Culturally Relevant and Collaborative Peacebuilding:

The Young Women for Peace and Leadership

By

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I dedicate this work to the hundreds of young women in North and South Kivu, DRC whom have faced gender-based violence, sexualized violence and road blocks for their advocacy and dedication to the full enjoyment of human rights in conflict-affected areas.

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Abstract

This thesis is an evaluative study of how the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program has empowered young women in the Democratic Republic of Congo to become agents of change. The research seeks to understand the impact of the program from the recipients' perspective – from a localized peacebuilding approach. The purpose of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program in the Democratic Republic of Congo is to enable hundreds of young women to understand their full potential and be free to advocate for themselves in their communities, throughout this research the program's aim is tested and evaluated. An objective of the program is to mobilize young women through human rights education to promote women's human rights in conflict-affected areas. This study contributes to understanding the role of human rights education and training in empowering young women in conflict-affected areas which will in turn assist in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. In its findings, the research identifies three key areas that served to strengthen their identity, agency, and hope. Throughout this thesis, these three themes are discussed in the context of the program's participants and the observed impacts on their personal, home, and community lives.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Have you ever asked yourself why you were born in one region of the world rather than another? Have you ever asked yourself why you were born in a certain socio-economic context rather than another? Or have you ever asked yourself why you were born with one gender rather than another? I have. These are the questions that brought me to work and study women's rights across the world. Ranging from my own family dynamics, to relationships with Indigenous peoples in Canada, to now in the Democratic Republic of Congo, one thing is clear: gender is among the most defining and discriminating factors of one's success.

In June 2016, I was asked to take on the coordination of a program in the DRC and South Sudan working towards the education and empowerment of young women. Being eager and enthusiastic about changing the world, I accepted. Never would I have thought that this side project would consume my every thought and become the subject of this thesis research. With a passion and drive for helping others, being confronted with every negative emotion facing unjust treatment of young women worldwide, I began to evaluate my own understanding of the work I was doing. Why did I have the right to call myself a women's advocate? How could I be coordinating something directly impacting lives in another continent? Was I truly doing this for the right reasons? This is the why.

This thesis is an evaluative study of how the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program (YWPL) is attempting to empower young women to become agents of change. The research seeks to understand the impact of the program from the

recipient's perspective. The Young Women for Peace and Leadership program in the Democratic Republic of Congo, attempts to enable hundreds of women to understand their full potential and be free to advocate for themselves in their communities. The objective of the program is to mobilize young women through human rights education to promote women's human rights. This study contributes to understanding the role of human rights education and training in empowering young women in conflict-affected areas which will in turn assist the implementation of women, peace, and security programming.

The purpose of this research is to evaluate, from the participants' perspective, the importance of this work and how it has changed their lives in the process – I hope to understand why they continue to participate in workshops and dedicate their time to the ongoing projects in the communities. This research evaluates the practical application of peace and human rights education for young women, in a conflict-affected zone. Since the program continues to expand in different areas, it is of utmost importance to understand the cultural relevance of this work. I want to highlight that the international non-governmental organization coordinating these programs, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders', fundamental principles and staff members are almost solely from countries of the *Global South*, which continue to promote the values of human rights, understanding and respect. They operate on the principles of collaboration with local partners and put cooperation at the core of their projects.

The significance of this research lies in identifying critical components to incorporate and influence development work and international collaboration for the promotion of women, peace and security. I hope to prove, throughout this dissertation, a

comprehensive understanding of the young women's perspectives and to critically evaluate the program for the betterment of the peacebuilding efforts. Critical evaluation of peace work is crucial to enabling change and cultivating a sustainable culture of peace.

I chose to divide this dissertation in three large blocks. First, the context. The context outlines the Congolese Wars, its impact on the relationship between what we call the *Global North* and the *Global South.* Because this research focuses primarily on the Democratic Republic of Congo, one cannot speak about women's rights in the DRC without understanding the grave human rights violations that are endured by women – the sexual and gender-based violence perpetuated primarily by armed groups and militias. It also addresses the current situation of sexual violence and what life as a young woman in the DRC resembles. To adequately understand the research, one must also study the topic beforehand, therefore background work on the international NGO coordinating the program and the program itself is included. Lastly, a brief description of international women's rights and specific calls-to-actions made by DRC women's groups and their representatives to the international community are showcased to further understand the gendered situation on the ground and how it relates to the women, peace, and security agenda.

The second block of this dissertation is the theories and methodology. The theories which are foundational for the research and thorough understanding of the perspective of this paper are divided into three sections: 1) understanding the impacts of gender; 2) the impact of conflict on women; and, 3) development and approaches. These integral theoretical backgrounds are at the core of the research. The methods used are

also outlined at great length, to showcase the approach and the rationale for the two main research approaches: surveys and interviews.

Thirdly, the most important part of this work. The analysis of the data gathered during this research is divided into six main components. First, the outline of reporting and data collection for this research; then the thematic analyses of identity; agency; and hope. The three thematic analyses stem from recurring themes raised by participants during the data collection of this thesis. A further analysis from Peace and Conflict Studies theoretical frameworks is conducted; along with unexpected findings and personal reflections facing this research.

Chapter 2

The Congolese Context and its Legacy

The Congolese Wars

The First and the Second Congo Wars were political representations of the instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Deibert, 2013). The Second Congo War, from 1998 to 2003 was the deadliest conflict worldwide since the Second World War in Europe (Herderschee, et al., 2011; Nest, et al., 2006). The Second Congo War claimed four million lives from its more than three hundred ethnic groups in the DRC (Diggs, 2012, 2). The DRC represents the multi-cultural, multi-lingual and diverse communities of Africa, with its size that could cover nine countries of Western Europe and its hundreds of ethnic groups (Diggs, 2012, 4). Many argue that the two wars in the DRC and its perpetuated violence today, come as a consequence of the Rwandan Genocide. They argue that the overflow of *génocidaires* – those who were responsible for perpetuating the 1994 genocide in Rwanda – had fled to neighbouring countries, such as the DRC, under the cover and protection as refugees and brought the aftermath of the genocide with them (Diggs, 2012, 26). Therefore, pushing a million people from Rwanda to cross the border into the Kivu regions (Eastern provinces of the DRC) within a few days (Diggs, 2012).

Diggs (2012) explains that the influx of Hutus in DRC incited the need for Rwandan and Ugandan governments to collaborate with armed groups, including the DRC government's, to aid the Tutsis in Kivu – this is what is now known as the First Congolese War (27). In 2001, Joseph Kabila became head of state, inheriting the presidency of the DRC from his father who was assassinated by his bodyguard, with

seven countries and thirty armed groups fighting within the territory (Diggs, 2012, 31). In April 2003, the principal parties signed a peace accord which ended the First Congolese War and maintained Kabila as president of the DRC, along with four new vice-presidents – the former leaders of the predominant armed groups (Diggs, 2012, 32). During the Kivu War, also known as the Second Congolese War, over two hundred and fifty civilians were displaced – and over the course of both Congolese wars, five million people were killed (Diggs, 2012, 34). A UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC) was sent to stabilize the Kivus, with a mandate that extended to the protection of civilians to end massacres and raping at mass rates, but it is largely understood that the UN peacekeeping mission failed (Akhava, 2017, 171).

Today, the country suffers from resource extraction which continues to escalate the conflicts and violence within its borders (Clément, 2004). The DRC is one of the world's greatest goldfields. Unfortunately, despite the country's natural resources, its economic growth and stability is extremely dependant on foreign investment (Human Rights Watch, 2005). The constant competition to control the extraction of these resources has caused bloody conflicts since the beginning of 1998, during the First Congolese War (Human Rights Watch, 2005). Over sixty thousand individuals have died due to the violence erupting throughout the DRC, directly linked to the extraction and consistent fight for control (Human Rights Watch, 2005). The international community continues to fail the DRC regarding the human rights atrocities linked with these resources, as people continue to be exploited, victimized, and killed due to the industry (Human Rights Watch, 2005).

Furthermore, the gold extraction is only a mere representation of the overall issue – that of extraction of other resources such as minerals which are in turn used for creation and advancement of technology in already developed countries (Human Rights Watch, 2005). Deadly coltan is one of the mining industries' most valuable minerals; this mineral, also known as columbo tantalite, is the metal used by individuals across the world to create cellphones, televisions, computers, and other digital devices (Diggs, 2012, 37). In the DRC, most specifically Eastern DRC, 64 percent of the world's coltan still remains, which further perpetuates the violence in the region – as the mining industry is not regulated by the government due to the large influx of armed groups in the region (Diggs, 2012, 37). Canada plays a major role in the ongoing conflict in the DRC. The involvement of Canadian companies since 1995, accounts for over 30 percent of all the investments on the African continent (The Dominion, 2007). Another problem within the DRC is the emphasis on foreign aid and the dependency on financial assistance from the international community. In 2013, the total assistance from foreign aid accounted to $2.4 billion USD (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2013). A country as wealthy in natural resources should not be so poor as to require such significant foreign assistance.

In addition, Evelyn Mayaja (2014) discusses the "'resource curse' phenomenon where resource abundance is characterized by political and economic setbacks that undermine progress and development." Her research shows that Eastern African countries, such as the DRC, are rich in natural resources – such as oil, gas, and minerals – but the problem lies in the governance systems and the corruption in leadership. She states: "The more the regime is able to finance its budget from the quick oil and gas money, the less accountable it becomes, and the greater the incentive to stay in power

illegitimately, and the more the population resorts to violence to demand economic and political rights" (Mayaja, 2014). Therefore, demonstrating the cyclical nature of the 'resource curse' in Eastern Africa – an exacerbating phenomenon for the continued violence and financial instability in the region.

The Colonial Legacy: Sexualized Violence

The current situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo is not favourable to human rights, and it has not been for the past twenty years. For the last two decades, tens of thousands of individuals have been raped and sexually abused in the DRC (Human Rights Watch, 2014). The conflict and violence in the DRC has become so extensive, that the exact number of victims and survivors remains unknown (Human Rights Watch, 2014). In 2008, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN agency responsible for the work on sexual violence in the DRC, reported that 15,996 cases of sexual violence had been brought forward throughout the country (Human Rights Watch, 2009). Additionally, the UNFPA reported that over 65 percent of the survivors of sexual violence were children, and majority of which were young women and young women (Human Rights Watch, 2009). The province of North Kivu had 4,820 new cases of sexual violence in 2008 alone (Human Rights Watch, 2009).

A more recent report from 2012 conducted by the Ministry of Gender with support from UNFPA identified that in that year there were 15,654 cases of sexual violence – which represents a 52 percent increase from 2011 (United Nations Population Fund, 2013). Furthermore, from these cases, 98 percent were found to have been perpetrated against women (United Nations Population Fund, 2013). A third of all

survivors of sexual violence were between the ages of 12 and 17, and as of 2012, 82 percent of these young women had not completed primary school (United Nations Population Fund, 2013).

Diggs (2012) insists: "In the Kivu, rape became a weapon of war, as much as bullets or machetes were" (45). She adds that when interviewing members of the Congolese national army, some testified that they did not enjoy raping women, they simply did it because that is what gives them the power and strength for the war (Diggs, 2012, 48). Furthermore, the perpetrators of sexual violence "understood that in every war, people were killed and could not pass on their stories—but raping was a new kind of war that would divide communities and keep their stories alive" (Diggs, 2012, 65). Not only are women victims and survivors of sexual violence by various armed groups and men in their communities, but the United Nations Headquarters reported that they had received over one hundred and fifty accusations of rape by UN peacekeepers deployed in the DRC (Diggs, 2012, 56). French (1992) also adds that patriarchal systems, such as the one established in DRC, give men the right to appropriate women's bodies (25). Meaning that men give themselves the right of determining what happens with women during times of war, or *peace* – that women are simply there for men's own enjoyment and use.

There are often questions as to why so many of these survivors do not come forward or wish to bring legal cases against their perpetrators. There are new laws in the DRC which protect victims of sexual violence, yet many problems still persist – for example, the family code of law requires a husband, father, or brother to support the woman who is bringing forward her case (Diggs, 2012, 120). Additionally, impunity perpetuates the violence as women are usually stigmatized, oppressed, or marginalized

for their rape; impunity is the "reason seventy-six percent of these women are raped in broad daylight" and is the worst contributing factor for the continuation of violence against women in the DRC (Diggs, 2012, 118).

Life as a Young Woman in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Livelihoods of girls and young women in the DRC, like in most conflict-affected areas, is complex. Although girls are more successful in school than boys, they are less likely to receive formal education – however, they are more likely to continue their education if given the chance (Mulumba, 2017). A hindrance to girls' education, is the outstanding number of early pregnancies. Girls aged 15 to 19 are most affected by early pregnancies; 27 percent of the girls in the DRC have been or currently are pregnant (Mulumba, 2017). Furthermore, the girls have access to fairly adequate pre-natal and birthing services with 81 percent of young mothers having had access to qualified medical personnel while giving birth (Mulumba, 2017). In the DRC, 3 percent of children have been made orphan due to HIV/AIDS – which is a significant portion of the population (Mabala, 2006). Furthermore, the crisis of overrepresentation of children in armed forces – child soldiers – is not exclusive to young men and boys. Some young women and girls are recruited by the army or other armed groups to endure harsh training and perpetuate the conflicts themselves (Diggs, 2012, 75). According to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), there may be up to thirty thousand children in the DRC involved as child soldiers (Diggs, 2012, 75).

With regard to decision-making, young women and girls face difficult situations in the home. In the DRC, 18 percent of girls are married and 5 percent are living with

their partners, and of those girls 55 percent suffer from various forms of control by their spouse (Mulumba, 2017). Young women and girls are suffering from trauma due to sexual violence and domestic abuse in the DRC, but these are not isolated cases. These abuses include consequences such as HIV/AIDS, obstetric fistula and unwanted pregnancies (Kikuni, 2016). Additionally, survivors of domestic and sexual violence are in need of psychological support – organizations have set up shelters for these women and girls as many survivors are shunned by their spouse and communities (Kikuni, 2016).

It can be extremely difficult for young women and girls to access education or basic resources in rural areas of the DRC. Many of these women, needing to travel long distances to gather water or for daily chores, end up victim of gender-based violence or rape. In rural areas, 37 percent of women between 21 and 30 have been raped (Diggs, 2012, 67). Similarly, 15.6 percent of women aged between 11 and 20 or 31 and 40 have been raped in a rural setting (Diggs, 2012, 67). The systemic and social barriers faced by women are extremely high. Furthermore, 60 percent of women living in rural areas are illiterate, lacking basic literacy and numeracy education, and only 23.4 percent have attended primary school; 15.6 percent have attended high school; and, 0 percent have gotten university degrees (Diggs, 2012, 59). In comparison to women living in urban areas where *only* – and I dare say *only* – 38.9 percent of women are illiterate; 33.3 percent have attended primary school; 25 percent have obtained high school diplomas; and, 2.8 percent have university degrees (Diggs, 2012, 59).

A predominant women's rights defender, inspiring medical doctor, and Nobel Peace Laureate who founded the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, South Kivu, where 71 percent of their patients are survivors of sexual violence, Dr. Denis Mukwege said:

> Impunity is the worst factor because militias know they will not be identified or judged. That is one of the main reasons why they keep loitering, raping and killing. In addition, the aggressors know that the more violent the crime is, the more shameful and scared the victims are, the less willing they are to talk about it. Many of these rapes are not inflicted upon these women because of a sexual desire, but with the purpose of showing them that they are nothing (Diggs, 2012, 68).

The *Synergie des femmes pour les victimes des violences sexuelles* (SFVS) – with whom I did this research – has submitted a joint statement to the CEDAW Committee on violence against women in the two Kivu provinces.[1] The last review of the DRC by the CEDAW Committee was conducted in July 2013. Although much of the submission echoed the various issues raised so far, they went as far as outlining the issues of customary law in the DRC. They mentioned the "impact of customs and traditions that limit the role of women to housework and childbearing; their low level of education and limited participation in decision-making bodies" (OMTC and SFVS, 2013) continued to perpetuate the view that many still hold, that women are second-class citizens. Furthermore, the customary laws in the country continue to create disparities between men and women, these laws also forbid women from specific needs such as food and labour, which are still reinforced today in some communities (OMTC and SFVS, 2013).

[1] The CEDAW Committee is responsible for country reviews of the ongoing situation and implementation of women's rights under the statute of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Violence Against Women, NGOs are also welcome to submit reports for the committee's consideration.

The low levels of education and lack of women workers are key reasons why women face tremendous poverty in the Kivus. However, most women who do engage in the workforce are concentrated in agriculture and informal sectors, such as commerce. In fact, 70 percent of the agricultural workforce are women and 60 percent of women represent the informal sector (OMTC and SFVS, 2013). Meaning that women hold the majority of the household duties and are responsible for much of the economic prosperity of the country. In terms of women in political office, the DRC has set a quota of 30 percent of women in their national parliament – SFVS (2013) reinforces that this quota has still never been met. Lastly, the strict abortion laws in the DRC leave many survivors of sexual abuse to suffer or go through extreme measures to get rid of their pregnancies. SFVS adds, "[t]his highly restrictive abortion law often forces women to resort to illegal abortions; they then run the risk of suffering from post-abortion complications, infertility and even death" (2013). This is not only a grave danger to the lives of the women and girls, but also infringes their rights to fully enjoy their human rights – this topic will be discussed further in the analysis of this thesis.

Chapter 3

The Program

The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) is an international coalition of women's organizations and civil society groups that bridges the gap between policy discussions and implementation and action on the ground on women and peace and security (WPS) issues (Cabrera-Balleza, 2016). With a broad membership base and partners in over thirty countries, GNWP has a proven track record in implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the supporting resolutions in remote, rural communities as well as in strategic urban centres (Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, 2017). GNWP members are at the forefront of civil society mobilization to build peace and prevent violent conflicts (Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, 2017). They are actively lobbying governments and the UN to ensure women's participation in decision-making and to guarantee civilian protection (Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, 2017). The GNWP's approach, specifically with the Young Women for Peace and Leadership, formerly named the Girl Ambassadors for Peace, is the basis of this research (Cabrera-Balleza, 2016).

As the main coordinator of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program in Africa, GNWP is currently involved in two regions of the DRC – provinces of North and South Kivu. Additionally, GNWP has implemented projects for Localization of the UNSCR 1325; literacy workshops; women's peace dialogues; community social dialogues; and, workshops on indicators for UNSCR 1325. These projects and programs are in majority led by *Synergie des associations féminines du Congo* (SAFECO) and

SFVS who themselves have ongoing programming in South and North Kivu. SAFECO operates in South Kivu and focuses on the empowerment of women and acts as a network for non-profit organizations in the DRC which focus on the implementation of women's rights from a grassroots approach. Their programs in the DRC involve keeping young women in school; technology and transformation; planting trees; Rwenena kids; changing the paradigm; and, the Young Women for Peace and Leadership (Hero Women Rising, 2017). The *Synergie des femmes pour les victimes des violences sexuelles* focuses on defending rights and providing services to victims of sexual violence in North Kivu. SFVS also acts as a network of over thirty-five organizations working for psycho-social, medical, and legal defense of survivors (Donor Direct Action, 2017).

The role of cooperation and collaboration at GNWP is critical for the thoughtful implementation and creation of project-based programming. All of GNWP's work is influenced by its emphasis on cooperation and collaboration with local partners. New programs and donor applications are in response to needs identified by local partners on the ground; which are critical actors for the implementation, monitoring, and follow up of GNWP projects and programs. The Young Women for Peace and Leadership is one of my examples of how GNWP puts the onus on the local contexts, local partners, and local people. Each aspect of the program and its curriculum is reviewed, discussed, and approved by local partners to ensure true collaboration and adequate cultural relevance to programming.

The Young Women for Peace and Leadership Program

The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders first started exploring the idea of a youth-focused project in 2014 when they saw the potential for more – that young women and girls are capable of more. Far too often the women, peace and security agenda, outlined by the United Nations and its stakeholders, focuses on the advancement of women's issues – but forgets the crucial component of young women and girls, which are also important to peacebuilding and peacemaking. GNWP adapted the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace's "Women, Peace & Activism: A Toolkit for Young Feminists to Build a Culture of Peace"[2] curriculum for use in conflict-affected areas to teach young women and girls literacy, numeracy, leadership and crucial peacebuilding skills. Now, the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program is implemented in the DRC, South Sudan – although many of the young women are now in refugee camps in Uganda, but nevertheless persist and continue to train other refugees – and the program has begun implementation in Indonesia, the Philippines and Bangladesh in 2017 and 2018.

The Young Women for Peace and Leadership program was first piloted in the Democratic Republic of Congo in August 2014, where young women from communities in Bukavu were gathered for the initial training. With the Young Women for Peace and Leadership, the women—aged 15 to 25 – underwent a series of trainings from the local organizations, to then go to communities and replicate their knowledge. For the purpose of this research, the participants eligible to participate were between the age of 18 to 25.

[2] The curriculum was developed in May 2014 by Manitoba Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) in conjunction with Canada Girl Guides, Manitoba Council and funded by Canadian VOW, and can be found here: http://vowpeace.org/peace-maker-camp/

The Young Women for Peace and Leadership methodology is based on a three tiered approach, intersectional, cross-cutting and collaborative tiers: 1) Literacy and numeracy, where the young women learn to teach literacy and numeracy and travel to rural communities to host workshops; 2) Leadership, where young women undergo a series of leadership workshops and in turn teach leadership skills in the rural communities to empower young women and girls to take a stand and see themselves as young leaders; and, 3) Capacity-building, this third component shifts and is influenced by the needs of the young women, the social context and the ongoing political situation in the regions. In 2018, GNWP in partnership with the *Synergie des femmes pour les victimes de violences sexuelles* (SFVS) in North Kivu, DRC, collaborated for the creation of a new component of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership capacity-building: economic empowerment.

The literacy and leadership training of young women and girls in local communities by the young women also promote responsibility and generate support among families and community members, who are able to see the program's positive impact on their daughters, girlfriends or wives – many young women in local communities are married off or have intimate partners. The program holds families and communities accountable; it prompts them to do their part in supporting and investing in women and girls' education so they can realize their full potential and contribute to countering violent extremism, long lasting peace, and sustainable development in their communities.

The program also makes critical connections to the private sector and entrepreneurs to solicit support that leads to the creation of economic empowerment

opportunities for young women. Through the training modules, toolkits and media materials produced, this program makes important contributions to existing literature that investigates the role of women in creating lasting peace. The young women act as ambassadors in their communities, following a series of capacity-building workshops facilitated by GNWP and the local partner organization – who is responsible for the supervision of the program once established. Once the young women have undergone a specific set of skill-building workshops, they travel to their local, often rural, communities and replicate their knowledge. This makes them ambassadors for peace in their communities and are able to adapt what they have learned to the context in which they grew up – most of the young women are university students or young leaders and have the innate ability to provide leadership and support to the peace processes in their communities.

Recently in North Kivu, the capacity-building focus for 2017-2018 has been on economic empowerment and skill-building. GNWP hosted a three-day workshop on January 24 to 26th, 2018 focused on entrepreneurship and economic empowerment of young women in the DRC. Eighteen young women joined the program's economic empowerment component that year. They learned basic entrepreneurship techniques, how to create a business plan, and have begun creating various women's cooperatives - including to sell handbags and jewelry. A participant added,

> "I wanted to become an entrepreneur to be independent and show other girls in my community that creativity can lead to development and empowerment" (Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, 2018).

The Young Women for Peace and Leadership participants in North Kivu are now semi-independent actors in the implementation of the program. Much like their counter-parts in South Kivu, they have begun to run their own workshops, seek their own opportunities, and coordinate the new components directly with GNWP under the supervision of the local organizations – SFVS and SAFECO. They are volunteers and significant actors within their own organizations, able to create change and the inspire hope in their communities. The young women in North Kivu have developed their own governance structure and now operate under a Board of Directors run by their peers, elected democratically among themselves.

Chapter 4

Women's Rights from Local to Global

As the Young Women for Peace and Leadership methodology builds on the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and other international laws, it would be faulty not to understand these nuances which are taught to the participants. Additionally, many of the participants are themselves victims and survivors of sexualized violence. They have all been impacted by sexism and sexist discrimination; some even suffer from early childhood marriage and forced pregnancies. Although brief, the history provided in the context of this research covers international jurisdictions within a mostly-African context.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was the first international criminal court to prosecute and convict an individual for the violence endured by women and girls during a genocide (Jones, 2006). Jean-Paul Akayesu's conviction in 1999 was ground-breaking and finally convicted an individual for rape and sexual violence within a genocidal context (Prunier, 2008) – arguably, giving power to the international feminist movement. This conviction modified the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,* of 1948, to include rape as an attempt to commit genocide (International Organization, 1949). Then, the Special Court to Sierra Leone's documentation of the trial of Charles Taylor in 2013 was essential to understanding the battles fought for international women's rights precedents (Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone, 2015). Taylor's case regarding the civil war in Liberia and the prosecutions

regarding crimes against humanity is the second most important legal precedent for convicting gender-based violence during times of conflict (Ackerly, 2013).

Since the end of the 1990s, the international non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations have tried to get women and peace and security onto the UN Security Council agenda (Betty Reardon, 2015). It is significant because articles on the agenda can become Security Council Resolutions, which have international legal obligations for state signatories. As resolutions set international norms and standards, women and peace and security was of great importance for civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations (Reardon, 2015). There had not been any Security Council Resolutions regarding women until October 31, 2000, which was voted by the Security Council with great efforts of advocacy and lobbying from the international civil society (Security Council, 2000).

Across the ocean, the monitoring of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is a predominant tool for women's NGOs to monitor and hold governments accountable for the implementation of women's rights. CEDAW is the founding United Nations document which state actors have signed and ratified in order to demonstrate their involvement in women's rights throughout the globe (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979). This Convention sets up national actions to end discrimination on the basis of gender in political, economic, social, cultural, civil and other areas (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979). When ratified, signatories commit to gender equality in legal systems, establishment of institutions for the protection of discrimination against women, and eliminate gender discriminations by

persons, organizations or enterprises (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979). This Convention demonstrates the importance of international monitoring bodies that come out of the UN Security Council, such as the Special Court for Sierra Leone or the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979).

The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was a great victory for those who had advocated for women, peace and security long before it came to the attention of the UN (Willett, 2010). The resolution is important for policy and is a tool for women to claim their human rights across the globe. Not only did the UNSCR 1325 set precedent for other women's rights policies, but UNSCR 1325 has become a tool for women's civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations (Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 2015). Many NGOs use UNSCR 1325 as a base for awareness and activism within their spheres, through lobbying governments, decision-makers, and even the United Nations for systemic change and gender inclusive policies (Reardon, 2015). Women's rights are finally seen as important to the international community as the member states of the biggest international governance put ongoing emphasis on maintaining women's rights – this emphasis is seen through the creation and adoption of the National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325 and the new development of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, a UN Women and NGO collaboration to raise funds for grassroots programming of UNSCR 1325 (Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 2015). This is also the case through social media and mainstream media in 2017 and 2018, where internationally

recognized #MeToo and #TimesUp campaigns had celebrities and local community members take a stand against harassment and sexual abuse.

There is also a need to understand the crucial contributions of the Secretary-General's official Review of UNSCR 1325, which was published on October of 2015 (UN Women, 2014). This document reviews the implementation of UNSCR 1325 across the globe; the global study reported to the General Assembly by the Secretary-General is of utmost significance as it demonstrates not only the severity of UNSCR 1325, but it outlines its flaws and successes of the last fifteen years with specific attention to lack of funding and education programming in most countries—one of the biggest flaws being the lack of understanding and meaningful policy implementation on gender equality – for example, appointing women to decision-making positions, but not allocating adequate resources for their positions (UN Women, 2014). Many internationally-focused NGOs find it essential to engage in these mechanisms to influence policy-making, decision-making, and to ensure constant monitoring of efforts on the ground. Organizations such as the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders have been founded with the purpose of engaging with these actors, but also to bridge the gaps between these international frameworks and the local contexts and local organizations.

Recent Calls-to-Action to the International Community

Women in the DRC are not only passive actors or victims of their situations, as they have stated time and time again on the international stage; many of them have decided to take a stand and work towards ending these atrocious human rights violations – including some traveling to the UN to call the international community to action. In

2015, Julienne Lusenge – who I had the privilege to work with during my time in New York in March 2018 – delivered a statement to the UN Security Council at the Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security. Lusenge (2015) began by recalling to the Security Council members that she had previously spoken about the situation in the DRC in 2008, she states: "Today, 15 years after 1325 was adopted, and 7 years after I first spoke to you, I am here again. How has this resolution full of hope changed the lives of women in conflict? I thought for a long time whether I really wanted to come back here to re-describe the same atrocities, to tell you that almost nothing has changed in critical situations for women in DRC." She emphasized that the situation on the ground continues to be difficult for women and girls as they are not involved in the peace processes or peace talks. When women asked to be involved in the peace process in 2013, they were denied – they were told that only two parties had been in conflict, that they had to be a part of the government or of the M23 armed group (Lusenge, 2015).

Lusenge (2015) continued by telling the Security Council that armed groups are a constant threat to women in their daily lives, that they live in constant fear and terror that these armed men will physically or sexually abuse them in their homes. Lusenge (2015) called on the Security Council and the international community to identify practical approaches for women's rights to be mainstreamed in peacebuilding; she also asked that the UN ensure the full participation of women in the DRC peace talks, as they have committed to do through the adoption of UNSCR 1325. Furthermore, Lusenge (2015) called for a justice reform, for gender-sensitive training of judges and police for survivors of sexual violence to be respected and have proper justice – even for violations perpetrated by the UN peacekeepers. She finished by adding, "[a]fter 15 years of 'good

intentions' it is high time to give women the authority and the tools with which we can build a better world for everyone" (Lusenge, 2015).

More recently, on March 19th, 2018, Jeanine Bandu Bahati submitted a declaration to the UN Security Council about the security situation of women and girls in North Kivu, DRC. Bahati's (2018) statement echoed many of Lusenge's sentiments from 2015, but she went further in depth by adding that the socio-economic situation for women and girls in North Kivu has deteriorated. She adds, "[w]ith less than a dollar a day, it is almost impossible to live in other places, but this has been intolerably possible for women and girls" (Bahati, 2018). Bahati continued by focusing on the power of women and girls. She emphasized that despite all of the issues that they face in their daily lives that they are "brave, intelligent, capable, and competent women" (Bahati, 2018). She asked the Security Council to "[j]ust support them, assist them and help them, and see what they can do and produce" (Bahati, 2018).

The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security also supported these claims in their Monthly Action Points report for March 2018. They specified that the members of the Working Group were calling on the UN member states and Security Council to "urge the Government and MONUSCO[3] to prioritize the protection of women politicians, candidates, activities and human rights defenders in the implementation of the political agreement" (NGO Working Group, 2018). This further reinforces the need for women involved in all levels of political life in the DRC, so that young women can grow

[3] The UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) is the UN sanctioned peacekeeping mission currently in the DRC.

up with political leaders that resemble them. Girls and young women lack strong female political role models, and often find political life unattainable for this reason.

Chapter 5

Understanding Theories

The theories of gender, conflict and development are the grounding principles of this research. Analyzing the different components of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program is crucial to understanding its impact on the ground. As development programs are intersectional, by identifying key theories from a variety of fields, the research was conducted in an inclusive and sensitive manner. These are the foundational theories which were considered throughout drafting the research as well as instrumental for the analysis of the data.

Understanding the Impacts of Gender

Gender is a social construct which many across the world have fallen victim to (Greco, 2013). Although gender is socially constructed, many have dedicated their lives and practices to belittling one gender over the other; seeking to maintain the social inequalities of gender barriers (Greco, 2013). Greco (2013) addresses gender mainstreaming – acknowledging that men and women experience and are affected by life events differently – by highlighting that peace work and peace education is often gendered (Greco, 2013).

Bunch (2003) describes the concepts of positive and negative peace and their importance in understanding gender differences brought on by war. Bunch (2003) focuses on *positive* and *negative peace* through a gendered lens. Bunch (2003) also explores the vital concepts of human rights, human security, national security as well as the

importance and impact of women on peacebuilding and peace activism. These are important to consider as they reflect many structural and societal constructs which critically impact men and women differently. Baksh et al. (2005) add that the "diversity of experiences, identities and roles among women within the war-to-peace context is thus neither documented nor explained" (20).

Women and girls are the primary survivors, and long-standing survivors of conflicts (Ahgtaie and Geetanjali, 2015). Women and girls are susceptible to a variety of physical and mental health issues directly related to gender-based violence and overt violence (Western, 2013). Women of specific ethnic backgrounds across the world are faced with a difficult choice regarding their cultural practices. Women of minority groups are faced with injustices and need support to face these adversities (Bradley, 2011).

Gender mainstreaming according to Sandole-Staroste (2011) "recognizes that gender relations are an essential aspect of any (conflict) situation, and that conflict, particularly violent conflict, changes gender relations in profound ways" (227). Therefore, gender mainstreaming recognizes the impacts of conflicts on women and men, and how both live experiences differently (Sandole-Straroste, 2011). It is important to consider gender mainstreaming in all instances related to international humanitarian work, human rights, and conflict resolution (Sandole-Straroste, 2011). The essence of gender mainstreaming and feminism is not only about women; it is an issue about gender (Sandole-Straroste, 2011).

Sandole-Staroste (2011) emphasizes that gender mainstreaming should be implemented within grassroots programming as well as by international actors. We must be wary of the commitment to ending violence and negative peace, for many of the

approaches do not consider adequate intersectional characteristics of individuals and groups (Sandole-Straroste, 2011).

The Impact of Conflict on Women

Leatherman and Griffin (2009) also argue that gender plays a key role in "defining people's entitlements and access to resources in society in general, and affects their social mobility, the effects of displacement and disintegration of communities may affect women more than men" (363). This demonstrates the importance of addressing discriminatory behaviour against women and girls within conflicts, as they are often primary victims of these situations (Leatherman and Griffin, 2009). Not only are they victims, but they are further victimized during the post-conflict stages (Leatherman and Griffin, 2009). Women and girls are silenced and need to bear the traumas that they have been subjected to, which is a problem related to the justice and conflict resolution practices (Leatherman and Griffin, 2009).

Leatherman and Griffin (2009) argue that sexual violence is used as a strategy of war within violent conflicts. Leatherman (2011) argues that sexual violence occurs not only because of social dynamics, but because of the need for power and power over. Sexual predators exercise power over their victims to reassert their position in the world and because they believe it is their right to do so (French, 1992). Safe spaces, and lack thereof, also greatly impact women in times of conflict as they do not have any safe havens or shelters—leaving them desperately vulnerable within conflict zones (Leatherman, 2011).

While Copelon (1998) explores the question of rape as a weapon of war, she also uses a series of historical examples to further her points. Her main argument is that rape as a weapon of war is often forgotten and is left unsanctioned due the terrible death tolls and destruction brought on by war which is deemed of higher importance by authorities (Copelon, 1998). By the lack of sanction, rape is viewed as a lesser crime and perhaps excusable in today's modern world (Copelon, 1998). This brings on violence against women, which is justifiable and goes unpunished in several cases (Copelon, 1998). Despite the traumatic and destructive consequences of rape as a weapon of war, the international communities and authorities have proven time and time again that violence against women can be excused (Copelon, 1998).

Baksha et al. (2005) explain that since the Second World War, there has been a shift in the way we wage war – the shift from the battlefield to the homes (22). This demonstrates the growing levels of sexual violence against women which has consequently increased as "military leaders seek to demonstrate their power and humiliate the women and men of an enemy community" (Baksh et al., 2005, 22). Women in turn, can be claimed as possessions to be used to gain political and strategic advantages against their enemies. Furthermore, Baaz and Stern (2013) stress that "rape is used as a systematic and strategic weapon or tactic of war" (46), that the act of rape is used in a deliberate fashion to cause further long-lasting impacts. They add that sexual violence is a product of militarization as "soldiers who engage in sexual violence are answering the call to fulfil ideal types of military masculinity" (27).

Development and Approaches

International human rights law is evolving to further understand and promote the concept of education for human rights as well as education for peacebuilding (Lord & Flowers, 2006). These two concepts are, however, very secluded and divided within their own spheres. The right to education—as a human right—and using education to promote peace are mutually exclusive in some instances, especially regarding international rhetoric (Lord & Flowers, 2006). Buhl et al. (1997) writes about the importance of human rights education for mobilization of activists. Buhl et al. (1997) also emphasize that mobilization can "involve educating other community-based organizations and NGOs on the rights framework and the use of the rights approach as a tool for advocacy." Ward and Marsh (2006) also emphasize the importance of "[w]idespread community-based education aimed at changing attitudes and behaviors that promote sexual and other forms of violence against women" (23) – which is prevalent in the DRC – as a means to evoke change and empower communities to live and claim their rights. Ackerly (2013) pushes the concept of human rights a step further, she moves rights as entitlements to rights as full enjoyments (33); she emphasizes that one's rights need to be enjoyed in order to truly have them. Goodhart (2013) also discusses enjoyment of rights, she adds that there is a need to consider the intersectionality of rights in order to enjoy them (356).

Various international experts and peace scholars have differing definitions of peacebuilding. Ernie Regehr reflected that peacebuilding had good intentions rather than concrete actions and programming, he insisted that the "term is in danger of simply duplicating the ideas and intentions of common security" (Baksh et al., 2005, 30). Stephen Ryan had a different opinion. He believed that peacebuilding involved a shift in

focus "to the attitudes and socio-economic circumstances of ordinary people" (Baksh et al., 2005, 30) that there was a need for focus on the people, rather than the conflict. Lederach and Paffenholz (2010) focus on peacebuilding as a framework of sustainable change, through various structures and processes, sustainable peace is possible (47). Lederach also discusses conflict transformation for peacebuilding; that long-term planning and programming is essential for transformation of conflict to reach peaceful societies (Paffenholz, 2010, 54).

Paffenholz (2010) has a four tiered approach to peacebuilding from a civil society perspective, to "reducing violence, reaching a negotiated agreement, the medium- to long-term sustainability of a peace agreement, and/or the establishment of conditions for treating conflict constructively in society at large" (381). Schirch (2006) further emphasizes that peace and the pursuit of peace can be achieved through *positive peace*, that a range of peacebuilding activities need to be conducted by actors at all levels on a lengthy period of time, which dedicated stakeholders (65). She also adds that human rights and human security are enmeshed, understanding the linkage between human needs and living human rights is essential for true human security (Schrich, 2006, 65).

Lord and Flowers (2006) make the link between peace education and human rights education – understanding that critical steps need to be taken in development work to ensure the sustainability of human rights and peace education (434). Fritzsche (2018) discusses the importance of empowerment as a requirement for human rights education, understanding the various linkages between the two. Meanwhile, Mistry et al. (2009) share an ongoing analysis of cultural relevance in the context of peace and human rights education; observing the various nuances in language and implementation on the ground.

Gürkaynak et al. (2011) also offer an analysis of peace education work and training by focusing on case studies to evaluate impacts and outcomes (290). Schirch (2004) developed a peacebuilding map to identify four criteria for sustainable peace, this criterion needs to be met in order to have true peacebuilding in post-conflict situations (26). Senehi (2009) focuses on the importance of storytelling for peace and the quest for reconciliation; that storytelling is a form of peace work which can be used within peacebuilding (203). Furthermore, Glasius (2013) describes global civil society as bodies of individuals working together towards a common goal; the idea is to influence and create change (145).

Gallant (2011) offers an analysis and exploration of international laws and programs to uphold human rights and conflict resolution. By highlighting the Responsibility to Protect, which is a new doctrine by the United Nations and its stakeholders, she identifies key issues related to humanitarian and conflict resolution work (Gallant, 2011). However, it is essential to understand and discuss the need for inclusion of gender and gender mainstreaming in international programs and laws, which is often lacking within the international dialogue (Gallant, 2011). Merry (2006) further adds to the discussion of international norms opposing local practices, she emphasizes that the onerous often rests on the international NGOs to bridge gaps between international discourse and local implementation (104).

Gendered rights need to acknowledge the oppression they impose or the empowerment they enable for women and girls (Donnelly, 2003). Cultural rights are important as they protect individual identities and cultural affiliations; these cultural rights enforce the legitimacy of respecting cultures and offer individuals and groups the

assurance that their dignity will not be violated (Donnelly, 2003). Kabeer (1999) emphasizes the importance of empowerment as a bottom-up approach, where women and girls are agents of change. Snyder adds that "women must be significant actors in the process, not simply recipients of improved outcomes" (Snyder, 2001, 50). Mishra and Tripathi (2011) conceptualize women's agency and how it relates to empowerment. They argue that agency is an essential aspect of empowerment, especially within development work. Furthermore, international aid must be wary of its effects on the people and their process of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation (Anderson, 1999). The international community must focus its efforts on the sustainability of its programs and aid—rather than the mere emergency response and extraction (Anderson, 1999). Humanitarian work and support must not hinder the processes undertaken by the locals and the grassroots (Anderson, 1999).

Chapter 6

Research Methodology

A Story of Perspective

On July 3, 2018, we landed in Kinshasa for a week-long adventure that would change my life forever. My long-anticipated travel to the continent had ended, here I was in the heart of Africa. When we landed at the Goma International Airport at 7 am, I did not know what to expect – going through immigration, baggage check, security screening, and finding our local partner through the crowd. I was relieved to see a familiar face, the face of Justine and her driver coming to pick us up. It is not customary for us to have drivers in Canada, but through my travels in various countries in the *Global South* I quickly learned that this was the norm for those with higher social status.

The culture shock was rather mild, I knew what to expect when it came to food and accommodation – it was similar to Nepal, to which I had traveled recently for work. We underestimate our sense of safety and security at home, something we quickly realize when traveling abroad. In the back of this Jeep, driving to our hotel, Justine explained to us not to walk on the street or to the marketplace without her driver accompanying us. She explained that it was not safe for two non-African women to walk around these streets – we would be targets. Targets of what? Targets for everything – but especially targets for the rebels. Now, what does this have to do with the young women we came here to meet? What does this cultural differentiation have to do with the program participants? Well, it has everything to do with them.

I once asked a colleague who has worked in South Kivu with survivors of sexual violence why he continues to return to the Congo despite having been attacked and abducted. I asked him why he continues to put himself in these situations, knowingly. In that moment, in that Jeep, I recalled what he had told me: "The reason I keep going back is because at the end of the day, I have a choice to leave, the people that we help, well they don't." I knew that I had a valid passport and a return flight booked – I knew that I could leave. Now, why would I put myself in this situation? Why would I willingly choose to travel to one of the most dangerous countries in the world? Two reasons: because, for one, I could leave; and because, for two, I needed to know how it felt to live this way. Over the past four years, the young women have been describing, sharing, and confiding in me their experiences living in a dangerous, war-torn country. They have come to me for help, for advice, and for comfort – who was I to provide any advice or teachings if I had no first-hand experience of their realities? That is why I agreed to visit them.

When I began this research, Dr. Jessica Senehi asked me if I was going to travel to the DRC to conduct the interviews with the young women. I quickly said no. Now over two years later, I have come to realize that there was no way for me to accurately share their stories without having met and shared with the young women. It is true, much of the research was conducted virtually, and the data gathered formally finished months before but as I analyze and understand their messages, I could not have these same reflections and perspectives today without having been in their shoes. That is the essence of participative data gathering and the meaning of collaborative work – perspective changes everything.

Research Question

As the focus of my research is on the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program currently implemented in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I sought to understand the impact and perceptions of the program from the participants' perspectives. In that case, my research question is posed as:

> What do the beneficiaries of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program think about its cultural relevance and validity in the Democratic Republic of Congo, North Kivu territory?

This gave me the liberty of using interviews and surveys as methods for data gathering – as I have codified the language this aided in understanding different changes which the young women have noticed because of the program. To understand the impact of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program on the women and girls participating in this project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, two specific methods—surveys and interviews—have been used to gather information from the young women in North Kivu, DRC. The information was gathered in partnership with the *Synergie des femmes pour les victimes des violences sexuelles (SFVS),* which operates out of North Kivu and is responsible for the supervision of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program on the ground.

Methodology

This research is based on the Young Women for Peace and Leadership's multi-dimension and multi-stakeholder program. For this reason, research through surveys and interviews have been conducted for qualitative data gathering, in addition to field observations

during a trip to the region. The research focuses on a small range of participants – a small range with a large scope and heavy knowledge of the topic.

Surveys. Surveys can be an easy way to reach large amounts of participants, in a small amount of time (Best and Harrison, 2009). The surveys have been conducted through the World Wide Web (www) to reach larger numbers of participants from the Democratic Republic of Congo. *E-mailing List-Based Samples* and *Non-Web Recruitment Approaches* were the primary manner used to recruit my survey participants (Best and Harrison, 2009). List-based samples is an effective method as it focuses on pre-determined users, such as the young women and the program partners, and sends individual requests to participate in the research. Also, non-web recruitment is useful for this research as it enables those who do not have access to internet, to fill out the survey through word-of-mouth and paper format. Specific partners and program recipients were emailed the link to the survey to request their participation—through direct email. Additionally, local members of SFVS requested participants which do not have access to the web at home, or were not in the email list, to part-take in the survey. Since SFVS currently has 375 young women – 50 young women trained in Kibati, 50 young women trained in Rubaya, 50 young women trained in Butembo, 50 young women trained in Mumba, 15 young women trained in Beni, 77 young women from Mugunga, 50 young women from Masisi, and, 15 young women trained by GNWP in 2015. The expected amount of survey responses was 50 responses – a low amount as not all of the young women remain active with SFVS once they have been trained.

Surveys were created through Survey Monkey, an online platform that enables widespread data gathering – the link was distributed to the local members and in the communities. Understanding the limitations of Survey Monkey due to its requirement of internet and technology, a physical copy of the survey was also shared via email with the young women in North Kivu, DRC. This allowed for larger distribution during the data gathering phase of my research. The online platform and printed versions were to enable better survey accessibility, as return rates for surveys are generally low – with an average of 40 percent for surveys administered by email and 80 to 85 percent in person – these different options intended to help increase the response for a total of 50 participants (University of Texas at Austin, 2017).

The participants of this project and most of the partners on the ground are only proficient in French and Swahili, therefore the surveys were written and distributed in French. The participants were asked to respond in French as this is the common language between the researcher (myself) and the participants – all of the participants from SFVS are fluent in French. Once the data was gathered, it was interpreted and quotes translated to integrate in the analysis chapters of this thesis. The analysis was primarily conducted in French and findings were transcribed to English for the final written findings and conclusions, including this thesis. Interpretation of Swahili to French was also a possibility, but none of the young women or SFVS members requested interpretation as they were comfortable with participating in French. For those who chose to answer the survey offline, they could send their responses in an email or online format. This way, both Survey Monkey responses and off-web responses could be transcribed into a

cumulative document for analysis – of which was facilitated by inputting the responses received into Survey Monkey manually.

The participants of the survey were any young woman who had already been trained or was currently being trained by SFVS. These young women were required to be literate, as they teach literacy in the rural communities, and therefore were able to respond to the survey with ease. Very few of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership are young men and boys, in fact, none of the respondents identified as male.

As the survey was for a broader analysis of the impact observed or experienced by the young women, GNWP staff were also asked to fill out the survey. The staff and previous staff of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders were asked to fill out a different version of the survey. The second survey, which was inspired by the one for the young women, was focused for GNWP to gather their opinions and observations of the program implementation. These surveys were done anonymously.

As surveys are a qualitative and open-ended way to conduct research, questions ranged from changes and challenges to worldviews; learnings and teachings which had not been considered before; the understanding of women's rights laws in the local context; international women's rights; how the program may have affected their daily relationships with themselves and others; and, how the community has reacted to the program implementation. Questions were primarily open-ended, to leave room for explanation and eliminate biases or constraints of information (Cerritos College, 2017). There was also a section about improving or criticisms of the program and their usefulness to the lives of the young women—as an arguable peacebuilding tool.

Understandably, there may be concerns regarding the use of surveys and who may be conducting them – as GNWP is the major organization responsible for funding and coordinating the program, there may have been concerns regarding the impartial treatment of the questions and responses, and that the participants may not feel comfortable to criticize the program due to my affiliation with GNWP. However, because these surveys were done anonymously, the participants were protected by the anonymity of their responses (Whelan, 2007). No answer or response by the participants demonstrated reluctance to respond due to any affiliation with GNWP.

Interviews. The purpose of an interview is for two individuals to focus their attention towards gaining further insight of one's perspective and perceptions on a given subject (Schostak, 2005). Interviews are undoubtedly the most widely understood and recognized way to gather data and research (Klenke et al., 2015), therefore I think this has helped make the participants more comfortable with the method of gathering data. Since participants were mostly unfamiliar with academic research, primarily being fieldwork individuals, this less complicated and direct way of gathering research seemed to be easier to grasp and perhaps less intimidating—making it more authentic for the research. It was also a culturally relevant method of data gathering as oral traditions are quite widely recognized and often preferred throughout the DRC (Vansina, 1985).

Four interviews were conducted at the SFVS Goma Centre in the DRC and one in Valence, Spain,[4] through Skype and WhatsApp, for a total of five interviews. The reason

[4] An active member of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership was on an exchange program in Spain for the duration of the research.

for such a small number of interviews, opposed to larger numbers of survey respondents, was because these were asking participants which have been involved in the program for a long period of time to tell their stories (Senehi, 2010). This intended to give them a voice and potentially influence the data analysis of the surveys, which were often much less descriptive. These were open-ended, semi-structured interviews with specific individuals whom had the most exposure to the program (Newton, 2010). Ideally, the interviews would have been under an hour each, but no specific time restraint was attributed if the participant wished to speak longer than the allocated time. These were conducted during the one month and a half data gathering period.

The five interview participants were selected based on their involvement with the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program. The first was the project coordinator or program coordinator at SFVS, and the four others were young women who were part of the original cohort in 2015—who are still active within the program. This way, the young women and the coordinator could discuss long-term impacts and observations, as well as observations on a personal and interpersonal level.

Open-ended questions were posed in order give more freedom to the participants (Cerritos College, 2017). Questions ranged from their broad perceptions of the program; what they had observed in their community; what they had learnt or understood through this program; what were some challenges they had seen for the program or themselves as agents of change; and, what were some positive observations that they have noticed. Participants were also reminded that their responses are entirely anonymous within the data analysis and findings, and that their responses would not impact their relationship with GNWP, SFVS, or the program. By emphasizing the anonymity of the data

gathering, the participants were free to express themselves and offer any type of criticism they may have observed during their time within the program (Whelan, 2007). Lastly, to help motivate participation and cooperation by SFVS, I will be providing them with an electronic copy of my findings and this thesis which they will be free to use for their promotion and own reports – keeping in mind that the data remains authentic and was not modified to reflect outstandingly positive outputs.

The local partner organization in DRC, SFVS, invited me to conduct this research and offered to facilitate access to the young women should they wish to participate. Some young women, of whom I already knew due to volunteer work I do as the Young Women for Peace and Leadership Program Coordinator at GNWP, had voiced their interest in supporting this research endeavor from the beginning. Once the Ethics Review Board had approved this research, I began to touch base with SFVS and the young women to explain in-depth the purpose and methods for this research, as they were patiently waiting for the ethics approval to engage in this study.

Field Observations. Following the months of data gathering through surveys and interviews, I traveled to Goma in July of 2018. This gave me the opportunity to collect additional data which shaped my understanding and interpretation of much of the information which had been shared with me in the months prior. As Kawulich (2005) explains, field observation "allows researchers to check definitions of terms that participants use in interviews, observe events that informants may be unable or unwilling to share." The observations gathered while in Goma were helpful to feed the data analysis and comprehension of the overall impact of the program on its participants. This brought

a third element to the data collection and strengthened the ability to convey the message and perspectives of the young women within this research.

Rationale for Methodology

A qualitative approach is relevant for this research as it seeks to understand the impact of the program on the Young Women for Peace and Leadership. This research does not seek to understand numbers or statistics of the young women, but rather the individual and collective perceptions of the program. By basing the research on the lived experiences and observations of the participants, this gives the study an authentic and tangible reality which could not be conveyed by statistical data (Klenke et al., 2016). Additionally, as the overall goal of this study is to understand the validity of the program within different cultural contexts, by researching the lived experiences of the young women, their cultural experiences are also crucial in the data and the analysis of the works.

Gürkaynak et al. (2011) identify key types of evaluation for peacebuilding work, of which research-oriented case studies. These focus on "outcomes and impacts or their process contributions, either of a single country/initiative" (Gürkaynak et al., 2011, 290). This research uses the research-oriented case study method in order to "focus on evaluation of dialogue, peace education initiatives and to some extend [conflict resolution] training" (Gürkaynak et al., 2011, 291) to further understand the impact and cultural relevance of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program in the DRC.

The work of Dr. Grace Ukasoanya also helped me approach this research in a more holistic manner – her publication on the integration of immigrant children in Canada I found related in many ways to my own integration in the DRC communities (2013). The

concepts of cultural scripts – common assumptions of social interactions – and role-taking – the ability to see things from the other's perspective – helped me conduct my research in a respectful and dignifying way (Ukasoanya, 2013).

Data Gathering

As the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program is a multi-stakeholder approach to peacebuilding, it was only fitting to include various individuals, groups and methods in this research. In order to adequately reflect the multi-dimensional approach of the program, the analysis of the data has been separated into three main themes: the road to identity; claiming women's agency; and, igniting a beacon of hope. During the months of January and February 2018, the young women in Goma, DRC were asked to answer ten questions (see appendix 1) based on their experiences and opinions of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program. The young women who responded were between the ages of 18 to 25 – on average aging 21 years. Interestingly, out of the twelve respondents to the survey, six were involved with the program since 2015, five since 2016, and one within the last year.

This enabled a wide range of perspectives and responses based on varied experiences with the program. The young women who had been involved since 2015 were from the first cohort of the program, which means they have been involved since the beginning of the implementation in North Kivu, DRC. Those involved in 2016 did not witness the creation or groundwork for start-up – but rather, were part of the new wave of young women who focused on media literacy and advocacy training. These different focuses within the program implementation are interesting to keep in mind when

considering the various responses of the young women. Lastly, the newest wave of the program in North Kivu has been focused on job readiness and skill-building; the newest workshop that the young women attended in January 2018 was on economic empowerment and entrepreneurship – a common theme which was noticed in the responses to specific survey questions.

The purpose of this research is to understand the impact of this program on the young women in the DRC and evaluate the cultural relevant nature of this peacebuilding model; but even more so, the purpose of this research for me is to see what the young women have learned and if they are truly benefitting from these types of programs. That is why, the questions posed throughout the research are always around the idea of what they have learned or how they may have noticed changes in their surroundings.

To approach this research from a holistic perspective, I chose to also ask a series of questions to the staff members of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP). GNWP staff who had been involved in various stages of the program creation and implementation were asked to answer ten questions (see appendix 2), during the month of January and February 2018. Five different members of the GNWP staff responded to the survey with various perspectives and observations of their involvements with the young women, the program, and the local communities on the Democratic Republic of Congo.

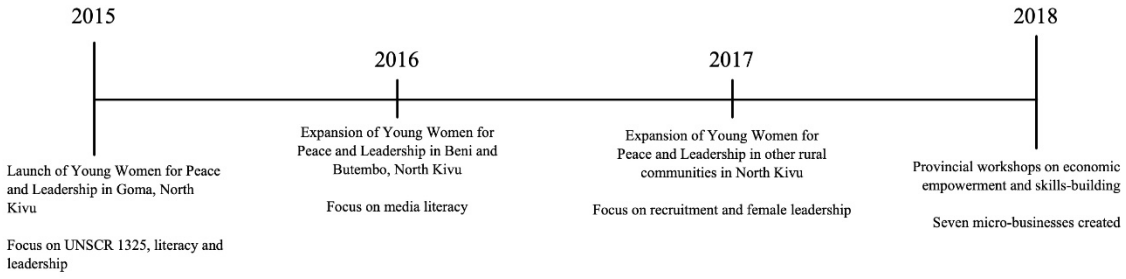
I also asked the GNWP staff and volunteers their year of association with GNWP; this was relevant as I wanted to understand how long they had been association with the organization and when they may have begun their involvement with programs, such as the Young Women for Peace and Leadership. One of the respondents has been with

GNWP since the founding of the organization in 2009, others since before the creation of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program in 2012, and others during the first step of implementation in the DRC in 2014. This ensures a wide range of responses which are holistic in their understanding of policy and program implementation on the ground.

I also crafted a question to understand the timeline of each respondents' implication with the program. They were asked to identify when they first were involved with the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program. These answers varied as some had worked for GNWP in other capacities or other projects, but interestingly there was at least one respondent per year who began their involvement between 2012 to 2015. This is particularly relevant in contrast to the timeline of the program's creation, implementation, and follow up. The respondent who had been involved since 2012 was inevitably privy to the inception and creation of the program, which may help craft an entirely different perspective than that of the staff who began later in the timeline. The respondent who became involved in 2013 was essential to the creation of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership and likely involved in the first stages of the implementation in the DRC. Whereas, the respondent from 2014 was involved in the province of South Kivu, DRC implementation, the two who became involved in 2015 were specific to the implementation and expansion in North Kivu, DRC – which is the focus of this research.

I have included two timeline tables to facilitate the process of understanding in terms of GNWP's work on the Young Women for Peace and Leadership as well as the work of the young women in North Kivu, DRC specifically:

(Table 1: Timeline of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program)



(Table 2: Timeline of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership activities in North Kivu, DRC)

When I questioned the young women I tried to do so in a way that could let them think freely, creatively. The purpose was to see where their thoughts would lead them when prompted with the question of which new direction they would like to bring the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program. If they could choose, what would they focus on? The young women outlined four different priorities: support businesses; sexual and reproductive health, and support for victims of prostitution; developing economic

empowerment centres; and, the integration gender in school curricula. The young women emphasized that "if youth find ways to create local businesses to make money, they will no longer be used by the armed forces to destabilize the peace in communities."

I outline these various methodology and responses to frame the following sections of the thesis. I have divided the analysis into four main sections, three thematic and one theoretical. I think it is important to understand how the themes of identity, agency and hope have shaped the young women, especially within the context of praxis. Far too often theory does not meet practice, therefore I have outlined the three themes and seek to apply Peace and Conflict Theories throughout my analysis.

Limitations

I have to highlight that this research has its own limits. Because of the nature of the methods – surveys and interviews – and of my own involvement with the NGO and the program. There is a legitimate limitation in terms of the difficulty for administrators of programs to evaluate their own work; detached and non-bias program evaluation is nearly impossible. I strongly believe in the work GNWP is doing across the world, especially with young women through programs such as the Young Women for Peace and Leadership. However, I understand that it is essential to hear all perspectives and to reflect on criticisms in order to ameliorate the work; just because something is good it does not mean it cannot be better. I too have led workshops or Skype calls, for example, with the young women under the pretext of creating a global solidarity network among like-minded youth. I too am guilty of promoting the rhetoric, perhaps imposing the rhetoric, of global solidarity among young people; a rhetoric that is very much fostered

and created by the international global giants who like to believe they are doing meaningful work on the ground. It may be in an effort to establish credibility at the international stage that GNWP promotes this rhetoric of global solidarity within its programs.

Another influential component of the research that must be raised is yet again related to my association with GNWP. In January 2018, I was to travel to the DRC with a GNWP colleague, to host a workshop in North Kivu on economic empowerment. This coincided perfectly with the timeline of my research. Unfortunately, the GNWP colleague did not receive her visa on time and the trip had to be postponed. Nevertheless, I conducted the workshop with the young women on Skype for two days. Waking up at 4 am to teach economic empowerment principles, job readiness skills and resume writing was yet again an eye-opening experience. In the context of my research, it gave me insight into the young women's lives and their understanding of themselves and the program. Many of the responses gathered during the surveys and interviews spoke about the economic empowerment workshop from January 2018. Had I not been present or associated with GNWP, I would likely not have the background or context for this research. Although I try to distance myself from the responses and my own understanding of the program, it remains that I am intrinsically involved in the implementation as well.

Another critical limitation of this study are the skills it required participants to have in order to even participate. Although I tried to remain flexible and to offer various ways to participate in the research, ultimately the limitations of literacy and basic technological skills remained. This limited the study as young women who were not yet proficient in literacy skills or access to technology could likely not participate, or at least

not with ease. We need to keep in mind while analyzing the data that it may not be reflective of every young woman in the North Kivu area – not every young woman possesses the skills to take part in the research.

I also want to emphasize the importance of culture within the research, as I am not a Congolese woman. Throughout the research and analysis, I continuously reflected upon my own biases and remembered that although I am a human rights advocate and a peace worker, I do not share the same experiences or history as the women and young women which have lived within these conflicts zones for the entirety of their lives. The research has limits based on my own experience as a Canadian woman working in lesser-privileged areas, and must acknowledge the realities of the power dynamics at play. I hope that my approach to this research does justice to the life-long commitments of women activist and young women agents of peace in the DRC.

Methodological Findings Arising from Data Collection

I was also quite surprised when I first began asking the young women if they would like to volunteer to respond to the survey questions. I was met with pure enthusiasm and excitement from the young women. The young women were excited to share their opinions and continuously thanked me for valuing their individual perspectives – perhaps because they knew this was for a larger research project not based with a local organization, contrary to their usual evaluation surveys done by SFVS or GNWP. I received a lot of *thank you messages* from the young women, and positive feedback in terms of the questions.

I must also mention that the survey response rate was lower than previously anticipated. Perhaps this was due to the difficulty in accessing good internet connection, busy school schedules, or a lack of willingness to join. Although I had hoped for more responses, I do not think this negatively impacted the overall study as the responses received were rich with information, thoughtfully-crafted and meaningful.

Overall, I found the responses to my questions to demonstrate positive language and examples. Some staff members were no longer active with the program or with GNWP, thus chose not to answer specific questions on impact of the program – as they felt they were not in a position to comment since they could only observe based on the social media and communications they had seen in the last years or months. Gathering the contact information from some of the GNWP staff was a challenge as those who had initiated the program in 2014 were no longer with the organization. I was quite pleased with the positive responses to my request for their participation to the survey – almost all the former and current staff members I had approached chose to answer the survey. There were a few members who chose not to, as they were never directly involved with the program or with the DRC location, and found it less appropriate for them to comment on the current program in North Kivu.

I think it is important that GNWP staff and former staff's perspectives are considered in this research as they are key to implementation and following up on the different program components. It is also interesting to me, to understand the program from various perspectives – the participants on the ground, the local organization will have a daily perspective and the GNWP team members have an external perspective that is impacted by their policy and international work – as most of them are also involved in

programs or policy work in various areas of the world, for example in Colombia and Moldova.

While collecting the data from the interviews with the young women, it came to my great surprise that the young women preferred written statements rather than interviews. Perhaps it was due to the time constraints – the seven-hour time difference made it quite challenging to arrange Skype calls – or it may be their own comfort levels writing on this topic. After the first Skype interview, I sent the participant my notes and she chose to add a substantive amount of information, which had not been discussed during the call, of which she had further reflected upon. Perhaps the young women preferred written statements as they were given the opportunity to reflect further on the answers they would be providing, and would not be constrained by often difficult audio-quality and suggested one-hour time slots.

Many of the participants shared personal examples, which I could not always share in this research due to the anonymity concerns, whereas others remained quite theory-based and factual. I found them quite reflective and highly participative. They organized themselves – it can be a challenge to get in touch with some of the young women due to the unstable internet connection in the country, and their lack of home internet, mostly working from their smartphones. They were very understanding and useful in terms of communicating with each other to coordinate meeting times or even to coordinate access to the resources available at the SFVS office – internet and computers for example.

One of the young women did not have easy access to a computer, as she was not in Goma during the time I gathered the data, she asked to submit the responses via

WhatsApp, an instant messaging application which enables communication on smartphones. I agreed, she sent me her answers from her cellphone and I proceeded to include them into the overall responses – another example of the adaptability and collaboration the young women are used to. I found it exciting and motivating that the young women were willing to trouble-shoot in order to participate in the research.

Chapter 7

The Road to Identity

Finding your Meaning

This is a tale about identity. Who are you? Who am I? Who are we? These are the questions we all seek to answer – regardless of place, time and space. We are curious beings, curious to understand who we are and where we belong in this world. Wivine is no different. Four years ago, when Wivine first joined the Young Women for Peace and Leadership, she did not know who she was – she did not know what she could be. Let me tell you about Wivine's story. Wivine grew up on the outskirts of the city of Goma, in Western Africa. She was a shy but curious little girl – curious to learn and curious to discover. When Wivine began elementary school, she noticed something: she noticed that little boys were encouraged to explore, they were encouraged to discover. She was told not to speak out, to stay calm and to go unnoticed. But why? Why couldn't she explore or discover the world? This is her why. Why does Wivine believe in equality? Why does Wivine feel determined to end gendered discrimination? Because Wivine knows who she is and who she wants to become. When I asked Wivine what defined her, her first thought was a defender of what is right. She told me:

> There is a big difference in my life since becoming a Young Woman for Peace and Leadership. Thanks to the different trainings of the program I know how to express myself in front of a public, to hold a debate on young people as actors of peace, to moderate the activities of young people, to make the young people aware

> everywhere I go with regard to different aspects of peace and the legal instruments for the involvement of young people in the search for peace. (Wivine)

Wivine has defined herself as a change-maker, a peacemaker, a peacebuilder. She finds herself, her confidence, as part of a bigger movement. Wivine is an example, of many, of the young women who have shared their pride in finding themselves – finding their passion, finding their voice, finding their identity. Who we are is a big question, what we will do as a result of who we are is even bigger. Wivine's journey is but one example. Wivine has one clear message for the young people across the world, she says: "Youth: always be active for peacebuilding in your region."

Identity through Research

Self-expression, finding the courage to speak up and being comfortable with public speaking were the determining factors identified by the young women throughout both the interviews and surveys during this research. They emphasized the importance of awareness in regard to their own rights and how they live in this world and how to take their place in the world. They spoke about their own worth, decision-making, leadership-building, postsecondary education, economic independence, and patience. While reading and analyzing these different responses, that showed a wide range of experiences, the famous saying *empowered women empower women* came to mind.

> There has been a big change in my behaviours and interactions. Before being a Young Woman for Peace and Leadership, I did not know how to express myself in front of people even when I had an idea. I was ashamed of saying it in public. But now, after the different program workshops, I am able to moderate a session, I

> am able to ask for a turn to speak and to express myself freely in public. Furthermore, I am able to train young people on themes that I know. To finish, everywhere I go, I present myself as a Young Women for Peace and Leadership and I am proud to raise awareness for youth for peace, something that was not in me before. (participant 7)

Snyder (2009) also discusses empowerment as "a process that encompasses progression from one state (gender inequality) to another state (gender equality)" (50). She adds, "women must be significant actors in the process, not simply recipients of improved outcomes" (Snyder, 2009, 50) – meaning that young women must be agents of their own change, true actors for their own empowerment and the empowerment of other young women in their respective communities. The concept of "trainees becoming trainers" was predominant within the responses from both the young women themselves and GNWP. It was found that the ownership of the program and of its content gave the young women the power to step up and empower other young women which were involved in the program or in the communities – thus demonstrating that these young women are significant actors in the process of their own empowerment.

The young women chose to discuss how conflict resolution skills they had gained were beneficial to their learning process, to their becoming true agents of peace. When asked about what they have learned, a participant responded:

> A lot of things, among them I feel very comfortable in this group because I learn the best ways to live in a team, I have learned various peacebuilding notions but also ways to help those who need moral support in order for them to gain internal peace thanks to this group, a respondent shared.

The level of comfort and sense of self was present throughout the various responses. To me, it meant that the young women were finding their own identity, their confidence and their own strength. Throughout this process, the young women did not only influence their surroundings, but truly changed themselves – they became leaders in their own rights.

The international community and organizations like to praise themselves as *creators* and *enablers* of leadership. As the young women discussed aspects of their roles and of what brought them pride within the program, they shared a fundamental truth: Leadership is essential for young women to find their place in the community.

> This program has taught me leadership, gender, literacy of women, conflict management, it has also given me a taste for peacebuilding and pushes me to continue tirelessly to train and sensitize other youth to seek peace. (participant 3)

> I learned how to speak in front of people and how a leader should conduct herself. Also, I learned how to be independent on the economic front. (participant 2)

It is evident to me that the young women value leadership characteristics and tie those with the characteristic of a true empowered and independent woman. They identified countlessly the changes in their own behaviours and interactions since their involvement in the program – a coming of age of a young leader.

The youth-focus of the program, seeing this as an opportunity to claim their voice and to enable other young people to use their voices is instrumental to their concept of self-worth. Why would they continue to participate in yet another peace initiative? Because young women and young people are the change-makers. Young people, to them,

are the only true sustainable change-makers. Through education and female leadership the young women are able to find themselves – they are able to find their confidence to speak out against injustices and to stand behind their values. Among the young women's surveys they spoke about sustainability, how the program focuses on youth working towards sustainable peace, it paves the way for young people to be the agents of change in their communities. Paffenholz (2010) points out John Paul Lederach's sustainable peacebuilding framework "based on an understanding of peacebuilding that centers on sustainable reconciliation within societies" (47). She continues by adding that "according to Lederach, peacebuilding can be achieved through the establishment of structures, processes, and training of people within a generation-long time frame" (Paffenholz, 2010, 47). Sustainable peacebuilding, as defined by Lederach and Paffenholz (2010), is attainable through the young women as this is an inter-generational peacebuilding model; where young women and girls are active participants, promoters and stakeholders of peace in their own communities.

I continued to inquire about changes the young women may have perceived – I thought it was important to understand changes they had noticed in their daily lives, after all, the purpose of human rights and peace education is to transform individuals. All of the young women shared that they are now much more confident, they feel as though they can use their voice and are comfortable with public speaking. They are able to debate various contentious issues and are able to voice their opinions. "I noticed the determination of young women to be heard and have their voices heard as young women leaders." This is a significant and substantive shift in the perception young women often have of themselves. Some credited their new found identities to the knowledge of

women's rights legal frameworks, such as the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women*, as useful in their daily lives, while others focused on their new acquired tools of nonviolence to defend rights and be pacific while still being passionate (Griffiths, 2001).

Ultimately, the young women have become advocates for women's rights and peace work; they are now advocating youth engagement at all levels of decision-making as they feel they have the tools and the knowledge to contribute to peace work. Another young woman, amongst the leaders in Butembo, North Kivu said: "Since the program began in my rural community in 2016, we have hosted workshops for awareness-raising with twenty-five different groups – all of this in only the first year of our existence as young women." Not only does this demonstrate her pride in the accomplishment but it also showcases the ultimate change in character: confidence – being confident and proud of who you are and what you are capable of.

Lastly, a young woman shared that the multiple workshops hosted in her community as her biggest accomplishment, she found it rewarding to have youth as central agents of peace. "It is of great pride for me to accompany young people in their consolidation of peace; SFVS has become a reference and a centre for the rights of young people and young girls." This demonstrates the impact of her involvement on her identity as a young peacebuilder, who has contributed to making youth central components of peace work in her area.

Chapter 8

Claiming Women's Agency

What Inspires Agency

As I sat at the front of the room, over capacity, on the morning of October 26th, 2018, in the United Nations Church Center, between Emilie and Lynrose, I thought to myself: this is why we do this. This is why we continue to build allyships and community-driven peacebuilding work. On that morning, moments before we spoke, I realized that our lives are not so different. I mean, Emilie grew up in one of the largest cities of the DRC; I grew up in one of Canada's largest cities. Emilie went to school, learned to speak English as a second language, and even graduated from her undergraduate degree. As did I. But how were our paths so different? Why would my path be easier? Why should it be?

Privilege is a funny thing. Colonization certainly is too. Emilie is still facing the majority of the colonial legacy in the Congo; but am I not? I am Indigenous. I have faced systemic and cultural discrimination my whole life, except I have never – until now – known that. Perhaps that is what makes us different. Emilie is aware, acutely aware even, of the aftermath of colonialism and violence against her. She is so aware that she even stands up to it on a daily basis. So aware that she even sat beside me that morning in New York, and looked at a majority European-descendent audience, and spoke to them about what they have imposed on her. That is courage. That is bravery.

Emilie shared her story that day: a story of resilience and hope. She insisted that the international community has a role to play. Emilie believes, wholeheartedly, that we can – the *Global North* and the *Global South* – work together to bring peace to her

country. I witnessed Emilie that morning, asking the Finnish Ambassador what he would do to stop the killing of her people; how he and other nations would end this legacy of colonialism in her country. That was power. Emilie has power.

Let me tell you about Emilie. Emilie is a 26-year-old woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She was raised in the city of Goma, bordering Lac Kivu, across the lake from Rwanda. She grew up with her siblings, in her family home, on the outskirts of Goma, traveling an hour to go to school every day. Emilie was one of few young women in her community to pursue a post-secondary education. Privileged – she felt – to have been sent to Burundi for university. She studied management there. Privileged – she felt – to have been able to learn English. A privilege too many in the *Global North* do not understand. Emilie graduated in December 2018 from the University of Kampala. She speaks of her time at university as a blessing, as her pride.

Today, Emilie works at the *Synergie des femmes pour les victimes des violences sexuelles (SFVS).* She has returned to Goma, to help other women who have not had the same privileges as she. She joined the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program in 2015. In July, when I traveled to Goma, I met Emilie among the other young women from North and South Kivu. Emilie was among the only three who spoke English – in a group of more than twenty. Emilie still keeps in touch with me, many of them do.

Years ago, when this program began, the young women did not know how to operate a computer. Many had never used a cellphone. Today, I receive dozens of emails and text messages from these young women every day. They feel free. They feel like they can do anything, because they have the world at their fingertips. I do what I do, as a volunteer, years later, because of them. I am inspired by their stories, by their lives, but

mostly by their courage. This is why context matters. Now let me tell you how young women like Emilie are claiming their agency.

Agency through Practice

Overwhelmingly, the young women identified advocacy and awareness-raising as one of their biggest accomplishments; a few even spoke about being able to hold workshops in various communities and feeling empowered by it. Some spoke about their pride facing their ability to involve others, particularly other youth, in the movement towards peace in DRC. And some spoke about being able to contribute to decision-making and having the skills to integrate survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in their advocacy. An outstanding testimony of their journeys from young women to young women leaders was shared about the ability to hold workshops for people of all ages and backgrounds:

> My biggest accomplishment is the fact that more than once I have led workshops with civil society in Goma on leadership and another time in Lubero but this time it was not in front of young people of my age or my generation, but instead in front of people older than me, above 20 years old and this proved that I am able to teach in front of people of any age and of any intellectual capacity. (participant 6)

This demonstrates a fundamental shift in the empowerment and learning journey of the young women. This testimony, explaining that she is now able to teach complex notions to individuals much older than her is important. Culturally, social hierarchies based on age are predominant factors and key to the social dynamics of power in the DRC. In the *Global North*, many criticize ageism due to the tokenism of youth; that young people are glorified in a superficial manner and that they are not necessarily taken seriously in any

respect. This participant demonstrates a shift, that perhaps in her context, which generally is much stricter with ageist norms, that her advanced knowledge based on international frameworks makes her a credible and respected individual, regardless of her age. She is able to teach valuable information to individuals of all ages because she has something meaningful to contribute – that is the true embodiment of empowerment.

I also wanted to understand the biggest challenge as young women, to see what they thought was still out of reach. They outlined that awareness-raising with specific community groups was difficult, some cultures and customs made it challenging as the principles they promote sometimes contradict certain traditions which is met with some degree of resistance in the communities. For example, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981 claims to "reflect a distinctive regional set of values, giving an African 'spin' to pre-existing human rights," according to Smith (2013, 71); however, this Charter is not included in any human rights curriculum or workshop for the young women. Instead, they share knowledge on the UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security and on youth, peace and security, and the work of the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* to educate community members of their legal protections and international standards of rights.

The perception that women hold of themselves can also be a challenge as they do not understand or see their own worth. Many women in their communities do not see social norms as negatively impacting them, a participant explains:

> It is difficult for us sometimes because women don't understand their own worth. They don't see that they are worthy of more than what is allowed to them by men. They think that they are only good enough to be in the home, I don't think that's

> true. It is a challenge because we want them to see that they can be more than that. (participant 3)

The young women identified a lack of support by certain men, especially educated men, which do not support their causes.

> Some men are very helpful in the advancement of women's rights; but many of them are not. Even the educated man does not always want to hear us. They think their wife or girls should not go to school, that only the man should need to get an education. It is difficult for us to teach women's rights when the men do not allow it. This can be dangerous for us. (participant 5)

The respondents also agreed that there should be a strong emphasis on men and boys in order to create larger culture shift. One response said:

> We must include men to help promote gender equality, men have already understood what their place is in society but they need to understand that we are all equal. The woman is similar to him; therefore, they must work together for everyone to be able to fully enjoy their rights. (participant 2)

Goodhart (2013) strengthens the argument concept of enjoyment of rights: "[T]he challenge of actually achieving human rights – securing their enjoyment – is of crucial importance" (356), she adds that to secure this enjoyment there is a need for specific attention to "the intersectional nature of oppression" (356). Therefore, in order to fully enjoy one's rights, there needs an international analysis and understanding of various oppressions – such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, social class. The young women also highlighted the need for better use of technology for their advocacy work and aspire for greater, more equal access to education for all women.

Ackerly (2013) discusses the entitlement of human rights – that some feminist thoughts have moved from rights as entitlements, as this is assumed, but rather on the full enjoyment of rights. She stresses: "If one does not enjoy one's rights, one doesn't really have them at all" (Ackerly, 2013, 33). Furthermore, one key insight of "feminist and other activist work on human rights is that if individuals or groups face cultural, economic, or other obstacles to the enjoyment of their rights, then in a very important sense they don't really have those rights at all" (Ackerly, 2013, 33). Thus, the young women are not working towards women's rights but rather to the full enjoyment of the rights by all women in Congolese society. In order to create change and ensure the full enjoyment of rights, the young women must include men and boys in their mobilization efforts to impact true social change.

Others found that mobilizing young people can be challenging as they are not always motivated – regardless of gender. Others identified the lack of follow up in the communities, even if those are supportive of the causes, they do not always continue the practices which are taught and promoted by the program. Additionally, there is a limitation due to the vast environment of North Kivu, which can be difficult for young women to reach communities which are far away. This can also be a difficulty for organizations in terms of data collection or other means of understanding the situation on the ground in conflict zones (Gürkaynak et al., 2011, 296). A challenge identified by GNWP staff with regard to implementation of the program was about mindsets. It was noticed by the GNWP staff, in addition to the young women, that mindsets of community leaders and cultural norms created barriers for the young women to promote women's rights.

Nonetheless, some GNWP staff highlighted the model of implementation as a strong asset, that this was an opportunity to create a global network of young women and girls who were like-minded in their beliefs, but facing much different daily contexts – regardless of their differences, understanding that they are part of a global solution towards peaceful, sustainable promotion of women's rights. This network opportunity for young women creates a sense of agency in many. One respondent said:

> I am part of the YWPL because I know there are other young women like me. They work for peace like me. I want to be part of something bigger.

Another reason identified by the GNWP staff for involvement was that young women's perspectives and agencies are at the forefront of conflicts, that they can be recognized for their worth and their voices can be heard. The Young Women for Peace and Leadership "empowers girls and young women not only to tell but also to share their own stories," added one respondent. Senehi (2009) highlights, "[m]any aspects of the storytelling process contribute to its ability to promote inclusion empowerment" (208). One of the aspects of storytelling which is specifically relevant to the young women is that of shared experiences, where the storytelling "builds community because is a shared experience" (Senehi, 2009, 210). Young women are able to use storytelling to promote community-building and use it as a tool for peace.

Creating Networks of Solidarity

A key theme of agency that shined through the research was with regard to networks of solidarity. A respondent focused on the relationship-building with the young women, that "although local context varies greatly from community to community,

country to country, trusting and investing in young women and girls brings about positive change." This perhaps can be expanded into the capacity-building of women and girls and the overall school of thought that it is no longer about capacity-building, it is rather about *capacity-enhancing*, as local communities already have various capacities, all that needs to be done is enhancement of those capacities.

Merry (2006) points out that "applying a universalistic framework obscures local particularities, but yielding to local situations impedes applying universal categories" (131), this is where the strength of having the "trainees become trainers," they are able to make the distinction between the universality of human rights and enmesh them into local contexts where appropriate. The young women have the inherent ability to filter and translate the legal frameworks into a local, culturally relevant context, to push social norms and preconceived notions just far enough.

Furthermore, the young women emphasized the importance of changing social and personal perceptions in regard to women's place and their ability to contribute in society. To quote one of the responses: "Way before, we were convinced that women were weak, incapable, and only useful for maternity. By taking part in this program, we have learned that women are capable, strong, and able to take on responsibilities." This demonstrates an initial shift in their thinking and their own perception of themselves as young women in this world. As echoed by Snyder (2009), "women often bear a double burden, taking on unaccustomed roles such as head of household and principal income generator because they have lost male family members and experienced displacement arising from conflict" (45). This was certainly discussed in literature and briefly mentioned by the young women.

> By joining this program, I have learned a lot in particular I have learned a lot of new notions on female leadership, women's autonomy especially through the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, that I now consider a tool for advocacy for women. (participant 1)

> I learned about the place of a woman in society, how to advocate for rights as a woman, how UN Security Council Resolution 1325 works among other UN Resolutions, responded a participant. (participant 7)

> I have learned a lot since I became a Young Woman for Peace and Leadership. I learned that youth have a big role to play in the promotion of peace and peacebuilding in communities and with different instruments of the United Nations that call for the implication of women and young people in peace. (participant 9)

They continue to identify visible changes in attitudes of different community members in relation to women's roles and their responsibilities in the communities. The force of a woman needs to be acknowledged – if I have learned one thing, it is that woman want to be involved, can be involved, but do not understand how to be involved. They are silenced by social norms, and disadvantaged at all levels. The only way to counter that systemic violence is through meaningful dialogue and education – education in a culturally relevant manner. For example, a young woman shared the change she had felt in her household especially in regard to access and support for young women's education:

> In my household, beforehand, according to my biological father, women were made for maternity. And he believed that women should not study very much. But after my involvement with the Young Women for Peace and Leadership, I was able to advocate to him and now all of the girls in our home are in university. (participant 4)

This quote and example demonstrates the concrete, real, meaningful change she has noticed in her home – which is undeniably life-changing for her whole family. Donnelly (2003) adds that "[i]n African societies, rights typically were assigned on the basis of social roles and status within the community," thus, the young women are challenging the predefined notions of rights and entitlements in their homes and communities (79).

Moving Together Towards Peace

From an external perspective, the GNWP staff identified three key changes they saw in the young women: the recognition of the young women as crucial actors for peace; empowerment of the young women by learning their own rights, capacities and skills; and, community solidarity and togetherness, working together to support aspirations and individual journeys.

The young women themselves had a lot to say about this. They described various differences they had noticed in their communities and in Goma, North Kivu in the last few years regarding women's rights. The young women all agreed that there had been many positive changes for women in Goma and neighbouring communities. They outlined consciousness and broader awareness in regard to women's potential and their rights in the community; and that women are being recognized as equal before the law

and that this is increasingly being reflected into practice. As an example of these changing practices, the respondent explained that sports have always been exclusive to boys and men, but now young women are beginning to be allowed to join in recreational sporting activities. Some even mentioned that women have begun to work with men in various fields, regardless of their genders. Others highlighted that women are now being empowered to express themselves and their opinions are being listened to. Lastly, certain rights for women and girls are being respected, for example access to education.

The lack of enjoyment of rights also leads to the lack of consideration of women's skillsets as they are often not actors in the public sphere. This problem was evident when discussing the program with the young women. There is also lack of spaces for young people to gather, areas for them to come together with like-minded youth. There is a lack of volunteer work, as referred to earlier; young people ask to be remunerated for their work and do not want to volunteer their time given the difficult financial situation of many in the DRC. In rural areas, there is also a significant lack of support by authorities and security. There is a lack of human security with the constant fear of war. Schirch (2006) also emphasizes that the "idea of human security bridges the concepts of human rights and human needs" that people ultimately "have a right to what they need" (65). She iterates: "Human security exists when governments adequately protect people's rights to meet their basic needs" (Schirch, 2006, 65). This is a constant reminder of the instability and need for grassroots, sustainable peace programming. For the full enjoyment of rights, the Congolese people need to work together, believe together and act together to demand *positive peace* in their country.

The young women' responses were also mostly focused on community – that community was a primary factor for their involvement: their wanting to change their communities; change violent cycles in their communities; and, empower their communities. Some were interested in the youth-focused programming, where the Young Women for Peace and Leadership enables youth leadership and youth mentorship. Others were more interested by the empowerment of young women and girls which they sought in this program; that young women and girls could build and lead this program in a way that could create meaningful change. On that same note, the young women identified the importance of education and furthering their understanding of women's rights, female leadership, understanding how to best mobilize, and to address sexual gender-based violence.

The Young Women for Peace and Leadership claim to enable change at all levels of society, their biggest challenge is with the perspective women have of themselves; women's agencies are at risk. The young women feel a responsibility to change perceptions and enable women to claim their own agency, as they can and should be able to. They truly believe that women, especially young women, are critical actors in creating and maintaining a peaceful, inclusive DRC.

Chapter 9

Igniting the Beacon of Hope

Before beginning this chapter, I must acknowledge that researching sexualized violence in the DRC was beyond the score of my research. The discussions on sexual violence and its impact on the young women were raised by the participants, which is why it is discussed in this chapter.

From Victim to Survivor

Let me tell you about Gentille. Gentille gave me perspective. Gentille was born in Walikale Territory in the province of North Kivu. In 2009, her family decided to move to Goma to give their children better opportunities and access to formal education. On her way to Goma, Gentille's family encountered a rebel group. They gave them two choices: be killed or be raped. They froze. Gentille recalls this incident clearly – she says it is the reason for what she does today. Recalling the sexual violence she experienced that day, Gentille vows to stop this violence from spreading. Once the nightmare over, she managed to find the *Synergie des femmes pour les victimes des violences sexuelles (SFVS).* They supported her, helped with psychological treatment. Sixteen at the time of her rape, Gentille remembers. She remembers the fear. She remembers the hate. She remembers how it felt to be helpless.

Gentille insists that this does not define her. Rape does not define you. Instead, Gentille chose to be strong; when she heard of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program, she was ecstatic. Finally, an opportunity to help end violence

against women, she thought. Ten years later, Gentille now owns a micro-business. She creates jewelry and snacks and sells them for profit. As a member of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership, she participated and learned basic entrepreneurial skills which she now applies to earn some money for personal expenses. She says:

> What motivates me to be part of the entrepreneurs is that I want to be an independent woman. I want independence to awaken the interest in other young women to create job opportunities and personal growth. I want to improve my future. Something else that pushes me to apply my entrepreneurial knowledge is what GNWP has taught me. GNWP has taught me female leadership and women's empowerment – I want to be the living, breathing example of this for others. (Gentille)

In 2018 during my trip to Goma, I observed that the young women, four years after their creation, have now become almost entirely independent from their host organization, SFVS. The young women, throughout the last few months and during the trip in July, were actively planning and coordinating the workshop in direct partnership with GNWP and had close involvements in developing the programme for the three-day workshop. I was often asked to explain, interpret or explore various topics of international attention – such as #MeToo – when discussing issues of sexual violence in their communities; and even asked what international standards were when we were working on revitalizing their *curriculum vitae.* The young women showed me, loud and clear, that throughout the last four years they have acquired a number of skills which they now apply as independent actors.

When I saw Gentille in July, she was happy. Gentille was happy and excited to continue learning and engaging with young women in her community. She shared with me that the group had created a leadership model – after our discussions about organizational management a few months back. Gentille was recently elected by her peers as the President of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership in North Kivu. She now leads. This is why Gentille gives me perspective. Gentille is living, breathing proof that change is possible – she is, to me, what the program is about. She represents and she is the purpose of peacebuilding. Gentille is more than her rape; Gentille is a daughter, a sister, a student, an entrepreneur, she is a person.

When I asked Gentille what this journey has meant to her, she told me that she now sees life in a different way. She used to be shy and afraid. Now, she is proud and brave. She feels that she can achieve anything because she has the tools and the support to do it – she feels empowered. For her, empowerment means being able to help yourself to be autonomous. She wants other young women to feel the same. That is what puts everything into perspective – this is what gives me hope.

A Deterrent to Darkness

In times of war and injustice, hope is often the strongest deterrent to darkness. With that, I decided to ask the young women to share with me what they perceived as the program's largest accomplishment. There were three key findings that stood out: transformation, empowerment, and impact. Transformation as the young women go from being passive members of their communities, to growing into strong, passionate and critical agents of change. Empowerment because the young women use their own skills. Snyder (2009)

highlights the need for young women to be at the forefront of their own empowerment – empowering themselves and other young women around them:

> Empowering young women and young women to lead, teaching them literacy and other skills, as well as strengthening their own training capacity and their understanding of how to build peace in their communities, and connecting them with other young women and women worldwide, one respondent added.

And lastly, impact – impact because of personal development and skill-building, but also impact on their families, their communities, and their country. The young women now represent hope for their peers and that change is truly possible. Senehi's (2009) storytelling reinforces the notion that young women are community-builders as they are able to impact an array of members, through their storytelling and outreach initiatives focused on shared stories and narratives (203).

Throughout the responses, a lot of young women spoke about examples or situations where they had noticed superficial change in attitudes or perceptions, two however chose to highlight the beacon of hope that the program ignites: "Although in certain regions there are still some resistance in regard to the respect for gender issues due to habits linked to specific religions or customs, we believe in the success of our mission." They emphaze that, "even though our results are not always visible today, this remains a process." Some respondents decided to get involved due to the impact they anticipated and believed in, they found the program to inspire hope and aspiration in young women.

The other theme was advocacy – the young women have become advocates, able to express themselves on critical issues such as sexual violence. The young women now

"believe that they will be able to attain their dreams" – they are now demonstrating perseverance and hope. The young women shared about discrimination against women that they have noticed in their communities, or violence against women and gender-based violence in the DRC. They emphasized:

> These motivated me to put forward the rights of women and girls in order to add my contribution to reduce violence towards women and young girls. (participant 4)

Another spoke about the history of over-burdened work for women, how women were already having to care at home and now in post-conflict or in continued conflict areas women need to also provide and work outside of the home – having to do "double duty" and work without recognition or benefits. Leatherman and Griffin (2009) insist that "[b]ecause gender plays a key role in defining people's entitlements and access to resources in society in general, and affects their social mobility" (363) this will inevitably impact women more than men. Thus, women will be overburdened in times of war. Furthermore, "[s]exual violence has been used as a strategy of war in conflicts" (Leatherman and Griffin, 2009, 362), meaning that not only are women responsible for household work, providing for their families, they are also victims and often survivors of trauma and violence themselves.

Women are seen as lesser than men, as they are under-estimated in Congolese society, the limited access to professional work and professional development infuriated one of the young women, which is what pushed her to join the young women in their advocacy for equal treatment of women, which she believes she can change. Similarly, the struggle for recognition for women's rights and various gender-sensitive rights, or

even the neglecting of women is what pushed some of the young women to get involved – they say, "society has pushed me, seeing that society neglects women has pushed me to join the Young Women for Peace and Leadership."

I chose to ask the young women to explain their initial decision as to why they had wanted to get involved with the Young Women for Peace and Leadership. Their responses were varied, but some were undeniably shared amongst the group. For example, half of the young women described some form of interest or need to get involved in peacebuilding efforts, they found the nuances and appeal to sustainable peace interesting and thought the program could offer "research for peace" and "reach for peace" in the DRC. According to Lord and Flowers (2006), peace education is "an umbrella term that captures many program models, all with some link to peace and conflict resolution," they continue by stating that some organizations working towards peace education by acknowledging the "connection between human rights and peace and may include some coverage of human rights material in trainings" (434). The embranchement between human rights and peace work is certainly predominant with the Young Women for Peace and Leadership, as it reflects the need on the ground and the direct interest of the young women.

Lord and Flowers (2006) explain that "there has been a move within some organizations with peace education programming to bridge the divide between peace and human rights education curricula" (435). Organizations such as GNWP and SFVS, are using the young women as crucial tools to bridge the gaps between peace education and the living of human rights in conflict-affected areas, this is a primary example of the shift that has been noticed by academics in peace work. This shift towards peace work has

been observed throughout the interviews; the young women identifying it as a key to their involvement and the continuity of the program.

Another young woman spoke about the youth-led research for peace; how reaching for peace was appealing in a conflict-affected area. According to Schirch (2006), peacebuilding "pursues a just peace" (64). The young women, through the program are attempting to achieve a *just peace*, a peaceful existence where positive peace is the norm for all. Schirch (2006) continues: "Peacebuilding coordinates the activities of a wide range of actors at all levels of society over a period of months, years, and decades, and requires a combination of approaches to peace through a nexus for collaboration" (65). Therefore, the Young Women for Peace and Leadership are among the various initiatives for peacebuilding, themselves working towards gathering more stakeholders at different levels in this inevitable web of peacebuilding initiatives and actors.

They were asked to share their thoughts about starting over – what would the young women do if they could start at zero? One of the young women said she would begin with helping victims of the war:

> If we had the chance to start over, what we should have done is begin with the young girls victim of the war first, those who saw their parents get killed, those who have been raped, to reintegrate them and to find out who is innocent. Doing the opposite is only selfish. (participant 6)

Another chose to focus on preventing army recruitment as a priority area for the program:

> If I had the power to mobilize youth for them to say no, I would tell them that they need to mobilize for peace and that they cannot get involved with the armed forces. If I had that power, I would mobilize these youth for peace. I would create

> entrepreneurial activities for these young people to avoid their tendencies to join the army. (participant 4)

Similarly, another young woman would focus on early prevention against army recruitment especially in rural, remote and isolated communities. Lastly, the young woman would create space for equal rights for women from the get-go: "I would begin by banning the different customs that consider women as a second-class person in society, then I would continue to raise awareness among youth to unite for the promotion of peace in our region."

The final question left it open for the young women to contribute whatever they felt had not already been discussed. Some chose to thank the researcher – myself – for focusing on this topic for this research, as this enables their voices to be heard and motivates them to keep working towards peace, knowing that other members of the international community also support and care about their work. Others chose to give words of encouragement and wisdom: "For young girls, to be able to fully immerse themselves in all aspects of life, do not underestimate yourselves in society and show them what you are made of. You are able to restore peace in your community."

Truly culturally relevant, collaborative approach to peacebuilding ignites hope; it creates it and most importantly it creates an intergenerational long-lasting movement of hope and reintegration (Amnesty International, 2006). Hope is the strongest, most dangerous weapon against violence. Those who have hope can achieve anything they set their minds to, they can achieve true equality.

> Do not put your arms down, there is a lot to do. We must fight to show that women can also change the world, women can run a country; one day there will

> be a world where women's dignity shall be respected and her rights will not be infringed. We, women, must lead the battle without giving up. (Wivine)

The only way a program can be sustainable is when it pushes its participants – voluntarily – to take ownership of their work. The hope the young women have is proof of ownership of their situation, and commitment to a better, brighter DRC.

Chapter 10

PACS Theoretical Analysis: Transformative Peace Education

In the field of Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS), many scholars focus on the notion of conflict resolution and its impact on the overall dialogue for peace. Many criticize the term "conflict resolution" as they deem it counter-productive; that conflict resolution itself does not go far enough, it implies that conflict is inherently bad and that there is a one-size fits all solution to resolute a problem. Other theorists focus on empowerment, agency and the intersectionality between peace and human rights education for broader peacebuilding. The largely recognized PACS theorist, John Paul Lederach, developed a comprehensive conflict transformation approach, which I will analyze in the context of this research (Paffenholz, 2010).

Conflict Transformation

Lederach also discusses the difference between "short-term conflict management" and "long-term relationship building" as key concepts essential to conflict transformation (Paffenholz, 2010, 54). He proposes that an emphasis be placed on long-term relationship building for "peacebuilding by supporting the reconciliation potential within societies" (Paffenholz, 2010, 54). Furthermore, third-party interveners should support local actors, rather than implement external projects; there is a need for sensitivity of the local context and long-term planning, which can only occur when peacebuilding is driven by those on the ground (Paffenholz, 2010, 54). The Young Women for Peace and Leadership, I argue, demonstrates the efficient link between global actors collaborating with local

organizations for peacebuilding work. As outlined by Lederach, international actors should support local work and foster peace efforts, but they should also coordinate external peace efforts – which is what GNWP is doing by bringing local knowledge to the UN Security Council or other stakeholders during advocacy meetings, and are reinforcing and uplifting the voices of the young women and local partners on the ground.

Lederach continues his analysis of peacebuilding approaches by offering a three-leveled method to empowerment and conflict transformation (Paffenholz, 2010, 54). First, top leadership need to be influenced by mediation. Second, mid-level leadership should be reached through workshops and peace commissions. Third, the grassroots can be reached by community dialogues, peace commissions, trauma healing projects, or other peacebuilding methods. I would argue, that this tier in Lederach's approach to peacebuilding is the most important – not that the two others play less significant roles, but rather that grassroots and civil society members often get left aside in such dialogues. The Young Women for Peace and Leadership program use multiple approaches to peacebuilding which priminarly focus on local people, working to improve local issues. Hosting community dialogues, community awareness gatherings and discussions are only examples of what the young women have identified as truly action-oriented changes they bring to community peacebuilding.

Lederach also emphasizes the large shift between international actors to local peacebuilding work – that actors on the ground are best equipped to work within the local contexts and ensure sustainability. Lederach adds that the "role of outsiders is thus limited to supporting internal peace constituencies rather playing a key intervening role"

(Paffenholz, 2010, 54). In addition, Merry (2006) explains that "gaps between global visions of justice and specific visions in local contexts create a fundamental dilemma for human rights practice" (103), which is why the young women are critical actors of the program; not only do they implement the program in the communities, but they also act as translators for international expectations into local contexts of rights. Merry (2006) continues by adding "it is the groups that navigate the divide between the local and the global, translating global approaches into local terms" (104) that are most successful in their implementation.

Unfortunately, the burden of "translating global approaches into local terms and seeking to give local groups voice in global settings" (Merry, 2006, 104) rests on the shoulders of international non-governmental organizations, such as GNWP. It is critical to understand what global civil society is in order to truly understand the work of GNWP and organizations like SFVS, they are key actors in the global civil society sphere. Glasius (2013) explains that global civil society "consists of people organizing to influence their world" (145), furthermore it "included even those who attempt to influence their world in undesirable directions, or by unpalatable means" (145). GNWP and other actors come from this perspective, that they have convened together in order to create change.

GNWP's local to global and global to local principle is what inspired the creation of the program, according to the staff survey responses. Staff respondents emphasized the need for global women's rights programs that were driven and led by local women – especially young women – to bridge the gap between international policymaking and local implementation. Therefore, the purpose of the Young Women for Peace and

Leadership is to ensure local adaptation and implementation of international women's rights and peace, with a focus on young women's agency.

Human Rights Education

Fritzsche (2018) writes about empowerment as a "pre-condition for sharing rights and responsibilities with others. Empowerment works as prevention against the feelings of fear, stress, insecurity, powerlessness and inferiority which are the fruitful ground for excluding and discriminating others" (3). He highlights that human rights education is a vehicle for recognition in every day life and in communities (Fritzsche, 2018, 3). I argue that the Young Women for Peace and Leadership embody these characteristics by sharing and promotion rights and responsibilities in their own lives. They work to educate – to share – basic human rights to education and the responsibilities of respecting women's rights within their communities. Furthermore Fritzsche (2018) quotes the *People's Decade of Human Rights Education* to strengthen the argument that human rights education is essential for the empowerment of all people in communities, of one's rights and to pave the way for their rights to be enjoyed is fundamental for the implementation of human rights:

> Human rights education is a way of clearing and preparing the ground for reclaiming and securing our right to be human. It is learning about justice and empowering people in the process. It is a social and human development strategy that enables women, men, and children to become agents of social change. It can produce the blend of ethical thinking and action needed to cultivate public policies

> based on human rights and opens the possibility of creating a human rights culture for the 21st century (4).

Fritzsche (2018) finishes by stating that the need is for "a new push of empowerment of the learners to enable them to cope better with the challenges of insecurity and to counter the feelings of powerlessness" (6). The overall discourse of hope in the survey and interview responses showcases exactly that, that the young women are countering the sentiment of hopelessness through the program and by working towards a common goal – that is true empowerment.

Mishra and Tripathi (2011) focus on conceptualizing women's agency in regard to empowerment. They insist that a woman's agency is essential to the empowerment of women (Mishra and Tripathi, 2011, 59). According to them, women's agency is "a fundamental shift in perceptions, or 'inner transformation' so that women are able to define self-interest and choice, and consider themselves as not only able, but entitled to make choices" (Mishra and Tripathi, 2011, 59). In further analysis of women's agency, Jejeebhoy, according to Mishra and Tripathi (2011), describes autonomy and empowerment in similar terms; the autonomy and development of women are about "gaining control of their own lives vis-à-vis family, community, society, markets" (59). This is an essential part of the overall philosophy of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program, that of having the young women take control over their own lives in all of its aspects. It is demonstrated by the young women in their survey responses – specifically when they identify the various changes they have noticed in their communities or their homes since their involvement with the program. One of the participants said:

> A change that I have noticed in my community is that certain rights of young girls are being respected – like the right to education – there is a small consideration of women in my community now. (participant 8)

Another participant added:

> In my community, I try to teach young people, especially young girls, how they can be autonomous by creating activities that can generate revenues. (Gentille)

This further demonstrates Mishra and Tripathi's (2011) point on agency. They emphasize that "agency should be treated as the essence of empowerment, and resources and achievements as enabling conditions and outcomes" (59) – that, I argue, is exactly what the Young Women for Peace and Leadership are doing in their own communities.

Mistry et al. (2009) provide an analysis of cultural relevance in the context of human rights education programming. They emphasis that "[c]alls for cultural sensitivity in the design and implementation of human services programs have become a standard response to the increasing diversity among the families and communities being served" (Mistry et al., 2009, 487). The essence of this research is embedded in this call for cultural considerations in development work. GNWP, among other international NGOs work under the pretext of being culturally diverse, culturally sensitive, and culturally relevant. This is important to the overall discourse of human rights education as it directly impacts the perception and reception of the program on the ground – programming that is not cultural relevant further perpetuate the idea that the *Global North* is superior to those residing in the *Global South.* This dichotomy and battle between both hemispheres is inherently racist, classist, and discriminatory in nature as it implies that the customs and structures of the *Global South* are lesser than those of the

Global North. Peace workers, looking to support peacebuilding in local contexts, need to be aware and to integrate cultural relevance in all aspects of their programming.

Mistry et al. (2009) also emphasize that "cultural competence goes beyond awareness or sensitivity and is characterized instead by 'a set of congruent behavio[u]rs, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross cultural situations'" (488). The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders is among those working in a larger system which requires cultural competence. The focus on the collaboration and cooperation with local partners is what makes GNWP successful with its attitudes, behaviours and practices in various countries. Collaboration with local partners is one of GNWP's strengths as it ensures that the programming is respectful, relevant and implemented in each cultural context.

Practitioners' attitudes – the knowledge and beliefs about the populations they serve that they bring to each interaction – can affect the efficacy of services, especially when these attitudes include biases against cultural groups or misunderstandings of behavioral manifestations of cultural values. Practice refers to the processes and techniques adopted by programs and implemented by practitioners. (Mason et al., 1996, 489).

The Young Women for Peace and Leadership also act as filters themselves for culturally relevant curricula. GNWP, through its training needs assessment, can – to an extent – determine the need for basic training within the group of young women "trainers." However, it is the young women themselves who work in the communities and teach various skills in the rural areas. They themselves are able to act as translators,

adapting to cultural contexts. Mason et al. (1996) also studied the various impacts of culture on programming, their findings led to favour "terms such as cultural relevance, or perhaps better yet, cultural attentiveness. Cultural competence implies discrete skills and competencies that characterize best practice—entities that can be quantified" (501). I chose to focus my narrative on cultural relevance, as it implies that cultural sensitivity is already established – rather, it focuses on how relevant a specific program or curriculum truly is within a cultural context.

It is important to understand the nuances of culture and the various discourse that terminology implies. In the context of human rights education, cultural relevance is essential to adequate implement peacebuilding programming. Lord and Flowers (2006) also allow the dialogue of the connection between human rights and conflict resolution. They emphasize that human rights education and peace education cannot be seen as two sided – they are one. Both types and approaches to education are complementary, we cannot have one without the other (Lord and Flowers, 2006, 434). Far too often theorists and programs work in silos, forgetting that a wholesome approach is beneficial for those who are intended recipients of the programs. When a group or a region is vulnerable due to conflict and violence, there is no way to work towards peacebuilding without considering the relevance of the proposed materials, methods and approaches within the local culture. Peace and human rights education is not about imposing colonial or imperial ideals – it is about enabling empowerment through grassroots and structural reform from within.

A Map of Peacebuilding

Another PACS theorist is Lisa Schirch. In her book on strategic peacebuilding, Schirch (2004) highlights the essence of peacebuilding and its key steps towards a fully sustainable peacebuilding process. In Schirch's (2004) peacebuilding map, she outlines four cyclical principles: 1) waging conflict nonviolently; 2) reducing direct violence; 3) transforming relationships; and, 4) building capacity (26). Each of these peacebuilding components are vital to the overall process of peacebuilding in post-conflict states. As the Young Women for Peace and Leadership are working towards peacebuilding in a post-conflict and ongoing conflict area, some of these peacebuilding components may not be applicable – or they may need to be modified for the current conflict situation.

Waging conflict nonviolently consists according to Schirch (2004) of "[a]dvocates and activists seek to gain support for change by increasing a group's power to address issues and ripen the conditions needed to transform relationships" (25). This tier of Schirch's theory includes monitoring and advocacy – which I would argue is something the young women have begun doing as they enter the later years of the program, through their community peacebuilding dialogues and sometimes at the international community. Recently, in April 2018, GNWP reported that one of their young women from DRC traveled to the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*'s (OECD) Global Forum on Development and Gender Equality to call on stakeholders to fund young women's peacebuilding programs, integrate gender mainstreaming into school curricula, and to localize projects in order to make them applicable in local contexts (Leclerc, 2018). Their participant added:

> I was the youngest member of the panel, which is very essential because representation is key. We need participants from youth and other age brackets at the same table to learn but also to be inspired from one another, especially in a forum like this which focuses on the role of women and youth in bringing about global change (Leclerc, 2018).

The second tier, reducing direct violence, aims to "restrain perpetrators of violence, prevent and relieve the immediate suffering of victims of violence, and create a safe space for peacebuilding activities" (Schirch, 2004, 25). Although the young women are not involved in reducing direct violence through peacekeeping or legal redress, they certainly seem to have had an impact on the communities. It could be argued that their work on the promotion of peace and avid dissemination of human rights education across the region may have a direct impact on the reduction of violence against women. Despite the lack of statistics and numeral proof of reduction of violence, the young women have indicated in their survey and interview responses that they are themselves noticing significant differences in the perception of the role of women and girls in their communities – thus, reducing structural and societal violence against them and making way for positive peace.

Transforming relationships according to Schirch (2004) is about "re-creat[ing relationships] by using an array of processes that address trauma, transform conflict, and do justice" (26). Conflict transformation requires the use of democratic dialogues to address underlying issues and causes of conflict, this dialogue is an essential element to creating a just democracy and satisfactory solutions for all parties (Schirch, 2004, 48). The responsibilities of the young women is to create this dialogue, focused on peace and

human rights, which in turn promotes democratic dialogue – towards sustainable relationship-building. Schirch (2004) also adds, "[a]ctive civil society groups support policymaking by gathering key stakeholders, analyzing important issues, and developing creative proposals for addressing public concerns" (54). I argue that the young women, such as the individual who attended the OECD Forum in April 2018, are beginning to find their place in gatherings of policymakers and stakeholders. As the program is only four years old, the young women are only beginning to find their way in this human rights and peacebuilding world – the survey and interview responses also echoed this sentiment.

The fourth component of peacebuilding according to Schirch (2004) seems to be the most relevant to the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program. Building capacity is primarily about the capacity to create a culture of *justpeace* (Schirch, 2004, 56). Ultimately, programs who seek to build capacity "create communities and societies that are able to accept the challenge of long-term planning" (Schirch, 2004, 56). As outlined throughout the analysis of Lord and Flowers' (2006) transformative peace education, capacity-building is one of the three principal components of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program. Furthermore, various types of education – which is an approach to building capacity according to Schirch (2004) – are essential to capacity-building. Peace education, conflict transformation, and human rights education are vital to capacity-building in peacebuilding (Schirch, 2004, 57). Schirch emphasizes that human rights education is about the empowerment of people through the articulation of their human rights – thus, learning about one's rights to be able to claim one's rights (Schirch, 2004, 57). A clear case could be made regarding these various types of

education for peacebuilding and the work of the young women. Young women are taught, they teach, and they promote the claiming of individual and collective rights for peace. Even with limited capacities, new interest, and funding challenges the young women continue to be committed to peace and education – this makes the young women true agents of peace by embodying the values they work so hard to promote.

The Role of Civil Society

The last question the young women answered was about describing the program to someone who had never heard of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The young women all explained the resolution and its '3Ps' – prevention, protection, and participation. The young women all explained in some capacity the importance of the '3Ps' in the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution and international women's rights, identifying that this program enabled easy understanding and grassroots implementation of each of the '3Ps.' Some have spoken of the 3Ps in the context of armed conflict, entrepreneurship, independence, decision-making, human rights, conflict resolution, gender equality, gender-based violence, and even from a local, national and international level.

Paffenholz (2010) continues to explain, in her chapter on civil society contributions to peacebuilding, that civil society has great impacts on the socialization of societies they serve. She adds, "this often happens at the expense of mainstreaming gender issues into broader civil society" (Paffenholz, 2010, 391), an interesting critique of the women's civil society approach to promoting their agenda. Additionally, Paffenholz (2010) also highlights that often "civil society becomes an advocate for

international engagement" (389), that they are at the forefront of monitoring and advocacy for the implementation and follow-through of international commitments. In sum, Paffenholz (2010) addresses education for peacebuilding as key to socialization efforts, that "[s]chools and other educational institutions are also a major element of socialization" (390). Therefore, the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program offers an alternative curriculum to socialization on gender norms and gender equality within the various regions it operates.

Chapter 11

Unexpected Findings

Upon further reflection, it has become apparent that I have collected unexpected findings through the nature of the research, its methods, and the relationships built with the participants. The various findings further strength the concepts of agency and empowerment of young women, in the context of this program. The research itself required specific skills that are taught in the program, these skills were not evaluated within the research specifically, but nonetheless remain as data gathered throughout the process.

It became inevitably apparent that the young women had acquired various levels of literacy in the French language, as their grammar and reading proficiencies varied. I can only assume that the young women who had been associated with the program for a longer period of time were among those who had strong writing skills, and that those who were younger and newer to the program had evident grammatical errors and syntactic challenges in their written responses. Although their levels of French varied on a wide scale, all of their responses were legible and understandable. This demonstrated that the program's first component – that of literacy training – was effective and had been beneficial for the participants. All of them were able to read and write with a certain level of complexity and ease.

Furthermore, during the interviews, it came to my surprise that participants preferred to submit written statements rather than Skype or phone interviews. The first interview conducted was a little less than an hour in length, that same day I sent my notes

to the participant for her to review the information I had retained; she sent back four pages of information, which was not discussed during the interview as she insisted that she had had the time to further reflect on the questions and wished to submit a more thorough testimony. This came to my great surprise, a pleasant surprise – but nonetheless, a surprise. Afterwards, I extended the option to the four other participants of the interviews to choose between a written or an oral statement. They opted for the written submissions – again, to my surprise.

Two responses, which were common throughout the data, were about the lack of financial stability of the program. The lack of funding enabled all of the other challenges outlined by the young women and they found this to be their ultimate challenge. Paffenholz (2010) also reinforces the systematic struggle for programs and non-governmental organizations to access sustainable funding, as they are almost solely based on external funds; in turn, the "level of engagement – and thus the chance to have an effect – [are] influenced by the availability of donor funds" (383). I found it interesting that program recipients and participants would notice the lack of funding for the program, as often individuals are unaware of the budgets or financial requirements of projects. They also spoke about the lack of financial and accessible resources for a "toolkit" to share with the communities. The lack of sustainable funding and resources proved to be the biggest challenge in attaining the goals of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program.

The Young Women for Peace and Leadership program teaches literacy to young women and girls, though the young women who become "trainers" are already literate, they enhance their own skills by working with local educators to develop their own

teaching skills. This research required basic literacy skills to participate in the surveys, which were distributed to any young woman in the program; it is a testament to the success of the program that the participants were able to convey their messages in written form and adequately understand the questions to do so. This is an unexpected finding, as I had not originally considered this as a large factor for participating – as it was an assumption on my part, that the young women had obtained adequate literacy skills to participate with no large burdens. The Young Women for Peace and Leadership therefore trains its participants as means of empowerment and development; nothing is more important for empowerment than to know how to read or write – a basic life skill that is required for active political participation and decision-making at any level.

Moreover, the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program teaches technology and media skills as one of its main components. As the young women underwent training in 2016 on media and technology, they have acquired adequate technological skills to respond to an online survey, sent by email. The young women demonstrated their skills by answering emails, filling out the Survey Monkey questionnaire, and communicating back-and-forth on the subject matter. Some of the young women even had WhatsApp conversations or Skype conversations with me, which showed further knowledge and depth of their grasp of technology. Among those who answers the interview questions, some sent their responses in Word documents, another critical technological skill obtained through the program's training.

I also unexpectedly realized the bilingual, often trilingual, language skills of the young women. This is evidence to the flexibility of the program. As the data was collected in French, all of the young women were proficient in the French language.

Additionally, most of the young women also speak Swahili and have held workshops in local languages in their communities. As the program promotes its flexibility and the coordinators take pride in the adaptability of the program, the fact that the young women are able to distribute the content in various languages demonstrates its innate flexibility and cultural relevance.

Having been associated with the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders for over four years, it was easy for me to pin point specific responses from the staff which were directly linked with the organization's overall philosophy for the program. A recurring theme in the survey responses by the GNWP staff were about the collaboration and networks developed by young women – these were not among the answers provided by the young women. The GNWP staff had identified the networking opportunities and the global solidarity as critical strengths of the program, however, these were not identified by the young women. Why? Because GNWP is in itself a global network for women who are peacebuilders. The primary reason for the existence of GNWP is the global solidarity and network of women's rights organizations working towards a more peaceful and inclusive future for women. They emphasize in all of their programming the importance of global solidarity, global citizenship, and the need for youth participation from all regions. This is likely why the GNWP staff are seeing and noticing the networking opportunities of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program and are showcasing its international collaboration. I am not of the opinion that the young women disagree with GNWP on this matter, but rather that it may not be as essential to their realities – perhaps this networking is not as important as GNWP thinks it may be,

perhaps this is a different regional reality, or perhaps the young women are just not there yet in their journeys as peace advocates.

Another interesting remark by GNWP is about storytelling. GNWP staff identified the importance of the program in terms of storytelling, sharing the young women' stories and making connections. Again, this was not predominant in the young women' narratives. This may be linked to the overall branding of GNWP – that of sharing stories and narratives among the world. After all, GNWP does do weekly features of their young women in various regions, marketing them as "profiles" of the young women. This is to showcase the various work and accomplishments of the young women, but also to further the idea that young women are in fact agents of peace. This also falls into the potential overall NGO rhetoric of agency and giving a voice to the voiceless. In the international community, NGOs take pride in showcasing stories of success and their programs providing agency to women and girls. Perhaps, yet again, the GNWP staff responses are influenced by what they believe is an important outcome for the program, rather than how the young women see it on the ground. The two perspectives do not have to contradict one another; rather, this is the ultimate reason why I chose to involve both the NGO and the young women in the research. There is value in seeing it from the grassroots and understanding the perspective at the global level.

Chapter 12

Conclusion

Lord and Flowers (2006) developed criteria for transformative education. They claim that good practice for peace education "combines a knowledge-based approach with a skills-and-attitude approach" (444). Their transformative education approach requires three basic components: planned flexibility; long-term commitment; and, community base. Peace work and program evaluation cannot remain with the question of "if" – we must do more than ask ourselves "if" a program is useful, we must also ask ourselves the "how." As I ponder on the "how," I offer an analysis of Lord and Flowers' (2006) transformative education criteria. This is my "how."

According to Lord and Flowers (2006), planned flexibility is essential for the success of durable peace education. They add that "peace education projects ultimately succeed or fail on their ability to plan for and respond to constantly shifting political and societal circumstances" (Lord and Flowers, 2006, 444). I would argue, that the third tier of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership, capacity-building, was crafted in response to this inherent need to adapt to political and social factors which are ever changing in conflict-affected areas. Lord and Flowers (2006) continue by claiming that the incorporation of grassroots members is usually neglected in the planning stages of programming, especially in post-conflict settings, as local people are difficult to mobilize and external actors have a difficulty getting to the regions (444). Furthermore, the most successful programs to promote peace education are "designed to anticipate change,

actively seek out local partners, and adapt with their help to the local environment" (Lord and Flowers, 2006, 444).

In terms of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership, with the support of SFVS, they were able to identify key components of capacity-building that were missing to further advance the learnings and skill-building of the young women. Thus, through a needs analysis survey, performed before every new phase of implementation, GNWP and SFVS were able to identify economic empowerment as a necessary component to integrate and re-inforce the young women's autonomy – one of the many examples of the collaboration between the two, international and local, organizations to address the needs of the local context and further the adaptability of the curriculum.

Lord and Flowers (2006) continue to outline requirements for planned flexibility by identifying three key components to sustainability: 1) value and effectiveness which proves the local people are willing to work towards keeping it going; 2) skilled and trained local members who have the commitment and skills to keep the program going; and, 3) adapted methods for local resources and needs (445). Throughout the interviews and survey responses, the young women largely identified the importance of this program in the creation and fostering of hope in the participants, but also in the community. While some chose to be part of the program out of passion for human rights, others chose to join and continue to participate because of the hope it ignites. This hope, and most importantly the small milestone of noticeable changes it provides, is the embodiment of the three sustainability components brought forth by Lord and Flowers (2006). Not only are the young women themselves experts in their own rights, but they have local

organizations and local community leaders supporting their work and ensuring its sustainability on the daily.

The second component essential for peace education programming is the long-term commitment – "transforming attitudes and mastering skills require time, repetition, and reinforcement" (Lord and Flowers, 2006, 445). It is essential for peace education to be effective, that it is sustainable and sustained for years, and not simply months or days. The Young Women for Peace and Leadership program offers a sustainable long-term commitment by having the participants become trainers – the "trainees become trainers," as explained in a GNWP staff's response. This ensures that the program can be community-based and inter-generational, as learning is passed on by every new participant. Thus, in the last three years of the program in Goma, over two hundred young women have taken part in various training sessions – some of them have moved on, others have continued to return and have now become trainers themselves. This is how empowerment from the grassroots happens. This is how capacity-building, and most importantly capacity-enhancing, ensures the durability of a program – when local people can take ownership over their own development and education.

Lord and Flowers (2006) also identify a key strategy to ensuring peace education, that of integrating peace education in formal education – having it taught through in integrated process in all aspects of schooling (445). This has been identified and suggested by some of the young women in their responses. Some believe that it would be preferable to include gender mainstreaming in school curricula as this would ensure a basic knowledge of gender and human rights across the board – others, find that the program is unique on its own and should simply develop a toolkit or handouts to have

tangible materials to share when teaching classes on the subject matters. These different recommendations should be explored by GNWP and the local partners as they may impact favourably their overall goals of promoting and ensuring the rights of young women in the DRC.

The third and final component to peace education according to Lord and Flowers (2006) is the community base. They emphasize that "peace education need[s] to be grounded in local people and local needs" (Lord and Flowers, 2006, 445). Although it is acceptable to put into perspective local concerns with international norms and standards with additional teaching of peacebuilding, it is the impact on the people's daily lives which will truly bring about peace education (Lord and Flowers, 2006, 446). The authors reinforce the need for a "trainees to trainers" concept, where those undergoing workshops will themselves carry out the education afterwards (Lord and Flowers, 2006). The essential need for periodic follow-ups and checking in with additional workshop to ensure continuity, adaptability, and responsiveness to new factors impacting the local context – for example, in Goma the young women underwent a workshop on *curriculum vitae* writing and requested a follow up workshop on cover letter writing. The two workshops are complementary, but would not have necessarily occurred should the young women not identified the need for a follow up workshop to further delve into the skills of formally applying for employment.

Furthermore, the need for local trainers stems from the simple fact that only they can truly translate and adapt the materials presented into the local contexts – into something that makes sense for their daily lives. Even if peacebuilding experts are significantly informed and have worked in the field for years, they cannot truly know

what is happening every day, just by the mere fact that they were not brought up with the socio-cultural or traditional values the local members have experienced. This is why significant local partners, which have a real say in the decision-making and implementation of the program is the only way to ensure its durability and effectiveness. Lord and Flowers (2006) end outlining their criteria by stating that the ultimate beneficiary of peace education is the whole community, to attain their participation we must begin by "deploying a wide variety of educational approaches and outreach techniques, and constant self-evaluation for inclusiveness" (446) – which is why GNWP and its partners need to be consistently collaborating with the young women and their communities to evaluate the progress and the need for new capacity-building components which adequately responds to the needs and the interests of its members.

While reading the data and reflecting upon its meaning I realized that this research is much needed for the betterment of the young women's lives and of the program's content. For example, I had never considered the idea of a "toolkit" for community members to access after the young women have finished their advocacy and awareness-raising in rural areas. These different perspectives are crucial for proper implementation and moving forward with these types of programs.

The significance of this study to the field of Peace and Conflict Studies lies in the understanding the importance of peace and education for young women's empowerment in the context of conflict and gender-based violence, which can be adapted to different contexts. The Young Women for Peace and Leadership offers an alternative approach to peacebuilding work, as the young women from the communities are themselves the peace workers and not solely recipients from the program. Furthermore, the PACS theoretical

analysis demonstrates the intrinsic nature of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program in the context of the field. The alternative approach to conflict transformation and peacebuilding is a model that can be used as an example of collaborative and culturally-sensitive programming for implementing human rights education in local contexts.

Having had reflected throughout this research – more than ever before – on what it means to have been born in Canada, as an upper-class white woman, it is important for all peace workers to understand themselves before attempting to understand others. This research has taught me many things; it taught me to be compassionate, to listen above all else, and to challenge myself and my own beliefs when faced with juxtaposing social and cultural values. I began this dissertation by talking about my naiveté in this development world, being eager and enthusiastic to change the world, without understanding the true impacts of my actions. I certainly cannot claim that I now fully understand my impacts, but I can claim to understand the meaning of reflecting upon them. That is my ultimate recommendation to any peace worker: Reflect upon yourself and continuously reflect upon your work. The people of the DRC do not need saving, and they certainly do not need saving from me – they simply need support to save themselves.

This study contributes to theoretical knowledge of various fields due to the intersectionality of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership, fields of Women's and Gender Studies, International Development, and Human Rights. These fields can be influenced by the framework of the program and the diversity of the participants who are actively involved in the solution. These young women serve as examples of empowerment work and challenge the criticisms of the *White Saviour Complex* which is

often promoted in international work—that of the *Global North* working to save the *Global South*. Furthermore, the research can have an impact on policymaking as it considers and demonstrates the positive impact of local collaboration in international development and peacebuilding work. Promoting accountability and engagement with grassroots for meaningful global change.

As the process of this study continued, I began to realize how deeply enmeshed the various conflicts in the African continent were, how colonization and the perpetuation of violence goes beyond borders. Having had studied thoroughly – so I thought – the genocide in Rwanda, it never occurred to me that the *génocidaires* and other stakeholders were at the heart of the two Congo wars. This is why context is so important. It is also important to understand what is already being done, how these strong women are finding the courage and the resources to travel to the United Nations to shine a light on the gross human rights violations faced by their mothers, their sisters, and their daughters every day. The international community is plagued with the failure of multiple peace interventions and has not proven its efficiency in many areas of Africa, yet these women still prioritize and focus their advocacy on the UN Security Council in New York and CEDAW monitoring in Geneva.

Theories of gender, conflict and development were crucial to understanding and unraveling the hundreds of sources of information that were coming at me left and right. By grounding myself in the theoretical perspectives of various peace scholars, this paved the way for true peace and conflict analysis. Ultimately, the livelihoods and the perspectives of the young women remained at the heart of my research. I truly hope to have done them justice through this work. It is they who are the true agents of change, the

true solution to the Congolese violence – they know it, the communities are beginning to realize it. My research question, about the cultural relevance and collaborative peacebuilding nature of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program has been solved: if the local people are at the heart of peace efforts, giving them true autonomy and enabling their dignity in the process, they will create their own power – they can change their world.

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Appendix 1

Sondage pour les Jeunes femmes pour la paix et leadership

Survey for the Young Women for Peace and Leadership

En participant à ce sondage, je comprends que les informations données seront utilisées pour une recherche académique dans le cadre d'une thèse à l'Université du Manitoba. J'accepte que mes informations soient utilisées de façon anonyme pour la recherche et que les résultats soient diffusés publiquement.

By participating in this survey, I understand that the information provided will be used for an academic research for a thesis at the University of Manitoba. I accept that my information be used anonymously for the research and that the results be published publically.

1) Quel âge avez-vous ? *How old are you?* _____
2) Vous êtes impliqué(e) avec les Jeunes femmes pour la paix et leadership depuis quand ? *When did you get involved with the Young Women for Peace and Leadership?* _____
3) Pourquoi avez-vous décidé de vous impliquer avec les YWPL ? *Why did you choose to get involved with the YWPL program?*

   _____

   _____

   _____

4) Qu'avez-vous appris en prenant part à ce programme ? *What have you learned from being part of this program?*

_____

_____

_____

5) Avez-vous remarqué un changement dans votre communauté depuis votre implication avec les YWPL ? Veuillez partager un événement qui explique votre réponse. *Have you noticed any changes in your community since your involvement with the YWPL? Please share a moment that explains your response.*

_____

_____

_____

6) Avez-vous remarqué un changement dans votre domicile depuis votre implication avec les YWPL ? Veuillez partager un événement qui explique votre réponse. *Have you noticed any changes in your household since your involvement with the YWPL? Please share a moment that explains your response.*

_____

_____

_____

7) Avez-vous remarqué un changement dans votre comportement ou vos interactions depuis votre implication avec YWPL ? Veuillez partager un événement qui explique votre réponse. *Have you noticed any changes in your behaviour or interactions since your involvement with the YWPL? Please share a moment that*

explains your response.

_____

_____

_____

8) Expliquez votre plus grand accomplissement en tant que Jeune femme pour la paix et leadership : *Explain your biggest accomplishment as a a Young Women for Peace and Leadership:*

_____

_____

_____

9) Expliquez votre plus grand défi en tant que Jeune femme pour la paix et leadership : *Explain your biggest challenge as a Young Women for Peace and Leadership:*

_____

_____

_____

10) Si vous aviez à décrire le programme à une jeune femme dans une différente communauté n'ayant jamais entendu parler de la résolution 1325, que lui diriez-vous ? *If you had to describe the program to a young woman in a different community who has never heard of the UNSCR 1325, what would you say?*

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 2

Survey for GNWP staff/volunteers regarding the Young Women for Peace and Leadership

(English only)

1) Since when have you been associated with GNWP?

_____

_____

_____

2) When did you get involved with the Young Women for Peace and Leadership?

_____

_____

_____

3) Why did you choose to get involved with the YWPL program?

_____

_____

_____

4) What have you learned from being part of this program?

_____

_____

_____

5) Have you noticed any changes in the communities since your involvement with the YWPL? Please share a moment that explains your answer.

_____

_____

_____

6) Have you noticed any changes in the young women since your involvement with the YWPL? Please share a moment that explains your answer.

_____

_____

_____

7) Explain the biggest accomplishment of the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program.

_____

_____

_____

8) Explain the biggest challenge for the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program.

_____

_____

_____

9) If you had to describe the program to a young woman in a different community who has never heard of the UNSCR 1325, what would you say?

_____

_____

_____

10) What would you like to say to someone that is interested by the program?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 3

Questions d'entrevue pour les jeunes femmes

Interview questions for the young women

1) Qu'est-ce qui vous a porté à mettre de l'avant les droits des femmes en RDC ?

   What brought you to champion women's rights in the DRC?

2) Quels aspects du programme des YWPL vous ont intéressé lorsque vous avez été approché(e) par SFVS ?

   What aspects of the YWPL program interested you when you were approached by SFVS?

3) Avez-vous remarqué des différences dans les communautés locales à Goma depuis les dernières années par rapport aux droits des femmes ?

   Have you noticed differences in the local communities in Goma in the last few years in regard to women's rights?

4) Puisque vous vous impliquez avec le programme depuis plusieurs années, qu'avez-vous remarqué de différent chez vous ? Avez-vous remarqué des changements dans votre vie quotidienne ?

   Since you have been involved with the program for the last few years, what have you noticed for you that is different? Have you noticed any changes in your daily life?

5) Quels sont vos plus grands accomplissements en tant que jeune femme ?

   What are your biggest accomplishments as a young woman?

6) Quels sont vos plus grands défis en tant que jeune femme?

What are your biggest challenges as a young woman?

7) Que feriez-vous différemment si vous aviez la chance de recommencer à zéro ?

   What would you do differently if you had the chance to start over?

8) Si vous aviez un nouveau projet pour les jeunes femmes, dans quelle direction aimeriez-vous aller ? Que voudriez-vous voir ?

   If you had a new project for the young women, in which direction would you like it to go? What would you like to see?

9) Avez-vous d'autres idées ou inspirations pour le programme ?

   Do you have other ideas or hopes for the program?

10) Quel est le message que vous souhaiteriez laisser ?

    What is the message you hope to share?