

Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange We Link Women Internationally

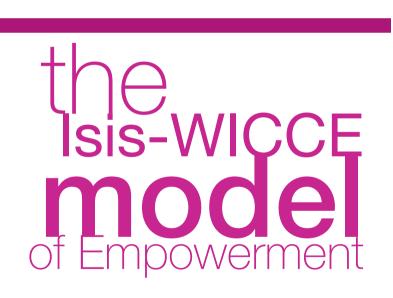


# the Isis-Wicce Model Movement

WE THANK ALL OUR PARTNERS FOR MAKING THIS POSSIBLE



Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange We Link Women Internationally



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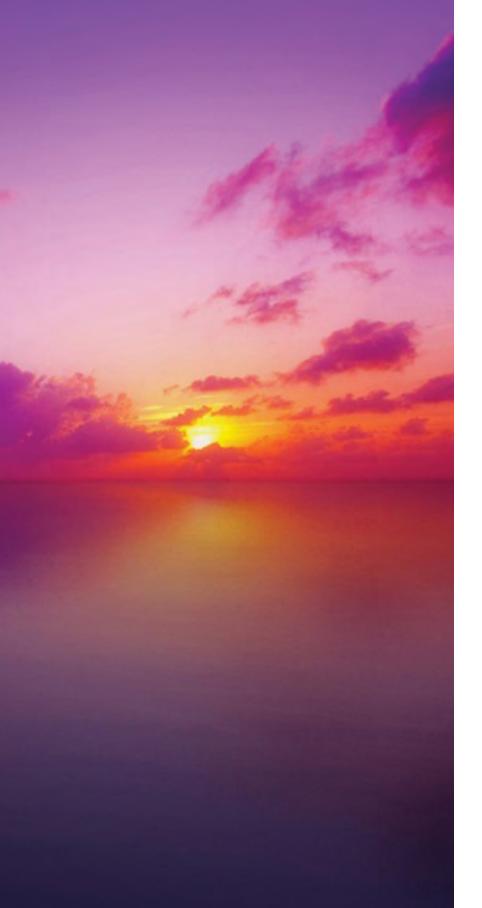
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## Forget me Not

### **Forget me Not**

While the sky witnesses merciless marauders and soulless soldiers getting away with taking turns at tearing my body apart

#### **Forget me Not**

As my undocumented reality is merged with others into a six figure estimate in the news quickly blurring into forgotten history

### **Forget me Not**

As I quietly survive each day with my secretly festering wounds constantly reminding me of the darkest horrors of my life

### **Forget me Not**

While my community shuns me into oblivion as my leaking orifice personifies the shame showered on me

### **Forget me Not**

As I risk my life bringing life into this world through my rotting canals

### **Forget me Not**

As I endure insomnia dreaming of remedies for the back pain that has confined me to an unproductive life of lack

#### **Forget me Not**

When plans are drawn and resources are allocated to alleviate the untold suffering in my community without consulting us

#### **Forget me Not**

As important meetings are held in posh venues to discuss and determine my fate from afar

#### **Forget me Not**

After projects aimed at improving one aspect of my life have ended and reports boasting of amazing results have been submitted

#### Forget me Not

As I wholeheartedly strive in isolation to bring light into my community using unrefined skills

### **Forget me Not**

As I am a true survivor with unlimited potential waiting to be realized for the benefit of the entire world

#### Forget me Not

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### ACRONYMS

AGI	African Gender Institute
AU	African Union
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EED	Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst
EU	European Union
HIV & AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus & Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
істј	International Centre for Transitional Justice
Isis-WICCE	lsis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MP	Member of Parliament
NDWA	Nepal Disabled Women Association
NGO	Non-government Organization
NRA	National Resistance Army
PRDP	Peace, Recovery and Development Plan
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
SLF	Steven Lewis Foundation
STIs	Sexual Transmitted Infections
TEWPA	Teso Women Peace Activists
UAF-Africa	Urgent Action Fund - Africa
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Developed Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in the Sudan
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WONGOSOL	Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia
WTF	Women Task Force

# My journey of peace making



I was born in a small village in eastern Uganda called Genguluho, where a small population of an ethnic group called Samia lives, with majority of the ethnic group living in western Kenya. Coming from a religious background, I was always taught that to

be human, one must make the environment she or he lives in peaceful by practicing three key values, that is; fairness, justice, and a selfless life. While growing up, I saw those values being practiced by my parents. It therefore became part of my culture and norm. For half the time I have lived, this has been part and parcel of my life. This reality was however not nurtured when I entered my career path in 1977, in a government institution where bureaucracy was the norm, and the systems were structured with less personal interactions. This silently made my values rather inactive. There was little time and space to share and learn from others. There was also less time to interact with those outside office space. It is until I joined Isis-WICCE on 2nd November 1994 that my hibernating values and beliefs of peace making became alive again. Isis-WICCE was the organisation I dreamed to be in, one with values and beliefs that aligned with mine, a space with less bureaucracy and more opportunities to be creative, and this consequently broadened my goals.

Isis-WICCE's mission of promoting the rights of women allowed me to practice what I learnt and believed in throughout my life. The organization chose to work with women in conflict settings following the Fourth World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing in 1995; this gave me courage and fulfilment because of the many years of unrest I experienced in Uganda. Recalling the Idi Amin era, in 1979 while running for refuge amidst flying bullets, as a young mother and surviving all that went on around me; it was a very humbling experience. Up to today I still ask myself how I survived the fragments of the bomb that sliced

into the woman who was also running for her life about 200 meters ahead of me.

After attending the Fourth World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing in 1995, I was convinced that it was indeed time for me to use my position (as the Documentation Coordinator), and my expertise in communication, in a feminist organization, to illuminate the voices of women in situations of armed conflict. It was time to restore their hope and renew their spirit, to make peace in their lives and that of their communities. I believed that enabling them to tell their stories was the first and most strategic approach to bringing peace to their hearts.

### **Developing Agency in a CrIsis Terrain:** Building women's Peace from a Personal Initiative

My very first response was to re-define the organization's definition of the term documentation, which meant, processing the literature the organization had collected over years into a one stop centre called the documentation centre. Accordingly, this was to allow access to different clientele who needed to know more about women's actions, needs and status from different regions of the world. Yet, to me, this did not make a lot of sense for an organisation that had moved from Europe to Africa with the express aim of tapping the voices of the African women (the majority of whom in most cases cannot read or write, let alone communicate in the foreign language), and position their concerns at global debates for the transformation of their lives. The approach could not respond to many questions that lingered in my mind. I wondered that if stories of thousands of women suffering in pain remain invisible and undocumented, how would the world know about their silent pains? How would one know what they would like to see different in their lives? How would the world know about the resilience they hold as human beings? For me, that is where peacemaking begins. Peacemaking is about providing the opportunity to listen to all in order to provide fair decisions for justice for all.

My dream of "breaking" the four walls of Isis-WICCE's documentation centre and re-defining documentation became a reality when I positioned my case to the then Director. To me, going beyond the four walls would include the tapping of voices of the marginalized, uneducated and those engulfed in conflict, on the continent of Africa. That way we would substantively fulfil the aim of moving Isis-WICCE to Africa, and my own feelings.

The flexibility of Isis-WICCE's governance structure enabled me to convince my organization. I was given a go ahead to tap the voices of women in conflict. The first woman I met was a young ex-combatant named Devota Mbabazi who lived in a remote part of Luweero district in central Uganda. She was raped by 21 soldiers, and developed several sexual and reproductive health complications including fistula and HIV & AIDS. When I met her, she was still suffering 14 years after the guns had fallen silent, while Uganda was proudly demonstrating its successes in the reconstruction recovery of the affected region (the Luweero triangle). The whole world was acknowledging the positive progress Uganda was making. But amidst all this acclaim, there was this lone voice of their own freedom fighter, Mbabazi, who was silently still in the battle ground, in a war zone suffering from all sorts of inequalities such as the marginalization of her contribution to the liberation. As she did not have formal education, she could not get integrated into the formal government army after the liberation. Even the soldiers who used her body as a sex comforter, bore a child for them while she fought side by side with them on the front line, could not plead for her to even be considered for hands on training for auxiliary services within the army. The numerous diseases that had been inflicted upon her through rape and/or through the sexual comforting role were now her own problem. It is at this moment that I started questioning myself; what is peace? Indeed the guns had gone silent but Mbabazi was still at war since her heart, her body and mind were still in crIsis. For me, Mbabazi represented a host of many other women victims of conflict across the world.

### Healing of body mind and spirit is part of peace making

In 1998, I initiated a new program called emergency medical intervention for women war survivors in the district where we found Mbabazi (Luweero). The strategies to the healing of the affected women

involved different approaches including screening, treatment and surgery, where needed. My passion to heal the body, mind and soul drove me to interpret awareness raising of sexual and reproductive health, which one donor had supported Isis-WICCE to do, as having a direct link with the emergency medical intervention I was proposing, which would consequently raise awareness of relevant policy makers to act. Although this decision was to later put me in trouble, I was not deterred. Instead the experience gave me more resolve to advocate for the healing of the bodies of war survivors as part of the peace process for many more years thereafter.

The skills building of survivors to participate in peace building / making, was another milestone of my peace work. However, this also brought in another huge challenge; the divide between the north and south of Uganda. Each region had had their own share of the conflicts and had no trust for each other. My values for peace making were tested and I was able to bring about consensus among the women. This experience gave me the resilience as the Executive Director to utilize the Uganda model, of holistic peacemaking for survivors, to replicate it in other countries affected by wars such as Liberia, South Sudan, and Nepal. In all these countries, it was vividly clear that the mainstream peacemaking architecture has continued to isolate the reconstruction of women's bodies as part of the peacemaking process. They were thus, not realizing the fundamental mistakes resulting from the mainstream peacemaking architecture given that wars shred the social fabric, destroyed the economies and weakened the political systems. Women play a critical role in all these components.

I am gratified to say at this point, that through these efforts, Isis-WICCE has been able to re-centre the women's voice in post conflict reconstruction and peacemaking through a fluid web of documentation and illumination, healing, synergy, lobbying and advocacy. Isis-WICCE has made a difference in the discourse and practice of peacemaking. The difference made in the lives of the women touched by the hand of Isis-WICCE fulfils my dream of peace making.

Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng Executive Director, Isis-WICCE

### **Acknowledgements**

The documentation of the Isis-WICCE model of making a difference in women's lives in peace building and post conflict recovery processes has been on the shelf for far too long. It was a process long overdue. This documentation will enable Isis-WICCE to firmly celebrate the successes as well as chart a way forward to scale up what we do, how we do it and the impact on individuals, communities and the entire global community.

Great thanks go to our development partners (see appendix 1). You have made it possible for us to realize our dream of grounded peace building. Special thanks to Steven Lewis Foundation(SLF) for not only supporting this documentation activity but also actively validating its utility and relevance.

The staff of Isis-WICCE was the very locus of the documentation. They offered the thinkings, interpretations and practices. They tirelessly engaged in the different processes of the documentation with a lot of energy and resilience. Ms. Juliet Were Oguttu, Ms. Harriet Nabukeera Musoke, Ms. Helen-Kezie Nwoha, Mr. Bedha Balikudembe Kireju, Ms. Lorna Nakato, Ms. Suzan Nkinzi, Ms Loyce Kyogabirwe and Ms Prossy Nakaye; your energies have brought the documentation this far. The leadership of the Executive Director, Ruth Ojiambo-Ochieng as well as her very passionate speaking from the heart are particularly prized.

Isis-WICCE acknowledges the input of the various people that were specifically interviewed and whose



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To all people who contributed in their different capacities, your efforts have been validated by this documentation of Isis-WICCE's model.

### **Intro**duction

## WHY SHOULD Isis-WICCE'S MODEL BE DOCUMENTED?

### If we do not tell our stories, who will?

ince 1997, Isis-WICCE has been involved in a painstaking process of documenting women's experiences in situations of armed conflict in several countries including Uganda, Liberia, South Sudan and Nepal. Through the unique focus on conflict and post conflict situations, Isis-WICCE has been able to document the multiplicity of violence against women and its multidimensional effects. The fast-shifting context is violent, dangerous and volatile. Women face violence in multiple forms: backlash, gangs and shadow 'armies,' scarcity, poverty, vulnerability, sexual violence, natural disasters, fundamentalisms, hate and misogyny.

Worthy to note is that situations of conflict tend to escalate the already existing unequal gender relations. For example, Ayiera (2010) argues that:

Sexual violence though publicly subject to public censure is an often tolerated expression of masculinity and domination of femininity. Rape in conflict is an accentuation of pre-existing gender relations, as opposed to a new situation emerging with the eruption of hostilities (2010:13).

CE Mode

### " Isis-WICCE

has been able to document the multiplicity of violence against women and its multidimensional effects..

Yet at the general level, the international and dominant discourse tends to treat violence against women and sexual violence in particular as a new phenomenon that will go away when the conflict ceases. Furthermore, there is tendency to react to numbers of women affected. For example, the numbers of women raped in the cases of Bosnia, Rwanda and Liberia conflicts drew sexual violence nearer to the page of 'crimes against humanity'. However, this recognition notwithstanding, sexual violence or gender based violence does not become part and parcel of the post conflict reconstruction agenda. That victims of sexual violence do not come into the mainstream reconstruction agenda demonstrates not only lack of political will, but a systemic simplification of the issue of SGBV and a tacit acceptance, what Ayiera refers to as "one of the greatest conspiracies of silence" (2010 p.9).

### Effects of a Conspiracy Of Silence

- Those who are directly suffering or causing others to suffer perpetuate their cycle of harm and suffering.
- Those who have suffered have their suffering extended by having their condition ignored or minimized, and are not considered seriously or redressed appropriately.
- Lessons that might be learned for the future are not learned.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org

Isis-WCCE's approach to documentation of violations against women's rights seeks to break this silence, to de-center the conspiracy of silence. This is done by highlighting the impact of conflict on women and making several interventions based on the needs identified through active and purposeful participation

of the women themselves (Liebling-Kalifani, 2011). The Isis-WICCE model is based on the realization that acts of violence against women in conflict and their effects are so ingrained in the social fabric and are multidimensional in their nature that it requires an equally multifaceted approach to address them. This model seeks to make a difference in women's lives through long term engagement with a layer of actors with equally layered actions. As will be explained in the sections that follow, the Isis-WICCE model is a delicate balance of documentation, healing and reconstruction, training, movement building and evidence based advocacy. It is a holistic, full cycle approach based on the understanding that women's lives are not segmented. According to Miria Matembe, one of Uganda's most prominent women's rights-focused politicians, "where many other people and organisations tend to 'plant and go', Isis-WICCE plants and goes ahead to nurture, water and finally harvest".

Whereas Isis-WICCE has been able to document the stories of women and to creatively respond to their needs, her own story remains untold. This without doubt deprives Isis-WICCE and the entire feminist movement of the opportunity to build on the successes and lessons learnt. It deprives Isis-WICCE in particular the opportunity to utilize the resources and reflective space for greater feminist engagement. This document presents how the different aspects of the work of Isis-WICCE come together. It presents the uniqueness of the Isis-WICCE model of women's empowerment, of making a difference, particularly in conflict and post conflict settings.

The documentation of the Isis-WICCE model of making a difference is a worthwhile venture on several fronts. Firstly, it enables Isis-WICCE to make a contribution to the global feminist knowledge bank. Needless to say, Isis-WICCE is already making an invaluable contribution to the body of feminist knowledge. In the words of Thelma Awori, the Isis-WICCE president then, Isis-WICCE is a substantive organization with a wealth of cutting edge knowledge. It gives content to what Harding (1987) discusses on feminist research methodology, in a sense, of a process in which knowledge is created by women as knowers rather than as merely sources of data. The

value of documenting the essence of how Isis-WICCE does what it does then adds a thread of purpose and demonstrates the consistencies and connections between women's experiences and the broader political social processes. In a fundamental way, the documentation contributes to theory building.

Secondly, documentation of this model makes a contribution to the global women's movement in general and the women's movement in the South, in particular. It presents lessons for women's activism especially in conflict and post conflict situations. Because conflict adds an ugly twist to the already unequal relations between men and women, it needs to be well characterized to enable meaningful engagement of women, beyond victimhood.

Thirdly, this document will be valuable as an advocacy tool, advocacy in a sense that it demonstrates how meaningful change in women's lives comes about. It demonstrates how intervention in the area of women and conflict is not a 'touch and go' affair, but rather a long term process that deals with the multifaceted nature of the effects of conflict as well as the reality of the complex dynamics of gender inequalities.

Furthermore, we think that this model can be used to create a sense of guilt on the part of the powerful actors, such as, governments and international organisations. It shows the gaps in the dominant approaches to post conflict reconstruction which is often male actor centered. The fact that some of the impacts that Isis-WICCE makes on the ground are achieved with minimal resources, would then make the point about the existing political will and the need to make key actors accountable. The document provides a tool for women to demand accountability from their governments as well as from all those who claim to work for humanity.

All in all, this documentation of the Isis-WICCE model achieves the key objective of profiling her homegrown feminist development model to broaden the development paradigms for post conflict recovery. Feminist activists and scholars, development actors and governments alike will find this document indispensable.

### A NOTE ON THE PROCESS

As already indicated, the major goal of the documentation was to capture the essence of the Isis-WICCE model of making a difference in women's lives and making it part and parcel of the existing knowledge as a contribution to feminist engagement at the level of political practice as well as theory building. In order to capture the story, the team used mainly two approaches: conversation and document review.

### Conversations with Key Actors

Several conversations were carried out with Isis-WICCE staff that have been at the frontline of engaging with women in post-conflict communities. The staff were engaged in a series of group conversations to provide reflective moments as a team. These were followed by in-depth individual interviews. This process enabled staff to reflect on their work and its impact at the individual, community, national and international levels. Additionally, these conversations engaged staff in nuanced systematization of what they do thereby adding more meaning and explanation to their work.

In-depth interviews were also held with the different development professionals who have interfaced with Isis-WICCE at different stages. This included the doctors who have participated in the healing aspect, generally referred to as the medical intervention, the trainers in the training institutes and researchers as well as development partners. Interviews were also held with founding members and selected members of the governing board. A critical question here was to find out their perspectives on the distinctive features of the work of Isis-WICCE.

Furthermore, we talked with selected beneficiaries, or rather those who have been touched by the Isis-WICCE model. These included women from Uganda, South Sudan, Liberia and Nepal. Telephone and email based interviews were used in the case of inability to have face to face interviews with some of the actors outside Uganda.

### Secondary Data and Literature Review

Documented literature, photographs and video clips produced by Isis-WICCE were reviewed in order to capture facts and stories that informed the fibre of the

### "major goal

of the documentation was to capture the essence of the Isis -WICCE model of "" making a difference in women's lives ...

story. In addition, published literature on conflict and post-conflict reconstruction and reports were reviewed. The review of documents especially at Isis-WICCE helped to reveal some of the nuances in the model not sufficiently revealed in the interviews. Essentially, interviews depend on memory and what individuals or groups chose to remember may be structured by many factors, including the manner in which questions are posed and/or understood.

### LIMITATIONS OF THIS DOCUMENTATION

We alert the reader to the following limitations:

- The bulk of the interviews are Uganda based. The team did not travel to the other countries where Isis-WICCE has worked. However, efforts were made to have telephone and email conversations with actors in Liberia and South Sudan. Also, there was an effort to tap into travel schedules for other activities to have face to face interviews with actors in Nepal, South Africa and South Sudan.
- Isis-WICCE has enormous documentation. The strength of Isis-WICCE's documentation is that each and every activity is detailed in various forms

   written text, photography and video. This at the same time presented a challenge to the team to make tacit choices on what to include and exclude. In doing this, the team ran the risk of overlooking some key aspects in the story.
- The Story of Isis-WICCE is told in a manner that seeks to show case the key ingredients of its model, of making a difference, of breaking the silence around women's lives in conflict situations and the appropriate response to these experiences. It is not the whole story. Hence this documentation may not appropriately present, for example the extremely difficult terrain in which the staff find themselves in the process of implementation. Neither is it able to bring out problems and challenges since the approach was not primarily an evaluative exercise.

# the **Isis-WICCE** Weave

### "Isis-WICCE's model

deals with issues of power in ways that carries a bold message for those who seem unaware of women's power ...

## What does "weaving women's power into peace" really mean?

While documenting Isis-WICCE's homegrown model, several instances of an increasingly familiar force emerged. This force manifested differently in each instance, but became more evident with each instance. Those who are familiar with the feminist tool of gender analysis will recognize this force as power.

Power is a big deal. Some may argue that armed conflict is rooted in competition for resources; resources which are capitalized by those who choose to execute their power over their competitors. If one were to pay attention to how power is executed in armed conflict situations, it becomes clear that women are specifically targeted in ways that seek to devastate communities by robbing women of their power<sup>1</sup>. Fortunately, as Isis-WICCE demonstrates through its work, women cannot be robbed of their power.

Isis-WICCE's model deals with issues of power in ways that carries a bold message for those who seem unaware of women's power, including those seeking to "empower" women. When one reads and understands Isis-WICCE's homegrown model, the meaning and relevance of words such as "empower" and "empowerment" become seriously challenged. Isis-WICCE's model demonstrates that all women have power of their own. While some women may be more aware of their own power than others, all women have power of their own.

This power is easily identifiable in the daily struggles

<sup>1</sup> Card, C. (1996), "Rape as a Weapon of War." Hypatia, 11: 5–18. doi: 10.1111/j.1527-2001.1996.tb01031.x

and the determination of women who have survived the horrors of war to overcome those struggles. It is audible in the testimonies, poems and songs of women and girls who have survived gang rape and mutilation, it is as contagious as the smile of a woman whose health has finally been restored long after the armed conflict, it is tangible in women's proud displays of economic independence, and it puts women into elected positions of leadership where they are able to exercise power for the benefit of those who elected them, particularly women. These instances of power differ in ways that feminist literature has articulated, yet power is not often discussed in feminist work:

"Although any general definition of feminism would no doubt be controversial, it seems undeniable that much work in feminist theory is devoted to the tasks of critiquing women's subordination, analyzing the intersections between sexism and other forms of subordination such as racism, heterosexism, and class oppression, and envisioning the possibilities for both individual and collective resistance to such subordination. Insofar as the concept of power is central to each of these theoretical tasks, power is clearly a central concept for feminist theory as well. And yet, curiously, it is one that is not often explicitly discussed in feminist work.<sup>2</sup>"

Isis-WICCE works with women affected by conflict to nurture their dignity and self esteem (power within), enhance their personal agency (power to), harness their collective agency (power with), and develop their influence (power over) so as to advocate for and effect meaningful change while addressing women's issues, which would typically go unaddressed in conflict and post-conflict settings.

One very powerful woman who inspired the development of several elements in Isis-WICCE's model was Devota Mbabazi. Isis-WICCE met Devota while documenting women's experiences of armed conflict in Luweero, Uganda. At the time, Devota had been written off by her community and the army she had served during the 1980's bush war in Uganda. The gang rapes Devota suffered during the conflict left her with several health issues; emotional and psychological, physical (her reproductive organs had been destroyed and neglected), as the abuse on her body resulted into HIV infection. Her rapists had tried to rob her of her power, and those who had written her off failed to

<sup>2 &</sup>quot;Feminist Perspectives on Power", Amy Allen, 2011 [available online: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-power/]

recognize the resilient power she possessed as a survivor.

"I have power and I can use this power to survive."

"There is a spirit within me that you cannot kill, and I will survive."

Devota used her power (power within) to share very personal accounts of her traumatic experiences, with the intention of causing positive change for other women who suffered similar experience. Rather than muffling Devota's power by treating her as a simple research subject, Isis-WICCE gave Devota respectful audience and the space to use her power. She told Isis-WICCE's research team what she wanted to be documented and how she wanted it documented, "If the president will be able watch this on television and become aware of my experiences as an exsoldier and survivor of armed conflict, then I want every detail to be made known, for my sake and for the sake of other women in a situation similar to mine". She had enough power to invite a team of Isis-WICCE researchers into her home, share painful details of traumatizing experiences. and even show the team how her reproductive organs had become one big festering wound. By providing her the space to exercise her power within, Isis-WICCE was able to document Devota's experiences of armed conflict, and learn. Devota inspired Isis-WICCE to provide emergency medical attention to women survivors, a tremendous shift in power.

Thanks to Devota's expression of power, Isis-WICCE was compelled to begin providing emergency medical attention for women who would not otherwise have been able to access it, again due to issues of power. She used her power to overcome what some would perhaps term "a fate worse than death", causing Isis-WICCE to deliver medical attention to thousands of women who were in a situation similar to hers. In most societies, doctors are revered as people, typically men, who have the power to diagnose health issues, and cause or catalyze healing - this may mean the difference between life and death. Many patients, particularly women with reproductive health conditions, will attest to the power gradient between doctor and patient, its effect on their willingness to seek medical attention and the success of their treatment. Isis-WICCE has worked with doctors and other health practitioners who, thanks to Isis-WICCE, have learned and taught the often ignored significance power and the importance of paying attention to power dynamics while examining and

### Isis-WICCE Model | 16

treating women's bodies. Still thanks to Devota's power, the significance of power has been documented in medical literature by medical professionals who have worked with Isis-WICCE, such as Dr Kinyanda. Isis-WICCE has created and customized numerous health-related manuals so as to influence the way women survivors are treated by medical professionals; all this, thanks to Devota's power and Isis-WICCE's ability to recognize and respect the power of women survivors. May she rest in peace as her power lives on and continues to improve other women's lives through Isis-WICCE's work.

One of the many things lost during armed conflict is selfefficacy, or the belief in one's ability to set and achieve goals (power-to); a loss that creates and exacerbates despair, apathy, poverty, substance abuse, violence, illness and a legion of other forms of hardship as observed in conflict and post-conflict settings. In many post-conflict communities Isis-WICCE has worked with, women play a leading role in "picking up the pieces" after armed conflict; women seek ways to support their families and improve their communities. This demonstrates another form of power (power-to) that women survivors possess.

Isis-WICCE enhances women survivors' power-to by developing their skills in ways that furnish their selfefficacy and agency. Isis-WICCE's skills building efforts are customized for optimal relevance and usefulness, and cover a wide range of topics including basic selfcare, research, leadership, organisational development, counseling, and even how to run a successful campaign for leadership positions. Using knowledge gained through Isis-WICCE's Exchange Program Institute, women have been able to conduct research on issues relevant to their communities, act on the findings of their research, and cause others to act on the findings of their research.

Women's power-to is central to Isis-WICCE's model and can be identified in the Illumination, Healing, Synergy, Radiation and Advocacy sections of this document. By affirming and developing women's power-to, Isis-WICCE both restores much of what women lost during conflict and influences the discourse on post-conflict interventions by drawing attention to women's agency (power-to) in post-conflict interventions.

The impact that can be delivered by women exercising their power-to is impressive. However, Isis-WICCE appreciates

another form of power that women survivors possess, namely power-with. One of the women leaders with whom Isis-WICCE has worked, Ms. Cecilia Engole of TEWPA (please see page 75), has shown that so much more can be achieved when women are given the space and awareness required to exercise power-with. Women's power-with can be identified throughout this document, but is clearest in the Synergy, and Radiation chapters of this document. Isis-WICCE's Exchange Program (see Synergy) gives women from different parts of the world opportunities to capitalize on their power-with, yielding results that would otherwise not have been possible.

The collaborative efforts between women leaders and survivors, Isis-WICCE, medical professionals and other partners who make Isis-WICCE's work possible also shows how exercising power-with plays an important function in Isis-WICCE's homegrown model.

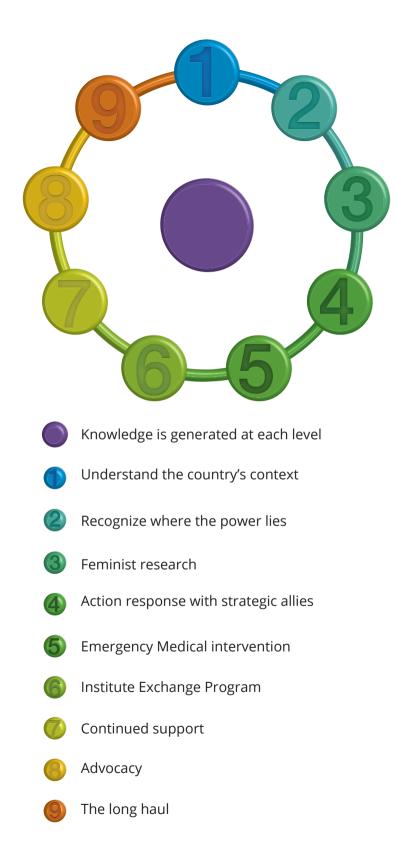
If one were to consider the way Isis-WICCE begins working in a country and eventually sees that work to international fora, issues of power also become evident.

Once Isis-WICCE has made a decision to work with women survivors in a particular country, issues of power are considered as plans are made. Isis-WICCE identifies strategic partners in the country to work with; powerful partnerships that can deliver change, and provide strength in numbers. Still at this stage, Isis-WICCE develops working relationships with those in positions of power to create buy-in and mitigate resistance concerning Isis-WICCE's work. After understanding the country's context and recognizing where the power lies in that country to drive their focus, Isis-WICCE embarks on feminist research. The research is referred to as feminist action-oriented research as the approach takes into account issues of power and gender; in the way that Isis-WICCE identifies, trains and works with women leaders to conduct research, as well as the way respondents are handled (they are not treated as mere research subjects but as women with power). The actions taken with strategic allies in response to the research are inspiring demonstrations of power with, overturning power over. The holistic healing offered to women survivors through Isis-WICCE positions women to be in a healthier personal space, and to appreciate the power within their bodies, and to be confident enough to associate with other women in order to exercise their power-with in meaningful ways to the needs identified by the researchers. The medical professionals who work with Isis-WICCE are aware of issues of power; they are willing to freely engage women on the details of their diagnoses and healing processes, which also nurtures women's awareness of their own power. Isis-WICCE takes the professionals and the necessary equipment to the women survivors; destroying the power-based barriers that arise from the more common arrangement of having a centralized health facility waiting for only those patients who are strong, supported, courageous and wealthy enough to travel to the health facility. While enhancing women survivors' leadership skills, Isis-WICCE provides opportunities for the women to exercise power with, regardless of race, nationality, religion, or anything else. This synergy grows into an international phenomenon, and using power to and power with and power over in evidence-based advocacy efforts to influence those entrusted with the power to deliver change.

While reading this document, the reader is encouraged to think of the power dynamics discussed above, as it is important to appreciate the significance of power in order to fully appreciate Isis-WICCE's homegrown model. The second edition of this document will explore issues of power within selected chapters.

### What has worked well?

As a feminist organization that works with women affected by armed conflict, Isis-WICCE's work never really ends; and the work will not end until patriarchy and war have been brought to an end, permanently. Yet, through Isis-WICCE's work, sustainable ways of identifying and addressing the needs of women affected by armed conflict have been successfully implemented in different countries, with impressive and lasting results. As an international organization, Isis-WICCE has worked in several countries; this requires strategy, collaboration, simplicity, flexibility, experience and, thinking big. As a learning organization, Isis-WICCE has established, continues to refine and customize, the methodology and processes that have brought meaningful change in the lives of women affected by armed conflict in different countries. This is all summarized in the diagram below, followed by a description of the diagram.



### Isis-WICCE Model | 20

### 1. Understand the country's context

As noted earlier, patriarchy and war are global issues which are yet to be resolved permanently. In the meantime, through networking within the women's movement, Isis-WICCE makes connections in different countries, and in this way proceeds to make inroads into different countries where women have been affected by war. That is how Isis-WICCE identifies countries in which to work. Critical information is gathered about the country, such as the cost of living, potential partners with whom Isis-WICCE may work, and accessibility (war destroys infrastructure, making it important to be aware of accessibility while making travel plans); accessibility of communities, technology, and relevant authorities; Isis-WICCE's preparations are thorough.

### 2. Recognize where the power lies

Isis-WICCE identifies powerful allies to work with in the country, such as women's organizations, activists, opinion leaders, government ministries and departments, non-governmental organizations, development partners, medical professionals, and the media; recognizing both institutional power and power with the people. This not only creates formidable partnerships that can work towards peace for women, but also fosters trust and creates buy-in among those who have the power to deliver change.

### 3. Feminist research

Isis-WICCE then works with women in their identifies women communities, leaders. and provides them with training in feminist actionoriented research. The research is conducted with Isis-WICCE's support, and a research report is produced. This affirms women's power by amplifying their voices for the purpose of effecting change through evidence-based advocacy. Through researching and documenting women survivor's experiences, the details of issues affecting women as articulated by women are brought to light. More about Isis-WICCE's feminist action-oriented research can be found in the chapter titled "Illumination".

### 4. Action response with strategic allies

For a more sustainable response to the findings of the research, Isis-WICCE works with strategic allies such as the relevant government ministries and medical institutions, providing support and encouragement

while leading by example. More about the collaborative nature of Isis-WICCE's work can be found in the chapter titled, "Isis-WICCE works together".

### 5. Emergency Medical intervention

While working with women affected by conflict, the details of issues concerning women's health emerge, particularly through Isis-WICCE's research and documentation. Due to unfavorable power gradients, women's health is typically considered a private rather than a national and a rights issue and is rarely given priority in post-conflict programs, while more attention is given to issues such as infrastructure development. Isis-WICCE makes women's health a rights issue that must be recognised as a national concern through emergency medical interventions, demonstrating to those with the power, resources and mandate to address women's health, how so much can be achieved even with minimal resources, and that so much more could be achieved if national priorities and political will were to be aligned with the documented health needs of women survivors. Women survivors who, again due to power gradients, were not in a position to access the medical attention they need, are provided with free medical services through Isis-WICCE's medical interventions. The medical interventions are conducted with the support of medical professionals who, through working with Isis-WICCE, are able to understand the power gradients faced by women in need of medical attention (particularly when women with sexual and reproductive health needs are treated by male doctors), and are able to work accordingly. The medical professionals take the time to listen to their patients, explain conditions and treatments, and answer questions. Thousands of women across the world have benefited from Isis-WICCE's medical interventions. The healing of mind, body and spirit goes a long way in restoring women's confidence in their power; power to survive, power to heal, power to feel healthy, power associate with other women. More about Isis-WICCE's medical interventions can be found in the chapter titled, "Healing".

### 6. Exchange Program Institute

Isis-WICCE runs a women's leadership program known as The International Exchange Program Institute, which brings together women leaders from different parts of the world to enhance their feminist leadership. As participants in Isis-WICCE's Exchange Program Institute, women leaders are reenergized and given support to conduct feminist work in their countries. Numerous women's groups and organizations have been formed by women who have participated in and been inspired by Isis-WICCE's Exchange Program Institute. Isis-WICCE's Exchange Program Institute enhances women leaders' power-to (agency) and power-with (synergy); an important cornerstone in the building of a powerful movement. More about the Exchange Program Institute can be found in the chapter titled "Synergy".

### 7. Continued support

The bonds formed between Isis-WICCE and participants in the Exchange Program Institute are strong and lasting. Isis-WICCE continues to support alumni from the Exchange Program Institute in various ways including the establishing of women's organizations, connecting alumni and their organizations to resources and institutions that will enhance their activism, writing references for the alumni and their organizations, providing support in writing proposals. This continued support demonstrates Isis-WICCE's staying power; as the number of Exchange Program Institute alumni and their organizations continue to grow, Isis-WICCE continuously appreciates and supports their work. The element of continued support and collaboration in Isis-WICCE's work is described in the chapter titled "Radiation".

### 8. Advocacy

In collaboration with Isis-WICCE's Exchange Program Institute alumni and their organizations, Isis-WICCE continuously advocates for the rights and needs of women affected by conflict. The advocacy work takes on numerous forms, including national and international campaigns, engaging with policy makers at various conferences and other forums, supporting women in seeking accountability from their governments, launching publications such as research reports, providing space for women survivors to speak for themselves before policy makers. Isis-WICCE has frequently engaged the African Union and other international entities in order to improve the situation of women affected by conflict. More about Isis-WICCE's advocacy work can be found in the chapter titled "Advocacy".

### 9. The long haul

As noted earlier, as long as patriarchy and war persist around the world. Isis-WICCE's work will never end; both in the countries in which Isis-WICCE work continues to trigger change, and in the countries where Isis-WICCE is yet to begin its work. As one issue (such as child marriage or the plight of half widows) is focused on, others emerge (such as poverty and corruption) and lead to more work such as legal reform and budgeting. While Isis-WICCE brings about change by demonstrating in practical terms how change can be effected rather than usurping governments' responsibilities towards women affected by conflict. Isis-WICCE is in it for the long haul, until real peace is a reality for women. This is all made possible by the power possessed by women, which Isis-WICCE harnesses into peace through its beautifully integrated programs described in the section titled, "The Isis-WICCE Weave". More about the continuous nature of Isis-WICCE's work can be found in the chapters titled, "The weaving continues" and "The challenge presented by the Isis-WICCE model".

### Knowledge is generated at each level

**Central to Isis-WICCE's work**, is the generation of knowledge;

this includes continuous reflection and institutional development, closely following global trends, packaging information in creative ways and making this information available to individuals, organizations, governments, international and other relevant entities.



Isis-WICCE restores hope and renews the spirits of women abused in armed conflict situations through its core programs of skills building (SYNERGY), documenting women's realities (ILLUMINATION), networking for peace and leadership (RADIATION), lobbying and advocating for redress of the spoils of the armed conflict (ADVOCACY) and providing free medical services (HEALING).

This weave illustrates the impressive integration of Isis-WICCE's efforts, coordinated towards realizing the overall goal of creating a vanguard of women with the capacity to participate in processes that influence gender equality and women's

"Isis-WICCE works on the span of the woman's life with the understanding that people's lives are not segmented. The approach is holistic." -Dr. Thelma Awori, Board President, Isis-WICCE

### THE KEY INGREDIENTS OF THE Isis-WICCE WEAVE

### Illumination

The core of Isis-WICCE's program is research and documentation, as all program activities are informed by research outcomes. The program avails information on women in situations of armed conflict and post conflict, which also directs appropriate response from Isis-WICCE and other actors.

#### Healing

Isis-WICCE mobilizes resources and expertise to address the physical, mental and gynecological emergency needs of survivors in different parts of the world. Through Isis-WICCE's work, over 2,000 women affected by war have received gynecological surgeries and treatment, and over 3,000 individuals have received counselling and trauma management treatment.

#### Synergy

Isis-WICCE International Exchange Institute, often refered to as the "The Institute", is a skills building program through which women survivors from across the world meet to focus on critical issues and share information, experiences, ideas, skills and strategies.

### Radiation

Isis-WICCE continues to strengthen the capacities of the community based women's groups that it mentors. With Isis-WICCE's support, these groups implement various activities that contribute to peace builling, post-conflict rehabilitation and resettlement.

### Advocacy

Isis-WICCE employs creative and innovative strategies under its advocacy program to infuence post-conflict reconstruction policies and programs at regional, national and international levels. Isis-WICCE profiles of women survivors, highlighting their needs and concerns so as to influence international development agendas.



# Illumination

### Isis-WICCE's documentation:

Tells the story from the perspective of those who lived the experiences... It focuses on the visibility of the affected communities rather than the visibility of the organisation.

## Isis-WICCE'S RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

When a woman wants to tell her story she wants the world to know her whole 'herstory'. She wants to tell the story, till she gets to the point where something broke, something got lost. She was raped by 21 soldiers. The gynaecologic trauma caused by mass rape, including forced insertion of objects such as sticks into the vagina resulting in formation of rupture or fistula between her vagina and her bladder and rectum (fistula) has left her confused. This was 14 years after the guns had fallen silent and Uganda was proudly demonstrating its successes in the reconstruction recovery of the affected region (the Luweero triangle). And the whole world was acknowledging the positive progress Uganda was making. But amidst all this acclaim there was this lone voice of their own freedom fighter, Mbabazi, who was still in a war zone, the guns were still in her vagina. She was experiencing all sorts of inequalities, i.e., invisibility of her contribution to the liberation, and because she did not have formal education she could not get integrated into the formal government army after the liberation. The soldiers, who used her as a sex comforter, left her with a child but could not plead for her to be considered for hands on training for auxiliary services within the army. She felt dehumanised, exposed, humiliated, betrayed, subordinated and put down. She lost her voice, became invisible, lost her sense of pride, and got trapped in fear, depression, low self esteem and anger. She does not want to start her story with rape lest the world thinks that she desired it, that she was not a decent woman. She starts her story with how beautiful she was as a young woman and the dreams she had...

The story of Mbabazi symbolises a key watershed in the journey of Isis-WICCE's documentation - a documentation that speaks. In an interview with Ms. Jebbeh Forster, the Country Manager of UN Women in Uganda at the time, she described Isis-WICCE's level of documentation as unique in a sense that it differs from many other programmes where women are constructed as passive

#### Isis-WICCE Model | 28

beneficiaries. According to her, Isis-WICCE's documentation:

Tells the story from the perspective of those who lived the experiences. Isis-WICCE goes deeper into the women's lives, works with the communities and gets their perspectives. It focuses on the visibility of the affected communities rather than the visibility of the organisation.

Since 1996, Isis-WICCE has been engaged in documenting the experiences of women in situations of armed conflict in Africa and globally. The focus on women's experiences in armed conflict came from the sheer realisation that this was a neglected area and yet very critical. Women in situations of conflict were largely invisible and their issues always 'a bit on the side'. This was true whether we are talking of international and national reconstruction efforts or at the level of the women's movement and activism. Isis-WICCE's focus on documenting women's experiences in conflict situations also came at a time when conflicts were escalating globally but particularly on the African continent.

#### The Focus of Isis-WICCE's Illumination:

- Tell the story from a woman's point of view and ensure that women are not erased from history in post conflict countries.
- Create safe spaces for women to share their stories and in so doing, challenge the silence around issues of stigma, taboos and denial related to sexual violation.
- Use the stories to demand resource distribution in ways that advance women's rights, improve livelihoods and wellbeing.
- Mobilize and amplify women's political influence and demands for resources, freedom from violence, and responsive and accountable institution in post conflict situations.
- Add to the body of existing feminist knowledge on women and conflict and strengthen the international women's knowledge base.
- Lobby the key stakeholders to change the norms, policies and practices that perpetuate inequality and violence against women in conflict and post conflict situations.
- Profile survivors potential in reconstruction processes.

#### Processes involved in Isis-WICCE's Illumination

#### i. Research Clearance

Permission for conducting the study is sought from the relevant recognised national institutions. A copy of the

clearance is availed to the local leadership in the specific areas of study.

#### ii. Strategic political Engagement with the selected community

Before Isis-WICCE starts the research process, it spends time building relations of trust in the community and gaining legitimacy and 'recruiting' allies. A consultative meeting is organised with stakeholders or individuals in the area of study. Some are connected with the topic being researched and documented while others are local leaders. The consultation process may include individual meetings with women's groups and others who may have opinions on the area of study. Consulting with potential stakeholders early in the process helps in ensuring that the documentation is both doable, and it helps in building trust and alliances with the very groups that will probably be in position to use and disseminate the findings. Meetings are held to introduce Isis-WICCE, the work it has done and the importance and relevance of documenting women's experiences. Isis-WICCE seeks consensus on the approach and methodology. identifies potential research assistants from the community and ensures that the community buys into the project.

#### iii. Training the researchers

Training the researchers is a key step in documentation. The researchers are not just a blank page. She or he plays an important and distinct role in interviews and in thinking about the right questions, in creating a safe space and empathy. She or he needs to be aware of the power and information she represents and embodies in the research process.

The Isis-WICCE team of research assistants are selected from the area of study and they include respected and community activists and leaders; leaders of women groups, teachers, nurses or social workers. Isis-WICCE ensures that men and women are represented; (75%women) and (25% men). Men are brought on board to enable Isis-WICCE capture the voices of other men with regard to their perspective on the extent and nature of violations inflicted against women. The training which takes about six days introduces the research team to conceptual and methodological foundation for Isis-WICCE's leadership training, learning, organizing, documentation and action. One of the most defining characteristics of Isis-WICCE's approach, is feminist popular documentation which provides a methodology and tools for going beyond tactics to prioritize approaches and strategies that amplify women's voices and makes vivid the violence committed against them with the hope of transforming the norms and beliefs that

#### Isis-WICCE Model | 30

dis-empower and perpetuate inequality during conflict and reconstruction periods.

The researchers are trained to understand the social forces that shape injustice and to manage their role in such a way as to find opportunities to continue to deepen the dialogue and stretch the thinking through questions. During the training, the researchers are advised to listen to the woman, listen to the silenced voice to gain access to her insights and perspectives; to listen to the voice of pain and agony, the silenced person, the silenced position in society, community and family, the silenced aches and pains and the silenced ideas.

#### iv. Interview process / Field data collection

Isis-WICCE acknowledges that patriarchy operates to discredit women's ideas and emotions, denigrating how they view their own mental capacities, relationships, feelings, and bodies. Hence there is a clearly conscious and deliberate orientation towards research methods that are interactive, participatory, supportive, empowering and grounded in listening skills. They include reflection and education; they encourage women to ask questions and reflect on their experiences.

Both structured and unstructured methods are used but the most important thing is to create space for the interviewee to gain confidence to tell her story without fear. This is done through a careful process of creating trust through validation of women's experiences as well as empathy. Where possible, focus group discussions are encouraged. The focus groups provide a plat-form to build relationships, inspiration, common agendas across differences, critical consciousness, analysis and eagerness to speak out and change the way things are. To ensure that everyone is engaged in the process, the researchers establish trust within the group and community and ensure interviewees confidentiality. The process starts with women's realities, concerns, feelings and experience so as to acknowledge the importance of their voices.

In discussing difficult, painful and sensitive topics, Isis-WICCE uses songs, drawings, poetry and skits, thus embedding within the whole process collective as well as single voices of reality. These are not just feel good methods. They are methods carefully structured on feminist principles particularly bent to validating women's voices as well as using those voices to create change. Following on what Sandra Harding (1987) refers to as feminist epistemology (as a justificatory strategy

that constructs women as knowers or agents of knowledge 1987: 3), it can be argued that Isis-WICCE's approach to illumination of women's lives serves to demonstrate a tangible model of feminist research in the concrete context of conflict and post conflict situations.

#### v. Validation

All the collected data is processed, analysed and a report is written. These are then disseminated first within the community where the study was carried out to validate the findings and then later at the national level to policy makers, development practitioners, women activists, among others.

The interviewee's identity is protected where necessary. At the community level, validation is part of learning and change, the process is used to mobilise women to better understand their own reality and work collectively to solve common, deeply-felt problems. The validation stage might be the beginning of building a movement by encouraging people to start addressing problems at the individual level. The collective experience inspires more women to join and tackle bigger agendas as will be demonstrated further in this publication (see "From the Harvest Basket").

#### From Research to Action

Isis-WICCE's documentation, like a mat, weaves in other programmes in diverse ways because it combines threads coming from multiple directions (horizontal, vertical, diagonal). This combination of distinct strands that come together around common aims gives Isis-WICCE's work its strength, resistance, legitimacy and also flexibility.

In Isis-WICCE research we find a thread that weaves into the whole idea of making a difference. We particularly draw out the following characteristics:

**Catalyst:** The process activates and catalyses women's voice (and communities) and their agency. Some have been known to engage in self- healing rituals soon after telling their stories. Others, like in the case of Liberia, buried the bones of people who were massacred; as part of healing and recovery.

#### Breaking Stigma and taboo on Women's

**Sexuality:** Isis-WICCE has recognized that through the documentation, women survivors are able, for the first time to share their experience of displacement, flight from homes, sexual violence, among others. The amazing thing is the courage women exhibit by sharing the form and extent

#### Isis-WICCE Model | 32

of cruelty in which the warring factions inflict pain through rape, and torture. At times, the women survivors are ready to undress to show the damage on their genitalia, they are ready to remove the lid of fear, shame and taboo associated with rape. Therefore, giving them the space to amplify their voices is an empowering process that closes the gap between the private into the public spheres.

Isis-WICCE has also noticed that the women leaders who serve as research assistants during the documentation gain the courage to share their own ordeals of sexual violence after the field documentation. The stories that they hear their fellow women survivors sharing enable them to understand that they are not alone. In addition, the process of sharing is therapeutic and forms a first step in the healing process.

**Responding to the Needs of survivors:** In all the areas that Isis-WICCE has documented it is evident that women suffer from various forms of sexual and reproductive health ailments, which include vesico vaginal fistulae, STIs, rectal vaginal fistulae, abnormal vaginal bleeding, abnormal vaginal discharge, infertility and chronic abdominal pain, genital prolapse, sexual dysfunction and unwanted pregnancy; and high levels of trauma and psychological problems that affect their ability to function and engage in various development related initiatives in their homes and communities.

Isis-WICCE provides on spot intervention during the documentation. It might also be forced to respond to immediate survival needs especially when an interviewee is a destitute. Isis-WICCE has organized short term medical interventions for the past 15 years; to respond to the pathetic state of women's sexual and reproductive health, as well as the psychosocial needs arising from the various violations inflicted upon them during the armed conflict. This is done in collaboration with a team of medical professionals that Isis-WICCE has trained to work with women. It includes medical screening for survivors in the area of study, provision of medication, counselling and surgery. The intervention also includes training of community based health workers in the identification and management of trauma and sexual and reproductive health related complications in areas affected by conflict, to enable them provide women friendly services as well as continuity of the service way after the medical intervention. Once women recover physically and emotionally, they are able to engage in self improvement and community development activities and hence to reclaim their dignity.

Building the Capacity of Women Leaders: During the documentation. Isis-WICCE identifies women leaders and those with the potential to lead. For instance in Uganda after the documentation, Isis-WICCE organised Exchange Visits and training for women leaders from the conflict affected communities (1999) - 2003). The training enabled the women leaders to get skills in conflict analysis and resolution, communication, leadership, and peace building. The training process involves learning to question and challenge the explanations for why things are the way they are and what is "normal" perpetually seeking a deeper understanding of power and inequality from the intimate and personal to the more public realms of decision making at the national and international levels. This is the foundation of developing a cadre of leaders able to engage with post conflict reconstruction programme as well as engaging in peace building processes. These are the same leaders that become lobbying and advocacy champions for women's rights both at the local and national levels.

**Inform and persuade:** The knowledge gained during the research process is used to inform and persuade, influence and pressure institutions and other power brokers to recognize, protect, address and deliver women's rights in post conflict programmes.

#### Sharing information for Greater Impact

Isis-WICCE is strategic in the way in which it shares information from research findings. The findings are not just shared in a raw form. Useful information is extracted and made 'edible' for different audiences. Isis-WICCE then looks for many windows of opportunity and uses them to 'push' information from the research findings. This is not as simple as it sounds. Isis-WICCE takes the time to understand the institutional process or structure of the group which needs influencing in order to decide what that window might be. Isis-WICCE also tries to understand the relationships within a specific institution such as the AU and the United Nations (UN) in order to identify an individual or voice within who can advocate for the importance of the information and carry recommendations forward.

One of Isis-WICCE's important skills is knowing how and when to weave new information and ideas into a community, institution, or a group so as to challenge assumptions and prejudices, and counter misinformation or provide missing data. Therefore, before sharing information, Isis-WICCE carries out a comprehensive analysis of its stakeholders in order to know if it is the right political moment to package information in a way

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that challenges discriminatory and destructive systems and behaviours.

People absorb, connect emotionally and act on information that is directly related to their daily lives. Thus Isis-WICCE does not assume that sharing information alone will motivate people to act or that they will change. Isis-WICCE connects information sharing with learning; the learning is also connected with the local realities, concerns, feelings and experiences.

In cases where groups are not literate, Isis-WICCE uses visual approaches such as drawings, videos and socio-dramas to disseminate the information and to encourage deeper discussions.

## Common channels used by Isis-WICCE to link research to policy

- Publications (e.g. Women's World magazine and annual reports, policy briefs, discussion papers and think pieces), oral presentations to key Ministries at national levels in each country where Isis-WICCE works, factsheets, research synopses, web portals, databases, research validation workshops, facebook and the website.
- Mass media presentations: Isis-WICCE has worked with the media for years
- A documentation centre based in Kampala at the offices of Isis-WICCE

Isis-WICCE supports marginalized voices to be heard. It does not just rely on text to capture voices on specific issues. It actively creates fora or responds to invited spaces and ensures that different groups are enabled to attend those spaces and tell their own stories to policy, technical experts, NGO and civil society groups.

## The Feminist Significance of Isis-WICCE's Illumination

According to Yaliwe Clarke, a Board Member, Isis-WICCE's research methods come from particular feminist post-colonial sensitivity. Isis-WICCE values women's personal lives - as a key site for learning and change, and what is revealed is unique. In an interview, Clarke states that:

The process amplifies women's voices and enables them to talk about their own bodies, sexuality, violence, pain and contribution. It visibilises authentic-neglected bodies, minds; in fact almost

everything neglected becomes visible. Accordingly, Isis-WICCE found people yearning for attention and gave it to them. Research is action oriented, it is transformative, relevant to the lives of women, it is holistic in its approach and hence reinforces our multiple forms of intelligence.

Sharing stories of trauma has proved to be a transforming experience for both researchers and respondents/interviewees. Most participants (interviewees) find the experience to be so helpful that they ask the researchers to "interview' a friend or relative who has a similar story to tell. Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are pre-requisites both for the restoration of some sanity and for the healing of individual survivors. Furthermore, telling stories shifts norms, ideas and community discourse; specifically with regard to stigma, taboos and denial about tolerance for violence against women, and their contribution during the conflict.

It is worthy to note that such grounded processes of knowledge and its use will contribute to the much felt pressing need for home-grown theory in the understanding of women's lives in particular and gender relations in general. Amina Mama (1996) for instance stresses that:

It is necessary to re-operationalise some of the basic concepts used in women studies, so as to ground them in our own experience and local conditions (1996:67).

Amina Mama (1996) is expressing a political interest in the feminist agenda - that of creating home-grown concepts and theories based on our concrete realities. Isis-WICCE is doing just that in relation to conflict and conflict realties by illuminating the women's experiences in a long term bottom up processes, which information can then be utilised to develop usable concepts for our lived reality. Much more importantly, such research processes in which the agency of the women is an inbuilt component, needs to be popularised in all spaces so that they move from the status of the exception to the norm - in feminist studies educational programmes as well as in spaces of feminist activism.

## Healing

The healing aspect of the model comes from the realisation that the body which has been damaged by the sexual violence and other ghastly atrocities has to be restored...

#### THE Isis-WICCE APPROACH TO THE BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT

Our bodies are our primary means of participating socially, economically, politically, spiritually and creatively in society. They are the beginning point of the practical application of rights; the place in which rights are exercised, and for women in particular, the place where rights are most often violated. Without knowledge of and control over our bodies, including our sexuality, women's rights can be neither fully exercised nor enjoyed. (Feminist Africa, Issue 6, 2006).

Healing, which is referred to as medical intervention in Isis- WICCE programming comes in as an offshoot of its painstaking approach to conflict and post conflict realities. It is a product of an approach that gives substantial meaning and validation to the feminist slogan 'the personal is political'. While the main driving force of Isis-WICCE's work is to document the problems and realities and bring them to the attention of the different actors (especially governments), the approach of making a difference makes it imperative to focus on the pressing health needs (Mulumba, 2002). The healing aspect of the model comes from the realisation that the body which has been damaged by the sexual violence and other ghastly atrocities has to be restored, for women to be whole again and thereby participate in rebuilding themselves and the community at large. Healing then becomes a pre-requisite for any peace building initiatives.

Extreme and massive sexual atrocities which include rape, repeated gang rapes, attacks on pregnant women and their unborn fetuses and mutilation of breasts and genital areas, leave the woman/ women shattered. Women suffer ailments such as vaginal fistulae and other similar complications. More often than not, there are increases in infections and often HIV & AIDS due to the sexual predatory behaviour of soldiers, militias, gangs and even peace keeping forces (UNRISD, 2005). The sexual violence leaves the body damaged, the soul ruined and the spirit destroyed.

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A report on the Isis-WICCE medical intervention in Liberia, for example outlined the ailments as presented in the table below:

Vaginal and Perineal tear	Protruding uterus	Unwanted pregnancy
Incontinence	Infertility	Sexual dysfunction
Abnormal vaginal discharge	Chronic lower abdominal pain	Swelling in the abdomen
Genital sores	Sexually transmitted infection	Abnormal vaginal bleeding

#### Table: Gynecological Problems Reported: the Case of Liberia

Source: Isis-WICCE (2009) Touching the Unreached, p. 91

Such health problems have been established in various contexts in varying degrees. For example, the Liberian conflict is said to have had massive sexual assaults in unprecedented proportions. In some situations like Northern Uganda, in addition to direct sexual violence, there were other ghastly atrocities such as mutilation (cutting ears, lips, arms legs and body burning) and other acts like making women pound their babies in mortars. But the connecting thread is the linking of the body to the soul and spirit.

For the women victims, the impact is not only physical injury but also psychologically devastating, and may lead to divorce, family rejection or social ostracism. Rape as a weapon of war demeans and humiliates not only the woman herself but also the people or clans to whom she belongs. As it were, rape is shameful and polluting for the family. Victims do not often reveal their rapes to others, whether due to shame or to the expectation that they will not be believed. They are forced to carry the burden of guilt and shame, while the rapists go scot free and unpunished. Hence, in addition to the physical harm, women are made to carry the burden of shame of the atrocities. Women also bear additional burdens of care giving in the context of breakdown of health service. Through the research and documentation, which, as already said is carried out in a manner that illuminates on the concrete realities, Isis-WICCE then sets the ground for intervention imperative. For example, the report on medical intervention notes that:

The lack of health services during armed conflict results in many women especially those in need of obstetric care to develop complications like obstructed labour leading to debilitating conditions like vesico-vaginal fistulae(uncontrollable leakage of urine) and recto-vaginal fistulae (leakage of faeces in the vagina).

Armed with information on the realities on the ground, Isis-WICCE mobilises resources and expertise to address the physical, mental, and gynaecological emergency needs of survivors of war in different parts of the world. Ideally, medical/ health intervention is a service delivery,

one of the public goods that governments provide to its citizens. However, as noted in the Isis-WICCE documentation, armed conflict often leads to disruption of health systems, and often dysfunctional governments. And much more importantly, such women's needs are ignored or systematically marginalized in the design of post war reconstruction.

#### Processes involved in Isis-WICCE's Healing

The process of medical intervention, of healing undertaken by Isis-WICCE is not an airtight project type intervention but rather a more fluid process with key learning points along the way. Broadly the intervention involves the following key strategies:

#### i. Understand the context

When an Isis-WICCE team goes to work in a specific country, it stays on the ground for as long as three months, organizing logistics and ensuring that the right connections are made.

## ii. Research and documentation of services available in order to respond to the context

Isis-WICCE carries out research and documentation to assess the state of health in the country and the extent to which health facilities cater for women who were raped and sexually abused during the conflict. Guided by the need to make a difference, Isis-WICCE seeks to cover the areas most affected by the conflict and most often hard to reach areas as well. Research also identifies women who were abused and encourages them to share their stories. It is important to recognize the role and importance of trust and relationship building in research. For the women to open up to the interviewers, they need to feel comfortable enough to believe that they are respected, honoured and valued. It is also important that these women understand the intentions behind capturing their stories, and that they believe that their views will be presented in a way that respects the integrity of their lives and personhood. Through storytelling, women confront the painful legacy of war on their bodies, with its silences and agonising secrets. Research produces knowledge regarding conflict, women, sexual abuse and recovery. Individual stories serve as alternative sources of "memory" of events which have been expunged from 'official memory'. This new knowledge is used in the production of tools, newsletters, reports, materials for training, lobbying, advocacy, resources mobilisation and other strategic actions. Above all, the knowledge is used in organising health and medical interventions for women.

#### iii. Collaboration

Isis-WICCE believes in collaboration for the purpose of alliance-

building, agenda-setting and advocacy. Therefore, together with the partner organisation, Isis-WICCE identifies other key stakeholders working in the field of gender and post conflict, sexual and reproductive health and rights. She explains the purpose of the project and gets their commitment and ownership. While working with allies, Isis-WICCE ensures that coordination, management and financing arrangements support institutional strengthening and local ownership.

For Isis-WICCE, identifying potential actors and allies, their interests, their degree of mobilization in support of or against an issue is a critical part of understanding the national context and policy terrain. Among the major actors and allies are government ministries and institutions. Isis-WICCE connects with government institutions to introduce itself and gain political support and influence at the highest level. Isis-WICCE explains its work regarding peace and security to government Ministries. In so doing, she makes her case by unpacking international instruments such as CEDAW and the UN Resolution 1325, from a feminist perspective.

With regard to healing, Isis-WICCE asks for permission to bring foreign health personnel whom it has worked with for many years, into the country to work with the nationals. The aim is to build a convergence between the foreign actors who have worked with Isis-WICCE in conflict areas for many years and have the experience required to work on women's bodies and the national ones who will be trained to continue with the work in the country.

#### iv. Reviewing and Updating the Training Manuals

Together with the partners, Isis-WICCE reviews her training manual on "Management of Medical and psychological effects of war trauma" to customise it to the realities and needs in the country. The manual is pre-tested during the training of the community based health workers, and during the screening of survivors. It's finalized and disseminated to government Ministries, Health workers and women leaders as a reference tool for continued response to issues that will be presented by survivors.

#### v. Planning health camps

Using the information gathered, local and regional medical consultants (gynecologists, surgeons, psychiatrists, and anesthetists and their assistants and nurses) and community based health workers, women leaders and Isis-WICCE get together and plan for health camps by assessing the state of the health centres, compiling a list of resources needed, and organizing logistical issues on the ground. They also assess available counseling services in the country and how woman friendly they are.

#### vi. Mobilisation of Survivors

Following research, women, girls, boys and men in the selected areas are mobilised by the researchers most of whom are Isis-WICCE alumni and community health workers. These are sensitized on the need to access medication and trauma therapy for the health complications associated with armed conflict. Mobilisation is not done mechanically, it combines awareness raising and counseling in a way that bestows agency on the part of the war victims.

#### vii. Medical/health intervention strategy

The team of professionals (trained by Isis-WICCE), deliberates on the methodology for medical intervention, and produces a strategy for the specific country. The intervention is shared with the key government Ministries and other stakeholders to ensure that it is consistent with the country's needs and the national policy on Health.

#### viii. Screening of survivors

Survivors are screened for sexual and reproductive health complications and psychosocial problems and the types of medical/health interventions needed are identified, where some receive on-spot medication and counseling. Those with critical cases are referred for surgery and intensive observation. Others are referred to the counselors, some of whom are trained by Isis-WICCE, in feminist counseling.

#### ix. Post medical treatment and surgical follow up and review

Monitoring and follow up of the women, girls, boys and men<sup>3</sup>, who benefited from the treatment and surgery is carried out by the health workers, Isis-WICCE alumni and community leaders and Isis-WICCE staff. A report on their progress is written and shared.

#### x. Lobbying and feminist Advocacy

At the end of the medical intervention, Isis-WICCE produces an analytical report of the impact of conflict on women and girls from a health perspective, as well as the value of the intervention. The organisation uses the report for lobbying the Ministry of health of every country they have gone, to improve the state of health services, especially with regard to reproductive health and sexual rights. The same report is used in many other spaces both at the local and international levels as a lobbying tool.

<sup>3</sup> Although women form the primary focus of Isis-WICCE, healing has in some cases involved men as a matter of necessity as they also turn up in dire need of help as a result of the war atrocities or neglected critical health needs as a result of the collapse of the health systems.

## Variations in the implementation of the Healing Piece of the model

The health/medical intervention model varies in accordance with the needs of each country. The model is fashioned with careful attention to the terrain and through a conscious effort to giving voice to the local actors - looking at their observable and felt needs. For example in Uganda, Liberia and South Sudan, Isis-WICCE trained health workers in the identification and management of physical, reproductive and psychological health complications. Medical workers in Juba Teaching hospital were trained in the pre operative, intra-operative and post operative fistula care.

In South Sudan, Isis-WICCE trained rural health workers, most of whom had no prior training in basic mid-wifely techniques. Because of the lack of medical facilities in some areas of South Sudan, Isis-WICCE trained traditional birth attendants. In Liberia, the medical intervention was done in remote and isolated communities in Maryland, and Grand Kru counties in Liberia. The intervention provided an avenue to weave across sections of stakeholders into the work. The same intervention also gave key stakeholders based in Monrovia an opportunity to reach remote, extremely poor places that they had never been or even thought of going. Given that the general health infrastructure was damaged, Isis-WICCE purchased assorted and special drugs for the survivors who benefited from the health camp. In Uganda and a few other countries, Isis-WICCE has carried out cancer screening as part of medical health intervention. Again this variation showed that the Isis-WCCE model is a learning model, a living model shaped by the needs and realities on the ground.

In Medical intervention, Isis-WICCE emits the following key messages:

- 1. The personal is political and the body is political. The body's wellbeing is as important as its citizenship.
- Peace involves a whole woman and not just pieces of her. Women cannot be involved in peace processes and post conflict programmes when they are not whole. All demobilisation strategies should always consider women's bodies and their health needs.
- 3. Women's bodies can be repaired with limited resources if there is political will.
- 4. Society must own up its mess and lift the burden of dislocation and atrocities off the woman's back.
- 5. 'Seeing is believing'. Women's needs in post conflict situations cannot be assumed, but rather have to be empirically established, by women themselves.

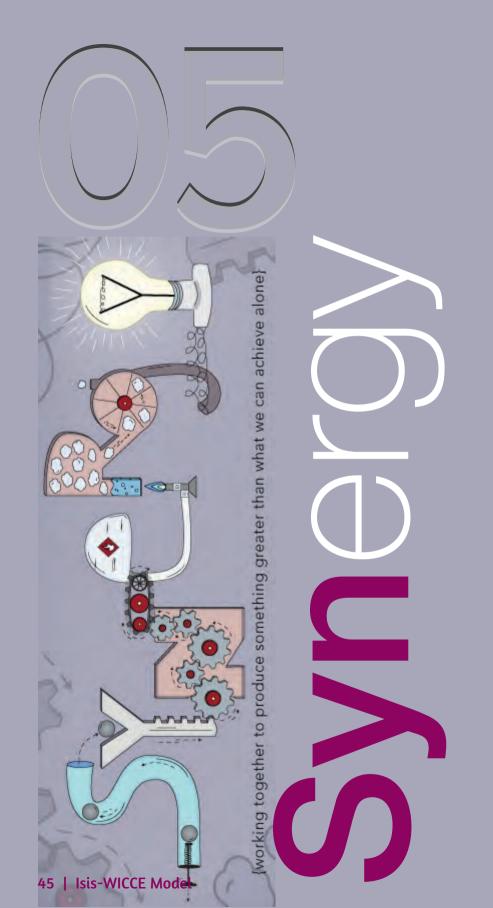
#### The Significance of Healing

In this publication we have decided to use the term healing instead of medical intervention. Why, because healing delivers the real impact of Isis-WICCE's work in the area of health. It restores the body, it restores hope and particularly restores women's agency. The intervention draws from the actual realities and touches where it matters most. It is a healing hand that utilises the voice of women. This healing makes real impact in the lives of the women touched. The difference can be seen, felt and touched. This approach has critical significance at various levels.

In the first instance, the healing intervention yields real impact on the ground which accords Isis-WICCEs' work credibility. It actually opens many policy and difficult doors for Isis-WICCE. It increases Isis-WICCE's legitimacy which can be further utilised to push a substantive and broad feminist agenda.

Furthermore, the engagement of health professionals in alternative approaches alert them to the fact that treating issues related to sexual and reproductive health particularly in the context of conflict could not just be 'business as usual'. The experience teaches the health professionals that technical bio-medical skills are not enough and that they need to understand women's health from a patriarchal, power, sexual and marginalization perspective. This has increased key competencies which remain beyond the life of the project in question.

Also, the impact of Isis-WICCE's healing approach has brought mental health from the periphery. This work has spotlighted the need to focus on trauma as a specific health need for women and men, but in a special way for women survivors of sexual violence. Isis-WICCE's manual on Management of Medical and psychological effects of war trauma continues to strengthen work on sexual and reproductive health rights during conflict and post conflict.



a key thread in the re-centering of the woman, building the capacity of women as change agents in peace making and post conflict development ...

#### Isis-WICCE'S INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME INSTITUTE

Developing Women as Leaders and Movers in Post Conflict Reconstruction.

Synergy comes into the Isis-WICCE's feminist development model as a key thread in the re-centering of the woman, building the capacity of women as change agents in peace making and post conflict development. Training neatly blends in with the aspects of illumination and healing through developing women as leaders and as movers, in post conflict reconstruction. Isis-WICCE's International Exchange Programme Institute is that synergy that constitutes a conscientious process of bringing together women from several countries across the world, to think, learn, co-create understandings and strategies in a manner that restores hope, dignity and agency.

The institute is an annual, phased, skills building programme where women from different parts of the world, (conflict and post conflict areas) learn from one another, exchange ideas and acquire crosscultural strategies and solidarity action for addressing a diverse range of issues from a human rights perspective (Isis-WICCE Annual Report, 2008). Isis-WICCE understands that a significant part of fostering the required leadership is coming to terms with the multidimensional processes of investing in the women as a development strategy. Investing in the women is more than just building leadership in a theoretical manner, but also finding constructive ways of facilitating their own healing, and affirming them by acknowledging their contribution especially during conflict. The essence of the exchange engagement is that women have a right and a crucial role in building peace and participating effectively in post conflict and reconstruction programmes, and hence in the transformation of their societies. Building the capacity for women to lead is perhaps one of the greatest challenges given all the taboos and stigma related to women at all levels and yet it is also one of the most important. It is the women - whether in government, civil society, or CBOs or simply activists not attached to any structured business that are likely to shape the

world especially in post conflict countries. After all, they are mostly the ones who keep their families 'alive' during conflict and are largely responsible for nurturing the next generation of leaders. Isis-WICCE's training could be considered as representing its theory of change for women's leadership, activism, women's movement building and feminist action. Hence, the institute is a core programme and a vehicle through which Isis-WICCE is able to bring the voices, identify needs and at the same time create women as leaders and peace actors.

Isis-WICCE's leadership training theory of change entails a continuous process of learning and co-creation. In this, Isis-WICCE adheres to the importance of a combination of strategies around the following:

- Strengthen women's empowerment and capacity to express voice, needs and claim rights and accountability;
- Promote change of societal norms, values & practices in adherence, tolerance and respect of women's rights within the context of post conflict
- Focus on advocacy, and lobby towards transparency by local institutions, governments and international bodies accountable to social justice, gender equality and enforcement and implementation of women's rights.

Isis-WICCE acknowledges the importance of the media but more importantly, believes in processes of consciousness-raising and mobilising for advocacy and lobbying and hence in slow, patient, face-to-face organising. In the whole conceptualisation of the institute, Isis-WICCE acts as a catalyst. The participants are provoked and facilitated to question preconceived notions about how the world operates and think more deeply about why gender and other inequalities exist, the structural causes of injustice in their situation but also in the world at large. Isis-WICCE's training does not mould women to conform to their social roles and the status quo but rather catalyzes critical thinking as well as resistance.

#### Key Guiding Principles of the Institute

- i. Holistic: All development and training initiatives must encompass all aspects of a woman's life and respond to their physical, psychological, social, economic and spiritual needs within the socio-political environment, thus ensuring that they gain the necessary knowledge, skills and experience required to ensure that they develop.
- ii. **Non-discrimination:** Women are not a homogenous group. They are diverse and hence have diverse needs. The training initiatives do not discriminate against any woman on the basis of political parties, ethnic background, sexual orientation, disability or area of origin.

- iii. **Sustainable development:** Women's assets, potential, capacity and capability must be maximised so that they can respond effectively and efficiently to life's challenges and development programmes without compromising their health
- iv. **Participation and inclusion:** Isis-WICCE training policies, strategies and programmes aim at sharing information, creating opportunities and providing the tools to enable women get involved in decision-making as active participants.

Isis-WICCE's training is both reformative and transformative. The training starts with what people know and then combines learning, reflection, action, lobbying and reflection again. The process of reflection and dialogue contributes to a process of enhancing the consciousness, identity and confidence of the participants and thus acts as a catalyst for re-strategizing and redefining struggles and alternatives.

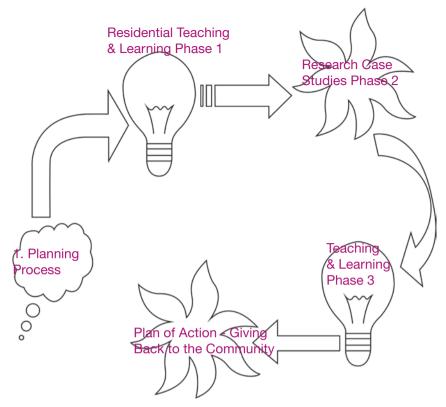
For Isis-WICCE, the tension and challenge between transformative and reformative has to be managed well. The current wind of change of the Arabic spring confirms this challenge of reform versus transformation of the power relations between women and men, at all levels, the household, the community, society at large and in all domains, social, cultural, economic and political. It also points at the fact that women's activism does not take place in a vacuum and is connected to wider struggles for democratisation, social justice, peace and sustainability (Antrobus, 2004).

Given that the core aim of the institute is to create a vanguard of women with knowledge and practical skills of investigating and documenting violations of women's human rights as well as imparting skills for undertaking effective advocacy for justice and sustainable development (Isis-WICCE Annual Report, 2008), the type of training is carefully crafted in a needs based continuum that creatively follows the rhythm of the needs of the participants and their conflict contexts (see figure below). In trying to understand the continuum, we have put it in blocks which still reflect the phases in the Isis-WICCE programming.

#### Block One: Planning and Reflection

Isis-WICCE's training does not start in the abstract. As part of the planning process, two key processes take place. One, is where Isis-WICCE develops tools to assess participants knowledge levels so as to design an appropriate training strategy. This also involves the preparation of the facilitators and the concept of what the training is all about. The second is the validation of the participants' knowledge and power by asking them to carry out a situational analysis of women in their countries with regard to conflict related experiences. If the women are working in formal setting, their own

#### The Continuum of Isis-WICCE's Institute



organisations are requested to support them in various ways. In their carrying out a situational analysis, Isis- WICCE encourages the selected women to the Institute to question and challenge the usual explanation given for why things are the way they are and what is "normal" and to perpetually seek a deeper understanding of power and equality from the intimate and personal levels to the more public realms of decision making at the national and international levels.

Therefore, the Institute begins before the prospective participants leave their countries. It begins with developing critical consciousness, which delivers Isis-WICCE's explicit goal of feminist popular education.

By starting a learning process that affirms personal and community knowledge and concerns, Isis-WICCE creates an atmosphere that builds women's confidence in their creative ability to change things as well as opening them to new ideas, ways of working together and strategies.

The documentation conducted by participants produces information that usually goes beyond conventional images of women as victims of war. It analyses the many different ways in which women make a contribution to the rebuilding of their countries as they emerge from armed conflicts. Special attention is given to women's priority concerns, to their resources and capacities, and to structural and situational factors that may reduce their participation in reconstruction processes.

The Institute is firmly located within the mission of Isis-WICCE which emphasises mutual relationships in cross-cultural contexts. Rather than impose a training strategy to a specific country, Isis-WICCE engages with the identified facilitators in the planning and reflection. This process then ensures the appreciation of the cultural, political and economic contexts and creates synergy for the whole exercise.

#### Block Two: The Exchange Programme

Bringing women from different conflict and post conflict countries to learn together, exchange ideas, share experiences and coping strategies and break isolation is what Isis-WICCE refers to as the exchange programme. The exchange 'spices' and enriches the training. It enables the participants to realise that they are not alone or that they are not to blame for their predicament and opens them up to a deeper analysis of the social forces shaping injustice. They learn from each other, share knowledge and find their voices together. The exchange enhances solidarity, sustains the participants' active resolve and capacity to self-organize in response to injustice. By the time they leave the Institute, they have built vertical and horizontal linkages across countries, classes, sectors, issue silos, and locations.

The exchange programme is occasionally organised at the national level with women from different parts of the country. Depending on the context, women from different warring parties/ ethnic groups of the country are brought together to share experiences. For example, this was the case in Uganda where women in Luwero (Central Uganda) came face to face with women from Northern Uganda (Luwero people blamed most of the atrocities to northern Uganda). At the beginning, some of the women could not bear to be in the same room. Isis-WICCE took the time to build trust and to make them understand the causes of conflict. The team building and reconciliation process were emotionally draining but eventually some reconciliation was achieved.

In some cases Isis-WICCE conducts country focused training on the basis of the prevailing conditions, for example, the training in South Sudan. Isis-WICCE trained women to be leaders and to participate in politics during the emergence of South Sudan as a new nation.

In South Sudan too, Isis-WICCE trained traditional midwives and medical personnel to enable them acquire the tools to address women's reproductive and sexual rights and handle trauma.

#### Key areas of Engagement in the Training

#### i. Dealing with conflict and tension during training

When people emerging from conflict or post conflict countries join Isis-WICCE training, they come with tension, fear, trauma, suspicion and mistrust among other challenges. Within the same training

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room, there might be people who were fighting each other during the conflict. The space has to be managed very well and therefore, Isis-WICCE creates the space to surface and deal constructively with conflict, including respect for disagreement. Isis-WICCE facilitates in such a way that the participants find common ground with respect for differences even if they don't agree. This is how Isis-WICCEs feminist popular education processes seek to create the experience and practice of inclusive and participatory democracy to develop new kinds of leaders and ideals.

The training is also tailored to meet the participants' needs. The process unwraps the multiple and intersecting layers of social exclusion and oppression such as gender, class, age, nationality, ethnicity, and the myriad other identities around which social hierarchies are built. It's these differences that war mongers use to divide citizens. As well, Isis-WICCE widens the analysis to acknowledge the many places and spaces in which patriarchy operates - notably, in the domestic, reproductive, sexual and intimate spheres. For women who are coming from conflict countries, this process renews energy, imagination and hope.

#### ii. The personal is political

Isis-WICCE whole orientation is that change starts with an individual - the personal is political. In its training, Isis-WICCE unravels how patriarchy operates to discredit women's ideas and emotions, denigrating how they view their own mental capacities, relationships, feelings, and bodies. The training raises the participants critical consciousness, and critical thinking skills regarding their beliefs, attitudes and values, own worth, own sexuality and own power. They are made to see that the way they see themselves is leant from society. They learn how power operates in everyday life and the connection between conflict, power and body integrity and to connect this to sexual abuse.

The other aspect of the personal being political is personal care. Over many years and especially in violent or risky contexts, the physical and emotional trauma that women and women activists experience can leave deep seated scars which, if unacknowledged, undermine women's sense of self and agency. The facilitation engages in processes that enable women to deal with exhaustion, fear, anxiety, shame and self-blame, violence, sexual coercion, abuse, and loss of family members bearing in mind that it is difficult to be a leader to build a movement when the soul is fragmented.

#### iii. Access to and control over resources (material, human and social)

Training in this area connects power and agency to accessing resource and controlling them, be it in the family, market and community. Issues related to post conflict recovery processes, agency and lobbying are also raised. For example South Sudan fought for independence for years and finally won political independence. But questions have to be raised around, for example, who has power

in South Sudan? Who determines who owns and controls what? To what extent are women being prioritised in the allocation of resources? To what extent can women exercise their own agency? During the exchange programme, Isis-WICCE prepared women in South Sudan to participate in politics and of the women trained, 15 are now Members of Parliament, with a Deputy Speaker being one of the Isis-WICCE alumni. The re-centering impulse also directed Isis-WICCE to the stack reality of limited technical expertise of the health professionals in South Sudan then, on issues of mental health and sexual and reproductive rights. Hence, Isis-WICCE trained some health professionals to address women needs in these and other areas.

#### iv. Cultural norms and practices

Isis-WICCE weaves information and ideas into the learning process in a way that challenges assumptions and prejudices regarding culture and practices, and counters misinformation or provides missing data. With new information, the participants are encouraged to develop more effective strategies that challenge institutions and the discriminatory and destructive systems, behaviours and beliefs. They engage with power and power dynamics and how invisible power (i.e. socialization, ideologies and harmful cultural norms and practices), prevent them and other oppressed groups from seeing and questioning injustice and hence reinforce their own sense of inferiority and shame.

#### v. Laws, policies, resource allocation

The participants are facilitated to understand laws and policies and how these contribute to discrimination in various forms including resources allocation. In so doing, they are made to interrogate power as it operates on two interrelated levels: through visible forms e.g. discriminatory institutions, laws and policies; through hidden power, referring to the ways powerful forces like multinationals and religious extremists shape public discourse and political agendas while delegitimizing opposing voices.

Naming how power operates both to oppress and to liberate, bolsters the participants' confidence in the possibility of change and better equips them to address the complexities of change. Having a common framework for understanding all the dimensions of power, including the ways in which women themselves perpetuate and reproduce inequality in their own lives, enables women to work together more effectively on common strategies.

#### Block Three: Research and Documentation

After two weeks of training, dialogue and reflection, the institute participants go back to their communities to do research and documentation. Most of the research involves documenting women's stories. The process is important in the sense that it helps them to connect emotionally with violated women and bring their stories and their voices to the public realm. The stories are used to make the world understand another world; the world of women. The significance of this process can be seen at different levels.

First, the tapping of personal experiences of other women enables those women get in touch with their own feelings, to reclaim their voices and to name their pain and their strengths. It firmly forms the beginning of reclaiming own identity, agency and inspiration and have the potential to transform these dimensions of their lives into action.

Second, documentation is a learning process for both Isis-WICCE and the participants. It provides facts and analysis and connects them to peoples' local realities, concerns, feelings and experiences. The information also helps Isis-WICCE to understand, contextualize, and customise its advocacy strategies as well as its support to women in various countries. The stories are used to inspire other key players to take action, individually and collectively. The participants' reports are published in the Isis-WICCE biannual magazine - Women's World and used by various organisations and academic institutions.

The research and documentation constructs the participants, the women as knowers. The feminist engagement in the area of knowledge production has been that women are largely constructed as a collective without knowledge and rarely as knowers (Obbo, 2001). Arming women (especially outside of the academy) with the skills of knowledge creation, which they can own and use, is an important endeavour in a feminist sense.

## Block Four: Sharing the Outcome of the Documentation and Bringing it all Together

After 6 months the participants go back for the exchange programme for two more weeks. They are given the time to share their stories with one another. This may entail some extremely painful moments as some of the stories are really brutal. At the same time, sharing stories creates a moment of reflection and consciousness-raising to begin developing new ways of making sense of their stories and relationships and new ways of thinking and acting and to heal.

#### Block Five: Giving Back to the Community

Isis-WICCE's training is not about building capacity for its own sake. It is about making a difference in the conflict affected communities. 'Giving back' refers to a situation where the participants define clear plans of action on going back to their communities and to work on an activity that links training to action. This part of the institute is important because beyond the importance of relevance and consciousness-raising, adults often learn faster when the information they gain addresses the problems they face directly. Therefore, after the training, the women are given seed

money; they define their goals and act on them. They return to their communities and initiate projects that address individual and community needs, especially those that build effective and collaborative actions. The money is normally nominal but the process of integrating some form of action in the training process is a big step towards learning to solve problems. Accordingly:

The basic provision of economic sustenance gave the women and girl survivors' emotional support and to feel strong and thus, participate in the promotion of the peaceful self, and consequently their immediate communities (Isis-WICCE Annual Report 2009/10, p. 9).

'Giving back to community' is a vital step to sustaining the growth and change initiated by the training and building leadership and organizing skills. The action can be as small as mobilizing other women to clean a maternity ward in a major hospital and the process of organizing them and enabling them to connect maternity to reproductive health and rights or working with another leader to ignite her inner power is very important.

Furthermore, giving back to the community involves channels through which the women mobilise and engage in collective action, including leadership, membership recruitment, networking, accessing political and material resources. Some of the alumni go back home and start Community Based Organisations (CBOs). For example, in Uganda, 3 alumni from North and North Eastern uganda started Community Based Organisations (CBOs); TEWPA (Teso Women Peace Activists), KIWEPI (Kitgum Women Peace Initiative and LIWEPI (Lira Women Peace Initiative). TEWPA has grown to be a vibrant women's mobilizing channel for peace building with presence at district and sub-county and village levels. In 2009, TEWPA organized a peace exposition to highlight specific issues related to peace and security of women and girls.

In Liberia, one of the Alumni identified a critical community need for burying the bones of the dead who had been killed in a massacre as a first step in the emotional healing process of that particular community. Grace Yeaney, an Institute alumnus responded to the immediate need of the Kpolokpala community, Bong County, Liberia by providing leadership for the community to bury the remains in a big ceremony that created enormous impact due to its sheer size and what it was able to achieve both in real and symbolic terms.

In Nepal, the institute participants organized at another level to influence government and to demand accountability relating to justice for rape victims. In this way, giving back to the community completes the circle of re-centering the woman and brings the synergy to fruition.

# Reclation

Another key feature in the Isis-WICCE's model is in the attempt to sow seeds of continuous engagement of women in peace making and post conflict reconstruction processes...

#### Isis-WICCE'S CONTAGIOUS INFLUENCE IN WOMEN'S PEACE MOVEMENT BUILDING

"The Isis-WICCE model is like 'Ekishogashoga' (the castor oil plant). The pod bursts into seeds and these seeds keep spreading on and on..." (Mr. Beda Kireju, Isis-WICCE Communications Coordinator).

Another key feature in the Isis-WICCE's model is in the attempt to sow seeds of continuous engagement of women in peace making and post conflict reconstruction processes, such as The PEAR (Peace Building through Empowerment, Accountability and Reclaiming our bodies) campaign. The PEAR campaign is nurtured through a process of consistently being grounded in the reality of ordinary women and their day to day struggles for survival.

Isis-WICCE makes a conscious effort to support women to become agents of change as a long term strategy. She capacitates the women to develop an understanding of the national policy framework and process and enhanced planning abilities.

Isis-WICCE's alumnae (or "daughters of Isis-WICCE", as they are fondly referred to), are also trained to mobilise and organise outside of the policy arena in order to challenge any barriers to participation. Isis-WICCE ensures the daughters have access to material support as well as establishing vertical lines of communication which link their issues and structures with national and regional processes.

#### The Isis- WICCE PEAR campaign

The PEAR campaign is dedicated to a vision that moves women from silent scattered groups to a louder, nosier, visible, dynamic and powerful movement. A strong movement ensures effective knowledge generation and dissemination, effective communication, joint campaigns, activist leadership development and a movement strong enough to move huge agendas. The campaign mobilises resources and deepens the sharing, learning, innovation and practices. The campaign capitalises on the collective power of numbers to have impact on the lives of women and girls living in violent situations. It enhances the public visibility and recognition of women's experiences with violence in conflict and militarised states, in a way that helps shift policies and programs, remedies the unjust, and challenge the status quo. It's a campaign that makes women feel empowered and connected to a larger cause.

When people recognize that their strongly felt beliefs, values, and interests are unjustly violated, when there is a growing political consciousness regarding the power they have, and when the affected people are provided with hope that change can happen and a means for them to act, then change happens. The formal power holders will not change their policies until there is overwhelming pressure from the general population demanding change.

Isis-WICCE has a broader definition of peace and does not believe that peace happens when war ends. Isis-WICCE believes that peace has an economic, social, political and gender angle to it. In responding to this Isis-WICCE has built a relatively strong power base and social capital in the areas she has worked. Many of the trained women have created community based organizations which have been supported by Isis-WICCE with fundraising, building systems and structures, and ensuring good governance. Some of the groups are playing increasingly important leadership roles in promoting gender perspectives within peace building and reconstruction programmes.

Isis-WICCE recognises the importance of constituency-building in sustaining citizen demand so that they can challenge patriarchal social attitudes and translate policy promises into concrete changes for women and communities. For example Isis-WICCE as a key mover of the Uganda women's task force to influence the PRDP, has ensured the participation of grassroots women groups in the monitoring of the programme.

#### The Principles of PEAR

- The campaign supports vibrant, conscious and committed women's rights activism as a critical pillar.
- The campaign believes in women's agency to take action and create the change they seek.
- PEAR gives time and space to women to participate, gain confidence, share stories and learn to be involved in activists.
- Participation in the campaign offers the participants a voice: acquiring the right to speak in a way which could lead to realisation of women's interests and could be the most important rationale for participating in the campaign.
- The leadership is shared and this necessarily requires a consensusbuilding process.

- The movement moves at the pace of women, its flexible, sometimes quick and sometimes slow depending on what women need.
- It unpacks the meaning of the statement 'the personal is political' and brings what women practice to the movement and hence makes the values of the movement their own.
- Recognizing, honouring and respecting individual journeys while celebrating strength in being a survivor.
- Creating the space for women to be comfortable using local symbols and examples and engaging in those activities they believe will deliver choice, freedom and respect for their rights; a transformation through which women and girls can thrive.
- The campaign engages in activities which give people, particularly the most powerless, a new sense of their ability to become active citizens.
- Form personal/political support groups that enable activists to participate in the campaign as holistic human beings, take care of their personal needs, reduce guilt, have fun, and provide support (and challenge) in doing political analysis and work.

#### Implementation of PEAR: The Castor Oil Plant Tale

As already indicated Isis-WICCE draws from a wealth of experience in organising and mobilising women survivors of sexual abuse. The approach is sustainable in that it engages with a core group of women – each one selected on the basis of her enthusiasm for being an organizer and activist leader, trains and grooms them and supports them in a variety of ways for a sustained period<sup>4</sup>. Each of these women becomes the entry point for organizing and building alliances, agendas and action, and the entry point for institutional partnerships for Isis-WICCE. For example, in Teso, Cecilia Engole, founder of TEWPA, illustrates the castor oil like movement from Isis-WICCE to TEWPA growing into over twenty CBOs and these giving rise to initiatives such as school clubs, peace animator committees and other groups. Similarly Veronica Micheal from the Western Equatorial State of Yambio, South Sudan had this to say:

## "Isis-WICCE gave us seed money for movement building. We started a group known as Self Help Women Development Association with the head office in Yambio."

The PEAR Campaign is also embedded in responding to Sexual and Gender Based Violence as committed by Heads of States in the Great Lakes Region in their 2012 Declaration on Zero Tolerance to Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

<sup>4</sup> In an interview, Veronica Micheal of South Sudan referred to the Isis-WICCE training she participated in as having taken place in 2009-2010. This reference to a period rather than dates characterised the predisposition to sustained engagement as opposed to a project type interventions.

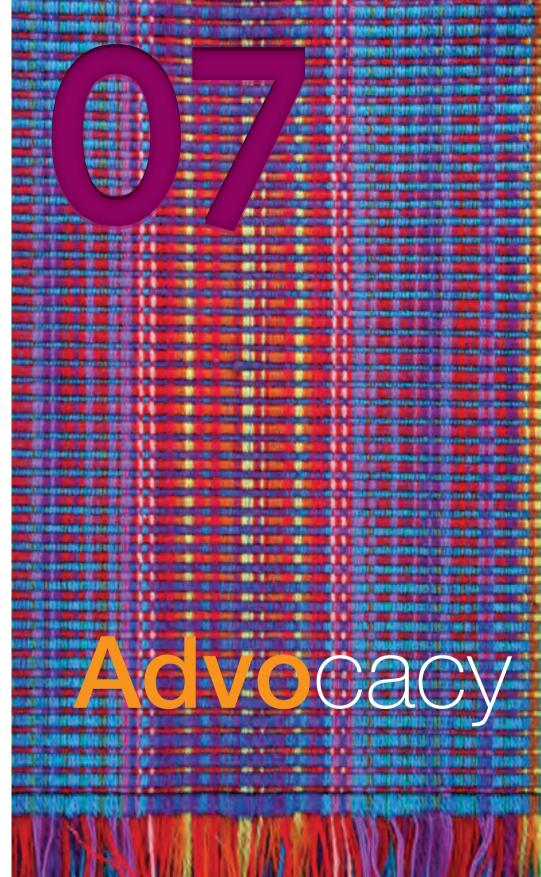


Isis-WICCE strategies are holistic in recognizing that women's economic problems are not isolated from their health problems, cultural challenges, political marginalization, social inferiority, sexual abuse, early pregnancy and stigma. There is no single issue whose solution will address the full nature of women's empowerment – violence is related to the economic, political, sense of self, and cultural aspects; the economic cannot be solved without the political and social; and so on.

The most effective means to make substantive and lasting change in any woman's life in a short period of time is, from Isis-WICCE's perspective, by supporting her to work with other women to solve the interlocking problems they face in the way that they see and experience them, one issue at a time, as these emerge naturally in the context.

The road to equality, justice and peace with dignity will be a long one. However, the fact that survivors of rape, community based leaders and child mothers from neglected parts of Uganda, Liberia, South Sudan and Nepal have set out on that road is evidence of a movement. This 'movement' may take a long time to be seen and recognised by the wider public because those who are oppressed and who have been silenced have to first walk a long path in their own hearts and minds, in order to realize that there is a way out of their oppression. To enable this, Isis-WICCE continues to work with its partners to change peoples' con-sciousness and to provide opportunities to think and act differently. Trainings, interactions, communication, test cases and ex-posure all form an integral part of building this femin-ist peace movement building.

Isis-WICCE has a broader definition of peace and does not believe that peace happens when war ends. Isis-WICCE believes that peace has an economic, social, political and gender angle to it.



Another **key feature** in the Isis-WICCE's model is in the attempt to sow seeds of continuous engagement of women in peace making and post conflict reconstruction processes...

#### Isis-WICCE'S APPROACH TO ADVOCACY

"There is power in evidence-based advocacy. That is what sets Isis-WICCE apart." (Jebbeh Forster, UN Women Uganda, 2012)

Lobbying and advocacy form the finishing turn in the weave of the Isis-WICCE Model. Making a difference in the woman's life requires a change and calls for a multifaceted process to challenge the norms, institutions, policies and practices that perpetuate inequality and violence in both the public and private arenas. As has been articulated in the elaboration of the other ingredients of the weave, Isis-WICCE focuses on impact right from the individual and does not leave the woman till she has strengthened her activist leadership, amplified her voice, visibilised her issues and made them more appealing to the broader public. As it were, Isis-WICCE does not believe in quick fixes, it stays with the woman activist and provides hope and solidarity.

Isis-WICCE constitutes a vital feminist voice at the decision making table regarding women's concerns in conflict and post conflict situations. Isis-WICCE leads local, national and global problem-solving as a transformative voice "at the peace and security table," providing feminist led solutions for gender justice and equality in post conflict countries. Isis-WICCE sets the agenda by initiating and leading debates on critical issues regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights in post conflict countries and hence increases the legitimacy, visibility and acceptance of issues that are normally covered up, silenced and invisibilised. While strengthening its constituency, Isis-WICCE itself continues to lobby and advocate for peace and security from a feminist perspective. Isis-WICCE creates a robust platform for sharing ideas that enable other women's organisations working in the areas affected by armed conflict to understand issues pertaining to women, peace and security. It carries a woman's story from the family level right up to the international level, also using the international framework to challenge the status quo.

The threading in the whole process of advocacy is the principle that the process of change has to be driven by those who are most affected –the women. However, for them to exercise their agency, and participate with confidence and capability in policy processes, Isis-WICCE builds their capacity (emotional, physical and intellectual) so that they enter the policy arena motivated, empowered, and equipped to engage with a greater sense of entitlement with governments and other institutions. Such processes include the women's own documentation of their stories, as elaborated in this document's sections on synergy, healing and illumination.

Throughout the interviews, one of the things that came out strongly was the power of Isis-WICCEs evidence-based advocacy. One of the approaches to advocacy is to allow for the voice of the survivors to speak for itself. Isis-WICCE has time and again, facilitated and supported women survivors of conflict (in their various diversities) to speak and give their testimonies at several fora.

- In 2002, Isis-WICCE brought women survivors whose bodies had been mutilated in the LRA war to the Know-How and Women's Worlds Conferences at Makerere University, Kampala
- At the AU summit, Addis Ababa in 2010, 5 women survivors of sexual violence gave their testimonies. The actual voices of the survivors moved the issues of gender based violence from the level of generalities to practical experiences.
- "In Liberia, in 2009, I saw men and women at the high table weeping during the validation workshop as the survivors gave their testimonies" - Isis-WICCE programme coordinator; Juliet Were
- In 2011 Child mothers as survivors of sexual abuse were facilitated to give testimonies at the Great lakes summit of SGBV.
- In 2011, Isis-WICCE and the Women Resource Centre Nepal (WOREC) facilitated female survivors from Nepal to speak during the 10th Session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.

Such testimonies are seen to be very powerful vehicles for lobbying and advocacy. According to the Exchange Programme Coordinator, Harriet Nabukeera, 'taking survivors to speak and give testimony puts a human face to conflict and its effects on women'. Although Isis-WICCE has time and again received some negative feedback on this very issue of bringing survivors to such fora, the impact is well appreciated by many. It is not the same effect as when Isis-WICCE is demanding accountability at such fora<sup>5</sup>. This is more powerful (Jebbeh

<sup>5</sup> Apparently, when Isis-WICCE brought women survivors from Northern Uganda some of them with ghastly looks from mutilation and burnings to the international conference of women in 2002, she was rebuked by some government officials for having put government of Uganda to shame- for the whole world to see. In 2011,

Forster, Country Manager, UN Women). To Honourable Alice Alaso, MP Serere Teso Region, the voice of the survivors is powerful. It is the beginning of healing. If you love them, give them a platform. That is exactly what Isis-WICCE does. ...I call Isis-WICCE our big loving sister.

Evidence based advocacy is also drawn from the documented stories, experiences and facts to make policy relevant messages and actions through a multiplicity of media including policy briefs, documentaries and reports. The facts speak and Isis-WICCE utilises these facts to create partnerships and alliances with all actors ranging from government, International Community, NGOs and CBOs.

In some cases, the advocacy aspect arises as a by-product of other processes.

For example in Liberia, the single act of burying bones of the dead as part of emotional healing also had an effect of bestowing some guilt on the powers that be.

"We the citizens of Kpolokpala having lost our beloved ones during the Liberian civil war and always seeing their bones had brought a lot of sickness and many problems in our lives.

We thank Isis-WICCE for helping us to finally give them a decent burial and to honour them."

- Chief Vamine, Kpolokpala



Policy makers who attended the ceremony realised the extent to which failure to address community concerns affected the survivors' participation in post conflict reconstruction. This enabled some organisations to consider moving out of Monrovia and reach-out to respond to immediate community needs such as providing access to clean water to the affected community of Kpolokpala in Liberia.

some government officials and women activists thought Isis-WICCE should not have brought the child mothers from Kasese district in South Western Uganda to the high level summit of the Great lakes- in the state they were in. Accordingly, Isis-WICCE should have dressed them to look more presentable and appealing to the delegates' view.

The Women NGO secretariat (WONGOSOL) committed to construct onewater hand pump in Kpolokpala, while the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), decided to use the information as a base of starting up collaborative activities in communities (Isis-WICCE Annual Report 2009/10 p.9).

The evidence that concretely goes to the detail enhances the credibility of Isis-WICCE's advocacy. To Honourable Alice Alaso, the Isis-WICCE documentation has empowered her on matters to do with conflict. For example, the information indicates how many women were raped and the state of the medical facilities in the area - information that enabled her to make inroads into making the issues visible in parliament. Accordingly, at the inspiration of Isis-WICCE, the Speaker of Parliament (Republic of Uganda) agreed to provide a slot for women to raise issues to do with the PRDP.

Isis-WICCE is an Organisation that Moves with the world - Prof. Victoria Mwaka, (First President of Isis-WICCE in Uganda)

## The case of the Juba Peace Process and onto to the PRDP-As told by Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng

Government of Uganda had just announced its willingness to talk peace to end a 20 year old rebellion led by Joseph Kony, at the same time, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) chief for Africa, Ms. Micheline Ravololonarisoa, in August 2006, announced her visit to northern Uganda, to assess the magnitude of the abuse of women's rights, and have a deeper understanding of the national policy direction for peace and security. The strategy was to use her office to influence government to involve women in the Juba peace talks.



The chief meeting with women survivors in Opit IDP camp, August 2006

I remember UNIFEM Uganda office contacting me at 6.30 p.m., to ask me to mobilize the women groups in northern Uganda (which we had nurtured), to meet the UNIFEM chief during her visit.

I was also asked to identify key critical concerns of women war survivors, which she would position when meeting government officials as they prepared for the peace negotiations. That day I left office past midnight since I had to make several telephone calls to all the Isis-WICCE alumni in Northern Uganda to mobilize survivors to meet the UNIFEM chief. About the key areas of concern, that was easy. It was all about women's participation in the peace negotiations, promotion of their rights and prevention of violence against women in line with the UN Resolution 1325.

Unfortunately, the agreement was not signed due to the egos and power struggles among the two parties. But we came to understand that government had developed a plan for peace and recovery, commonly known as Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), for northern Uganda, after the collapse of the agreement. This provided Isis-WICCE a leeway to push for a peaceful environment for the women and girls' survivors. I convinced the women's peace coalition not to give up, but to use the PRDP to demand for the social issues that were incorporated in the agenda items although not signed by the two parties. After several reflections, I initiated the idea of analyzing the PRDP to identify the gaps in addressing the strategic needs of women. I recruited a consultant to drive the process.

All in all, the push enabled government, through the office of the Prime Minister, to include women (mostly from the war affected areas), to be part of the implementing and monitoring committees of the PRDP. Isis-WICCE put in place a 21 Women Task Force (WTF) to monitor government's efforts in this post conflict recovery program. The efforts of the WTF have progressively influenced the extension of the recovery program to include key priorities of women war survivors, namely, sexual and gender based violence, land issues and livelihood.

The way in which Isis-WICCE took on the engagement with the PRDP process demonstrates the flexible nature of its work and the ability to creatively take on the issues as demanded by the situation, not some kind of fixed logical framework cast in stone.

In all this collaboration is a critical thread in Isis-WICCEs advocacy because Isis-WICCE believes in the motto that "Strength is in numbers" and hence it is crucial in developing partnership with all its allies depending on the context at different levels. For example it has worked with Club of Madrid, Institute of Security Studies and Strategic Initiative for the Horn of Africa and in so doing has strengthened the capacity of 40 women leaders from the East & Horn of Africa to engage high level policy makers on peace and security issues. Isis-WICCE also collaborated with the African Gender Institute (AGI), which trained women activists in feminist writing regarding "Women Activists Confronting Militarism and Conflict in Africa". For Isis-WICCE, advocacy has required shifting of capacities over time depending on the context. It is a learning organisation - with its ears and hands consciously and firmly on the ground.



#### PATTERNS IN Isis-WICCE'S WEAVE

The programmes of Isis-WICCE show how it has galvanised several programmes and weaved them into a powerful force.

# This is a summary of some of the unique elements Isis-WICCE has used to weave its basket.

**Courage:** Whatever Isis-WICCE has done has required both intellectual and moral courage. Intellectual courage has enabled Isis-WICCE to imagine possibilities such as training doctors to work on women's bodies and particularly orienting them to alternative healing approaches. To work with countries still in conflict and those in post conflict as the case in Uganda and South Sudan required moral courage. Isis-WICCE is courageous but does not just walk into a battle field and expose itself; due diligence is done to ensure staff safety. Isis-WICCE's courage also comes from caring deeply about women's fragmented lives, and wanting to make a difference. Leadership both at the governance and organisational levels and colleagueship support the courage.

**Mission driven - Making a Difference:** All programme managers are responsible for drawing up the departments programme, outlining how they are going to contribute to the overall mission of the organisation. Generally, each is responsible for acquiring the training, resources, tools and the allies needed to do their work. This makes Isis-WICCE an organisation that is effective but also deeply human. Isis-WICCE's work can be seen, felt and touched. Every turn in the weave is guided by the need to make a difference. For example, the healing aspect is as a result of the realisation that life starts with the body and a broken body cannot be peaceful. The healing work of Isis-WICCE endears it to many key stakeholders, including various government ministries.

**Flexibility:** In Isis-WICCE's work, flexibility is nurtured and encouraged. Structures exist but they sometimes disappear based on what is happening. Staff members are free to act in ways that fit the reality. For example, a person in charge of research and documentation will also engage in exchange programmes depending on the level of need. In the view of Prof. Victoria Mwaka, "At Isis-WICCE, you fail to differentiate between the leader and the led until you are told. There is no bureaucracy, but there is order". When in the field, staff innovate almost on a daily basis because they cannot anticipate all the unexpected possibilities in a conflict or post conflict country. **Evidence based:** Every time Isis-WICCE goes to work in a country, it gathers data to make its case. The process involves extensive stakeholder participation. Researchers are drawn from public service, civil society, academia, and community based organisations. Empirical data gives Isis-WICCE credibility and legitimacy. Data also enables Isis-WICCE to determine what it can and can't do and to monitor progress. The data catalyses Isis-WICCE to respond to the transformation of a specific society in a context<sup>II</sup> sensitive way, aligned with its constituencies' real needs.

**Collective ambition:** Isis-WICCE's collective ambition is weaved together by a strong glue. Suffice to say is that Isis-WICCE has built leadership in its area of expertise through learning and working with a variety of allies. The chain of allies has created a unified culture that sets Isis-WICCE apart in a number of ways. One of those ways is its medical intervention and leadership training. Some of the women who were trained created CBOs that are instrumental in addressing issues of conflict.

Weaver and cross pollinator: working across cultures and geography has enabled Isis-WICCE to 'blast' through the silos that tether most NGOs to what the novelist Chimanda Adichie calls the dangers of one story. Weaving and cross pollination creates space for them to ask for sufficient, diverse, relevant inputs and perspectives from cross sections of people and organisation. The boldest predisposition in this respect has been to work with medical professionals, government departments and parliamentarians.

**Relevance and political capital:** Isis-WICCE understands how leadership can facilitate change in post-conflict environments. For example, in rebuilding societies in which exclusion and marginalization of large sections of the populace are cited among the root causes of conflicts such as in the case of Liberia and Sudan. Through the exchange programme, Isis-WICCE's ability to train women who can bring about reconciliation, lobby for equality, facilitate an atmosphere of respect of differences, develop a culture of impartiality, openness, inclusion, fairness, compromise and concessions, create groups that address issues of peace in all communities without distinction, fosters the needed political capital and legitimacy and restore the broken social trust.

**Documentation and building trust:** Isis-WICCE creates the space for women to share their authentic and compelling stories. Why stories? They lay the ground for building trust. This trust is pivotal because women's stories are part of their humanity, and of building human enterprise. Documenting stories infuses Isis-WICCE with passion and insight. Isis-WICCE does not go into the field and ask women to summarise the main points of their stories. It lets the stories run their course. When a woman tells her story, she will know where to start and end. During the course of storytelling, Isis-WICCE builds personal connection with the women, and gains deeper insight by building some of its programmes around women's stories.

The stories persuade in a way that facts and reports seldom do because stories make an emotional connection and unleash powerful connections. Through storytelling, Isis-WICCE has brought communities together. From years of working in post conflict countries, Isis-WICCE knows that when it documents a woman's story, without pretence, she is thinking; "Oh they want to listen to me?". Everyone wants to be listened to, and as Isis-WICCE taps into the reservoir of personal stories, new insights begin to emerge. Stories have helped Isis-WICCE to make order out of chaos. For example, it was through story telling that the healing programme started. Story telling itself is a step in the healing process (Dr. Kinyanda).

**Hurdler:** Through hurdling, Isis-WICCE transforms communities with limited resources. When confronted with a road that looks really steep, they find other ways of approaching it. Isis-WICCE is a tireless problem solver. Working in complicated terrains, for example in Eritrea, where they encountered a tribe where women stayed indoors throughout the year while the men went to fight, they have learnt to take risks and to cleverly work out of the NGOs systems.

**Architect:** Isis-WICCE challenges the "one size fits all" paradigm so characteristic of development practice and civil society alike. There is a painstaking process of designing programmes that fit the unique demands of each country. Even then, there is a lot of learning and adjusting while in the field. Demonstrated in this methodology is the autonomy of an organisation to draw its map and tell its story from the conditions it encounters and not necessarily the preconditions brought to a project. A testimony by one actor in Liberia goes thus:

Before going to the field with Isis-WICCE, we had many assumptions about hospitals, accessibility of roads, etc. But we were wrong. We adjusted as we travelled and as we worked. I love Isis-WICCE's ability to adjust. ( Cecilia Danuweli, Liberia).



# From the Harvest Basket

One way of Catalyzing change includes advocating for instruments of change such as the UNSCR 1325, CEDAW, Maputo Protocol and others....

## The Diversity of Fruits Borne out of Isis-WICCE's Model

As many women rights activists are aware, change is a painfully slow process. While "slow" is a relative term, there is no evidence to suggest that change has been happening "fast enough". Change is "slow" not only because of the impatience with which women's rights activists would like to see the world becoming a better place for women, but also because of resistance to such change and the burdensome work involved in effecting such change. That is why much energy is invested in catalyzing change. One way of catalyzing change includes advocating for instruments of change such as the UNSCR 1325, CEDAW, Maputo Protocol and others. Governments which sign such instruments can be held accountable, and Isis-WICCE has used such instruments to remind governments of their duties and responsibilities. When one considers the long chain of hurdles that have been overcome while pushing for change, the hard work and despair involved in pushing for change, and the many hurdles that still need to be overcome; a number of questions are bound to arise:

Why do we bother? Are we really making any difference at all? What have we got to show for all our efforts? How is it possible to do our work wholeheartedly and not suffer from burnout? Is there anything positive or rewarding about our work that would encourage others to join us? What inspires us to increase our efforts?

Much like farmers, women's rights activists know that efforts and sacrifices are not typically rewarded instantly; but during the harvesting season. The rewards of effort and sacrifice serve as an important source of encouragement and affirmation in strenuous times when the work is in progress. Harvest baskets contain many such rewards.

If Isis-WICCE were to have a "Harvest Basket", the following are some of the things one might find in it:

## "I have been lifted up"

- Anna Grace Nakasi : A Survivor of SGBV

On the evening of Saturday 17th June 1987 a year and a half after President Museveni had taken over power in Uganda, I was returning to Soroti Town, Senior Quarters where I lived. Then hell broke loose. I met a section of 9 soldiers on patrol at about 7.00 p.m. They gang raped me and abandoned me on the roadside in a very bad state, unconscious. Was rescued and taken to hospital by another group of soldiers on patrol as one of them knew me. In July 1988, my father and three brothers who lived in Serere village were killed by rebels. I then decided to go to the bus park in Soroti Town to find out more about their death and prepare for their burial. However, on my way to the bus park, I met four National Resistance Army (NRA) soldiers who raped me, one after the other. They left me lying helpless under the mango tree until a police patrol vehicle picked me at around 1.00 o'clock in the night and took me to hospital for treatment.

Again in 1990, six men whom I believe were government soldiers gang raped me. As a result, I was confined in hospital for a very long time. I was mentally incapacitated. The many rape incidents and the killing of my son, father and brother completely affected and destabilised me mentally until I was taken to Butabika Mental Hospital in Kampala. Later, I was transferred back to Soroti psychosocial ward.

I was completely devastated. I felt ashamed. People started calling me a dog. "They wondered how nine men could sleep with me and I could still talk. Even my husband rejected me saying that he could not live with a dog and a pig. He openly confessed that he regretted marrying me, whom he believed was being chased by a bad omen. I had no peace and I did not understand who I was anymore. Worse still, I developed a fistulae. I was later diagnosed with HIV/ AIDs. My husband rejected me as a dog and pig who had now brought HIV/AIDs to kill him. I was condemned as everyone thought that now she was useless and deserved punishment and death. What made her strong was that she was aware of the likely circumstances of her infection and she became determined to live on. My in-laws also wanted to take away my children, arguing that I would infect them. Consequently, I was thrown out of the house and started to live in a dug up anthill near the compound. My children were prevented from seeing me as my in-laws maintained that I would infect them. Imagine one of my sons was tied with ropes as a way of stopping him from coming where she was!

The situation was so bad that even in September 2003 when Relief Fund brought maize flour and beans at Tubur Centre to distribute to all the people because of the famine in the area, the Local Council members refused to register my name among the beneficiaries. Even though everyone was given rations of 30 - 50 kilograms of maize flour, she was not given any because of her status since, by this time, everyone in Turbur Sub County knew her HIV status. "I used to go and wait in the line like the rest but my name would not be read out. I was curious and anxious about why my name had been omitted from the list. Even one local

council officials who was involved in food distribution directly told me to expect nothing because to give me food was just to waste the chances for those who were healthy. Who can give you our food when you are going to die very soon? It is like spoiling chances for those who are healthy. Be contented and go back to your house to wait for your funeral "they said!

In 2002, Isis WICCE came into my life. Good Samaritans helped me to attend the Isis-WICCE medical camp and my fistula was repaired.

TEWPA (Teso Women's Peace Activists) identified us and recognised our struggles in spite of the rejection and stigma in our families and community. Our group was selected for a project 'addressing the intersection between GBV and HIV/AIDS in conflict and post conflict situations in Africa'; with TEWPA introducing us to Isis-WICCE and Urgent Action Fund-Africa; opening for them an opportunity for the funding support that has empowered them in documenting their own stories and setting up income generating projects for self sustenance.

The greatest part of the project was enabling us to tell and write our stories. This has been very energising and it gave us fruitful and reflective moments. We document their daily activities using the tools acquired through the project and the documentation experience is becoming a great asset in all their awareness campaigns. It is the experience in documentation that we as a group will continue using in furthering our economic activities. This has restored our hope As an individual, I have been exposed through the different seminars I have attended in Kampala and more recently, in Nairobi, Kenya where I shared a lot of information about myself and my group. I am determined to do more.

As a result of all these activities, we have regained our self esteem and more women in the community want to be open about their HIV status so that they can join us to get the benefits we are now getting. The project has made us courageous and we are no longer reviled by the community. More importantly, we are not going to die tomorrow as some people used to think! The social benefits have also been great. Since the beginning of this project, I have been able to discuss with my husband about our marriage. We have even talked about the use of condoms. My children, who were made to fear and reject me due to the influence of my in-laws, are now comfortable and they love, respect and support me. I have also managed to discuss with them my current status and to sensitize them about how HIV is contracted and spread. I am now a Local Councillor, Tubur subcounty.

I would like to thank Isis-WICCE, UAF-Africa and TEWPA for the work they have done for us. Most members in my group and I would have probably died a long time ago if they did not come to lift us up and enable us to access medication. Through what they have done for us, society has started to look at us and HIV differently.

#### **TEWPA:** Women taking peace building to another level

Ms. Cecilia Engole comes from Teso, a region in eastern Uganda comprising the districts of Soroti, Kaberamaido, Amuria, Katakwi and Serere. She is the founder and coordinator of TEWPA (Teso Women Peace Activists). Before meeting with Isis-WICCE in 1998, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and cattle rustlers from Karamoja had caused Cecilia to give up hope of ever seeing peace and respect for women's rights in Teso. Soroti town was full of hungry, half-naked, disillusioned and helpless internally displaced women and children. Cecilia explains that as a district counselor in Katakwi at the time, "I didn't have the courage to confront the situation. I thought I was just a woman, with minimal education. Cowardly, I thought peace building and advocacy for women's rights was for highly educated people."

All this changed when Cecilia met Isis-WICCE in 1998 while the organization was researching the experiences of women survivors in Teso. After Isis-WICCE trained Cecilia as a Research Assistant, she was inspired to advocate for women's rights. She recalls a traumatizing experience while traveling with Isis-WICCE, "While travelling, we arrived at the scene of a fresh ambush. There was a lot of blood and screaming. I was terrified." Cecilia received further training from Isis-WICCE in leadership, conflict analysis and transformation and peace-building. Through Isis-WICCE's exchange institute, Cecilia travelled to Kenya and Tanzania where she interacted with women who had lived in similar situations. The exposure sprouted resilience in Cecilia, triggering a plan of action for women and peace in Teso.

In the beginning, Cecilia met with women under a tree. TEWPA became active in 2002, during the peak of the LRA insurgency in Teso. With training, moral and material support from Isis-WICCE, TEWPA began writing proposals for funding. Isis-WICCE linked TEWPA to various development partners. TEWPA has since sprouted into an active organization; 550 women have been trained by TEWPA, some of whom have since taken on elective politics and become deputy speakers in district councils. Across Teso, more than 20 peace-building CBO's (Community Based Organizations) have sprung from TEWPA. The CBO's receive regular training from TEWPA in partnership with Isis-WICCE to address a wide range of issues pertinent to the women's peace building movement in Teso, such as HIV/AIDS and poverty. TEWPA continues to authoritatively advocate for women's participation in the PRDP process.

## Engaging civil society in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 point 8

In November 2007, Ms. Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng spoke as the Director of Isis-WICCE during a conference held in Brussels. The conference was titled "EU and UNSCR 1325, point 8 - Women: from target group to stakeholders in peace and security". There was a rich exchange of knowledge and personal experiences between the diverse stakeholders present at the conference. In a panel discussion at the conference, Ms. Ojiambo Ochieng said that women's participation should be recognized since women in the South and partners in the North work in difficult situations. The EU is far away, which is why national



governments should be held accountable. The EU should be a vehicle to bring peace and democracy into our communities. She shared a story from Kenya, to inspire the EU. In a community in the Rift Valley, 200 children were orphaned when two ethnic groups clashed over national resources. Mothers decided to ignore the issue of ethnicity and adopted the orphaned children as their own. Ms. Ochieng used this story as an example to encourage the EU policies to ignore differences and take on real issues. The experiences of women in the South should be linked to the EU policies in the North. Prevention is key. "The ball is in your court EU!"



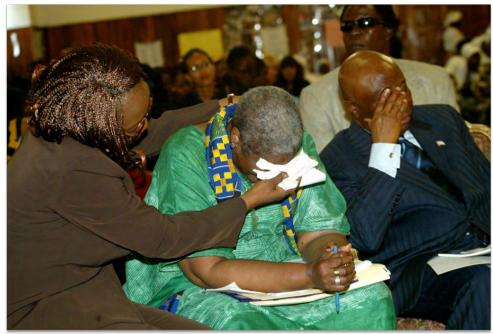
## Thank you Isis-WICCE for supporting me!

"I am the first born in a family of four children in Laxmipur. Kanchanpur district, Nepal. My parents could not afford to take all the children to school, so I went to school at the age of ten. In 1995, I had an accident at a rice mill and I lost my left leg. The family started to ignore me and people always stared at me. I started to go to school by crawling. I was about to commit suicide but the sisters from Isis-WICCE and NDWA (Nepal Disabled Women's Association) made it possible for me to see an orthopaedic and get an artificial limb. My life is different now. I got a iob and I can somehow

support my family. The artificial limb made my life different. Thank you for supporting me in such a condition!" - Anita

#### Change Happens When Survivors' Testimonies Are Amplified

At Isis-WICCE, we meet and interact with many people.. We listen to women, we talk with women, we work with women to improve their lives, and we remember women. Many of the women we meet have been courageous enough to intimate detailed accounts of their horrific personal experiences during armed conflict; a difficult exercise for the survivors who recount their horrific experiences, and a difficult experience for those who listen and witness the pain with which brave survivors of armed conflict share their experiences. These are not mere "stories" or memories; these are typically unspoken life changing experiences that continue to pervasively affect survivors' daily lives. It is a delicate process that requires a lot more than empathy, strength, courage, humility, balance, experience and support; a process that Isis-WICCE has initiated thousands of times in order to document women's personal experiences of armed conflict, and effect positive change in their lives. As challenging as all this may be, it is central to Isis-WICCE's work as it is a crucial starting point for positive change in the lives of survivors.



The Minister of Gender (Liberia) comforting the weeping Minister of Foreign Affairs, seated next to the visibly shaken Vice President after listening to survivors' testimonies during the validation of Isis-WICCE's research in Liberia, in 2009.

#### The resilience of a woman

#### "Big changes come when small changes happen" Archbishop of Canterbury, June 2012

One evening while working in Liberia, I was introduced to a survivor named Finda. A respected member of the community caringly held Finda by the hand and walked with her towards me. Their solemn advance prompted me to approach Finda. After greeting Finda, I found myself waiting for a response. The despair on her face was amplified by her silence which screamed out loud for a hug. I hugged Finda to reassure her that there was hope. Knowing that she had a lot on her mind and a difficult story to tell, I still wanted to hear her voice. Looking down at the damaged sandal on her foot, I attempted to begin a conversation with her, "I am sorry you had to walk for long..., your sandal is damaged..." Finda burst into tears, "That's all I have... and I don't know whether my son will eat today..."

Her crying was not about her damaged sandal, nor about her condition, but the painful thought of her child going hungry. I quickly organized some food for Finda. Her face lit up, glowing with an expression of relief, "This food will last us more than a week! Thank God!" Her companion began to tell her a little bit about Isis-WICCE. It became late, and we agreed to continue our discussion the following morning. The next day I met with Finda under a flowering tree, and she shared her experiences of armed conflict with me. Finda is a mother. During the armed conflict, her family was attacked and she was forced to have sex with her brother in the presence of her family members. Her father could not stand the violence he was being forced to witness, and was killed when he tried to fight back. Finda was then assaulted by her father's killers who pushed a bottle inside her vagina, leaving her physically disabled.

For Finda to fit back into her community, she needed cleansing, she needed to fight stigma, humiliation, loneliness, poverty and she needed healing for her disability, if that were possible. Isis-WICCE managed to provide healing services for Finda through a support system that has helped build her inner strength to begin healing emotionally. With additional support from well wishers, Finda is now able to provide for her family through cross border trade, despite her disability. Her son is able to attend school. This is what peace means to women.

#### Supporting priorities set by women survivors



In South Sudan, the Western Bahr Ghazal group (a group of Isis-WICCE's Institute Alumni) undertook a health and sanitation campaign to address the unhygienic conditions in 1 maternity ward in Wau hospital, and 3 markets in 3 coun¬ties. The campaign attracted 360 people and a number of agencies (including Ministry of Social Development, Medical Director of the Hospital, UNDP, women's groups and UNMIS who joined the Institute group in the activity. UNMIS provided 2 loaders that have been stationed near two markets as secure places where the community can store rubbish. This contributed to sanitation, improving hygienic conditions and teamwork towards building peace and co-existence in the community.

## Creative Healing – Institute Alumni Giving Back to the Community

Zoe Latumbo is an Isis-WICCE Exchange Institute alumni from Thailand. She utilised the seed funding of US\$ 1,000 to develop a friendly documentation methodology manual for the Asian context, using the Isis-WICCE methodology. This helped her and other CBO's to continue with the documentation of women's human rights violations. As part of trauma healing through the use of art, Latumbo used part of the fund to support women in Karenin refugee

camp to deal with their traumatic experiences through drawing. As women painted, they also reflected, shared their pain and collectively supported each other. This helped to relieve their memories of what happened to them and the poor conditions of the refugee camp; but also provided space on sharing survival strategies.



#### Fistula can be healed

The cup on the floor was full, each drop splashing out into the puddle that was forming around the cup. Nalongo had been watching it fill all morning as though the cup kept her company. The leak in the roof of her shack seemed to serve as an abstract distraction, each drop and splash giving her mind momentary reprieve from the more problematic personal leak that had kept her in solitary confinement for years. Nalongo had seen many difficult situations conspiring to evolve into the prolonged and indefinite suffering that threatened her very existence as a survivor of war. Hours after the rain had stopped; she called out to her five year old daughter, "Atim! The cup is full!"

As Atim gently pushed open the fragile door, a putrid stench welcomed her into the room, interfering with her best efforts to put on a genuine smile for her mother. The complexities of Nalongo's condition had put tremendous strain on her relationship with her daughter and only friend, Atim. Just a few days earlier, Nalongo snapped at Atim in a fit of bitterness and despair,

"If you hadn't decided to be born that night when the soldiers had come to our village, your father and I probably wouldn't have been too afraid to travel to the hospital for a safer delivery. Now look at us! At least your father found a way to escape living with this disgusting odour."



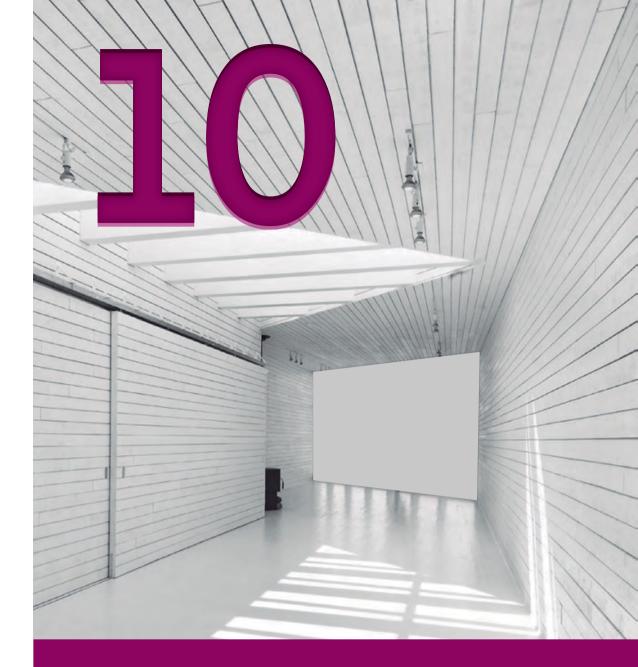
Nalongo shielded her eves with her hand as the door's squeaky hinges warned her of the blinding sunlight that would invade her dark and smelly room. Sunlight flooded the room with a gust of fresh air, reminding Nalongo of the fresh world out there, and the sharply contrasting stale world to which she found herself confined. Atim bent over to pick up the cup of fresh rainwater and asked, "What about the basin? Should I empty it too?"

She asked, not because she hadn't noticed the more dignified look on her mother's face whenever the basin was empty. She asked because the basin was filled with more than her mother's urine and faeces; it was filled with shame and baggage too heavy for a five year old girl to carry willingly. She didn't wait for her mother's response, picking up the basin with all the love a daughter could have for a mother.

It was later that afternoon while serving liquor at her father's informal bar that little Atim witnessed the most bizarre and unexpected spectacle ever. A vehicle bouncing its way along the potholed main road near the village drew crowds as a voice repeated an announcement from a megaphone mounted on the vehicle. The sight alone was more than amusing for Atim, but the announcement was simply unbelievable, "....we are inviting women for free medical services. If you are suffering in silence or if you know somebody who is suffering in silence, this is an opportunity to receive free medical services..."

Atim had heard enough. She didn't wait to hear who was offering the free medical services or even what types of medical services were being offered. She knew enough to understand that the invitation was meant for her mother who had been suffering in silence but had never been able to afford or even access the much needed medical services that would turn her life around. Without needing to prioritize her actions, she hurriedly left her father's informal bar unattended. All she could hear was the wind rushing in her ears and her own panting as she ran as fast as she could to break the good news to her mother. Her mind was alive with thoughts of what her mother's life would be like if she were to be healed by the visitors to her village. Nalongo and Atim would later learn that the visitors were healers from a family known as Isis-WICCE. Both their lives have never been the same since that day.

... The sight alone was more than amusing for Atim, but the announcement was simply unbelievable, "....we are inviting women for free medical services. If you are suffering in silence or if you know somebody who is suffering in silence, this is an opportunity to receive free medical services..."



# the Framework

#### **THE GRAIN IN THE BASKET:** Isis-WICCE'S 360° APPROACH TO RE-CENTERING THE WOMAN SUBJECT INTO PEACE BUILDING AND POST CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

In the harvest basket we find intriguing processes, results and outcomes, as products of a down-to-earth but at the same time highly ingenious change facilitation process. The Isis-WICCE model directly defies conventional conceptions of post conflict recovery and 'buzz word' based development (Ahikire 2008), and presents an alternative paradigm that seeks to validate women as knowers and change agents, through a rights based approach. Following Lewis (2004) who critiques the tendency to employ only valuable signifiers, the Isis-WICCE co-creates new signifiers for women's empowerment, focused on making a difference right from the personal level through the whole continuum of community, national, regional and international levels. The model presents an alternative development approach entailing 360 degrees – full cycle approach to feminist oriented human development within the context of conflict and post-conflict recovery. The approach is human centered. It has a human face. It has a human touch.



### Isis-WICCE's 360° Approach to Empowering Women for Peace

•	<b>UN - UNSCR 1325</b>
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- AU
- International conferences/fora
- Bringing women survivors to the world (Voice)
- Knowledge
- Restoring women's dignity
- Building women's capacity/ skills, political, economic, social
- Healing of Body Mind and Spirit
- Enhance skills for self reliance
- Knowledge
- Enhancing women's capacity to engage in peace processes
- Influencing the implementation of post- conflict recovery programmes)
- Advocacy on health matters
- Knowledge
- Institute Alumni Giving back to community (GBC)
- Peace, Movement building
- Linking women to national and global markets.
- Catalyzing women as leaders to define community needs
- Knowledge

The 360 degrees approach as seen from the above illustration puts the women at the centre in her entirety, carefully building her agency to engage as an actor rather than a beneficiary and making a full cycle linkage from the personal through to community and national to the international level. The Isis-WICCE model goes beyond rhetoric and is focused on making real changes in the everyday lives of women in conflict and post conflict settings. It is a holistic model looking at the woman's life in its entirety - the body, mind and spirit, as well as soul. It is a learning model, not predicated on pre-conceived ideas, allowing space for cocreation and validation of women's knowledge. The model allows for creativity, and creates space for non-conventional knowledge and strategies to thrive and utilises these in upward and downward advocacy. And it is a model that creates space for voice, voice of those who have suffered the brunt of conflict to tell their story and demand accountability. In its totality, it puts into question the hegemonic big push approaches that are predicated on massive resources with very little impact on people's lives in general and, on women's lives in particular. In this way, Isis-WICCE clearly transcends what Micere Mugo refers to as the Kasuku Colonial

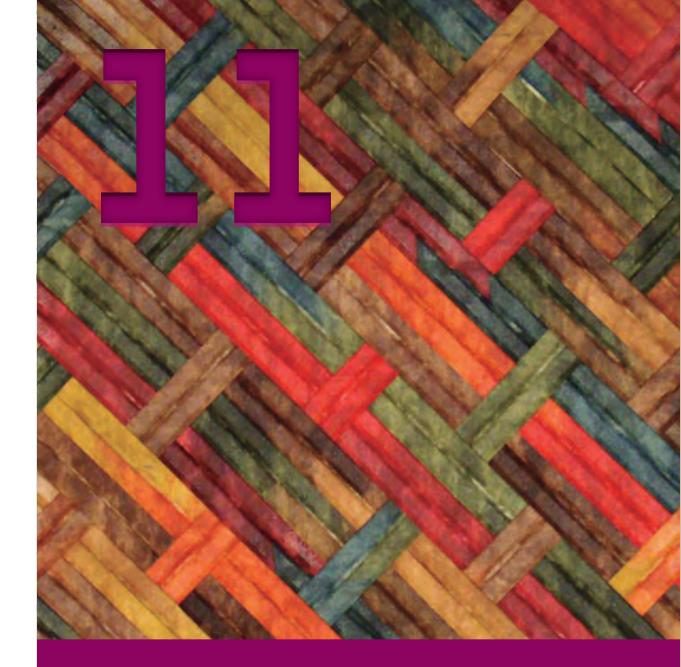
Consciousness or syndrome. Kasuku, is the local name for the parrot, and this is what Mugo says about this bird:

The parrot.. is at once fascinating and at the same time pathetic. She/he is intriguing and fascinating because she excels in imitative skills – always able to reproduce the speaker's word, using the originators exact pronounciation and even tone However the creature is also pathetic in the sense that she/he can never become the "owner" of the source of the word. Thus we can only call her/him a fascinating mimic but never an intellectual thinker (2012, p.237).

To Mugo, the Kasuku syndrome inhibits our sensibilities and visions as Africans and calls for creativity and inventiveness. In this trend of thought, Micere Mugo's focus was on intellectuals and higher education in Africa but the same logic can be applied to gender development practice, where creativity and inventiveness are urgently needed in order to contest orthodoxy and offer alternative frameworks that have women at the centre, in substantive ways- beyond rhetoric. Isis-WICCE presents a home grown model that surely buries the Kasuku Syndrome and cruises in creativity and inventiveness along the way.

The Isis-WICCE 360 degrees approach also helps in reclaiming feminism and to take back some of the critical feminist concepts that have been over the years appropriated by mainstream development paradigms. Gender, empowerment, gender mainstreaming are some of the terms in critical need of liberation. The term gender has been reduced to a mere game of numbers and gender mainstreaming shifted from the realm of the political to become a mere technical project with gender experts and specialists as its vanguards. The term empowerment, is, as according to Batliwala (1994), 'one of the most loosely used terms in the development lexicon, meaning different things to different people or more dangerously, all things to all people' (cited in Sardenberg, 2008, p.18). As Pereira succinctly notes, such appropriation and dilution of feminist inspired terms goes beyond 'benign changes in meaning to involve differences in intent and political interests' (2008, p. 49). As such, feminists need to consciously reclaim these terms and tools by grounding them in our realities and contexts.

The lsis-WICCE model helps to ground these feministinspired terms, and to give them content. In this way, it makes it possible, for example to redefine empowerment in a manner that captures its essence, thereby bringing its emancipating origins back in - as 'a process by which people begin making decisions on matters which are important in their lives and being able to carry them out' (Mosedale 2005, cited in Sardenberg, 2008, p. 19). Without doubt, Isis-WICCE makes a critical contribution to African feminism - as a thought, as an experience and as a practice - and to the world of development in general.



# the Weaving continues

## LESSON LEARNING AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE Isis-WICCE MODEL

Go to the people, live with them, learn from them, love them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. But with the best leaders, when the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say, 'we have done this ourselves'. Lao Tsu, China, 700 B.C<sup>6</sup>

Isis-WICCE's innovative strategies have provided synergies where women have learned and shared; and eventually developed a women's peace agency, which has profiled women's voices at national, regional and international agenda. The organization creatively profiled the impact of war on women and girls in Uganda, Southern Sudan, Liberia and Nepal, among others. Over time, Isis-WICCE built a wide range of alliances, which have enabled the organization to amplify women's agendas and influence at all levels. Alliance building has also supported its mobilization strategy to urgently respond to extreme violations of women's human rights in conflict setting as well as their well-being and dignity. Particularly, the action research is creatively modeled into tangible solutions for the war survivors, which subsequently enabled some female war survivors to heal and to regain their dignity, and engage in the rebuilding of their lives, households and communities.

In the women's movement, Isis-WICCE has demonstrated unique tenacity in bringing women together to better understand and work collectively towards solving common and deeply-felt problems in post conflict contexts. Its attention to detail and solidarity; remaining sensitive to the concerns of women war survivors has clearly demonstrated a model for meaningful engagement in conflict and post conflict settings. The approaches, designed through workshops, training, dialogues, exchange programmes, giving back to the community, and organisational development support, have built a strong cadre of women leaders capable of lobbying for women's rights.

Through its reflection and learning processes, Isis-WICCE has over the past two years studied its complex model of empowerment of women in conflict settings, and identified areas of scaling up and rebranding the model of making a difference. This scaling up and rebranding comes from the realisation that although Isis-WICCE has made a difference to a number of women war survivors at individual levels (and mostly where it hurts most), and gone ahead to bring their voices to the national and international levels, it has not been very successful in creating sufficient guilt on the part of governments and international actors. Hence the felt need is to become more political by boldly and explicitly naming its feminist approaches in its implementation as well as amplifying the demand for accountability. Isis-WICCE is set to be a front runner in demand and support for a feminist approach in the post conflict settings- to influence politics/policy, 'shape the field' by ensuring that women's issues in conflict situation continue to be visible and legitimate areas for post conflict agendas. The rebranding and scaling up of the Isis-WICCE Model is set to be realised through the following strategies:

<sup>6</sup> Adopted from Isis WICCE's document titled "The Egg Has Hatched", 2010

#### a. Firm Naming and use of its Feminist Research

As Isis-WICCE continues to focus on the impact of war to women's bodily integrity in all its programming, it will endeavour to scale up its research by consciously making feminist political analysis of how conflict affects women and girls, and preparing more credible information geared towards re-defining concepts such as peace and security to influence the post conflict recovery programs, to effectively address the special needs of women war survivors. To achieve this, Isis-WICCE will need to re-analyse and interpret its massive collected data gathered over the years, identify the gaps and prepare thematic papers that name (highlight) the impact of militarism on women's bodily integrity, contribute to theory, practice, new paradigms and suggest new alternatives from a feminist perspective.

#### b. Alliance Building in knowledge building

As it were, this endeavour will require Isis-WICCE to intensify partnerships with strategic institutions such as peace institutions globally with a gender/feminist angle, as well as individuals with a feminist approach to peace and security, to assess the extent to which the information can be used to deepen feminist analysis. Such partnerships will help in creating a robust platform on women peace and security, to enable Isis-WICCE and other women leaders to initiate and lead debate on critical issues related to women, peace and security and hence, raising the visibility and acceptance of women and feminist-led solutions to those issues. To ensure continuity, such partnerships will specifically target institutions responsible for nurturing young people, such as universities.

#### C. Firm Political Agenda

The intensified approach will provide opportunities, particularly to African feminists, to reclaim spaces of decision making in post conflict reconstruction programs by providing a powerful voice at decision-making tables and therefore making an even greater impact on the lives of women and girls in post conflict countries.

Reflections on Isis-WICCE's work revealed that there was a gap in drawing broader political significance from the very intensive and meaningful engagement. Hence the focus now will be to use the information and experience of the implementation to develop a roadmap against which Isis-WICCE and its larger constituency can hold various actors accountable. The packaged knowledge will also inform curriculum of peace institutions, inform the UN and government institutions on peace and human security from the feminist angle.

#### d. Feminist Popular Education

Ideas on the Isis-WICCE International Exchange Program Institute is that it should be upgraded into a 'Feminist Popular Education' institute positioning the organization as a centre of reference to acquiring information and knowledge on feminist approach to peace building. In this, the training would enhance women's self - realization and their understanding of power and power dynamics that influence conflict, as well as mitigating the conflict, with the aim of developing their capacity to advocate at national and regional/ international levels on issues of bodily integrity, peace and human security. Diversity and inclusiveness, for example minority groups will be a guiding principle for these institutes with the express aim of making their issues more visible in a way that challenges prejudice, taboos and stigma.

The proposed approach will facilitate the alumni's on-going initiative of giving back to the community by engaging in activities that increase multiple sources of leadership and influence likely to sustain and accelerate women's peace movements. The alumni will use their collective power to be visible, amplify their voices and make demands for their rights. This whole approach will offer participants space to critique mainstream theories and approaches to conflict, peace and security.

#### e. Politicisation of Women's Health and Well being

Isis-WICCE is one of the few feminist organizations whose emphasis is to develop a holistic approach to healing the bodily needs of women war survivors. Isis-WICCE has creatively integrated the Heart-Mind-Body process as part and parcel of reconstruction- the woman's body as the starting point.

The current naming of medical intervention empties it of its political content. There is realisation that Isis-WICCE need to devise a way of going around 'catalysing' women to reclaim their bodies in order to renew, mend and strengthen their individual, groups- to use the body, mind and spirit process to become a critical force for movement-building.

#### Pointers for scaling up the Body-Heart-Mind Process

- i. Create a space for the personal but make it explicitly political. Using the terms heart mind and body is a useful way of shaping the action strategy ensuring that the strategy itself defends women's bodies, the agendas reflect and channel women's passions, values and anger (heart) and tap into their minds.
- ii. Organise for women in acute physical pain to be treated by the personnel who have been trained to look at woman's body holistically and to listen to their stories.
- iii. Aggressively lobby governments, especially relevant ministries, to prioritise women's bodies in allocation of the budgets and other resources.
- iv. Facilitate robust debates on the body and shape agendas e.g. to allow women to have access to abortions especially in cases where they feel that emotionally, they are not ready to carry a rapist's pregnancy.
- v. Lobby all the organisations and institutions involved in post conflict initiatives such as demobilisation and post conflict reconstruction and recovery programs to consider women's health and well being
- f. Amplifying the Voice: Information, communication and advocacy Information and advocacy is the heart of Isis-WICCE and the realisation is that there is need to strengthen this component to scale up and use of information and other resources and amplify its agenda. In other words there is a realisation that Isis-WICCE needs to amplify its communication and more visibilisation of the issues. Through enhanced communication, Isis-WICCE will increase the culture of collaboration, including the integration of grassroots, national, regional and global voices. This will enable issues regarding women, peace and security to be more visible and appealing to a wider audience.





# the Challenge presented

" Isis-WICCE has continuously innovated around one clearly cut target of continuously developing a responsive programme that meets the strategic needs of women..."

#### SO MUCH WORK, HOPE RESTORED, BUT SO MUCH YET TO BE DONE

Isis-WICCE has spread her wings to several areas of conflict, post conflict as well, spaces of conflict resolution and/or global governance. As has been demonstrated in the section above, Isis-WICCE has continuously innovated around one clearly cut target of continuously developing a responsive programme that meets the strategic needs of women in armed and post conflict situations through bottom up and highly labour intensive empowering approaches. We call them approaches rather than one approach precisely because Isis-WICCE has over time created and recreated concrete responses relating to concrete situations of women and as identified by women in post conflict situations.

Action Area	Focus areas	Coverage/reach	Aprox. No. reached
Exchange Programme Institute	Leadership training Documentation Research Monitoring Peace building & conflict transformation Advocacy	Nepal, South Sudan, Uganda, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda, India, Senegal, Colombia, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Republique Central Africaine, Sierra Leonne, Sudan, Tunisie, Zimbabwe, Israel, Kingdom of Thailand, Pakistan, Phillipines	717

#### Table: The Direct Spread of Isis-WICCE's wings

Action Area	Focus areas	Coverage/reach	Aprox. No. reached
Sexual and reproductive Health of women in situation of armed conflict	Management skills of psychological effects of war trauma Cervical and breast cancer screening Psychological therapy Surgery for fistula care Trauma counselling therapy Facilitation of hospitals	Liberia, Kenya, Uganda, Pakistan, India, Senegal, South Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire	2843
Documenting & Awareness raising about the situation of women in Armed and post conflict situations	Research Food security Widows access to rights over land Sexual harassment in professional circles Implementation of laws on sexual violence Girl child trafficking Discrimination against LGBTI Sexual violence Human rights violation Documentation Psycho-social effect of armed conflict Early marriages Post conflict resettlement Effect of armed conflict on health Effects of genocide impact of FGM	Liberia, Nepal, Uganda, Burundi, India, Rwanda, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroun, Burma, Ghana, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Colombia, South Sudan, DRC, Pakistan, Israel, Philippines	2094

Action Area		Focus areas	Coverage/reach	Aprox. No. reached
Strengthening the potential of women initiatives in the post-conflict Rehabilitation and Reconstruction		CBGs formed and trained Peace building Conflict transformation Business entrepreneurship Financial management, strategic planning, Proposal writing Counselling and trauma management Medical and legal aid services	Liberia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, South Sudan	384
etworking	National	Peace exposition PRDP review Documentation Sensitization Baseline surveys	Uganda	920
Advocacy and Networking	Regional	Advocacy Policy making Feminist writing	Addis Ababa, Kampala, Djibouti, South Sudan and Somali land	
	International	Advocacy campaigns Monitoring and implementation Peace building Leadership development	Norwegian ministry of foreign affairs, New York, USA, Banjul, Monrovia Liberia,	

Isis-WICCE spreads wings far and wide with differing emphasis and depth. However, the thread of the matter is what we term as a delicate balance of the mind, body, heart, soul and spirit as a two way process. A two way process that flows from the Isis-WICCE work as well as the communities in question. Isis-WICCE deploys the mind to innovate the response to a specific conflict, gathers evidence around it, goes ahead to address issues that relate to the women's body, mind and spirit. And much more importantly, restores the spirit to push on. As a result, the participating communities and women in particular graft into this delicate balance where they have to deploy their mind, heart, hands and soul to be the prime movers of peace building reconstruction.

In the words of Isis-WICCE's Communications Coordinator Beda Kireju, the Isis-WICCE model:

- Gives hope
- Gives energy
- Gives power to the woman
- Mobilizes women to be part of the change agents
- Demonstrates to government where they lack as a basis of advocacy

Working in conflict and post conflict situations the way Isis-WICCE does requires courage. Isis-WICCE went into northern Uganda and S. Sudan when conflict was at its height. All the work of Isis-WICCE is filled with long hours, ebbing budgets, bumpy conditions, looming deadlines, and inevitable setbacks. In all these teams that Isis-WICCE works with, it often leads from the middle using some diplomatic, leadership and participatory skills to hold the team together. When enthusiasm flags, they find ways of cheering the team.

One Weave cannot cover the Entire World

Conflict in the world especially in Africa is taking on a more or less continuous form and more widespread:

## Conflict in Africa is spreading. The moral breakdown is appalling. It is even more appalling that people are marrying or marrying off little girls. It is unforgivable, it is a disgrace (Thelma Awori, Isis-WICCE President).

The fast-shifting context is violent, dangerous and volatile. Women face violence in multiple forms: backlash, gangs and shadow 'armies,' scarcity, poverty, vulnerability, sexual violence, natural disasters, fundamentalism, hate and misogyny. Violence has increased so much that it is fast becoming the norm rather than the exception. The affected populations and communities are much bigger, broader and widespread than Isis-WICCE and its partners capacity. A question to one of the women leaders in South Sudan as to whether or not women who had not directly worked with Isis-WICCE would know about its work was answered with a very strong non-hesitant no! Her view was that the work of Isis-WICCE should spread even to the Central African Republic, beyond Sudan. In Uganda itself where the secretariat of Isis-WICCE is located, there is an outcry about its reach and visibility as a women's organization.

Hence the issues that Isis-WICCE engages in are insurmountable. This makes the work of Isis-WICCE, reminiscent of the story of the humming bird:

#### The Story of the Humming bird

One day a terrible fire broke out in a forest - huge woodlands was suddenly engulfed by a raging wild fire. Frightened, all the animals fled their homes and ran out of the forest. As they came to the edge of a stream they stopped to watch the fire and they were feeling very discouraged and powerless. They were all bemoaning the destruction of their homes. Every one of them thought there was nothing they could do about the fire, except for one little hummingbird. This particular hummingbird decided it would do something. It swooped into the stream and picked up a few drops of water and went into the forest and put them on the fire. Then it went back to the stream and did it again, and it kept going back, again and again and again. All the other animals watched in disbelief; some tried to discourage the hummingbird with comments like, "Don't bother. it is too much, you are too little, your wings will burn, your beak is too tiny, it's only a drop, you can't put out this fire." And as the animals stood around disparaging the little bird's efforts, the bird noticed how hopeless and forlorn they looked. Then one of the animals shouted out and challenged the hummingbird in a mocking voice, "What do you think you are doing?" And the hummingbird, without wasting time or losing a beat, looked back and said, "I am doing what I can."

- An inspirational story shared by Noble Peace Laureate Wangari Maathai.

The point therefore is that the Isis-WICCE model presents a challenge, a challenge to all actors in conflict and post conflict situations that resources should be invested where they are needed most - to rebuild the person, women and men. Isis-WICCE brings to the fore the human face of conflict, as well as what it should take to rebuild the society. In other words, the message is: "this is what it takes to address the effects of war and much more importantly, to enable people, women in particular, to rebuild themselves as agents of change". In the specific case of women, the complexity of gender relations and how these tend to play out in the conflict situation requires much more that buzz word development approaches. Buzz word development approaches such as those promoted by the World Bank and other mainstream development agencies, are predicated on otherwise empowering terms such as demand driven, participatory, bottom up and so on. Yet in reality, they tend to re-enforce existing patriarchal and other structures of domination. By the mere fact that these mainstream agencies have broad global legitimacy that makes their approaches the norm, the dominant standard, thereby making largely invisible all alternative modes of development.

Davies, in a preface to Ogundipe-Leslie's book on: "Recreating Ourselves: African Women's Critical Transformations", alerts us thus:

Within the context of hegemonic discourses which normalise their insanities and illegitimacies and seek to maintain their power, those who resist are not mad. Rather they often occupy a "wild space" outside of the margins of dominance it is this space of resistance and transformation which dares to demand clarity, joy freedom and creation of new worlds of being (Davies, 1994:xvii).

The challenge then is how to surmount the overly hegemonic buzz word development paradigms which are the same time buttressed by powerful

structures globally and nationally. And much more importantly to be able to create a sense of guilt on the part of those who continue to re-enforce patriarchal structures and gender inequalities in the name of development. It is a challenge for feminism, to reshape and retool itself to be able to make a claim on what peace and post conflict recovery should look like, in a sense, to claim the power of labelling.

The Isis-WICCE model of re-centering the woman in a full circle manner, challenges buzz word based development approaches and presents an alternative trajectory to peace building and post conflict recovery and development. It is challenging orthodoxies and presenting a world of heterodoxies, of feminist inclusive development. The biggest hurdle now is how to scale up the model, to move it from the realm of the exception, to the norm.

The clear message from this model is, that the multifaceted manner in which conflict affects the lives of women (especially) cannot be approached through simplistic "one size fits all" approaches. Hence Isis-WICCE is saying:

"You cannot go pretending that people's lives are segmented. Do little but do it well. Period." (Thelma Awori, President, Isis-WICCE Board).

## Isis-WICCE WORKS TOGETHER - BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

Isis-WICCE, a global action oriented women's organization, makes a difference by creating a vanguard of women with the capacity to participate in processes that influence gender equality and women's empowerment, through impressively collaborative means.

The work that Isis-WICCE does is not limited to implementing projects successfully to achieve pre-conceived goals and objectives. The scope of Isis-WICCE's work is determined by the needs of individual women within its expansive constituency covering conflict and post conflict contexts such as Uganda, Liberia, Nepal, South Sudan, Tunisia, India, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, and other countries affected by armed conflict.

Using a strategically coordinated set of activities, Isis-WICCE penetrates even the most forsaken of communities affected by conflict in different countries, trains local women to conduct research and to document violations of women's rights in their local communities. Isis-WICCE uses the research to respond to the specific health needs discovered in each of the researched communities with the aim of healing women survivors' bodies and minds. This subsequently develops those healed women into leaders within their communities and assists those women leaders in the establishment of community-based organizations, arranges for the cross-cultural exchange of information between community-based organizations from around the world, and introduces the voices of those women leaders into audiences where policy makers can be compelled into making documented commitments towards responding to those women's voices.

Isis-WICCE works together; together within its closely knit programs and departments, together with its global extended family of survivors, doctors, psychiatrists, the women's movement, academics, development partners, non-governmental organizations, local leaders, government ministries, and policy makers. This working together has bred what can be referred to as 'glocalisation' in that Isis-WICCE is able to act globally and engage with the international framework, while at the same time making a difference that can be felt and touched at individual and community levels.

Isis-WICCE has repeatedly dared to venture into avoided work, employing a holistic and empowering approach to making a difference with women survivors. As revealed in this document, Isis-WICCE's comprehensive approach is refreshingly unique, truly inspiring and attractively adaptable

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#### **APPENDIX I**

Isis-WICCE'S SUPPORTERS	PERIOD
Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1993-1998
German Protestant Association for Cooperation Development	1993-1999
Evangelische Zentralstelle for Entwicklungshilfe E.V (Now Bread for the World)	2000- To date
Swedish International Development Agency	1994-1996
NOVIB	1993-1996
Evangelisches Missionswerk	1994-1996
Canadian International Development Agency	1993-1995
Heinrich BÖll Foundation	1997-2004
Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1994-2004
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation	1993-2001
Norwegian Council For Africa	2002-To date
Norwegian Foreign Affairs Ministry	2008-2010
Global Ministries : The United Methodist Church	1999-2007
Tides Foundation	2001-2003
Tides	2008
Ford Foundation	2001-To date
Action Aid Uganda	2001-2003
Global Fund For Women	1996-To date
Kerkinactie /Global Ministeries The Netherlands	2002-2008
ICCOenKerkinactie	2009-To date
African Women's Development Fund	2003-To date
Human Institute for Development Cooperation	2005-To date
Government of Uganda	2004
USAID	2004
Fund for Global Human Rights	2005-2009
Medica Mondiale	1998-2011
Sigrid Rausing Trust	2005-2009
UN WOMEN	1999-To date
Barrow Cardbury Trust	2007-2010
Trust Africa	2007-2008
Open Society Institute	2008-To date
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2009-2011
American Jewish World Service	2009-To date

Isis-WICCE'S SUPPORTERS	PERIOD
Club Madrid	2009-2011
Woman Kind	2011-To date
African Gender Institute	2010-To date
Steven Lewis Foundation	2010-To date
Care International	2011 - To date
Norwegian Embassy Uganda	2010 - To date
St. Livingstone	2011 - To date
Urgent Action Fund - Africa	

#### APPENDIX II

Countries Isis-WICCE Work has engaged in	Area
Uganda	Kitgum, Gulu, Pader, Lira, Moroto, Yumbe, Arua, Kabaramaido, Serere, Soroti, Katakwi, Amuria, Namayingo, Kasese, Luweero, Karamoja, Mbarara, Ntungamo, Mubende, Iganga
South Sudan	Torit (Eastern Equtoria State), Malakal (Upper Nile State), Wau (Western Bahr el Ghazal State); Juba (Central Equatorial State); Mundri and Yambio ( Western Equatoria State)
Sudan	Kasala, Khartoum
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa
Somaliland	Haygesia
USA	New York, New Jersey Washington D.C
Kenya	Nairobi, Mombasa
South Africa	Cape Town, Johannesburg
Djibouti	Djibouti
Columbia	Bogota
Eritrea	Massawa, Kurbaweb
Somalia	Mogadishu, Merka
Liberia	Pleebo, Harper City; Gbarnga, Monrovia, Foya, Kaloken, Cavalla, Ferloken, Glofaken, Fish town, Newaken, Behwen, Barclayville, Garraway, Sass town, Grand Cess, Buchanan
Sierra Leone	Free Town, Tambarka, Makeni, Buchanan

Countries Isis-WICCE Work has	Area
engaged in	
Burundi	Bujumbura, Bubanza, Ngonzi, Kinama
Mozambique	Maputo
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	Bukavu, Kinshasha
Ivory Coast	Abidjan
Tanzania	Arusha, Zanzibar
Egypt	Cairo
Tunisia	Tunis
Nigeria	Lagos, Abuja
India	Chennai , Bombay
Malaysia	Kuala Lumpur
Thailand	Bangkok
Philippines	Manila
Nepal	Kathmandu, Kavrepalan-chowk
Zimbabwe	Harare
Ghana	Accra
Rwanda	Kigali
Brazil	Rio de Janeiro
Mexico	Mexico city
Australia	Brisbane
Netherlands	Amsterdam
Norway	Olso
United Kingdom	London
Italy	Rome, Bologna
Germany	Berlin
Iceland	Reykjavik
Malta	Valletta

