

AN ACTION-RESEARCH PROGRAM CONDUCTED BY McGill's *Centre for Developing-Area Studies*  
AND THE *Women's Centre of Montreal* IN COLLABORATION WITH THEIR PARTNERS

NOVEMBER 2001 - Number 3

# Gender

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## and Human Security Issues

Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)

### REPORT FROM THE WORKSHOP

The concept of *Communities-Universities Research Alliance* took a concrete form on November 9, 2001, when the majority of the partners in the *Gender and Human Security Issues (GHSI)* program gathered for a daylong workshop dedicated to our respective research projects.

The objective of the workshop was to gain a better understanding of the work done by each partner in the program, as well as to see how, by synergy, each dimension interrelates and enriches the whole program.

The day, which notably gave us the opportunity to meet our African partner, confirmed the program's fundamental characteristic - to implement concrete action that allows society to benefit from research results almost immediately. The day effectively reinforced the synergy already existing between some partners and created a new one between those who got better acquainted through the workshop. In addition, discussions during the workshop helped us proceed with three important challenges that we were facing when we initiated the program: its inter-disciplinary dimension, the linkage between the concrete needs of the community and the academic research, and the mutual learning experience.

I invite you to determine for yourself the extent of the progress accomplished in these regards.

On 9 November 2002, at the Centre for Developing-Area Studies (CDAS), we held our special event of the season: the *Gender and Human Security Issues (GHSI) Program Workshop*. The workshop went very well thanks to the many people who helped to organize it. The organization of this event necessitated many discussions and readjustments, all of which were greatly facilitated by the openness of our colleagues. I would like to thank the partners in the program: Miranda D'Amico, Myriam Gervais, Dorys Makhoul, Claudia Mitchell, Maude Mugisha, Shree Mulay and Bilkis Vissandjée. Special thanks to the director and co-director, Rosalind Boyd and Johanne Bélisle. In addition, other collaborators contributed to the organization of the workshop. I would like to mention the valuable contributions of CDAS interns: François Michaud (welcome desk and rapporteur), Sharmila Pillai (audio-visual and rapporteur), Chloé Frommer (rapporteur and resource person for our guest from Uganda), and Pascale Hatcher (rapporteur). CDAS research assistant, Eugenia Zorbas, also participated as a rapporteur. The involvement of the CDAS staff also calls for thanks; I would like to mention the contributions of Sara Regehr Neufeld (coordinator for the Inter-university Initiative), Jane Leeke (administrative assistant) and Iain Blair (documentalist). Finally, I would like to acknowledge those who contributed to the content of this day by sharing their insights and the findings of their research activities. The names of these contributors appear in the following pages, which I invite you to read.

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Suzanne Boutin, Program Coordinator

P A R T N E R S

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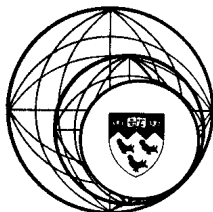
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*The Centre for Developing-Area Studies (CDAS), McGill University, founded in 1963, is an interdisciplinary institution facilitating and conducting research on development issues primarily with a social science perspective related to developing areas.*

[www.mcgill.ca/cdas](http://www.mcgill.ca/cdas)

**Gender and Human Security Issues (GHSI) Program  
Workshop  
9 November 2001, CDAS**

*Le concept de sécurité humaine appliqué au programme  
d'aide canadien au Rwanda / Myriam Gervais*

*Briefing on Fieldwork in Palestine: The Women's Movement:  
From Grassroots Organizing to NGO Professionalization /  
Manal Jamal*

*Gender Dimensions of Trauma and Demobilized Soldiers in the  
Great Lakes Region / Rosalind Boyd and Eugenia Zorbas*

*The Work of EASSI / Maude Mugisha*

*Femmes et violence organisée: modèle d'intervention /  
Women's Centre of Montreal (Anne Benoit, Maria Camila Chica)*

*Topic Contextualizing Girls, Sexuality and Violence: Some  
Lessons Learned from South Africa / Claudia Mitchell.*

*Plenary: New Areas of Research-action*



*The mission of the Women's Centre of Montreal (WCM) is to provide services to help women help themselves. To accomplish its mission, the Centre offers educational and vocational training, information, counselling and referral services. This non-profit organization communicates women's concerns to the public and acts as a catalyst for change regarding women's issues.*

[www.centredesfemmesdemtl.org](http://www.centredesfemmesdemtl.org)

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE GENDER AND HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES PROGRAM:

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The Gender and Human Security Issues Newsletter is produced twice a year.

The day of workshops for the Gender and Human Security Issues Program held on 9 November 2001 began with a word of welcome from Myriam Gervais and Johanne Bélisle, on behalf of the Centre for Developing-Area Studies (CDAS) and the Montreal Women's Centre (WCM) respectively. The presentations before noon were presided over by Johanne Bélisle. In the afternoon, Myriam Gervais assumed this role. Twenty minutes were allocated for each presenter. Following each presentation, the floor was opened up for discussion. More than thirty people involved in the program or interested in the issues participated in the day of workshops, which ended with a plenary session. This issue of the GHSI Program newsletter is entirely devoted to the information that was shared at that workshop. The texts that follow are in great part based on reporters' notes.

### "Le concept de sécurité humaine appliqué au programme d'aide canadien au Rwanda" / Myriam Gervais

(*Rapporteur: Eugenia Zorbas*)

Myriam Gervais, CDAS Research Associate, follows the development of the concept of human security from its origins until its formalization as an operational objective.

In the realm of international relations, security is traditionally defined in terms of external threats to the security of a state. Since the 1990s, civil conflicts internal to states have multiplied. Myriam Gervais explained that the concept of human security was born of the observation that the security of the State and the security of the citizens are oftentimes in conflict.

The United Nations Program for Development (UNDP) defines human security in these terms: "assure the survival of individuals in all aspects: economical, cultural, political, physical, health, environmental, food supply". In Canada, this concept has been the cornerstone of foreign policy since 1995. Nevertheless, in terms of ground-level experience, the concept of human security as defined above proves to be difficult to apply, as was revealed in a preliminary study of Canadian interventions in Rwanda undertaken between 1995 and 1998.

On the basis of this report,

M. Gervais put forward a more operational definition of this concept in order to allow for a more realistic appraisal of successes and failures at this level. In operational terms, human security is guaranteed by a system of values and norms that discourage violence for the sake of defending particular interests.

In other words, considering the case of Rwanda, one has to determine to what extent society can guarantee the security of all of its citizens and whether it can successfully develop a culture that

Manal Jamal, Ph.D student at McGill University, discussed her fieldwork and some of her general findings in relation to the transformations that have taken place in the women's movement. During her recent stay in Palestine, she examined some of the consequences that have occurred after the movement began professionalizing in the 1990s.

Starting with the establishment of a

condemns violence as a means of making demands.

Specifically, the study conducted by M. Gervais seeks to determine whether the actions of the State and aid programs during the period of "post-reconstruction" work towards establishing a solid foundation for human security in Rwanda.

In order to carry out this research, M. Gervais developed some analytical indicators to measure the impact of these aid programs on human security. Concretely, this study focuses on six projects that are financed by Canada and intended mainly to widows from the genocide and refugee women who came back since 1994.♦

### Briefing on Fieldwork in Palestine : The Women's Movement : From Grassroots Organizing to NGO Professionalization / Manal Jamal

(*Rapporteur: Pascale Hatcher*)

plethora of women's groups and societies in the 1920s and onward, M. Jamal proceeded to outline the politicization and mobilization in Palestinian society, which took place in the 1970s. In mid-1970, the organization of women began to take a different form that was more in line with the new demands of life under Israeli occupation. Popularly-based organizations reached their peak during the 1988-1993 *Intifada*.

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## Gender Dimensions of Trauma and Demobilized Soldiers in the Great Lakes Region of Africa / Rosalind Boyd and Eugenia Zorbas

(Rapporteur : Chloe Frommer)

In the absence of director of the Centre for Developing-Areas Studies (CDAS), Dr. Boyd, her research assistant, Eugenia Zorbas, presented her work entitled "Gender Dimensions of Trauma and Demobilized Soldiers in the Great Lakes Region of Africa."

The research makes a very important assertion: in dealing with post-conflict reconstruction, "both sides of the gender medallion" must be addressed. Highlighting an additional articulation is the distinction that gender is not just two sides, but more the relationship between plural genders.

The logic of R.Boyd's approach further unfolded as E. Zorbas explained that demobilized soldiers have been overlooked as part of a deeper, extended reconciliation stage of the demobilization process. Beyond superficial discharge of arms, reconciliation includes catering to all aspects of trauma, human security on individual and community levels, and efforts to sustain a peace culture.

Dr. Boyd's research carried out in the Great Lakes Region demonstrates that

soldiers are not, in fact, "demobilized in the mind". A study she did with former child soldiers in Uganda, currently attending school, showed that they still attach a huge importance to the military and its ways of viewing and interacting in the world.

Further research in South Africa showed that former soldiers continue to promulgate violence in their communities, families and in their relationships.

E. Zorbas asserted that the intention of their research is not meant to downplay, or even to lower the significance of women and children's trauma, but simply to highlight the crucial role demobilized soldiers have in building a post-conflict peace culture.

Ultimately, the discussion with the audience revealed even more potently that these new creative ways to "demilitarize the mind" and detaching the word "fight" from the idea of "liberation" are urgent needs. ♦

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Their goal was to address the needs of working women and the needs of women in rural areas, as well as to establish self-help and productive ventures for women that would eventually facilitate economic independence. Special attention was used to involve local women in committees so they could express their needs and priorities, and establish and run committees in various localities.

The emergence of *Hamas* (of traditionalist influence) created a serious reassessment in women's organizations. Many of the cadres began aspiring for professionalization and institutionalization, and to distance themselves from purely nationalist factions.

This coincided with increased international interest that the Madrid reconciliation process generated. The institutionalization and professionalization were facilitated by the availability of donor assistance.

Establishment of NGOs as a way to professionalize and institutionalize the women's movement required women who were highly educated, fluent in English and had high administrative as well as organizational skills.

A number of female activists who were previously active in the women's committees were not eligible or qualified to work in these new NGOs. Individual relief became the primary focus rather than the genuine structural change.

According to Manal Jamal, all these combined factors resulted in the demobilization of the grassroots committees and in the estrangement of these new NGOs from the grassroots base. ♦

### CDAS Discussion Paper in the GHSI Program Series

The CDAS Discussion Paper number 90 has been published and is the first to be produced within the framework of the GHSI Program. In her paper entitled "Women's Organization Working for Peace and Reconciliation in the Great Lakes Region of Africa", author Rosalind Boyd presents various initiatives that African women have undertaken collectively to hinder the recourse to the war and to affirm, in its place, new possibilities for existence rooted in a culture of peace. This document is supported by several years of research in the Great Lakes Region of Africa and more recently in Rwanda and Uganda.

## The Work of EASSI / Maude Mugisha (Rapporteur: Pascale Hatcher)

Maude Mugisha, coordinator of the *Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI)*, and special guest at the GHSI Program Workshop, gave a presentation entitled *The Work of EASSI*. She began by giving a brief historical background on the EASSI which has its roots in the context of Beijing Conference on Women

organization's mission is to enhance gender equality and social justice through networking, research, capacity building and advocacy." EASSI covers eight Eastern African countries: Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda.

EASSI has four priority issues during the 2001-2004 period:

### 1) Women and land rights:

Currently the laws and the custom regarding access to land favour men. However, land is an important economic resource base in Eastern Africa. EASSI insists that women gain access to land, and that women's rights to land ownership must be legally secure.

### 2) Participation of women in politics and decision-making at national and local levels:

Development is political and therefore women must increase their participation in the decision-making process. The EASSI works to enhance women's participation in politics and decision-making by, among other strategies, identifying and profiling women role models in politics.

### 3) Gender budgeting:

Budgeting is a very important tool for resource allocation within a country, but rarely does it consider gender. The EASSI analyzes national budgets to see their effect on gender disparities and inequalities. The *Gender Budget Initiative* exposes the gendered nature of the economy and economic decision-making. It also tries to transform the decision-making process so that it will benefit women and men equally.

### 4) Conflict resolution and peace building:

In recent years, Eastern Africa has been severely affected by internal armed conflicts. Seven countries out of eight have been involved in conflicts directly or through the refugees problematic.

EASSI carries out advocacy work to prevent any new conflicts and to promote a culture of peace through the participation of women in the peace process. ♦



*Maude Mugisha (Coordinator, EASSI, Uganda), special guest participating in the GHSI Program's Workshop, at CDAS, on November 9, 2001.*

of 1995. Ms. Mugisha continued with a presentation of EASSI's vision, which is: "A transforming society where women and men realize their full potential through the enhancement of gender equality, advancement of women, and social justice within Eastern Africa and beyond. The

«Femmes et violence organisée: modèle d'intervention» /  
 Maria Camila Chica and Anne Benoît (Women's Centre of Montreal)

(Rapporteur: Sharmila Pillia)

Ms. Benoit and Ms. Chica, group facilitators for the Women Centre of Montreal (WCM), presented the main components of the project *Women and Orchestrated Violence: a Model of Intervention*, which is taking place within the GHSI Program.

The WCM is a grassroots NGO that responds, every year, to approximately 35,000 various requests from women, including those of immigrant women and their families.

The project aims to develop a model of intervention with immigrant women and help them adjust to the radical changes in their life related to their refugee condition by offering them to join a self-help group. The group facilitators shared with the audience the methodology and ethical procedures that they followed while organizing and animating the group sessions.

Most refugee women participating in the first self-help group live under precarious financial condition. Some have official refugee status and those who don't feel insecure. Most live alone, widowed because of war, and some have left behind children. All have experienced tragedies first-hand during the armed conflicts. Most suffer post-traumatic stress.

Through the self-help group sessions, attempts are made to help them realize they are not alone in their suffering and that they can find new points of reference in their lives. It is important to create a sense of security by validating their emotions, particularly grief, and creating a climate of tolerance and respect for others.

Through the techniques of art therapy, the women express their feelings using materials and colors. The participants' drawings and paintings are the point of departure from which they can share with others meaningful and important elements of their lives.

After 12 sessions the participants have traced a positive evaluation about the relevance of a self-help group. Friendships developed. They have found reassurance and regained some self-confidence. The self-help group at the

Women's Center has helped women adapt to their new home and learn more about the culture of Canada.

A second self-help group began in September 2001. At the end of the project, well documented with the rich experience gained through previous self-help group sessions, the WCM will produce a guide for facilitators to be used in other instances and distributed to organizations in Canada and abroad working with refugee women. ♦

Contextualising Girls, Sexuality and Violence : Lessons  
 Learned from South Africa / Claudia Mitchell

(Rapporteur: Sharmila Pillai)

Claudia Mitchell, professor at McGill in Education, Jackie Kirk and Stephanie Garrow, both Ph.D candidates, presented the new tools that they are developing in the GHSI Program regarding gender-based violence. The presentation consisted mainly of a discussion which followed the presentation of the video entitled *Unwanted Images: Gender-Based Violence in the New South Africa*.

The video-producer, Monica Mak, was also present to supplement information on her video.

The video uses images drawn by African children, interspersed with related statistical information and minimal commentary to show the pervasive effects that sexual harassment, violence, and rape have on many lives, particularly on those of women and girls.

Going beyond the context of a region, a

country, a continent or a culture, the message has a universal meaning and is well suited to sensitize a diverse public such as teachers, students, facilitators, social workers, etc.

Subtitles in French and a bilingual Facilitator's Guide to the video soon to be available, were financed by the GHSI Program. To obtain a copy of the video *Unwanted Images: Gender-Based Violence in the New South Africa*, please email Claudia Mitchell: [claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca](mailto:claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca) ♦

***Congratulations  
 To Professor Bilkis Vissandjée  
 who gave birth to  
 Anya  
 (on the same day of the  
 GHSI Program workshop)***