



# Gender and Statebuilding in Fragile and Conflict-affected States

## Key Messages

### Why integrate a gender perspective into statebuilding?

Integrating a gender perspective into international support to statebuilding processes is key to improving the quality of international engagement in fragile and conflict-affected states. This involves basing all interventions on an understanding of the distinct experiences of men and women and acting on opportunities to promote gender equality in these contexts. Doing so is essential for at least four reasons:

- **Gender equality is important in its own right and statebuilding processes offer particular opportunities to advance it.** Donors can help seize these opportunities, for example by supporting women's participation in peace negotiations and constitution-making processes.
- **Gender-sensitive approaches can accelerate progress towards internationally agreed peacebuilding and statebuilding goals.** For example understanding the ways in which gender inequalities can act as a driver of conflict is central to designing effective interventions that benefit both men and women and support sustainable solutions (*see Box 1*).
- **A good understanding of the links between gender relations and statebuilding processes is essential in order to avoid negative impacts of international support.** For example, donors may risk further embedding discriminatory practices if they advocate for “grounded legitimacy” approaches without having analyzed the specific impact of customary institutions on women in a particular context.
- **There are complex interactions between statebuilding and development, and gender equality matters for both processes.** “Gender equality is smart economics”<sup>1</sup>, offering the potential to raise productivity, improve other development outcomes and contribute to more representative decision-making within society.

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1. World Bank (2011), *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*, Washington D.C.

## BOX 1. GENDER AND CATTLE RAIDING IN SOUTH SUDAN

In South Sudan, understanding the dynamics of bride wealth is particularly important for any conflict analysis or programming intended to address gender inequality, community-level violence, or employment opportunities. Young men must acquire cows in order to get married and move up the social hierarchy, otherwise they are prevented from participating fully in community life. Decades of conflict and rising cattle prices have destabilised this practice, and young men are unable to make a living given the limited employment opportunities. This has exacerbated cattle raiding and violence between communities.

Applying a gender lens to the issue of cattle raiding exposes the layers of gendered identities and customary practices of bride wealth that are driving violence between communities. Armed with such an understanding, donors can support programmes that address the root of the issue and lead to more sustainable solutions.

*Sources:* Schomerus, M. and T. Allen (2010), *Southern Sudan at Odds with Itself: Dynamics of Conflict and the Predicament Of Peace*, Development Studies Institute, LSE. Sommers, M. and S. Schwartz (2012), *Dowry and Division: Youth and Statebuilding in South Sudan*, United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Washington, D.C.

## Contextual Challenges

Many of the challenges of addressing gender relations and inequalities in these contexts are common to wider support to peace and statebuilding processes. However, supporting gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected situations can be particularly problematic as it requires fundamental social, political, economic and institutional changes that can be difficult for donors to understand and influence.

### 1. Reconciling tensions between normative international commitments and local political realities and priorities.

Statebuilding is a local political process that depends on the buy-in of key power brokers whose interests and value systems may not always align with or respect gender equality as an international normative commitment.

### 2. Managing perceived trade-offs between short-term stability and longer-term goals.

In an immediate post-conflict context, the most urgent priority is to establish peace. The focus on short-term stability may come at the expense of objectives such as inclusion and gender equality.

### 3. Navigating the informal institutions that shape and regulate men's and women's roles, responsibilities and opportunities.

It is difficult to translate formal gains in women's rights, such as quotas or new legislation, into meaningful change. The outcomes such formal institutions deliver in practice depend in large part on a range of informal institutions – including value systems, power relationships, and traditional institutions – which can be difficult for donors to grasp and access.

### 4. Understanding drivers of resistance to gender equality reforms.

There may be a variety of reasons for resistance to reform. Not all of them necessarily originate primarily from objections to women's rights as such. Instead, women's rights – and opposition to enhancing them – may be caught up in broader political issues, such as land allocation or inter-community relations (*see Box 2*).

### 5. Recognising and effectively engaging with the range and diversity of women's voices and movements.

Women tend to be divided along the same ethnic, religious, socio-economic or ideological lines as the rest of society. This means that there is often no common "women's agenda" with which external actors can easily align (*see Box 3*).

## BOX 2. RESISTANCE TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN BURUNDI

Resistance to reform is not exclusively driven by a deliberate intention to deny women their rights. It may be rooted in broader political issues with which women's issues may be entwined, such as land allocation or inter-community relations.

For example, research in Burundi found that opposition to women's inheritance rights was not primarily based on the desire to preserve patriarchal tradition. Rather, elites were concerned that additional pressures on scarce land resources resulting from the division of land between sons and daughters would exacerbate existing land pressure and threaten traditional practices of land distribution through patronage. Their main fear was that such a disruption could cause increased insecurity and violence.

Effective support to gender equality reforms therefore requires a solid understanding of how gender roles and relations interact with the broader local context and power dynamics.

*Sources:* Castillejo, C. (2011). *Building a State that Works for Women: Integrating gender into post-conflict statebuilding*, Madrid: FRIDE. Gahungu, P. and G. Kazoviyo (2011), *The Issue of Inheritance for Women in Burundi*, Madrid: FRIDE.

## Key success factors

A more politically informed approach to integrating a gender perspective into statebuilding can help tackle these challenges. This involves greater awareness of the links between women's ability to participate in the statebuilding process and the wider distribution of power. It also calls for greater realism about how long change takes, particularly in situations where state institutions are weak. Key ingredients of a more effective approach include:

**Developing a highly nuanced understanding of the local context**, including the ways in which gender inequalities are tied up with wider issues of how resources are distributed. This can be crucial, for example, in addressing drivers of resistance to reform, which often reflect wider political issues such as land allocation (*see Box 2*) or the balance of power between formal and customary institutions.

**Making use of a variety of different strategies** that will allow donors to seize whatever opportunities exist to help advance women's rights in the short term while also pursuing longer-term and more indirect approaches. In the area of political empowerment, for example, effective interventions could combine training for women candidates, local advocacy for quotas, campaigns against electoral violence and sensitizing male community leaders.

**Supporting women's agency and mobilisation at different levels and for different purposes** – including for the pursuit of grassroots initiatives and engagement in national and local peacebuilding or political processes – while taking into account the diverse views and interests among women.

**Engaging with a wider range of actors and institutions** and facilitating identification of common interests and partnerships to promote gender equality. Donors can help achieve this, for example, by drawing in South-South contacts with relevant experience or framing gender equality issues in ways that appeal to the interests of a diversity of key power holders.

**Using political influence and senior-level commitment** to advance the gender and statebuilding agenda, **and seizing opportunities particularly in the early stages of statebuilding**. Supporting women's participation in constitution-making processes is a prime example.

### BOX 3. DIVERSITY AMONG THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN NEPAL

In Nepal a varied and diverse women's movement has been in the making since the 1990s. *Dalit* women were organising around caste discriminations; *Madhesi* women around exclusion along the lines of class, language and specific customary practices such as dowry and *ghumto* (the veil); and *Janajati* women, who are less affected by discriminatory religious and cultural practices, prioritised access to education, health and employment. The different women's agendas can thus overlap with other political agendas and group identities, and donors need to take into account the full diversity of these voices when deciding which organisations and priorities to support.

*Sources:* El-Bushra, J., Lyttikäinen M. and S. Schoofs (2012), "Gender Equality and Statebuilding", Framing Paper for the OECD DAC International Network on Conflict and Fragility, unpublished; IDEA (2012), *Women Members of the Constituent Assembly: A study on contribution of women in constitution making in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Women's Caucus, Constituent Assembly Secretariat, Nepal Law Society.

## Recommendations

A series of operational constraints stifle progress in achieving a more politically informed and more effective approach to integrating a gender perspective into statebuilding. They include: i) a lack of adequate tools and skills for gender analysis, ii) a weak evidence base on effective strategies and the impact of gender-sensitive statebuilding, and iii) a related lack of accountability, resources and high-level political will. The following entry points can help donors tackle these challenges and deliver better outcomes for both men and women in fragile and conflict-affected states.

## Strategic entry points and examples of actions donors could take

STRATEGIC ENTRY POINTS	EXAMPLES OF ACTIONS DONORS COULD TAKE
<b>Strengthen analytical tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise existing conflict analysis and statebuilding frameworks to reflect gender analysis</li> <li>• Ensure that all staff have adequate training and knowledge to be able to effectively apply gender analysis in programme design, development and monitoring</li> <li>• Ensure the inclusion of gender issues in any future assessment frameworks such as Fragility Assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Improve the funding and accountability mechanisms available to support gender-sensitive statebuilding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen co-ordination of in-country funding allocations to support gender-related statebuilding activities and, where relevant, reinforce the priorities set out in National Action Plans</li> <li>• Consider earmarking within statebuilding funding streams to ensure that resources are available each year for programmes that directly support gender equality and women's rights</li> <li>• Support efforts to advance international and national-level accountability mechanisms, including transparent reporting and data collection on progress in implementing UNSCR 1325 and other commitments</li> <li>• Partner with the private sector to leverage and target resources more effectively</li> </ul>
<b>Contribute to building an evidence base on gender-sensitive statebuilding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocate funding to multi-year research programmes to understand the impact of increasing the gender-sensitivity of statebuilding programmes</li> <li>• Support the establishment of partnerships between northern and southern-based research organisations working on issues relating to gender and statebuilding</li> <li>• Ensure that all programmes incorporate detailed monitoring and evaluation components that specifically relate to gender issues</li> </ul>
<b>Use international forums and networks to support change at the national and local levels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding as a platform for exchanging good practice and lessons learned on integrating a gender perspective into statebuilding</li> <li>• Support international networks that work with grassroots women's organisations and provide channels for them to feed their priorities and recommendations into UN, EU, NATO and other inter-governmental forums</li> <li>• In the convening role that many UN organisations or donors play, ensure that speaking invitations are extended to women's civil society, for example in donor planning or national recovery conferences</li> </ul>
<b>Identify skills and capacity gaps within donor agencies and take measures to address them</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and carry out gender training with staff working on peacebuilding and statebuilding programmes</li> <li>• Ensure that gender advisors have the seniority and access to high-level policy discussions relating to statebuilding</li> </ul>
<b>Build on entry points to integrate a gender and statebuilding lens into the piloting of the New Deal and the development of the post-2015 framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for the inclusion of gender-sensitive and gender-specific indicators within the indicators being developed for the PSGs</li> <li>• Ensure that women and girls are consulted and supported to identify their priorities in relation to governance, security, justice and economic dimensions of the post-2015 framework</li> <li>• Use the New Deal piloting as an opportunity to strengthen implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the pilot countries</li> </ul>
<b>Foster linkages with local women's organisations and grassroots networks and ensure they are able to access funding and programming opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish quick-disbursing, smaller-scale funding streams that are accessible to community-based and grassroots organisations and streamline procurement processes</li> <li>• Build capacity among programme staff to be able to identify and engage with local women's groups and grassroots networks</li> <li>• Facilitate South-South and North-South linkages among women's organisations and networks to enable cross-learning</li> <li>• Establish regular and institutionalised mechanisms for consulting with local women's organisations on priorities and recommendations in relation to the statebuilding process</li> </ul>