

INTRODUCTION ENGENDERING PEACEBUILDING

The Concept of Peacebuilding

The dominant understanding of peacebuilding in foreign policy presents it as a package of measures intended to strengthen and solidify peace by building a sustainable infrastructure of human security.¹ The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) defines peacebuilding as the effort to strengthen the prospects for internal peace and decrease the likelihood of violent conflict. The overarching goal of peacebuilding is to enhance indigenous capacity of a society to manage conflict without violence.²

Peacebuilding may involve a number of activities, including conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.³ Under the auspices of this nascent field are a variety of issues including environmental security, good governance and democratic development.

Complementing DFAIT's work on the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict, an additional priority area has been in "gender and peacebuilding" in which the Peacebuilding and Human Security Division (AGP) has been engaged in a process of conceptualizing how to integrate a gender perspective into its policy, strategies and operations.⁴ This piece is intended to be a

¹ Peacebuilding and Human Security Division, Global and Human Issues Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), "The Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative Strategic Framework", The Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative, 1997-1998. November 1997. Human security is defined by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs as "safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It is a condition or state of being characterized by freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, their safety, or even their lives. From a foreign policy perspective, human security is perhaps best understood as a shift in perspective or orientation. It is an alternative way of seeing the world, taking people as its point of reference, rather than focussing exclusively on the security of territory or governments. Like other security concepts - national security, economic security, food security - it is about protection. Human security entails taking preventive measures to reduce vulnerability and minimize risk, and taking remedial action where prevention fails." DFAIT, "Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World", April 1999.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Efforts include peacebuilding consultations held with the NGO community; a policy paper, "Gender and Peacebuilding", February 1998, located at http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/peacebuilding/gngoc_gender-e.asp; a bilateral initiative with the UK on Gender Sensitization Training for Civilian and Military Participants in UN Peace Operations; and participation in the Gender and Peacebuilding Working Group which consists of government agencies, NGOs, and university and independent researchers.