ACHEEIVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR
WOMEN
IN THE CONFLICT ZONES OF KENYA’S UASIN GISHU,
TRANS NZOIA AND MOUNT ELGON

A Dissection of the UN SCR 1325
& Kenya’s New Constitution.
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Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities for Women in the Conflict Zones of Kenya’s Uasin Gishu, Trans Nzoia & Mount Elgon: 
A Dissection of the UN SCR 1325 & Kenya’s New Constitution.

A Book by

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The scattered pictures which are featuring in this book were taken between October-December 2011 during the two COPA women’s empowerment training which took place in Eldoret as well as the community forums in different rural areas of Mount Elgon, Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia performed by the newly trained women.

Designed by
Cecilia Newman

Supported by
IFA-Zivik
ON THIS BOOK

The Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA) in partnership with Peace Women Across the Globe (PWAG) and with the support of IFA-Zivik is carrying out the women’s empowerment programme: ‘Enhancing Kenyan women participation in 2012 political processes’. The programme is aiming at equipping women from Mount Elgon, Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu in Kenya with skills and knowledge, which will enhance their effectiveness as leaders both in their communities and the political arena.

As part of the programme, COPA carried out a research aiming at showcasing tangible evidences of gains rural women in the targeted areas have been able to achieve as a result of the opportunities the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution have opened up.

The main objective of this study was thereby to record for future learning both challenges and successes for rural women in pursuant of implementation of the UN SCR 1325 and the new Kenyan constitution. This book is based on this study and presents the stories of 25 rural women in the three targeted areas. With this book we are acknowledging the efforts of the featured women and are aiming at using it to reach out to other women beyond the project’s geographical reach as well as increase awareness about the realities at the grassroots.

Rural women working towards peacebuilding and women’s empowerment or interested in taking a more active role in Kenya’s political processes can use this book to identify with issues other women face and go on by adopting some of the suggested solutions.

Finally, this book is a useful tool for the civil society to understand better the issues rural women face in these post conflict regions and identify the areas where efforts should be intensified.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This book would not be possible without the financial support of IFA and the Zivik programme, which enabled COPA to perform the women’s empowerment project, collect the information and produce this book. We would also like to thank Peace Women Across the Globe (PWAG) for their technical support in designing the project: ‘Enhancing Kenyan women participation in 2012 political processes’.

We would like to thank the Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL) and PeaceNet for their assistance as well as all the women from Trans Nzoia, Mount Elgon and Uasin Gishu who participated in the trainings and forums. We would also like to express our gratitude to all the women who played an instrumental role in organising the community forums.

We are grateful to the 25 women whose stories are presented here. Thank you for taking the time and courage to share your experiences with us and accepting to be part of this book.

Last but not least COPA would like to thank Cecilia Newman, the designer who put significant effort and time to design this book.
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Abbreviations

ACK Anglican Church of Kenya
ADC Agricultural Development Corporation
AIDS Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CBO Community Based Organisation
CDF Community Development Fund
DC District Commissioner
DPC District Peace Committee
FGD Focused Group Discussion
FGM Female Genital Mutilation
GBV Gender Based Violence
HIV Human immunodeficiency Virus
IDP Internally Displaced Person
IGAs Income Generating Activities
IOM International Organisation for Migration

MP Member of Parliament
MYWO Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation
NGO Non Governmental Organisation
NSC National Steering Committee On Peace Building And Conflict Management
OVSs Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PEV Post Election Violence
PWAG Peace Women Across the Globe
STD Sexual Transmitted Disease
TJRC Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission
UNSCR United Nations Security Council Resolution
VCT Volunteering Counseling and Testing
Achievements, challenges
and opportunities for women
in the conflict zones
of Kenya’s Uasin Gishu,
Trans Nzoia & Mount Elgon

The impact of the recent conflict incidents in Kenya has been severe. The violence that followed the 2007 general elections came as a surprise to the local people and the international community. It destroyed economic structures, in turn hindering the country’s economic growth. The impact on the people of Kenya was serious with an estimated 1,000 deaths and 350,000 IDPs. Gender Based Violence, linked to conflict, poverty and lack of economic and social empowerment increased the vulnerability of women in the affected areas.

Determined to improve the conditions for others within their communities, there are rural women, who regardless of their background and conditions decided to take an active role and make a change. This book is featuring the stories of 25 of these rural women who are protecting the rights of other women and empowering them to claim an active role in the peacebuilding and political processes of their communities.

What the stories of these rural women demonstrate is that whether they are in Uasin Gishu, Trans Nzoia or Mount Elgon, whether they are focusing on women’s empowerment, increase in their political participation or tackling GBV, the challenges and opportunities they are facing are similar.

Existing cultural norms and the male dominant society within which they are operating, is creating obstacles by reinforcing a limited to household duties role for women. This, coupled up with an entranced fear of women to speak up is a challenge recognised by all who shared their stories.

Furthermore, financial constrains and limited funding opportunities for women hinder their chances in advancing and taking up political and other leadership positions.

Finally, high illiteracy levels especially among women, poverty and lack of access to information such as the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution are further preventive factors of paramount importance.

However, the 25 rural women who shared their stories in this book remain optimistic despite the various obstacles. They believe that intensified efforts by the civil society and government to inform women about their rights, economic empowerment and the establishment of support networks between rural women is the way forward.

We, the civil society, government and international organisations, should recognise these women’s efforts, learn about their problems and take into account their suggestions so as to achieve sustainable solutions.
ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE CONFLICT ZONES OF KENYA’S UASIN GISHU, TRANS NZOIA & MOUNT ELGON

Uasin Gishu is one of the forty seven counties in Kenya. It is located Midwest of the Rift Valley and borders six counties namely, Elgeyo Marakwet to the East, Trans Nzoia to the North, Kericho to the South, Baringo to the South East, Nandi to the South West and Bungoma to the West. The county is estimated to have a population of 894,179. The percentage of men to women is 50/50.

Uasin Gishu is a multi ethnic county composed of mainly Kalenjin, Kikuyu, Luo, Luhyia, Somali, Turkana, Maasai, Kisii, Kamba but also other ethnic groups. Main economic activities within the county are: large and small scale maize and wheat farming, dairy farming, ‘Sports Tourism’, manufacturing and agro-processing.

The county had been peaceful for a period of time but factors such as resource ownership and management have triggered a series of conflicts within the area. Tribal conflicts have rocked the county in different periods; the most recent being the PEV in the year 2008, which had a severe negative impact on Uasin Gishu.

The conflicts resulted in loss of life, increase in incidents of GBV, breakdown of marriages and increased numbers of female headed households. The conflicts affected all but mostly women, children and youth. Destruction of property led to increased levels of relative poverty. This forced the women to engage in casual jobs so as to provide the essentials for them and their children. This trend has in turn triggered a lot of interventions from the civil society, international organizations and government, who are geared towards building peace and restoring relationships within the county.

Destruction of property, GBV and loss of life caused severe psychological trauma to women and girls. Sexual violence resulted in increased numbers of women affected with HIV/AIDS and other STD’s. This in turn increased the stigma against the affected women and thereby their vulnerability. In cases violated women feared to visit the hospital and request treatment, which led in further loss of life.

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[A BRIEF HISTORY OF CONFLICT]

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The 2008 PEV was one of the worst conflicts experienced in the county over a
long period of time. It was due to the severity of the conflict and the impact it had on all but mostly women that efforts were geared towards promoting peace and restoring harmony and unity within the county. These efforts were initiated and supported by the government, the international community as well as CBOs.

Due to these efforts, women in the areas affected by the PEV have formed groups, supporting each other to acquire land and build homes, educate their children and are now in a better position to start up IGAs, which lead to the improvement of their living standards.

Community peace talks were held, which assisted in settling disputes amicably and resolutions were made in an effort to prevent any future outbreak of conflict within the county. Some of the resettled women and children IDPs have now a place they can call home and hence are able to engage in productive work towards promoting development.

However, efforts to promote peacebuilding in the county have been hampered by many factors; psychological, financial, political and historical. The settlement programme has also been affected by inadequate funds.

Historical injustices, a male dominated society, discrimination of women and the traditional beliefs, customs and practices are major hindrances to the attainment of peacebuilding and women’s empowerment in the county. But through engendering peacebuilding, by encouraging a more active involvement of women in the process, sustainable peace and women’s empowerment can be realized.

Mount Elgon

Mount Elgon district is an administrative unit in western province with headquarters in Kapsokwony town. The district is located on the South East slopes of Mount Elgon with a population of about 135,033 people in an area of 944 square kilometre according to the 1999 census. The dominant communities are the Sabaot, Iteso and the Bukusu. It is also home to the Bagisu, Sabiny and Ogiek communities.

The root cause of the Mount Elgon conflict is the existence of disputable land and issues of unequal access and distribution of resources. The existence of these factors together with a history of violence in the region, politics and limited local economic prospects complicate the situation further. The presence of multiple grievances contributed to the geographic reach and duration of the conflict. The Mount Elgon conflicts affected the women and the children more than any other group, where attacks left them deeply scared by the violence witnessed and the sexual assaults committed.

An initial government response, which focused on dialogue and adopted a flexible approach, did not bring much result. Following the failure of this strategy, the government deployed army, a quick and successful intervention in terms of apprehending militia and recovering arms. However, it was not long after the deployment that the violent incidents against women started picking up once more.

This resulted in increased numbers of pregnancies and higher levels of contraction of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. Parallel, the army’s tactics led to accusations of human rights abuses and undermined the confidence of the local population. Aggressive militia responses and excessive use of force to settle the conflict created even more female-headed households, deteriorating further the position of women in the area.

Conflicts within the district of Mount Elgon resulted in IDPS, the majority of which were women and children. Families were separated and women who were intermarried with other tribes were affected. Mothers saw their children taken into custody never to return.

Peacebuilding within the region has been an on going process where many actors have
combined their efforts towards sustainable peace in Mount Elgon. These efforts have helped in restoring order in the region; still more needs to be done to realize sustainable peace in Mount Elgon.

Peace efforts have been rocked by challenges; challenges, which have been hampering the peacebuilding and women’s empowerment process in the region. Some of the challenges include: lack of sufficient financial resources to deal with the underlying causes of violence as well as reach to all the affected areas; political interference; leaders who are objecting to women’s empowerment and the peacebuilding processes; historical and more recent land disputes.

The above challenges can be dealt with if the international community and the local population are both committed to address the underlying issues of conflict openly. All actors should be willing to realize the importance of including women in the peacebuilding efforts and incorporating in all their structures the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UN SCR 1325). For the first time the role of women in conflict is recognised—not as victims but as actors in the prevention and resolution of conflict and in equal participation in peacebuilding and decision-making.

**Trans Nzoia**

Trans Nzoia county is located in the Rift Valley of Kenya bordering to the North, West Pokot county, to the South, Uasin Gishu county and Bungoma county to the East, Elgeyo Marakwet county and the republic of Uganda to the West. It is one of the administrative districts of the Rift Valley province of Kenya. Trans Nzoia has a population of 818,757 according to the census of 2006. The county has three major constituencies: Cherangani, Kwanza and Saboti that is inhabited by different ethnic groups such as: the Bukusu sub tribe of the Luhya, Kalenjin, Kikuyu, Kisii and Turkana.

The region witnessed a number of conflicts tracing back to the 1970’ result of the colonial policy, which led to displacement sparking thereby land conflict. Disputed land and tribalism are the root causes of the conflict since.

As in the case of most conflicts, during the PEV in Trans Nzoia it was women and children who suffered the most. Women in that region were evicted from their homes and were as a result seeking refugee and protection in other areas. Conflicts in Trans Nzoia county as well as the subsequent displacement exposed women and girls to dangers such as rape and other forms of GBV as well as HIV/AIDS.

Physical and psychological trauma was greatly experienced by women who witnessed violence. Families were separated as a result of fleeing the conflict zones and many women became widows having to take care for the children. Women saw their children falling sick as a result of the displacement, malnutrition and exposure to different diseases.

The conflict transformed the lives of individuals living within and around Trans Nzoia. Due to these consequences, efforts were made to address the issues of conflict in the area so as to prevent any future violent outbreak and a number of interventions from the civil society and government took place.

Peacebuilding and conflict management committees were formed within the region and organizations implemented trauma healing and reconciliation programmes between different conflicted communities. These efforts have experienced a lot of challenges, which in cases hindered the peacebuilding and women’s empowerment efforts in the region. Interferences from the regional and community leaders, a male dominated society, fear and hesitation from the women, historical injustices and inadequate finance are only few of these challenges.
Within the NSC, I believe we have made progress regarding empowering women to effectively undertake peacebuilding activities. For instance, we have established peace structures and peace committees where women are included and represented at all levels from sub location to district level as well as in the county peace forums. Additionally, women are included in the indigenous peace structures of conflict resolution such as in the Council of Elders.

In the new constitution, women rights are protected and guaranteed. It is therefore crucial that women are aware of the importance of participating in the electoral process. Using the UN SCR 1325, I have been advocating for special measures to be put in place to protect women and girls after post conflict situation in camps. I am also training youth and women in the general Trans Nzoia East district on the new constitution as well as encouraging women groups to become familiar with the pillars of UN SCR 1325 namely Participation in Peacebuilding, Promotion, Protection, Prevention of conflict and Relief and Recovery after pre/post conflict situation. Additionally, I am also focussing on the rights of women and girls as stipulated in the new constitution especially the bill of rights in chapter 4.

Within my area of work, we have quite a number of women who were combatants in the 2006-2008 Mount Elgon violence.
have been advocating for their inclusion in the ongoing reintegration processes so that they can be reintegrated and where possible receive some life start packages.

My engagement with this kind of work is due to the passion I feel working with women especially those who have been directly affected by conflicts and those whose rights have been trampled on. Through this, I believe I contribute towards peace and development in my community.

The passion was not always there. It was borne out of the 2007/8 PEV. Following the PEV my district had the largest IDP camp; after visiting the camp and learning the experiences of women, I felt I should really commit my energy, time and money advocating for women’s rights.

My work has been enriched by the provisions of the new constitution that guarantees women more rights. This is one of the reasons why I am doing awareness raising on the constitution. Furthermore, after informing women about the new constitution, a good number of them are now ready to vie for seats in various elective posts. And in taking the lead role on women empowerment, I intend to vie as well for a seat at the county as a County Women Representative.

Additionally, through my work, even the youth have started village ‘Bunges’ (forums) where they discuss issues affecting them, such as their roles in the society; leadership and integrity.

**Assisting the resettlement of IDPs and empowering women**

The IOM constructed houses for IDPs in my area. Through the government led *Rudi Nyumbani Operation*, an IDP resettlement operation, I actively engaged in resettling the returnees in to their new homes, providing them with trauma healing skills to enable them overcome the pain and open up dialogue with their neighbours/adversaries.

Indeed, recently, I mediated in an incident involving my community and a woman perceived to be a witch and who as a result, had been rejected and evicted by the community. After mediation sessions I managed to convince the community to reaccept her and the family was integrated back to the society.

During the referendum that was held in August 2010, using the UN SCR 1325, we managed to put up Peace Committees with women representatives from sub-local to district and county level. The large number of women involved highly contributed to the peaceful and successful referendum.

The UN SCR 1325 has brought many positive changes to me as a person and in my work. As a woman I feel empowered, protected and promoted by the resolution. The pillars, prevention, participation, promotion and protection are key in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, which is the field I operate in and thereby they assist me a lot in my work.
Parallel, the constitution has addressed challenges that women face in the area of peacebuilding. Now women can participate in elections, political parties and vying for elective posts. Thereby, the rights presented in chapter 4 of the new constitution has enlightened women and promoted their rights.

Beside the gains, implementing the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution entails many challenges.

a. Most women do not have the knowledge of the UN SCR 1325 and New Constitution

b. Negative cultures still exist extensively

c. Resource mobilization towards peacebuilding needs to pick up

d. Complications regarding enhancing early warning mechanisms to prevent conflicts from escalating to crisis so as to protect women

e. Different methodologies are used by different actors and some do not include women in their processes. For example the elder’s councils are hindering the role of women in the peacebuilding process. Also some tribes do not consider the existence of women and that can frustrate all our efforts

f. Discrimination, humiliation, harsh environmental conditions especially in post conflict situations is another major challenge.

Cultural norms and the ‘nature’ of women hinder their full participation in the peacebuilding process

Our culture does not agree well with women taking leading roles in the peacebuilding process. A woman’s place is believed to be in the kitchen and as a result, women are overwhelmed by household activities. Linked to that, women experience discrimination from politicians who are frustrating the peace efforts done by women.

Parallel, women are emotional and cannot fully take part in peace interventions. Women cannot often afford to travel to harsh terrains hence cannot effectively meet the target groups. By nature some women are more reserved and prefer to avoid any confrontation by accepting the situation they are in. Linked to peacebuilding work is always the fear of a potential violent reaction when two conflicting parties come together; this builds up fear for a woman peace actor.

How to overcome these challenges?

The resolution UN SCR 1325 provides a legal framework for the rural woman promoting women’s involvement in the peace process. There is a provision for capacity building, technical support and logistical support in the resolution that will address issues of women and girls.

We need to keep in mind that post conflict situations call upon all parties to address special needs of women and girls in camps and not only. It is the responsibility of all of us. Trauma healing and counselling sessions should continue so as to assist and empower traumatized women to pick up their pieces and move on with their lives.

Parallel, the constitution empowers women and promotes and protects the rights of women and girls. Hence if it is well implemented then most of these challenges will be addressed. Proper implementation is of paramount importance. This can only be achieved if women at all levels lobby to ensure that the government structures remain committed to the course.

The instruments are there; we only have to make sure that we use them properly and in full. More training has to be carried out by organizations on the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution so as to inform women. The constitution encourages special measures to be put in place so as to protect women and girls from GBV and all forms of violence. We have to make sure that these measures are properly implemented and advocate for gender mainstreaming in all institutions and organizations.
Since time immemorial women have been suffering during conflict. Most of them cannot defend themselves; they get physically and sexually abused and are held hostage by the fighting groups. At the same time, during times of conflict most women are left alone and vulnerable with the responsibility of taking care of the family or those wounded. UN SCR 1325 is recognizing the unique suffering of women and girls during armed conflict and aims at protecting them.

**Informing women about their rights**

I am a community mobilizer and facilitator in gender and governance related programmes focusing on civic education. I have been organizing discussions at grassroots level, enlightening the community on the importance of women’s full involvement in decision-making; from family to national level. I believe in the importance of targeting women as it is mostly women who have been left behind in terms of leadership and are used to decisions being made for them; decisions, which in cases are not in their best interest. Only when women are directly involved in decision-making they are able to influence and form policies towards their protection. It is therefore important that they

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**Lindah Nelimah Wakhungu**

is a community development worker from Trans Nzoia working for the Christian Partners Development Agency (CPDA). Committed to empower women, Lindah is currently training women in her local area to know about their right to participate in peacebuilding, political processes and ownership of property. Passionate about her work, Lindah wants to become a community leader in her local area so as to continue her work hoping to have a bigger impact.

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**The Christian Partners Development Agency (CPDA)** is a NGO, which started as a relief organization but later changed its focus to developmental activities. Its mission is to uplift the living standards of the poor and disadvantaged communities in Kenya and beyond through partnership, capacity building and development programs that empower them to respond more effectively to their needs. CPDA’s vision is a world in which communities are empowered to take charge of their own development and destiny.
get empowered.

As a trainer, I have been carrying out civic education with women in my community before and after the passing of the Kenyan constitution. I have been organizing focused group discussions (FGD) where we, women and community members, have been discussing about the Gender and Governance Programme (GGPIII).

Under the constitution, I tried to dispel the myths about the new constitution and specifically about ‘controversial’ clauses such as the ones about abortion, Kadhis courts (traditional Islamic courts), and the provincial administration among other issues, so that the Wananchi (people) will increase their understanding regarding these issues.

To increase the impact of my work I am working with women and youth groups and taking advantage of all available opportunities to inform women about their rights such as church meetings, chief’s meetings and other community gatherings. I also talked on a radio station about the gains of women in the new constitution. During this show, interested women were given the chance to call and ask me their questions, which I answered.

**Women now vie to become leaders**

Under GGPIII, and through capacity building trainings in Trans Nzoia, we built the leadership capacities of women and increased their understanding of the government structures and procedures as well as informed them about the existing opportunities for their participation in the peacebuilding and political processes. This in turn strengthened the women’s capacities in leadership and the decision-making at community level, and increased their active participation in development committees, churches, Board of Governance in schools and the local administrations.

Women now vie to be chiefs, assistant chiefs and councillors. During these FGDs, women had the chance to get more information regarding women’s enterprises funds. Through the trainings, the women were encouraged to form groups and get loans. As a result these women are now economically empowered.

Increased awareness creation on gender concerns and women’s rights has also been achieved through school debates and public road shows in Trans Nzoia. During the school debates we targeted both boys and girls on gender related issues since the organization felt that it is the young generation that can make a change. In the process I also networked with like-minded organisations such as Handicap international, which were carrying out a sexual gender based violence (SGBV) related programme, so as to address sexual discrimination against women.

The gender debates at schools between boys and girls have been very empowering for the girls and gave the chance to boys participating to defend the rights of women. Through the process they got more information about what consists gender inequality and as a result realized and reflected upon relevant incidents that have been happening at their family and community.

**Women’s rights under the new constitution**

The new constitution has many gains for women. Now, all forms of discrimination and violence against women are prohibited. Women can own and inherit land. Matrimonial property is protected during and after the termination of marriage. Both parties of a marriage are entitled to equal rights. Women representation in elective and appointive post is now guaranteed. There are equal parental responsibilities for the mother and the father, whether they are married to each other or not; for a long time women were left with the burden of bringing up children without any help from the fathers.

The new constitution and the UN Resolution 1325 have opened many doors for women but women are not aware of them. When we talk to them about the constitution and its provisions for them,
many women are in fact impressed to realize that some politicians and non-reformists had lied to them about some articles such as the ones on abortion and inheritance. Other women were even impressed to realize that the new constitution defends their rights as women and nobody can discriminate against them.

**Our success stories**

Our efforts have so far paid off. As a result of the civic education and increase in the realization of their rights under the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution, there is an increased number of women in all decision making bodies including the devolved government.

Recently, one woman agreed and went ahead to vie for a councillor seat during the last elections. Women in the Saboti constituency took up leadership positions at the school Board of Governors. More women are now applying for chief’s positions and we are extremely happy to say that one of them was chosen as chief in the Matisi location. Women in Cheraganyi are economically empowered through women’s enterprise funds and supported from other women in leadership positions.

In Trans Nzoia, all MPs are men but due to devolved governments, the position of the governor will ensure that either the deputy governor or the governor will be a woman. This is crucial since the governor will form an executive committee responsible to form laws. When a woman is present, then women’s interests will be considered during law making at the county level.

Many women have come out to vie for elective posts. So far in Trans Nzoia, twelve women have shown and declared their interest in women representatives post. This is at the same time a challenge because every woman wants just this one post.

However, women should not limit themselves at that level only. More leadership trainings in Trans Nzoia need to be organized so as to empower these

women to campaign for other elective posts such as Senators, Governors, Members of Parliament and Presidency.

So our work is not done! As a community facilitator, I am going to pay each one a visit and try to call them together for a meeting so that I can discuss this matter with them. If only these women could identify among themselves those who can vie for other positions and give full support, women in Trans Nzoia would have taken many leadership positions.

**Challenges we have to overcome**

However, nothing has been achieved without a lot of obstacles we had to overcome on our way and we still have a long way to go. Limited funds are always a challenge when it comes to penetrating remote places in the villages due to poor infrastructure. As a trainer, in many instances I have had to stay away from my home and family for a long time to be able to access remote areas and talk to women.

Another major challenge when wanting to inform women about their rights and empower them is the low participation during discussions due to the household errands they have to run. Furthermore, before getting trained and more empowered, most women did not know their rights hence it has been a challenge convincing them about the importance of learning them and even more so using them.

We also find that many women are rarely or never involved in peace talks and negotiations due to culture and tradition where women are perceived as subordinates hence cannot be consulted or included in decision-making process. As a result most women grievances have been left hanging since there is no representation in crucial decision-making.

High level of illiteracy is another major challenge in our area; specifically for me when I was distributing the copies of the constitution, which were in English. This highlights the need to adjust our approach and always find
alternative ways to educate women about the provisions of the new constitution and the UN SCR 1325. By incorporating interpreters when needed we can ensure that all women understand the clauses of the Resolution and the new constitution.

**Blocking the way of women to leadership**

Specific challenges are there when it comes to women’s full participation in the electoral processes. Women lack monetary resources needed to campaign as well as support from men or even fellow women. In cases, women are specifically targeted and physically attacked during elections or campaigns.

Also women are not involved in decision-making or politics because of traditions. They can never make decisions or talk in the presence of men. Women are expected to fulfill their roles in the house, which gives them limited or no time at all to engage in politics. Existing social norms deriving from a culture and tradition where women have been told that they can never be leaders hinders women’s development. In a male dominant society like ours, many women have been even denied their political right to choose whom to vote for; men decide on their behalf.

And of course we should not forget to mention a major root cause, which is the lack of opportunities to advance in education which in turn results into women having fewer opportunities to increase their capacity to compete with men.

**The motivation of women keeps me going**

Some things might take time to change but grassroots women leaders like me working on the same issues; we can overcome these challenges by networking with each other.

Keeping in mind the opportunities that the new constitution and UN SCR 1325 offer to women, we shall continue our work. Specifically, the new constitution will give women full potential since the affirmative action will ensure that in all elective positions a third would be occupied by women. Women have always been peacemakers in the past, for example during the PEV. Those who were displaced from Cheragany in Munyaka held a peaceful demonstration while camping at the ACK showground in Kitale town. They can continue doing so now.

GBV is still an issue in Trans Nzoia District, especially rape. At least now victims can visit the newly set up of gender violence clinic at the Kitale district hospital for rape victims. The police is more cooperative and holds the perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Even when facing difficulties, what always rewards me is the fact that rural women are very cooperative and eager to learn and most of them try to get trained through workshops and regular meetings. As a result their lives have improved greatly and that result should keep us all going.
My work has mainly focused on advocacy of the new constitution and what it entails for women. Most women in my community, the Sabaot, are ignorant of the constitution and hence I have been very active in sensitizing them. The above has been possible through getting involved personally with my local church and women’s groups. I have also participated in sensitization of the grassroots women on the negative aspects of the FGM and the dangers it poses on the girl child and the women fraternity especially in regards to reproductive health.

I am also engaging in dialogue and community forums especially with the church leaders and some politicians to denounce and condemn atrocities that happened in the neighbouring Mount Elgon region. This has been necessary so as to prevent such vices from occurring in my community.

Furthermore, I have been giving motivational talks in schools focusing on the importance of the girls to pursue education to the highest level possible and exploit their opportunities as much as possible. This has been easy for me because of my achievements in my community. Being the second lady to become a lawyer and advocate in the area gives me a greater platform for girls to listen to me.

Finally, I have been offering my services in partnership with other organizations in the area especially after 2007. I volunteered with organizations like Water Missions International (WMI), a faith based organization, to provide clean water to the highest level possible and exploit their opportunities as much as possible. This has been easy for me because of my achievements in my community. Being the second lady to become a lawyer and advocate in the area gives me a greater platform for girls to listen to me.

The Release Political Prisoners (RPP) Trust is a pressure group, which lobbies for improved prison conditions and the repeal of repressive laws. The RPP acts through cultural activities, seminars, demonstrations and by producing reports and is one of the vocal human rights organizations in Kenya which, produces a regular series of often critical reports on Kenya’s human rights record but also organizes activities to publicize their cause.

Melissa Ngania is an advocate from Trans Nzoia County. As a lawyer, Melissa has worked with Release Political Prisoners Trust as an Assistant Programmes Officer and with the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) St. Stephens Kinyoro church in the Development Committee.
people in IDP camps. Our target areas included Endebess and Langas in Uasin Gishu. This exercise gave hope to those living in the camps.

My work is my way to give back to the community

The skills and the capabilities I possess motivate me to sensitize my community because it’s the primarily way that I can give back to the society and I would like to encourage other empowered women to do the same.

It has been a challenge for me to see that women from my community have not made it far. Only very few women occupy significant decision making positions. I believe that through educating the girl child we can beat all odds and change this situation.

I of course appreciate the unique challenges that women from my community, the Sabaot, face. However, I am inspired to sensitize them and remind them that if we are strong willed, we can change things just like women from other regions and communities do.

Women’s empowerment and declining levels of FGM

Through my work I have increased women’s empowerment through increased participation in school, economic empowerment and declining levels of FGM.

- Women are more empowered through attending school. Most of the women in my area now are realizing the need for empowerment through education and they have started going to school. The married ones have also embraced the need and are attending relevant programmes.

- FGM has started to reduce. Most girls have been liberated and we are coming up with alternative right of passage for the girls. The passing of the FGM bill into law has further been a plus for us. Furthermore, even the boys have been liberated. Last year we organized a joint circumcision ceremony, where the boys were taken to hospital. This was to discourage the usual use of the knife that promotes infections and can also cause bleeding.

- There has been a slight improvement in the economic empowerment of women. Most women concentrate their efforts in domestic work. Yet there are great new opportunities opening up for them, especially with the New Constitution that needs to be exploited. But most women are ignorant of the existence of important pieces of legislations that can empower them. I am informing women on the need for economic empowerment and their rights. This has resulted into women engaging in activities like farming, rearing of poultry and small-scale business. However, there is need for continued sensitization on their independence. They are still controled by their husbands and most of them have no economic independence.

Impact of the UN SCR 1325 and new constitution

The Judicial appointments have been gender sensitive. The last year has seen the appointment of women to the position of Deputy Chief Justice; there are now more women Judges in the Supreme Court and the female High Court Judges came up to five. These are not just women but articulate women who have women issues at heart.

The two/third gender rule has brought sanity to our appointments. Sanity in a way that men have been compulsorily forced to have women at all levels of governance; the foundation of the patriarchal society have been shaken.

Advocating the participation of women in peace agreements through the Resolution is a plus. The 2007 negotiations excluded women. This was not the best for us, women, because we have a significant role to play in peacebuilding.

Finally, many women were sexually assaulted during the conflict and in the IDP camps, where they have been exposed to
pathetic conditions. The UN SCR 1325 is ideal for us and we should adopt it and embrace it because if we knew about the Resolution earlier, the extremeness of 2007/08 could not have happened.

**Ignorance is one of the challenges of our work**

When trying to implement the Resolution and new constitution I am coming across several challenges. First of all, there is ignorance. The existence of the Resolution is still unknown to most people. Personally I came to learn about it when COPA called for applications for the Training. There is a good piece of empowerment for women and yet we, women do not know about it.

Regarding the constitution, there is also limited knowledge of the available positions for women in leadership roles. Consequently, most of these positions are not occupied by women. Despite the existence of laws, women’s rights are still violated; women are still refused property ownership, wives are victims of domestic violence and women are sidelined in major decision-making.

Secondly, there is the challenge of having the Resolution 1325 domesticated and appreciated by our legislatures. This is extremely important as our legislations, which are a plus for women have always been shelved. Classical example is the Domestic Relations bill. Thus we need tactical moves to have the Resolution embraced.

Third challenge is the ignorance on the key provisions of the constitution especially on the system of governance. Most women have not appreciated the concept of devolution. This is risky because devolution entails additional opportunities for leadership, a key concept for emancipation and full control. The issue of women representation has also blinded women on the other MP seats, which they can campaign for. There is a need for a holistic sensitization of women who can compete with men so as to get a wider representation in the parliament. It is only through this process that we can achieve true emancipation.

Finally, a further hindrance is the deeply rooted cultural beliefs. Appreciation of both the UN SCR 1325 and the constitution is curtailed by our cultural beliefs. We always feel it is men who have it all and they are the ones to take up leadership positions. This is also the main obstacle to women’s full participation in the political processes. Most women are not allowed to participate in the public arena especially in the political field. Sabaot women are not allowed to campaign as they are viewed as crossing their cultural ties.

**How can women overcome these problems?**

By appreciating and getting to understand the UN SCR 1325 and the constitution as key documents for women’s empowerment and emancipation. Most of these laws are unknown to women. Yet they are very essential in women’s empowerment and involvement. Women should sit down and appreciate these two very important documents.

Women should form allies and target positions of leadership especially in county level government and parliament. It is only through this that they can get a quorum in the election process and capture seats. Having women in key political roles will help us to pass and implement policies that are gender sensitive.

Also, women should concentrate on money generating activities that will empower them and help them become independent. It is high time for women to recognize that even activities like poultry keeping or small scale farming are very important and if saving is done properly and those savings are channelled towards their empowerment, women can have a saying.

Many women have however failed to come up with concrete measures to adequately respond to issues that affect us. Most of us have been held in bondage of cultural imprisonment, feeling less empowered. And this has to stop now through sensitization and personal choice of each woman to claim her rights.

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As a chairperson and founder of the Mwanga Women organization and Chairperson of MYWO, I have done community work for more than 10 years. My work has been focusing mainly in the larger Mount Elgon area, which includes Kapsokwony, Cheptais, Kaptama and Kopsiro. The work that I have been doing at grassroots level is in line with the UN SCR 1325 and the provisions for women indicated in the new constitution.

With my capacity building work I have been educating the rural women on their rights as per the chapter 4 of the constitution on the Bill of rights. I have also been doing capacity building on peacebuilding and how women can participate actively in peace issues. Through lobbying and advocacy I have been lobbying for women to be included in various peace committees and other structures. I have also lobbied the community against harmful cultural practices such as FGM. Finally I have been

Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO) believes in uplifting and empowering women as a means of alleviating poverty and creating a better environment and quality of life for all. MYWO has a forward looking vision of a society in which equality, peace, justice and unity prevail.

The Mwanga Women Organization’s objective is to fight for the rights of women and children who were suffering as an outcome of the conflict. Main activities included the establishment of a women micro-finance programme where women could borrow money and start small business.
mobilizing the community and sensitizing community members on various issues affecting them.

I have been advocating for the rights of women and have been helping widows and victims of rape who go to court by ensuring that their rights are not been violated during the process. I have been campaigning against FGM, early forced marriages and early pregnancies and in favour of human rights and girl child education. I have mobilized women to support girl child education, while I have been directly supporting a few girls in Kapsokwony division to go back to school.

Through mobilization and discussions, I have been sensitizing the community on peacebuilding and the role that women can and have to play when building peace as presented in the UN SCR 1325. Parallel, I have been lobbying for increased women’s participation in leadership positions and committees. For example we have eight women in the District Peace Committees and two women are appointed as assistant chiefs in the Kaptama division.

To enable further women to claim their role in leadership we have started empowerment programmes in my area and a microfinance project where we give out loans to women.

**More and more women take leadership positions**

As a woman, I am passionate about my work towards empowering and protecting women and children because they are the most vulnerable group. When I see women and children suffering I am touched and that is why I have been engaged in voluntary community work the last 10 years. Looking at our so far successes gives me more courage to continue my work.

Before the constitution we had no power, no legal document to refer to, but now the constitution has helped us to speak with a strong voice. Parallel, the UN SCR 1325 is an eye opener to what we are doing.

As a result, more women do know their rights though more work still needs to be done to reach out to even more. The number of women who have been included in various committees has increased. Examples are the Kopsiro division where the Peace chairpersons are women; in Kapsokwony division the Peace chairperson are women as well and the total number of women in the division is eight.

In the school management board we now have women, and the CDF chairperson for the Mount Elgon constituencies is a woman as well. A lady is also the poverty eradication chairperson and we have now two assistant chiefs in the Kaptama division.

**Success stories**

We have few important success stories about which we are proud. One is the inclusion of women in local leadership. We went and talked to the DC about the importance of including women in the structure. As soon as some positions opened up, we encouraged women to apply. They were called for interviews and both succeeded to take up the positions as Assistant Chiefs for the Kongit sub location and the Kaptalelio sub location respectively.

Furthermore, we lobbied the District Peace Committee for two thirds of it staff to be women. We have now 8 women and 7 men in the District Peace Committee and that is an important step.

We also advocated for the rights of a widow whose land was taken by her elder son living her with nothing. We mobilized women, contributed money, and called media which covered and aired her story. We hired a female lawyer to represent the widow and now the case is in the high court with good chances of winning it.

The UN SCR 1325 has given me power by knowing that the work I am doing is being supported by a resolution that was passed by the UN Security Council and holds certain gravity. The constitution as the supreme law of the land has many gains for women. This
in itself gives me strength because I am not arguing the case of women out of nowhere. I now have a document where I base my argumentation.

**Challenges when implementing the UN SCR 1325 and new constitution**

Culture is the main hindrance to women’s full participation – some people still think women cannot take decision-making positions. To that can be added the negative attitude from the community.

Due to high illiteracy levels among women, it usually takes time for some women to grasp the truth in the constitution and the UN SCR 1325. Ignorance is another problem – most women have not idea of the new constitution and resolution 1325.

Finally, a challenge for us is the limited funds, which do not allow for wider spread civic education and empowerment activities.

These challenges can be overcome by doing:

- Intensive trainings and workshops
- Exchange programmes. These are programmes which will allow rural women to interact with other women leaders from other regions and exchange experiences about their struggles and successes
- Women should visit more areas where women have succeeded in doing peacebuilding and reconciliation e.g. Rwanda, Liberia
- Solicit funds to implement more peace activities
- Form networks of women which will jointly implement programmes
- Do more wide spread civic education on the new constitution and the UN SCR 1325.

**Why do women ‘avoid’ active participation in the political processes?**

Most women do not have IDs and voter cards and most of them do not see the need of participating in the elections. Women do often also lack the confidence in themselves and that fear is in itself a big obstacle. In addition, most women are not in a Political Party and do not necessarily know how to go about and join one.

Another important aspect is that most elections in the past were followed by conflict and violence, a factor, which prevents women from participating. Finally, women lack the resources, which can enable them to fully participate in politics.

**How can the UN SCR 1325 and constitution help rural women?**

The 1325 Resolution provides 4 pillars, which can assist women in getting more engaged in decision-making for example Participation, Prevention and Promotion. These instruments, namely the resolution and the new constitution, advocate for women’s participation; protect women against GBV; prevent women from harmful traditions and practices and promote women’s human rights as stipulated in the constitution chapter 4 about Bill of Rights and the gains of women found in the constitution.
My exact work has been to empower women against discriminative practices and integrate them socially and economically. I am enhancing their standard of living, by ensuring that women’s rights are promoted, realized and protected.

My main activities have been conducting civic education on the new constitution and women’s gains as stipulated therein, organizing peace initiatives and informing how the new constitution if implemented can prevent conflict. I am also advocating against GBV by reporting rape cases.

My target group is women and youths and especially victims of PEV in camps i.e. (IDPs) in Trans Nzoia county. Through my work I am offering women the opportunity for personal development through increased access to training, inspiration, recreation and counselling. Through my involvement in different organizations I am also expanding my work in the counties of Trans Nzoia, Mount Elgon and Bungoma.

The idea to work in activities related to women’s capacity building, hatched from a need to tackle issues such as violence, poverty and illiteracy. Poverty combined with poor governance and ethnic based politics resulted in the 2007 – 2008 PEV and its consequences: prostitution, unwanted

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Joyce Wanjiru Karanja

is a lawyer and an upcoming politician from Kaplamai division, Sinyereri Location, Trans Nzoia East District. Joyce is working for Tears of Women as a Programs Manager. Joyce is also a legal advisor for the Regional Organization for Conflict Analysis and Resolution; she is a board member for Vijana Umoja Pamoja foundation and organizing secretary for the Trans Nzoia Youth Association.

Tears of Women is a local CBO based in Kitale. Its vision is to ensure that the rights of women are promoted, realized and protected in order to enable them to enjoy fully their human rights. Tears of Women thus addresses issues such as education, HIV/AIDS, gender advocacy, conflict resolution, human rights and governance.

Vijana Umoja Pamoja is a Swahili word meaning YOUTH UNITED TOGETHER. It is not-for-profit, independent umbrella foundation of various youth organizations founded in 2008. Main mission of the foundation is to enhance a democratic space for positive and active youth inclusion and participation in reform process.
pregnancies outcomes of rape, drug abuse and gender violence. The situation at the grassroots became alarming. My aim was to turn around this situation, to enable women to participate fully in the development of their livelihood assets and to lobby for peace initiatives to ensure that what happened in 2007 – 2008 will not happen again.

An increasing number of women start claiming decision-making roles

Since the constitution was voted in 2011, it has been my guiding principle. Most of the women I have been able to reach, do now understand the gains stipulated in the new constitution. They have realized their rights and appreciated the new constitution.

Girls and women visit the hospitals before 72 hours if they are raped and most rape cases are reported.

I have been able to educate the community and especially the women to realize that they have a role to play in the society. I believe that women will be involved more and more in key decision-making, peace negotiations and will occupy key roles in the society. Most of the women that I have empowered are interested in politics unlike before. Through the whole process, I have also been able to realize my talents and my passion of working with the community.

Also the UN SCR 1325 has brought a lot of changes in my work because now everything I am doing is supported by an international instrument, which is revolving around women and girls in conflict areas.

I want to continue lobbying for women participation in peace initiatives considering the pillars of UN SCR 1325. I will continue my work towards ensuring that women participate in the peace processes, their rights are protected, realized and promoted, calling for the adoption of a gender perspective, which includes women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.

Recognizing problems, introducing solutions

When working towards implementing women’s rights I am coming across many difficulties. Below I am naming some of them as well as the way I believe we can solve them:

• Culture: In most African cultures women are not allowed to play a key role in the society or even address to men. What we can do? Encourage special measures to be put in place so as to protect women from harmful cultural practices that prevents them from participating in peace initiatives. Also sensitize the community and ensure increased representation of women at all levels of decision-making.

• Fear due to insecurity: Insecurity in Trans Nzoia and Mount Elgon has been the order of the day, which is a big challenge for women like me visiting fragile areas on my own. So first of all, we need to appreciate that we are women and thus vulnerable people in the society and be aware that anything can happen during our work. Therefore we can use other methods of peace initiatives like negotiations, visit areas that are safe and also try to walk with men from the community where the security is bad.

• The ICC process: When trying to talk about peace and its processes some tribes/communities feel that the ICC process has been discriminative against tribes and they refuse to participate. To overcome this challenge I am trying to make people understand the importance of the ICC, what exactly it means and how it works.

• Lack of information on the Resolution 1325: Which has been also my case. Even though I have been working with women in the community and advocating for their rights, which means my work has been in line with the Resolution 1325, I did not know that I was implementing it. Only recently did I hear about the Resolution. I would therefore advice women to do what I did, which is research and reading as
well as documentation of key aspect of the Resolution 1325 and dissemination of the documentation to other women.

• **Aid dependency and NGOs:** Some NGOs issue reimbursements to the participants, which makes it difficult for smaller organizations with limited resources to do their work. What I advice others working towards implementing women’s rights to do? When starting to sensitize the community let them appreciate that you are doing the work for their own good, not yours or your organisation’s. Explain to them that they have the information you need and you have to give them the knowledge they lack, which is more powerful than a reimbursement.

• **Language Barriers:** Most local women do not understand Kiswahili or English, which forces me to look for translators. In cases I am facing language barriers, I ensure that a percentage of the participants understand one of the national languages so then they can interpret to others.

• **Limited funds in amount or duration:** Trans Nzoia and Bungoma Counties are huge areas; due to limited funds I have not been able to reach all parts of these counties. My initial target has been very hard to meet; I have not been able to reach as many women as I would like within the two counties. Also the stipulated time of funds is very short. Women activities always get little funding that can exist for only 2-4 months, which is not enough time to cover all areas so the activities are cut short again.

• **How to go about it:** Write proposals which are long term and also think of a way of introducing income generating activities (IGAs) through new technologies so the projects can become self-sufficient after some initial funding.

**Obstacles in women’s participation in politics**

When it comes to Kenyan women’s participation in peacebuilding and political processes culture is again an obstacle. In most cultures it is believed that women are there to be seen and not to be heard; that their place is in the kitchen and they should remain silent forever. Because of this belief women are not supposed to say anything in front of a man.

Linked to the culture is the fear that women have of losing their families. Firstly, there are the many tasks they have to perform when involved in politics, which keeps them away form their children. In addition, when women join politics the society and their relatives believe that they have become prostitutes and consequently they lose their families. Furthermore, there are some religions, which do not encourage women to get involved in politics.

Finally, ignorance is one of women’s worse enemies. Most women do not understand the process of elections nor its importance. For example, they believe that the registration process takes time and they feel they do not have this time. So they avoid this ‘time consuming’ process all together.

As I mentioned earlier my main work has been empowering women against discriminative practices as stipulated in the constitution and Resolution 1325 ensuring that their rights are realized and protected. I have used the constitution to encourage women to participate in politics because its one of their fundamental rights. I have encouraged them to seek actively a position in the peacebuilding discussion of their communities. I have convinced them to refuse harmful cultural practices. I believe that these women will participate fully in the elections and vote or vie to be voted, they will participate in peace negotiations and sign peace agreements.

I believe that come 2012, there will be more women in the parliament and other governmental and non-governmental bodies because I am sensitizing women to be empowered and make right decisions. And for that I should thank the new constitution and the UN SCR 1325 for being in place.
The Eldoret East Peace Committee, where I am the chairlady is an organization that was created by the government to undertake and oversee peacebuilding work in the district. The organization has representatives at the district, division, location and sub location level. The majority of these representatives are men.

**Vying for political positions so as to represent the interest of other women**

I am engaged in early warning work; I collect information from the administrators and the communities about the prevailing situations, capture likely conflict triggers and then communicate the information to the government and relevant CSOs for action so as to prevent violence.

I also do dispute resolution between groups and communities. Some of the disputes are over land ownership; others are just simple misunderstandings that are easily resolved through communication.

Additionally, my work at the grassroots with women involves raising awareness on the UN SCR 1325 and what it entails. I urge them to get involved in peace work and vie for political seats so that they can represent the rest of the women and their issues as well as make their voices heard at the decision making level. I also do civic education on the
Resolution and the gender gains of the new constitution. I do sensitization of women during public barazas (discussions) and other public gatherings such as fundraisers. During those events I highlight the various opportunities that women have.

At the grassroots, I work with the Tsachi women’s group, where I talk to women about why they should engage in leadership positions and why they should get involved in peacebuilding work. We also have merry go rounds in an effort to empower the women members economically. This helps them to become independent because they have income.

The UN SCR 1325 provides great opportunities for women and I am actively working towards implementing aspects of the resolution. My main contribution has been promoting equal participation of women by ensuring that they are well informed and have the necessary leadership skills, which can enable them to contribute as men do.

In politics, I am very much interested to undertake leadership position myself. I plan to vie as a woman representative in Eldoret East in 2012 so that I can talk about what ails women in my areas and the kind of support we will need to make us more independent and onward looking.

Many of the women in the grassroots suffer from stereotypes in the society. Women are largely undermined, even when they make contributions towards peaceful coexistence in the community, their contributions are not acknowledged. At the same time, they are not allowed to be economically independent. This is why I work with women. I want to contribute in some way towards the alleviation of ignorance and certain stereotypes; to empower women to also know they are able to perform tasks in peacebuilding and political representation just like men.

I like to emphasize the need for women to have some income generating activities and make them understand that they are capable of doing so. I also encourage them to go to community meetings and voice their opinions, claiming leadership positions at grassroots level.

More women believe now in their capacities

The UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution have already resulted in various successes. Women in my area have been participating in peacebuilding through dialogue and have also started demanding their rights to property.

Furthermore, women have been actively contributing in chiefs barazas (meetings) and also make sure that their voices are heard in determining the distribution of Constituency Development Fund bursaries. Active contribution has given women a voice and also increased their self-esteem; they have now started believing that they also count and are equally important.

There was a woman in my village, who I informed about her right to own property and empowered to claim that right. She had also been experiencing domestic violence from her husband. After knowing that the new constitution provides her rights to own property she demanded a share from her husband and she managed to get it and then move away from an abusing household.

From these kinds of examples, women witness how the new constitution and provisions such as the UN SCR 1325 has made their lives easier in that apart from owning property, they are also given a voice in decision making. Many are willing to take up political leadership positions. Women realize that these are tools, which can address issues like GBV and gender equality and promotes them to have an active role in the peacebuilding processes.

**Discrimination is still challenging our work**

Working towards implementing aspects of the UN SCR 1325 I had to face many challenges; the biggest being discrimination.
For instance, sometime back, the chief called a peace dialogue meeting in my locality. When I went, I only found 2 women. The rest of the 15 people were men. When I asked the chief why, he told me it’s because women have no role to play in the peacebuilding process. He said that only leaders participate in peacebuilding matters and women are not leaders. I demanded that next time he ensures women are also invited reminding him about the new constitution as well as the relevant Resolution provided by the United Nations.

When it comes to specifically women claiming an active role in the decision making and peacebuilding processes there are more obstacles to overcome: Cultural beliefs and myths about women, their capacities and their expected role; discrimination; inferiority complex women have, coupled up with fear and insecurity; lack of support from men or even fellow women; and inadequate funds.

**Women learning how to promote themselves**

Women can still overcome challenges such as underrepresentation in the decision making, by learning how to promote themselves, becoming empowered in the areas of leadership and economic well being. This can be through leadership trainings, soft loans for economic activities, and civic education on the new constitution and UN SCR 1325.

These instruments have to be used together so as to promote the role of women and empower them. The new constitution is there to mainstream gender, the UN SCR 1325 calls for participation of women in the peacebuilding. It also protects them during times of conflict and calls for activities, which ensure that women effectively contribute in the peacebuilding processes.

I also believe that the new constitution will also prevent political violence by criminalizing hate speech and bribery. The UN SCR 1325 heightens the rights of women in peacebuilding processes and the new constitution allows women to participate in leadership positions. This will slowly but surely give women self-confidence as well as the thrust to participate in public affairs. I vied for a ward seat in 2007 and though I did not get it, am all set to go for it again in 2012. If I decided to step forward and take an active role in decision-making so can other women. ■
Women have a big role to play in decision-making and peacebuilding as outlined in the new constitution and the UN SCR 1325. Women in marginalized communities are protected by the government from practices such as FGM, early marriages and sexual exploitation of minors. We have now equal rights like men in inheriting family property.

**What men can do, women can do better**

As a peace monitor in Uasin Gishu my target is to increase women’s participation in peacebuilding, which involves women’s representation at all levels. My belief is that women can make use of different opportunities so as to serve their community. Thereby, the quote I am trying to pass to other women is that what men can do, we, women can do better.

I am already witnessing progress made in my work with most of the women I am working with taking part in the peacebuilding processes effectively. The representation of women in peacebuilding has increased in all three districts I am working. From the 15 members in the Committees, 5 members are women in each district. Moreover two of the chairpersons in two districts are women; these two elected chairwomen came directly from the grassroots.

And the above could not have happened if it wasn’t for the new constitution, which gives an equal opportunity to women to achieve their full potential and makes it possible for them to claim influential decision-making roles. In my work towards sustainable peace and women’s participation in the process, the new constitution and the UN SCR 1325 have been crucial instruments.

**Daisy Kosgei**

is a Peace Monitor for the NSC from Uasin Gishu county. She is working towards building sustainable peace by increasing the representation of women at all levels in the local peace committees.

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**The National Steering Committee On Peacebuilding And Conflict Management (NSC)**

is an interagency committee that was established on 2001. As an interagency, the NSC brings together stakeholders to coordinate efforts geared towards peacebuilding and conflict management in Kenya.
Lack of enforcement is a challenge

The mere existence of these two instruments although helpful is not enough. Proper implementation of what both the Resolution and the new constitution entail is critical. However, we often witness a lack of commitment. For example not much has been done regarding civic education so as to reach to more women and inform them about these instruments and their rights.

Consequently, some of the obstacles that women are facing when it come to participate in the political processes in Kenya is the fact that most of these women do not know their rights. Despite the massive campaign on women empowerment much is yet to be done especially for women in rural areas.

Women and girls in rural areas are the most vulnerable group during times of conflict. It is these rural women who need to be empowered so as to realize the role they can play as mothers, community members, leaders and peacemakers and it is the role of the civil society and government to empower them.
In my work I first mobilize the community to form groups with a specific proposed activity and then I train them to implement this activity. I am also training and further empowering already formed groups with a specific mandate. As the Community Development Committee Treasurer I am also empowering community members socio-economically and carrying out trainings on GBV in Trans Nzoia.

The gains of women presented in the new constitution on gender equality have opened up a way for me as a woman to hold a leadership position in previously men dominated organizations. As a result of the new constitution I am the chairperson of the Kapchera Initiative project in this district.

Based on the Resolution after the post election violence in 2007/2008, there was a role for me and other women of my area in participating in the relevant discussions. The discussions helped maintaining peace in our area. I then got more motivated and went on to do post conflict peacebuilding work in the affected areas.

**Encouraging women to form groups and train them to become economically empowered**

In my work, I am implementing aspects of the UN SCR 1325 and the constitution driven by my desire to contribute towards gender equality in my area. I do that by mobilizing women to form groups and
register them. Through these groups I have the opportunity to reach out and train women on different socio-economic skills. These skills enable them to start up or expend their business and develop other income generating activities, which improve their livelihoods. Through this process I have been able to hold discussions on aspects of the UN SCR 1325 and educate community members on the new constitution’s provisions for women.

**Protecting the rights of vulnerable women IDPs**

After the PEV women, girls, children, the elderly and people with disabilities were displaced and took shelter at the Kachibora shopping centre as well as the District Officers grounds in Cheraganyi constituency. When visiting the IDPs we found that the women were not in a position to access food and other necessities provided because those who were distributing the provisions were men who were asking for sex in exchange of the relief items. This was a clear violation of the rights of these women.

Furthermore, we had many cases of rape, which made us want to effectively do something to protect women and girls apart from talking to them in the camps and educating them on their rights.

After discussing these issues we organized ourselves and lobbied the administration requesting for this GBV to stop. In our fight to protect these women’s rights the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution were our allies.

In general, the UN SCR 1325 has brought changes in my work. Getting to know that legal instruments are protecting the rights of women I have been working with has given me to courage and strength to work harder. I now know that there are both international and national laws I can refer to in protecting women and girls from GBV. I feel more equipped to continue my work towards protecting women and girls and empowering them and I am planning to target more women’s groups through my work.

At the same time my work is more demanding as most of the women at the grassroots are not fully aware of their rights as outlined in our new constitution. More education forums have to be held to prepare the women for the 2012 elections and ensure that they are both aware of their right to take leadership positions as well as the importance of voting wisely.

Finally, to end sexual violence against women, there is need to train grassroots women in knowing their rights and enable them to apply those rights when violated. Generally, there is a lot more to be done than what I have been doing so as to protect and empower rural women. However, there are many obstacles we have to overcome.

Limited information, fear, our dominant culture, discrimination against women and existing gender inequality combined with GBV are only few of the factors that do not allow the women of Kenya to obtain leadership roles.

**Obstacles in my work to empower women**

- **Culture** – it is a challenge because most cultural beliefs do not value women as leaders, hence my work fails to deliver in communities where men can’t accept being talked to by women
- **Insecurity** – being a woman I feel insecure in most communities where security is poor
- **Lack of funds** – when holding meetings or trainings funds are essential but usually not there so I have been contributing often out of my pocket
- **Gender inequality** – there is poor representation of women in many development committees.
- **Religious beliefs** – which do not allow women’s participation in politics and leadership.
My advice to others working towards women protection and empowerment

Women doing similar work to mine need to undergo trainings and take part in forums that will improve their leadership, communication, lobbying and team building skills.

Furthermore, they need to be well informed about the UN SCR 1325 and the gains for women in the new constitution; the majority of women doing similar to mine work are not aware of these instruments.

As our work is linked closely to peace, they need to be very clear about the key concepts of peace and conflict and get involved in peacebuilding. Parallel, they need to gain good knowledge of the concepts of gender, social construction and gender perceptive in governance and peace processes. Unless we are fully aware of the concepts and ideas we promote, we will not be able to empower other women and transfer them the necessary skills. Therefore, extensive Training of Trainers could help the women doing similar to my work to get out of their comfort zone, gain the essential knowledge and skills and change so as to start mentoring other women.

When it comes to address GBV, implementation of the UN SCR 1325 would allow for more measures to be put in place against the perpetrators. Under the new constitution aspects of the GBV have been addressed, and it is our responsibility to inform all women about that. In my work educating the community on gender concepts, I will give more on GBV from now on.

In enhancing the participation of women in the political, economic and social processes, we need to ensure they are well informed of the UN SCR 1325 and the provision of the political and socio-economic rights of the women in the new constitution. I am going to empower the women I am working with so as to help them overcome the obstacles of gender inequality and will enable them to challenge our culture of governance.

Finally, for our work to have a bigger impact we need to work together; support and encourage each other as well as network with other partners that can assist us in our cause.
My work has been building peace and promoting entrepreneurship among the community of Mount Elgon as well as promoting women’s rights. Through this work, I have been training community members to recognize conflict early warning signs and increasing their awareness about the importance and benefits of peace.

I have been working with women on the importance of peace where they have realized that during times of conflict their potential for advancement gets hindered. For example they can’t continue working on their farm, their children don’t go to school and have to leave in insecurity and the constant threat of rape, loss of property, displacement and poverty. Through my work, I have also enabled women to take an active role in peacebuilding by discouraging their husbands and sons from getting involved in conflict and promoting Peace and reconciliation.

**Ann Ndiema Bucheche** is a farmer and women’s leader from Cheptais Division, Mount Elgon. She is the chairperson of the Focal Area Development Committee (FADC), a member of the Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL) and a member of the Mount Elgon Resident’s Association.

**The Focal Area Development Committee (FADC)** mission is to eradicate poverty in the area through farming. FADC trains the community on Advocacy, Agriculture, Environmental conservation, HIV/AIDS, Life Skills and Peace/Conflict Management.

**The Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL)** is a network of grassroots women’s organizations in areas affected by armed conflict in the western part of Kenya. RWPL works through 14 networks working for peace in their local communities. The Peace Link, created in 1999, is creating a platform to enhance the visibility and the silent voices of local women in conflict situations. RWPL enables the Peace Link to access information and opportunities to share experiences and expertise that is both relevant and specific to the environment. RWPL has been empowering women and girls to become active citizens and agents of change in communities affected by ethnic and gender based violence.

**Promoting reconciliation and forgiveness**

According to the new constitution, Kenyans are not supposed to harm one
another and women and men are allowed to coexist in peace and harmony. Women rights are stipulated in the new constitution; I am trying to inform women about these rights and tell them to vie for political posts from the local to the national level. Apart from vying for political seats, according to the new constitution, women are allowed to own property and they are guarded from harmful cultural practices like FGM.

In Mount Elgon there are many traumatized women; women who have lost their children and husbands and women—victims of rape, which resulted to unwanted pregnancies or HIV/AIDS infection. However, even if it has been extremely painful, all this has already happened and there is nothing we can do to change the past. The only thing that can help these women is to give them strength and encourage them to forgive and go on with their lives. Therefore, I have been talking to them about forgiveness and reconciliation so that they can live in harmony with the other community members, begin to heal and build up their lives.

It was due to my trauma healing and peacebuilding work that I was elected to be the chairperson of the community group called Cheptais Kanga’anga FADC. This was an achievement for me as a woman as I was chosen over 17 people, 13 of which were men.

**Empowered women results into empowered communities**

The Sabaot community lives by its culture, a culture, which has been ‘bad’ to women. Sabaot women are not allowed to appear in front of men in meetings; women are treated as children as if they have no will or saying and are beaten anytime at the smallest provocation; they are not allowed to own property. Consequently women are not listened to.

Because of the new constitution I have encouraged women to fight for their rights and take up leadership positions so that they can get involved in decision-making. This is the only way they can address their issues; men would never care about helping women solve their problems.

Most women have now taken up the challenge and are emerging from fear. They are trying to come up with income generating activities to boost their economic status; they are coming out to talk about their issues. Thereby, change is slowly coming into the community because when a woman is empowered the family and the community are empowered as well.

**Changes due to the existence of women’s rights**

This overall change is based on smaller successes. With my work, I have organized women’s groups, which have entered microfinance schemes like Faulu Kenya, and the Kenya Women Finance Trust. They are doing well because they have come up with different businesses, which are providing them with money to take care themselves and their families.

I have also managed to bring together widows in different locations and formed a cereal bank and I have facilitated their connection with the World Bank. Soon they will be taking the produced maize, onions and beans to Kisumu and will come back with good money, which will help them to gradually come out of the poverty they are in. Their children will go to school and they will be able to eat well.

Furthermore, I have brought together the victims and perpetrators of the Mount Elgon conflict for negotiation and reconciliation, and I am happy to say that this gesture had a positive outcome. Forgiveness has taken place and the perpetrators are slowly but gradually integrating in the community. Parallel, the former militia groups and the victims of the PEV have come together and are engaging in farming activities. Doing things together has encouraged a spirit of reconciliation.

Boys and girls are now going back to school; young girls who are mothers are
encouraged to continue with their education even after giving birth. Young girls have also being empowered to know that they have a right to go to school and that they should not allow men to misuse them. The girl child in the Sabaot community knows now that she has right to inherit property despite the fact that she is a girl.

Victims of rape are encouraged to go for medical attention within 24 hours and then report the incident to the police. This has contributed to reduction of infections and unwanted pregnancies.

In addition, after informing women about the new constitution and the UN SCR 1325 and thereby empowering them, they are taking up leadership posts; for example ward representatives, women representatives and even members of parliament. Empowered women are able to attend workshops and seminars, which was not the case before. Now they are able to just inform their husbands and they are free to attend the forums.

Women now attend ‘barazas’, community meetings, and are able to talk in front of men. One time I was called for the District Commissioner’s office meeting and I was given a chance to speak. I quickly agreed and after I finished with my speech, men applauded me for what I said. This was something new to me and made me feel very good. For the first time I felt that men where listening to me while I was representing the issues of other women.

Also, women are accessing job opportunities, leadership positions and are participating in politics. They have the freedom of movement; they are engaging in income generating activities; they are able to own cars, land, plots and joint accounts. Women are now socially, politically and economically empowerment.

Politicians are scared of the power of women

A major challenge in our work is the lack of funds as well as information. The level of ignorance is still high among all community members and the lack of access to appropriate information contributes to this.

Also, women are still afraid of their community and the potential outbreak of violence. This makes our work very hard. Furthermore, very high levels of poverty coupled up with inaccessibility makes things even worse.

Finally certain political interests contribute towards the suppression of women. In my community in Cheptais, since Kenya got its independence we have never had a woman chief because of our culture. Politicians are scared; they know that women are powerful and they are capable of taking up the leadership from them.

When it comes to their political participation or elections, there are other challenges to cross. Accessing funds is quite an uphill task for women and access to adequate funds is crucial during campaigning. The lack of identity cards and/or voter’s cards prevents most women from participating actively in politics and claiming leadership positions.

Women can learn from each other

The Resolution 1325 and new constitution can help women overcome these challenges when women know their rights and participate at all levels of decision-making. When women get to know their rights in the pre-conflict, conflict and post conflict situation, a big percentage of them will succeed in taking up leadership positions and help from that position other fellow women.

But for that to happen, women should stop being ignorant. They should constantly seek information and aim at attending workshops, seminars, churches and other public forums as well as using the internet and any other potential source of information.

They should come together ad organize exposure meetings, which is really important as women should realize that they have a lot to learn from each other.
I come from an area that since 1992 has been going through repetitive political violence. Violent conflict has affected us in 1992, 1997 and in 2007. I have personally been a victim and lost my mother and property in the 2007 violence. Responding to that violence I started working as a community peace animator in Kesses division, Timboroa location in Uasin Gishu County with the women, youth and community leaders.

My main focus is trainings for women to enlighten them about: peacebuilding and how they can get involved in the peaceful resolution of disputes, as well as women’s rights to property as stated in the new constitution. An activity I am also involved in is trauma management for women affected by conflict to enable them resume back to normal life.

**Mary Wachuka**

is a 33 years old teacher and Community Peacebuilding Animator from Timboroa, Kesses division in Uasin Gishu County. She works for the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), Eldoret diocese as a Field Officer. Mary conducts peacebuilding and trauma healing trainings amongst her community. Having experienced the results of violence first hand, she is committed in help women learn about their rights and become active agents of the peacebuilding process.

The Anglican Church of Kenya is part of the Anglican Communion, and includes 30 dioceses. The Primate of the Church is the Archbishop of Kenya. ACK’s mission is to equip people to reach out and transform society with the gospel of Christ. The ACK Diocese of Eldoret was created in 1983 following the sub-division of the former Diocese of Nakuru. On 1st July, 1997 the Diocese of Kitale was carved off leaving the present Diocese of Eldoret. It covers four administrative districts namely: Nandi South, Nandi North, Keiyo and Uasin Gishu.

**My voyage towards inner peace and realization**

During the 2007 post election violence, we almost lost our sense of life value. I personally was in confusion not being able to understand how human life could be considered to be so cheap. How it was
possible for friends to just turn against their neighbours and kill indiscriminately. I lost my mother in an unexpected way, as she was murdered. Initially, I was very bitter but then, the inner voice of reason implored me to talk tirelessly about peaceful coexistence. I did not want others to experience the kind of pain I felt when I lost my mother.

Before 2007, I never thought that I could engage in peace work. The pain of losing my mother motivated me to engage in this work so that other families in the future would not have to go through the kind of pain I went through. This is what motivated me to start working as a peace monitor under the Anglican Church of Kenya. I wanted to use my role to let people know that conflict hurts both the victim and the aggressor because even as an aggressor, you live with the shame and the guilty.

I mostly work with women, from both the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin community. I encourage them to engage in dialogue with one another. This I do through community forums where I bring women from both communities together in one place to talk about their issues and find a common way to resolve them. These forums have really expanded the public space for dialogue in my area.

I am conversant with the provision of the new constitution and I have been working towards informing women about their rights during and after the conflict. However, it is only recently that I fully understood the UN SCR 1325.

Through my work, women have been given a forum to fully express what ails our communities and to make suggestions of how we can get out of this situation.

In this, I can say my work under UN SCR 1325 has really been on promotion of women to ensure that they fully participate in ongoing dialogue forums. I have not yet done anything under the new constitution. Until the recent COPA training, I was not very familiar with the gender gains as presented in the new constitution but now I am.

**Lack of clear knowledge about our rights is what holds us back**

In my work I often refer to the assistance the UN SCR 1325 has provided to women by helping us to come out and show our leadership qualities. In the past women in my community would be intimidated by men. They never used to talk of their contribution in the peaceful co-existence within their communities. Now they believe that what a man can do, women can do it as well. I am now aware that I can vie as women for any political position that I aspire for and so do the other women in my area.

We, women of course have challenges to face whether in terms of implementing the UN SCR 1325 or provisions of the new constitution or spreading its word to other women. The lack of clear knowledge about the Resolution and the constitution is something that holds many women behind. We, who are working towards empowering other women, do not have enough funds to reach out to a large number of them in the way we want. I know that if we could increase our reach we would have a remarkable impact.

The fact that many women at grassroots level are illiterate or semi-illiterate makes things difficult because they are not able to read for themselves the Resolution. Cultural beliefs often make life for women and our work difficult as many African cultures prohibit women from engaging in leadership activities such as politics and peacebuilding. As a result women shy away from these activities.

Due to this general climate when socializing, women suffer from low self-esteem which prevents them from voicing their contribution or articulating what it is they can do. Added to this is the general lack of support from other members of the community who regard women as weak vessels incapable of performing set tasks. As a result women receive no or minimum support.
Similarly, when it comes to women’s full participation in the electoral processes, lack of information, education and funds, low self-esteem, ignorance and dominance by men hinder the potential of women.

Working together- maximizing our results

However, we haven’t yet lost the battle. The Resolution and constitution are here to protect women during and after conflict and enable them to do more. We just need to assist women to understand their rights better, reach out to more of them. There are ways that we, rural women, can overcome these challenges.

First of all through networking; women should get connected to one another so that they can know what is happening around them, what other women in other similar circumstances are doing. Thereby they can provide solidarity and support to each other by sharing experiences and facilitate mutual access to information.

Many women especially those in the rural areas have no access to information. More information can make them better in whatever it is that they are doing whether they are interested in becoming involved in the peacebuilding process, battling GBV, claiming land, training and empowering others. CSOs, churches, mosques and other bodies should come down to the grassroots and provide this kind of information.

For many reasons, women tend to work in isolation from each other. Their activities therefore do not have the results they would if they were conducted in connection to each other. Therefore, a higher degree of cooperation is crucial.
With my work, I am sensitizing women on the new constitution and on peacebuilding. I am helping them to know their rights and get involved in income generating activities. With my work I have been providing guidance and counselling to community members, informing them about the new constitution and creating awareness on women’s rights. Target groups are both women and men from Chebukwabi, Chwele especially those who were affected by the PEV.

I observe a lot of ignorance regarding the new constitution and what it entails for women. The driving force behind my work is my desire to change that.

**Women aware of their freedom and rights**

The biggest success we have achieved because of the new constitution and the Resolution is that women now have knowledge of their rights and freedoms. They are now actively participating in peacebuilding activities. Since they have known their rights and the gains for women that are included in the constitution, women no longer fear the unknown. The women in IDP camps live in peace and feel more protected despite being IDPs.

Because of the new constitution, women are now given political leadership opportunities from the grassroots levels up to the national level. Furthermore, women have been ignorant on their rights especially around GBV. The women we train are now enlightened and can demand their rights.

Following the previous elections and violence, the women I am training swore never to participate in the voting process because they thought it had not meaning. However, now the same women are eager to...
vote and take a role in deciding who will be representing them. They are informed about the voting procedures and the importance of taking part in the elections.

**Rural women to actively engage in community activities**

Of course there are also certain problems I have to face in my work such as lack of adequate resources, funds as well as skills and knowledge. In addition negative cultural perspectives does not make my work much easier.

But what has been achieved so far motivates me to continue my work despite the problems I have to overcome and I would advice all rural women to do the same. There are ways to deal with some of the above-mentioned problems.

There is certainly a need for more capacity building to promote and encourage positive cultural practices and replace the negative ones with positive alternatives. Solicit funds from reliable funding agencies would enhance the impact of empowerment for women and the youth. Through civic education we should enlighten more rural women as to what democracy is and what it means to them, train them on campaign strategies and engage them in the voting process. Rural women should realize their rights and actively seek to get involved in community activities especially decision-making.
For change to be achieved in terms of reinforcing the position of women in the decision making table, all different groups should be targeted during civic education. Thereby in my work I am doing trainings on the new constitution targeting women, men and the youth. I am also focusing my work in training women on their rights, on peacebuilding and their position in the new constitution.

One of the things that motivated me to do my work is that our communities voted against the new constitution in the referendum. That happened because they still don’t understand the new laws included in the referendum or what these laws mean for them, especially for women.

**Women have the freedom to speak**

Despite the lack of initial popularity of the constitution in my area, its existence has facilitated my work and so has done the UN SCR 1325.

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**Mary Njoki**

is a businesswoman and a peacemaker. She is the chairperson of the DPC of Nigeria, Kapsaret division in Uasin Gishu. As a peacemaker she is also participating in several other peace and women groups in her area. Mary is the Chairperson of Konyitana and member of Simama Imara.

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**The Konyitana women’s group is a registered with the department of social services organization with the following objectives: Peacebuilding and dialogue among various communities and Women empowerment and leadership management.**

First of all me and other women, who are engaging in similar work, have been informed on our rights as described in the two documents. By reading them in more detail we have understood them better and realized the many chances that exist for women in areas like ours.

Secondly, the new constitution has given me the chance to speak out. I am feeling more confident to express my views in front of other community members in different forums. I now have the freedom to express my opinion and so do other women.

Educating other women on the new constitution and UN SCR 1325 has brought changes in their lives and motivated them...
to do more. Women from my community seem to be more involved and ready to support each other. For example, the women have formed an inter-communal group; it is called Inukeni women’s group. Inukeni is an umbrella CBO of 30 smaller groups. These self-help groups are from different areas in Kapseret division. Thereby this women’s network due to its structure, is reaching out to many areas in our division.

**Lack of financial support is a challenge**

Training women to become more involved in peacebuilding and decision-making costs and one of the challenges women like me are facing is lack of funding. We need to finance the meetings, transportation and cover other expenditures like the material we use for civic education.

Furthermore, lack of resources is one of the problems women face when they want to claim a position in the decision making table. Everything still belongs to men; resources as well as the right to ‘rule’ the life of their wives. This is a major challenge, which prevents women from becoming leaders and needs to be addressed.

However, I believe things can change. Women have a position in the new constitution and there are already people in our communities who are willing to vote for women in the coming elections for example in Eldoret East and South.
In the area of peacebuilding, as a secretary of the Cheptais Community Forest Association, I have been encouraging women to come out and participate in the activities of the group. The Association is composed of 16 women groups and focused on planting and growing trees as well as develop the shamba system.

During the activities I use the time to mediate between the different women groups as within these women are both victims and perpetrators of the 2007/08 PEV, which often creates clashes. Through our meetings I advice them to forgive each other and I am happy to say that they now work as a team in alleviating poverty through the shamba system in the forest.

In human rights, I have been teaching the community to know their rights such as right of women and girls regarding FGM. As a result, FGM incidents have reduced a bit in my community; still there is much more work to be done to sensitize my community against this harmful practice.

I have also been encouraging women to take up leadership positions and vie for high posts like members of parliament, ward representatives, administrative positions as well as posts in NGOs.
**Enabling women by informing men**

As part of my work, I have been advising men to give women room to participate in the development and peacebuilding agenda. I am also talking to fathers about the importance of giving equal opportunities to education to both girls and boys. I am, in line with the new constitution, advising women to try and increased the assets they own by for example purchasing land or motorbikes. On education I encourage the community to take both boys and girls to school.

The driving force behind my getting involved in community activities is our culture, which has made women to become ‘useless’ in their own society. The rights of women are being violated on a daily basis. The women in my community are beaten by their husbands; sometime to the extent of being mutilated. They are not able to own any property due to retrogressive beliefs and young girls are not going to school because of early marriages.

**Successes so far**

Working on the above issues I am pleased to present the following successes we have achieved:

- Community integration whereby the victims and perpetrators of the PEV come together and embrace forgiveness and reconciliation and work together for development.
- Women have come out and try to become leaders and there are men supporting them in their attempt
- Children rights violations have reduced and now FGM is slowly being shunned away because the community is able to understand the effects of FGM on women and girls
- More and more women have come up and participate in peacebuilding activities
- There is improvement in the rate of girls who are attending school unlike before where in each household there was a clear preference made towards the boy

**Specific success stories**

There is a woman whose brothers were killed by people she knew well during the PEV. At first she could not face or come into contact with the killers, but in one of the workshops I facilitated was about peace and forgiveness and this woman was one of the participants. After the sessions, she decided to forgive the people who killed her brothers and burnt their property. Now with all what happened behind her, she has been able to move on with her life, take an active role in the peacebuilding process and become the chairperson of a group called Nomnyiet forest group.

Overall, more women have taken up leadership roles; for example a woman was elected to be a coffee factory society treasurer for the first time. Furthermore, in the year 2010, a female circumciser was arrested before mutilating some girls during the circumcision period.

Men are now being arrested when they are found to have beaten their wives. So there is some degree of respect for women in the community but there is still so much that needs to be done so that all men understand that women can equally be involved in development, leadership and in decision making at all levels.

**Culture as a challenge, my own experience**

Of course, there are also the challenges we are coming across in our work. In my community, men do not want women to talk in front of them.

I was the chairperson of the Rwantet organic Farmers with 332 members. In the group there were also men and youth. I managed to connect with the ‘Daughters of Africa’, exporters of organic onions, to assist in getting the right seedlings for the onions. When the older men saw that I was able to successfully lobby for the seedlings, they became uncomfortable and they started abusing me saying I was a small girl and that I cannot take any decisions. Back then, due
to my frustration and the young of my age I had to resign and my position was soon occupied by a man. Thereby, culture is a huge hindrance to women’s development in Mount Elgon.

Funding is also a challenge in Mount Elgon as it is a vast area and some regions are not easy to be reached without the adequate resources. Poverty levels are quite high. Women do not have sufficient funds to register or move around to other districts because they cannot afford transport and the roads are bad.

Illiteracy has been a challenge to women because most of them have not gone to school. This prevents them from qualifying for leadership posts. This low level of education and understanding prevents women from participating in peacebuilding activities in my area as well as the electoral processes.

Parallel, there is a lot of political interference during the elections by politicians. Most of the politicians talk against women and use abusive language to disrupt women from taking up leadership positions.

Moreover, women are some times ignorant. They think that leadership is only for men and so they feel comfortable in taking a back sit and leaving men to make decisions for them; decisions which in most cases do not favour them.

**Sensitization can help us overcome the challenges**

Rural women can overcome these challenges if we increase sensitization against the harmful cultures as well as highlight the importance of women to take up leadership positions.

Rural women, should act as mentors for the young girls in their community as well as help the young men to understand that women can also be leaders and that men should be supporting them in their effort.

The NGOs working in the area in different capacities, should try at all times to work with women who have been left out of development for many years.

Most importantly, women from the rural areas can overcome the challenges they are facing by believing that they are able to change situations by taking up leadership posts, and by becoming financially, socially and economically empowered.

**Our Instruments in this attempt**

The Resolution 1325 and the new constitution can help us increase women’s participation in decision-making, in conflict resolution and the electoral processes because there are offering many opportunities for women.

As demonstrated by these instruments, it is important to adopt gender perspectives when negotiating and implementing peace agreements in areas like:

- Special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and post conflict reconstruction.
- Support local women’s peace initiative and indigenous process for conflict resolutions and involve women in all of the peace agreements and implementation mechanisms.
- Ensure the protection of and respect for women’s human rights particularly relating to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and judiciary.
- Take special measures to protect women and girls from GBV, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse and violence in situations of armed conflict.

My commitment is to continue my work and teach women about the existence of the Resolution 1325 and what it entails for women in conflict and post conflict times.

The fact that there are so many gains for women in the constitution is enough a reason for me to help women from my community to understand and take up what is rightfully theirs. Women should get empowered so that they begin to be seen at all levels of decision-making and bring change in their community and the nation.
The need for women to be empowered and being agents of change—being proactive in social-economic and political development is what drives my passion for my work.

I strongly believe in the opportunities that opened up for women because of the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution and I am using these instruments in my work to promote these opportunities. Thereby, the peace following Kenya’s PEV saw more women representatives in local and national levels in leadership.

Based on the Resolution we are holding civic education activities, informing the people about women and child rights. The new constitution is also offering many opportunities for the Kenyan women and we are lobbying for the implementation of the women’s interests, which are presented in this constitution.

Establishment and recognition of women forums is a big achievement

In our work we encounter many challenges but also achieve important successes as a result of the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution. Most important is the establishment of women forums for women to address social, economic and political issues. The forums are recognized as women led and focused organizations by both public and private entities, which in turn give more gravity in the decisions made by women within them. A further achievement is the current media dissemination of information on women rights, and the economic empowerment of women who are now more equipped with peacebuilding skills.
The UN SCR 1325 has brought many positive changes in our work. It has enabled us to do focused activism as well as strategic empowerment and creation of peacebuilding capacities. It has facilitated us in organizing and directing better the development of skills of women for leadership and governance.

The new constitution with its provisions for women is a big plus against retrogressive cultural practices. It is providing us with a better platform for property protection and inheritance. Women and child rights are safeguarded and there is a better platform for women representation at all levels of leadership.

Still there is much more work that has to be done so as to enable us and the other women to properly implement the provisions of the new constitution and the UN SCR 1325. We need more resources to establish a higher percentage in women’s representation, and increase our political influence by improving existing women structures and platforms.

To overcome some of the challenges we need to enable the formation of more networks by mobilizing resources locally. It is crucial to increase the network off women allies in all sectors, we need to become each other’s keeper and refuse to be manipulated or compromised.

**Economic empowerment is essential for participation in leadership**

Economic empowerment of women is also very important as lack of resources for campaigning and the nomination fees are seriously hindering the chances of women to fully participate in the elections process. Insecurity during campaigning as well as poor coverage of women candidates due to discrimination makes it even more difficult for us.

We need to ensure that all women are more familiar with the election processes and aware of the existing political parties so they can become a part of the process.

When it comes to women taking an active role in the peacebuilding processes, they often find as an obstacle the existence of unresolved, long-term issues such as land disputes and historical injustices. Some times women feel that these issues are too complicated and they do not know how to go about dealing with them. Furthermore, the dominance of men in most if not all leadership positions, prevents us women from getting access to decision making roles.

I believe that the true implementation of the new Kenyan constitution as well as the UN SCR 1325 can change all the above. However, much needs to be done to get adequate resources so as to implement the above two instruments and actualize their gains.
I am a volunteer with CUAHA (Churches united against HIV & AID), a regional organisation created by churches to work alongside church leaders and increase awareness among the congregation about HIV/AIDS. I have also worked on peacebuilding in Mount Elgon through KAP (Kitale Aids Programme). There I have worked on trauma healing with women victims of GBV, traumatized by the war and those who got infected with HIV/AIDS.

Kiminini is a poor locality, characterized by high levels of girls dropping out of school and early pregnancies. Most of the people in this area are originally from Mount Elgon running away from violence. What made me do this work is the history of sexual violence of girls and women in my area and the fact that many people were getting infected with HIV as a result.

**Metrine Gaudenciah Mwasame**

is a peace animator and VCT counsellor from Kimini, West Trans Nzoia volunteering with CUAHA (Churches united against HIV & AID) towards improving the lives of women and children victims of sexual violence in her area.

In the process of understanding the Resolution

I am not familiar with the UN SCR 1325, and initially I not even interested in it since I did not see its relevance to my work. That was because I did not know what it was about. After receiving more information about it, I understood what a useful tool this UN Resolution can be for my work.

I am currently in the process of understanding more about the Resolution and how it is going to benefit my work in my area. Although I have not been consciously working towards implementing the UN SCR 1325, a lot of the ideas I have
been trying to promote are reflected in the Resolution. Now, women like me have a tool to do our work.

**The UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution enable women to open up**

Although I am not directly working towards implementing the Resolution or constitution I see the benefits of women knowing about it in my work.

Working with victims of sexual violence is hard. At the beginning, there was a lot of stigma. Nobody would come to the VCT. Most of the women who are raped even fear reporting the matter to the hospitals or the administration. They only talk when there is a consequence of this rape such as a STD or pregnancy. Violated women fear discrimination and by sharing what happened to them, they feel they will lose their self-esteem. I wanted to help these traumatized girls and women who have been suffering in silence.

However, now women learn more about their rights and consequently decide to open up; women victims of rape do walk more easily in the VCT now and that has helped them a lot. One mother from Kiminini was raped during the Mount Elgon violence and was infected with an STD. Still she got the courage to come to us; she has been treated and now she continues her life. Other women who are HIV positive are now on medication, which improved significantly the quality of their life.

When more women learn about their rights, they will realize the extent of their freedom and will seek more information so as to improve their lives.

**Challenges of a woman working toward battling HIV/AIDS**

In my work I have come across the challenges that women patients are dealing with. When couples come for testing, it is women who mostly come up positive with an infection; frequently due to a sexual assault in her past. As a result women suffer further violence from their husbands and end up being blamed for spreading the
As a woman working towards improving the lives of women with HIV/AIDS, I am facing many challenges. The fact that I am a woman makes it often harder. Being a woman, it is expected that my husband would cater for me and as a result my pay is very low. Furthermore, there are men who come to me as patients when drunk and I have often find myself in a very uncomfortable position as some of them try to seduce me. When I keep a firm stand, they start being insulting towards me. The way that men in our community are viewing us and our work is clear by the mocking way they refer to us: the HIV sisters.

Community expectations for women

There are many drawbacks, which prevent us from fully participating in the decision-making processes whether political or other. First of all the myth that women are not capable of leading men as well as the fact that we are not suppose to be expressing our views in front of men. This is also linked to the belief that women who vie for political leadership are women of loose morals. Unfortunately, these are commonly accepted beliefs, often internalized even by us, women. To save our marriages and not upset our husbands, most of us just go along with these preconceptions. Men and our communities view us as the weak sex whose work should only revolve around the kitchen and children. As a result they do not support our personal or professional development. Often husbands of women who are interested in politics expect them to choose between politics and their families threatening them that if they proceed with their political careers they will not be allowed to see their children.

The lack of fund complicates things further whereby most women here are poor and depend on their husbands. Within our community there is the belief that a leader is not someone with good ideas and values but someone with a lot of money who can bribe voters. Consequently, the chances of women to access political roles become very slim.

Most of the women in our area are traumatized by GBV and the conflict and that is why they shy away from leadership. Women originally from Mount Elgon, residing now here who have experienced first hand the atrocities in their areas. Due to their trauma these women do not believe that peacebuilding or women’s empowerment is even possible. Even those who are more empowered, consider money and donor support the only way to achieve peace and avoid taking an active role in the decision making process. Overall, women have not yet realized the important role they can play in the peacebuilding process as community members and women.

Defending ourselves- knowing our rights

All us women, working towards improving our lives or that of other fellow women, we have to be very strong in defending ourselves and also have enough information to know our rights. We have to start from the basics, claiming equal opportunities in education and training so we can stand a better chance of getting well-paid jobs, jobs, which are currently occupied by men only.

The provisions of the new constitution and the UN SCR 1325 are our opportunity as women. Opportunity to choose not to shy away because of GBV, opportunity to start believing in the role we can play in bringing peace in our communities. Teaching women about the Resolution and constitution however is not enough. We have to parallel work towards changing perceptions within the communities and among men as well as increase access to funding opportunities.
In my work with women I have been implementing aspects of the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution. I have carried out community outreach sessions on peacebuilding through initiation of dialogue among survivors and perpetrators of violence. I have also been holding psychosocial debriefing sessions, which involve counselling all parties before they come face to face with each other for the reconciliation process.

Through the use of theatre, sensitive information on women gains in the new constitution as well as the role they have to play according to the UN SCR 1325 are addressed. This has included sensitizing women on the affirmative action, which enables them to vie for women representative positions, and to actively engage in politics.

I am further involved in capacity building trainings for the youth, both boys and girls, on the early warning signs of conflict, conflict management and human rights. This is aimed at ensuring that they can then assist in the peacebuilding process by translating the knowledge gained to practice. I have also worked towards economically empowering young women in basic project and financial management and assisted them in resource mobilization and utilization so that they can become financially independent.

**Empowering women today will ensure a better future for the women of tomorrow**

The provisions of the new constitution and the UN SCR1325 have brought positive consequences so far. Young women who now want to take a more active role in decision-making are taking the initiative to
register for national ID cards in preparation for the 2012 elections.

Women are also realizing that the constitution has a lot of gains for them. They can now own land, and some have been already given land as part of a relevant resettlement scheme, the Chepyuk phase III.

Additionally, through our work in trauma healing, women are now able to talk about the injustices that happened to them during the conflict.

Economic empowerment of women is important for their financial independence. By supporting these women through capacity building and in future through providing them with capital for projects I believe we can ensure that their children will be better placed than them.

**Women are not allowed to speak**

As a woman, I feel the pain of most women and girls in the community I work for. What hurts me most is that the majority cannot talk about it since according to our culture it is the men who are allowed to do so. It is also the men, who make decisions, which at times are of no benefit to women and the girl child. Some of these decisions are culturally backed up and once certain rituals have taken place no one is allowed to speak or go against them.

Household chores occupy most of women’s time, which prevents them from attending the peacebuilding processes in their community. When it comes to political participation most of the women have too low levels of education to vie for women representatives, senators, ward representatives or Members of Parliament. Even if that was not an obstacle, the fear of how community will view a woman if she vies for a political seat is a major set back.

**Aid dependency is one of the challenges we face**

There is also the donor dependency attitude whereby women will only show up for civic education if there is an allowance involved. They still do not realize the benefits of civic education for themselves. Also there is the fear of women who view themselves as inferior. They will vie for a political position since they believe it is not their place to be leaders and as a result, they also oppose to any other measure, which will uplift other women.

Furthermore, impassable roads due to bad weather are preventing us from reaching some target groups like the ones located in the Chepyuk and Kipsigion areas of Mount Elgon. This is further coupled by poor communication, which makes our work more difficult in these areas.

Illiteracy levels are high and access to information limited whereby most women do not understand the constitution and have never read or heard about the UN SCR 1325. Finally, most women do not have a national identity card or a voter’s card and are not willing to take active part in politics as they believe that since the last election was flawed, so will be the next one.

**Advocacy at grassroots and local administration level is crucial**

More capacity building on the constitution and the UN SCR 1325 for women will help them understand their role as peace makers and their gains in the new constitution. Advocacy at the grassroots level is needed to promote the inclusion of women in decision-making by becoming members of the supreme council of elders and the Peace Committees.

Furthermore, we need to advocate the local administration to conduct mobile ID registration and educate women and youth on the importance of voting. After further empowering women in Mount Elgon, more advocacy should take place to highlight their role as decision makers on key issues on peace in the Sabaot supreme council of elders. These have to be women who are assertive enough to lay the issues on the table.
Rural women themselves can contribute greatly in changing attitudes by encouraging the community women and youth to try and own the peace processes and commit to peacebuilding without necessarily focusing on the monetary gains.

**Use the Resolution to advocate for our rights**

In the effort to overcome the different challenges we encounter, we need to use the tools we have. The UN SCR 1325 promotes increased participation of women at all decision-making levels, in conflict resolution and peace. Women using the Resolution can and have advocated for representation in positions of power and decision making at the District Peace committee level despite cultural barriers and beliefs.

Both the new constitution and UN SCR 1325 protects women’s rights, therefore gender cannot be used to band women from vying for positions. Further, capacity building on this will aid in reducing fear in women. The minimum education levels for vying for various positions can be used as a tool to demonstrate to women the importance of advancing academically and empower them to further their education or those of their girl child in preparation for their future elections.
I work as an HIV counsellor where I offer information regarding HIV/AIDS through outreach activities and work towards implementing women’s rights. Part of my work involves increasing awareness on GBV where I work with sex workers whose rights are violated through beatings and clients failing to pay for the services offered to them. As a result of the 2007/2008 PEV, women started engaging in sex to earn a living.

Working towards implementing women’s rights I specifically focus on GBV issues. I also train women on HIV/AIDS issues to create awareness of the disease.

I am also working with women living with disabilities and more specifically deaf women in fighting for their rights to equal education. I do so by interpreting for them during civic education on matters related to their rights as well as transferring livelihood skills to them.

The groups of women I am working with are those who have been neglected for a long time. There are women whose human rights, like right to access to education and health services, have been violated through discrimination either done by the families or the society. It is this discrimination and negligence that makes me fight for their fundamental rights.

**New constitution for the protection of all women against GBV**

The constitution has provided a number of benefits to women. First, there is the two/thirds principle, which enhances women’s participation in politics. There is also the principle of gender and equality in terms of employment in the public service and the judiciary. The constitution has also allowed women to own property and in

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**Scholastica Kosgey**

is a HTC (Haemophilia Treatment Centre) service provider and HIV counsellor from Uasin Gishu. She is working with sex workers and deaf women increasing awareness and protecting the rights of these two marginalised groups.
case of marriage they are entitled to half the property if their marriage comes to an end.

Kenyan women have now a right to freedom from all forms of violence. The recent act on FGM will put an end to the brutality done to women during circumcision or at least so we hope. With the new laws women can acquire citizenship with their children and husbands. Also, women aspirants have been protected with new dispensation. Through the education act girls have been given equal rights to go to school as boys.

**Disability rights in the new constitution**

Previously the constitution has not been supporting the fundamental rights for the disabled persons. Their rights were not clear, neither where there clear laws regarding this group of people. But the new constitutions are addressing the issues of marginalize groups and is giving them equal rights to any other person in terms of education, employment and access to health care. For the first time they will have a representative in the 2012 elections that will be the voice of the people with disabilities.

The new constitution advocates for women rights and fights GBV in the communities. This is a big success for women and will help me in my work with sex workers. As soon as more widespread awareness takes place, these women will know that they are not supposed to be abused by anyone and so they will end up standing up for their rights.

The UN SCR 1325 is another powerful instrument in our work against GBV and inclusion of women in decision-making. The Resolution emphasizes the strength of women in leadership and peace processes through recognizing the role of women in peacebuilding. In addition it ensures that gender components are included in field peacekeeping operations. This in practise is done by adopting a gender perspective when negotiating and implementing peace agreements and by supporting local women peace initiatives for conflict resolution. The UN SCR 1325 continues to specifically protect women during armed conflict by putting up measures to protect women and girls from GBV.

**Constitution vs tradition: Where do women stand?**

The greatest challenge in implementing the new constitution is that women have the mentality that if the previous constitution failed to protect them, then how will the new one do so for them? There is also the aspect of culture where in some communities women are not allowed to be leaders and own property. A further example is the case of divorce where in some communities women are not allowed to divorce. Thereby and despite the new constitution, women who are been violated and sexually abused by their husbands can never divorce; this is simply not an acceptable practice within their community.

Although this challenge might require time to overcome there is still things we can do. By having sufficient funds we can hold women forums at grassroots level thereby creating networks among women who will support each other. Furthermore, more awareness has to be created on the new constitution and specifically the rights of women. Women can also use the self-help groups or merry go rounds to pass the information regarding women’s rights.

**Discrimination, beliefs and lack of education preventing factors for women**

The next elections are near but there are still many obstacles that hinder women’s full participation. There is the aspect of discrimination where women are thought not to be worth as leaders and are discriminated because of their marital status; if for example they are single. So cultural beliefs and practises prevent women from participating in the elections.
There is also poverty and the fact that politicians are expected to have money; who would support a poor woman vying for a political position?

Other obstacles include illiteracy where women have little or no education. The current requirement for certain positions is at least a university degree or equivalent hence this will leave out women from participating. There is also lack of information on the ground concerning the elections and what the constitution entails for women.

The new constitution and the UNSCR1325 are there to help women to overcome these challenges by having affirmative actions on dissemination at all levels, from the government to grassroots. The civil society should advocate for more funds to be used in carrying out civic education, enlightening women to participate fully in politics and peacebuilding processes and to get them to know what the constitution has for them.
Vulnerable women and girls in the ADC farms are frequently victims of sexual violence and STDs. So as to get money and goods to provide for their children, they have to give in to men’s sexual demands. Such a trend has also raised the HIV prevalence among women. Most of these women were not aware of their right to refuse such exploitation. I have a passion about health education, counselling, peacebuilding and women’s protection. This passion combined with the hard realities that these women face in the ADC farms drove my decision to engage in civic education work.

The new constitution and the UN SCR 1325 are promoting human rights and women’s rights in particular addressing issues such as sexual violence. By informing women farmers about their rights I am protecting and empowering them. Based on these laws they know that men are not allowed to ask for them sexual favours in exchange of commodities and they know what they should do if they are victims of GBV.

I have been training rural women on the constitution, in Kwanza constituency, in Trans Nzoia county. I have also done advocacy work in promoting the 5 pillars of the UN SCR 1325, where women have participated in preventing violence amongst the community by providing a positive approach in women groups and churches. Another thing I do is training rural women on behaviour change communication. This skill does not only change the trained women but has the potential of changing through them a whole community by realizing the importance of good health and peace at community and county level.

**Ann Norman Mutungi**

is a Community Health Worker and the Chief Executive Officer of CANA from Kwanza District, Trans Nzoia. Ann is training women-farmers to know their rights and promote those rights.

**CANA** is a community-based organization founded in 2002 as the women’s group (CHAMA) and was registered in 2003. The desire of the founder was to reach to rural women in Kwanza constituency Trans Nzoia County who are marginalized. The vision of CANA is to create an independent community free from diseases and poverty. CANA’s mission is to reach out to the vulnerable groups with knowledge and skills so as to transform their lives and increase their capacity to handle socio-economic challenges.
**Fighting HIV/AIDS**

Due to the new laws I have been able to distribute both male and female condoms as a measure to prevent HIV/AIDS other STDs and do family planning. Together with a group of women we also registered a relevant CBO in 2003 targeting vulnerable and marginalised women. We also created several women’s groups, which we visit quarterly so as to give them more information and update them about the provision of more services for the affected women. With our work we help victimized women to claim the normal life and help they deserve. An recent example is that of S., a widow who following the death of her husband was forced to become a sex worker so as to support her four children. During one of our trainings on the new constitution and the UN SCR 1325, S. learned about her rights and the risks of HIV/AIDS, an issue we were also covering. Following the trainings, she visited a health facility where she was informed that she was HIV/AIDS positive. With our support S. claimed access to proper treatment and counselling and got economically empowered. She now produces and sells vegetables in her village and looks forward in life with a positive attitude.

**Empowered and confident to express myself**

With the new constitution and the UN SCR 1325 I feel empowered and able to express myself better. I also feel that I have a part to play in the county unlike before where my field was only working with the women in the ADC farms. The gains for women in the new constitution and the protection the UN SCR 1325 offers, encourages women to embrace change and take leadership positions.

The challenges I face in my work are linked to the fact that most rural women are not aware of neither instruments and do not know their rights. They have never come across the UN SCR 1325 and never had the chance to read the new constitution. This is either because they never felt the connection between their daily problems and these instruments or because cultural norms prevented these women from accessing them. For this reason, in CANA we are trying to educate women about the gains of women in the new constitution, which are also highlighted in the UN SCR 1325.

**Using existing community structures for our advantage**

Rural women working toward implementing aspects of the Resolution or the new constitution should come up with an implementation strategy by using in their advantage the existing structures in the community.

For example Culture; we need to relay on the positive role that culture can play and ‘use’ positive cultural beliefs, which are beneficial to women. To empower other women we need to embrace the existing groups at community level and use them for empowerment and dissemination of information. We also need to encourage women to join and vie for the elective seats and become part of the local community committees. By doing so women will become more aware of their capacities and needs. By educating other women, coming together and as a team addressing other issues we can overcome the challenges of our work.

Rural women should start with the most important pressing issues affecting them. Then they can organize lobby groups or networks, which will be enable them to address these issues fully.

The main obstacle, which prevents women from participating in the political and peacebuilding processes is the belief that women should be home-makers while men are opinion-makers and leaders. When an African woman talks politics or gets involved in peacebuilding, she is threatened by men. So women have developed a negative attitude for politics and peacebuilding. The truth is that women are not only capable of making decisions but their rights are also protected under the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution of Kenya. It is high time for women to step forward and participate by promoting and protecting their fundamental rights.
I have been directly working towards implementing aspects of the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution in the Nalondo, Wasio, Kangaga, Kaboro, Sirkani, Cherendio, Kimaswa, kapkota, Chemondi, Kapkirongo, Kaptoboi of Chepkube, Sasur, Cheptais and Cheskaki locations in the Mount Elgon area.

I mostly work with women groups, sensitizing them on GBV and providing them with legal aid on the processes of succession and inheritance, sexual violence, children rights, as well as raising their awareness on the gains of women in the new constitution. Part of my work is also referring issues of violation to the police and the district children officer.

The driving force in what I do is the need to ensure Mount Elgon has leadership representation, which addresses the pain that women of this region have gone through as well as acknowledges their contributions in the on going reconstruction. In the past, the leadership and the people in decision-making roles tended to overlook issues affecting the women.

Surprisingly, even as I tried to champion women’s participation in rebuilding the society, I was not aware I was working on one of the pillars of UN SCR 1325. Therefore, realizing that there are legal documents I can use in my work has really given me courage and more skills on how to go about. I now see the new constitution and the Resolution as two extremely useful tools for all actors working towards women’s protection and empowerment.

Success starts from us

I am happy to say that knowledge of the Resolution and the new constitution lead to many success stories including my own. I have been married for 17 years. My husband
wanted us to have as many children as possible, without trusting my decision I agreed to whatever he said and bore him seven kids. My husband did not allow me to attend any meetings or workshops initially. I however realized that women who go to sensitization meetings were different from me. They were knowledgeable, they were bold and they knew their rights. I aspired to be like them so I started to attend such meeting albeit with lots of resistance from my husband initially. Today, I am even a trained paralegal, reaching out to village women with information in their rights and my husband has accepted the situation. We live in peace. I have come across several similar cases concerning other women.

The UN SCR 1325 has brought changes such as enhancing specific measures for protection of women against negative effects during or after conflicts. It also enhances resource mobilization for women something that has been a challenge in participating in leadership positions and peacebuilding.

It also endorses gender and human rights training for peace-keepers and civilian personnel in peace support operations. Finally, it urges the government to increase its financial technologies and logistic support for gender and human rights sensitive training efforts.

**Networking is the way to overcome the challenge of limited funds**

Women have been unable to access information on the UN SCR 1325 because they are domesticated and constantly engaged with the many responsibilities at the family and that makes my work more difficult. One other major challenge I have experienced is linked to the limited funds women can access. Women engaged in development activities are receiving no or limited funding and significantly less than activities carried out by men.

Rural women working on similar issues should link and network with each other and together approach donors. To do the latter successfully they have to find opportunities to improve their proposal writing skills as well as become more conversant with new technologies.

As women we should also come out and support women who are vying for leadership positions, if we want to see a change.

**Insecurity and gender imbalances block women’s way to leadership**

The main obstacles hindering women from participating full in elections and even peacebuilding processes are: First of all Insecurity of women to step forward and existing gender imbalances and discrimination. Clearly gender mainstreaming has not taken place at all levels since men are dominating all higher positions. Lack of accessibility of women to micro credit finance is also a major obstacle.

However, the UN SCR 1325 is there to assist us overcome most of these problems by reaffirming the obligation of the state parties towards the CEDAW.

Another major thing is that women should unite and implement the provisions of the UN SCR 1325 and new constitution by vying for political positions or supporting other women to do so.

Furthermore, leadership and peace making is important to start at the family level and that is something women everywhere can already start doing while lobbying and advocating towards establishing our position without fear.

There are many successful examples of women who came together and achieved important changes such the case of the Liberian women. We should be looking and learning from these examples and thereby form as many women movements as possible as the Liberian women did and succeeded.
As a founding member of the Mwavuli women group, one of my key objectives is to empower widowed women economically. We are doing so by village-based microfinance activities whereby we encourage merry go rounds to accumulate money. The concentrated amount is given to one member per month to carry out an economic activity within their homes. So as to ensure a degree of food security, we are furthermore assisting each group member to keep 3 hens in the homestead as a source of cheap proteins for the children in terms of eggs.

**Learning the UN SCR 1325**

As soon as I learned about the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution I realized its relevance to my work and the importance of ensuring that women understand and are aware of their provisions. Although I have heard of the Resolution before, I was not aware of how it relates to me as a woman in a conflict zone. I became truly familiar with it through the training we received from COPA on women’s empowerment in peacebuilding. The training made me realize that the UN SCR 1325, as an instrument prepared by the United Nations responsible for the security of women in times of conflict, is an extremely useful tool for us, women. It outlines measures aimed at ensuring that we can actively contribute to peacebuilding activities during conflict and that we are well protected against violence.

As an instrument, which aims at ensuring that women are given opportunities to undertake leadership roles in peacebuilding, the Resolution paves the way for women to participate in decision making, in conflict prevention and management. Thereby...
we, women should be familiar with the Resolution including its provisions on prevention, protection, promotion, participation, relief and recovery.

Equally important for us Kenyan women is to become familiar with the provisions of our new constitution and the gains for women. Under the Bill of Rights, women have now been given equal rights with men to own property. Furthermore, the affirmative action in the constitution has given women considerable opportunities for representation. They are entitled to at least 1/3 of positions in decision-making levels. This is a big favour to the women.

Finally, the law now recognizes GBV and any other form of violence against women as a crime, which is punishable. These three are major achievements through the new constitution we should be aware of and use to claim our rights.

**Enable women to speak up**

Realizing the importance of women to become familiar with these instruments which can help them claim their rights, we have organized trainings and meetings in partnership with the St John’s Catholic Church-Eldoret on self awareness.

Through these trainings, our members have raised their confidence and have gone ahead to be elected leaders of other women groups and church groups. Through the awareness trainings, widows have gained confidence to voice their opinions on issues of the community Development Fund-CDF.

Parallel, under the Bill of Rights, women have now been given equal rights with men to own property. Culturally, women could not own any property and nor did they even have any right to invest. Women were inferior to men and one example of how that was expressed is that women could not own land. The new constitution is allowing women to own property. This in turn has enabled us to assist women who eventually were able to inherit their family land. Together with our microfinance programme other women have through our loans and economic empowerment been able to buy personal property.

Most important outcome of the Resolution and the new constitution is that women have gained self-esteem and have even had the confidence to raise questions on the use of the CDF bursary funds.

**Cultural norms, an obstacle still to overcome**

However, our work is still very challenging when it comes to implementing the UN SCR 1325 or the new constitution. A significant obstacle is the lack of sufficient funds as well as lack of enlightenment about the Resolution due to its complexity. I myself despite working on women’s empowerment issues, I only got to truly understand it during the COPA/PWAG training.

Finally one of the major obstacles we are facing is the lack of self-confidence of the women we are working with. Even if they become aware of their rights provided by these instruments, it is not straight forward that they will actually claim them.

When it comes to specifically the women’s full participation in the election or Peacebuilding process a major obstacle is the cultural values of the communities women are coming from. That together with the lack of civic education and illiteracy, heavy workload in the household and an entranced feeling of inferiority prevents women from going out there and claiming their rights in leadership.

The way to overcome these challenges: Unity! We need to start trusting truly each other and working together. Through this way women can overcome these challenges. Parallel, more training is essential so as to increase the awareness of women on their gains in the new constitution and the Resolution.
Armed conflict in our area has resulted in many GBV victims, both women and children where the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) has committed many atrocities to our people. Because of that violence, the Mount Elgon Resident Association (MERA), has been doing civic education since 2004 on human rights, peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Although I have been working on informing women about their rights when it comes to GBV, I only recently heard about the UN SCR 1325 realizing that it speaks about the same things we are speaking. Learning about the Resolution will make our work easier since we can now use it as a tool to inform women and young girls as well as claim a place for them in the peacebuilding process.

**Political interference and limited funding are challenges**

Main challenge in our work is the lack of funds, which does not allow MERA to hold more meetings. Political interference makes things even worse. When it comes to women, despite being informed on their rights, still the retrogressive culture, poverty and lack of exposure prevents them from claiming those rights. Fear of expressing their views in case this exposes them to more violence combined with all the above factors do not allow women to take an active role in the decision-making process.

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**Eunice Temko Pkania**

is a farmer and representative of the Mount Elgon Resident Association (MERA) from Chepkube, Cheptais Division.
Women learning from each other

We can overcome these problems by engaging all community members in fighting the bad aspects of our culture. We also need to enlighten women on democracy, campaigning strategies and the role they can play now with the new constitution in place. We have to develop a relevant campaigning strategy and engage the local media to not only inform women about the existence of the UN SCR 1325 and the new constitution but also the importance of claiming their rights.

Women should be taken for exposure visits so that they can learn from the experiences of other women and see the differences between their areas and the places they visit. They should also get active and form groups so that they can involve themselves in Village Savings and Loans Associations.

Finally, there is a big role for NGOs to play by providing more solicit funds to CBOs, which are essential to carry out some of these activities.
In Burnt Forest, Tarakwa location, I work with women, OVCs, widows and youth. I have been teaching women and widows on issues of trauma healing and counselling. I am also teaching them to know their rights, and helping them to engage in income generating activities so as to eradicate poverty within their families and empower them in the process.

Prior to the referendum, I was lobbying women to vote for the new constitution since for the first time it considers women and provides important gains for them in terms of leadership, citizenship and property ownership.

I decided to work towards peacebuilding due to a personal experience. In 1992, during the first ethnic clashes involving members of the two different communities in our area, my husband was killed. I was devastated as a newly married woman with a 2 months baby. When I was assisted to deal with my trauma, I managed to come in terms with this experience. Since then I promised to always assist women who have been affected by conflict to outlive their experiences like I did.

Most women in Burnt Forest are illiterate and have no access to information. I have tried to inform them about their rights by familiarizing them with the pillars of the UN SCR 1325. This is important for women in our area given that every time the country has a general election, they are badly hit by post election violence.

**Now women know they have rights**

The Resolution has increased representation of women in various levels of decision-making. With the new constitution, women have the right to own and inherit...
property and their foreign spouses can have dual citizenship. Now women have the right to vote and be voted for. They now have a right to know their status in regards to HIV/AIDS and access counselling centres as well as engaging in family planning.

Informing the women of Burnt Forest about their rights and familiarizing them with the Resolution and the provisions of the new constitution has not been easy. Lack of widespread information prevents them from accessing the relevant documents and most women prior to the trainings had never heard of the Resolution.

Furthermore, lack of exposure hinders their potential for leadership. Frequently, there is a conflict of interest between our work to empower women and certain people within the communities who feel 'threatened' by the women’s empowerment. These aspects are making our work in implementing the Resolution and the provision of the new constitution quite hard.

Discrimination from men, insecurity and fear of violence are only some of the reasons preventing women from taking up leadership roles. Finally, lack of time because of household duties and lack of funds make it even more difficult for the women of Burnt Forest to engage in the political processes or taking up leadership roles.

**We need to create a safe environment for women to advance**

My advice to other rural women involved in the same work as me is to first engage all community members and educate them on the negative aspects of the culture, which prevent women from advancing.

We also need to network better between us and help the women we empower to network with other women peacebuilders in other areas going through the similar process. Through that way we can support and learn from each other.

Moreover, we have to work towards creating an environment whereby women are protected and can focus on advancing further. For this, we need more NGOs to come to Burnt Forest and focus on security issues. But we also have a responsibility as women to go to the next elections and vote out politicians who do not support peace in our communities.

Finally, there is a need for more widespread civic education on campaign strategies and democracy so as to equip women with the necessary tools so as to stand a change in the political arena.

The Resolution 1325 and the new constitution have really assisted women so far to claim leadership roles. More work is needed from both women as well as NGOs.
I am a community mobilizer and a woman peacebuilder operating in the general area of Cheptais. What motivated me to do this work is the conflict that occurred in our region and the need for peace especially when considering the extent in which women have suffered. In my work I have been championing and protecting women’s rights during periods of conflict as well as during the peacebuilding process.

Women can be mediators of peace even at family level

In the recent past women did not know their rights as presented in the constitution and the Resolution 1325. Through our work, we have been sensitizing women on participating in peacebuilding activities in the region. I have explained women how they can contribute towards peacebuilding at even micro level and become peace-makers starting from their own houses and going up to the national level. As a result of our work, more women are aware of their rights and the role they can play within their family, community and country.

Through my work in peacebuilding I have been able to reach to most women and now they know that they have a role to play in the peace process. They are the people who bring up the children, the future of our country, so by preaching peace to their children women can contribute to the formation of a peaceful society. So this is a first way that woman can be used as a tool to maintain peace.
Positive changes in my community due to the SCR 1325 and constitution

Women are now tools for peace. They have started making an impact in the community because they are able to speak about peace and are listened to. Men have begun to regard their wives as important and value more what they say. What I am witnessing is that slowly the culture of women just sitting and not getting involved in community development is slowly going away. Women in my community said they will not keep quiet when things go wrong, not any more and they will always champion for peace.

Many women know now that they are protected by the constitution and so they are taking up political seats and other leadership positions so that they can bring changes in their community.

Challenges women of Mount Elgon face

First of all it is certain harmful cultural practices, which exist across many communities in Kenya. Retrogressive cultures whereby women are not allowed to speak or stand before men has for so many years been used as a tool to put women down.

Also, Gender Based Violence is a problem in Mount Elgon. In cases men terrorize their wives and thereby prevent them from leaving the house. Women are thereby controlled and they do not have the freedom to do anything for themselves. They end up becoming slaves in their own homes. Some women are even beaten as a result of trying to develop themselves by engaging in IGAs or take up roles in the community. Women are also intimidated by men whenever they want to take up leadership roles in the community.

A further difficulty, which increases the vulnerability of women, is the dependency attitude. After the conflict in Mount Elgon most families were left living under high levels of poverty because newly widowed women depended financially on their husbands. So as to make a living and provide for their children, many women have engaged in small business like fetching firewood from the forest and selling it. This has increased the vulnerability of women as in some cases they are raped in the process of looking for firewood in the remote forests.

How to protect these women?

We can protect these vulnerable women by creating their capacity on how to generate alternative IGAs. Also by increasing their understanding on how to keep peace and preaching peace in their homesteads, conflict can be prevent in the future in Mount Elgon.

Also women should be encouraged to join women’s groups so that they are informed about any relevant to them developments that come by. Through that way women will not be left behind. In addition these linkages and sharing will help the women to be exposed to more information.

Moreover, we need to encourage older women to become members of the Supreme council of elders so that when decisions are made, they can ensure that women’s issues are also taken into account and addressed.

When it comes to the negative culture, we have so far managed to reach out to women and sensitized them against harmful practices. Now we are looking forward to transform the whole community before the 2012 elections with men and women working together to achieve this ultimate goal.

Sensitizing women to seek an active role in decision-making

Similar to the above mentioned factors are the ones that are preventing women from taking an active role in the political and peacebuilding processes. First of all it is the culture, which prevents women from accessing decision making roles. Secondly, it is the insecurity and the existing fear, which is demoralizing women. Finally, the lack of financial support to perform certain activities is definitely a big obstacle for women who would otherwise want to take an active role within their community.

What will I do to enable women to overcome
these difficulties? I will reemphasize the importance of peacebuilding in all women’s meetings in Mount Elgon and convince them about the role they have to play. I will continue to sensitize women to read the new constitution, understand it, and ‘use’ the opportunities, which exist for them due to this constitution. Thereby, I will remind them of the chances we have now in leadership and the important role we can play in addressing women’s issues.

Finally, I will encourage women who are doing peace work, to create awareness about the Resolution 1325 and its advantages. I will encourage them to participate in preventing promoting and protecting the peace that is now present in Mount Elgon.

As an agro forester, through my work with women at the grassroots I have been contributing towards:

- **Gender Mainstreaming**: In all the activities and structures in my work I have been making sure that there is equal involvement of male, female and youth in the process of planning and decision making. I am also ensuring that both genders are represented in equal numbers in the management committee. By disaggregating the activities we are engaging in, according to gender, we can ensure equality in the accessibility of both sexes in our projects and demonstrate to our donors the importance of mainstreaming gender in all the aspects of our work.

- **Promotion of economic practices done by women**: We are training women on choosing appropriate for them enterprises such as poultry keeping, tree nursery establishment and merry go rounds. Such enterprises are requiring small spaces, have usually high returns and are more conflict sensitive declining the
probabilities of household confrontations. Also the management of such activities is easy and cannot affect other main activities that women are expected to perform, which are considered by the family as very important. We are also encouraging women to form groups and support each other in the establishment and running of such economic practices. The involvement of women in economic activities has enabled them to raise their standards of living and improve their conditions. This has also in turn enabled them to acquire assets as a group without asking their husbands for financial support.

- **HIV and AIDS mainstreaming**: A healthy society can implement agricultural activities well and deliver good results. Recognizing the importance of health in our work, we have been mainstreaming HIV/AIDS during our capacity building programmes by sensitizing the community on the causes and effects of HIV/AIDS. We have been informing the people about protection and we have been encouraging the already infected to move on with their life and implement friendly to their needs farming activities. These include dairy and goat rearing, and planting of various vegetables and diverse crops in the gardens to provide both income and a balanced diet.

- **Acquisition of funds**: We have formed a group of CBOs, which could access social and culture service grants to help their members boost their income generating activities and also acquire loans from women friendly banks e.g. Kenya Women Finance Trust (KWFT).

- **Assistance to victims of conflict**: The organization I am working with was providing donations towards those affected by conflict living in camps. The people affected had the opportunity to propose what they needed and were thereby provided with fuel wood and sanitary towels for the women.

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**The new constitution in my work**

One of the impacts of the new constitution, which is very relevant to my work is the right of women to own property. In the recent past, after women were selling their production, outcome of their hard work in the farm, men where taking the whole amount from them. That was very demoralizing for women, whose incentives to improve their production was dropping significantly. That is now changing due to the new constitution.

Also, before the constitution, most of the leaders in high position were male. After the constitution women are given more chances and thereby a higher position within the organizations, which in turn can help other fellow women. For example if the project manager is a female she will be contributing towards ensuring that women are further empowered and benefiting from our projects.

**Obstacles for women as witnessed in my work**

- **Culture and its implications**: Most of the top positions are male lead. As a result and because of he cultural beliefs, it is
difficult for men to accept that women can manage senior positions as well as resources well.

- **Inadequate knowledge about the new constitution:** The new constitution is in place, however most people, including both men and women, have not taken the time to read it. So people rely still on the politicians to interpret it to them. There is a need for people to be sensitized again so they can change their attitude towards the constitution and decide to properly implement it.

- **Limited participation of women:** During field days and seminars we are organizing, the male participants are the main actors; they dominate the discussion, they make the decisions and they are the ones who are getting the technical know-how. Although women are the ones who are mainly working on the farm, men are not sharing the gained during the seminar knowledge with women. As a result, women do not get more empowered and skilled and the knowledge gained by men is never used. So there’s a need for increasing women’s participation in such trainings and field days.

- **Inadequate resources:** After participants of one of our capacity building seminars are getting the knowledge there is a need of disseminating the same information to other people within their communities. However, due to inadequate resources to cover essential costs such as funds for moving around and lunches, the impact of our work is limited as the information is not reaching other community members.

- **Women tend to shy off when faced with vacant positions:** In case where a job is advertised, most applicants are male, who meet the job’s qualifications. Due to that, women believe that they will not be considered for the job and so even if they have the qualifications, they will not bother to apply.

- **Illiteracy:** High levels of illiteracy contribute to low levels of implementation of the provisions for women as described in the new constitution and the UN SCR 1325. This is due to the fact that women are not able to read and understand the constitution well and thereby disseminate the same information to other people within their community. Women are instead waiting for the opinion leader’s interpretation, which frequently is wrong and not beneficial to them.

**Overcoming all difficulties**

Apart from all the above, other factors such as: limited resources, inadequate knowledge, fear of the unknown and insecurity, dependency and poverty, inaccessibility to information and lack of exposure, tribalism and conflict of interest are preventing Kenyan women from fully participating in the political and peacebuilding processes of the country.

However, there are things that rural women can do to overcome these problems.

- **Having shared forums:** All women, who are living the rural life are experiencing similar challenges. There is a need for all these rural women to come together and point out the challenges, which are affecting them and identify the stakeholders who can assist them in the possible solutions.

- **Group formation:** Women working towards women’s empowerment should create groups i.e. women groups, self help groups which consist of 15-30 members and are registered with the Ministry of Culture and Social Service. In case of inadequate funds, or lack of needed skills the work can be implemented through mobilization of these groups and sensitization of its members. Through that way more people will be reached by once reducing costs and increasing the impact.

- **Encourage participation of all:** Incorporating role plays and songs during
a capacity building session, stimulates the concentration of the participants especially women who might be tired because of farm work. Furthermore using the local language, helps women of any educational background to grasp better the concepts of the new constitution and the UN SCR 1325 and enables them to later disseminate them to the rest of her community.

• **Put structures in place to implement the activities:** In local rural level there are only few active and literate members in the communities especially women. These women should be identified as community facilitators and trained so that they can train other women within the community. Thereby a system can be structured which can be used when needing to train or disseminate information to other rural women, reducing thereby expenses and avoiding duplication of activities.

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**Milka Kemei**

is a peacebuilder from Kopsiro division in Mount Elgon district. She is the chairperson of the Division Peace Committee, the coordinator for Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) in Kopsiro and the chairperson and founder of the CBO KOWOPE (Kopsiro Women Peace Initiative). Milka is a community mobilizer for the Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA) and a volunteer for World Vision. She also sits in the council of elders meeting to advocate for women issues in her area.

The conflict in Mount Elgon has affected me personally. I was a victim and some of my family members as well; I lost a daughter in law during that time. She was murdered in my presence and at that time she was pregnant as well. At the moment I was convinced I was the next victim but somehow that did not happen. This experience is what really made me want to work in finding justice. Thereby, the driving force behind my work is to find the truth and justice and ensure that what happened in Mount Elgon will never happen to future generations.

Through my coordination with the Truth Justice and Reconciliation commission, I

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Image of Milka Kemei
have been able to voice out the injustices done to women and the youth. Such injustices include loss of property and life, rape of women and young girls, and mutilations. Through reconciliation in the community I am aiming at enhancing the peace in the area.

**Taking up leadership roles - representing women's rights**

I have been working towards Peacebuilding in my community for some time. Being aware of women's rights as outlined in the new constitution and Resolution 1325 I knew it was my right to take up leadership roles in my community and my duty to do so, so as to represent the other women of my community.

And so I did. I have been working in advocacy for justice for women and the youth victims through the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation commission where I became the Community Coordinator. I reassured the women of my community and enabled them to take part in the TJRC process by realizing the importance of reporting the injustices done to them and the right they have to protect themselves.

Furthermore, I became the Chairperson of the Division Peace Committee helping further the peace processes in my area. I am now also a member of the Sabaot supreme council of elders where I talk about women issues like leadership and I participate in decision making on behalf of the women from Mount Elgon.

Motivated to help the women in my area further I founded the CBO KOWOPE where I have been educating women on the peacebuilding issues and the gains of the new constitution.

**Women do not know their rights & that is our challenge**

Poverty levels are very high, which makes the life of all and especially women very hard in my area. Also, the culture has been a preventive factor of women's full empowerment as well as their participation in the peacebuilding and political processes. Furthermore, most women in my community do not have ID and voter’s cards, which prevents them from taking an active part in the elections. Most importantly, women do not know their rights and so they are not claiming the realization of those rights.

**How to overcome these challenges?**

Through training women about the new constitution and the gains it entails for them, as well as the UN SCR 1325. The new constitution is against the negative aspects of our culture, which do not protect women’s rights. Now women have the right to own property and are protected against negative cultural practices like forced and early marriages. My experience has also shown the importance of advocating for women’s representation in the supreme council of elders where decisions affecting all including women are made.
ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE CONFLICT ZONES OF KENYA'S UASIN GISHU, TRANS NZOIA & MOUNT ELGON
ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE CONFLICT ZONES OF KENYA’S UASIN GISHU, TRANS NZOIA & MOUNT ELGON

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