Inclusion in practice: Examining gender-sensitive conflict analysis

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Summary and key recommendations

Organisations working in and on conflict increasingly recognise that the causes of conflict are gendered. Therefore applying a gender perspective in any analysis is essential to tackling conflict at its roots. Commitments to undertake gender-sensitive conflict analysis have been recently included in national action plans on women, peace and security and related policies,[1] and there are now a range of toolkits and guidance available to combine gender analysis and conflict analysis in one framework.[2]

While some progress has been made in putting these commitments into practice, multilateral organisations, governments, and international, regional, national and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) each face specific challenges in carrying out gender-sensitive conflict analysis.[3] In particular, conflict analysis that includes a detailed examination of gender norms, how they are embedded in societal structures and institutions, and how they relate to conflict drivers is relatively rare.

This practice paper examines the experiences of peacebuilding practitioners and policy actors in undertaking gender-sensitive conflict analysis and integrating that analysis into programming and policymaking in conflict-affected contexts. It aims to identify and promote good practice by exploring the challenges faced by different actors in doing this work and identifying lessons learned from their experiences. The paper sets out why and how peacebuilders might make gender-sensitive conflict analysis a peacebuilding activity in itself – an approach which entails re-envisioning the relationship between analysis and practice.

The findings have been developed into suggestions as to how practitioners and policymakers could better conduct and use gender-sensitive conflict analysis in practice, which are summarised below.

Regional, national and local NGOs:

○ **Integrate gender-sensitive conflict analysis into longer-term peacebuilding strategies:** Incorporate regular participatory analysis into longer-term programming to sustain changes in gender norms.

○ **Document and systematise current approaches:** Create more formal processes for each stage of the conflict analysis process, and document the findings methodically.

Methodology

The findings are based on semi-structured interviews with 18 respondents carried out between January and March 2019. These individuals work for a range of organisations, including 3 multilateral agencies and 4 donor government agencies all located in Europe or North America, 5 international peacebuilding NGOs headquartered in Europe, and 4 regional, national or local NGOs[4] in conflict-affected contexts in South Asia, the Pacific and the Middle East. The findings were then further developed in a workshop attended by 3 representatives from national NGOs from conflict-affected contexts and 18 participants from international NGOs, as well as a meeting with 8 representatives from the UK Government.[5]

Respondents were asked:

○ what their current practices were in relation to gender-sensitive conflict analysis,

○ what challenges they faced in conducting it and translating it into peacebuilding responses,

○ what positive outcomes they had achieved from conducting this analysis, and

○ how they could be better supported in undertaking this work.

Interview with Emma Fernande Martissi and Tiburce Ngola Debonheur, members of a Local Peace Committee in the Central African Republic. © Caesar Poblicks/Conciliation Resources

International NGOs:

○ **Localise existing methodologies:** Translate existing gender-sensitive conflict analysis toolkits and methods into local languages and, with local partners, adapt tools to specific contexts.

○ **Integrate existing methodologies into new programming models:** Work with regional, national and local NGOs to support their ownership of the analysis and find new ways to incorporate the findings into programming approaches which meet their needs and objectives.

Donor governments and multilateral organisations:

○ **Re-value analysis:** Regularly conducting gender-sensitive conflict analysis in a proportionate way to the needs of each project should be an accepted part of peacebuilding project proposals.

○ **Reconsider what is 'credible' analysis:** Qualitative analysis that builds on the views of people living in conflict-affected communities is crucial. Analysis without these perspectives

can mean the gendered drivers of conflict are left out, resulting in failure to impact the root causes of violence.

○ **Take risks on new programming approaches:** Fund pilot projects to trial new programming approaches to address unequal or exclusionary gender norms that drive conflict.

All peacebuilding actors:

○ **Challenge 'quick win' approaches:** Find ways to collectively resist unrealistic expectations that peacebuilding activities addressing structural issues, including gender norms, should demonstrate measurable impact within short timeframes.

○ **Support internal reflection:** Provide resources for structured reflection on organisations' and individuals' own gendered power and privilege.

○ **Change organisational incentives:** Create formal accountability mechanisms to ensure that those doing conflict analysis conduct it in a gender-sensitive way.

What is 'good practice' when doing gender-sensitive conflict analysis?

Conflict analysis is used for a variety of different purposes, including to inform the design of long-term peacebuilding and development activities, as well as shorter-term humanitarian, diplomatic and security responses to crisis situations. The content and process of a conflict analysis will differ according to these different needs, and as such there can be no one-size-fits-all approach to integrating a gender perspective. However, there are some principles which actors working in and on conflict can apply in order to conduct a 'good practice' gender-sensitive conflict analysis.

Good practice principles

In order to ensure that the content of the analysis is gender-sensitive, the following principles can be applied to all conflict analysis, regardless of the methods used. Applying all of these principles can be difficult, and the specific challenges faced by different actors are explored on pages 10-12.

Analyse gender norms, not just categories: Doing gender analysis does not only mean thinking about 'women' and 'men' as categories of actors, it means analysing gender norms – that is, social constructions of masculinity and femininity. 'Masculinity' refers to the qualities, behaviours and attitudes associated with or deemed appropriate for 'men'; 'femininity' being used for characteristics linked with 'women'. Gender norms shape, and are shaped by, both conflict and peacebuilding – as such, analysing them is essential to understanding power dynamics in conflict. Understanding norms requires careful qualitative analysis – it is not enough to include statistics about women's position in society.
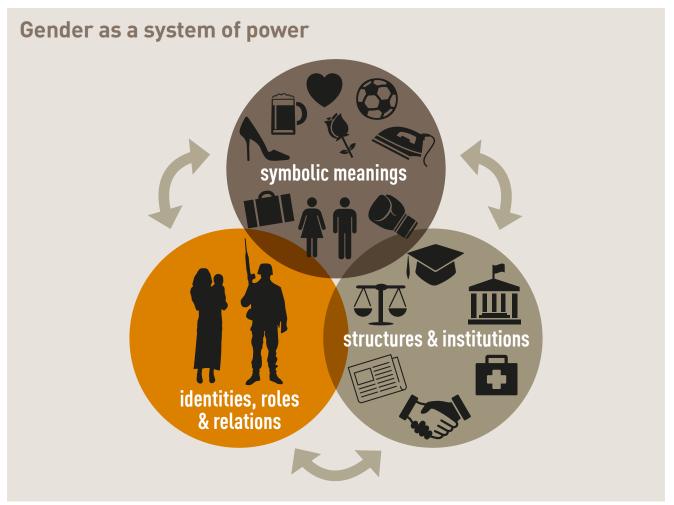
Understand gender as structural: Gender norms are not just a matter of ideas and beliefs: they are embedded in formal and informal institutions and structures in both private and public spheres. As such, analysing gender norms means examining the social, political, economic, religious, legal and cultural institutions that uphold them.

Apply an intersectional approach: Women, men and gender minorities can experience multiple forms of discrimination related to their diverse gender identities. These exacerbate social, legal, economic, cultural and political marginalisation. Taking an intersectional[6] approach means taking into account the multiple ways that systems of power – such as ethnicity, age, class, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, indigeneity and geographic location – interact with gender to shape how different actors engage with conflict and peacebuilding.

Analyse gendered drivers of conflict: It is now commonly understood that the impacts of conflict differ according to gender. However, conflict analysis should also examine how the drivers, or root causes, of conflict are gendered, and whether and how gender norms may themselves be driving conflict.[7] This could include, for example, a strong association between masculinity and gun ownership among young men, or a custom of women shaming men who refuse to join armed groups.

Think beyond the gender binary and stereotypes: It is important not only to consider cisgender, heterosexual women and men, but also gender and sexual minorities (GSM) – including, among others, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and non-binary individuals and communities (LGBTIQ+).[8] A good conflict analysis does not assume that, for example, women are peacemakers and men perpetrators of violence, but looks out for non-stereotypical behaviour and roles.

Use gender disaggregated data: As far as possible, both qualitative and quantitative data should be disaggregated by gender, including when analysing the impacts of conflict as well as the roles that different actors plan in conflict and peacebuilding. This may include differentiation of data for sex, age, or ethnicity.

Look beyond elite actors: While it is common for conflict analysis to focus on elite actors because they hold power, this is insufficient for understanding conflict and risks leaving out women and other marginalised groups altogether.[9] It is essential to analyse the roles of, for example, (non-elite) civil society actors, sub-national and local-level actors.

Gender as a system of power

- symbolic meanings
- identities, roles & relations
- structures & institutions

Gender can be understood as a system of power encompassing gendered identities, roles and relations; symbolic meanings; and structures and institutions. For more information see Conciliation Resources' Gender and conflict analysis toolkit for peacebuilders, p. 8-9. © Conciliation Resources/RevAngel Designs

Applying these principles can be particularly challenging where conflict analysis is reliant on existing literature or the knowledge of a few people leading the analysis. As the next section sets out, a participatory approach to undertaking analysis both helps to fill in these gaps in knowledge and enables the needs and ideas of people directly affected by violence to be included.

Participatory approaches

It is common to label some conflict analysis methodologies 'participatory' and others not, but in reality levels of participation lie across a spectrum. This includes analysis that is desk-based (using existing research) with internal consultation mechanisms, primary research in conflict-affected communities, and approaches in which members of conflict-affected communities take ownership of the process and bring in a diverse range of perspectives to the analysis. Levels of participation typically depend on a range of factors, including time and resources available, political sensitivities and security risks.

Among respondents in this research, officials in multilateral institution and donor governments described their conflict analysis as largely desk-based, often supplemented by consultations among colleagues within the institution. Sometimes consultations extend to formal state and elite civil society actors in the conflict context, sometimes including women's rights organisations, and less frequently to local level research with non-elite actors and community members.

International NGOs described a variety of practice, but tend to place more emphasis on civil society participation, often through conflict analysis workshops. Regional, national and local NGOs more often facilitate in-depth participatory analysis processes in conflict-affected communities, with careful attention to facilitating representation from different gender groups (see pages 6-7).

Meaningful participation in practice

As a peacebuilding organisation, Conciliation Resources advocates for participatory approaches to conflict analysis which maximise local ownership and involvement as far as possible in all stages of the process. Participatory approaches usually include the use of focus groups, key informant interviews and workshops for gathering data in conflict-affected communities, but ideally go beyond these to achieve *meaningful* participation – where those involved, particularly those who are directly affected by the conflict, can *influence* the process, findings and outcomes of the analysis. This approach is critical to link analysis to effective implementation.

Meaningful participation is grounded in the inclusion of a diverse range of stakeholders in the design, data gathering, analysis and dissemination phases.[10] Typically, a balance is struck between 'broad' participation (consulting with a wide range of participants) and 'deep' participation (aiming for analysis and findings that are generated and shared among key participants), with pragmatic decisions made about which approach to prioritise in each phase. Facilitating meaningful participation can be time-consuming, costly and relies on early engagement to build trusted relationships to overcome tensions and generate analysis that has practical value.[11]

Some participatory approaches can run the risk of becoming extractive, demanding excessive time and effort from participants and raising their expectations while offering little in return. However, a well-designed conflict analysis with sufficiently 'deep' participation can enable local participants to take ownership of the process and ensure that the final analysis is useful to them. Furthermore, participatory approaches to conflict analysis can themselves make a contribution to peacebuilding.

Gender-sensitive conflict analysis as peacebuilding practice

In addition to producing an examination of conflict, violence and peacebuilding opportunities in a given context, the process of a more participatory conflict analysis can perform other functions too. If done sensitively, these include building trust between different social groups, giving a platform to people that are frequently excluded, aiding recovery from conflict-related trauma, and beginning to shift attitudes and behaviours – all of which can contribute to peacebuilding outcomes. As such, participatory conflict analysis can be not only a tool for informing the design of peacebuilding activities, but also a peacebuilding activity in itself.[12] If done in a gender-sensitive way, it can also contribute to challenging inequitable gender norms and recovery from gendered violence.

The regional, national and local level NGOs who participated in this study identified how participatory gender-sensitive conflict analysis contributes

directly to gender equality and peacebuilding outcomes. For example, a respondent from a regional NGO described how making time and space for discussing and recovering from trauma as part of the conflict analysis process brought personal benefits to women, as well as a new angle to the analysis and avenues for advocacy work:

> [We have been] convening [trauma healing] meetings with the same women for almost 10 years. After two or three years they change – they start from not wanting to speak, but then they become vocal, share their stories, talk about the violence they faced. Now they talk to government officials. That is why participatory work is important – to build a wider understanding of an issue.

Doing analysis of gender norms as part of a conflict analysis can also begin to change people's attitudes towards them. A community activist described how, over time, the dialogues she organised helped the women who participated to question patriarchal gender norms:

> It has not redefined the roles of women but it has added new dimensions – women's participation in [conflict analysis] processes has itself helped to make this change [...] They have a space to raise their concerns, realise different issues they might never have thought about. Changing the norms is not something that happens overnight, it's a slow process. But [by] engaging different age groups and backgrounds, we help them realise a different angle to their roles and see that they can exercise their agency, that is how we can slowly move towards changing the mindsets.

Designing conflict analysis processes in this way also means making careful decisions about who is best to participate and how. One research participant from Kashmir explained how bringing together women from different communities to participate in gender-sensitive conflict analysis jointly helped to build trust between members of communities in conflict with each other:

> It was difficult to reach out to [displaced] Hindu communities in the camps initially – they were looking at Muslims as the aggressors and vice versa [...] But I was able to cut across that mistrust and misunderstanding and build good rapport and understanding amongst both the polarised communities. As a result I have women from both the groups, comprising of those [Hindus] who have migrated and those [Muslims] who are from the valley as members and part of a group I have set up and we all share a good rapport.

As these examples suggest, when conceived as a peacebuilding activity, participatory gender-sensitive analysis requires additional time and resources to plan, coordinate, implement and integrate. Furthermore, several respondents in this research noted that they need to update conflict analysis frequently – during strategic planning processes, when designing projects, during inception phases, and in response to events such as elections, sudden eruptions of violence or shifts in the economy. Systems analysis approaches are particularly relevant when considering how to implement new gender policies and programmes in complex, rapidly changing conflict-affected contexts.

Some respondents felt that this demand to continually update the analysis sits at odds with the practice of undertaking analysis processes with deep and broad participation. One respondent noted that peacebuilding organisations promoting participatory approaches are "good at thinking through long-term structural issues that need to be unpacked, but their method is less adapted for the fast pace of changing deadly conflict."

It is not possible for every conflict analysis to be designed in this way, particularly where analysis is needed urgently in response to rapid changes in conflict dynamics. However, if incorporated into longer-term programming activities, participatory and gender-sensitive approaches can produce regular, rigorous and credible conflict analysis and contribute to peace and gender equality at the same time. Doing this in a way that does not make the process overly burdensome could mean thinking innovatively about how to spread the analysis over multiple sessions and/or interspersing analysis with other activities. It could mean including gender-sensitive conflict analysis as part of a cycle of action research in which participants use the findings to draw up and implement their own action plan(s) before periodically reconvening to update the analysis. Creative thinking is needed on how to integrate gender-sensitive conflict analysis activities into programming models that are linked with efforts to create sustainable outcomes for peacebuilding and gender equality.

CONAMIC members and participants at Gender Workshop, Cachipay, Colombia, April 2016. © CIASE

Positive outcomes from gender-sensitive conflict analysis

Conducting conflict analysis in a gender-sensitive way has had a range of positive outcomes for respondents in this research, some emanating from the process itself, and others from the gendered content of the analysis produced.

This paper has already noted how regional, national and local level NGOs found participatory analysis served a variety of peacebuilding functions. Respondents from international NGOs found that the process of gender-sensitive conflict analysis generates new learning that can inform their organisational practices. For example, one described how applying a gender lens to conflict analysis has prompted their organisation to have wider conversations around ensuring that research processes are ethical and inclusive, and the need to provide pastoral care for staff:

People who do gender work tend to be aware of more issues around research ethics, the need to look at other factors that might play a role (disability, etc.) and tend to be the ones doing the pushing for issues around self-care, which isn't the gender adviser's task but comes out of the way that you have to think about the world when you think about gender.

Donor governments and multilateral institutions also found that holding gender-sensitive conflict analysis workshops is a rare opportunity for people in different institutional agencies to meet, and those connections sometimes translate into better collaboration on gender and conflict issues. However, the main concern for respondents from INGOs and donor institutions is whether making their conflict analysis gender-sensitive results in effective gender-sensitive responses to conflict. The following example demonstrates how this has come about.

Bangsamoro Women's Summit 2014, which fed into the drafting of the Bangsamoro Basic Law. © Conciliation Resources/Irene de la Torre.

Former armed gang member talking during a community reconciliation dialogue in Yobe State, northeast Nigeria.

Gender-sensitive peacebuilding in northern Nigeria

In 2017-18 Conciliation Resources and a local partner conducted a conflict analysis in northeast Nigeria, which has been severely affected by the Boko Haram insurgency.[13] We spoke to over 1,000 people – a third of them women – using surveys, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, and included research questions about changing gender norms, and the gendered impacts and root causes of violence. Taking an intersectional approach, the research focuses on the inclusion of marginalised persons, both male and female, ethnic and religious minorities, and the differences between old and young people.

The findings show that the failure to adequately sensitise communities about rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives for the return of people associated with Boko Haram has led to misconceptions that threaten to derail the entire process. A common view is that men were more likely to have joined Boko Haram voluntarily and were all active combatants, while women were more likely to have been coerced. Despite awareness of the prevalence of women suicide bombers, communities view men associated with Boko Haram as a greater threat and, as such, are more willing to accept women formerly associated with Boko Haram into the community. These pervasive misconceptions are fuelling community resistance to reintegration programmes. While women returnees face significant levels of stigma and exclusion, their presence is generally tolerated, whereas men will often face threats or acts of violence. Furthermore, reintegration and rehabilitation programmes may categorise people according to these gendered stereotypes, with men often facing a punitive form of reintegration while women undergo a community-based reintegration approach.

Based on these findings, Conciliation Resources re-focused its programmes, taking account of not just the varying ways in which women and men become associated with Boko Haram and their particular roles, but also the way that gender shapes how these individuals are perceived within the community. Our new programmes include better informing communities about the need for a targeted reintegration process that better responds to the different needs of women and men. In particular, we focus on shifting the recurring narrative of men as voluntary, active combatants. The programme also looks to take lessons from the way that communities are able to tolerate the presence of women associated with Boko Haram to see whether they could be applied to the reintegration of men.

Contributed by Daniel Tucker, West Africa Project Manager, Conciliation Resources.

Challenges of conducting gender-sensitive conflict analysis

Respondents were asked what challenges they face in ensuring that their conflict analysis is gender-sensitive, and particularly that it analyses gender norms and takes an intersectional approach. While some of the obstacles identified were common to all conflict analysis, many were particular to, or became particularly challenging when attempting to do, gender-sensitive conflict analysis.

Shared challenges

Several of the challenges identified by respondents were common to donors, multilateral organisations and NGOs at all levels.

Analysis work is difficult to fund: Staff in donor governments and multilateral organisations are expected to prioritise meeting spending targets, and funding analysis is not a quick way to do this. They are often subject to results-based management systems that do not regard analysis as an output in itself, meaning there is less incentive to spend time and money on it. Pressure to produce the kind of outcomes or impacts donors want to measure is felt by NGOs, who may in turn deprioritise analysis in their project proposals. There is sometimes an assumption that conflict analysis will be done before project funds begin, yet this means few resources are available, and conducting consultations without guaranteed funding risks raising false expectations in communities if funds do not materialise. The challenge of sustaining funding and the resultant lack of capacity often results in shallow attention to gender and a lack of intersectional analysis.

Qualitative research with 'local' and non-elite actors is perceived as less valid and credible by donors: Respondents from NGOs reported that some donors find quantitative research and/or qualitative research based on interviews with recognised 'experts' to be more credible, while local civil society is often perceived as too embedded in the context to provide credible analysis. This perception does not acknowledge that *all* conflict and peacebuilding actors – including foreign donors – bring their own interests and biases to their analysis: as one respondent put it, "we are all local to somewhere."[14] Furthermore, NGOs reported that donors request shorter analysis that focuses on women's experiences of conflict, rather than deeper analysis of gender norms.

Lack of skills and understanding: Respondents cited challenges in knowing how to do gender analysis in a deeper way. Respondents from donor organisations related this to the expectation that most officials will be generalists who rotate every few years, where as soon as they build up gender and contextual expertise they leave their posts, making it difficult to maintain institutional knowledge of more complex issues such as intersectionality or gender norms. Respondents from INGOs reported that gender advisers often do not hold power and influence within their organisations, while those with influence often lack gender expertise, making it difficult to embed institutional commitments to gender sensitivity.

Security risks: When travelling to areas affected by conflict, those involved in conflict analysis face the possibility of being caught up in violence or being deliberately targeted because of their participation in discussions about gender and/or conflict. For donors, and to a lesser extent INGOs, security protocols restrict travel to remote locations or areas experiencing higher levels of violence, with the result that potential threats are often transferred onto regional, national and local NGOs, who often take considerable risks to complete conflict analyses. These challenges can reduce the pool of people consulted as part of a conflict analysis to those in capitals or safer areas, often excluding those from marginalised groups.

Challenges for regional, national and local NGOs

While most respondents reported that **political sensitivities around talking about gender** represent an obstacle to doing gender-sensitive conflict analysis, those from regional, national and local NGOs explained that they often bear the highest risks in relation to these. In some contexts taboos make it difficult to discuss specific issues – such as sexual violence, sexual orientation and gender identity, or constructions of masculinity – and often the concept of gender is regarded as a foreign imposition. Respondents feared that speaking about or working on gender would undermine their relationships and programmes, resulting in pushback or resistance to the wider aims of the organisation. Even some organisations for whom gender equality is central to their work

Young Ladakhis in Srinagar, Indian-administered Kashmir, share their perspectives on peace and conflict. © Conciliation Resources

are acutely conscious that the 'gender agenda' can be used by donors to legitimise and/or distract from other, more problematic policies and practices, such as trade and defence partnerships with governments with poor human rights records.

While practitioners often carefully adapt their language – localising concepts and terminology, or talking about 'inclusion' rather than mentioning gender by name – they explained that they sometimes face pressure from donors and INGOs to use the word 'gender' in order to meet a donor's own internal targets. Some practitioners try to use the analysis process itself to challenge these sensitivities by creating safe spaces for discussion, but they reported that project cycles are often too short to significantly reduce resistance to discussions about gender.

Challenges for international NGOs

INGO respondents explained that existing methodologies for gender-sensitive conflict analysis, such as toolkits by Conciliation Resources and Saferworld, are helpful, but that the processes they describe are **time-consuming to carry out comprehensively**. They struggle to produce detailed, intersectional analysis of gender norms

with the time, staff and resources normally available for this work. They also noted that, despite recent progress, there is still **an attitude among some colleagues that gender is not a 'real' peacebuilding concern** – "nice to have" but not "essential" to conflict analysis. This is a common challenge also shared by donor organisations. Some respondents suggested that this belief results from a **lack of reflection by staff on their own positions of power and privilege**, as it can be much more difficult for people to see the effects of systems of power that they benefit from, than those they are negatively affected by. As one respondent noted:

> We have invested a lot in tools and evidence and reasoning but we haven't been able to create that internal reflection in our own people, particularly male colleagues, to see how they are biased. Being able to talk about privilege is very absent from our conversation. As a sector, we need to shake people's internal bias and the way they practice and see and live gender roles and norms.

This absence of reflexivity about power relations translates into a shortage or absence of institutional structures and processes, leadership, time and resources supporting gender-sensitive conflict analysis.

Challenges for donor governments and multilateral institutions

While donors vary in when and how often they conduct or commission conflict analysis, they were more likely than others to conduct **quick conflict analysis in response to crisis**. As one respondent put it:

> We know that doing rigorous conflict analysis early on to inform upstream work is better than waiting until a country is in crisis, but it's very difficult to persuade senior managers to invest in this when there are always crises to address. [...] The urgent is the enemy of the rigorous.

In such circumstances, gender analysis is one of the areas that can be either left out, or included in a tokenistic way. Donors also noted that **existing methodologies for gender-sensitive conflict analysis are often too long and complex for non-gender specialists**, particularly when they are also expected to mainstream other themes such as climate change and human rights.

It is challenging to include gender in a nuanced but proportionate way which does not overtake these other thematic concerns. Senior people often **do not have the right institutional incentives** to ensure gender analysis is always included: respondents from donor organisations noted that senior people were held formally accountable for meeting spending targets and producing results within agreed deadlines, but their performance was rarely assessed on the production of good quality conflict analysis or their attention to gender. Furthermore, managers often do not attend the same trainings as their junior colleagues, contributing to a **lack of buy-in at senior levels**.

Compared to other actors, donors' conflict analysis also tends to **focus more on the most powerful actors in a conflict**, which often excludes women and other marginalised groups from the outset. Some respondents believed that it is not possible to do a gender analysis of political institutions where women are absent, or were unsure how to – as one explained, "Our ability to analyse meaningfully gendered power dynamics in any of these public spheres is limited because women are by definition excluded."

This view assumes that gender is synonymous only with women, and fails to examine how gendered norms, patriarchal power and particular forms of masculinity are embedded in political structures and institutions. Donors also felt that while existing methodologies give them the tools to do gender analysis of community-level dynamics, they tend to **focus their conflict analysis on national-level dynamics and geopolitical factors**, which are less well addressed by the methodologies available.

Finally, donors in particular found it **challenging to analyse the gendered drivers of conflict**, though this is by no means exclusive to them. This is partly because a detailed structural, institutional, political and cultural understanding of the conflict context is required – a far more complex step than differentiating the impact of conflict on different gender groups. This understanding is hampered due to a relative lack of available research on how gender norms drive specific conflicts or analysis of masculinities and femininities through an intersectional lens. For solely desk-based analyses which rely on existing literature, this can lead to questions about the gendered drivers being left out altogether. This can result in policy and programming that fails to address the root causes of violence.

Women representatives sharing their views at the 2011 All Darfur Stakeholders Conference, part of the Sudanese peace talks.
© UNAMID/Oliver Chassot

Challenges of translating analysis into practice

Respondents were asked what particular challenges they faced when translating the gender elements of their conflict analysis into policy and programming responses. One common difficulty was **the expectation by donors that projects should show evidence of large-scale change in relatively short timescales**, which acts as a disincentive to embark on long-term strategies of norm change. While staff in donor governments and multilateral organisations also recognise this as a problem, they often do not feel empowered to challenge the political imperatives that underlie this push for rapid change.

For regional, national and local NGOs who (as discussed earlier) make less of a distinction between analysis and peacebuilding practice, this expectation of quick impacts is the biggest obstacle to turning the early peacebuilding gains made during the analysis process into long-term change. They also felt that the political risks of doing sensitive work on gender are often transferred onto them by international organisations. Finally, they explained that it is difficult to develop implementation strategies when the findings of their analysis do not match up with donor priorities.

INGOs, governments and multilateral organisations identified a **lack of available programming models for addressing gender norms that drive conflict**. Although some initial thinking has been done on how existing programming models might be adapted to meet this need,[15] few such approaches have yet been tested and shown to work.[16] Without such evidence, donor officials struggle to make the case for investing in gender-transformative programming, with the result that NGOs find it difficult to find funds to pilot new approaches, creating a vicious circle in which neither donors nor NGOs can initiate activities in this area. NGOs were also acutely aware that, if not designed properly, programming focused on violence and masculinities had the potential to make things worse rather than better, such as by re-entrenching male privilege or reinforcing racial and class stereotypes.[17]

In INGOs, gender advisers are frequently involved in developing project proposals to ensure they are gender-sensitive, but when it comes to implementation they have little time to provide ongoing support, often because **funds for gender advisers' time are cut from proposals** in order to keep staff costs down. There is also still a sense among some staff that **working to change gender norms in conflict contexts is "not our business"** as foreign organisations, although local women's rights movements often (though by no means always or without qualification) welcome the support of international organisations. While it is vital to question the role of international actors and how they are situated within gendered, racialised and class-based systems of power, without time and resources for internal reflection on this, it can be easier to deprioritise gender work than to actively find ways to navigate the dilemmas this work raises.

For multilateral organisations and donor governments, respondents found that – because conflict analyses are often conducted in response to rapid contextual changes – **policy and funding priorities in a given context are often already decided** before a conflict analysis is done, and changing course as a result of new analysis findings is "difficult and scary". When conflict analysis is not timed around funding cycles it does not readily feed into planning processes. Furthermore, the people (often technical advisers) who commission or carry out conflict analysis are often not the same ones responsible for translating it into practice and is it is often **not clear who is responsible for overseeing whether gender sensitivity carries through** to the implementation stage.

Suggestions for improved practice

The findings outlined here suggest a range of steps that can be taken to enable donors and NGOs to better integrate gender analysis into conflict analysis. The steps outlined below can help organisations to apply the good practice principles set out on page 4, making for more sustainable and inclusive peacebuilding efforts. The methods used, and levels of participation in the analysis process, will look different for different actors according to their needs, and not all recommendations will apply equally to each organisation.

Suggestions for regional, national and local NGOs

Integrate gender-sensitive conflict analysis into longer-term peacebuilding strategies: Finding creative ways to integrate regular participatory gender-sensitive conflict analysis activities into longer-term programming aimed at sustained change in gender norms could help to maintain the benefits of broad and deep participation while reducing the risk of analysis being purely extractive. Methodologies that combine conflict analysis with interconnected activities, if documented and shared, would be of value to sustaining peacebuilding efforts in many contexts.

Document and systematise current approaches: Systematise the data collection and analysis stages of the conflict analysis process, and document the findings in more methodical ways. This may enable NGOs to undertake regular gender-sensitive conflict analysis that meets their own and international organisations' needs for credible, rigorous conflict analysis while maintaining other functions such as trauma recovery, relationship building and attitudinal change.

Suggestions for international NGOs

Localise existing gender-sensitive conflict analysis methodologies: Translate existing toolkits and methods for conducting participatory gender-sensitive conflict analysis into local languages and, together with local partners, adapt them to specific contexts on a case by case basis. This includes considering how the concepts used relate to local concepts and understandings of gender and intersecting systems of power.

Integrate existing methodologies into new programming models: Work with regional, national and local NGOs to find new ways to incorporate the processes set out in toolkits into programming approaches in which participants take ownership of the analysis and use it to meet their own needs and objectives. This could include supporting NGOs to systematise, document and share their existing good practice approaches, as suggested above. This would help to alleviate the labour-intensive nature of the existing methodologies and concerns that lengthy participatory processes may become overly extractive.

Suggestions for donor governments and multilateral organisations

Re-value analysis: Resources for regularly conducting gender-sensitive conflict analysis in a proportionate way to the needs of each project should be an accepted part of peacebuilding project proposals. In contexts where multiple organisations are receiving donor funding, a joint analysis may be optimal. The quality of gender-sensitive conflict analysis undertaken could be one of the criteria on which a project is assessed. This would help to ensure that there is time and funding available to make conflict analysis gender-sensitive and avoid this analysis being unduly deprioritised in favour of activities that produce direct 'impact'.

Reconsider what is 'credible' analysis: Qualitative analysis that builds on the views of people living in conflict-affected communities, including civil society and non-elite actors, should not be regarded as less valid due to their embeddedness in the context: rather, it should be be recognised that all perspectives are shaped by the context in which they are situated.

Take risks on new programming approaches: It will be necessary to fund pilot projects to trial new programming approaches to address unequal or exclusionary gender norms that drive conflict. While donor organisations are understandably seeking examples of evidence-based programming models they can support, few such approaches have been tested, and so donors will need to take risks on trialling new ideas. At the same time, it is necessary to be cautious about transporting any programming model from one location to another without due attention to contextual differences, however well 'tested'.[18]

Suggestions for all peacebuilding actors

Challenge 'quick win' approaches: NGOs and officials within donor organisations need to look for ways to collectively push back against unrealistic expectations that peacebuilding activities addressing deeply embedded structural issues, including gender norms, can demonstrate measurable impact within short timeframes. Because this expectation is fuelled by public scepticism in donor countries about the effectiveness of international aid, these efforts would benefit from NGOs at all levels communicating publicly the shortcomings of prioritising 'quick wins'. Until this short-term approach is altered, there will be little incentive to analyse, let alone work to transform, gender norms that drive conflict.

Support internal reflection: NGOs and donors alike must recognise the importance of structured reflection on power and privilege relating to gender and other intersecting inequalities – both as individuals and organisations within the international aid sector. These reflections should involve staff at all levels, and include conversations about how their positions shape the way all actors understand and interact with conflict and peacebuilding, including (but not limited to) the gendered aspects of these. This could also include convening discussions about how best to manage the risks of producing gender analysis and working on gender norms in ways that take into account these power imbalances. Such reflection must be resourced and time made for it as an essential practice of any peacebuilding actor.

Change organisational incentives: An understanding is needed that, as one respondent put it, "Unless you do a gender-sensitive conflict analysis, you're doing an incomplete conflict analysis and it's not good enough". Additional formal accountability mechanisms are required to implement this point. For example, the requirement to integrate gender sensitivity in a meaningful way can be included in job descriptions, and all staff held accountable through performance reviews. This may also mean adjusting or supplementing monitoring and reporting mechanisms, such as simplistic 'gender marker'-type systems that do not help measure whether gender sensitivity has been incorporated in a nuanced and intersectional way.

Questions for further inquiry

- Are there 'minimum standards' for gender sensitivity that can be applied to all conflict analyses?

- How can participatory gender-sensitive conflict analysis be integrated into peacebuilding programmes in ways that ensure it is not overly extractive?

- How can international organisations balance their need to ensure that their commitments to gender sensitivity and programming about gender and gender equality are met with the need to use contextually appropriate language, particularly in contexts where talking about 'gender' may undermine the work?

- What tools are most appropriate for doing gender-sensitive analysis of conflict at the national level, particularly concerning geostrategic issues or others where the gender dynamics are less obvious?

- Given the political sensitivities and risks for many actors of sharing their conflict analysis, what possibilities are there for improving knowledge management practices?

References

1   See, for example, HM Government, *UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018-2022* [London: HM Government, 2018]: 20; Dutch NAP Partnership, *The Netherlands National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2016-19* [The Hague: Government of the Netherlands, 2016]: 19.

2   For example, Conciliation Resources, *Gender and conflict analysis toolkit for peacebuilders* [London: Conciliation Resources, 2015], https://www.c-r.org/resources/gender-and-conflict-analysis-toolkit-peacebuilders; Saferworld, *Gender analysis of conflict toolkit* [London: Saferworld, 2016], https://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/gender-analysis-of-conflict-toolkit-introduction.pdf.

3   This paper uses the term 'gender-sensitive conflict analysis' throughout, because the focus of the paper is on how to integrate gender sensitivity into the process and content of conflict analysis. However, since all conflict analysis should be gender-sensitive, the recommendations made in the paper are intended to be applied to all 'conflict', 'situational' or 'power' analysis.

4   The term 'local' is often used in a broad sense to refer to organisations who operate in conflict-affected contexts and do not have a formal international presence. This can serve to mask the vast differences between different types of organisations, and therefore the power dynamics between them. This paper refers to 'regional, national and local NGOs' as an attempt to highlight their diversity, while acknowledging that this does not fully capture their differences.

5   Semi structured interviews with 18 people included 13 female and 5 male respondents. The workshop had 21 participants (11 female; 10 male) and the meeting had 8 UK Government representatives (2 male and 6 female).

6   The term 'intersectionality' was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw and emerges from black feminist thought. Her original exposition of the concept can be found in Crenshaw, Kimberlé, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum* [1] [1989]: 139–167.

7   Gendered drivers or causes of conflict include any issues, behaviours, structures, institutions, events or symbols that incite or perpetuate violence.

8   Cisgender is a term for people whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth. These terms are not used in all contexts, so it is important to identify the most suitable language to use in each case. For more on sexual and gender minorities in peacebuilding see Langridge, Fred, Veronika Tesarova and Sophia Close, *Inclusion of gender and sexual minorities in peacebuilding* [London: Conciliation Resources, 2018], https://www.c-r.org/downloads/Inclusion%20of%20gender%20and%20sexual%20minorities%20in%20peacebuilding.pdf.

9   We use 'marginalised groups' to refer to those groups who experience systemic oppression based on gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, class and other systems of power, with many people experiencing multiple intersecting oppressions at once. See Close, Sophia. *Gendered political settlements: examining peace transitions in Bougainville, Nepal and Colombia* (London: Conciliation Resources, 2018), https://www.c-r.org/downloads/Gendered%20political%20settlements-Examining%20peace%20transitions%20in%20Bougainville,%20Nepal%20and%20Colombia.pdf

10 For in-depth discussion of what it means to make conflict analysis participatory, see Hiscock, Duncan and Teresa Dumasy, *From conflict analysis to peacebuilding impact: lessons from the People's Peacemaking Perspectives project* [London: Saferworld and Conciliation Resources, 2012]: 7-15, https://www.c-r.org/resources/conflict-analysis-peacebuilding-impact-lessons-peoples-peacemaking-perspectives-project. See also GAPS UK, Women for Women International, Amnesty International, Womankind Worldwide and Saferworld, *Beyond Consultations* [London: Women for Women International, 2019], https://www.beyondconsultations.org/images/Beyond_Consultations_Tool.pdf.

11 For further analysis of the participatory processes Conciliation Resources uses see Zahbia Yousuf and Sophia Close, 2019. 'Gendered political settlements and peacebuilding: mapping inclusion in practice'. *feminists@law*, Vol 9, No.1, http://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/feministsatlaw/article/view/752/1467

12 For more on participatory conflict analysis as a peacebuilding activity, see Hiscock, Duncan and Teresa Dumasy, *From conflict analysis to peacebuilding impact: lessons from the People's Peacemaking Perspectives project* [London: Saferworld and Conciliation Resources, 2012]: 16-19.

13 Conciliation Resources and the Kukah Centre, *Through our eyes: people's perspectives on building peace in northeast Nigeria*, [London: Conciliation Resources, 2018], https://www.c-r.org/downloads/Through%20our%20eyes%20-%20peoples%20perspectives%20on%20building%20peace%20in%20northeast%20Nigeria.pdf.

14 On the need for reflexivity, see Conciliation Resources, *Gender and conflict analysis toolkit for peacebuilders*, 6. Also McCorkel, Jill and Kristen Myers, 'What difference does difference make? Position and privilege in the field', *Qualitative Sociology* 26 [2] [2003]: 199-231.

15 See Wright, Hannah, *Masculinities, conflict and peacebuilding: perspectives on men through a gender lens* [London: Saferworld, 2014]: chapter 3, https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/862-masculinities-conflict-and-peacebuilding-perspectives-on-men-through-a-gender-lens.

16 It is notable that Women Peacemakers Program, one of the only organisations which has piloted innovative programmes explicitly aiming to address gender norms that drive conflict, has closed down due to lack of funds. See https://www.wri-irg.org/en/story/2017/after-20-years-women-peacemakers-program-closes-its-doors.

17 See Duriesmith, David, 'Engaging men and boys in the Women, Peace and Security agenda: beyond the "good men" industry', *LSE Women, Peace and Security Working Paper Series* 11 [2017].

18 On the politics of 'best practices', see Parashar, Swati, 'The WPS agenda: a postcolonial critique', in *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace and Security*, eds. Sara E Davies and Jacqui True, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018]: 829-839.

Peace Research Partnership

Conciliation Resources is an independent international organisation working with people in conflict to prevent violence and build peace. We provide advice, support and practical resources to help divided communities resolve their differences peacefully. We take what we learn to government decision-makers and others working to end conflict, to improve policies and preacebuilding practice worldwide.

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