while important, the attention directed at sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), detracts from other forms of gendered violence that occurs. In 2018, SGBV accounted for approximately 90% of the references to women's rights in reports on transitional peace processes (Mader 2018). While focusing on sexual violence is necessary, the dominant tendency to focus on women as victims and sexual violence crimes against women, reduces women to mere sexual beings, reinforcing perceptions of passivity and silencing and minimising other aspects of their experiences (Scanlon & Muddel, 2009; Turano 2011). Rubio-Marin (2012) similarly critiques

the heightened focus on sexual violence, saying that it fails to consider and confront the other multiple gendered forms of violence. The narrow focus on sexual violence diverts attention from wider systemic challenges, such as unequal socioeconomic rights and gender-based violence in the aftermath of war (Buckley-Zistel and Zolkos 2012; Simic 2016), in this way reinforcing rather than challenging gender stereotypes.

As demonstrated by Salaah (2019), women are active agents, collaborators and leaders, never just one identity. In conflict zones, women tend to bear the burden of caring for the community and may be victims of gender-based violence, at the same time however they may be perpetrators, complicit in human rights abuses or they may advocate for peace and justice. Respondent 2 states that in Sierra Leone, stories from the TRC, special court and other literature demonstrate how women are both victims and heroines. A growing body of evidence also provide examples of how women in various contexts, like the DRC, Liberia and Rwanda perpetrated acts of genocide as well as sexual violence against both men and other women (Goldstein, 2001; Muddell, 2007; Naidu-Silverman, 2014; Shekhawat, 2015; Specht, 2006). Similarly, Friedman (2016) notes that women in Sri Lanka took on leadership roles, gaining respect for their advocacy. Naidu (2014) asserts that the ambiguities of women's experiences as well the multiplicity of identities that women assume during the various stages in a conflict, disrupts the stereotypes set up by a traditional, patriarchal paradigm of war and conflict.

The diversity of roles has been discussed at length by feminist's scholars working in this field. Turano (2011) for example, takes a chronological approach when discussing the roles women assume and the negative ways that conflict impacts on them. She says that even prior to active conflict, women's lives are disrupted. Women are often relegated to caring positions within families and this is often at the detriment of their own educational and career aspirations. In the build-up to a conflict, propaganda used

to rally support often draws on ethnic and national pride which is often rooted in patriarchal belief systems, further entrenching them. At the same time, when fighters are mobilised women are at risk for sexual harassment, trafficking and there is an increased demand for commercial sex. Conflict naturally heightens these risk factors and brings with it additional responsibilities and stressors. Women's decreased mobility means that they have to care for children, the elderly and the community while also being exposed to occupying forces. During this period, women take on the roles usually assigned to men, that of economic providers. While this additional role sustains families and society, it once again increases their risk in the aftermath of conflict. Men, returning from conflict, may feel threatened by their survival and agency and through gender-based violence may attempt to reassert their manhood (Hamber 2010).

The respondents in this project concur that women engage in ways that are complex and multifaceted, confirming that for many women, the conflict itself necessitated that they take on more active roles; fighting for their family members and in the absence of men, some had little choice in becoming activists. Referencing the heterogeneity of women and their experiences, respondents also spoke of the ways in which class, geography, age, ability, religion, ethnicity and race impacted on women in conflict and post conflict. In Guatemala, indigenous women had different experiences during the conflict than women from other communities. This was the same for the different ethnic/religious groups in Sri Lanka. Hawkins (2019) speaks to this noting how in her study geography determined how women experienced conflict as well as their access to discussions about transitional justice. Women in some areas and in some ethnic groups, even when on the same warring side, have different experiences of conflict, requiring specific reparative and reconciliatory justice.

Women as Survivors

Across all of these contexts women were not spared from the violence that marks conflict. As mentioned above, acts of gender-based violence (GBV) against women does not happen in a vacuum during war time only. Instead they are part of a continuum of violence, mirroring and exacerbating what was happening before and which extends beyond (Scanlon & Muddle, 2009). Women's pre-existing inferior social status makes them especially vulnerable to GBV and sexual violence by almost all of the protagonists in conflict situations (Boesten 2016). We know from numerous reports and studies that sexual violence is used extensively by all sides as a weapon of war because of the stigma it carries and the potential it holds to fracture communities



A woman shares her views at a GIJTR workshop in South Africa.

and silence individuals (Kostovicova et al., 2020; Scanlon & Muddell, 2009, Valji; 2007, Wirtz et al., 2014). Respondent 3, from Guatemala, shared that during the conflict, female leaders were kidnapped and the *'rape of girls, adolescents, young women, pregnant mothers, and grandmothers began. These experiences are indelible in the lives and memories of women, as the product of all the fear and terror that invaded women'*.

In The Gambia, Respondent 1 shares that teenage girls and young women were particularly vulnerable to state sponsored acts of violence. In Sierra Leone, Respondent 2, describes the experiences of women as unimaginal; resulting in long-term trauma. She shares, *'Women were brutally murdered, they witnessed loved ones, husbands, children and other family members being abducted, killed in gruesome ways. Worst among the abuse was women's experiences of sexual violence. Women were abducted and turned into "bush wives". Those who were lucky to be allocated to the commanders became a sex slave to only the commandos, others were sexually abused by whosoever desires. Women reported having been inserted with sticks and all sorts of instruments especially those who resisted'*.

Women as Activists and Breadwinners

Each of the respondents added that in spite of these traumatic experiences, they resisted, and advocated for change. Respondent 3 says that many of the women in Guatemala *'endured the embarrassment and built up the courage'* denouncing the ongoing human rights violations despite threats to their own well-being. They continually sought solutions to help not only themselves, but their families and communities. In much the same way, Respondent 5 describes the multiple roles she was forced to take on, *'In my case, the conflict and the disappearance of my husband forced me to fill the role of mother, father and activist at the same*

time. Many were left without resources from one day to the next and had to urgently seek out means of survival for their families, while continuing their investigations, in spite of the risks involved’.

Respondent 1 says of the women in The Gambia, they were in the *‘forefront fighting the authoritarian regime in The Gambia. They organised and/or joined demonstrations against Jammeh’s government, took on social media and radios to reveal the atrocities that were taking place.’* At the same time, many of those who lost breadwinners *‘took over the responsibilities of their families’.* Similarly, respondents from Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, also mentioned the additional financial roles that women assumed.

Respondent 5 from Algeria, noted that necessity demanded active participation, saying, *‘Given that the vast majority of forced disappearance victims during the civil war were men, women (wives, mothers, daughters, who were often housewives before the conflict) found themselves in a situation of needing to provide for their family, while also fighting for the truth’.*

Women as Peacebuilders

Each of the participants spoke at length of the number of ways that they, as individuals and as part of women’s organisations, saying women *‘have always been protagonists’;* at the forefront of transitional processes. Respondents described how women *‘women have been taking the bull by the horn and their voices have been amplified more than ever before and solidarize in activism to call for the protection and advancement of their rights.’* Another respondent, also suggested that, *‘Women are the fabric holding Gambian families and communities together’.* In Algeria, the respondent added, that the *‘women of the disappeared were the first to topple the wall of fear during the civil war and to openly advocate for truth and justice’.*

In spite of the many ways in which women were and continue to be actively involved as activists and community and family leaders, respondents noted that they were and are excluded from official peacebuilding processes. Respondent 2, says that *'Women played a very instrumental role in bringing all the factions to the dialogue table, yet women were left out of the conversation during the Lomé peace accord meeting.'*

This exclusion of women is, as demonstrated above, in across many contexts, purposeful. In the section that follows, the respondents talk about how they have been involved in transitional processes despite opposition and obstacles. As has been demonstrated in research, women play a central role in transitional justice initiatives, either officially or unofficially and often without acknowledgment (Anderlini, 2007). Their participation, as respondent 1 notes, often comes at great costs to their own safety, resulting in *'arrests, canings, threats and intimidation' as well as persecution and murder'.*

SECTION B:

Making Space, Being Heard

As highlighted earlier, while conflict no doubt increases vulnerability and risk and exacerbates existing gender inequality, it also provides opportunities for female political agency and a discovery of new identities and responsibilities (Friedman 2016). This was true for the respondents in this project as well as for many of the women they engage with. Respondent 4 concurs, saying that the long enduring conflict provided opportunities for greater political agency for women in Sri Lanka, she said, *'But with the war came, possibilities for the women, they had no choice but to shoulder their burden. They had no choice. Their role changed'*. Here we provide a brief snapshot on the ways in which the respondents in this project have been involved in truth, justice and reconciliation efforts:

1. Advocacy

- Demanding full and equal participation of women in all process, including dialogue, peace building, reconciliation, justice and reparative processes. Advocating for consultative and inclusive reparations processes for women survivors, including those that did not participate in the TRC hearings out of fear, impracticability or inadequate state outreach
- Political agency through standing for key elective positions as Members of Parliament, Councillors, and Mayors despite the challenges

- Championing gender responsive legal reforms as part of institutional reform efforts, such as Sierra Leone’s Domestic Violence, Devolution of Estate and Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act of 2007 and the Sexual Offences Act of 2012 and its 2019 Amendment
- Offering solutions on the specific issues of indigenous women, widows, youth, and the entire displaced population
- Ensuring that GBV crimes, like rape and forced marriage are acknowledged and given priority during special court tribunals to ensure that accountability for such human rights atrocity is addressed

2. Documentation

- Documenting cases of forced disappearances throughout the country
- Documenting cases of GBV and other human rights violations

3. Coordination and Collaboration

- Creating new collaborations and co-ordinations across cultural, ethnic and religious divides
- Collaboration and representation within and across a range of state and civil organizations as well as international organizations



Participants in a body-mapping workshop in The Gambia, 2019.

4. Awareness-raising of Transitional Justice Processes

- Leading outreach activities and community engagement, including through the use of existing traditional practices that allow communities to feel comfortable in expressing views and opinions. These have included women's story circles and existing community groups

5. Community Engagement and Mobilization

- Communicating key findings from government-led transitional justice processes to communities
- Mobilization of other women to participate in TRC hearings

6. Creating Safe Spaces for Women's Participation

- Ensuring safe spaces for women to talk about their experiences, voice their opinions and raise any concerns they may have about transitional justice processes
- Supporting women survivors of conflict, including through providing and facilitating access to psycho-social, medical and legal support
- Ensuring the safety, anonymity and support of sexual abused victims
- Communicating needs and issues raised at these forums to the state-led transitional justice mechanisms in the country

What works?

Respondent examples of current practices and processes that support inclusion

1. On-going Commitment by Women Activists

Across all the contexts, women indicated it was their unerring conviction and refusal to give up that has allowed them to persevere in gaining recognition of women's rights and needs, this in spite of the number of challenges and gatekeepers wanting to exclude them. Respondent 3 talks to women's persistence, saying *'I believe that everything we have achieved, we have won it with our fights, the marches, and the political pressure from the victims'*

2. Building Relationships with National and International Role-players

Hawkins (2019) references "gender champions"; individuals within the government or state-led transitional justice institutions that support and advocate with and form women (Hawkins 2019, pg. 5). Respondents here, alluded to similar types of support. They mentioned international aid agencies, like UNWomen, who provided both technical and financial support, as well as gender commissioners in TRC processes who demonstrated a level of commitment to ensure women's inclusion in process.

For Respondent 4, allies within political processes provides a measure of awareness. She says, *I think some of the independent commissions have been very supportive ...there are some politicians from different political parties who are supportive but who don't have much of a voice, so that is an issue as well but they're supportive of women's voices being heard in the process.'*

Essentially, and notwithstanding the potential that powerful allies within institutions may play, as is apparent from the respondents here and in other contexts, women survivors and women's rights activists appear to carry the weight of promoting women's rights and gender inclusivity (Hawkins 2019).

- Ensuring the safety, anonymity and support of sexual abused victims
- Communicating needs and issues raised at these forums to the state-led transitional justice mechanisms in the country

Examples of Successful Inclusion of Women in GIJTR Projects

Since 2019, GIJTR partners International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) and Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV), together with local partners Gambia Centre for Victims of Human Rights Violations (VC) and Women in Liberation and Leadership

(WILL), have undertaken a series of initiatives in order to promote a coordinated and inclusive approach to Gambia's transitional justice process, including by supporting WILL's women-only Listening Circles.

As a Gambian CSO that works to support, protect and empower women and vulnerable groups, WILL has been leading and coordinating outreach projects that allow women and marginalized members of Gambian society to share their experiences and voice their concerns and expectations of the TRRC in a safe and confidential setting. Through its work, WILL has developed a trusting relationship with communities. Its activities ensure regional and local language inclusivity, are held on a small scale, and are reliant on local capacity to ensure the Listening Circle methodology is sufficiently flexible and adaptive. These measures aim to protect participating survivors from possible shame and stigma to the fullest possible extent. WILL's Listening Circles and community dialogues serve as a platform for victims of sexual violence, women in rural areas and hard-to-reach communities (such as LGBTI persons) to share their experiences, discuss challenges they faced during the dictatorship based on their gender, receive support in accessing the TRRC, identify their concerns and expectations regarding follow-up from the TRRC and benefit from psychosocial support tailored to victims of trauma and highly sensitive cases. WILL has also worked closely with other women-led organizations, engaged key stakeholders and contributed to the development of gender-sensitive mechanisms to support Gambian women's participation in the TRRC.

SECTION C:

Obstacles to Inclusion

Research (Krause et al. 2018) shows that women's active and meaningful participation in peace processes increases the quality and durability of peace. The reality however is that the inclusion of women in these processes is an exception rather than the norm (Krause et al 2018). Findings from the Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Rights project (Reimann 2014) describe a number of impediments to the participation of women in official peace processes. Some of the difficulties described by women activists includes, difficulty accessing information about peace processes and creating awareness amongst women, patriarchal stereotypes of women as either victims or peacemakers, high levels of insecurity and threats to women participants, limited gender awareness amongst mediators and negotiators, lack of political will in both international as well as national negotiating teams to the inclusion of women as well as limited access to formal institutions and political structures and limited funds to access positions of influence.

Some of these obstacles were echoed by our respondents. They indicated that structural and political inequality continue to limit women's participation in transitional justice processes. This intersects with generally hostile environments that are marked by instability and fear of reprisal. Fear of sexual violence within parties as well as outside of these structure also silence women.

1. Hostile Environments and Prevalence of Gender-based Violence in Post Conflict Context

As mentioned above, exclusionary practices occur within contexts that are generally unfavourable towards women and grounded in patriarchal belief systems; which means that GBV is largely ignored, dismissed and unreported. Respondent 1 reports that, *'the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence in The Gambia and the tendency for these crimes to go unaddressed are rooted in long-standing social injustices and institutional failures on issues of women's rights and empowerment.'*

Respondent 2 speaks to the fear of violence that stems from within, in saying, *'The environment for women's inclusion is a bit hostile – women cannot deal with the violence associated with elections for example or deal with issues like sexual violence within their political parties'*. This hostile environment makes it difficult for women to remain actively involved.

Respondent 4, adds that there is constant *'fear of reprisal for example, threats, surveillance, the increased surveillance...lack of protection and the assurance of safety.'* Speaking to this, Respondent 4 also says that fear for women's safety means that some civil society-led initiatives or projects intended to ensure women's participation have had to be stopped; she notes the unfairness of this, saying; *'I mean for example we had to stop certain projects after a few incidents occurred late last year because women cannot [appear] in certain things because of fear for their safety. So we stopped certain activities, immediately there is an exclusion. It's not fair that something took place without [women].'*

One respondent added that the media was partly responsible for the intimidation of women. She indicated that state

sponsored media reinforces negative stereotypes of women and silences detractors, both men and women. She said, *'I have been advocating for 25 years and I have seen the negative role of traditional media, which is subject to the dictates of the government, ministries of information and the interior, and which boycotts the fight for human rights'* (Respondent 5). This experience is not uncommon and research shows that media impacts negatively on women's participation, through biased and the otherwise dubious nature of its coverage in periods of violence or conflict of victims' experiences, and transitional justice processes. This lack of accurate reporting may be a result of a lack of understanding among members of the media about transitional justice processes and appropriate ways to report on the experiences of survivors but may also, as is indicated in the above excerpt, be a result of an intentional (often state-promoted) bias or ill will (Hawkins 2019).

2. Patriarchal Socio-cultural Contexts

Prevailing patriarchal beliefs, continue to exclude women from decision making and full participation. Friedman (2016) notes that although women disproportionately bear the legacies of conflict, they are expected to conform to patriarchal post-war social structures and economies, which rest on the reinstatement of gendered practices and norms. For instance, Respondent 3 notes that in Guatemala says, *'Those who have not supported it are usually some men who still maintain their "macho" idea. Nonetheless, women do not give up and we are always present to achieve truth, justice, and reparation of damages'*.

Similarly referencing pre-existing gender stereotypes, Respondent 2 says, *'Sierra Leone like many other societies is entrenched in strong patriarchy rooted in strong traditional norms and stereotypes that continues to exclude women in decision making and address their empowerment needs'*.

Respondents also indicated that continued adherence to this belief system, also means that women demanding a presence, are policed and silenced, by both men and women in the community. In these traditional contexts there is fear and stigma attached to speaking out. Respondent 1, says that *'Due to the culture of silence and fear of stigma, many women do not attend activities organized to include them in the process. Also when activities or consultations are conducted where men and women come together, usually the men are the only people who speak and women are not given an opportunity to share their thoughts.'* This is reiterated by Respondent 5, who says that *'Fear, being a woman and the society's negative opinion of activist women',* inhibits many women from participating. She adds that, *'the smallest association in the neighborhood is subject to control by security services, and they just have to notify the wali (prefect) of an unfavorable opinion for any activity to be declared illegal.'*

3. Lack of Political Will

Our respondents confirmed that the lack of political will, and accountability continues to hampers transitional processes. Existing discriminatory laws, ineffective and unsupportive gender bodies within government bodies as well as religious and cultural laws that nullify constitutional laws are contributory factors. Speaking to the situation in Sierra Leone, Respondent 2 says, *'There has been very low political will to propel a radical inclusion of women in peace consolidating processes in Sierra Leone. Some of Sierra Leone laws have also served as challenges to women's inclusion.'*

Referencing obstacles created by both cultural and religious laws, Respondent 1 says of the situation in The Gambia, *'Despite strong provisions in the TRRC Act for the inclusion of*

the experiences of women, the legacies of authoritarianism continue in both subtle and explicit ways to exclude and oppress women and vulnerable groups in The Gambia. For example, whilst the draft constitution (2020) of The Gambia guarantees equal dignity and equal treatment of men and women in the political, social and economic spheres, these provisions have been weakened by the recognition of both customary and Shari'ah as the personal status law applicable to members of the communities concerned. In most cases, these rules are not favourable to women and girls and therefore puts them in more vulnerable and disadvantaged positions.'

Related to (or perhaps preceding) this limited political resolve, is the failure to even begin acknowledging some of the gross human rights violations experienced by women. Respondent 4, says, *'Including these women in conversation at a different level becomes impossible because we don't want the truth to come out.'*

4. Limited Economic Power

Budgetary constraints and limited financial resources present practical barriers to participation. Respondent 2 says, *'Development policies and frameworks are not gender responsive nor are the national budgets'* and added that *'women do not even have the resource required to mount elections campaign'*. The lack of funding has emerged as a significant challenge for organisations wanting to implement gender sensitive provisions and for women wanting to actively participate in political structures. Research (Reimann 2014) show that women have little access to formal institutions, power structures and funds – this bars them from participating in the implementation of peace agreements.

5. Structural Inequalities

Tied in with women's subordinate position in all these contexts, are intersecting vulnerabilities of racism and poverty, limited access to education opportunities and information. These multiple vulnerabilities create barriers to women's ability to participate in transitional justice processes. Respondent 1, notes that it is in part the *'ideological and historical structural racism as well as the lack of formal education'*, that impacts women's participation. She adds that women, particularly rural women, are hampered by their lack of access to information about TJ processes.

SECTION D:

Identifying Solutions Towards Greater Inclusion

One of the respondents succinctly summed up what women wanted and what is needed, saying, *'what women want during peace time is what they [wanted] before conflict'*. Here she talks to an enduring need for equality, recognition and meaningful participation. As we have pointed out throughout this report, the harms perpetrated against women during conflict and the exclusion suffered by women during transitional processes is largely a result of the marginalisation that existed in these contexts before. This continuum is recognised by scholars who note that an understanding of the needs of women before, during and after a conflict is necessary to ensure that transitional justice mechanisms lead to the desired transformative change for women and societies (Warren & Alam 2016). In post conflict society, opportunities for legal reform are possible even in otherwise traditional societies. Through new mechanisms, revised constitutions and affirmative action strategies and quotas, women activists are able to push for gender sensitive judicial reform. Scanlon (2008) notes that transitional processes offer a number of opportunities for addressing extreme violations of women's rights, and this transfers to broader changes in gendered socio-political relations. Interventions should not only add women into the existing processes of transitional justice bodies but should instead purposefully and strategically address the underlying structural inequalities that prevent women from participating in and benefiting from these processes (Muddell & Hawkins 2018; Rubin 2018; Scanlon & Muddell 2009; Warren & Alam 2016).

Such interventions may contribute to the construction of new gendered realities, not mirror what existed before the conflict (Alam 2014). The need for such a socio-cultural redress was also noted as one of the recommendations made by 438 signatories in an open letter to the United Nations Security Council (NGOWG-WPS). This awareness of pre-existing conditions and a need for structural redress highlights the importance of a holistic, transformative approach to transitional justice. Shackel and Fiske (2019) suggest that interventions that do not recognise systems of oppression are not able to respond to the needs of the marginalised. Fragmented responses that focus on specific sectors, like health or justice but that does not look at issues of land ownership, status of widows or women's rights to participate in every level of decision making will not be effective in realising transformation within transitional justice.

As many feminist scholars writing in this area have repeatedly shown, women do not need to be rescued in post-conflict societies, they need to be seen and engaged with, as active, political agents. They add that that, 'Justice cannot just be delivered from above, nor communities simply trained or given 'capacity,' as too many external interventions imagine' (Wendy Harcourt in Shackel & Fiske 2019, p. vi). Instead there is a need for 'stronger, collaborative partnerships with communities, direct personal relationships, building trust and seeing the delivery of justice as a shared project' (Wendy Harcourt in Shackel & Fiske 2019, p. vi).

Below we share recommendations, made by respondents, to ensure greater inclusivity of women in transitional justice and which addresses the obstacles mentioned above. We acknowledge that there is not a standard solution that applies to all contexts, instead all endeavors at inclusivity need to be culturally and contextually meaningful and relevant to a particular society (see GAPS_UK 2019). These are therefore broad, general recommendations that speak to different actors in transitional justice processes, including the state, CSOs, donors and intergovernmental organizations.

Recommendation 1:

Prioritizing Gender Sensitivity in Formal/State-led Transitional Justice Processes

DIRECTED AT: TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSIONS, REPARATIONS AUTHORITIES, AND OTHER OFFICIAL TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE BODIES; NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES/ GOVERNMENT, INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Conceptualization of all processes, including the establishment of truth commissions and reparations authorities, identification of key role players and design of public materials, like information briefs and statement-taking forms, from a gender perspective. This includes holding consultations around the design of transitional justice mechanisms in ways that practically allow for women's involvement.
- Creation of accessible spaces at truth commissions that encourage participation of women.
- Special truth commission hearings or similar platforms for women to narrate their experiences during conflict that are not strictly related to GBV.
- Gender sensitivity training, education and awareness raising for every team member in a truth commission at the beginning of the process.
- Sensitivity to women's (and broader gender) issues in public hearing sessions; for example, questions should be sensitive to the experience of women and should not cause secondary trauma.
- Psycho-support services should be made available to women survivors and should not be contingent on their providing testimony in a formal commission or court setting.

- Truth commissions' reports and recommendation should speak to the specific experiences of women and should include gender specific recommendations.
- Reparations should be tailored to meet the specific needs of women based on inclusive consultations with survivors at all levels of society

Recommendation 2:

Strengthening Legislation

DIRECTED AT: INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES/GOVERNMENT, CSOS, GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

- Institutional capacity of governments should be developed and/or enhanced to support equal representation of women in public decision-making spaces.
- Institutional and legal reform that facilitates and encourages greater representation of women in all spheres of society is necessary.
- Gender affirmative action policies should be adopted to ensure that women do not continue to be economically disadvantaged. Research suggests that in many post-conflict contexts legislation promoting affirmative action for women in the economic sector is absent and women continue to be under-represented in the formal economy (Rubin 2018). Joshi (2020) points out that affirmative action policies enables a redress of structural inequalities and should be included as part of transitional justice plans.

Recommendation 3:

Addressing Structural Inequalities

DIRECTED AT: INTERNAL POLITICAL PARTIES/GOVERNMENT, CSOS,
GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS

- Transitional justice mechanisms provide an opportune time to address root causes of gender inequality and gender-based violations. Broader gender issues (like early and forced marriage, land rights as well as socio-economic inequality) that pre-dated the conflict should be tackled through policy change and other institutional reforms such as constitutional reviews and drafting.
- Opportunities for women's advancement through accessible, available education should be prioritized.

Recommendation 4:

Recognition of Intersectionality

DIRECTED AT: TRUTH COMMISSIONS, INTERNAL POLITICAL PARTIES/
GOVERNMENT, CSOS, GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS

- Women have unique experiences in conflict and post conflict societies. Multiple intersections of race, poverty, rurality, language, religion and other identities may compound the experiences of some women. As such all women in a context should not be expected to speak as one group with the same concerns. Spaces that acknowledge these differential impacts should be created, giving all women, an opportunity to be heard.

Recommendation 5:

Recognizing Everyday Realities of Women

DIRECTED AT: TRUTH COMMISSIONS, EXTERNAL DONOR AGENCIES, CSOS, GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS

- Women have a number of competing demands; caregiving, working, peacebuilding. The feasibility and logistics of capacity building workshops should be considered before demanding attendance at workshops and/or TRC processes.

Sri Lankan Women and Alternate Methods of Documentation

Since 2015, GIJTR partners, in collaboration with its local partners, have led several projects that aim to expand on-the-ground capacities to support post-conflict justice, truth and reconciliation efforts in a sustainable approach that ensures the active participation of diverse stakeholders. From the early stages of its programming in Sri Lanka, GIJTR understood the critical role women play in community life, socially, culturally and politically, as well as their multiple roles throughout the prior internal armed conflict – as primary or secondary victims, peacebuilders in the community, and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) or military combatants – and thus intentionally structured the project to engage women as trusted community leaders. GIJTR’s 2015 needs assessment found that memorialization of the conflict by women in the North and East of Sri Lanka was highly surveilled by security forces, but could serve as a significant form of truth-telling. To meet this need,

GIJTR invited twenty Sri Lankan women – both primary and second victims to the conflict, including Muslims, Tamils, Christians and Sinhalese from the North-Central, North and East provinces – to take part in a body-mapping workshop, as well as a debriefing session with a psychologist. Body-mapping can allow its participants to share stories they otherwise would not disclose openly, in an anonymous and confidential setting, which is especially critical given the stigma associated with sexual violence. Body-mapping also is a vehicle for participants to recognize the experiences, victimization, and ultimately the humanity, of others; to foster a culture of understanding among community members; and to contribute to awareness raising and advocacy purposes. This arts-based, creative methodology can depict the nuances that traditional testimonies and formal documentation may not capture, and can serve as a less-threatening means of documenting human rights violations. The body-mapping program in Sri Lanka aimed to encourage a space for memorialization as well as healing and reflection for women participants to openly share their experiences of violations they experienced or witnessed. Despite an initial sense of hesitancy, participants later reported a feeling of relief, strengthened trust and understanding and bond among women from different religious backgrounds after sharing their experiences.

The workshop led to a public exhibit of the body-maps in Colombo, where the women spoke on a panel discussion, promoting reconciliation, justice and increased public awareness around women's experience of the decades-long conflict. Apart from the individual outcomes that the body-mapping workshop participants reported, two of the women later became transitional justice advocates and trainers with local partners on the ground, emphasizing the importance of their participation in truth, justice and reconciliation activities

Recommendation 6:

Inter-sectoral Collaboration Across Ideological, Generational, Cultural and Social Lines

DIRECTED AT: TRUTH COMMISSIONS, EXTERNAL DONOR AGENCIES, CSOS, GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS

- The need for stronger collaborative partnerships across ideological, generational cultural and social lines is strongly echoed in research (Shackel & Fiske 2019). Transitional justice should be viewed as a shared project, between different sectors (grassroots communities, civil society organizations, government, and external organizations).
- A strong, active women's sector that is proactive rather than reactive should be developed. This would result in greater collaboration between key role-players and increased acknowledgement and acceptance of diversity.
- Solidarity and mentoring relationships across generational levels (between older and younger women advocates) should be build.

Recommendation 7:

Providing Material Support Through Appropriate, Considered Allocation of Funds

DIRECTED AT: EXTERNAL DONOR'S, GOVERNMENT

- Funding is essential in ensuring greater representation, awareness raising as well as basic support for women. Lack of funding denies women entry into spaces that are traditionally held by men. Access to and availability of material support, primarily through funding, in ways that are meaningful and sustainable is needed. For example, civil society, private and corporate, funding is essential to women interested in entering the political arena. Similarly, external donor agencies may contribute to the development of political, socio-cultural and economic rights of women by providing information and facilitating access to education and economic empowerment opportunities.
- Shifting roles during conflict and/or the death and disappearance of husbands/fathers, means that many women become sole breadwinners post conflict. The persistency of structural drivers of inequality however results in limited employment opportunities, lower salaries and difficulties accessing financial opportunities and loans in a male-dominated economy. In this regard, both government and business have a role to play to ensure greater access.
- Across many societies women are expected to engage in community care, support and advocacy without any form of financial remuneration. This minimises their contribution and worth. This unpaid work should be acknowledged and women should be adequately and fairly compensated. With limited or

no funding, women at grassroots level don't have the means to engage in and further peacebuilding activities. These efforts should be supported and funded. For example, external donors and government, should make funding available to cover capacity-building activities that women at the grassroots level lead with others. External donor agencies may also support these activities by providing operational/institutional support to women's organizations and victims associations, instead of only project-driven funding.

Recommendation 8:

Recognize Local Expertise

DIRECTED AT: EXTERNAL DONORS

- Respect for CSOs expertise, contextual knowledge and competing demands. Respondents suggested that donor organisations placed unreasonable demands on CSOs at times and have a tendency to devalue the local expertise. *'Sometimes donors are unreasonable....you need to be working with civil society so that they're able to tell you what the pulse of the people is. They are close to the community, they work in the community, and they know what is going on. You need to listen to that'*. This view was echoed in a research report (Hawkins 2019), with respondents from a range of countries who similarly noted the importance of listening to the needs of local and national civil society organizations and victims' groups rather than pushing donor agendas. These organisations understand the context and priorities best; this expertise should be valued and acknowledged.

CONCLUSION

“It’s important that we just continue soldiering on because there is no choice. There is no choice, I mean we can’t just give up.” (Respondent 3)

ICSC’s experience since 1999 with more than 300 Sites of Conscience members in 65 countries, together with the accounts from respondents in this study, confirm that the absence of women from transitional justice processes is not indicative of an absence of need and desire for accountability, lack of voice or capacity, or in fact, the result of inaction within conflict resolution and community building. It is instead a purposeful, negligent and potentially detrimental exclusion, largely rooted in patriarchal systems and constructions of women’s roles in society. Despite little acknowledgement and a denial of entry and space at political tables, women are resolute and their participation is unwavering. Women continue to be disproportionately impacted by conflict, while simultaneously remaining disproportionately under-represented in initiatives to sustain communities during conflict and to bring conflict to an end (Bell & O’Rourke 2007, 2010; Coomaraswamy 2015). In this context, and as articulated by our respondent above, ‘giving up is not an option’. The enormity of rebuilding communities requires holistic, collaborative responses; all stakeholders (TRC, political parties, CSOs, grassroots organisations, external donors and aid organisations) should work towards dismantling the structural drivers that enable exclusion. Transitional justice processes offer an opportunity to redress pre-existing inequalities, gains made in these processes may be leveraged to effect greater change.

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