

Report on Roundtable on Gender and Peacebuilding

Introduction:

The relationship between peace-building and gender is a critical one. In many countries it is women who have been instrumental in reconstructing war-torn areas, fostering reconciliation and rebuilding sustainable societies after a period of violence or crisis. Sometimes because they are the only ones left living (for example, Rwanda); often because they are critical to the basic development of micro-economics and families in given societies. While it has been long recognized that the key to 'development', more generally, often lies in supporting women's activities, such wisdom has not yet broached the peace-building discussions either here in Canada or internationally. It was proposed therefore that an initial forum be held in order to explore the relationship between gender and peace-building and provide some specific recommendations to the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Canadian International Development Agency as it develops its overall policies on peace-building.

On Monday April 24th, a one day round table on gender and peace-building was held at the University of British Columbia, supported by the Centre for Foreign Policy Development. At the table was an international mixture of government officials, academics and non-governmental representatives from both the north and south (See appendix 1). The basic question put to the assembled group was: **How can women support peace-building initiatives and how can peace-building initiatives support women?** A paper and set of specific questions was circulated prior to the meeting and provided the focus for the discussion which ensued (see appendix 2). Finally, Guatemala was chosen as a specific case-study to discuss, within the larger rubric of peace-building initiatives, partly because of the extra-ordinary role of women in the peace negotiations in that country, partly because of Canada's interest in Guatemala and partly because Guatemala is at a critical juncture in its peace-building process. Three of the individuals who attended the roundtable therefore had a specific interest in and experience of the Guatemalan peace process and the role of women within it.

Definition of peace-building:

One of the key problems first identified in our discussions was how to define peace-building. It was pointed out that even in international discussions many people use the term to describe different things. Out of this discussion may be distilled a number of recommendations:

1. Canada should take the lead in developing a universally recognized and accepted definition of peace-building.
2. a) Peace-building should be defined in terms of its results rather than its inputs. This is analogous to the 'Reinventing Government' approach to domestic government policy. Rather than measuring how many peace-keepers are on the ground or how much money is being spent in what activities; peace-building must be seen in the concrete construction of peace in a given country - the results for all people living in that country must be measured, rather than the activities of the people from the outside going in.
b) A results-based approach to peace-building initiatives must incorporate a gendered analysis including both: a) the impact on women of peace-building initiatives; b) the potential to mobilize women to support peace. As well, it was argued by some that for women in