

constructed roles and responsibilities of men and women."(CIDA,1995b) The term gender is a more useful analytical category than "women," because it not only takes the relationship between women and men into account but relationships among various groups of women or men as well. Similarities and differences between class and other social characteristics may thus be accommodated (Chowdry et al,1995.,Moser,1989:1800) Understanding gender as a system of relationships is particularly important when analysing situations of pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict.

When thinking about the relationship between women and war, and women and peace, it is important to understand that violence against women is a highly gendered phenomenon. The Platform for Action defines violence against women as;

any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Accordingly, violence against women encompasses but is not limited to the following:

- (a)Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- (b)Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- (c)Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

114.Other acts of violence against women include violation of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict, in particular murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy (Platform for Action,1996:73-74).

Whether violence against women takes place during times of peace or war, whether in the home or on the street, whether by a spouse or an armed combatant, it is still violence.

Furthermore, the construction of gender prior to and during armed conflict, the vulnerability of