

# Mainstreaming Gender Into Conflict And Peace Building Through Women Led Madras's In Pakistan

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## Introduction

Armed conflict has many significant effects on gender relations. Women and girls have special vulnerabilities to many forms of violence. Women bear many consequences of wars and suffer violations of human rights in situations of armed conflict including terrorism, rape, disappearance, ethnic cleansing, family separation, displacement, and social and psychological traumas.

Peace building is generally defined as initiatives that are designed to prevent the eruption or return of armed conflict. As argued in this initiative, and as increasingly recognized in scholarship and diplomacy, religion can be used or mobilized to promote either conflict or peace building. There are strong connections among women and peace building processes. United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1325 (SCR, 1325), recognized that armed conflict affects women in different ways and women plays an important role in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peace building processes. Mostly, women's engagement in religious peacemaking is often invisible because, in many contemporary conflict zones and faith traditions, men tend to dominate formal religious leadership. Historical tendencies of male domination in security matters - and violent conflict specifically - accentuate women's invisibility. And it is evident that women are crucial in conflict situations, because women's perspectives, needs and unique leverage are often ignored by policy makers and scholars in the design of traditional religious peacemaking initiatives. This suggests new ways of understanding peace processes and making them more effective.

This paper focuses on mainstreaming a gender approach to peace building, emphasizing the interests and needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations. The paper presents a bottom-up approach to religious peace building, exploring how institutes led by women, home based madrassas, can play a crucial role in rebuilding peace in conflict zones of Pakistan. Madrassas in Pakistan are schools in which religious knowledge is the focus. In the madrassas, Quranic study and methods of prayers are taught to young children (including boys and girls) by female religious leaders (often called as Bibi's), in both war-affected and stable settings. This paper also presents case studies of two women-driven madrassas, each of which offers an opportunity to reflect on the intersection of women, religion, conflict and peace in both war-affected and stable settings. In these examples, women hold regular sessions on religious matters and teach children religious knowledge. Finally, the paper reflected on religious impact in shaping women's roles in society and peace building and highlighted the challenges

and opportunities afforded by the “invisibility” or “non- threatening” status of women religious peace builders.

### **Background To The Conflict In Pakistan And Their Impact On Women**

Khyber Pukhtunkhwa –KPK (former North West Frontier Province) Pakistan saw the biggest and fastest conflict-induced internal displacement in the world in 2009. At least three million people fled fighting between insurgents and security forces. Many were able to return after hostilities ended but at least 1.2 million remained displaced at the end of the year. Since 2001, displacement in Pakistan has been linked to clashes between the armed forces and militant groups fighting for territorial control of regions near the border with Afghanistan. The KPK and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has been the scene of continuing displacement. For example, in July 2007, violent clashes for control over the Swat District in KPK caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians. In Baluchistan, violence and displacement were reportedly linked to another militant group, sometimes described as the Baluchistan Liberation Army, which aims to establish an independent Baluchi state. By May 2008, up to 60,000 people had been displaced as a result of fighting in Baluchistan (IRN, 5 July 2009). For over a decade, the Taliban have been known for their strong opposition to the participation of women in public life. Their rule over most of Afghanistan until 2001 was marked by a complete prohibition for women in the workforce; educational facilities, as either teachers or students, were now denied to them. One of the most noticeable features of the past two years of conflict involving the Taliban in tribal Pakistan, particularly in Waziristan and Swat, has been the Islamic movement’s response to the role of women in society. In July, an umbrella network of Pakistan’s Taliban movements, Tehreek-e-Islami Taliban, posted warnings in parts of Punjab threatening that women who do not wear the hijab would have acid thrown on their faces. Subsequently, since militants of pro-Taliban cleric Maulana Fazlullah established their own government in Swat in October 2007, over 100 girl’s schools has been destroyed. Women bear disproportionately the consequences of wars and suffer violations of human rights in situations of armed conflict, including terrorism, torture, disappearance, rape ethnic cleansing, and family separation, displacement social and psychological traumas.

In April 2009, Pakistani media showed a young girl being beaten by Taliban in Swat. Many anti-women acts took place by the Taliban in the region, from demolishing girl schools to attacking women for actions, which they consider un-Islamic. There is a pattern in what the Taliban did against women in the name of Islam. As part of “providing their rightful place in Islam”, the Taliban has adopted a multi-pronged strategy against this generation of women and the future ones (Huma, 2010, p.103). Fazlullah (Taliban’s Leader) has openly opposed women’s education and started targeting girl’s schools in Swat.

War has always affected men and women in different ways. In contemporary conflicts, as much as 90 percent of casualties and victims are women and children. Women in war- affected zones face specific and devastating forms of sexual violence. The impacts of sexual violence persist even after when conflict ends, including unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and stigmatization (UNWOMEN, 2011). Widespread sexual violence as a consequence of

insecurity and impunity may continue or even increase in the aftermath of conflict. Discrimination and inequitable laws prevent women from accessing humanitarian aid and their basic social, political, and economic rights. This dire situation for women prevails in Pakistan. In Pakistan, women are not only subjected to financial discrimination, but they are also victims of inhuman customs and laws such as Karo kari, Hadood ordinance and marriage to the Quran and half witnesses according to the state law (whereby in court a female witness is only worth half a male witness). They are highly vulnerable to violation of their rights to life. A women's right to liberty is restricted in the name of modesty, protection and prevention of immoral activity. Karo kari is the form of honor killings. In 2004, 286 women were murdered in the name of honor by the male family members in Punjab (and these were only the registered cases). (Zahra, 2005). But again, only the women of the poor class are victims of inhuman custom of Karo Kari, another form of honor killings. This custom is seldom implemented against rich women. Many of the cases of Karo Kari are related to love to love marriage. Mostly women are being stigmatized for the bad character who marries to a person of their choice. Marriage to the holy Quran is also common in Sind. Under this law a woman has to live without a husband throughout her life. But this law is only applied among the class of landlords. They use this only to keep and grab the land of their sisters and daughters. There are hundreds of such cases that are not registered. But if we go to the root cause of these honor killings we see that they are linked to the question of land, water, money and property. In the province of Punjab brothers, fathers and husbands subject 82% of women to domestic violence. Wife battering is so common that is not even recognized as a pernicious form of violence against women. Even in the cases where women receive serious injuries and want to file complaints, they are advised by the police to reconcile with their husbands, as any matrimonial dispute would bring dishonor to them.

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### **Madrasahs In Pakistan**

Madrasahs are Islamic religious seminaries/school, found throughout Pakistan, where students of ages ranging from five to eighteen pursue religious education including Quranic study and other religious practices. The literature on male madrasahs explains the demand for religious education primarily in terms of poverty. It is argued that, lacking the option of private

education, poorer parents put their children in madrassas to benefit from the free education and boarding facilities. Unlike government schools, madrassas provide full boarding facilities (Singer, 2001; Stern, 2000). Occasionally lower middle-class children are recruited among populations in Pakistan who do not have access to any other kind of schooling. The primary objective of madrassa education is to produce Islamic scholars who can take up the role of preachers and religious leaders. Since religious authority in Islam is considered to be the domain of male scholars, training women in formal Islamic education has not been a priority. Rather, the emphasis has been on enabling women to read the Quran independently and encouraging them to acquire Islamic knowledge through reading the religious texts produced by prominent Ulamas, rather than to produce their own religious scholarship or pursue education through formal institutions.

In the past, madrassas substituted for regular elementary education and higher education, and ultimately produced clerics.<sup>1</sup> Many Taliban leaders were educated in Saudi-financed madrassas in Pakistan that teach Wahhabism<sup>2</sup>, a particularly austere and rigid form of Islam. Around the world, Saudi wealth and charities contributed to an explosive growth of madrassas during the Afghan Jihad against the Soviets. During that war (1979-1989), a new kind of madrassa emerged in the Pakistan - Afghanistan region – not so much concerned about scholarship as making war on infidels. The enemy then was the Soviet Union, today it is America. (Public Broadcast Service, n.d.) In 2005, Peter Bergen and Swaty Pandey<sup>3</sup> - research fellows at New America Foundation, argued that concern over Islamic education was based on a ‘madrassa myth.’ Basing their analysis for the controversial World Bank study about the actual number of madrassas in Pakistan, both argued that “while madrassas are an important issue in education and development in the Muslim world, they are not and should not be considered a threat to the United States” (Pakistan's Madrassas, 2009). This is because of their relatively small number and since terrorists who attacked the West had largely not been educated in madrassas.

The difference between madrassas associated with modern Islamist movements and the traditional madrassas is that they were not really so much concerned about scholarship and actual teaching and preaching of Islam. They were more concerned about training religious fighters who would fight in to the Afghan field or further serve as a suicide bomber, who mixed a dosage of Islam with a lot of military training.

*‘The students studying in jihadi schools are totally brain washed right from the very beginning. The text books have been authored to provide only one dimensional world view and restrict the independent thought process of children.’ (Liberal Forum of Pakistan, Future Youth group, 2003)*

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars, preachers, religious community leaders who conduct the religious affairs of a community.

<sup>2</sup> A conservative and intolerant form of Islam that is practiced in Saudi Arabia, founded by Abdul Wahhab (1703-1792). wahhabism - definition and meaning from Wordnik; accessed June 13, 2010. m.wordnik.com/words/wahhabism.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Bergen, the author of "Holy War Inc.," and Pandey are research fellows at the New America Foundation.

While male madrassas have existed in Pakistan and other Muslim countries for the past nine decades, they have only recently come into the limelight due to their alleged links with militancy (Bano, 2007). With respect to female madrassas, almost 2000 registered Islamic religious schools for girls provide more than half of all candidates in graduate level exams.

(Butt ,2003) elaborating more on madrassas that there are more than 1900 registered all female madrassas in Pakistan, constituting 15% of the total madrassas in Pakistan , that indicates the failures of the Pakistani education system and an increasing appetite for traditional Islamic values among the lower middle class. Similar concerns about the need for proper education for youth are repeatedly echoed in the publications of many Islamic organizations. For example, the Quran Foundation reads:

*'In this media exposed society, every individual wants to send his child where the child can get right knowledge, right guidance, and a neat and clean environment having good company and conducive environment where children learn about religion as well as the world along with modern subjects.'* (Al-Mohsinat Trust newsletter, 2007)

Women's invisibility – as victims, as survivors and as peace makers and leaders needs to be understood as a first step in addressing the opportunities for and obstacles to improving progress for women affected by conflict. Depending on the specific circumstances and needs, peace building efforts vary from country to country. Peacekeeping missions can work to prevent and resolve conflicts before they begin. The importance of including women and gender perspectives in the planning and implementation of peace operations is increasingly recognized.

Madrassas promote traditional roles for women and students feel confident about their position in society. We cannot associate this phenomenon with poverty. It was observed that madrassas gave economic and social opportunities. Students could offer private tuition in religious education, increasingly their respectability and upward mobility. According to the latest statistics from the Pakistani government, nearly 236,000 girls are studying in almost 2,000 madrassas. Female students exceed males in their academic achievements, with a greater number registering for graduate exams and enjoying a higher pass rate. Madrassas are not a poor alternative to public education but here I am emphasizing the importance of women led madrassas where there is a strong relationship between educational opportunities and peace building – i.e. providing opportunities for youth so that they are less likely to become involved in militancy groups.

### **Bottom-Up Peace Building**

Sustainable peace building process requires the full participation of women at all levels of the peace process; their involvement in the healing mechanisms is essential which prevent conflict, stop war, and stabilize regions damaged by warfare (Hunt Alternatives Fund. 2011). This paper highlights the healing mechanism of the war affectees for a sustainable peace building process. The importance of including women and gender perspectives in the planning and

implementation of peace operations is increasingly recognized. Peace building offers important opportunities to support the advancement of gender equality in conflict – affected regions. Women’s issues are often given low priority and inadequate support in peace negotiations and in national governance, at senior levels. Attitudes towards women’s participation pose a significant barrier to progress. And further, policies frequently fail to translate into operational targets and effective impact on the situation of women on the ground.

In the scholarship on peace building practices, (Lederach, 1997, p. 39) (Professor of International Peace building at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, and Distinguished Scholar at Eastern Mennonite University) has emphasized the importance of distinguishing between three broad categories of actors in society:

- 1. Elites** constitute those people in top-level social and political positions who have the potential to influence widely the community ideas, practices, and values. Examples include prominent politicians or the heads of large religious institutions. Since many of the Swati militants and their minions have been traced back to madrassas, like Mullah Umer, Maulana Sufi Muhammad played the same role, and to whom women donated their assets and jewelry to them on the name of Islam. While elites wield a high level of power in society, the drawback to relying on them as peace builders is their small failure in achieving the targets can reduce the ratio of their audiences and their quick diversion to other values or groups has been confirmed, like in Swat mostly the ratio of people , their values and support to a specific group has been totally deceased and particularly women’s views being totally changed towards to level social and political position holders on the name of Islam.
- 2. Mid-level** people whose occupations are thought to have influence over smaller groups of people, in a more personal way. Examples include local clergy, journalists, and teachers. In Pakistan’s religious community, mid-level leaders include the highly respected Ulema, who serve as heads of regional religious bodies.
- 3. Grass roots participants or activists** (like local leaders, leaders of Indigenous NGO’s, community leaders, local health officials, refugee / IDP camp leaders etc).

Lederach argued that mid-level social actors or mid-level leaders are best positioned to lead and support long term peace building efforts according to his proposed model. Scholars and practitioners do not always agree on which category of actors is likely to be the most influential. (Fitzduff <sup>4</sup>, 1997, p. 12) noted “in some cases influential leaders made a difference. In other cases it had been leadership from the grassroots that has gradually enabled the institutional churches and religions to move into a more inclusive mode.” Women teachers of religious education to boys & girls can play a significant role in molding a peaceful society, and I support Lederach’s argument and that they have greater flexibility of movement and are more numerous than top-level leaders, and they are connected to a wide range of individuals in the conflict settings through their work. Female madrassas are weak units of the society but they

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<sup>4</sup> Mari Fitzduff is Professor and director of the Coexistence and Conflict Master’s Program at Brandeis University.



can influence social norms and conflict dynamics very strongly through channelizing the potential of young minds positively and can influence the way in which people in groups behave and interact. Females or young girls being taught at madrassas can influence and affect her surroundings at household and community level leading to contribution to peace building efforts. In practice, in all peace building processes, both bottom up and top down approaches are equally important and need to be balanced according to the specificities of each local context.

### **Peace Building Actors**

Peace building is a process that relies heavily on the commitment and efforts by outsiders and local actors/insiders to break away from conflict and create a state and society in which peace can be sustained, where there is security and respect for human rights and a competent and affair justice system prevails. And the history shows that all these were missing in all the conflict zones of Pakistan and where “women” was considered as an asset and the most “vulnerable creature” by all means. Outsiders support to local peace builders by providing financial, technical and human resources can change the situation of this “vulnerable creature”.

A vast range of actors are engaged in religious peace building including religious authorities, traditional spiritual leaders, and members of religious communities, as well as faith based non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Additionally, a large number of secular NGOs have developed a programmatic approach to engaging in religious peace building in conflict areas of Africa. Interreligious and transnational movements have contributed successively in the provision of neutral and secure space for dialogue, advocacy, neutral mediation or liaison to governments or relief agencies, and so supported peacemaking and peace building in conflict areas of the world.

The inclusion and empowerment of women in peace building settings requires representation at the levels of government including legislatures and women affairs ministries, like the Ministry of Women’s Development in Islamabad, which has been increasingly active in advocacy and support to women related affairs, although primarily at the federal or provincial level. Emphasis needs to be placed on establishing/strengthening such institutions at district levels to address the women concerns at grass root level.

International actors and civil society play a significant role in promoting and enabling the inclusion and empowerment of women (UNIFEM, 2005, p 23). (Ballington, 2004, p. 101) quotes that “...women’s groups in conflict zones have used [United Nation’s Security Council] Resolution 1325 as a mobilizing tool to demand involvement at all level of decision-making at negotiation tables, and in the implementation of peace processes”. Through Gender Equality commitment at all levels allowed women to gain access to basic social services and other humanitarian assistance that was not easily accessible to them during displacement. (UNDP, 2003, p.5) Noting that women in situations of armed conflict and post conflict situations continue to be often considered as victims and not as actors in addressing and resolving situations of armed conflict and stressing the need to focus not only on protection of women

but also on their empowerment in peace building. SCR 1325 recognizes the particular needs of women and girls in post conflict situations, including physical security, health services including reproductive and mental health, ways to ensure their livelihoods, land and property rights, employment, as well as their participation in decision making and post-conflict planning, particularly at early stages of post conflict peace building. A number of international organizations are involved in supporting programs of this nature, as well as internally mainstreaming gender. According to (Hunts Alternatives Fund, Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: A toolkit for advocacy and action (2004), p. 5) , UNDP and UNIFEM are very instrumental to that end, as they support women's participation in peace processes and reconstruction by providing leadership training and capacity building, facilitating contact with the international community, supporting indigenous women's peace activism & advocacy and initiating conflict early warning and prevention projects by UN Women and supporting Pakistan government in providing technical assistance at decision making level by supporting CEDAW's implementation at National level, Gender mainstreaming project and so many others by UNDP and several projects addressing GBV concerns as a consequence of conflict by various INGO's and UN agencies . And other bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors placed their focus through providing opportunities to women to contribute socially and economically through economic growth and women empowerment projects in conflict zones.

These different actors involved in peace building have been developing four main types of activities specifically aimed at supporting religion and religious actors' contribution to peace building: education and training programs; interfaith dialogues and programs; and international conferences. Another religious peace building activity is exemplified by the women who lead madrassas, where religious knowledge is given to young children in Pakistan. Quranic and prayer study is taught to young children (including boys & girls) by male religious leaders (Ulama) especially in war affected areas- where the python of creating Talibans took birth. In urban settings, the same practice is carried out by female teachers (Bibis) in madrassas at their homes (home based madrassas). As such, women have always been active promoters of harmony and through these madrassas she can do a lot to promote culture of peace in the community without any class difference (youngsters from all sects has been taught), which can be referred to as a culture of peace. Besides other socio-economic contributions, the essential contribution of women in every tradition is the role of a mother as a teacher for their children. Through their important mothering role a household level, the culture of peace is entrenched in children as a foundation for peaceful living in families, the traditional rural community and the clan. Religious teachers / preachers have a significant role in Pakistani society and have been given a great respect and regards by the community. They obey him / her till death. Maulana Fazlullah is the example of this; the whole swat was following him on the name of Islam.

### **Significance Of Supporting Home Based Madrassas Led By Females In Tribal Areas**

In Pakistan, women, often elderly and motivated by their faith, run madrassas for young children in their neighborhoods, free of cost. This system is showing a declining trend in urban areas because many women are drawn to other jobs. Such madrassas fall into two categories, one specifically for young children (both young boys and girls) and the other one to give "*daras*



- **Islamic education sessions**", once a week to females in their homes, with translation of Quran and other different topics of Islam and Peace. This kind of madrassas has seen a rapid increase in cities during the government of "Jamiat -i-Islami".

Mainstreaming gender and supporting both types of madrassas in rural areas or conflict zones offers an important peace building tool. Where women teach peace to children of all ages in their homes or, as outsider actors, international / external actors can play an important role in promoting and capacitating the inclusion and empowerment of women, like **UN Agencies, Interagency task forces and Networks. United Nations Peace building Commission (PBC)**, which became operational in 2006, is a new inter-governmental advisory body of the UN specifically dedicated to helping countries make the transition from war to lasting peace and which has emphasized the need to include gender components in various facets of peace building, including participation in governance and justice sector reform. International financial Institutions may fund women's groups, or organizations working toward socio-economic empowerment of women. For instance, the World Bank has funded local women's associations that seek to improve employment capacities of women. Bilateral donor agencies, such as USAID, CIDA, SIDA, DFID, JICA, and so forth provide assistance to gender specific programs. **INGO's and other organizations** working on advocacy and from a policy perspective, relief, early recovery and development for post conflict regions. **Foreign governments (through their embassies and different cooperation bodies); Research and academic institutions**, and think tanks also come under the category of External actors. According to Agatha. M. (2003) besides other actors, the most important actor is the "women", to whom the society has assigned a role of an "educator", note that this is a role that this word goes far beyond Pakistan; in African traditional societies also women are assigned the role of "educator". Such education from "mothers" is the type that starts from the cradle and was affected through various activities in which children participate.

*"For generations, women have served as peace educators, both in their families and in their societies. They have proved instrumental in building bridges rather than walls."*  
(Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations).

In olden days, our grandmothers conveyed the stories, proverbs and sayings that contained simple but clear messages and moral teachings, at the fireplace or after the evening meals. Many such teachings aimed at reducing conflict and focused on the importance in human living and mutuality, of consideration for others. Stories showed greed and individual interests as major sources of conflict and young men and women were warned against them. Certain myths given to children in those days were meant to emphasize that to avoid war can sometimes be an act of good leadership. Some stories also underscored the negative aspects of conflict and hostilities, and as such could act as a deterrent. The strong understanding is that peace is not born but made and that the culture of peace in traditional societies can be implanted in a child through responsible upbringing and socialization undertaken and supervised by mothers or religious teachers. The lesson learned or the central message from the contemporary war of affected tribal zone of Pakistan is that peace building should be taken seriously and that it is established, little by little, in young minds and moulded in the behavior and personality of the

young through the agency of the Mother, as it was over many decades by religious leaders. Now, however, the Taliban's has contributed to using similar means instead to implant a negative global understanding of Islamic teachings. After the Taliban regime in war affected zone, the mind set of local people have changed; many are reluctant to send their children to mosques / madrassa (especially young boys). Thus this is a good time to promote sustainable peace through women who are running madrassas at their homes.

### **Supporting Such Institutions At A Broader Level (Both In Tribal Areas And Urban Areas) With External Aid Could Have Multiple Advantages And Positive Societal Impact**

- Such kind of initiatives will encompass interrelated areas: improving mutual understanding between US and Pakistan; strengthening capacity to mitigate conflict; and promoting peace building through education and civil society initiatives.
- Women leadership in promoting long lasting peace at home based level.
- Will inhibit the number of suicide bombers etc. Strengthening local institutes including female madrassas by providing opportunities to women in promoting peace by the support of external aid.
- This will rebuild the confidence of locals on religious madrassa's.
- People will be happy to send their children to such kind of religious institutes just for education not for any training.
- This will be the best initiatives that will be designed to prevent the eruption or return of armed conflict.
- The choice of madrassa education by parents and their daughters is partly driven by religious beliefs, but is also a rational response to the socio economic and cultural changes that concern them.
- And most of all, by the support of an external aid, will strengthen the good relations between Pakistan and US which will detoxify the image of US among Pakistanis.

### **Activities**

For peace promotion, focus should be placed on activities and components that specifically support religion and religious actors to develop their contribution in peace building. As suggested in the (Peace building initiatives, 2008) activities like support to local faith based NGO's, and conducting interfaith dialogues and programs, may frustrate and create tension between the local communities due to their affiliation with a specific sects in the tribal areas from a religious perspective. In the context of Pakistan's war affected areas and in stable urban context, and besides other formal peace building initiatives from a religious perspective following programs are suggested:

- *Special training programs for female religious leaders;* including International conferences and trainings for religious female leaders by authentic and certified leaders. Specific training programs including a manual for religious women in peace building was

developed by The World Conference on Religion and Peace (Religions for Peace. A Multi-Religious Training Manual, 2004).

- *Special programs for youth (especially in war affected zone).* Engaging youth constructively is the dire need of the time, especially in the war affected zones. Lack of education, poverty and unemployment were the major causes of terrorism and suicide bombing in these areas. Programs like skills training and education, creating employment opportunities for youth and education for girls and boys can accelerate the process of development and peace in the target areas. National youth networks, youth camps and workshops on peace can offer an opportunity from various sects of Islam (and from other religions too) to learn about one another's religion and traditions first hand.
- *Education and capacity building programs;*
- *Institutional strengthening programs (especially of home based madrassas)*
- *Training and capacity building of media.* Media plays an active role in promoting women's issues in peace building settings. Yet the image of war portrayed by the media covers very little of the peace end of the conflict/peace spectrum. Discussions about the multiplicity of women's roles in war and peace were underway in boardrooms, conference halls, and on the floor of the U.N but the media were lagged behind offering images of women in conflict situations that are rarely nuanced and portraying them solely as collateral damage –if they are seen as "a story" at all.
- Other grassroots interfaith initiatives were aimed specifically at schoolteachers, whose influence was primarily on the next generation. Induction of trainings on coping mechanisms with trauma and tension, as a teacher and as a psycho social counselor in schools. This combination of professional healing and personal development is what the educators need now. It is not explicitly 'education for peace' but the long term result is the forging of a common society based on mutual understanding and respect.

### **Recommendations For Peacemaking**

- Special programs for female religious leaders; (as mentioned above).
- Special programs for engaging youth (especially in war affected zone).
- Working in partnership with civil society organizations on comparative information on peace processes which is an essential resource for effective peacemaking.
- Knowledge management of all stakeholders on how facilitating comparative learning can work, and drawing out new thinking on cross-cutting issues.
- Engaging armed groups in peace processes
- Third party involvement in peace processes Frameworks for conflict resolution. Here I would quote UNDP's project "Anjuman Masalihah Project", which aimed at resolving disputes and conflicts at communities' level by the village committees (by the third party).
- Induction of research and activities for - Identification of "resuming Peace processes: looking for new opportunities".
- Experience sharing and discussions among all stakeholders involved in peace processes.

- Sharing Insights and lessons learned from their responses for developing themes and policy recommendations rooted in practical experience.
- Identifying challenges (with specific geographic context) to policymakers with alternative and practice-based viewpoints on conflicts and peacemaking.
- It is important to note that the madrassas are located all over Pakistan in rural and urban areas. ***And this paper aims to draw attention of the Pakistani government, civil society as well as the international donor community regarding madrassas in Pakistan to divert their attention and pool of their resources to female driven madrassas (home based madrassas).***

### **Sharing Peacemaking Lessons**

Following are two peacemaking Scenarios / Short case studies for the religious activities to support peace building efforts.

### **Case Study: Peshawar: Religious Activities To Support Peace Building Efforts**

#### **Scenario One:**

Shakeela Bibi, aged 40 yrs was running a free madrassa in her home in the village of But Khela Swat (war zone area), where around 140 children were her students (including boys and girls). She was teaching Quran for the “will of God” along with translation. Young children or children not enrolled in school were her morning students; in the afternoon she had more school going students. Mostly, her madrassa had more young girls up to the age of even 20 years. Being a religious leader (Bibi) and being from the very respectable family (Syed), everybody in the surrounding area respected her and her whole family. Within the family or in the neighborhood, people came to get advice or teachings from her on specific issues or day to day problems.

The number of boys in her madrasa drastically decreased after the war on terror. One day her home (along with other homes in the neighborhood) was destroyed by the militants and shakeela and many other people migrated to Peshawar city, along with her family. Settling in Peshawar with support from her relatives, she started a similar kind of madrassa at her home with very low monthly fees; most students are girls.

#### **Scenario Two: Dars Gah (Religious Learning / Teaching Place) For Females And Young Girls**

Hayatabad is a small modern township located in Peshawar comprising seven sectors (two of them are not developed). Approximately 10-15 dars gah exist in five of the sectors. Many women attend parallel movement of informal Islamic learning referred to as Al Huda, Jamia and so many other names. All are run by women who have a command over the religion. They hold one session per week. The same kind of dars gah is run by Shireen at her home or sometimes at some other place. The number of female students can be as many as 100 when they pray together on special occasions etc. Many women and men defend and favor the expansion of such Madrassas as the best source of knowledge for women and young children as well as for

society in general. ***The important point is that in these “dars gah’s” only females are allowed to attend, while as mentioned above in scenario one young boys and girls both attend. Here the matter is not just to highlight such madrassas/ dars gah.*** This paper argued and noted the importance of recognizing the existence or reformation ***of female Madrassas*** as a means of peace building initiatives and promoting the positive image of Islam and United states which will strengthen the relations between Pakistan and United States.

## **Conclusion**

Peace building includes both tangible and intangible dimensions. The tangible dimension consists of such things as the number of weapons destroyed, soldiers demobilized, jobs created, or dialogues held. The intangible dimension includes such phenomena as reconciliation between former antagonists, trust in public institutions, and new norms of dispute resolution. It is fair to say that most international peace building initiatives have focused primarily on visible, tangible, and quantifiable outputs rather than on qualitative processes of change, which, admittedly, are much more difficult to induce and assess.

Women's invisibility - as victims, as survivors and as peace-makers and leaders needs to be better understood. as a first step in addressing the opportunities for and obstacles to improving progress for women affected by war. The magnitude of violence suffered by women before, during and after conflict is overwhelming. The glaring gaps in women's protection must be addressed. Women are motivated to protect their children and ensure security for their families. Women have their fingers on the pulse of the community. Living and working close to the roots of conflict, they are well positioned to provide essential information about activities leading up to armed conflict. Women can thus play critical role in mobilizing their communities to begin the process of reconciliation and rebuilding once hostilities end.

Mainstreaming “Gender and development” has proven highly effective in a conservative, tribal and religious environment by drawing universal values from particular religious, social and cultural contexts, rather than critiquing local contexts in the light of universal values. This paper draws lessons for women’s empowerment policy and practice from home based madrassas.

*"Supporting women is a high-yield investment, resulting in stronger economies, more vibrant civil societies, healthier communities, and greater peace and stability".*

*(Secretary Of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, March 8th, 2009).*

The lesson learned or the central message from the contemporary war of affected tribal zone of Pakistan is that peace building should be taken seriously and that it is established, little by little, in young minds and molded into the behavior and personality of the young through religious women leaders. This is the time to bring positive social change through the agents of social change “women”. After the Taliban regime in war affected zone, the mind set of local people have now been changed and they are reluctant to send their children to mosques /

Madrassa's (especially to young boys) and this is the perfect time for promoting sustainable peace through women who are running madrassa's and delivering "Dars" at their homes.

By supporting such kind of institutions at broader level (both in tribal areas and urban areas) by an external aid will enhance and promote sustainable peace. And this paper aims to draw attention of "peace builders" regarding madrassas in Pakistan to divert their attention and pool of their resources to female driven madrassas (home based madrassas).

Lastly, I must say that:

*One **Woman** Can Change Anything. Many **Women** Can Change Everything.*

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