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**Peace Agreements as a Means for Promoting Gender Equality and Ensuring**  
**Participation of Women**

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## **Gender, Human Security, and Peacebuilding: Finding Links between Policy and Practice**

**Richard Strickland**

This paper will highlight some of the links between gender and human security in the context of peacebuilding and some of the ways in which gender discrimination may erode those links to the detriment of women's status. It will also consider ways in which elements of a human rights framework might address persistent gender discrimination and women's exclusion from the benefits of peace processes. Much of the background for this paper rests in a separate document exploring gender relations and issues of equity in peacebuilding, which was completed following an extensive review of recent literature and policy debates conducted at the International Center for Research on Women in 2002, with financial and technical support from the International Development Research Centre. A summary of that document can be found in the attached Annex.

### **Links between Gender and Peace Processes**

Whether in time of war or peace, gender identities and the dynamic of gender relations carry a strong influence on a wide array of social, economic, and political outcomes. Despite cultural variations, the consistent difference between women's and men's gender roles based in power influences women's access to and control over resources, their visibility and participation in social and political affairs, and their ability to realize their fundamental human rights. Such relationships have been explored in depth in a broad range of analytical literature on subjects as diverse as the operational analysis of political institutions, the gender analysis of budget processes and economic activity, and the causal factors and public responses associated with violence against women.

In the context of Amartya Sen's 1999 discourse on "development as freedom," social norms and institutional practices that discriminate against women represent an "unfreedom" that constrains their capabilities by limiting such things as their political freedoms, economic facilities, and social opportunities. The capabilities of individuals – of women and men – and the measure of their human security depend upon institutional arrangements in economic, social, and political spheres that influence the process of development and require a corresponding plurality of institutions. In conflict-affected settings where most institutional arrangements may be altered or destroyed, it becomes especially important to consider how gender dynamics shape societal operations and policy outcomes both in the short term and in the longer term aftermath of conflict and reconstruction. Understanding such dynamics is essential for successful gender mainstreaming in peace processes.

If, as Sen argues, human development focuses on the enhancement of individuals' capabilities and freedoms, then human rights represent the claims that individuals have on the conduct of individual and collective agents, and on the design of social

arrangements to facilitate or secure these capabilities and freedoms (Moser and Norton 2001). In post-conflict transitions, an emphasis on a human rights framework would promote fundamental elements of accountability and transparency in evolving institutional practices and policies. It is possible, and indeed essential, that such a rights-based perspective incorporates a gendered approach to peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and reconstruction. Members of the International Women's Mission to the North East of Sri Lanka have observed:

Such an approach works on many levels to support and develop local capacities of women and men, while working to transform structures of power from structures dominated by violence and militarization into ones that promote a just and sustainable peace, protective of the rights of all people irrespective of ethnic, gender, class, caste or religious identities. Such an approach recognizes the power of disparities built into and reinscribed through official processes of peace building and humanitarian and development assistance and calls for programming to be transformative in nature. In so doing it facilitates a move away from charity or social welfare paradigms to a model that works, with guidance from and in collaboration with local women, to support self-reliance and social justice (Women and Media Collective 2002).

In a broad sense, a human rights framework can be employed in this way to strengthen the human rights content of public policy in support of stronger and more equitable public, civil, and community institutions. These, in turn, enhance the human and social capabilities of individuals and communities, increase their capacity to manage risk and adversity, and contribute to long-term livelihood sustainability and the realization of human rights associated with secure livelihoods (Moser and Norton 2001). In this way, human security and human rights can be seen as mutually reinforcing. The recent report of the Commission on Human Security (2003) defines human security as protecting fundamental freedoms that are the essence of life:

It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity....Human security helps identify the rights at stake in a particular situation. And human rights help answer the question: How should human security be promoted? The notion of duties and obligations complements the recognition of the ethical and political importance of human security.

### **Impediments to Gender Mainstreaming**

An approach that relates gender concerns in peacebuilding to a rights-oriented pursuit of human development and human security is consistent with the intent of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 concerning women, peace, and security and with the

imperatives associated with mainstreaming gender into all aspects of peace processes, peacekeeping operations, and reconstruction initiatives. However, the early evidence drawn from assessments of relevant policies and practices following adoption of the resolution is mixed (U.N. 2002; UNIFEM 2002; Strickland and Duvvury 2003). Despite increased expression of international will to address gender-based inequities in conflict and post-conflict settings, translating that will into action remains problematic. In part, this relates to some of the observed shortcomings of Resolution 1325, including the document's limited guidance for practical application when designing field-level interventions and continued conflation of "women" and "gender" despite the focus on gender mainstreaming. Limited action is also related to an uneven appreciation of the issues (including gender itself) and disagreement on priorities at national and sub-national levels of implementation.

Gender mainstreaming relates directly to principles associated with the elimination of gender-based discrimination. However, many of the institutional frameworks and operations of peacebuilding and reconstruction – even some of those said to be gender sensitive – have failed to address underlying gender roles and associated power dynamics that lay the basis for institutionalized gender discrimination. In too many cases, "gender" and "gender perspectives" have become shorthand terms for women and women-specific interventions. While gender mainstreaming does not replace the need for the latter, such interventions should be seen as useful adjuncts, not substitutes, in the course of peacebuilding and reconstruction.

More fundamentally, even gender-sensitive approaches have sometimes failed to address the larger contextual issues behind women's marginalization in peacebuilding and reconstruction, which in turn can exacerbate women's marginalization in economic, social, and political processes. This suggests that in such cases, the actors and processes of peacebuilding give inadequate attention to the construction of gender norms and the processes by which they can be transformed to ensure more equitable gender relations. Correcting this inadequacy is no easy task since it requires stepping back to consider fundamental aspects of gender identities, notions of power, and a nuanced understanding of the norms and dynamics of violence, power, and conflict. Yet this is what is required to ensure gender equality and women's participation in peace processes and reconstruction.

Furthermore, the dynamic nature of gender perspectives involving diverse masculinities and femininities requires that any response to gender inequality should be equally dynamic. Yet, in many cases where measures for redress or correction may exist (e.g., in the form of international humanitarian law), the corrective measures themselves may rely on hierarchies based on gender and lead to some new form of discrimination against women, if they are not accompanied by deeper transformation of institutions and practices in terms of gender roles and power dynamics. For instance, a selective legal focus on certain high profile aspects of women's experiences during armed conflict (e.g., incidents of sexual violence during conflict) may address a specific set of problems but may not generate lasting changes of attitude or alter fundamental power dynamics (Gardam and Jarvis 2001). This may serve to shift attention away from lower profile

social and economic needs of women for which few legal norms exist, yet the consequences of neglecting these aspects of women's lives can be just as profound for their human security in terms of livelihoods and human rights.

Countering this inadequacy requires multidimensional transformative approaches that go beyond many gender-sensitive approaches to fundamentally alter the balance of power in gender relations as societies resolve conflicts, establish the parameters for peace, and rebuild politically, economically, and socially. By seeking to change masculinities as they relate to the dynamics of conflict and violence, such approaches would help replace masculinities emphasizing violence, confrontation, and domination with patterns of masculinity more open to negotiation, cooperation, and equality (Connell 2001). In this sense, sustainable peacebuilding that promotes gender equality and women's participation can be seen as a comprehensive process of social reconstruction entailing the transformation of social relationships, values, identities, ideologies, and institutions.

Similarly, it has been argued by the Deputy Minister of Defense South Africa that those working for gender equality in peacebuilding and reconstruction must challenge the male-dominated security paradigm that emphasizes the military dimension, and promote a multidimensional human security paradigm that brings issues of economic, social, ecological, political, and gender justice into the peace equation (Madlala-Routledge 2001). This would encourage the shift from a narrow male-dominated understanding of power to a perspective of collective security based on an inclusive exercise of power:

The new paradigm of peace building involves a comprehensive process of social reconstruction and a transformation of social relationships, values, identities, ideologies and social institutions. It calls for the participation of women in peace building, peace keeping, peace making and decision making. By peace building, we mean organized efforts and initiatives to promote human security. These efforts are very significant, if we are to avoid a shallow approach to peace that focuses narrowly on the actions of elites. Exclusion of women from peace keeping, peace making and decision making in the aftermath of war means that peace is not achieved or fails to address key issues, such as the reintegration of women ex-combatants, violence against women and the needs of women refugees. In these situations peace is not meaningful (Madlala-Routledge 2001).

Madlala-Routledge suggests that interventions addressing the dynamics of peacebuilding as a social process might include the following:

- Creating alternative social identities, including demilitarized conceptions of citizenship
- Constructing new gender relations that challenge the connection between militarism and masculinity
- Supporting and expanding the operation of various institutions at regional, national, and local levels, in both state and civil society, that allow people to

process their demands and conflicts in peaceful ways and to promote reconciliation, cooperation, tolerance, security, respect for human rights, and social cohesion

- Shifting the various social meanings attached to small arms
- Promoting alternative values and ideologies through “peace education” by churches, trade unions, and educational institutions
- Empowering civil society, including women and women’s groups, to participate in debates on defense and security

### **When Links Work: Some Hopeful Signs**

The peacebuilding community is gradually recognizing the value of gender-sensitive approaches, as suggested by a wide range of policy statements leading up to and following after the adoption of Resolution 1325 that are concerned with women’s participation in and benefit from peacebuilding and reconstruction. However, there remains considerable uncertainty about how to fully incorporate gender into program design to address discriminatory practices, at both individual and institutional levels. Finding examples of “good practice” in this regard is still a challenge, particularly when trying to find evidence of enduring positive change in terms of women’s economic status, political participation, and freedom from gender-based violence.

Nevertheless, there are a number of recent initiatives, if mentioned only anecdotally here, that merit close attention and may offer lessons for other conflict-affected settings. Much praise from various circles has been expressed for the level of attention given to gender concerns through official institutional mechanisms in East Timor. Efforts there coincided with the increased attention of the international community to issues of gender, conflict, and peace, and the introduction of a special gender advisor as part of the peace operations in East Timor was seen as a significant experiment in gender mainstreaming. While it may be early to pass judgment on this strategy of operation, the initial evidence suggests that such a move helped raise gender and gender relations onto a higher plane of policy discourse than had been seen previously in other conflict-affected settings. This combined fruitfully with the active network of women’s organizations, which had been instrumental in the country’s independence movement and then in the call for women’s participation in nation building and development of the constitution. Reliance on the framework of international human rights was fundamental to this work and supported national efforts for developing a women’s charter of rights and the creation of the Office for the Promotion of Equality, charged with ensuring gender mainstreaming in government institutions. For such reasons, the case of East Timor remains one to follow as a potential example of “good practice.”

In several countries pursuing peace agreements in recent years, women have sought to lend their voices and insert their concerns in the peace negotiations (e.g., Rwanda and

Burundi). Frequently, this has represented the intersection of formal and informal activities associated with peace processes. However, while women's involvement in informal activities is well documented, they are seldom included in formal activities, reflecting the fact that they are usually not represented among the decisionmakers and military leaders who dominate conflict resolution, peace negotiations, infrastructure reconstruction, and provision of humanitarian aid. In several cases, women's initiatives have occurred alongside formal peace processes and have even found creative means to introduce their recommendations into the formal process, yet rarely have women been accorded equal status with men or proportional representation in peace negotiations.

A notable example of efforts to break this pattern and ensure women's participation in formal activities to develop a peace agreement can be found in Sri Lanka, where women's groups have long worked to bring about a negotiated political solution to the island's ethnic conflict. Following the initial ceasefire agreement between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in February 2002, two women's coalitions (Mothers and Daughters of Lanka and the Sri Lanka Women's NGO Forum) called for the strengthening of the agreement and petitioned the parties to ensure that the peace process would be inclusive, representative, and conducted within a democratic framework. An international consultation on women, peacebuilding, and constitutional development organized by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies soon followed, sparking development of a Women's Peace Memorandum that was delivered to leaders on both sides of the conflict. The Memorandum sought to include women's concerns in the peace process and articulated the basic elements of a gendered framework for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It called for women's full and equal participation in peace negotiations and in decisionmaking in all phases of the reconstruction, rehabilitation, and transformation process. It also underscored the importance for all efforts toward peace to take place within the norms and standards of human rights and humanitarian law. Subsequently, an International Women's Mission was organized to assess women's concerns and prepare specific recommendations to the Plenary of the Peace Talks. Five teams visited different conflict-affected zones in the northeast districts and the "border" areas. The findings were compiled in a Mission Report used for lobbying the government, the LTTE, and multilateral missions and delegations attending the Sri Lanka aid group meeting and the third round of peace talks in Oslo in December 2002. The Mission Report concentrated on recommendations for the peace process and for policy formulation that flowed from the findings, and highlighted the need for a gendered and rights-based approach to peacemaking, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. One outcome of the third round of peace talks attributed to the impact of the Mission Report was the establishment of a Sub Committee for Gender Issues (SGI). This ongoing group, composed of five women from the south and five from the north, is mandated to explore the effective inclusion of gender concerns in the peace process. Periodic meetings of the SGI have occurred since its establishment, including occasional meetings with representatives of the government, the LTTE, and the Norwegian facilitators. The full effectiveness of the strategy remains to be seen, dependent upon how well the peace process itself can be kept on track.

Other examples of interventions in the field suggest that progress is being made, even if slowly, to identify and utilize strategies linking specific measures of peacebuilding and reconstruction to the pursuit of gender equality and women's participation. As part of the Stability Pact for South East Europe covering twelve states and territories, the Stability Pact Gender Task Force employs a multidimensional program to advance gender-balanced sustainable development in the region. With a firm grounding in gender equality and human rights, the Gender Task Force focuses on four priority areas: engendering key policies (security, labor, social, economic); gender equality machinery (including training in gender disaggregated statistics and review of regional equal opportunity laws); active women's citizenship and political empowerment (including elections training and gender equality in local governance); and information technology and publishing. Through such work, women's political participation is promoted as a means to address gender-differentiated social and economic outcomes of national and regional transitions from conflict. Similar efforts to build women's political skills and promote their participation in politics and decisionmaking can be found in a number of post-conflict settings, including Afghanistan and East Timor. Such efforts are not always successful, however, since the component targeted at training women often is not matched by measures addressing the underlying normative structures and processes that have served to exclude women. Various analytical works by Anne Marie Goetz have examined the challenges of building accountable, representative institutions, suggesting for example that the creation of "national machineries" for women may promote bureaucratic representation of women but often fail to act as institutional openings for feminist politics that address fundamental inequalities of power between women and men (Goetz 1997; Goetz and Hassim 2002). National machineries are more likely to be effective in settings characterized by vibrant civil societies with the capacity for open, participatory political discourse, as suggested by the example of South Africa.

### **Some Suggested Next Steps**

Given what we know of gender discrimination, human security, and the potential impact of human rights frameworks for development, new attention needs to be given to determining ways to ensure women's political participation, economic justice, and social equality. This is especially true in societies emerging from conflict where norms and institutions are in a state of flux as reconstruction and rehabilitation occur. At such times, the three "I's" of inertia, implementation, and institutionalization may be addressed through efforts to close the gap between the international commitment to gender balance and mainstreaming and the observed outcomes (Stiehm 2001). Achieving gender equality first requires overcoming the *inertia* characterizing most institutions, something already occurring within the U.N. system and among some its partners as suggested by significant shifts in policy about and support for gender mainstreaming and women's participation in peacekeeping. However, *implementation* in terms of devoting energy and resources to put policies into practice (and to turn political will into action) is a slower, more difficult task, reflecting the ongoing search for practical operational measures. This in turn affects progress toward the *institutionalization* of policies, which relates to the



alteration of norms, including those that shape and define institutional policies and practices.

There is the need to determine how to institutionalize the current understanding of gender relations and power dynamics in ways that contribute to a normative framework promoting gender equality in peacebuilding and progress toward conflict prevention. Employing human rights to address gender discrimination in this context is fundamental to a transformative approach that would alter the balance of power in gender relations as societies rebuild following conflict. Peacebuilders themselves and the organizations they represent must understand the role of gender, identity, and power and transform their own operations accordingly. Additionally, strategies are needed that ensure women's equal representation and participation in structures of governance and policymaking in countries emerging from conflict. Conceived in this way, gender mainstreaming has transformative potential because it requires changes in organizational cultures and ways of thinking and shifts in the goals, structures, and resource allocations of international agencies, governments, and non-governmental organizations.

Violations of women's human rights underscore the structure of unequal relations at the root of conflict and suggest the need to understand peace as being connected to the broader issues of unequal relationships between women and men in all spheres of life. The interface of peace and gender relations is central to the holistic conceptualization of peace incorporating aspects of economic and social justice, equality, and human rights. The close relation between peace politics and unequal power relations suggests that rather than a return to the status quo, a just peace involves the reworking of the gender status quo (Manchanda 2001).

It is therefore important to consider concrete ways in which specific program recommendations in all facets of peace processes might be structured with reference to specific human rights provisions. While the local interpretation or manifestation of any given right may vary from setting to setting, the overarching principles of the human rights framework, including principles of transparency, accountability, participation, and non-discrimination, can be used to frame the process for dialogue about specific interventions. Thus, it may be possible to consider the provisions for women's rights in terms of property or education or employment and then develop specific action proposals in a given setting that would expose and address gender aspects for that right as program measures are developed. An example of this approach to intervention design and policy recommendation can be found in the UNIFEM handbook, *Turning the Tide*, which developed a series of recommended actions for diverse sectors constructed around specific human rights that aim to ensure gender equality in responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic (UNIFEM 2001). The methods employed to uncover the nature and implications of gender dynamics associated with the effects of the AIDS epidemic and the shape of rights-related responses may serve as a guide for a similar, broader exercise to expose and address gender gaps in peace processes.

It is important to ensure that peace initiatives are, from the outset, fully inclusive and participatory in order that fundamental gender concerns are integrated in all aspects of

peace negotiations and reconstruction activities. Formal peace activities (often male-dominated) must begin to incorporate more of the actors and knowledge associated with informal activities, where women's concerns and participation are often highly visible. In the context of employing human rights to transform peace processes, it seems imperative that any action leading to peace negotiations and peace agreements should recognize the fundamental principle of gender equality and ensure that all groups active in defining and working toward peace are involved in the process. While there have been recent cases of steps by women's groups to insert their concerns and recommendations in the course of peace agreements, this has often been an *ad hoc* process lacking the same level of legitimacy or participation accorded to members of the formally recognized negotiating parties, often dominated by men. It may be necessary to think of a mapping exercise in advance of peace negotiations that would identify all groups working in a country to promote peace and reconciliation, including all those engaged in informal peace activities. Then measures might be taken to actively engage all such groups in a consultative process supporting development of a peace agreement, thereby increasing the likelihood that gender-based concerns can be inserted into the formal process from the outset. For example, if such an exercise had been mandated in the case of the Burundi peace negotiations, the contributions by women's NGOs that were submitted in an *ad hoc* fashion parallel to the formal process may have been incorporated more formally from the outset on an equal basis with other concerns addressed. Taking this approach would fundamentally target basic gender roles and power dynamics and would promote the kind of emphasis on equality that is essential to gender mainstreaming.

Given the complexity and interlinkage of factors determining gender equality, it is useful to think of actions and recommendations along a multi-pronged approach addressing gender discrimination. One such approach to put women's rights prominently on the agenda, employed in battles against gender discrimination in the United States over the last 25 years, included simultaneous efforts addressing public understanding, legislative change, and change in judicial doctrine (Ginsburg 2002). It is likely that incorporating any single rights-based gender concern (e.g., women's property ownership and inheritance) into agendas or action plans for peacebuilding will ultimately require changing elements of public knowledge and legislation about that issue, as well as the institutional practice (e.g., of the legal system) required to uphold that right in the context of reconstruction. Therefore, efforts to employ a human rights framework to address gender discrimination in the context of peace initiatives will need to consider multiple levels of intervention if lasting change is to be achieved.

Finally, it is important to remember that there is likely to be no single recipe for success. Each conflict-affected setting will have its own unique social, cultural, and historical characteristics. Furthermore, gender perspectives are themselves dynamic and constantly changing and will vary from setting to setting. Overarching principles of the international human rights framework offer the general parameters for identifying key challenges to gender equality in peacebuilding and considering the means of intervention in terms of programs and policies. The specific actions that may result from such a process will have to be tailored through participatory methods to the context of the

conflict setting in question, where gender relations and human rights are defined and contested.

## Annex

### **Executive Summary\***

## **GENDER EQUITY AND PEACEBUILDING From Rhetoric to Reality: Finding the Way**

A Discussion Paper

By Richard Strickland and Nata Duvvury

International Center for Research on Women

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This paper is the product of a review of recent literature on issues of gender in the context of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. It was prepared as background material for an international workshop on gender equity and peacebuilding jointly convened by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in November 2002. Key findings and research questions are presented in relation to the effective integration of gender concerns into policies and programs that shape post-conflict societies. There has been progress in considering a gender perspective in international thinking, policy statements, and programs related to peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, as evidenced by recent documentation on this topic from the United Nations. Findings reported indicate a slow but positive shift in international opinion and understanding about the consequences of conflict on women and the importance of their participation in peacebuilding processes and post-conflict social transformation. However, gender discrimination continues through political exclusion, economic marginalization, and sexual violence during and after conflict, denying women their human rights and constraining the potential for development.

Women individually and collectively contribute to peacebuilding in many ways. Yet, their contributions are often overlooked because they take unconventional forms, occur outside formal peace processes, or are considered extensions of women's existing gender roles. Conflict and its aftermath affect women's lives and men's lives in different ways. Therefore, addressing gender norms is critical since they so strongly influence women's options for action. While the temporary loosening of gender roles that often accompanies conflict can bring opportunities for innovative efforts by women to build peace, sustainable peace also requires a more permanent transformation of social norms around violence, gender, and power.

While women represent a population that is severely and distinctly victimized by conflict, the tendency to disproportionately portray women as victims perpetuates inaccurate assumptions about their contributions to war and peace. Women are not solely passive victims; they are often powerful agents. The portrayal of women as victims not only

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\* The full text of the discussion paper can be found on the web sites of the International Center for Research on Women (<http://www.icrw.org>) and the International Development Research Centre (<http://www.idrc.ca>).

neglects the significant roles women have played in conflict and post-conflict, but also undermines their future potential as key participants in formal peace processes. Thus, the ability of international peacebuilding policy to incorporate a gender perspective takes on greater significance.

International policies and programs for peacebuilding have paid greater attention to gender in recent years. Gender-sensitive language has been widely adopted within the field since the mid-1990s, prompted by the identification of women and armed conflict as one of the critical areas of concern at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Prior to 2000, there was growing awareness of gender-differentiated experiences of and responses to armed conflict as it increasingly targeted civilian populations. Global concern and women's activism was galvanized especially by specific offenses, including sexual violence committed against women during conflict. Important international legal developments after Beijing included the landmark decision in 1998 to recognize rape and other sexual violence as crimes against humanity when committed within the context of war. Also, major international institutions such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Bank, the International Labour Office, UNIFEM, and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as many bilateral donor agencies (notably those in Canada and Australia) were establishing new guidelines for responses to conflict that included attention to gender.

The year 2000 marked a turning point in international policy addressing gender in conflict and peacebuilding with the U.N. Security Council adoption of Resolution 1325 concerning women, peace, and security. The resolution incorporated aspects of gender mainstreaming, highlighted by the Windhoek Declaration and the five-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action, and established a political framework making the pursuit of gender equality relevant to all elements of peacebuilding and reconstruction. Subsequent efforts to monitor progress toward gender mainstreaming have included two major assessments of policies, programs, and outcomes conducted within the U.N. system (one by the Secretary-General's office, the other by UNIFEM), and several other country-level evaluations undertaken by non-governmental organizations. With some caveats, there has been progress in the form of revised policies and program designs that respond to women's specific needs during conflict and reconstruction. Many of these have incorporated a gender perspective that acknowledges and, to a lesser extent, addresses men's gender roles as well as women's. Specific areas of progress include the international legal framework; peace processes; peacekeeping operations; humanitarian operations; reconstruction and rehabilitation; and reintegration.

While gender mainstreaming seeks to eliminate gender-based discrimination in policies and programs, initial evidence indicates that many of the peacebuilding and reconstruction institutional frameworks and their implementation continue to fail to address underlying gender roles and associated power dynamics that lay the basis for institutionalized gender discrimination.

Such lack of progress raises questions about the general approach to gender mainstreaming as currently conducted. Although the peacebuilding community is

gradually recognizing the value of gender-sensitive approaches, there remains uncertainty about how gender can be fully incorporated into program design to address discriminatory norms and practices that continue to impede women's participation in and benefit from peacebuilding and reconstruction.

One way that discrimination is perpetuated despite gender-sensitive approaches is through the continued subordination of women's human rights resulting from the power imbalance inherent in gender relations. Human rights were fundamental to the framing of "women and armed conflict" in the Beijing Platform for Action, and were underscored by the provisions of Resolution 1325. As the example of sexual violence in conflict settings has suggested, gender and human rights are inextricably intertwined. Consequently, a framework of peacebuilding and reconstruction must address socially entrenched gender-based discrimination. Research and interventions addressing violence against women outside the context of conflict settings offer lessons concerning the construction of gender norms and identities and how this is related to the violation of human rights. Such lessons can help expose the relationship between masculinity and violence against women. They may also help clarify whether women's human rights might best be promoted through a gender-specific focus on the rights of women as a specific group, or through a broad framework that emphasizes the rights of all people.

Efforts to introduce gender-sensitive approaches to peacebuilding have met with limited results because they fail to address underlying norms that define gender relations and power dynamics. Peacebuilding, despite recent progress toward being more gender-sensitive, gives inadequate attention to the construction of gender norms and the processes by which they can be transformed to ensure more equitable gender relations. Current gaps in knowledge suggest the need for further inquiry to understand the complex interplay among gender identity, power, and violence; to establish methods of monitoring and evaluation that assess and guide gender perspectives in peacebuilding initiatives; to document norms and institutional practices that influence women's economic reintegration; and to determine optimal strategies to promote the human rights of women in reconstruction and conflict prevention.

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