Project Summary (4600 characters)

Do women activists in post-conflict societies prioritize their security and empowerment goals the same way they have been defined by the international community? More specifically, how do women respond to the sometimes-conflicting goals and priorities of the international community, their national governments, and powerful transnational NGOs? Many women in post-conflict areas play a transformative role in formal and informal security, but they also must navigate the politics of UN Security Council resolutions regarding women's participation in post-conflict peacebuilding, national policies addressing women's security (including the National Action Plans mandated by these resolutions), and the politics and financial pressures of transnational NGOs. This project addresses how local and national women's organizations in post-conflict areas of West Africa work to advocate for women's security. To do so, this study will use participant observation and interviews in Guinea and Mali (building on prior research in Cote d'Ivoire) to reveal how international resolutions impact local actions and also whether and how local women's priorities can shape international policies. Analyzing policies on women's security and the discourses that sustain them through macro-, meso-, and micro-level lenses will reveal how local and regional women's community organizations define their security goals and priorities, translate and localize the international agendas of the UN Security Council and transnational NGOs as well as the national agendas of governments, and work with local women to achieve peace and security.

This project will enhance understanding of women's activism on peace and security in conflict and post-conflict countries. While there has been much interest in women's victimization and peacebuilding efforts, little attention has been directed to understanding how women holistically manage and advocate for their security in their communities. This project explores how individual and organizational narratives form a part of or potentially subvert dominant international discourses on women's roles and experiences in conflict as well as the relationship between women and peace. Therefore, this study contributes a better, evidence-based formulation of security for women than conventional international relations security theories, feminist international relations theories, and postcolonial international relations theories, given African women's own understandings of their own security. Additionally, this study contributes to an understanding of how and to what extent international gender norms affect national policies and local implementation strategies. In contrast to much existing research that prioritizes international-to-local policy implementation through the state, this project develops a theory of how to approach the intersection of gender and politics in the security of postcolonial states. It thus has the potential to transform our understanding of how international policy-making in gender mainstreaming is fundamentally different from other types of security policy efforts.

Understanding the appropriateness and effectiveness thus far of the UN Security Council's Women, Peace, and Security resolutions is important for broader policy making. First, by prioritizing women's knowledge of their own security needs, this study contributes to efforts to improve U.S. foreign policy goals of women "as equal partners in preventing conflict and building peace." Second, by examining the conflicts in Guinea and Mali, this project will develop a framework of how to understand women's needs in their communities and in national peacebuilding and reconstruction projects, underscoring that historical, political, and cultural contexts are important in developing successful, appropriate security policies. Finally, in their

practical application, this study's findings will aid policymakers and policy advocates in their global efforts to promote peace and security for women, particularly in regions that have been understudied. More precisely, by distilling the specific areas in which women's organizations, national plans, and international priorities connect or disconnect, the findings will aid organizations in building strategic plans for advocacy and reform. Given that the co-PI has already worked on projects with NGOs in West Africa for two years and has established relationships with members of UN missions in Cote d'Ivoire and Mali, the project results will be disseminated throughout the UN and among NGOs working on women's peace and security.

Outline of Project Description:
A.   **Introduction**
B.   **Review of the literature**
    1.   *How does feminism contribute to security studies?*
    2.   *How is African post-colonial feminism important to security studies?*
C.   **Research questions and expectations**
    1.   *Main research questions*
    2.   *Levels of analysis*
D.   **Research in progress and preliminary studies**
E.   **Research plan**
    1.   *Case selection*
    2.   *Participant observation*
    3.   *Interviews*
    4.   *Analysis*
F.   **Research schedule**