Chapter 9: Prevention and Early Warning

In Kosovo we met Zlata who told us that when she saw arms caches growing in early 1998, she realized that armed conflict was imminent. But she had no one to tell and doubted that her concerns would be taken seriously. "At a certain point, the boys - young men I suppose, my own nephew also - went up into the hills and got trained," she said. "That was the beginning. Then there were guns, first only some, which is usual, but then a lot of weapons being talked about. I didn't see them, but I heard about them. We knew all this, but still nobody was watching or listening to us in Kosovo."

Sometimes, women have nowhere to turn with their information. In Sierra Leone, a young woman named Amy told us that in her village, "we knew roughly where and when the RUF were planning something big against the peacekeepers. My friend and I, we wanted to tell someone, but it was hard, we were watched, it would take a long time to walk in the night, and it was dangerous. It was a big pity too, because the RUF took the guns and the pride of the UN that day, but it took our hope too. We were scared again, which is exactly what they wanted."

Over and over on our journey we heard stories such as Zlata's and Amy's – stories that appear to be about women's helplessness and marginalization. But gradually we learned to listen to these narratives differently, and to appreciate that they were a signal – of the potential escalation of hostilities – that had been ignored. Preventing deadly conflict is as much about knowing the signs as it is about acting on them. Women have much to offer but their analysis is often devalued and their solutions deemed irrelevant. Because women are disconnected from what are considered 'high politics' and the 'seats of power,' there are few opportunities for information from and about them to inform preventive actions. Yet throughout our visits we saw impressive, though generally small scale, actions by women working to build peace and resolve conflicts. Ultimately, we came to view women's experiences and perceptions as an untapped set of resources to prevent deadly conflict and its resurgence.

In November 1999, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged the international community to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention.[1] The United Nations,[2] regional organizations, NGOs and women's peace groups have taken concrete steps towards establishing systems of early warning and response. The European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the African Union,[3] groups such as the G8, representing the major economic powers and NGOs have all begun to recognize that deadly conflict can be prevented and are re-examining what it takes to do that. Addressing the root causes of conflict and investing in development is the first step.

Processes such as disarming and demobilizing the warring factions, or transforming a corrupt or crumbling police force are not only part of ending a war but also a way of preventing future wars. Whether through preventive deployment, grass roots reconciliation or security sector reform, we are convinced that women's contribution to these processes can make a difference.

Gender, Information and Early Warning

Formal early warning systems monitor potential crisis situations, collect information and generate analyses that will give decision makers a way to assess risk and find openings for preventive action. Preventing an incipient armed conflict requires time – time to gather and analyse information, time to build political support for action and time to design and implement preventive strategies. The signs of potential conflict or resurgence are as many as the methods for collecting them. Some organizations collect and report data on human rights violations; others carry out case studies on specific conflicts or broadcast information about drought, diseases, famine, and other potential causes of conflict. The Centre for Documentation and Research of the UN High Commission for Refugees monitors and analyses information to predict refugee flows, while the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) run by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) provides alerts of imminent food crises. NATO's early warning system is structured to foresee a different range of threats and crises, leading to both non-military and military response options.

       In the eyes of many early warning experts, the system is working well except for some deficits in information analysis and response. But from our perspective, one of the major problems is that women and gender issues have been left out. By and large, early warning systems do not consider information about what is happening to women or what they are doing. In their Preliminary Framework on Gender and Conflict Early Warning, Eugenia Piza-Lopes of the NGO International Alert and Susanne Schmeidl of the Swiss Peace Foundation suggest that incorporating gender-sensitive indicators may fine-tune existing approaches to information collection and analysis. They argue that previously overlooked signs of instability at the grassroots level provide early warning signals of impending conflict.[4]

       Preliminary research suggests that the status of women is associated with a country's level of stability.[5] Countries with very low percentages of women in parliament or with high rates of domestic violence are considered more prone to repression and violent conflict. Afghanistan under the Taliban, with its massive human rights violations against women, is one such example. Other 'gendered' violations, including rape, trafficking, domestic violence and military-related prostitution, are also indicators.

       Although always context specific, other indicators that are often overlooked in early warning and information collection systems include:

- propaganda emphasizing hyper-masculinity
- media scapegoating of women accusing them of political or cultural betrayal
- sex-specific refugee migrations
- engagement of women in a shadow war economy
- sex-specific unemployment
- resistance to women's participation in peace processes and negotiations
- lack of presence of women in civil society organizations
- growth of fundamentalism
- increase in single female-headed households[6]

The indicators of potential conflict are often visible in the routines of daily existence. Espionage and high tech surveillance methods are not always the best tools; the signs of potential conflict may be as obvious as the operating time of markets or the price of a gun. In Sierra Leone, one woman told us, "As the war was brewing, women were up and about very early in the morning, getting all of their business done as quickly as possible. The markets were only open for a few hours because people were afraid. When the market was open for longer, it was a sign that things were getting back to normal." In Burundi according to another woman, "In the morning, if we see women coming down from the mountain, then we know it is safe to send our children to school. If we don't see women, we know that something may happen. They have been sent back by the men for a reason, and it is very possible that it is not safe."

Women's efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts are equally as important as the information they gather as they go about their day. Women's peaceful protest can also reveal new opportunities for non-military preventive action.

Though successful in the short term, women's often bold and creative efforts at peace-building are rarely followed up or supported, despite the plethora of opportunities to do so. When receiving information about potential conflicts, for example, the UN Secretary-General can alert the Security Council and initiate fact-finding missions; he has also been asked by the Security Council "to include information on gender mainstreaming throughout peacekeeping missions and all other aspects relating to women and girls" in his reports on country and thematic issues. But very little information has been made public except for reports from Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, East Timor and Sierra Leone, where gender units or advisers have been part of peacekeeping operations. This lack of information is partly due to the fact that information collection systems have not been sex-disaggregated, and partly because of a lack of expertise.

The absence of information about and from women has been signalled in recent UN resolutions and reports, including the Secretary-General's July 2001 report on conflict prevention,[7] in which he called on the Council to make protecting women's human rights part of conflict prevention and peace-building, and urged it to include a gender perspective in its work. The Security Council reaffirmed this, in its Resolution 1366 on conflict prevention, which calls for greater attention to gender perspectives in the implementation of peacekeeping and peace-building mandates as well as in conflict prevention.[8] While the importance of gender is well recognized, concrete measures to improve the flow of early warning information from and about women have not been put in place. If preventive visits and fact-finding missions to areas of potential conflict were to routinely include gender expertise and consultations with women's organizations, systematic and useable information about women could be collected and analysed. Only then could "gender perspectives" be turned into concrete early warning indicators.

The 2001 statement by the Foreign Ministers of the G-8 industrial nations on Strengthening the Role of Women in Conflict Prevention describes the opportunities available for supporting and identifying local women who represent an influential voice for peace, and delineates the resources needed to carry this out.[9] The G-8 statement emphasizes the importance of the systematic involvement of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, as well as their full and equal participation in all phases of conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building. It also

encourages the participation of all actors of civil society, including women's organizations, in conflict prevention and conflict resolution, and encourages the sharing of experiences and best practices.[10] Now, a reporting mechanism is needed to monitor their progress on implementing these commitments.

At the NGO level, there are many regional organizations that recognize the importance of women's input. The European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation is an open network of some 150 European NGOs that are involved in the prevention and/or resolution of violent conflicts in the international arena. It facilitates the exchange of information and experience among participating organizations, including women's organizations[11] The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), founded in 1991, is one of many African NGOs focused on conflict prevention that has devoted considerable energies to exploring gender and African women's role in prevention and peace-building.[12] The Global Action Plan to Prevent War was launched by a large coalition of international and national groups in 1999 and also focuses on women's role in conflict prevention throughout the world.[13]

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) – the key to keeping the peace

During the post-conflict period, prevention of new violence depends not only on early warning systems, but on the willingness of armed groups to lay down their arms, disband military structures, and return to civilian life. If armed groups or warlords do not put down their weapons, peace will never be possible.

When weapons remain in circulation, they combine with trauma, poverty and lawlessness to turn women's neighborhoods and homes into war zones, heightening the lethality of crime and of domestic and political violence. If disarmed ex-combatants become "restless," as officials in Sierra Leone describe the 30,000 former fighters awaiting reintegration, the peace is fragile at best.[14] This is why DDR programmes need to be thoughtfully planned, adequately funded with a long-term commitment to see the process through.

Each of the DDR processes involves and has implications for women, whether they participated in combat, have family members who did, or are members of a community trying to integrate former combatants. While some women joined armed groups of their own free will, large numbers were abducted into combat and/or forced to become sexual and domestic slaves. But no matter how they came to military groups, almost all of them are neglected during the DDR process. El Salvador, where female ex-combatants were effectively excluded from the reintegration programme is just one example.

Disarmament

Disarmament is the most essential and most frequently neglected component of the DDR effort. When weapons remain in communities after peace has been declared, women are often caught in a growing spiral of violence. In Mozambique because of the small weapons left in circulation after the civil war, crime took on an added danger: women were raped at gunpoint, homes were robbed by armed thieves.[15] Unless soldiers feel safe

without their weapons and can survive by means other than violent crime, disarmament programmes are doomed to fail.

Successful disarmament depends on sufficient resources to effectively disarm, destroy, store and guard weapons caches. Although the responsibility for disarmament rests with the government and is often supported by a peacekeeping force, transitional authority, or regional organization, these resources are rarely available. Rather than sit by and do nothing, humanitarian staff or women from the local community may, by default, attempt to collect weapons. In Cambodia, a local activist described the situation that has forced women to take action: "There are so many weapons left over from the war. Almost every house has them. Accidental deaths are happening all the time; in domestic arguments; guns are pulled out at traffic jams; even to round up the cows, guns are used. Too many women were getting hurt so we started a campaign to collect them." In the Democratic Republic of the Congo women demanded disarmament on International Women's Day 2001, because they understood it as a first step towards peace. Liberian women organized a weapons collection and destruction campaign before elections in 1997. In many sites we visited, we met women who, because of their efforts towards disarmament, were accused of treason by their governments and by rebels for whom the AK-47 symbolized liberation.

Women most affected by guns often have the best ideas about how to remove them from the community. UNDP's "Weapons for Development" collection programme in Albania owes a great deal of its success to women supported by UNIFEM. In Gramsche women went door to door collecting weapons and preaching the danger of small arms under the slogan, "One Less Weapon, One More Life." In Elbasan women collected 2332 weapons and 1801 tons of ammunition. [16] In Diber sixty-five women of various ages, professions, occupations and organizations collected 2407 weapons and 855 tons of ammunition. And in a district of Tirana women's associations distributed questionnaires on the issue of disarmament. "While filling out the questionnaire we talked to many women," one of the organizers said. "They spoke about anxiety about the arms they had in their houses. The general feeling was that the arms are a great danger for every family. There were some women who considered arms as necessary for defence because of the weak police force. If the state would better defend people and help them feel safe, then arms would not be needed in the home." [17]

The media, the schools and society in general can play an important role in showing that weapons do not provide security. Operation Essential Harvest, a NATO mission to disarm ethnic Albanian groups in Macedonia, was supported by public service announcements on television and radio, many of which focused on women and home safety. According to Major Jeffrey White, responsible for NATO Southern Region Psychological Operations, "We found this theme to resonate very powerfully with women, and contrary to our first thoughts, even with many men. I would say it is demonstrably the best approach overall to these types of efforts." [18]

Demobilization
Aisha is from a village near Baidoa, Somalia. Her husband, brother and children were all killed in an attack on her village. Since all of their belongings were looted, she arrived in Baidoa without any clothes. Aisha told us that she decided to join the fight against the militia that had attacked her village out of a desire for revenge and became part of a

group of 50 militia women. But life in the military was mainly a struggle for survival. "We walked for 5 days in the bush without food and without water. Mostly we supported the young boys by taking care of the wounded and by bringing them water when we found some. Often I had to walk 350 to 380 kilometres carrying ammunition and food. I also used to cook for them."

Sarah in Sierra Leone spent three years with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel group known for its brutality towards civilians. Unlike Aisha, she did not join of her own accord. "I was taken by the RUF when I was 14 years old," Sarah told us. "Now I am 17. I was made to be the 'wife' of a man for nearly two years. That is quick to say, two years, but every day felt like a year to me. I feel like an old woman now. Nobody will ever want me. I don't want to face my family because they know what happened. I will never love."

Aisha and Sarah represent two examples of the ways in which women become part of armed groups. Some join voluntarily as combatants, and perhaps even larger numbers are abducted and enslaved. What they have in common is the experience of war and the likelihood of being excluded from demobilization programmes, when former combatants are offered assistance to help meet their immediate basic needs, and are discharged and transported to their home communities. In some cases experienced troops are recruited into a new, unified military force.

Since many demobilization programmes base eligibility on a "one-man, one-gun" model and since most women forced into combat or support functions do not own weapons – even if they used them – they are often excluded from these programmes. According to a woman ex-combatant in Sierra Leone, "Unless you were a fighter with a weapon to lay down, you are not eligible to join the programme." The situation in East Timor was similar. Male Failintil fighters were offered the option of joining the new East Timor Defence Force; those who chose not to, received the equivalent of $US100 along with language and computer training. Nothing comparable was offered to the women who had occupied support functions throughout the struggle. In Somalia, there is currently no DDR programme at all. Women's groups have identified at least 420 female ex-combatants, most of who were attacked and raped by opposing forces before joining a militia. Most are illiterate and eager to be educated.

Demobilizing women means more than providing vocational alternatives, it also means overcoming the difficulties women face in everything from receiving financial payments when they do not have bank accounts to making autonomous decisions about their future. During the demobilization phase, abducted women need private spaces where they can speak confidentially with staff to tell them if they are being held against their will, or to ask for reintegration and training. If the women do leave their captors, they may need special arrangements to protect them from reprisals.[19]

Reintegration
All combatants find it difficult to reintegrate into civilian communities, but it is especially challenging for women, who usually receive less support than men do, even from their families. Some of the challenges faced by former combatants are social. The rules of war – or the lack of rules, as in many local wars – do not apply in civilian life, and readjustment can be hard. Women who voluntarily joined armed groups face an extra layer of alienation because in many cultures their decision violates traditional

expectations. This means that communities may be suspicious of women returning from battle, and that the women themselves may no longer feel they fit in. This may be due to the new responsibilities and skills they have acquired during conflict, or it may be related to their struggle to deal with abuses they have survived, or both. Many women who participate in combat have lived through violent battles and experienced brutal sexual violence both of which can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. They often refuse to speak about what happened to them for fear of being mocked or ostracized or further violated. While the isolation that accompanies this silence is, in some ways self-protective, it also makes it harder for women to settle down to a new life.[20]

Despite their clear needs, women are not included in most reintegration programmes and are typically excluded from veteran's associations. Their wartime experiences do not bring them the status and social roles accorded to male combatants; their voices and experiences tend to disappear when peace processes begin,[21] and they are rarely looked to as leaders during reconstruction. Too often, former combatants, women and men alike, find themselves in competition for scarce resources with non-combatants, such as returning displaced persons. Tensions frequently occur between former combatants, returnees and those who did not take up arms when one group perceives the other as receiving more privileges. Although reintegrating ex-combatants is central to creating a secure post-conflict society, all such initiatives should be designed to take into account the needs of combatants as well as receiving communities.

Security Sector Reform

"Security does not just mean the end of war, it means the ability to go about your business safely, in a safe environment, to go to work, to go home, and to travel outside your home knowing that your family is safe and will not be harmed."
Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN's Special Representative in Afghanistan[22]

When an armed conflict ends, maintaining the ceasefire and preventing further violence depends on reform within the military, the police and justice system. Former combatants are generally united into one military, and military and police functions are separated, and the rule of law is re-established. But security sector reform is also about civil society regaining faith and democratic control of all those organizations that have authority to use or threaten force. This goal can't be achieved without building a security sector that protects and involves women.

Women will never be safe if those who committed crimes during conflict are not held accountable. In Rwanda one woman asked us, "How can we be expected to believe that men in the uniform of our new government will protect us when so many of them were themselves our brutalizers?" Often the military and police who committed abuses in the past are still in place after a ceasefire. At the public hearing on crimes against women held in Tokyo in December 2000, a 19-year-old Burundian woman described what happened after she had been kidnapped and raped by rebels:

> "One day, after their normal "homework" of raping me, they told me that
> they would take me to my brothers. Brothers meaning the government
> soldiers…They pulled me to a certain point and told me to walk by myself

towards a government military position…I walked toward the place shown to me and called for help. I mentioned that the rebels brought me there and that I had no guns. Immediately after that, one strong man caught me from the back as if I were a criminal, put me down on the floor and touched me everywhere as if looking for guns and ammunitions, identity cards and so on…I wanted them to tell me that I was now in good hands. That I was going to see a doctor and my family. That I'm not pregnant and I don't have AIDS…I was left with one person who asked me to have sex with him. He threatened that if I did not, he would take me back to the rebels. I refused and told him that I'm going to die. He then tied me up like the previous group of people, forced himself on me and raped me. He left me there soon after and disappeared in the bush. The second person came and did the same, and the third person…Like the first group of rebels, the government soldiers too asked me to keep it secret and said nobody will believe me anyway.

Making sure that the police, military and judiciary protect women and guarantee their legal rights require specialized training and mandates that make these new functions explicit. Community policing – collaboration between civil society and the police to identify security risks – holds promise for increasing women's security. In Cambodia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNIFEM-supported women's groups organized training for police and community leaders to help them respond appropriately to violence against women. After the Cambodian training police began efforts to combat domestic violence and trafficking. In Bosnia and Herzegovina local police created special teams to ensure privacy and protection for women who bring charges of violence committed against them.

Human rights monitoring is another way to reintroduce standards of law and humanity, particularly in societies traumatized by violence. An international human rights presence can also lay the foundation for a local human rights structure. UN Observer Missions such as those in El Salvador or Guatemala have supported emerging human rights and security institutions on the national level.

Addressing gender bias within the judiciary – the very institution that determines how equality is achieved in society – is essential. Sensitizing judges about women's human rights and about gender equality can help mitigate bias. Support services and programmes should be provided to ensure that legal aid is available and that women witnesses and complainants are treated fairly. Legal literacy programmes are urgently needed.

Setting quotas to address the extreme gender imbalance in the security sector is also important.[23] Different security priorities are likely to emerge when women participate in all sectors. Priorities for mine clearance, for example, may shift from clearing military bases to agricultural areas or transportation routes. Women's participation in police forces often means that crimes against women are taken more seriously, but women must be present in all areas of police work. Currently, although their numbers are growing around the world, they are typically assigned only to areas dealing with violence against women and female prisoners.

Security sector reform also requires that the police, military and judiciary are open and democratic. Civilian control of the armed forces, through parliamentary and governmental oversight, must be the fundamental starting point for security sector reforms, but in many conflict and post-conflict situations, the veil of secrecy over national security prevents civilian oversight. This is doubly true when security sector functions are privatized, as is happening in many countries.

Private organizations and mercenaries increasingly play roles once considered the preserve of governments, and have been engaged in the conflicts in Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone and Angola. Private groups are also often hired to provide security to humanitarian workers and training for police and military forces. They sell arms and take up combat roles in wars. Central to the concern about these companies is the lack of accountability and absence of any legislation to regulate their activities, including their treatment of women.[24]

Ultimately those entities that fight for financial gain are a dangerous threat to the sovereignty of states and are anathema to the broader requirements of transparency and good governance that are the basis for democratic security sector reform. The international community first condemned the use of mercenaries in 1968. In 1989 the General Assembly strengthened its position when it adopted the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries, and a recent UN Expert Panel recommended that a monitoring mechanism be established to improve the accountability of private security and military companies.[25]

The Cost of Investing in War Rather than Prevention

For 87 years the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom has insisted that wars are preventable. Ever since 1915, we have signaled developments that unless managed quickly would develop into violent conflict and war. We reject the idea that war is inevitable and is part of human existence. It is the deliberate investment in and preparation for war, pursued under the guise of 'defence', that makes armed conflict inevitable. If we are serious about preventing war, we must support the United Nations and proceed with systematic disarmament - disarming militaries, economies, cultures and lives. This is what will save future generations from the scourge of war.
Edith Ballantyne, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Increased military spending has not increased world security. Women's organizations have been at the forefront of researching and protesting the enormous resources devoted to war, asserting that the ability of military violence to achieve its stated aims is routinely over-estimated, while the extent of its costs are overlooked.[26] The U.S. military budget for fiscal year 2003 alone is $396.1 billion[27] which is more than the combined spending of the next 25 biggest military spenders.[28] While recognizing a country's right to defend itself from violent aggression, women's organizations are overwhelmingly calling for an international condemnation of first strike policies. In 1997, 99,000 women signed their names to the Women's Peace Petition[29] presented to the General Assembly. This petition called for at least 5 per cent of national military expenditures *each* year over the next five years to be redirected towards health, education and employment programmes.[30]

Research suggests that just one quarter of the world's approximately $839 billion in military spending[31] would allow nations to provide decent housing, health and education to their citizens. It would also allow governments to provide energy, to clean up the environment, stop global warming, ease the debt burden, disarm nuclear weapons and de-mine the world.[32]

As the World Bank has pointed out, excessive levels of military spending divert scarce resources and impede good governance. The Bank cites the potential benefits of reducing global military spending for balancing economic disparities - which are the root of many conflicts - and for improving environmental conditions. Yet so far, very few governments have acted to reduce their military spending. The military establishment is one of the few sectors that is exempt from trade regulations established by the World Trade Organization.[33] The Security Council has yet to act on Article 26 of the United Nations Charter calling for it to formulate a plan "for the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources." Meanwhile, the Permanent Five Security Council members face a clear conflict of interest: they are the main purveyors of the international arms trade and reap 85 per cent of its billions of dollars in profit.[34]

Article 33 of the UN Charter calls on parties to any dispute to "first of all seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice." The reality couldn't be further from this: instead, governments have chosen to go to war dozens and dozens of times since 1945, leaving millions dead, and millions more injured and displaced.

Despite the selective implementation of the UN Charter, it provides a clear mandate and formula for conflict prevention. Through its calls for early warning, preventive action, disarmament and demilitarization, it delineates the path for 'saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war.' It is time to recommit to this goal with renewed determination and with the benefit of the energy and efforts of the world's women.

On the Prevention of Conflict the Experts call for:

1. The Secretary-General to systematically include information on the impact of armed conflict on women, and women's role in prevention and peace-building in all of his country and thematic reports to the Security Council. Towards that end, the Secretary-General should request relevant information from UN operations and all relevant bodies.

2. The systematic collection and analysis of information and data by all actors, using gender specific indicators to guide policy, programmes and service delivery for women in armed conflict. This information should be provided on a regular basis to the secretariat, member states, inter-governmental bodies, regional organisations, NGOs and other relevant bodies. A central knowledge base should be established and maintained by UNIFEM together with a network of all relevant bodies, in particular the Department of Political Affairs (DPA).

3. The Security Council to formulate a plan for the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources. Sixty years after being assigned the task, the Security Council should implement Article 26 of the United Nations Charter, taking into account the Women's Peace Petition which calls for the world's nations to redirect at least 5 per cent of national military expenditures to health, education and employment programmes each year over the next five years.

4. The UN Development Programme (UNDP), as the leading agency in the field of security sector reform, **to ensure that women's protection and participation be central to the design and reform of security sector institutions and policies,** especially in police, military and rule of law components. UNDP should integrate a gender perspective into its country programmes.

5. Operational humanitarian, human rights and development bodies to develop indicators to determine the extent to which gender is mainstreamed throughout their operations in conflict and post-conflict situations and ensure that 'gender mainstreaming' produces measurable results and is not lost in generalities and vague references to gender. Measures should be put in place to address the gaps and obstacles encountered in implementation.

6. Inter-governmental and regional organizations to strengthen and expand women's role in conflict prevention and peace-building. To this end, the UN together with regional organizations should convene an Expert Group Meeting to improve collaboration, share information and develop expertise.

7. In cooperation with relevant UN bodies, UNIFEM to develop and test a set of gender-based early warning indicators for mainstreaming into the UN Early Warning Framework and explore use of such indicators with regional organizations.

8. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) initiatives to equitably benefit women ex-combatants and those forced into service by armed groups. Resettlement allowances and other forms of support should be provided on a long-term basis.

9. The UN to conduct a 'lessons learned' study on the gender aspects of DDR processes in which it has been involved.