

THE HARARE CONVERSATION





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THINK TANK 3

February 2014

Organised by Isis-WICCE and HopeAfrica



Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange
Promoting Peace Internationally



With Support from



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Isis-WICCE is a 40 year old women's organization that draws no boundaries while working with women, so that peace may be enjoyed by all. The organization's new strategic plan for the period 2013-2017 draws attention to the value of strategic collaboration with a wide range of feminist thinkers including activists, scholars, politicians and other women leaders. In line with this strategic thinking, Isis-WICCE and the Uganda Women's Parliamentary Association (UWOPA) hosted a think tank in August 2013, in Kampala. The think tank was a huge success, and Isis-WICCE remains thankful to all those who contributed to its success. Following the think tank in August 2013, Isis-WICCE conducted a series of reflection exercises, taking into consideration the proceedings from the think tank as well as current affairs, such as the recent conflict in South Sudan. After much deliberation and discussion, it was agreed that a follow up meeting to the think tank would be held in Harare, Zimbabwe. In February 2014, Isis-WICCE and HopeAfrica hosted the follow up meeting in Harare. The meeting drew feminist thinkers from different parts of Africa, each of whom made powerful contributions. This report presents a summary the thoughts and ideas expressed during the meeting that was held in February 2014 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The first section of the report introduces the meeting with information such as the background to the meeting, and the situation of women in the work of peace and human security. The second section of the report describes some of the challenges faced by women leaders and "the gaps" as identified by the meetings' participants. The third section explores two tools that were identified as being key in addressing the challenges and gaps identified; research, and self-care. The fourth section concludes the report by connecting various dots which all point to a very promising new innovation from Isis-WICCE; the Isis Peace Centre.

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1 INTRODUCTION

“Isis-WICCE’s soul is what allows the organization to share hope and life. Isis-WICCE’s heart is what allows the organization to love what it does and the people it serves. Isis-WICCE’s brain allows the organization to reflect on its work and strategize. Isis-WICCE’s uterus allows the organization to reproduce its work, particularly its respect for women’s bodies, through partner organizations, individuals and various entities..”

Ever since Isis-WICCE was established 40 years ago, something new and beneficial has always been happening for women affected by conflict. Isis-WICCE has been described by many as an organization with a soul, a heart, a brain and some would argue, a uterus too. One only needs to interact or better yet, collaborate with Isis-WICCE, to understand why the organization would be described in such a manner by so many people.

Everybody has seen the bad news as broadcast live on television twenty four hours a day, seven days a week; armed conflict around the world and the injustices suffered by women in such situations. The news on television typically focuses on the bad news, and rarely takes a closer look at the lives of individual women survivors of armed conflict, providing the world with a staple of morbid and soul-less facts and figures accompanied by heartless images of women in their most vulnerable states; often depicted as too traumatized by conflict to still have a functioning brain, and too violated to have any future use for a uterus. Sadly, many of the women survivors with whom Isis-WICCE has worked have shared accounts of organizations and politicians who are not much different to the bearers of bad news; always looking for a shocking story that will cause a chain reaction of emotions and ultimately result in benefit; primarily for the organization or politician, and secondarily for the women survivors. Fortunately, Isis-WICCE appreciates, respects, and responds positively to the experiences, bodies, intellect, and wishes of women survivors. Isis-WICCE treats women as whole beings, in a way that would cause many to conclude that the organization appreciates the sum of the different parts of a woman because the organization itself has a soul, a heart, a brain and a uterus.

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allows the organization to reflect on its work and strategize. Isis-WICCE's uterus allows the organization to reproduce its work, particularly its respect for women's bodies, through partner organizations, individuals and various entities.

There are those who want to make a difference in women's lives, but for some reason have not understood the fact that women are not only about one issue; human rights, economic independence, sexual and reproductive health, injustices and unjust laws, patriarchy disguised as culture and religion, exclusion, or violence. Isis-WICCE appreciates that the issues that affect women are not compartmentalized either; they are intertwined and they overlap in ways that necessitate a more comprehensive approach towards realizing peace. When women talk about peace in post-conflict settings, there are as many definitions of peace as there are women who have been affected by conflict. Such is the complexity and beauty of Isis-WICCE's work; helping to realize peace as defined by women who have been affected by conflict is a non-trivial responsibility. Such responsibility is best carried jointly, as described in Isis-WICCE's new strategic plan.

This report, like many others from Isis-WICCE, is not a stand alone document, but rather a snapshot of one event in the long life of a feminist organization whose work knows no end and no limits.

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2 THE SITUATION

To open the discussion on the situation of women affected by conflict, Juliet Were made a powerful presentation on behalf of Isis-WICCE. The presentation included a harrowing testimony of a survivor of sexual violence, and the horrific reproductive health conditions that persist indefinitely as festering wounds after peace agreements have been signed. The relevance of the word "post-conflict" in feminist discourse was brought into question, as what many would define as "post-conflict" ignores the ongoing and often worsening conflict visited upon women's bodies and minds. This was identified as one way that women's definition of peace has, despite numerous instruments and treaties, often been ignored in peace building and recovery efforts. Further, it was noted that the "post" in "post-conflict" ignores the fact that much of the work done with women across the world is in the context of armed

conflict, militarism and other legacies of armed conflict.

“Isis-WICCE was an early pioneer in identifying and responding to the reproductive and mental health needs of women survivors as a priority in its work...”

Isis-WICCE was an early pioneer in identifying and responding to the reproductive and mental health needs of women survivors as a priority in its work; doctors and psychologists have furthered their careers and learned much from Isis-WICCE’s feminist approach to working with women, influencing the discourse on women peace and human security. The presentation went on to highlight the holistic approach of Isis-WICCE’s work as documented in Isis-WICCE’s model; the impressive difference that Isis-WICCE makes in the lives of women affected by conflict, and the amazing power that women survivors have exercised for the good of their communities after learning from other women survivors and honing their leadership skills through Isis-WICCE’s Exchange Program Institute. The presentation also brought to light some of the persistent

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challenges encountered by Isis-WICCE; disappointing levels of commitment from leaders and governments towards addressing even the most basic of needs of women survivors, the challenges and changing priorities met by the increasing number of women leaders and its effect on the movement as well as the frustration of non-commensurate change, the expensive nature of Isis-WICCE’s work and the lack of responsibility governments often demonstrate towards the needs of women survivors.

During the ensuing discussion, it was agreed that despite the tremendous efforts of Isis-WICCE and other women’s organizations, there exist persistent challenges and gaps which could be addressed through changes in the approach to both Isis-WICCE’s work and the work of the women’s movement, particularly in supporting women leaders.

3 THE KAMPALA MEETING: THE CONNECTION

Isis-WICCE is a very busy organization. Fortunately, being busy has not stopped the organization from being a thinking organization. Through regular reflection exercises, Isis-WICCE takes an analytical look at various aspects of its work, usually with external input from co-creators such as feminist activists, scholars, and politicians. This enables the organization to develop new ideas and plans for improvements and growth, for the benefit of the organization, its constituency, and the movements within which Isis-WICCE is located.

One such opportunity was created in August 2013, when Isis-WICCE hosted a two-day think tank in Kampala, Uganda. The think tank was titled, “Making a Difference: Women’s Substantive Engagement in Governance and Decision Making”. Dialogues were held to identify rethinking, revamping and reactivating strategies for the women’s movement. Through a series of themed discussions, observations were made and a number of critical questions were raised during the think tank:

1. Why is the change resulting from having more women in positions of power not proportional to the increase in the number of women in positions of power? “The women’s movement has achieved a critical mass in many African countries, but this needs to translate into influence.” – Rebecca Kadaga.
2. Is connecting with the women’s movement a political liability? The spaces in which women politicians operate can be virulently patriarchal and sadly, many have paid dearly as politicians associated with the women’s movement.
3. How can women in leadership be supported? “There is a need for commitment, coordination, strategic and direct engagement in furthering transformative women’s leadership and feminist action in Africa.” – Thelma Awori
4. While Isis-WICCE has done a lot of work in different countries (such as providing medical attention for women survivors, training women leaders, conducting research and documentation, bringing together women leaders to learn from each other, evidence based advocacy to influence key actors in reconstruction and recovery, and engaging international bodies by presenting survivors’ testimonies), are the women Isis-WICCE has worked with

continuing to make a difference? If they are, what difference are they making? Have women's stories been followed to understand the value they have been adding? Can we make a case to support women in leadership programs if we do not have the full picture?

5. How can we optimize the following components of a combined strategy for driving the women's movement and women's political leadership in Africa forward:
 - a. More pervasive feminist leadership (as opposed to an increase in the number of women politicians),
 - b. The connecting of networks (women's movement connections) and,
 - c. Improved accessibility to research and information for support?

During the Kampala think tank, it became clear that research is needed to:

1. Understand the contribution of women in politics.
2. Understand how issues of sexual and reproductive health are handled.
3. Understand how the connection between the women's movement and women in politics can be strengthened.
 - a. Does such a connection exist?
 - b. Is such a connection necessary?
 - c. Do we have the capacity to support them?
 - d. If we have the capacity, do they accept that we have it?

“ It was indeed a special week for women in political power, civil society activists and academia to connect and unanimously say ‘something big and new is about to happen!’ I witnessed the blossoming faces of these 25 or so visionary women (and a few feminist men); connecting their power to the environment and fully recognizing how essential their environment is to their survival as people with power, identify, and leadership! As they connected and shared in an airy space in Kampala, technology enabled their reflections to be embraced by other feminists and women leaders with like minds globally to be part of the process of a movement in formation. Reflections and strategies about safety, space and power for women in leadership in Africa and how they must renew their connections to form that movement - a movement that critically questions those structures that have continued to silence them, those very structures that simply marginalize their ideas and creativity; those that continue to identify their power out of sexism. The conversation, a very critical dialogue, interrogated all this and pushed for strategies that will demand women's leadership for taking over the power to save mother earth. - Concluding message from Isis-WICCE's Executive Director, Ms. Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng at ‘Making a Difference: Women's Substantive Engagement in Governance and Decision Making’ – Think Tank hosted by Isis-WICCE and Uganda Women's Parliamentary Association (UWOPA) in August 2013 ”

In attendance at the think tank in Kampala were South Sudanese women politicians who were trained and supported by Isis-WICCE into positions of leadership. Isis-WICCE was disappointed to learn of unfortunate changes in the level of commitment towards peace building activities in South Sudan as it had made significant contributions towards the involvement of women in politics in South Sudan.

In November 2013, armed conflict returned to South Sudan. Weeks after the conflict in South Sudan erupted, Isis-WICCE invited women leaders from South Sudan for a consultative meeting in Kampala to hear from them and provide a space for them to create a united position on their concerns. Isis-WICCE and World YWCA with support from ICCO and Cordaid then facilitated the participation of South Sudanese women leaders at the African Union Heads of State Summit in Addis Ababa, where they presented their concerns to the IGAD mediator in the South Sudan Peace talks, Ambassador Seymoum Mesfin. Their



concerns included women's participation in the upcoming political negotiations, the development of a comprehensive DDR program, the need for security sector reform, and the need for a truth and reconciliation process. Ambassador Mesfin (right) appreciated the insights from the women and commented, "...these are genuine concerns coming from the womb of mothers, daughters and sisters, who are at the receiving end of the crisis."

Ambassador Mesfin

“ these are genuine concerns coming from the womb of mothers, daughters and sisters, who are at the receiving end of the crisis”



Also in attendance at the think tank in Kampala were Zimbabwean women leaders including Ms. Margaret Dongo and Ms. Jessie Majome. Following the Kampala think tank and the subsequent sequence of events concerning South Sudan, parallels were drawn between the circumstances under which Zimbabwe and South Sudan experienced post-liberation struggle conflict. These parallels informed the identification and selection of Harare, Zimbabwe as a suitable location for a follow up meeting to the Kampala think tank. In the Harare meeting, Zimbabwean women leaders shared some insight into the causes, nature and resolution of the 1980s conflict euphemistically referred to as Gukurahundi (literally translated as “the early spring rains that wash away the chaff from the fields”). Similarities between the Zimbabwean and South Sudanese conflicts included: competition for power as a resource before, during and after peace talks; “power sharing” agreements that became unstable; the distortion of the nature of the conflict from ideological to political to ethnic; and the clandestine influence of international parties with interests in the conflict.

The issues that emerged during the Kampala think tank were re-visited in the Harare meeting, and ideas were shared about how some of those issues can be addressed.

4 GAPS IN OUR WORK

Broken Bridges:

The Women’s Movement and Women in Politics

Regarding the apparently non-commensurate social change accompanying the increase in the number of women in leadership, it was noted that many women are, through no fault of their own, inadequately prepared for the extraordinary challenges they encounter and seek to overcome as women leaders. Given the space and opportunity, many of these persistent challenges could be better defined and addressed by learning from the experiences of veteran women leaders.

The Women’s Movement suffers when members forget their sisterhood as they take on different political identities, positions and aspirations. This would explain some of the gaps in the support the women’s movement offers women in leadership. Personal testimonies were shared of some of the challenges faced by women in leadership; patriarchy and sexism in male dominated politics, greed and corruption, isolation, sexual harassment, intimidation, violence, undue scrutiny from the media and the public, quotas and tokenism. In many countries, standing up in parliament and boldly declaring, “I am a feminist!” would likely amount to political suicide. Feminists in

“Personal testimonies were shared of some of the challenges faced by women in leadership; patriarchy and sexism in male dominated politics, greed and corruption, isolation, sexual harassment, intimidation, violence, undue scrutiny from the media and the public, quotas and tokenism.”

leadership require additional support while navigating male dominated spaces.

Closely linked to the issue of quotas and tokenism, is the separation of women's issues from citizen's issues. It was agreed that in many cases, ministries of gender are lacking in what they can offer women as citizens. Examples were given of cases in which ceremonial visits were paid to ministries of gender but the involvement of other ministries, such as ministries of finance and ministries of health, were more sought as they were more effective and better equipped than the ministries of gender. This contributed to the recurring question regarding the separation of women's issues from citizen's issues and the inadvertent auto-insulation of the women's movement from broader contexts.

“Some women's organizations lobbied night and day for women's ministries because women's issues were not put on the agenda of any government ministry. Should we not be making demands on these ministries instead of dismissing them?”

– Hope Chigudu

Flickering Flames:

What ever happened to some women activists?

While hundreds of women peace activists from around the world have been successfully supported into evidence-based peace activism through Isis-WICCE's International Exchange Program Institute, some have since neglected their feminist research and in some cases their feminist activism altogether. Similarly, many women have been supported into positions of leadership by the women's movement, with the understanding that those women would demonstrate feminist leadership in those positions, but on entering office “something happens” to our women leaders' feminism. There is a disconnection between the women leaders and their original constituency of women, as their constituency broadens. Rather than engaging with women at functions, some women leaders will make a brief ceremonial appearance. Their sources of information about women

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move from primary sources such as feminist research to secondary sources such as processed and politicized information from their party's women's league. While this trend is disappointing, part of the disappointment may be traced back to unfair assumptions and expectations placed on women leaders and activists. Power changes people, as does exposure to politics. Politics uses women, and women leaders have not been exempt. Many women activists remain actively responsible in their families' daily lives, dedicated professionals during their day jobs, and many are businesswomen too; they live active lives which are often affected by their activism. Activism can become a lonely experience, as can politics. There are a myriad of reasons why many promising women leaders have neglected their feminism. This could explain the non-commensurate change accompanying the increase in number of women in leadership.

The solution to this gap in feminist leadership would involve providing women leaders with continuous opportunities for support, learning, solidarity, reflection, monitoring, accountability, self-care, and a guaranteed safe space for all women leaders; the upcoming, the promising, the veterans, the struggling, the weary, the compromised, the ambitious, the unstoppable.

Visibility Matters: Where were you?

As women leaders and women's organizations work towards improving women's lives, partnerships are formed and often, credit is given to partners rather than the women and women's organizations actually doing the work. This negatively impacts the kind of support women and women's organizations receive, as their work is not fully acknowledged and appreciated by those in a position to offer support. Women politicians have found themselves being asked "Where were you when this work was being done?" despite having contributed significantly, because of poor visibility. The issue of visibility remains a constant challenge for women's organizations as they are financially pressured into competing while following donor-oriented approaches to their work, which tend to be focused on niches, objectives, and projects whereas women's lives are not fragmented into niches, objectives and short term projects. In the past, this has interfered with Isis-WICCE's work as some donors who did not

“The issue of visibility and funding would perhaps not be as challenging to women's organizations work if alternative and sustainable means of funding were accessible.”

fully understand Isis-WICCE's work were not willing to continue supporting their more holistic long-term work with women survivors.

The issue of visibility and funding would perhaps not be as challenging to women's organizations work if alternative and sustainable means of funding were accessible.

Undocumented but not forgotten: Feminist Historians Needed Urgently

On women's agency and the various narratives of armed conflict, it was noted that family narratives have been largely neglected yet they carry many truths and lessons, particularly concerning women's historical agency in both conflict and peace. In every generation, a woman's life has been fundamentally disrupted by conflict, and women have been central to peace processes even before male-dominated negotiations were introduced to different parts of the world. While some affirming histories may have been lost, oral tradition may still be accessed to document women's historical agency, not just for purposes of affirmation and to challenge the male dominated and often alien architecture on human peace and security, but also for the persistent nature of the challenges identified to be better understood and addressed. "How did we negotiate as African women? We negotiate even before war, we stop them from killing each other; what is it that has changed? It is the new approach to negotiation presented by the west? We need our own convening of African women".

"... a woman's life has been fundamentally disrupted by conflict, and women have been central to peace processes even before male-dominated negotiations..."

Documented but almost forgotten: Digital Archives of Research Needed

Isis-WICCE takes pride in the research and documentation work it has conducted for decades. However, much of this work is underutilized as it remains archived and is not readily accessible. It was agreed that a wealth of information and knowledge could be generated from these archives if the material were reviewed and repackaged for contemporary use. This would also help in contextualizing, better understanding and addressing the persistent challenges identified in Isis-WICCE's work. The Isis Peace Centre will take on this challenge in one of its future projects.

Seats at the table: Does “influencing” really work?

While aggressive advocacy has yielded some results, questions were raised about the effectiveness of attempts at influencing men seated at various tables of power. Such tables are often militarized spaces into which women are either “invited” or more commonly, “accommodated” after much lobbying for a seat at the table despite the requirement of women’s active participation as set out in various international instruments and agreements, many of which were derived from processes that excluded women. The men seated at tables of power often demonstrate, beyond the ceremonial, little to no interest in what women bring to the table. Commitments are made towards addressing the issues presented by women as though such commitments were special favors, and they are often not honored after the men have enjoyed the political capital generated from signing and making commitments on paper. An example was given of a concurrent event in Lesotho to which other organizations expected Isis-WICCE to be invited, but no invitation was sent to Isis-WICCE or any other women’s organization.

“The idea of creating an alternative space – a different table – is an appealing and promising approach.”

While it was agreed that separating women’s issues from citizen’s issues is problematic and undesirable, we live in times when women’s issues are typically regarded as secondary or tertiary issues by governments until the advocacy efforts of feminists and feminist organizations yield fruit. The idea of creating an alternative space – a different table – is an appealing and promising approach,

“...we need alternatives, rather than us going to the convening of ‘international organizations’ which already have set agendas.” – Harriet Musoke

Creating a guaranteed feminist space may not be enough. For example, when Isis-WICCE invited women leaders from South Sudan to Kampala in February 2014, the women leaders were fortunate to have been able to travel after being treated with suspicion by their government and immigration officials who mistook “Isis” for “ICC”. The situation worsened when mention was made of one of the supporting partners in that effort, “ICCO”. This confusion occurred despite the fact that Isis-WICCE was very active in South Sudan at various stages during the birth of the nation, and is perhaps more indicative of the general state of fear, mistrust and paranoia during conflict than anything else.

Boundaries and Niches: What is security? What is peace?

Patriarchy is linked with so many overlapping and auto-exacerbating issues, yet when women's organizations seek to address these issues, they tend to be grouped into organizational "niches" such as armed conflict, militarism and sexual violence; debilitating mental, sexual and reproductive health conditions; poverty and economic exploitation; substance abuse; domestic violence; access to justice and ignorance of the law; weaknesses in referral pathway systems; misinterpretations of culture and cultural marginalization; political exclusion; lack of political will and lack of accountability towards women as citizens; religious and other fundamentalisms.

Through their work, many women's organizations find themselves appreciating that while they have a niche (an area of specialization or a specific constituency among women) and a "purple cow" (that which sets them apart from other organizations, making them more attractive to donors), the needs and concerns of the women they seek to serve are not discrete. Isis-WICCE remains cognizant of this fact while working with women, and Isis-WICCE's holistic approach to working with women is documented in Isis-WICCE's model.

While Isis-WICCE works with women who have been affected by armed conflict, many if not most feminists have at some point worked with women who have been affected by armed conflict in one way or another. Further, the scope of Isis-WICCE's work is far broader than the way it has been defined.

During recent reflection exercises, Isis-WICCE has continued to ask a simple three-word question, "What is peace?" This question has been answered in various ways by the thousands of women with whom Isis-WICCE has worked over the years. Yet, this simple question keeps the organization thinking and looking for new answers. There is a stark difference between peace as defined by women (who generally seek to maintain peace for all and avoid armed conflict) and peace as defined by men (who need to be persuaded to end armed conflict and make concessions in response to women survivor's needs). Differences such as the focus on physical security verses the focus on emotional security were noted. In many parts of the world, women are taught to think of their families first and themselves last. In many societies, men and children are allowed to say, "I am hungry. I need food", whereas women are taught not to express even their most basic of needs. Without external intervention, it becomes difficult to imagine such women finding the voice to say, "I

"There is lots of work to be done in getting more women to find their voice and speak up for themselves in a world that has taught too many women to believe that they matter less than others."
Rudo Chitiga

have been traumatized. I need peace of mind.” There is lots of work to be done in getting more women to find their voice and speak up for themselves in a world that has taught too many women to believe that they matter less than others.

If the scope of Isis-WICCE’s work was more accurately represented in the definition of Isis-WICCE’s work, would Isis-WICCE’s niche and purple cow fall under threat? For many women’s organizations, threats to niches and purple cows spell disaster in an all-too-familiar pattern; a loss of funding, followed by the grinding to a halt of their work, and the neglect and sometimes the eventual disappearance of a constituency as that constituency loses its “sexiness”.

Research questions may be identified by Isis-WICCE on how to broaden the definition of peace, safely.

Resources and Funding: The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*

For decades now, the nature of relationships between donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has been a topic in development discourse. Criticisms from a wide range of thinkers led to the creation of alternative names, such as “development partners” instead of “donors”, yet the challenges presented by the power gradient between donors and NGO’s continue to persist. A significant concern was related to sources of funding which create situations in which “the piper plays the tune” to which recipient organizations must dance, sometimes leading to competition between women’s organizations’ agendas and the tenets of donors. Without disparaging the support received from donors, which has made many successes possible, it was agreed that more sustainable sources of funding should be explored if women’s organizations are to enjoy the kind of freedom and autonomy in their operations that would allow a more significant difference to be made.

“The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*. I think this is extremely important. Everything we’ve been talking about. Linking it back to the macro; if we don’t understand what kind of framework we are working within, we will be expecting people to fund us to transform, that’s not what the macro is about. It’s about neo-liberalism to keep you a certain way. And also we don’t realize that at some point, when you start thinking about real change the funding is going to stop. So, the revolution will not be funded*. It is a very strategic thing to remember, linking it to the macro, and often dealing from the macro we think we are sailing alone.” – Pat Made

*The Revolution Will Not Be Funded is a term used around the world in honest conversations about funding, especially concerning social movements and neo liberalism. It is no longer a secret that, while funding from donors has helped and continues to help women's organizations to make a difference in women's lives, it cannot be relied upon as a permanent solution to the shortage of resources available for advancing women's rights, for various reasons. The Harare Conversation was an honest conversation.

Safety and Security: A Safe Space Needed

Safety and security remain ongoing concerns for many women leaders. This is particularly so for activists whose boldness periodically draws attention which often results in intimidation and violence, which many of the women present in the room have suffered.

Beyond the gaps: Thoughts on what is needed

Create a space:

Where we can reflect individually and collectively.

Give people hope:

Everything that we do as NGOs, we need to ask ourselves, "are we giving people hope?"

Theorize our work:

Use research and documentation to make our case

Trace the difference:

Women are making a difference, but we are not always able to trace what is happening, to understand the situation before and after. If you think about the domestic violence acts that have been passed, many of them were pushed by women MPs, but we become very cynical or we just do not try to track and document and say, "This is the difference they are making". If we don't, then we will not be able to convince the donors, the women we support, and the constituencies, we will not even be able to convince the constituencies unless we trace the difference.

Look for leaders:

We should have an eye for potential leaders.

Heart, Mind & Body

Women are not fragmented into parts, they are whole. We must ensure that our work embodies heart, mind and body.

Our purple cow:

We need to define our “purple cow” – that which sets us apart. The women’s movement worked so hard to ensure there are gender studies, ministries of gender, 5% affirmative action, but the women who are in power now and the young generation does not seem to be aware of the fact.

Co-creating:

“I think that knowing where our expertise stops and where the other people’s expertise starts, has enabled us to engage with others without generating unnecessary friction.” – Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng

Further reading

The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond The Non-Profit Industrial Complex – Professor Ruthie Gilmore (YouTube video)

The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Pursuing a Radical Antiviolence Agenda

Resonance and Radicalism: Feminist Framing in the Abortion Debates of the United States and Germany, Myra Marx Ferree, University of Wisconsin, American Journal of Sociology, Volume 109 Number 2 (September 2003): 304–44

5 KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: RECLAIMING POWER

Demystifying Research: Decolonizing Knowledge

The generation of knowledge, more specifically research, is crucial to making a difference in the field of women, peace and human security. Isis-WICCE continues to take pride in its research and documentation work; eliciting women’s voices on often ignored issues that women identify as being important, documenting the research, validating the research with key stakeholders, packaging the research in formats suitable for the intended audiences (such as reports, publications, and video documentaries), using it as a tool for evidence based advocacy, as well as a tool to inform the work that needs to be done.

However, the word “research” itself can be a loaded word; research has been opportunistically defined and misused by those seeking to move a particular agenda forward. This has been the case particularly with statistics based research, which unfortunately forms the mainstay of most universities’ research programs. While new researchers emerge from universities and enter established fields of research, they are most likely unaware of the patriarchal influence that exists in most universities and how this contributes to dominant perspectives on what constitutes valid research. This has strongly influenced the way certain types of research are respected as being credible while the validity of other types of research is questioned and not respected as credible. However, even the most established and respected types of research can be flawed. For example, research involving “GDP” (Gross Domestic Product) has been used to inform the formulation of economic policies, yet GDP excludes much of the informal sector in which women make significant contributions to the economy.

“Isis-WICCE continues to take pride in its research and documentation work; eliciting women’s voices on often ignored issues that women identify as being important, documenting the research, validating the research with key stakeholders...”

When ascertaining the credibility of research, the names of experienced and well-published researchers are often considered. In the context of the discussion, two types of researchers were identified; those who identify as researchers first and as activists second, and those who identify as activists first and as researchers second. The former is more likely to be unquestioning and set in their ways with a chartered career path, whereas the latter is more likely to be questioning towards research and aware of the limitations of the dominant research methodologies taught at universities which are respected by most decision makers who revere statistics.

We are taught to believe that there are those who “know” because they conduct research by “the book” – “the book” being that which they were taught at university and which fails to challenge patriarchal research and its implications. As a result, many women researchers and those who would challenge patriarchal research by employing more meaningful and useful research methodologies are left doubting themselves as “knowers”, more specifically their ability to conduct valid research, or at least the readiness with which their alternative research methodologies will be received as valid by the intended audience. Yet, everybody “knows” and has conducted valid research at some point in their life; comparing products in a supermarket aisle to inform a purchase, discussing literature in a book club, deciding which seeds to plant - all these are examples of valid research. Research is influenced by funding. “The Revolution Will Not Be Funded”^{*} was applied in macro terms to research, knowledge generation and framing:

“The Revolution Will Not Be Funded^{*}. I think it’s also linked to research that’s not making the case; when we talk about knowledge generation, the power in global frameworks is about who produces knowledge, because they are framing the language, and now they even co-opt the language. The right spent months of research on this, and so the progressives and everybody is saying ‘human rights’ but we all mean something different. So when you start using the language that you think is progressive, it may not necessarily be so. So, knowledge generation is very important, for us to be framing things and that is valued because often research by black women or people of color is not valued, even by our own leaders and the people in power you are trying to get it to, so it has to be done and it has to be valued. But the revolution will not be funded^{*}, I thought was very important. - Pat Made

“The issue of research and attracting feminist academics with whom to work is really an important one. Because interestingly, most of us in civil society do not think much about investing in research. We sort of think that things will just sort of work out. We document here and there, and then we seem to think that that is enough. But research is a whole body of work that requires that kind of support. I wondered about your relationship with existing research institutions or universities. Is there potential for you to tap into that? We have an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding)

with the Women's University in Africa, and there is a lot of potential for us to do some interesting work with them. I think there are some global networks of feminist academics. To what extent are you engaging with them?

Tried and Trusted: Research that works

If patriarchal research is to be challenged effectively, we need to cultivate confidence in our own abilities as researchers as well as an appreciation for more suitable alternative forms of research. Many types of research have been used successfully by African feminist organizations. For example Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) has made impressive gains for women in Tanzania using research based on transformative feminism, participatory action research, and community animation¹.

“We want to advance understanding of transformative feminist theory and practice, including documentation of concrete specific struggles against patriarchy and neo-liberalism and strengthen the feminist movement at all levels”

– Ms. Usu Mallya²

Further reading

Feminist Research: Exploring, Interrogating, and Transforming the Interconnections of Epistemology, Methodology, and Method - Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber

Researching for Life: Paradigms and Power - Jane Bennet

Feminist Research - Debbie Kralik and Antonia M. van Loon

Search results for TGNP in the Daily News - Tanzania's leading online news edition

TGNP sets plans for feminist social transformation - Daily News, 29 August 2013

1 Search results for TGNP in the Daily News - Tanzania's leading online news edition

2 TGNP sets plans for feminist social transformation - Daily News, 29 August 2013

6 SELF-CARE IS IMPORTANT!

Self-care refers to actions and attitudes which contribute to the maintenance of well-being and personal health and promote human development. While working with women who have survived armed conflict, Isis-WICCE often emphasizes the importance of self-care.

The women who participated in the Harare Conversation are all hard-working and accomplished feminist leaders and activists. Activism and feminist leadership do not come cheap; the price includes stress and significant demands on the mind, body and spirit. As feminists who are determined to continue making a difference through their work, the participants were undoubtedly aware that their bodies pay a hefty price for their activism and feminist leadership. Many feminists have learned to employ self-care as a tool for improving personal productivity and clarity of mind, as their bodies continue to pay (part of) the price for their activism and feminist leadership.

HopeAfrica has a keen appreciation of the importance of self-care and has adopted simple yet sophisticated and effective self-care methods. HopeAfrica generously shared a number of self-care methods with the women who participated in the Harare Conversation, including free yoga lessons. The yoga lessons were provided at the start of each day by Mr. Jassat, a professional yoga instructor based in Harare, Zimbabwe. The lessons were received favorably by the participants, many of whom noted an increase in positive energy after each lesson. The positive energy from the yoga lessons at the start of each day was carried over into the conversations.





Professor Mama (left) joined the meeting on the second day. He shared a personal testimony of how he survived armed conflict as well as some of the effective techniques he has used to manage trauma; alternate nostril breathing and tapping (EFT – Emotional Freedom Technique).

“Many feminists have learned to employ self-care as a tool for improving personal productivity and clarity of mind...”

Further reading:

Professor Mama recommended two self-care books:

1. The Healing Code: 6 Minutes to Heal the Source of Your Health, Success, or Relationship Issue (Alexander Loyd), and
2. Ageless Body, Timeless Mind (Deepak Chopra)

7 CONCLUSION

Isis-WICCE and HopeAfrica were delighted by the participants’ enthusiasm and excellent contributions during the conversation. Much was discussed during the Harare conversation. While not many concrete conclusions were drawn during the conversation, new directions were identified and contemplated. It was on the second and final day of the conversation that Isis-WICCE’s new innovation, the Isis Peace Centre was introduced and discussed as an attainable facility that promises formidable solutions to the issues raised during the Harare conversation.

About The Isis Peace Centre

Isis-WICCE has at its disposal, access to the human resources necessary to build on its work and develop a new entity that will present a formidable challenge to the fundamental shortcomings of mainstream post-conflict interventions and galvanize a movement that will break through the hindrances encountered by all those working in the field of women, peace and human security.

Isis Peace Centre will:

1. Host strategically themed think tanks and set research agendas using the voices of women in conflict and post conflict settings from which a set of information sources (data bases of feminist peace experts, research journals, documented peace building skill sets, policy briefs) will be created. These will seek to challenge unfavorable existing academic and political discourse that currently dominates mainstream peace and security work. The Centre will be a 'hub' of credible information to inform scholars, feminist peace experts, women activists, politicians and leaders who work in militarized contexts.
2. Provide a space for the harnessing of peacebuilding skills and transformation for women leaders and politicians who work and live in militarized contexts.
3. Provide holistic support in the form of health- and wellbeing- focused activities and facilities. This will include sexual health services and various types of mental and physical exercises that will enable bodily and emotional rejuvenation for women. The Peace Centre will also draw on approaches to healing that can foster networks of trust and solidarity amongst women. We envisage that the Peace Centre will be located in a place that will enable women to reconnect with nature as an alternative approach to healing.

The Isis Peace Centre will be run by Isis-WICCE staff, who will bring together feminist peace experts, feminist scholars, women activists, health professionals, and a diversity of leaders. Women from all walks of life will converge at the Peace Centre to (re)create new ways of transforming the lives of women who have lived and worked in situations of armed conflict and human insecurity.

The Third Think Tank concluded that there is need for yet another dialogue among women politicians and those from other forms of governance to concretize all the emerging issues and prepare a paper that will be the basis for the round table with specified actors from different disciplines, in 2015.

Appreciation

Isis-WICCE and HopeAfrica appreciate the support which made this meeting possible. Thanks also to the following women for their powerful contributions during the meeting:

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Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng



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