



GENDER and ARMED CONFLICT

Overview Report

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© Photos by Jenny Matthews. Jenny Matthews is a documentary photographer working with Network Photographers. Since 1982, she has been working on a world wide project looking at Women and War. Many of these photos featured in her book *Women and War*, published by Pluto Press in 2003, and were also part of a photo exhibition in London, UK, co-sponsored by ActionAid on the same theme.

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Acronyms

ACORD	Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development
AWAG	Abused Women and Girls
AWCPD	African Women's Committee on Peace and Development
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
BICC	Bonn International Center for Conversion
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEVAW	Declaration of the Elimination of Violence Against Women
DID	Development-Induced Displacement
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit/German Technical Co-operation
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally Displaced People
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NAWOCOL	National Women's Commission of Liberia
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRA	National Resistance Army
NURC	National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RAWA	Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SFOR	Stabilising Forces
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Armed conflict negatively affects women and men and results in gender-specific disadvantages, particularly for women, that are not always recognised or addressed by the mainstream, gender-blind understandings of conflict and reconstruction. Gender inequality reflects power imbalances in social structures that exist in pre-conflict periods and are exacerbated by armed conflict and its aftermath. The acceptance of gender stereotypes is one of the main reasons that such gender blindness persists.

Stereotypical perceptions of roles

Stereotypical interpretations shape and are shaped by social, political, economic, cultural and religious contexts. Armed conflict encourages expectations that men will fight and women will support them on the 'home front'. The popular perception is that men are soldiers or aggressors and women are wives, mothers, nurses, social workers and sex-workers. It is true that it is primarily men who are conscripted and killed in battle, but women make up the majority of civilian casualties and suffer in their role as caregivers, due to a breakdown of social structures (Byrne 1996). However, women are also combatants, as evidenced in Sri Lanka and Liberia, and men are also victims. These realities have consequences for gender relations, which often go unnoticed and unresolved.

Gendered impacts of armed conflict

The impacts of armed conflict on gender relations are significant. Forced displacement and gender-based violence (GBV) are two examples of impacts that are not inevitable outcomes of armed conflict, but rather are deliberate strategies of war that destabilise families and communities. Physical and sexual violence, particularly towards women and children, occur with greater regularity during and after armed conflict. Women experience rape and forced pregnancy, forced sex work and sexual slavery, often at the hands of 'peacekeepers', police or occupying forces, as occurred in Bosnia. Although men are the primary perpetrators of violence towards women and children, it is important to note that men too are subject to victimisation and violence, including sexualised violence.

International laws and institutions

Gender differences are entrenched within public and private institutions that intervene to end armed conflict and build peace (El-Bushra 2000a, Kabeer 1994). International organisations such as the United Nations (UN), governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) vary from ignoring women or taking a gender-blind approach, to treating women stereotypically. Still others look at women without a consideration of women's relative inequality in the context of gender relations.

Often where the term 'gender' is used, the focus still tends to be on women and girls without taking into account the ways in which gender inequality and power imbalances between women and men exacerbate their disadvantage. Impacts of armed conflict such as forced displacement and GBV are not understood as human rights violations, but rather as cultural or private issues that are best left alone. Furthermore, many governments have yet to ratify the international commitments designed to protect the human rights of women and girls during and after armed conflict. Lack of recognition or enforcement prevents any real progress towards gender equality.

Mainstreaming gender concerns into conflict resolution and interventions

Interventions, such as humanitarian assistance and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes for ex-combatants, exacerbate gender inequality if they are administered in gender-blind ways. Mainstreaming gender awareness into the structures that govern armed conflict and post-conflict reconstruction requires better cooperation between international institutions, states and NGOs. If we are to build more equal post-conflict societies, it is particularly important to involve women's organisations at the decision-making level in the formation of political and legal structures.

Indeed, the all-encompassing upheaval caused by armed conflict creates the potential to redefine gender relations in the post-conflict period in more gender equitable ways. But without greater support for organisations and interventions that promote gender equality in *all* sectors, there is a high risk that long-standing patterns of oppression will be re-established.

Recommendations

The report makes a number of recommendations:

Take the lead from the local: Interventions need to be based on context-specific evidence about what women and men *are* doing, and not on stereotypical interpretations of gender roles and relations that presume to know what they *should* be doing. Interventions should involve local organisations – particularly women's groups – in decision-making capacities. Outreach and support designed to assist families and communities adjust to shifting gender roles and relations should be assessed on the local level to ensure they are appropriate to the particular community or region. The programmes of states and international organisations must also reflect the concerns and priorities expressed by local populations.

Improve implementation of existing international laws by international institutions and states, particularly in terms of recognition of impacts of armed conflict such as forced displacement, impoverishment and GBV as violations of human rights and not as private, cultural concerns that are unavoidable outcomes of war. Implementation and enforcement of UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 would represent a significant step forward.

Increase funding to specialised services that deal with the distinct needs of women and men who suffer violent impacts of armed conflict such as rape and torture. For women, specialised services must include counselling and outreach to manage gynaecological/reproductive health concerns related to rape, forced pregnancy and sex work. More health and counselling services should also be made available for men who move away from masculine, stereotypical gender roles or resist violence and combat and, as a result, become victims of physical and sexual violence.

Involve women and provide gender training: The involvement of women is necessary but does not in itself guarantee that gender concerns will be addressed or that women are automatically gender-aware. Training in identifying and addressing gendered concerns is important for everyone involved in post-conflict reconstruction. Peacekeepers in particular must receive tailored gender training in order to build

trust with communities, as well as to minimise the threat of sexual and physical violence from peacekeepers themselves.

Without a proper understanding of how gender roles and relations are shifting, we jeopardise the goal of a sustainable and peaceful post-conflict society. Greater cooperation is needed between all the actors involved in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction to address the power imbalances that lead to gender inequality. Without significant steps towards gender equality, there can be no real or meaningful peace.

Executive summary written by Lata Narayanaswamy.



'To the railway station – the only hive of activity – in the midst of desolation, the surreal scene of 326 women rebuilding a station which has no trains ... They are mostly widows, some of whose husbands have been taken to filtration camps. Ask why they are doing it. They reply, so that the city will exist again'.

Grozny, Chechnya, 7 June 2000 © Jenny Matthews (Matthews 2003: 178).

1. Introduction

1.1 Why study gender and armed conflict?

Armed conflict exacerbates inequalities in gender relations that existed in the pre-conflict period. This study explores the impact of armed conflict on gender relations, analysing the distinct ways that both women and men are affected. It highlights the gender-specific disadvantages experienced by women and men that are denied by conventional interpretations of armed conflict and post-conflict reconstruction processes.

Interventions must account for the diverse realities of women and men, who may simultaneously play the roles of activists and parents, soldiers and victims. Recognising and addressing this diversity is vital to establishing more sustainable, gender-equal societies in the aftermath of conflict. Women experience significant disadvantage in the course of armed conflict, but it does not necessarily follow that men are always the perpetrators and therefore the winners, and women the losers. This report shows that both women and men experience armed conflict in distinct ways that in turn may alter gender relations.

The inequality that women experience during and after armed conflict in all societies derives from dominant understandings of gender roles. 'Gender' refers to the perceptions of appropriate behaviour, appearance and attitude for women and men that arise from social and cultural expectations. In the context of armed conflict, the perception persists of women as wives, mothers and nurturers, whereas men are cast as aggressors and soldiers. Although women and men do often assume these traditional parts, there is a tendency in the mainstream literature to exaggerate the extent to which they play stereotypical gender roles in armed conflict. The reality is that women are also active as soldiers and aggressors, while men may be both victims as well as combatants.

Gender relations, then, refers to the ways women and men interact. A key focus of this report is to explore the impact of armed conflict on gender relations in terms of how power dynamics between women and men are affected by the distinct types of disadvantage that armed conflict imposes. Existing analyses of armed conflict and post-conflict resolution are weak in various ways – some ignore women while others take a gender-blind approach or define the role of women in stereotypical ways. Still others look at women without considering gender relations.

Where the term 'gender' appears, its usage often implies that women (and girls) are predominantly 'victims' who experience 'special' circumstances and have 'special' needs, while men are depicted as the 'perpetrators'. But the term 'gender' should not be used in such a limited fashion. Rather, it should allow us to understand that women and men function in a variety of roles – stereotypical or otherwise – and to examine how changes in these roles affect gender relations.

The destabilisation of gender relations that frequently accompanies armed conflict and its aftermath also opens up potential opportunities. Following the upheaval of war, we have a clean slate to start again and ask some fundamental questions about what kind of society we want and how gender relations will

function within it. In other words, it is a time when 'social upheaval might open a door to the changes we hope for' (Cockburn and Zarkov 2002: 11). The reality is, however, that sometimes these changes are not forthcoming, as we will see later on in this report.

In order for social upheaval to lead to more equitable relationships between men and women, it is advisable to first perform a gender analysis. This allows us to identify the nature of existing power relations between men and women in a particular society and to understand how conflict and its aftermath affect these relations. It also highlights the fact that marginalised groups who do not readily conform to female and male stereotypes, such as male pacifists or women in the military, experience conflict in diverse ways.

A mother may be a breadwinner and an activist, and this engagement in both stereotypical and non-stereotypical roles has consequences for gender relations in her household. Interventions designed to assist her that are not gender-sensitive may assume, for instance, that her needs are limited to those of a mother. This type of interpretation denies that people, women in particular, take on multiple roles and responsibilities and experience a wide range of negative impacts in times of social upheaval.

A gender analysis allows a more nuanced understanding of how women fulfilling multiple roles simultaneously affects gender relations in the household and in society. The language of gender moves away from stereotypical interpretations of what women and men *should* do and what they *should* need, to accepting and supporting what women and men *are* doing and what they *do* need.

This report addresses the following concerns:

- *Intersections of gender and armed conflict.* Section two provides an overview of the types and stages of armed conflict. The analysis is continued in Section three, which covers the gendered dynamics of armed conflict. In Section four, we look at the gendered impacts of armed conflict, illustrated with the examples of gender-based violence (GBV) and forced displacement.
- *Tools to mainstream gender.* Section five presents and critiques the theoretical frameworks, international laws and other guidance currently used to implement more gender-sensitive approaches to armed conflict.
- *Making the case for gender-sensitive approaches.* Using the critiques from the previous chapters, Section six examines the consequences for gender relations of humanitarian assistance, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and peacekeeping/peace-building, rounding out the case for a more gender-sensitive approach to all aspects of conflict and post-conflict resolution/peace-building.
- *Strategies for improvement.* Section seven provides an overview of some of the practical tools available to mainstream gender into the institutions that govern armed conflict and its aftermath. Three examples of successful gender mainstreaming programmes provide insights into how mainstreaming may be achieved in practice. Finally, this section looks at how women's organisations have responded to the lack of attention paid to the gendered dimensions of armed conflict. Section eight offers conclusions and recommendations for action.

2. Understanding armed conflict

2.1 Causes of armed conflict

The causes of armed conflict are often linked with attempts to control economic resources such as oil, metals, diamonds, drugs or contested territorial boundaries. In countries such as Colombia and the Sudan, for example, oilfield exploration has caused and intensified the impoverishment of women and men. Entire communities have been targeted and killed, displaced and/or marginalised in the name of oil development. The control of resources, like the exercise of power, is gendered. Those who do not have power or resources – groups that are disproportionately, though by no means exclusively, made up of women – do not usually start wars.

Unresolved struggles over resources, combined with the severe impact of displacement, impoverishment and increased militarisation in zones of conflict, serve to prolong existing armed conflicts. Moreover, conflict tends to cause and/or perpetuate inequalities between ethnic groups and discrimination against marginalised groups of women and men, thereby paving the way for the outbreak of future conflicts.

Armed conflict as the world moves into the 21st century is growing in its complexity. At the international level, inequality in the distribution of power and resources has become more pronounced. Coupled with structural inequalities between and within nation-states, this disparity has led to more regional conflict, as well as an escalation of international armed conflicts. Furthermore, the nature of warfare itself has dramatically changed due to the development of increasingly sophisticated weapons technology. Nations have placed greater emphasis on increasing and/or reinforcing military strength. This worsens existing constraints on women's rights, which in turn exacerbates inequalities in gender relations.

At the same time as increased militarisation has further limited the rights of women within countries, gender equality has been co-opted at the international level to justify military intervention into sovereign nations. The liberation of women from the oppressive Taliban regime, for example, constituted one of the justifications for the American invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. But in the five years prior to the invasion, there was a consistent lack of regard for the plight of women, despite attempts by both local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to draw attention to the violation of Afghan women's human rights.

In reality, military interventions are NEVER the answer to resolving gender inequalities. Armed conflict and its aftermath either cause gender inequality or exacerbate existing gender inequalities, which are further compounded by divisions on the basis of race, class, caste, sexuality, religion or age.

War and justice for women ... like oil and water

War exacerbates women's suffering. In their roles as mothers, nurturers and caregivers, women invariably account for a large proportion of civilian casualties. Women in Afghanistan, for example, have constituted the majority of civilians injured or killed as a result of the mis-targeted bombing of houses,

hospitals and other civilian structures (Malakunas 2001). The destruction of resources and the poisoning of farms have endangered all civilians' lives (Edwards 2001). Furthermore, even though women assume non-stereotypical roles as combatants, policy-makers and/or heads of households, attempts to have their voices heard in official processes are often dismissed. Few resources are made available to address and prevent gender-specific violations such as rape and forced marriage.

2.2 Types of armed conflict

Distinctions between international/inter-state and national/civil conflicts have been made by a number of scholars (Byrne 1996). Recent insights suggest, however, that contextualising these distinctions is critical to ensure gendered impacts are fully considered. It is important to recognise national/civil conflicts are not only internal but transnational in nature, insofar as they take place within a particular international context.

Regardless of the type of conflict, the concept of men going to war at the 'front' and women staying safely at home with children and the elderly does not reflect the reality of war. In fact, the distinction between 'conflict' and 'safe' zones, whereby the home and workplace are viewed as safe, is a long-held myth, and has been problematised by feminists for some time (Byrne 1996; Cockburn 1998; El Jack 2002; Giles and Hyndman forthcoming). In conflict zones, war comes to women as they work on their land. War targets their homes – abducting, displacing and/or killing them along with their children (El Jack 2002).

2.3 Stages of conflict

As Byrne (1996: 8) states, conflict may be said to have the following stages:

1. Run-up to conflict (pre-conflict)
2. The conflict itself
3. Peace process (or conflict resolution)
4. Reconstruction and reintegration (or post-conflict)

Types of gender inequality and appropriate responses to particular gender-specific needs differ depending on the stage of armed conflict. This breakdown allows us to hypothesise about the likely impacts at a given stage and design an intervention that takes account of the gendered dimension. The potential for designing detailed and tailored responses, however, is limited by the shifting boundaries of armed conflict itself. As Cockburn and Zarkov (2002: 10) tell us:

...war can surely never be said to start and end at a clearly defined moment. Rather, it seems part of a continuum of conflict, expressed now in armed force, now in economic sanctions or political pressure. A time of supposed peace may later come to be called 'the pre-war period'. During the fighting of a war, unseen by the foot soldiers under fire, peace processes are often already at work. A time of postwar reconstruction, later, may be re-designated as an *inter bellum* – a mere pause between wars.

An additional concern in this breakdown is that the tendency to consider conflict and post-conflict reconstruction as real, identifiable and autonomous stages creates a conceptual divide. What constitutes peace from a feminist perspective may differ from mainstream views because for many, particularly women, peace does not simply mean the end of the armed conflict, but a time to address the structural power imbalances that caused the conflict in the first place. What is required, then, is a more nuanced interpretation of these stages, where interventions that address gender inequality in armed conflict reflect the fact that events occur simultaneously and stages overlap.

3. Gender dynamics of armed conflict

3.1 Gender relations and conflict

Gender relations are typically characterised by unequal access to, or distribution of, power. Given that gender discrimination is so prevalent, it influences other dynamics of armed conflict. More specifically, gender analysis in armed conflict highlights the differences between women and men in terms of their gendered activities, their needs, their acquisition and control of resources and their access to decision-making processes in post-conflict situations (UNDP 2002).

Men of combat age are most often the ones who are conscripted and therefore killed or injured during battle. Women, however, are the main victims of war. This is either directly as fatalities and casualties or indirectly through the breakdown of family and community structures (Byrne 1996).

3.2 Women and conflict

Women in war zones may face contradictory demands from government and society. On one hand, the nation calls upon women to participate in nationalist struggles in their capacity as members of the national collective. In various war zones, women have been mobilised in armed conflict because their support, labour and services have been needed. At the same time, the construction of women as 'mothers' and 'guardians of the culture' within nationalist liberation movements has often constrained their activism in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction processes (Stasiulis 1999).

The construction of the identities of women in their gendered roles as 'mothers' and 'guardians of the culture' implies they are 'victims', thus justifying the intensified use of power and violence to 'protect' them. Often there is a perception that this 'protection' has failed, as is the case where public acts of physical and sexual violence such as rape occur. Sexual crimes, which disproportionately affect women, may be carried out in full view of family and community, thereby rendering the victims as 'tainted' and unworthy of protection (Bennett et al. 1995).

No sex please, we're fighting!

A notable exception to the exclusion of and discrimination against female combatants occurred in Tigray, a province of Ethiopia. The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was formed in 1975 to fight for a democratic Ethiopian state. They actively encouraged women to join the fighting. Education for women and child-care were provided to facilitate their participation. Sexual relations were banned with the aim of concentrating energies on the struggle. Exceptions were later made to allow for marriage and children. One woman recounts: 'The no-marriage law had a positive role: between men and women there was talk, not sexual activity. A man would look at a woman in relation to her job, not in relation to whom she goes with'. (Adapted from Bennett et al. 1995: 9)

Examples of women's initiatives to achieve peace are often cited as evidence that women are innately nurturing in contrast to men, who are characterised as innately aggressive and warlike. Yet research by

feminists in the North and the South has challenged the so-called peaceful nature of women by examining their involvement in national liberation struggles, their direct and/or indirect support of armed conflicts and their contributions to war and militarism generally (Babiker 1999; Byrne 1996; Cockburn 2002; El-Bushra 2000; Moser and Clark 2001; Kelly 2000).

Women as aggressors

The stereotype of women as innately nurturing does not always reflect experience on the ground. The abundant examples of women as active combatants or supporters of 'oppressive' states show assumptions about the behaviour of women or men can be very shortsighted and naive:

- Women became members of the Nazi party in large numbers and served in the extermination camps.
- Pinochet's regime in Chile in the 1970s received support from middle-class women.
- Protestant and Catholic working-class women have been present in mobs in Northern Ireland.
- Women have served in, as well as rallied around, the US military.
- There are instances where women have condoned the use of rape against 'enemies' and those constructed as 'not proper women'. (Adapted from Jacobs, Jacobson and Marchbank 2000: 12-13)

Whether in their traditional and perhaps stereotypical capacity as wives and mothers, or in their roles as aggressors and supporters of conflict, women continue to experience discrimination, due to the unequal power structures that govern their relationships with men.

3.3 Men and conflict

Women and men experience violence differently during and after conflict, in their capacities as both 'victims' and 'perpetrators' (Moser and Clark 2001: 7). Sexual violence is largely inflicted on women, but men and boys are also raped during armed conflicts in a form of violence designed to shatter male power. Yet even when there has been documentation of men's experiences as victims of abuse on the battlefield, men continue to be described as 'masculine heroes' (Moser and Clark 2001: 3). Zarkov (2001) argues that in the case of the former Yugoslavia, the refusal to identify men as victims of sexual violence during armed conflict was rationalised in terms of power relations during war as well as in the subsequent nation-building process, which dictated who could be labelled victims of sexual abuse. In other words, a woman can be a victim but a man is never a victim, which is a denial of one of the gendered realities of armed conflict.

It is not only in terms of sexual violence that men suffer. Men also experience human rights abuses that are different from but equally unjust to those afflicting women, whether as prisoners of war, as soldiers or as people who diverge from gender norms (e.g. homosexuals, male pacifists). Men are also directly targeted in armed conflicts and they make up the majority of casualties caused by small arms and light weapons (SALW). The increasing number of households headed by women in conflict zones is an illustration of men's specific vulnerability (El Jack 2002).

Masculinity and armed conflict: Do the two go hand in hand?

The connection between 'masculinity', militarisation and armed conflict is significant. Feminist analyses identify military structures as patriarchal, male institutions run by and for men, based not on 'biological

traits of men but ... on cultural constructions of "manliness" (Turshen and Twagiramariya 1998: 5). In many cultural contexts, being a 'proper man' is also defined by the ability to use a weapon (Jacobs et al. 2000: 11).

Does this mean that men are inherently violent? NO – male violence directed at other men, women or children is a reflection of 'masculine expectations' imposed by societies and reinforced by states keen to manipulate these expectations for their own political ends (Cockburn and Zarkov 2002; Dolan 2002; Jacobs et al. 2000). Men who feel they are unable to fulfil their 'masculine' roles as protectors or aggressors may vent their frustrations on their families. This leads to further violence and a lack of understanding of personal and women's needs, and how these change in the face of conflict.

The fact that war is usually perpetrated by men does not prove men are inherently violent. War is waged by those who have power, and men are usually in the most powerful positions. There have also been cases of female leaders in power, such as Margaret Thatcher and Indira Gandhi, engaging their countries in conflict.

4. Gendered impacts of armed conflict

Gender inequalities are exacerbated during periods of armed conflict and continue during post-conflict reconstruction. Both women and men suffer war abuses and traumas, disruptions and loss of resources. The impact of these losses is experienced in different ways and women are often disproportionately affected.

States and organisations persistently fail to enforce international laws and conventions designed to protect the human rights of women and promote gender equality. Assistance providers, be they governmental, non-governmental or multilateral, have been slow to tackle the escalation of women's human rights abuses, particularly during and after armed conflict. Decision-makers sometimes discourage or even prevent the development of gender-sensitive initiatives.

One reason gendered initiatives lack support is the divide in thinking between technical and social support. Technical support refers to assistance with immediate needs such as re-establishing running water, sewage systems, health facilities or electricity supply. Social support, by contrast, refers to assistance with longer-term issues that are harder to tackle, with fewer quantifiable results, and are therefore considered to be lower priority, such as schooling, training and social service provision. Both types of support, however, bring into question social, cultural and religious practices. But during periods of conflict, it is considered inappropriate to address gender relations. The result is that the effect of technical interventions, such as large-scale sanitation projects, on the dynamics between men and women, is not raised (Williams 2002).

Regardless of the geographical, economic, political or social context, armed conflict makes it more difficult to access food, health, education and other basic goods and services. This section analyses two specific impacts of armed conflict – gender-based violence (GBV) and forced displacement. In exploring these issues, it also seeks to demonstrate how war exacerbates pre-conflict conditions characterised by inequality and lack of access to resources.

4.1 Forced displacement

'Forced displacement is the clearest violation of human, economic, political and social rights and of the failure to comply with international humanitarian laws' (Moser and Clark 2001: 32). People have often been uprooted from their homelands due to political, religious, cultural and/or ethnic persecution during conflict. Whatever the cause, displacement is a source of human rights violations and results in distinct types of disadvantage for both women and men.

Internally displaced people (IDPs) are not protected by international law

Displacement does not necessarily mean that people leave or are forcibly removed to destinations that are far from their homes during and after armed conflict. Armed conflict in the 1990s saw millions of people internally displaced, or still living within the borders of their country. The UN Refugee Convention of 1951 protects refugees outside of native borders, but does not cover IDPs. The international

community has limited options to protect people displaced within their own borders, if their home country is not willing to cooperate. The legal status of IDPs continues to be a serious concern (Adapted from World Health Organisation 2001: 23).

Displacement is often viewed as a temporary or transitory phenomenon. However, experience in countries such as Peru, Sri Lanka, Somalia and Sudan shows it is actually a prolonged process. Globally, many generations have been displaced as a result of armed conflict, with a significant number of those affected having being displaced more than once and for significant periods of time (Indra 1999).

Displacement disproportionately disadvantages women, because it results in reduced access to resources to cope with household responsibility and increased physical and emotional violence (El Jack 2002). Displacement also implies social exclusion and poverty – conditions that are themselves likely to prolong conflict.

Forced displacement is frequently used as a *strategy* of war that targets gender relations through family breakdown and social destabilisation. Displacement often leads to shifts in gendered roles and responsibilities for both women and men. Demographic change due to conflict has led to more women becoming heads of households. This has contributed to changes in the division of labour that have created new opportunities for women but in some respects further marginalised their place in society.

Displacement does not affect all women the same way. In Sudan, for example, ethnic groups such as the Dinka, Nuer, Nuba as well as other groups in the South and the Nuba Mountains, are marginalised due to their minority status. Women from these groups constitute an increasing number of war fatalities and casualties. Furthermore, the added responsibilities women have in productive, reproductive and community work are often transferred to younger girls and boys within the family. In particular, younger girls have to assume more responsibilities such as caring for children, the elderly and the sick, along with managing burdensome domestic work. This shift of responsibility impacts on the welfare and future of female household members (ibid).

Despite experiences of vulnerability and trauma during the process of displacement, some women benefit from displacement. They may be given priority for training and development programmes in health and education, as well as in income-generating activities. The skills women gain enable them to assume new roles within their households, becoming the main breadwinners when men have been killed or have problems finding employment after removal from their homes and communities. This shift in responsibilities represents a move away from stereotypically 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles. Men however may react to these changes with depression, alcoholism and an escalation of violence against women in public and private (de Alwis and Hyndman 2002).

Greater autonomy does not necessarily translate to gender equality

Case studies conducted by the Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development (ACORD) in Angola, Sudan, Somalia and Uganda show that although conflict has broadened women's economic roles and given them greater autonomy, it has rarely led to increased political influence or greater gender

equality. Everyday relationships within the household were about the only place where change was observed, but it would be too soon to say whether this would last in the long-term (El-Bushra, El-Karib and Hadjipateras 2002: 5).

The relatively small gains women obtain during displacement do not necessarily translate to more equitable gender relationships. Advancement of 'women's interests at a superficial, women-focused level that fails to challenge overall paradigms of gender differences leaves women with new roles to fulfil but no institutional leverage to fulfil them effectively' (El-Bushra 2000b: 6). Furthermore, there is concern that existing international laws and resolutions use the term gender but actually focus specifically on women. Although this is important, they simply do not provide the tools to understand *gendered* impacts, minimising the potential to foster more equitable gender relations.

4.2 Gender-based violence (GBV)

Physical and sexual violence, particularly against women, continues to be a well-documented feature of armed conflict. This report understands GBV to be violence, sexual or otherwise, which plays on gender norms and gender exclusions to break people down both physically and psychologically. Although it is most often women who are targets of GBV, both women and men may be victims and subject to rape; increased rate of HIV infection, as well as other sexually transmitted infections (STIs); damage to physical and psychological health; disruption of lives; and loss of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Violence against women

Conflict worsens existing patterns of sexual violence against women in two main ways. Firstly, incidences of 'everyday' violence, particularly domestic violence, increase as communities break down during and after conflicts (UN 2002). Secondly, 'everyday' violence escalates in the context of masculine and militarised conflict situations. The establishment of rape camps and the provision of sexual services to occupying armed forces in exchange for resources such as food and protection are two examples of GBV during and after conflict. Conflict breeds distinct types of power relations and imbalances. In the context of conflict, for instance, violence against women is more than the exercise of power over women. By raping women, who represent the purity and culture of the nation, invading armies are also symbolically raping the nation itself.

Some types of GBV are experienced almost entirely by women and girls during and after conflict, such as forced prostitution and sex work; increases in trafficking for sexual or other types of slavery; and forced pregnancy. Also, the impact of GBV has distinct consequences for women and girls including sexual mutilation; sterility; chronic reproductive/gynaecological health problems; and marginalisation from family and community due to stigma associated with sexual abuse (UN 2002).

In conflict zones, sexual violence has become a weapon of 'ethnic cleansing', as seen in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, where rape was used by Serbian police and paramilitary forces to punish women belonging to the Kosovo Liberation Army (Human Rights Watch 2000). Given that rape had been used in Bosnia, it became a causal factor in conflict-related displacement in Kosovo.

Rape as a weapon of war

'Women recounted to Human Rights Watch their fear that they and their daughters would be raped. Rumors of rape circulated wildly as families attempted to flee their homes. Older women often dressed their daughters in loose clothing and headscarves in an attempt to disguise young girls as grandmothers. Other mothers smeared dirt and mud on their daughters' faces to render them unattractive. As one mother told Human Rights Watch, 'I was most afraid for my daughter[s]. I lost eighteen kilos during the war because I was afraid that my daughters might be raped'. In the words of another woman, 'The girls were afraid of the police and put on scarves. The police took off their scarves and pinched their cheeks and told them not to act like old women. The girls were screaming'. According to a doctor in Pristina, 'Rape was our greatest fear. Our main goal was to get our daughters – aged twenty-five, twenty-one, fourteen, and ten – out of the country' (Vandenberg 2000).

Through the lobbying efforts of women's organisations, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) now recognises and prosecutes sexual and gender violence as war crimes and crimes against humanity. According to the statute, these criminal offences include 'rape, sexual slavery (including trafficking of women), enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, other forms of grave sexual violence, and persecution on account of gender' (Human Rights Watch 2002).

After incidences of sexual violence, women are often rejected by family or community. Despite pity for the trauma the women have suffered, society marks the victims as 'damaged goods' (Bennett et al. 1995: 9). Women also have particular healthcare needs as a result of these violations. For example, they require additional nutritional and health support if they are pregnant or lactating. Food scarcity and inequalities in food distribution are exacerbated during periods of armed conflict, rendering women and girls more susceptible to malnutrition (UN 2002). The increase in the rate of HIV infection in conflict zones is also a worrying trend – women face an increased risk, and therefore need special psychological, health and social support.

HIV/AIDS: A growing epidemic in the midst of armed conflict

HIV infection is increasing in conflict and post-conflict areas. Many conflicts are raging in areas where HIV infection is already very high (Smith 2002: 1). Disruption and displacement caused by conflict may lead to changes in sexual behaviour, an increase in the rate of sexual abuse (e.g. by armed forces), and to decreased access to blood screening facilities (ibid). Studies conducted in Rwanda and Sierra Leone found sexual favours were often demanded in exchange for food, which led to an increase in the number of women's sexual partners (Benjamin 2001).

HIV infection is often considered to be primarily a medical issue that is not a priority in conflict. Its pervasive links to unstable social, economic and political circumstances are overlooked (Smith 2002: 2). Given the degree of stigma that persists for those infected with HIV, both women and men are not likely to talk openly about their concerns. Consequently, there is an even greater need to reach out to those affected. This is particularly the case with women, who are typically unable to access medical services.

Men as direct and indirect targets

Although men are most often the perpetrators of rape and violence in armed conflict and women the victims, men themselves may also be subject to physical and sexual abuse. Sexual abuse, torture and mutilation may be directed at men either as detainees or prisoners of war (UN 2002). In Northern Uganda, research conducted in the early 1990s showed an increased prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among men, 'allegedly due to indiscriminate rape of men' by the National Resistance Army (NRA) (Dolan 2002: 74).

ACORD's experience of running workshops on sexual violence confirms the difficulty of quantifying the extent of male rape because victims are reluctant to speak out (Dolan 2002). Dolan argues that 'the level of stigma attached [to male rape] is even higher than that associated with female rape', and 'undermining men's sense of masculinity becomes a key channel for men to exercise power over other men' (2002: 75). In this sense, rape or violent sexual abuse as demonstrations of 'masculinity' or power are potentially weapons that can victimise both women and men in conflict zones.

Men are also the indirect targets of violence against women. The rape of women has long been considered a public act of aggression, where raping and 'dishonouring' women is a way of 'violating and demoralising men' (Bennett et al. 1995: 8). Women are perceived to be the preservers of family honour, and often symbolise a nation's racial purity and culture. The 'abuse and torture of female members of a man's family in front of him is used to convey the message that he has failed in his role as protector' (UN, 2002: 16). It represents an attack on the entire country at the same time it violates women's human rights.

Although men are likely to be the aggressors, we cannot 'make assumptions about the behaviour of men as a group ... some men do not benefit, and may indirectly suffer, from acts of sexual violence carried out against female family members' (Jacobson et al. 2000: 2-3). This is not, however, to minimise the greater suffering that women directly experience as a consequence of sexual abuse, but rather to illustrate that GBV disrupts and destabilises gender relations in often irrevocably damaging ways that negatively impact everyone.

A weapon of war shrouded in silence

'[Women who were] raped during the war tell their close friends. You hardly hear of women coming out in public to talk about all those things that happened to them. They would rather suffer in silence until they can get over it. They try to live with it or live with the idea that it didn't happen to them alone. If hundreds of other girls can live with it, you can also live with it and, gradually, it vanishes away ... but most of the raping was done in the open. A particular rebel may like your daughter, and right in front of you – the mum, the dad, the other sisters and brothers – it will be done openly. So that was how many girls got to know that their friends were raped.' (Extract from the narrative of Agnes from Liberia in Bennett et al. 1995: 39)

GBV and gender relations

How does GBV impact on gender relations? One impact is visible in the private or domestic sphere,

where women are likely to experience increased violence, not only at the hands of occupying or state forces, but also by men in the household in the post-conflict period. Women in war zones often experience physical and sexual abuse by male spouses who have been demeaned by the armed conflict and crippled by guilt and anger for having failed to assume their perceived responsibility of protecting their women (El Jack 2002). It is important to remember, however, that increased GBV during and after conflict often reflects patterns of violence that existed in the pre-conflict period.

Notions about 'public' versus 'private' domains present barriers to dealing with victims of physical and sexual violence. Violence is considered to be a private issue, both within and beyond armed conflict. The divide between public and private renders many of these problems 'invisible' – 'either literally, since it happens behind closed doors, or effectively, since legal systems and cultural norms too often treat it not as a crime, but as a family matter, or a normal part of life' (WHO 2003). This is further complicated during armed conflict because physical and sexual violence, particularly against women, often occur in public or in full view of family and/or community. For both women and men, however, recovery from the trauma is often hindered by an inability to discuss it because it is considered a private matter.

Sex work and sexual slavery during periods of conflict also have consequences for gender relations. Women in conflict zones are sometimes driven to provide sexual services to soldiers in order to survive. But as the box below demonstrates, men are unwilling to accept women's changed roles, leading to long-term resentment and family disruption.

No small sacrifice: Sex work and armed conflict

'Men feel the women are responsible for what happened, that we did it wilfully. They consider us prostitutes. During that period, they were helpless. They were like babies. They were not able to look after their families any more. A wife had to sacrifice herself, the marital contract, everything, to save the family, yet the men are not grateful ... We sacrificed ourselves, our image in society, our integrity, everything, to save their lives and the children. So, my reaction to Liberian men is equal. Just as they think of me as trash, a prostitute, I think of them as animals ... They have forgotten all the suffering we went through for them.' (Excerpt from the narrative of Agnes from Liberia in Bennett et al. 1995)

The process of armed conflict itself can lead to particular types of GBV due to the shifts in gender relations, particularly when women are active as combatants or dissenters in a conflict. Women who do not fulfil stereotypical roles are seen as deserving of violent torture or abuse.

Tortured for 'betraying her womanhood'

Nora Miselem is a women's rights activist and one of only four survivors of nearly 200 people in Honduras who were kidnapped, imprisoned and tortured as part of state-imposed terror in the 1970s and 1980s. Backed by successive American governments, dictatorships in Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador prevented popular socialist movements from taking root, resulting in the migration of scores of refugees fearful of persecution. Many ended up in refugee camps on the border of Honduras and El Salvador. Nora's account of her experience follows:

'They said they were going to sterilize me, because I didn't deserve to have children – that idea they have of a woman as some sublime being whose sacred role is bearing children. According to them, I was breaking with the tradition of what a woman was supposed to be. And they were going to punish me, from their point of view, so I wouldn't be able to have children. A woman like me didn't deserve to be a mother ... I had given birth to a little boy, my first, but he had died at the age of two ... so the psychological torture was well aimed, ... they said: You know why your son died, don't you? Because you got involved in all this stuff. Implying that I hadn't been a good enough mother.

'It was there in that torture chamber that I learned about the special treatment they reserve for women. That whole double morality thing. Because on the one hand they said I didn't deserve to have children, that I was a bitch and they were going to sterilize me. But at the same time, individually, whenever one of them had me alone, he'd try to rape me. He'd come in, put the hood on me and a rubber bag – like a tire that chokes you – and those electric shocks in my vagina ...

'They'd tell us we were traitors to our womanhood, as they conceived of that. How can a woman be involved in this sort of thing, they'd ask, along with men, no? [They told] us that war is a man's business, or fighting against war is something for men alone to be involved in ...

'They can't stand it when they see a woman who thinks for herself, who wants to change the course of history, who wants to change her country's future. That was the tone when they were all torturing me together. But when each of them would come in by himself, he would tell me he wanted me to have his child. I want to have a child with you, he'd say, mocking me with that. I had to struggle, so they wouldn't be able to penetrate me. And morally speaking, they were never able to ... I was physically overpowered by them, but not morally or emotionally or ideologically overpowered. The only recourse I had was to attack their morale, because they wanted to rape a woman who was afraid. But my words were not the words of a woman afraid.' (Extract from the narrative of Nora Miselem in Randall 2003: 28-29)

5. Protecting human rights and promoting gender equality

The ongoing violation of human rights, and especially women's human rights, in conflict zones continues to occur despite the existence of international laws and conventions designed to prevent such violations.

We need then to understand:

1. What frameworks underpin international laws, rights and conventions related to armed conflict? How gendered are these?
2. What do international laws, conventions and rights actually protect?
3. Why are these international laws and commitments weak in practice?

The first section of this chapter looks at human rights and human security approaches, which form the basis of many international laws and commitments.

5.1 Human rights versus human security

Human rights

Historically, mainstream definitions of human rights, while seemingly gender neutral, have been predominantly based on men's experiences. Article two of the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises human rights as a universal ideal of respect for humanity that all people are entitled to, but does not make any specific mention of women. Indeed, few governments and NGOs are committed in domestic or foreign policies to women's equality as a basic human right (Peters and Wolper 1995). In zones of conflict, the denial of women's human rights has reinforced oppression and discrimination. When combined with other forms of power imbalance, this denial has more devastating consequences.

An emphasis on human rights is important but insufficient in dealing with issues related to gender equality. Violations that occur during all stages of armed conflict are often considered simply to be the consequences of war and not necessarily human rights violations, and are frequently overlooked:

- Although armed conflicts violate the basic right to life and security, women experience specific vulnerabilities and violence including forced pregnancy, sexual mutilation and sexual slavery at the hands of soldiers (Anderlini 2001). Similarly, men may be physically or sexually abused or experience trauma after witnessing this type of abuse against family members. These types of violations are seen as 'private' issues or unavoidable outcomes of conflict as opposed to human rights violations.
- Human rights are also violated in conflict through imprisonment, torture, disappearances and forced conscription but, again, these acts are considered to be inevitable outcomes of war rather than violations. Women and men experience violations of human rights in distinct ways. Men of combat age constitute the majority of those killed during fighting, endure imprisonment and are forcibly conscripted. Meanwhile, women and children in conflict zones constitute the majority of civilian casualties as well as the majority of those displaced and impoverished (Byrne 1996).

- Political representation and participation are basic human rights. But whether in conflict or not, political institutions frequently exclude women. Women are under-represented in national and international organisations in both conflict and post-conflict arenas (UNDP 2002). This violation of human rights is not defined as such, but rather, is seen as a reflection of 'normal', patriarchal structures of power in play. Therefore, it is rarely questioned, particularly during armed conflict.

In short, human rights approaches will continue to overlook serious violations unless they recognise the gendered effects of armed conflict as basic rights violations and not as private, normal or inevitable consequences of armed conflict.

Women's rights in Afghanistan

In post-conflict, post-Taliban Afghanistan, the effort to redefine women's rights as human rights and not as 'private' or 'cultural' matters is an ongoing struggle. The new Karzai government claims to have overturned Taliban laws and says it now upholds international human rights laws. However, the opportunity for significant post-conflict changes to gender relations seems diminished. As was the case under the Taliban regime, many women continue to be imprisoned for travelling without male accompaniment or marrying without male permission.

Whilst a government-endorsed poster campaign encourages parents to put girls in schools, female teachers are being threatened with death and schools are being firebombed. Despite a shortage of doctors, Najiba Asseed, a woman who returned to Kabul University Medical School, faced severe opposition from her husband and death threats from her brother. She applied for a divorce to the new Women's Ministry, but was encouraged to 'quit medical school, go back to her husband and have children' (Garapedian 2002).

Human security

Human security relates to the safety of people (particularly disadvantaged people) from 'such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression . . . [and] from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities' (UNDP 1994: 23).

The human security approach is based on the assumption that all people 'have basic human rights and should enjoy these rights regardless of who and where they are' (ibid). In the context of gender, the term implies that all women and men are entitled to security, including economic security, food security, and health and environmental security (ibid). Feminist perspectives on human security draw a further link between sustainable development, social justice and the protection of human rights and capabilities as central aspects of any discussion of human security (AWID 2002).

A human security focus for studying gender and conflict is significant because it establishes a link between gender equality and human security. Unlike a focus on rights, the human security approach implies that *anything* that threatens security is a violation of human rights, including gender-specific violations long considered to be normal, private or inevitable outcomes of war. However, even with the security framework, in practice there will still be resistance to recognition of these violations.

A human security approach is also problematic, insofar as it can be appropriated by states and multilateral organisations for their own agendas (Enloe 1993). The attacks on the World Trade Center in the US on 11 September 2001, for example, have become a pretext for the racist depiction of Muslims and people from the Middle East in the name of 'homeland security'. Current developments within US foreign policy strongly suggest that human security will continue to be used to justify wars such as those against Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003.

5.2 International laws, resolutions and conventions

The human rights of women (and girls) are embodied in a number of international human rights instruments and international humanitarian laws. These instruments collectively condemn all forms of violence against women. Many of them also contain specific references to the inclusion of a 'gender component' in 'peace and security', most notably UNSC Resolution 1325, the Windhoek Declaration: Namibia Plan (UN 2000). These laws and resolutions stress that those negotiating and implementing peace agreements should adopt a gender-sensitive perspective and address the protection and rights of women and girls during conflict and in post-conflict reconstruction.

International laws and conventions that protect women's human rights

Significant international human rights instruments and international humanitarian laws relating to the human rights of women include the following:

- Charter of the United Nations (1945)
- United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
- OHCHR Declaration on the Protection of Women in Emergency and Armed Conflict (1974)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979)
- The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1985)
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Policy on Refugee Women (1990)
- UN Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993)
- UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993)
- Beijing Declaration & Platform for Action (1995)
- Optional Protocol to CEDAW (1999)
- Windhoek Declaration: The Namibia Plan of Action on 'Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations' (2000)
- UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000)
- European Parliament Resolution on Gender Aspects of Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding (2000)

What is UN Security Council Resolution 1325?

In October of 2000, the UN Security Council held a debate on Women, Peace and Security, which led to the passage of Security Council Resolution 1325 on 31 October 2000. Among other things, the Resolution recognises that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls and effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process, can significantly contribute to international peace and security. The UN calls on all parties involved in conflict and peace processes to adopt a gender perspective. This will include supporting local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution. The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security is working to ensure the implementation and raise the visibility of UNSC Resolution 1325 and incorporate more women in peace and security issues. The complete resolution is available in the Supporting Resources Collection that accompanies this report or online at www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf.

5.3 Why are there difficulties in implementation and enforcement?

Although the importance of these laws, resolutions, conventions and commitments must not be understated, they are limited in their application. International commitments are difficult to enforce in practice because of the limited interpretations of human rights that deny various forms of gender-specific violations, as discussed in the previous section. Also, a range of cultural, historical and patriarchal justifications exist for the exclusion of gendered concerns in both human rights and human security approaches. This oversight is reflected in the use of language in international laws, in that emphasis is placed on women and girls in isolation as opposed to gender and gender relations. Furthermore, many states have yet to ratify these international commitments. Finally, despite the availability of this information, communication and information sharing with respect to these laws and commitments within organisations and between policymakers and grassroots organisations has been poor.

The language of 'gender' in Resolution 1325

UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security is undeniably a breakthrough for establishing broader human rights guidelines, particularly for women's human rights, at the international level. Unfortunately, the resolution does not provide much guidance on what a 'gender perspective' consists of, and where the term 'gender' is used, it is used interchangeably with 'women and girls'. It denies many of the gendered concerns that arise in armed conflict. These concerns require an understanding of how existing power imbalances between women and men are experienced during and after armed conflict and how these inequalities might be removed to improve gender relations.

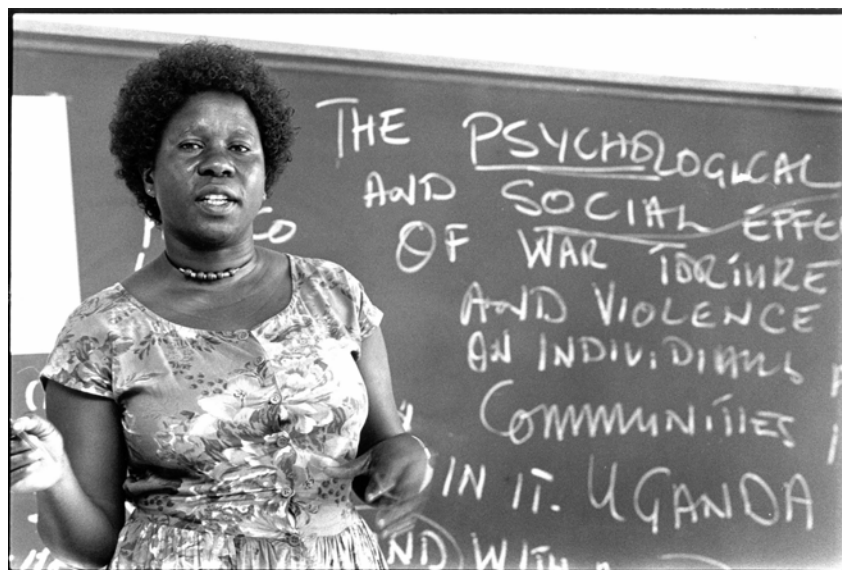
Even where equal rights and security are recognised in theory, the practice remains unequal because women and men do not have equal opportunities to claim these rights, due to differential access to economic, political and legal resources. At all levels, there is a need for laws, resolutions, strategies and interventions that specifically target the differential access to resources and opportunities.

Implementing and institutionalising gendered human security and human rights approaches into policies requires the commitment of resources and the development of strategies that effectively overcome

gender bias. Civil society, particularly women's organisations, can play a role in raising awareness and ensuring governments and NGOs are held accountable.

Improving enforcement: The Gender Audit

One way women have mobilised to improve enforcement is through 'audits' of states and multi/bilateral organisations engaged in post-conflict reconstruction processes. International Alert, for example, has been bringing together women's NGOs and civil society organisations for the Gender Peace Audit Project. It consists of an ongoing process of systematically documenting women's experiences of war and peace-building through national and regional consultations, thereby creating tools for awareness-raising and advocacy. The Project uses UNSC Resolution 1325 as a framework for promoting women's human rights and recognising the role of women in post-conflict resolution and reconstruction.



Woman teaching on the psychological effects of conflict, Uganda © Jenny Matthews (no date)

6. Gender in conflict interventions

Gender power imbalances are entrenched within public and private institutions, including governmental and non-governmental development organisations that intervene to end armed conflict and build peace (El-Bushra 2000a; Kabeer 1994). El-Bushra (2000b: 4) argues that these institutions 'must be challenged if gender injustice is to be transformed into equality of treatment, opportunity and rights'.

Gender approaches should be incorporated into institutional planning, management, execution and evaluation (UNDP 2002). In some cases, organisations such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Department for International Development (DFID) in the UK, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), have tried to mainstream gender. However, bureaucratic problems such as lack of communication between policy-makers and management, as well as a lack of funding and training, have hindered these efforts (El-Bushra 2000a).

A gender analysis must extend beyond addressing women's immediate needs, such as food, water and health services toward women's longer-term needs, including equal representation in decision-making processes and leadership roles. It should also recognise how shifts into non-traditional roles affect power balances and gender relations.

In practice, a gender analysis of conflict interventions reveals a persistent lack of attention to gender concerns. Regardless of the stage of the conflict, mainstream interventions appear short-term in their scope, and designed to deal mostly with stereotypical needs and concerns. The subsequent sections of this report will deal with interventions that address one or more aspects of the phases of conflict and reconstruction: humanitarian assistance; disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR); and peacekeeping/peace-building.

6.1 Humanitarian assistance

Humanitarian aid consists of a wide range of emergency goods and services provided during conflict and in post-conflict reconstruction including emergency loans; medical services; community organisation; protection; training; shelter; clothing; household equipment; seeds and tools; and food. This assistance may also extend into the longer-term, where states, bi/multilateral organisations and NGOs provide technical, educational and professional expertise to rebuild communities.

According to the European Community (EC), humanitarian assistance aims:

... to prevent or relieve suffering, [and] is accorded to victims without discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic group, religion, sex, age, nationality or political affiliation and must not be guided by, or subject to, political considerations ... humanitarian aid decisions must be taken

impartially and solely according to the victims' needs and interests ...' (EC Council Regulation 1257/1996, as cited in Stevenson and Macrae 2002).

The 'impartial' assessments of victims' needs and interests as outlined in the definition, however, risk being gender-blind in their delivery. Given that gender discrimination is often characterised by uneven resource distribution, the manner in which resources are allocated, either directly as aid or indirectly as assistance, may greatly affect gender relations. Unfortunately, the interventions of humanitarian groups often demonstrate a lack of sensitivity to gender. Groups that are marginalised – whether by sex, race, class, ethnicity, religion, culture, nationality, sexuality or political affiliation – may be further disadvantaged by humanitarian aid and assistance programmes that assume a stance of supposed 'neutrality' (de Alwis and Hyndman 2002: 28).

Although gender relations have the potential to be greatly improved through long-term interventions aimed at the social and economic integration of women, long-term development assistance has decreased while funding for complex humanitarian emergencies has increased proportionately. In fact, in the 1990s, international aid for regions in conflict grew five-fold to US\$5 billion a year while long-term development aid significantly dropped (Boutwell and Klare 2000). Donor governments have shown a preference for funding international organisations that manage emergency, short-term humanitarian crises, with proportionately less concern for the post-conflict reconstruction period. In other words, there is even less money available for long-term assistance and where it is available, gender equality becomes a considerably lower priority on the post-conflict agenda.

Providing immediate necessities such as food, shelter and income-generating activities is critically important to conflict-torn societies, particularly for women who often are left with the responsibility of providing for their families. But initiatives that place a disproportionate emphasis on immediate or short-term needs rather than long-term development are not enough to transform gender relations and improve women's lives.

The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) decision to provide short-term income-generating opportunities for women in post-conflict situations recognised that equipping women with resources does not in itself result in economic success or social acceptance (Bouta and Frerks 2002). Given that power imbalances between women and men are exacerbated in conflict and post-conflict periods, gender equality will only be advanced if support is given to women, men and communities adjusting to post-conflict circumstances. However, given its short-term nature, humanitarian aid is often unable to deliver this level of support.

Humanitarian aid delivered by organisations or states also tends to shy away from challenging GBV. In principle, the acceptance of rape as a *war crime*, coupled with the extensive media coverage of rape as a weapon of war in Bosnia and Rwanda, brought GBV into the public domain and made it an acceptable focus for humanitarian intervention. In reality, however, reporting and recognising these crimes can be a challenge, especially when one considers that in the majority of cases, the victim knows her (or his) attacker or the violent event occurs in the domestic setting. International organisations continue to

demonstrate a reluctance to address these issues, deeming them ‘too difficult, too complicated and too private’ (Williams 2002: 99). Likewise, humanitarian agencies are unwilling or unable to manage soaring rates of HIV infection in conflict situations, particularly among women (Smith 2002).

Even when NGOs are geared to longer-term development and openly committed to ‘gender mainstreaming’ and ‘gender sensitivity’, their approach may be flawed. Some deal with gender issues superficially by hosting ad hoc staff workshops or merely by adding women’s points of view to a larger strategy, which as a whole remains conventional in its gender insensitivity (de Alwis and Hyndman 2002).

In Sri Lanka, NGOs providing emergency relief focused on income-generating activities directed to women such as poultry rearing, home gardening, and sewing, thereby reinforcing stereotypical gender roles for women and earning them lower returns. Unlike their male counterparts, women were ‘encouraged to be nurses and typists (supportive roles) rather than doctors or office administrators’ (de Alwis and Hyndman 2002: 12). Training women in non-traditional roles, however, will not result in greater gender equality unless women, men and communities are supported through outreach or training to come to terms with the changes in post-conflict society.

Gender inequality in humanitarian aid in Kosovo

Oxfam was involved in the emergency humanitarian efforts in Kosovo in 1999. Oxfam has made considerable efforts to mainstream gender and integrate ‘hard’ (technical) and ‘soft’ (social) elements of humanitarian assistance. This resolve, however, crumbled in the face of high media interest as large sums of money were diverted to Oxfam to spend *fast*.

In Kosovo, this initially resulted in gender inequalities in the recruitment and pay of staff: young educated male Kosovar refugees working with the water engineers were paid, while young educated female Kosovar refugees were not, an oversight that was later rectified. The stereotypical gender divide in the division of work, however, remained unchanged, with ‘hard’ programmes such as water engineering being staffed almost exclusively by men, while ‘soft’ programmes including gender, disability, social development and hygiene promotion, employed almost exclusively women. The water programme teams each had access to their own new vehicles – highly desirable resources during the crisis period – whereas social development, gender, hygiene promotion and disability teams had to share one old, broken-down vehicle (Adapted from Williams 2002: 96).¹

Where priority has been given to women in assistance programmes this has, at least on a superficial, short-term level, lessened their disadvantaged status and increased women’s means to support households and communities. However, where such prioritisation is not accompanied by an examination of gender power structures, programmes may fail to challenge women’s inequality (EI-Bushra 2000b).

6.2 Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR)

DDR is a programme designed to re-integrate ex-combatants back into post-conflict society. The

¹ Please see the Case Study on ‘Oxfam, gender, and the aftermath of war – Kosovo’ in the *Supporting Resources Collection* of this pack for a more detailed look at Oxfam’s work in this region.

integration of gender-aware frameworks into DDR is necessary in post-conflict reconstruction because it enhances the equal participation of women and men in negotiating conflict resolution and peace-building processes, either as ex-combatants, or as family and community members receiving ex-combatants. One of DDR's most important functions is arguably the provision of training and support for ex-combatants to help them understand the way their society has changed as a result of conflict and how they might re-integrate into post-conflict social structures.

The UN has recognised that ensuring ex-combatants, their families and receiving communities and those assigned to re-integrate them have an understanding of the gendered dimensions of armed conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, is essential to lasting peace and development. This is illustrated in Point 13 of UNSC Resolution 1325, which calls for 'all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants' (UN 2000).

Female ex-combatants

Women combatants are often more marginalised than other groups of women in conflict and post-conflict societies due to their involvement in direct military combat, which is stereotypically understood to be a male domain. Unlike male ex-combatants, female ex-combatants are often excluded from participating in new political structures and overlooked by veterans' organisations (Farr 2002).

Female combatants challenge gender roles

'Before the struggle started our society was very conservative and rigid. Women had no place among men. They would not talk with their head[s] up. Who thought that they would take up arms? But in the last 10 years there has been a tremendous change. We see young women in the battlefield fighting equally with the men ... Now women all over the world participate in armed struggles. Why not our women? Instead of dying screaming, being raped by an aggressor army, it is a relief to face the army with [your own] weapon.'

'Our women have proved that they can do anything ... Our women are going to police work. This was not there before ... I appreciate their heroic acts, self-confidence and the sacrifices they have made for the land of their own. They protect not only the land, but also the entire women of this land'. (Excerpt from narrative of Kokila from Sri Lanka, in Bennett et al. 1995: 146)

Although some women cite positive experiences as combatants and/or perceive the work of female combatants as a step forward, these changes are not often sustainable due to the gender-blind administration of DDR. In the absence of gender-sensitive approaches, reintegration services may be set up for men but not for women.

Reintegration and rehabilitation: Only for men?

'I know some [organisations] that deal with former combatant boys. They help to rehabilitate them, send them to school, help them to be engineers, teachers, whatever [they] want to be. They provide food, clothing, [and] medical facilities. But I don't know of any kind of rehabilitation centres for women. Most of

the women only tell their friends [that they were combatants]. You hardly find women combatants saying that the government should try to help them.' (Excerpt from the narrative of Agnes from Liberia, in Bennett et al. 1995: 37)

In the few cases where women have received equal demobilisation grants, such as in Eritrea, little attention has been paid to the complexity of gender roles, priorities and responsibilities.

Demobilisation grants in Eritrea

Female and male ex-combatants have been given demobilisation grants without consideration of their post-conflict gendered roles and obligations. Single mothers, for example, spent demobilisation grants on immediate family needs such as food and medication. After their money was used up, these women became impoverished and vulnerable. Their male counterparts in contrast, invested the money in farming and trade, or they put it in the bank. Given an overall lack of resources, coupled with ongoing political marginalisation, women's organisations such as those in Eritrea were unable to offer appropriate support or guidance for these women involved in DDR (Roche 1999), nor could they mobilise to challenge this gender-insensitive approach to DDR.

Changing gender relations in post-conflict society

It is not only ex-combatants who require support and assistance. Many women in receiving communities become heads of households in the absence of male breadwinners. Male ex-combatants, expecting to return to their role as breadwinner, are confronted with the reality that women are managing on their own and this shift away from stereotypical female and male roles is not easily reversed. Meanwhile, women, having performed in a non-stereotypical role as combatants, may expect to maintain the leadership or independence they gained during conflict, whereas men expect them to come home and continue to fulfil the stereotypical role of wife/nurturer/mother.

There is a lack of counselling or other services that take account of these gendered consequences of war on ex-combatants and receiving communities. There is clearly a need for gender-sensitive DDR that accounts for the shifts away from stereotypical roles caused by armed conflict. Without training and support to understand the impact of armed conflict on gender roles, gender relations amongst ex-combatants and their receiving families and communities will undoubtedly worsen.

Gender equality in DDR – Rwanda

The post-conflict administration of Rwanda is often cited as an example of successful gender mainstreaming. As with many other aspects of reconstruction in Rwanda, DDR had a significant gender component. DDR took place in demobilisation camps, where, for instance, 90 men between the ages of 19 and 30 would be resident for three months of re-integration training. As part of this, they received gender training to inform them of changes in Rwandan society, such as the passage of new laws that gave women inheritance and property rights (UNIFEM 2002).

Although excluded from senior positions of power, women's involvement in DDR is substantial. Women have been involved, for example, in DDR programmes for former child soldiers in various conflict zones.

UN peacekeeping troops in Bosnia also worked with local women in acquiring SALW and other illegal weapons from ex-combatants.

Inclusion of previously marginalised women and men is fundamental to the successful implementation of DDR. However, such inclusion has not been prioritised in post-conflict policies, legislation or institutions at both national and international levels. The lack of enforcement of Point 13 of UNSC Resolution 1325 is due to many factors including a lack of capacity, funding and staff training.

6.3 Peacekeeping and peace-building

Generally, women are thought to be lacking in expertise to function in the public arena and are excluded from those processes and institutions considered to be *political*. This under-representation extends into peacekeeping and those peace-building activities that are widely considered to be political, such as formal peace negotiations, mediation and diplomacy.

Peacekeeping refers to a UN military and civilian presence that, with the consent of the parties involved, controls conflicts and their resolutions, while ensuring the safe delivery of humanitarian aid (UN 1995). Peace-building includes building legal and human rights institutions as well as fair and effective governance and dispute-resolution processes and systems (Morris 2000).

Peace-building is generally perceived to be the 'softer' or feminised side of post-conflict reconstruction. If women are associated with anything at all in post-conflict reconstruction, then it tends to be in peace-building activities such as primary health care delivery, counselling and education services, or assistance with the provision of basic needs or income generation. Conversely, peacekeeping is highly masculinised and militarised. Male involvement in peacekeeping involves patrolling streets and borders, maintaining control and protecting people, primarily women and children.

This interpretation of peacekeeping and peace-building as distinct and separate elements, where women are protected and men are protectors, misrepresents the reality. Women are also active as peacekeepers in the military and men are part of peace-building activities. Moreover, these elements are not separate but intersect in ways that result in distinct injustices that reflect unequal power in gender relations. The most notable example occurs in the case of 'peacekeepers' who abuse their power by physically or sexually violating local populations, particularly women (Bennett et al. 1995: 8).

The belief that peacekeeping and politicised elements of peace-building are mutually exclusive male/female domains diminishes peace-building efforts and exacerbates inequalities in gender relations. Women's organisations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, for instance, were keen to work with the Stabilising Forces (SFOR), or peacekeepers. They wanted to deal with a variety of issues related to post-conflict reconstruction including the following: sex work (where SFOR personnel were often involved as clients); female trafficking and sexual health; and assisting displaced refugees (Cockburn and Hubic 2002).

The head of one women's organisation argued there was a persistent 'masculine undervaluing of women and the feminine', while politics, reconstruction and 'soldiering' were seen as 'men's work' (ibid: 110). This lack of cooperation between the predominantly male peacekeepers and the female peace-builders

rendered gender-specific concerns an even lower priority and diminished the chances for more equal post-conflict outcomes. As the following box demonstrates, cooperation between governing elements and women's organisations can help promote gender equality as part of a sustainable peace.

Cooperation gets the job done

In post-conflict Rwanda, cooperation and collaboration between the government's Ministry of Gender and Women in Development (MIGEPROFE) and women's NGOs has created unique opportunities for lobbying and advocacy work on gender issues. The achievements of these constructive partnerships include greater attention to gender in policies and programmes generally; changes to property laws in order to recognise women's rights; the incorporation of gender into decentralisation processes; and an increase in the number of women in public policy positions. It proves that working in cooperation establishes the basis for a more sustainable, gender-equal reconstruction process in the aftermath of conflict (UNIFEM 2002).

7. Mainstreaming gender and women's organising

7.1 What is gender mainstreaming?

The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1997 defined gender mainstreaming as follows:

In any area and at all levels, a gender mainstreaming perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men in any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes.

It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as men an integral part of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality (UNDP 2002: 8).

Gendered rights and security approaches should form the basis for broadening existing definitions of human rights. Mainstreaming gender into these approaches would allow us to go beyond passive 'vulnerable group' and 'victim' characterisations that deny the reality that men are also victims and women are also aggressors during and after armed conflict. As we will see later on in this section, women's organisations have begun this process by lobbying national and international governments and bodies to recognise the contributions of women as active peace-builders.

7.2 How do you mainstream gender in conflict and post-conflict interventions?

The ECOSOC definition of gender mainstreaming is supported by a number of guides, manuals and tip-sheets commissioned by various international NGOs and multilateral organisations, such as the UN, on all aspects of armed conflict, including humanitarian interventions, DDR and peacekeeping.

These publications offer checklists, charts and forms to guide practitioners on how to establish gender-sensitive conflict and post-conflict interventions. The guidance and the questions posed are often quite general, but nonetheless provide a valuable starting point in trying to institutionalise gender sensitivity from the ground up.

Interventions must account for the political, social, cultural and economic contexts of a particular operation. They should focus on issues such as power and resource allocation in the household; religious/cultural roles of women and men; women's participation in public and private institutions; boys' and girls' access to education; and differences in the ways women and men access economic opportunities.

The identification of local resources/infrastructure/organisations that can contribute to the intervention, either through direct involvement, or through the contribution of expertise, is also considered vital to the

success of the intervention. Specific reference is often made to the gender balance of any groups involved and how power appears to be allocated within them. Emphasis is placed on the importance of nurturing, supporting and consulting local gender expertise in the form of women's organisations, such as all-women news conferences, roundtables and meetings.

Gender training for staff and awareness in programme setup are also essential to ensure international and local staff are sensitive to the gender-specific issues in post-conflict reconstruction – from access to health, food, water and other resources to economic opportunities and female leadership at the policy/decision-making level. Programmes must provide support for non-stereotypical areas of peace-building, such as, for instance, training in non-traditional skills for women and physical and sexual violence counselling for men.

This summary is by no means exhaustive, but provides a starting point in thinking about the ways in which specific aspects of interventions in armed conflict can incorporate more gender-sensitive approaches.

History repeats itself

A vast amount of information is available on the importance of including women in all stages of peace-building and problems that have occurred due to the exclusion of women, such as in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, of 250 delegates attending meetings on the constitutional future of post-war Iraq in April 2003, only six were women.

Dr. Shatha Beserani, an Iraqi doctor living in London and the founder of the Iraqi Women for Peace and Democracy Campaign, told BBC News Online that the participation of women was not prioritised: 'At meetings in London, we have tried to raise it but the men say they want to go concentrate on the essential issues. It is just seen as secondary. But if we don't push it now it will be difficult to do it later'.

Elisabeth Rehn, a consultant who authored an extensive report on women, war and peace for the UN, expressed shock at the disregard for UN resolutions that protect and encourage the role of women in conflict reconstruction (Adapted from Westcott 2003).

However, an exclusive focus on women, either as facilitators or as recipients, should not be mistaken for 'mainstreaming' gender. The involvement of women is not in itself enough to ensure gender sensitivity.

Mainstreaming gender does not mean simply the inclusion of women!

De Alwis and Hyndman (2002: 13) point out that in Sri Lanka, many humanitarian organisations raised concerns about the lack of sensitivity on issues related to women's welfare. Their efforts to raise awareness led to the appointment of women as gender coordinators. However, contrary to expectations, this resulted in greater gender *insensitivity*, due to a lack of training for the coordinators on gender-specific issues. Training was deemed unnecessary because it was assumed that female gender coordinators were naturally more sensitive to gender issues. For this same reason, gender coordinators solely worked with women's groups or on women's projects. Their dealings with men were infrequent and

they were given little opportunity to challenge men to be more aware of the need to reform gender inequity.

7.3 Examples of mainstreaming gender in post-conflict structures

There are instances where existing conceptual approaches, in conjunction with enforceable guidelines, resolutions, declarations and institutional practices, have met with some success in post-conflict reconstruction situations, most notably in the work of the Gender Affairs Unit set up by the UN in the reconstruction of East Timor. The relative success of this office in mainstreaming gender throughout the peace-building process demonstrates a gendered response is possible in practice.

The Gender Affairs Unit in post-conflict East Timor

The Gender Affairs Unit was established by the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). The unit focused on capacity-building and raising awareness of the link between gender equality and sustainable development, as well as the need to take positive action towards gender equality as a goal. The office conducted workshops and training sessions, as well as establishing networks for gender mainstreaming within UNTAET as well as in East Timorese society more broadly. The objectives for gender mainstreaming and strategies for implementation were based on the experiences and priorities raised in consultation with local women and women's groups (UN 2002: 81).

The administration of post-conflict Rwanda has also emerged as a good practice example of gender mainstreaming. Continuous efforts have been made to ensure gender cuts across all policies and priority areas. Moreover, all government departments must report on how gender equality is being addressed in programmes and how budgets are being developed in gender-sensitive ways.

Gender and justice in post-genocide Rwanda

The *gacaca* is a traditional, communal judicial system that was re-introduced to relieve the burden on the national courts. It nominates 19 'judges' or respected people at the village level to hear cases. In 2002, over 115,000 defendants accused of genocide-related crimes were shifted to the *gacaca*.

Gender equality issues have featured prominently in the re-establishment of these village courts, which have traditionally been male-dominated. Although women were initially prevented from testifying in the traditional *gacaca*, they are now allowed as full participants. They are also being encouraged to join as judges, with 27 per cent of *gacaca* posts reserved for women. With assistance from the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) and support from UNIFEM, training has been provided to these women judges. Bilateral donors such as Belgium and Canada are also supporting increased efforts to involve women in the *gacaca* judicial process (UNIFEM 2002).

The partnership between women's NGOs and government has created high expectations for what women's organisations can collectively achieve, but this recognition is not being matched by a growth in funding or other resources. Consequently, it is increasingly difficult for these organisations to work at the same pace (UN 2002). The Rwandan experience is proof that more funding and resources should be

devoted to promoting partnership with women's organisations, which contribute not only to the basic needs of post-conflict society, but are also instrumental to the development of gender-sensitive legal and political structures.

Independent organisations such as Oxfam have also had some success in mainstreaming gender into institutional practice at the grassroots level.

Mainstreaming success: Lessons from Oxfam's field office in Sierra Leone

Recent feedback from Oxfam's long-term humanitarian interventions in post-conflict Sierra Leone suggests mainstreaming gender is a slow but steady process that requires commitment from every individual in the organisation.

After piloting a very ambitious gender programme, field-level staff realised that, in fact, it was time to 'go back to basics' and provide gender training for all staff. Basic gender training encouraged a shared understanding of why participation of both women and men is important. It also highlighted the harmful effects of stereotypes and the value of work sharing.

Although understanding and acceptance of these principles is still variable, the field staff have generally noted a positive change in the attitudes, beliefs and practices of community members. For instance, it is now taken for granted that women will be involved in community assessments and consultations, both with men and also separately. There is also growing enthusiasm for achieving gender equality among field staff.

The Sierra Leone programme identified four key ways of addressing gender equality in a humanitarian programme: gender training; commitment of management/leadership to gender equality; implementation of gender-equal recruitment techniques, including training for women in non-traditional roles; and development of the capacity of external partner agencies to implement and enforce gender equality agendas (Adapted from Williams 2003).

7.4 Women's organising

UNSC Resolution 1325 is clear on the need to protect women's rights and support the work of women's organisations in peace-building efforts. Despite these commitments, the gendered ways that women and men, but particularly women, actively engage with, and are victimised by, armed conflict and reconstruction, remain unrecognised by gender-blind interpretations of war and its aftermath. Women's organisations continue to protest these injustices at the local, national and international levels. These ongoing efforts have laid the groundwork to have gender mainstreamed more effectively into institutions that govern during periods of armed conflict and reconstruction. Recognising the relative inequality faced by women during and after armed conflict is an important step to mainstreaming gender. Only then will the impacts on women and gender relations be put into context.

The importance of supporting women's organising efforts has been recognised by Point 15 of UNSC Resolution 1325, which officially endorses the need to promote gender equality through consultation with local and international women's NGOs in the processes of post-conflict reconstruction (UN 2000).

Poetry as a rallying force

In periods of conflict, poetry has been used not only as a means of expressing grief but as a force for mobilising women to actively resist conflict and oppression. Through contributions from poets and activists in Afghanistan and around the world, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) uses the medium to raise awareness of life in an oppressive state. The poetry collected by RAWA recognises and inspires women's active roles as objectors opposing these violations. An extract from a poem by Meena, the founder of RAWA who was assassinated by Afghan Intelligence in 1987, follows:

I'll never return

I'm the woman who has awoken
I've arisen and become a tempest through the ashes of my burnt children
I've arisen from the rivulets of my brother's blood
My nation's wrath has empowered me
My ruined and burnt villages fill me with hatred against the enemy,
...
I've learned the song of freedom in the last breaths, in the waves of blood and in victory
Oh compatriot, Oh brother, no longer regard me as weak and incapable
With all my strength I'm with you on the path of my land's liberation.
My voice has mingled with thousands of arisen women
My fists are clenched with the fists of thousands compatriots
Along with you I've stepped up to the path of my nation,
To break all these sufferings all these fetters of slavery,
Oh compatriot, Oh brother, I'm not what I was
I'm the woman who has awoken
I've found my path and will never return.

(The full text of the poem is available at rawa.fancymarketing.net/ill.htm.)

There is a distinction between women's actual engagement in peace-building and the integration of women's rights in the peace process. It is, after all, possible to enforce the international laws and conventions that protect women from GBV and recognise the disadvantages experienced by women during and after armed conflict, without actively involving them in the political process. Although recognition on its own is important, it would still deny women the opportunity to work alongside men in shaping conflict resolution processes in more equitable ways. Long-term peace that is gender equal must go beyond protecting but still excluding women, to actively engaging women in the decision-making structures that govern peace itself.

Women's work in peace-building mostly capitalises on stereotypical interpretations of gender roles because, typically, it is only in their capacity as wives and mothers that women gain the attention of soldiers and politicians. Women's presence in the official peace process remains marginal and the process of negotiating gendered relations of power in the context of armed conflict is an ongoing challenge.

A message to the women of Iraq from the women of Kosovo

Just after the 'end' of the conflict in Iraq, the Kosovo Women's Network in April 2003 circulated an open letter via email entitled *A cautionary tale from Kosovar women to women in post-war Iraq*. Excerpts are reprinted below.

'We have a briefly recounted but very complex story to tell to the women of Iraq ...

'We greeted joyfully the decision that put Kosova under a UN administration. [The] UN was to us the revered international organization that developed and passed key documents that stipulated women's rights and promoted their integration in all levels of decision-making. But, when we returned home we were, unfortunately, disappointed by the UN Mission in Kosova (UNMIK). We were eager to work with the international agencies in developing effective strategies for responding to the pressing needs of Kosovar women, but most of those agencies did not recognize that we existed and often refused to hear what we had to say on decisions that affected our lives and our future.

'Some of the international staff came to Kosova thinking and assuming that this is an extremely patriarchal society where no women's movement can flourish. And there were those who wanted us to do all the groundwork for them [like] find staff and offices, set up meetings and provide translations, but were not interested in listening to us... They had their own fixed ideas and plans and their ready-made programs that they had tried in other countries and did not want to change their plans to respond to the reality of our lives.

'Instead of dedicating all our energy to helping women and their families put together lives shattered by war, we had to spend efforts in fighting to be heard and in proving to UNMIK that we knew what was best for us, that women in Kosova were not just victims waiting to be helped – they could help themselves, as they did in the past, and they could be key and effective actors in building their own future.

'We did not give up. We met with UN officials, wrote letters, went to meetings to present our ideas, knowledge and expertise. We talked to donors and built alliances with those international organizations in Kosova and abroad that genuinely saw and related to us as partners in the common efforts to advance [the] women's cause in our country. This is part of an on-going multi-layered struggle that women's groups in Kosova have been engaged in during the last four years, a struggle to be part of the decision-making process from day one, a struggle to get better organized and become more effective, a struggle to take the place we deserve in shaping our life and the future of our society.

'We urge and encourage women in Iraq to organize ... and be part of the rebuilding of their country.'

The fact that women support conflict along religious, ethnic and nationalist divides raises the question of whether it is possible for women to unite around gender-specific concerns to fight patriarchy and oppression. There are many examples, however, of groups of women that have managed to prioritise gender-specific concerns over political allegiances in order to address women's human rights issues in a unified fashion.

Palestinian and Israeli women work together

Jerusalem Link, a partnership between the Israeli organisation Bat Shalom and the Palestinian Jerusalem Centre for Women, is one example of women successfully bridging the divides between politics, armed conflict and gender equality. Whilst the two organisations work principally to address the concerns of women in their own societies, Jerusalem Link is able to prioritise women's human rights more generally as an important element of any lasting peace settlement.

Established in 1994, the partnership project marks the first time that a Palestinian and an Israeli organisation have worked so closely together for the advancement of women's and human rights in the region, as well as for the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The two organisations jointly run programmes promoting peace, democracy, human rights and women's leadership. Their work includes campaigning on International Women's Day; raising awareness through Palestinian/Israeli Women's Public Media Dialogue; facilitating an International Women's Peace Commission; and lobbying of international organisations and national governments to promote the inclusion of women in decision-making processes. See www.batshalom.org/english/jlink/index.html for more information.

The importance of recognising, encouraging, supporting and strengthening the capacity of women in conflict and post-conflict situations cannot be overstated. As the box below illustrates, women mobilise and take the initiative in periods of armed conflict in order to survive and/or to fight for their rights. As they move into non-stereotypical roles with support from family and community, the basis for the protection of women's human rights and the groundwork for a longer-term shift towards more equal gender relations are made possible.

Addressing the multi-faceted needs of women: The Liberian experience

The National Women's Commission in Liberia (NAWOCOL), an NGO made up of 78 women's groups, developed in the post-war period to address the myriad needs of women. It encouraged grassroots working groups to come together around income-generating activities - from garden projects to peer counselling. Progress has been made in educating women about their rights, providing training for income-generating activities and enabling women to take control and move away from stereotypical roles. Although there is cause for optimism, women require government support and some men remain sceptical. Generally, it is clear that this work has paved the way to rebuild Liberian society in a more gender-equitable fashion.

Below we reprint an extract from the testimony of Rose, a former Secretary-General of the Commission in Monrovia, discussing the multiple programmes in place to assist women in the post-conflict period (extracted from Bennett et al. 1995: 41-5):

'The idea for the Abused Women and Girls (AWAG) programme came right after the ceasefire in 1990. A group of women including myself attended a workshop run by Save the Children, UK ... We talked about the Ugandan experience where women were raped and molested ... We were moved because we knew that these things had happened [in Liberia] ... We decided to form an association called the Association

for Women in Crisis. Its aim is the rehabilitation of victimised women, abused women and girls, through trauma counselling... [and] group therapy ...'

'We have health education, talks about family planning, nutrition, hygiene, sanitation and general things. Besides that, we have preventive education and counselling about HIV/AIDS ... We have increased awareness about HIV/AIDS, but we are short of films and [other] educational materials.

'The HIV counsellors have meetings with women's groups, in the schools, in the churches. In one month they see about 2,000 or 3,000 people, distribute [information] materials as well as condoms. We also talk about [taking] care of a victim, and about the psychological effects on a victim's family. All the myths about AIDS are cleared away.

'Women took up arms and they've disappeared ... We are trying to develop a programme to identify these girls, [help them find] their productive capacity [and] rehabilitate them through counselling and training ...

'Women are becoming independent of men. We love the men, we need them – they are our husbands, brothers, fathers, uncles – but we are not waiting for them like before to be the only providers. Men have come to appreciate this role and they talk about it with admiration. They [also] fear it, but they are willing to go an extra mile with the women. It is now common to hear a man say, "We wish to have a woman president". That's how far the women have gone. In Liberia, women have proved themselves. But somehow, the suppression is there. It's camouflaged. You don't see it but it's there.

'In the refugee camps outside of Liberia, the women are learning masonry and carpentry and about building their own homes ... You could not find that before ...

'All is not rosy, because our government has to back us, and we have to have a unified country. The government has been sensitised now to plan for gender issues.'

Women are active not only at the local or community level, but at the national and international levels as well. In Africa, for instance, women's groups have formed the African Women's Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD), now a part of the African Union (formerly Organisation of African Unity). Its mandate is to broaden the peace agenda to include issues such as land reforms, economic and social justice and equal participation for women in political processes generally. The inclusion of rape and GBV as war crimes and crimes against humanity in rules and statutes governing the ICC is due to the contribution of international women's groups led by the New York-based Women's Caucus for Gender Justice.

From the local to the international sphere, women's activism is laying the groundwork for mainstreaming gender in all aspects of armed conflict and post-conflict reconstruction.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

The primary objective of broadening our understanding of the intersection of gender and armed conflict is to recognise and address forms of gender-specific disadvantage that are overlooked by conventional, gender-blind representations of armed conflict and its aftermath.

As this report has demonstrated, the diverse experiences and needs of women, who invariably function in both traditional *and* non-traditional roles, have generally not been recognised. Similarly, the distinct disadvantages faced by men have been misunderstood. In the case of gender-based violence (GBV), for instance, female victims are shunned by family and community while male victims are unable to access counselling or other services. The denial of these and other traumas impedes our understanding of gender relations, blinding us to the ways in which we may promote gender equality and thereby contribute to the establishment of sustainable, peaceful post-conflict societies.

Real peace does not only mean the end of armed conflict, but rather the establishment of durable and inclusive social institutions. Conventions designed to protect the human rights of marginalised groups, particularly women, during and after conflict do exist. However, the negative impacts of war, such as forced displacement and GBV, continue to destroy families and communities. Interventions such as humanitarian aid, DDR and peacekeeping, are meant to alleviate suffering and assist in the reconstruction process, but where administered without regard to gender, they may actually exacerbate inequality.

The social upheaval caused by conflict creates the potential to redefine gender relations. Without appropriate funding, support and resources dedicated to promoting gender equality in *all* aspects of reconstruction, however, there is a risk that old, oppressive and discriminatory patriarchal institutions and practices will be re-established, as opposed to transformed, in the aftermath of conflict.

8.1 Recommendations

The issues raised in this report may be addressed by the detailed recommendations below:

More context-specific evidence is required to understand the diverse roles and needs of women and men during and after armed conflict. Such evidence must be based on what they *are* doing and not on stereotypical interpretations of gender roles and relations that presume to know what they *should* be doing:

- The notion of what constitutes traditional and non-traditional gender roles may vary slightly between cultural, economic, political, social and religious contexts. Researchers and practitioners engaged in conflict studies and/or programmes must consider how stereotypical interpretations of gender in these various contexts reinforce as well as challenge our understanding of the diverse roles and needs of women and men during conflict and in post-conflict reconstruction.

- International institutions, states and NGOs need to move beyond perceptions of women solely as victims and men solely as perpetrators of violence. The focus should instead be on the power imbalances reflected in the gendered roles of women and men during conflict and post-conflict periods. The effects of these imbalances on gender relations may then be assessed.
- Research should focus on the ways in which armed conflict and its impacts, such as forced displacement, alter gender relations within the family and community. Improved outreach and counselling services must be made available to address the distinct needs of women and men who experience negative impacts of armed conflict. This is particularly important if we are to address the often unrecognised gendered needs of women and men who have suffered traumas such as GBV.
- Researchers and practitioners must pay more attention to how the notion of masculinity limits our understanding of the diverse roles and needs of men and also how it affects women and gender relations. Heightened awareness of this male diversity will contribute to the development of gender-sensitive post-conflict interventions.

The escalation of all types of physical and sexual GBV during and after armed conflict must be addressed:

- More funding should be made available to research and document the impact of all forms of GBV – including imprisonment, torture, rape, sexual slavery and forced sex work – on women, men and gender relations.
- Increased funding and other necessary resources should be dedicated to finding and promoting effective outreach services that respond to the needs of victims of GBV, including specialised and localised access to healthcare, ongoing counselling, outreach and support. This is particularly important for women, since women's unique gynaecological and reproductive health concerns related to forced pregnancy and sex work are invariably overlooked. Funding should be geared towards organisations that are able to provide training in the consequences of GBV and other types of violence.
- Increased funding and resources must also be dedicated to addressing the needs of men who diverge from stereotypical masculine gender roles, particularly those who are victims of, or who resist, violence. This may be done by tying outreach for men into existing health and support centres, or through the creation of new services that address GBV against men.

The institutions governing armed conflict and post-conflict reconstruction will be in a better position to address gendered needs through better implementation and enforcement of existing international laws and commitments:

- International institutions and governments must recognise impacts of armed conflict such as forced displacement, impoverishment and GBV as violations of human rights and not as private or cultural concerns, or merely inevitable outcomes of war.
- International institutions and governments must also recognise, implement and enforce laws and commitments that recognise gender issues as important, legitimate concerns and provide greater protection for women and girls, who frequently experience significant disadvantage. The recognition, ratification and enforcement of UNSC Resolution 1325 would be a significant step forward.

- All types of GBV should be criminalised and all states must ratify the new ICC statute, which stresses that GBV and rape are war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- Implementation and enforcement of international commitments such as Resolution 1325 would also ensure the presence of gender-aware female activists at the peace table. Mechanisms such as all-women short lists of candidates or reserved seats for female participants at peace negotiations would represent significant steps forward in promoting gender equality.

All interventions designed to alleviate suffering and ‘normalise’ life in a post-conflict society must take account of gendered concerns:

- Agencies should try to provide humanitarian assistance that is long-term and includes training for women in non-traditional roles. Training must be provided in conjunction with outreach and support to help families and communities adjust to shifting gender roles and relations. Without such measures, the potential for gains in gender equality to be sustainable in the long-term is limited.
- Gender-sensitive DDR should be encouraged through increased funding for local organisations that provide gender-specific training and support for ex-combatants and their families to re-integrate into post-conflict society. These services should recognise the changes in gender relations that take place during periods of conflict as both women and men assume new roles.
- Researchers are needed to catalogue the experiences and attitudes of male and female ex-combatants and the families/communities receiving them. This will help to determine the best means of addressing the different needs of ex-combatants and their families, and the effect of the return of combatants on gender relations.
- Peacekeepers must receive tailored gender training in order to promote healthier relationships and establish trust with local communities. There must also be better reporting and policing mechanisms to address both the threat and the occurrence of sexual and physical violence associated with peacekeepers and those charged with protecting post-conflict areas.
- All staff and volunteers deployed in conflict and post-conflict interventions must be trained to understand and manage the gendered implications of post-conflict reconstruction in the social, political, economic, religious and cultural contexts in which they are operating.

More emphasis should be placed on the concerns and priorities expressed by local populations, particularly women:

- Mainstreaming gendered concerns requires the involvement of local organisations and the use of local infrastructure to ensure solutions are appropriate to the post-conflict society. States and organisations such as the UN must encourage the role of women’s organising and the importance of including local women’s voices in the formation of post-conflict political and legal structures in practice.
- Civil society organisations, particularly women’s organisations, need increased funding and resources. Women’s organisations in conflict zones around the world engage in a wide range of activities, from meeting basic needs for local communities to lobbying for changes to political and legal structures that are not gender equal. International institutions and states engaged in post-

conflict reconstruction can support, promote and enhance the role that women's organisations play through invitations to peace conferences, as well as greater funding and resources.

- Women's organisations also need resources for capacity-building to train and prepare women to participate at the decision-making level of official peace negotiations. It is important to recognise local women's organisations have knowledge related to the specific economic, political, cultural, social and religious contexts that underpin gender inequality in a particular community or region. Therefore, they should also be involved in a decision-making capacity in the design, planning and implementation and evaluation of post-conflict reconstruction. Delegations and international donors must ensure the participation of women's organisations in peace processes.
- Systematic and context-specific gender-sensitivity training must be provided to peacekeepers and NGO staff who are interested in engaging local populations, particularly women and girls, more effectively in reconstruction processes.
- When women are recruited, there needs to be an awareness that participation of females will not in itself guarantee that gender concerns will be addressed or that equality will definitely result. Women are not automatically gender-aware and therefore, every recruit, regardless of sex, must receive training in how to identify and address gender concerns.

Through the mobilisation of and cooperation between all actors concerned with armed conflict and reconstruction, we have a better chance of addressing the power imbalances that lead to unequal gender relations and establishing a long-lasting, sustainable peace.

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