

Including the particular needs and abilities of women and men in post-conflict reconstruction is essential to create a lasting peace

Gender, Conflict & Development



GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT
BRIEFING NOTES

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Importance of Gender Issues in Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Reconstruction

Eighty percent of the world's twenty poorest countries have suffered major conflicts in the past two decades. Conflicts and wars, both interstate and intrastate, have different impacts on men and women. This difference in men's and women's experience of conflict and post-conflict requires that development organizations provide different kinds of assistance to men and women that respond to their specific needs.

There is now a substantial body of literature on women's experience of conflict, which demonstrates that there are high short- and long-term costs to women's and countries' development from failing to address women's needs during reconstruction periods. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) recognizes this distinction in women and men's needs and calls on all actors involved in negotiating and implementing peace agreements to adopt a gender perspective. This perspective includes the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. Further study on the nature of and changes in gender relations during and after conflict will ensure an improved response to communities' post-conflict needs.

Gender and Conflict – Key Developmental Impacts

Female Combatants: Women are not only the victims of conflict; they are often actively involved in the fighting. Women tend to represent between ten percent to one-third of all combatants in regular or irregular armies (i.e. guerilla movements), and often participate in other active roles, including supporting functions. Demobilization and reintegration programs (DRPs) for ex-combatants should represent the economic, legal and psychological needs of female, not just male ex-combatants. These needs are usually not met because many women tend not to register for DRPs for fear of being stigmatized for their role in the conflict, or for having had illegitimate children resulting from rape. Postwar societies go through changes and adapt, making the issue of reintegration relevant to all members of society, not just to ex-combatants. DRP planners should therefore also analyze the potential side-effects of the DRP on non-combatants and avoid any negative impacts.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and HIV/AIDS: Women and men are both vulnerable to GBV during conflict, albeit in different ways. Women are often victims of heightened sexual abuse and trafficking during conflict, as they are seen as a form of booty by enemy soldiers and abusing women from the enemy camp is seen as a means to demoralize the enemy. Women are therefore more susceptible to contracting HIV/AIDS or STDs than men as a result of sexual abuse. Men and boys are more often victims of brutal indoctrination during their recruitment to an armed group, which can involve forced killing of family members, drug abuse, rape and cannibalism. During post-conflict, many men are unable to find employment and find themselves displaced from their family's land. Young men therefore commonly lose their traditional source of manhood as the provider for the family. Many of these men are consequently in search of a new socially accepted version of manhood during post-conflict periods, and some find status and power in sexual violence against women, and possession and use of guns. Post-conflict programs should focus on ways to draw these young men into a cohesive society, rather than on punishing and controlling them. The latter only reinforces a cycle of exclusion and punishment and perpetuates violent behavior.

World Bank's Policy Framework on Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction

Over the past half-century, the World Bank has widened its focus on conflict from mainly rebuilding infrastructure to promoting economic recovery, creating effective and accountable institutions, working to improve health and education services, clearing land mines, and demobilizing and returning ex-combatants and displaced people to their communities. The Bank's Operational Policy (2001) on [Development Cooperation and Conflict \(OP 2.30\)](#) allows the Bank to support states that are transitioning from war to enable them to achieve economic and social recovery and sustainable development "with particular attention to the needs of war-affected groups who are especially vulnerable by reasons of gender, age, or disability."

Economic Reintegration and Increased Labor Burdens: Conflict leads to high levels of male mortality and permanent displacement or migration of mainly men, but also women, from their homes. This creates an imbalance in communities' sex ratios and women frequently become single heads of household

(WHH). These women usually then become the sole source of income for their families, and often assume tasks previously considered to be exclusively male duties. Women's capacity to earn income is hindered in contexts where they have not had access to education and professional skills prior to the onset of conflict. In urban areas, these women are leading the "feminization" of the informal labor sector, as it usually requires less education and start-up capital than the formal sector. For WHH, income generation can lead to greater empowerment, as it provides a certain level of economic freedom. However, it can also be exploitative, and can simply expand their existing burden of labor to include income generation in addition to parenting, home schooling and home medical care. The shift of responsibility to the private domain for providing social services often occurs in response to the collapse of centralized public services during conflict. Post-conflict efforts need to ensure more employment opportunities are available for women and that public services are quickly reestablished during post-conflict.

Formal and Informal Peace Processes: Women are often seen as the victims of conflict and are usually excluded from contributing to the peace process based on their low levels of participation in political institutions. However, women's increased participation is essential to ensure the incorporation of gender issues in peace accords. And, many women already participate in informal peace processes through women's civil society organizations that undertake relief work and lobby to incorporate rights and provisions in peace accords. These informal peace processes are incubators for emerging women leaders interested in entering politics and have led to an increase in women's post-conflict political participation over time. In Rwanda, the number of women in ministerial positions jumped from 9 in 1994 to 26 in 2002.

Promising Approaches in the World Bank's Work

Post Conflict Fund: Established in 1997, the Post Conflict Fund finances a number of initiatives that incorporate gender into physical and social reconstruction activities. Among these activities:

- *The Community Action for Reintegration and Recovery for Youth and Women project* in the Republic of Congo focuses on assisting female and male ex-combatants to re-introduce themselves into their communities and establish sustainable livelihoods. They receive information, counseling, referral services, formal and informal apprenticeship training, and educational opportunities.
- *The Supporting Conflict Prevention and Social Cohesion through Early Childhood Development in Kosovo* grant has jointly supported a Woman's Literacy Project with UNICEF since 2002. 21 women's NGOs provide basic and post-literacy education to 2,300 rural women in 113 classes. The women come from different backgrounds, ranging from 13 -60 years of age. In addition to literacy, they are taught life skills including conflict resolution techniques and democratic citizenship.

- *Micro-Credit to Iraqi Widows* assists young widows with children recently affected by conflict in Diwaniyah to improve their incomes. Widows are provided with micro-credit to start their own businesses, or training to develop or upgrade their skills. By early 2005, 120 widows had received a \$200 microcredit from a local NGO and they have already started repayments.

Integrating Gender Issues in PRSPs and CASs: The Congo interim poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) (2004), and the country assistance strategies (CASs) for Niger (2003), Cambodia (2005) and Rwanda (2002), all successfully integrated gender issues in their specific post-conflict reconstruction strategies.

Integrating Gender into Participatory Development

In Timor Leste, the Bank-supported **Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project** helped communities create democratically-elected village councils to organize the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure. To ensure that the needs of the female headed households were met, the project incorporated a 50-50 male-female quota for elected village representatives. The program increased the number of women in community development planning positions at the local level. **The Multisectoral HIV/AIDS Control and Orphans Project in Burundi** involved many stakeholders, including women, line ministries, civil society, religious groups and people living with HIV/AIDS. The project ensures provincial HIV/AIDS committees include 15 members of which 5 are women. These committees are responsible for promoting and monitoring the implementation of activities.

Awareness-Raising

Several seminars and conferences on gender and post-conflict reconstruction have been organized: Conflict, Post-Conflict and HIV/AIDS – The Gender Connections, March 2001; Gender Impact of Armed Conflict, May, 2001; Empowering Women: Socio-Economic Development in Post-Conflict Tajikistan, September 2003; and Women in Post-Conflict Iraq, September 2003.

Research

- Barker, Gary and Christine Ricardo. 2005. *Young Men and the Construction of Masculinity in Sub-Saharan Africa*. CPR Social Development Papers, No. 26
- Bouta, Tsjard, Georg Freks, and Ian Bannon. 2004. *Gender, Conflict and Development*.
- De Watteville, Natalie. 2002. *Addressing Gender Issues in Demobilization and Reintegration Programs*. Africa Region Working Paper.

Alliance building

Externally, the Bank has formed broad-based partnerships with UN agencies (UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO), international relief agencies, such as the ICRC, and national NGOs in active client countries, on gender and conflict issues.

◆ For more information about on the World Bank's approach to gender and conflict, please visit <http://www.worldbank.org/conflict> and <http://www.worldbank.org/gender>. ◆

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