

GENDER EQUALITY AND PEACEBUILDING: AN OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document is designed to provide guidance to organisations working in the field of conflict management (which includes prevention, containment, resolution, reconciliation and reconstruction). It is an initial attempt to draw operational lessons from our increasing understanding of the inter-relationship of gender equality issues, conflict and peacebuilding. This document is based on a review of reports and published sources. It sets out questions to be asked and issues to explore. It will evolve with feedback and new inputs. It assumes that participatory approaches are more effective than top-down initiatives and that both women and men must be involved in building peace and gender equality.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Gender Equality and Mainstreaming

Gender equality has been adopted as a vital goal for development cooperation, with mainstreaming used more and more as strategy to support that goal.

Gender and Gender Roles: "Gender refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men. [It]... includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). These roles and expectations are learned, changeable over time, and variable within and between cultures."*

Gender equality requires equal enjoyment by women and men of socially-valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. Gender equality does not mean that men and women become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances are equal. The emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment does not presume a particular model of gender equality for all societies and cultures, but reflects a concern that women and men have equal opportunities to make choices about what gender equality means and work in partnership to achieve it.

Because of current disparities, equal treatment of women and men is insufficient as a strategy for gender equality. Achieving gender equality will require changes in institutional practices and social relations through which disparities are reinforced and sustained. It also requires a strong voice for women in shaping their societies.

Mainstreaming is a strategy to support the goal of gender equality. It has two general dimensions:

- the integration of gender equality concerns into the analyses and formulation of all policies, programmes and projects; and
- initiatives to enable women as well as men to formulate and express their views and participate in decision-making across all development issues.**

2.2 The Emergence of a New Form of Peacebuilding

This framework is grounded in a broad definition of peacebuilding:

"Peacebuilding refers to those initiatives which foster and support sustainable structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful coexistence and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence or continuation of violent conflict. This process typically contains both immediate and longer term objectives... Peacebuilding is a two-fold process requiring both the deconstruction of the structures of violence and the construction of the structures of peace."***

2.3 Why Look At Gender Equality Issues in Peacebuilding Initiatives?

It is important to ensure that gender equality issues are taken into consideration in peacebuilding initiatives because:

- Gender is a relevant dimension in peacebuilding. Conflict is a gendered activity. There is a strong gender division of labour, women and men have differential access to resources (including power and decision-making) during conflicts, and men and women experience conflict differently. This was recognized by the international community and highlighted in the final document of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) the **Platform for Action (PFA)**: *while entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society as well as their sex (para 135).*
- Women (as well as men) have a fundamental stake in building peaceful communities. Their contributions to peacebuilding should be encouraged and supported (given women's economic and political marginalisation, they are not always well-placed to play an effective role).
- Canada has a formal commitment to gender equality and, more specifically, has agreed that a gender perspective should be part of peacebuilding initiatives (the PFA states: *In addressing armed or other conflicts, an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and*

programmes should be promoted so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively. (para 141)

- peace is a prerequisite to achieve the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment and some would argue that gender equality is necessary for true peace (broadly defined).

2.4 Gender Issues in Conflict Situations

Each conflict/peacebuilding situation is different and there is always a need for a specific analysis. Factors such as gender, religion, age, class, nationality, ethnicity, race and sexual orientation will come together in different ways. Table 1 highlights ways gender differences and inequalities may be relevant in conflict situations. This is not a complete list, rather it provides examples and is intended to provoke additional reflection.

Table 1: Elements of Conflict Situations and Possible Gender Dimensions	
Elements of Conflict Situations	Possible Gender Dimensions
Pre-Conflict Situations	
Increased mobilisation of soldiers	Increased commercial sex trade (including child prostitution) around military bases and army camps.
Nationalist propaganda used to increase support for military action	Gender Stereotypes and specific definitions of masculinity and femininity are often promoted. There may be increased pressure on men to 'defend the nation.'
Mobilisation of pro-peace activists and organisations	Women have been active in peace movements – both generally and in women-specific organisations. Women have often drawn moral authority from their role as mothers. It has also been possible for women to protest from their position as mothers when other forms of protest have not been permitted by authorities.
Increasing human rights violations	Women's rights are not always recognized as human rights. Gender-based violence may increase.

Elements of Conflict Situations	Possible Gender Dimensions
During conflict situations	
Psychological trauma, physical violence, casualties and death	Men tend to be the primary soldier/combatants. Yet, in various conflicts, women have made up significant numbers of combatants. Women and girls are often victims of sexual violence (including rape, sexual mutilation, sexual humiliation, forced prostitution and forced pregnancy) during times of armed conflict.
Social networks disrupted and destroyed – changes in family structures and composition	Gender relations can be subject to stress and change. The traditional division of labour within a family maybe under pressure. Survival strategies often necessitate change in the gender division of labour. Women may become responsible for an increased number of dependents.
Mobilisation of people for conflict. Everyday life and work disrupted.	The gender division of labour in workplaces can change. With men’s mobilisation for combat, women have often taken over traditionally male occupations and responsibilities. Women have challenged traditional gender stereotypes and roles by becoming combatants and taking on other non-traditional roles.
Material shortages (shortages of food, health care, water, fuel, etc)	Women’s role as provider of the everyday needs of the family may mean increased stress and work as basic goods are more difficult to locate. Girls may also face an increased workload. Non-combatant men may also experience stress related to their domestic gender roles if they are expected, but unable, to provide for their families.
Creation of refugees and displaced people	People’s ability to respond to an emergency situation is influence by whether they are male or female. Women and men refugees (as well as boys and girls) often have different needs and priorities.

Elements of Conflict Situations	Possible Gender Dimensions
Dialogue and peace negotiations	Women are often excluded from the formal discussions given their lack of participation and access in pre-conflict decision-making organisations and institutions.
During reconstruction and rehabilitation	
Political negotiations and planning to implement peace accords	Men's and women's participation in these processes tends to vary, with women often playing only minor roles in formal negotiations or policy making.
Media used to communicate messages (peace accords, etc.)	Women's unequal access to media may mean that their interests, needs and perspectives are not represented and discussed.
Use of outside investigators, peacekeepers, etc.	Officials are not generally trained in gender equality issues (women's rights as human rights, how to recognize and deal with gender-specific violence). Woman and girls have been harassed and sexually assaulted by peacekeepers.
Holding of elections	Women face specific obstacles in voting, in standing for election and in having gender equality issues discussed as election issues.
Intern'l investments in employment creation, health care, etc	Reconstruction programmes may not recognize or give priority to supporting women's and girls' health needs, domestic responsibilities or needs for skills training and credit
Demobilisation of combatants	Combatants often assumed to be all male. If priority is granted to young men, women do not benefit from land allocations, credit schemes, etc.

Elements of Conflict Situations	Possible Gender Dimensions
Measures to increase the capacity of and confidence in civil society.	Women's participation in community organisations and NGOs is generally uneven. These organisations often lack the capacity and interest in granting priority to equality issues.

3. WHAT TO DO?

What are the implications of our increasing understanding of both the gender dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding and the role of development assistance in facilitating peacebuilding processes? There are two fundamental dimensions:

First, **all initiatives should:**

- incorporate a gender analysis into the assessment of the situation;
- ensure that gender equality considerations are present at the level of results (in other words, gender equality issues should not be restricted to one component of a project, rather they should be part of and influence the primary direction of the initiative);
- increase women's participation in conflict resolution at decision-making levels;
- promote women as actors and protagonists (rather than a 'vulnerable group'); and
- provide, where feasible, sex-disaggregated data (of participants, beneficiaries, etc.).

Second, there is also **a need for specific initiatives** to strengthen women's capacity to participate in peacebuilding initiatives in a meaningful fashion, to improve the capacity of organisations to deal with gender differences and inequalities and to reduce gender inequalities. This could involve initiatives and/or components that directly target women (including skills training, capacity and development for women's organisations) and/or men (such as sensitisation and analysis of links between notions of masculinity and violence).

3.1 Gender analysis in peacebuilding initiatives

In recent years significant work has been done in developing gender frameworks and analytical tools. Table 2 below distills some of this thinking into questions to be asked in peacebuilding initiatives.

In order to be most effective, the questions should not be asked in a mechanistic manner. They are meant to spark discussion and action on how best to incorporate a gender equality perspective and improve peacebuilding initiatives.

Key questions to ask	Why ask this question
How and why is gender equality relevant to the proposed results/impacts of the project?	All too often gender equality issues are considered as a sub-set or a marginal issue. Experience has shown that it is important to bring equality issues into the main proposed results for an initiative. In many programmes, attention has focussed on increasing women's participation in project activities, rather than considering the overall impact on gender inequalities.
Has there been an analysis of how women can contribute to peace in this situation and how the peacebuilding initiative can contribute to gender equality?	Consistent with the move to mainstreaming strategies, gender equality issues should be brought into the core of the initiative. For example: an economic construction programme should look at how women participate in the overall programme not merely set aside a marginal amount of money for "women's projects."
Has contact been made with local/regional peace organisations, especially those involving women?	It is important to build on local initiatives and draw in relevant expertise.
Is there a clear understanding of people's women and men experience differential conflict experiences - both i) between women and men and ii) among different groups of women?	Research has clearly demonstrated that conflict differently (Table 1 outlines numerous gender equality issues). Gender imbalances in access to power are reflected in numerous ways. It is important that these differences be recognized in the general analysis and design of interventions.

Key questions to ask	Why ask this question
Does the analysis include a consideration of the gender division of labour, differential access and control of resources and include domestic work in the calculations of work?	Despite the recognition of the importance of gender analysis, it is rarely done as part of the project preparation. Yet, this type of analysis should be seen as routine and part of the crucial information necessary to understand a specific situation.
Have women participated in a meaningful fashion in the design of the project? Have the project holders/partners established a 'channel of access' to women and demonstrated a capacity to involve women?	Participatory methodologies will not automatically ensure that women's voices are heard or that their perspectives are represented in project design. It is important to understand the obstacles women face when participating in programmes or political processes and work to minimize these obstacles.
Are women viewed as actors and protagonists, rather than as primarily victims?	Development cooperation organisations have often focussed on women as victims rather than on strengthening their capacity to survive, act, articulate alternative visions and rebuild.

3.2 Entry Points

In attempting to link gender equality objectives to general peacebuilding objectives, there are numerous possible entry points. Table 3 offers an initial list building on the potential peace and conflict impact assessment areas (Bush, 1998 -referenced earlier).

3.3 Anticipated Results

Anticipated results should be developed in close cooperation with the people involved in a specific initiative. They will also depend on the situation, the institutions involved and the scope of the project.

Ideally, a gender equality perspective should be part of the primary anticipated results of an initiative. For example, if a project aims to help restore the political, legal, security and civil structures necessary for the establishment of peace****, gender equality dimensions include:

1) human security is enhanced: *the initiative distinguishes between the security of women and men (as well as boys and girls) and ensures that everyone's security is enhanced;*

2) increased capacity of local leadership to assume responsibility for peace: *local leadership includes both women and men; local leadership has the capacity to recognise needs and potential participation of both women and men;*

3) civil society is empowered: *women are active participants in civil society organisations, organisations represent both their female and male members; vibrant women's organisations and other equality-seeking organisations are active in setting policy agendas;*

4) increase trust in and reliance on as well as capacity to function of political and legal systems: *legal systems based on and promote women's rights; both **women and men have trust in** political and legal systems; increased participation of women in political system;*

5) society is demilitarised and war economies are converted: *both women and men benefit from economic promotion initiatives; demilitarisation is ensured at all levels (including the household).*

A similar analysis could be carried out for other primary expected results.

3.4 Indicators

In general, sex-disaggregated indicators can offer some indications of the differential impact of initiatives on women and men. For example, asking how many peace negotiators were women or the voting rates of women and men or the male/female ratio of a group of displaced people can offer insights into gender differences and the varying impact of a project on women and men. Indicators of more equal gender relations and women's increased role in setting a peacebuilding agenda are more difficult to frame. In part, they will be situation-specific as they will relate to what each project is intending to achieve.

However potential indicators could be based on:

- increased participation of women in peacebuilding;
- respect for women's human rights; institutions able to deal with women's complaints relating to human rights abuses;
- ratification and implementation of international agreements on women's rights and empowerment;
- improved infant and maternal mortality figures;
- number of women standing for election and the number elected; and

- percentage of people starting new businesses which are women.

A third set of indicators offer guidance on whether or not attention has been given to gender equality considerations in specific projects. These include:

- expected results include a gender equality dimension;
- resources are provided to ensure that the gender equality dimension is delivered during the implementation phase; and
- the implementing organisations have a demonstrated capacity to work with equality issues.

Table 3: Entry Points to Support Gender Equality in Peacebuilding Institutional Capacity to Manage/Resolve Conflict and Build Peace:

Support for women's role in peacebuilding: What is the role of both women in mixed organisations and women's organisations in peacebuilding initiatives - both formally and informally? (Even when women have been excluded from the formal discussions, they have often played an important role through civil society institutions in trying to hold governments accountable for their commitments.) Are women involved in early warning systems? Do women, as well as men, receive training in mediation, facilitation and alternative dispute resolution? Is there an analysis of the barriers that women face when attempting to participate in peacebuilding initiatives? Is there a role for women-specific activities?

Institutional capacity to work with a gender equality perspective: Do local and international organisations have the capacity to recognize and work with gender equality issues? For example, do investigators of war crimes take full consideration of gender- based violence and do witness protection programmes consider the safety of witnesses testifying in cases relating to gender- based violence? Do organisations working with refugees have the capacity to implement the UNHCR guidelines on refugee women? Do Canadian organisations providing support and assistance have the capacity to work with gender issues?

Human Security:

Individual security: Are the basic physical security needs of women and girls being met? Is there a recognition that women and girls face specific dangers primarily related to their sex? Is there a consideration of women's sense and definition of security? (Specific issues for attention include violence against women and girl refugees, prostitution, gender-based violence, rape, etc.) In addressing basic human needs and survival strategies, is there consideration of needs of both women and men (based on their health needs and domestic roles and responsibilities)?

Public and state security: Do public security forces receive adequate training on women's rights and violence against women? Do women have equal access to employment in public security forces? Do they have equal access to membership in civilian review boards? Do oversight institutions (ombudsmen, complaints boards etc.) have the mandate and authority to investigate violations of women's rights related to the conflict?

Political Structures and Processes:

Women's involvement: Will the project support women's participation and decision-making within political structures, organisations and other institutions? Will non-governmental organisations gain insight into how better to represent their female members? Will women's organisations gain new skills and capacity in articulating policy alternatives, holding governments accountable and being advocates for change?

Human rights: Do all human rights initiatives recognize and support women's rights as human rights?

Legal framework. Special support can be directed to ensuring that the legal system complies with international norms and conventions on women's legal and human rights (including CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action)

Women within state structures: Will women have equal access to state employment and advancement at all levels?

Economic Structures and Processes:

Economic reconstruction: Do reconstruction programmes allow for equitable participation by women? Are these programmes designed so that women can take advantage of new resources and/or opportunities? Will women's productive roles be supported by these programmes?

Social Reconstruction and Empowerment:

Support the gains women might have made: In some conflict situations, women might have moved into non-traditional occupations or made other gains. Development assistance can play a role in helping ensure that there is no movement back. Support can be provided to women's organisations and efforts can be made to grant legitimacy to these new roles.

Women's empowerment Is there support for women's empowerment generally (as defined by international conventions (including the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women - CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action)? Do projects anticipate and attempt to minimize backlash?

4. REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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Women's Rights Unit, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. 1998. *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict: United Nations Response*. Women 2000. April. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/cover.htm>

4.2 International Agreements and Guidelines

Beijing *Platform for Action*: Critical Area of Concern: Women and Armed Conflict. Strategic Objectives:

E.1 - Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation.

E.4 - Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace.

E.5 - Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women.

Full text available at:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/armed.htm>

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

1993. Article 38: "Violations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict are violations of the fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law." For complete text see:

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menus/d/vienna.htm>

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Notes:

*From CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality (1998).

** Gender equality and mainstreaming definitions are from DAC Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation, 1998.

*** Kenneth Bush (1998). *A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict Assessment (PCIA) of Development Projects in Conflict Zones*. Working Paper No. 1. The Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Program Initiative & Evaluation Unit. IDRC: Ottawa.

**** These sample results are taken from Anne-Marie Laprise (1998). *Programming for Results in Peacebuilding: Challenges and Opportunities in Setting Performance Indicators*. Prepared for the Strategic Planning Division of Policy Branch, CIDA.