Women, peace and security in post-conflict and peacebuilding contexts

By Jacqui True

Executive summary

Post-conflict peacebuilding processes present major opportunities for advancing women's rights and gender equality. But a gender perspective needs to be more effectively operationalised in post-conflict institutions and peacebuilding processes. A key challenge for the United Nations (UN) and its member states in progressing the women, peace and security agenda in post-conflict settings is bridging the gap between the interdependent political and economic security pillars of peacebuilding. Well-intentioned gender mainstreaming objectives are often undermined by the post-conflict political economy context, which reinforces structural gender inequalities between men and women. This is a major setback for peace, reconciliation and the long-term recovery of societies. Mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment in post-conflict peacebuilding requires an integrated framework for action. This framework needs to address institutional and structural barriers to equality. This policy brief suggests concrete ways to do this, building on the UN secretary-general's 2010 seven-point plan on women's participation in peacebuilding. Recommendations target measures to increase women's representation in post-conflict governance, improve government responsiveness to sexual and gender-based violence against women, secure women's economic and social rights, design reparations for women's economic empowerment, incorporate gender budgeting in all post-conflict financing arrangements, and prioritise gender equality in the security sector.

Operationalising a gender perspective in post-conflict peacebuilding

Post-conflict peacebuilding processes present major opportunities for advancing women's rights and gender equality particularly with respect to education, political representation and rights to land/property/inheritance. The experience of some post-conflict countries in advancing the rights and position of women and girls bears this out. For example, in post-genocide Rwanda some female small-scale landholders and entrepreneurs have gained new-found rights to land, property and equal inheritance. Girls have also shot ahead in the education system, where previously over 40% of women were illiterate (Rombouts,

2010; Boseley, 2010). The experience in Rwanda demonstrates that the political, economic and social status of citizens – and women citizens in particular – can be improved during the rebuilding of societies after conflict. However, a gender perspective needs to be operationalised in post-conflict institutions and peacebuilding processes in order to bring about lasting and gender-equal peace. Such a perspective is necessary to illuminate the relational basis of women's oppression and inequality with men. But it should also be clear that gender-based oppression and inequality affect men – especially marginalised, "feminised" groups of men and boys – as well as women.

What it means to adopt a gender perspective has to be clarified on the ground if local and international actors are to achieve the protection, participation, prosecution and prevention goals of UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security (WPS). Gender relations are "characterized by negotiation, bargaining and exchange between different actors", and men and women are positioned variously within constructions of masculinities and femininities "with different[ial] access to economic and social [and political] power" (Higate & Henry, 2004: 482). This gender perspective requires that we address physical/political/military and economic/livelihood/societal insecurities as part of the same integrated framework in post-conflict and peacebuilding contexts.

For donor countries such as Norway, three core principles should guide the operationalisation of a gender perspective in post-conflict and peacebuilding:

1. WPS provisions should be embedded in all UN Security Council resolutions on post-conflict countries', donor, and country post-conflict strategy and planning.

2. Conflict-affected and post-conflict countries should be prioritised in the implementation and monitoring of donor national action plans on WPS.

3. Gender equality should be practically realised in development aid strategies, support and financing for post-conflict countries.

Challenges and opportunities

A key challenge for the UN and member states in progressing the WPS agenda in post-conflict settings is bridging the gap between the interdependent political and economic security pillars of peacebuilding. Gender mainstreaming objectives are often undermined by the political economy context, which reinforces structural gender inequalities between men and women in employment, the informal economy, and participation in decision-making roles. There is a major disconnect in post-conflict settings between establishing political-military order and planning socioeconomic stabilisation. Military security and the reinstatement of political order and the rule of law are enacted without consideration of their social and economic impacts and prioritised over social and economic aspects of security. The lack of integration of military and socioeconomic security has had a disproportionately negative impact on women's rights in post-conflict societies. This is manifest in the failure to mainstream gender in post-conflict budgets and in the sizeable deficit in women's representation in decision-making processes. Peacebuilding institutions typically do little to create livelihoods and economic opportunities for girls and women or to empower them politically and economically after conflict (see True, 2012; 2013). To be effective, they must be able to transform the structures of socioeconomic inequality that affect women's insecurity and vulnerability to violence and poverty after conflict.

Women's representation in post-conflict governance
The UN secretary-general's 2010 seven-point plan on women's participation in peacebuilding (UNGA & UNSC, 2010) sets admirable goals for institutionalising women's participation in all post-conflict strategy and planning processes (para. 32) and providing technical assistance to support women's participation as decision-makers in public institutions such as through temporary special measures. Currently, however, there are major barriers to achieving these goals due to the lack of concrete accountability mechanisms supporting their implementation. Thus, governments should be required to compile data on the presence/number of women and men (and their positions) at every low- or high-level governance meeting concerning elections/constitutions, post-conflict planning, economic recovery, transitional justice and reconciliation. This data should then be analysed annually in a census of women's participation in post-conflict governance, with interventions planned, implemented and supported where women's presence is below one-third (see APEC, 2002).

The goals also do not highlight an important difference between women's descriptive and substantive representation – the "*quantity*" and "*quality*" of their representation. They tend to focus only on increasing the number of women, rather than their capacity for making "quality" contributions to governance and representing women's particular interests and concerns in post-conflict contexts. To improve women's substantive representation in male-dominated post-conflict governance, donor governments and the UN should provide direct technical and capacity-building support to women members of parliament and civil society leaders to facilitate their involvement "at the table" in the peacebuilding processes. Women's presence is not enough: to meaningfully participate and to be able to address sensitive and urgent crises of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), women need an enabling environment and capacity-building support at both the national and local levels. Moreover, to give greater visibility to the courageous work women are doing to strengthen peace and prevent conflict, the international community should fund research partnerships that help build the evidence base for advancing the WPS agenda in post-conflict countries. This research should support wider education on and advocacy of the benefits of women's participation in peace and recovery processes.

Responsiveness to SGBV against women
SGBV is a major barrier to women's participation in peacebuilding and recovery as mandated by UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. Violence against "political" women speaking up in public, defending human rights or seeking political office is very common in post-conflict countries and strongly dissuades women from participating in public life, let alone seeking political office. In Afghanistan in the last nine months alone, 70 such women in leadership positions have been assassinated (Afghan-Australia Development Organisation, 2013; Zaher, 2013). In many post-conflict countries new laws to elimi-

nate violence against women are in place, but are not enforced. Resources need to be prioritised to operationalise the protection of women and girls and to support gender training, sensitising and capacity-building for police, judiciary and social services professionals to enforce the law. It is important to remember that in many contexts security forces are the perpetrators of SGBV. The need for improving legal accountability and prosecutions is thus crucial for the legitimacy of post-conflict institutions. Local women's NGOs in post-conflict countries could be involved in the monitoring, documenting and publishing of the human right violations of women and the gender training of professionals. At the same time, however, they also need financial and material support to provide medical, psychological, economic and legal assistance and to open new or improve existing shelters for survivors of SGBV, which in some accounts "spikes" after conflict. Former combatants and security forces are often the perpetrators of SGBV against women. No longer able to wield small arms in public, they may use them as an expression of their power in the private realm in acts of violence against intimate partners or other family members (Farr et al., 2009; Cockburn, 2012). Thus the public reintegration of soldiers into peacetime civilian life must address their adjustment to changed family and gender relations destabilised by war.

Gender and economic recovery

The UN secretary-general's seven-point plan for economic recovery seeks to promote women's economic participation, but does not recognise this structural oppression of women prior to and during conflict. Post-conflict conditions tend to exacerbate women's already unequal economic and social status relative to men, and add-on measures do little to change this situation. Often, dire economic conditions after conflict foster corruption and criminality, while marginalised groups of women experience extreme income inequality, working in the informal economy and the most precarious employment positions in the labour market. They also suffer from pre-conflict legacies of poor investment in gender-equal economic and social development with respect to education, health, housing, food security, water, property and land rights. The 2011 World Bank Development Report concurs that while the impact of armed conflict falls directly on young males, who make up the majority of fighting forces, women and children suffer disproportionately from war's indirect effects (World Bank, 2011).[1] Increases in female heads of households; gender discrimination in employment; exploitation in incipient sex industries and trafficking networks; female displacement and resettlement in urban slums; and gender bias in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes are all part of a pattern of gendered marginalisation after conflict that constrains economic recovery in post-conflict settings and women's participation in that

recovery. The preference for employing men is widespread in post-conflict countries, and if the UN suggests that employment programmes should specifically target women as a beneficiary group and that neither sex should receive more than 60% of positions created by economic reconstruction programmes, then donors and the international community will have to lead the way in supporting programmes that are culturally sensitive (for instance, in Afghanistan, women would be ostracised if they engage in road building, but in Kenya it is acceptable) (Anderlini, 2010).

The effects of conflict and peacekeeping missions are also enduring. For example, more than ten years after the Bosnian conflict, government trafficking data shows that women continue to be both imported and exported, albeit with the number of foreign women decreasing and the number of Bosnian victims increasing significantly (Jennings & Nikolić-Ristanović, 2009). These numbers reflect the economic desperation and lack of alternative economic opportunities that many women face. The UN response has been to enforce among its personnel a zero-tolerance policy on sexual relationships with locals and a code of conduct for peacekeepers that treats sexual misconduct as an exceptional occurrence rather than the consequence of a political economy based on unequal gendered social relations (see Simic, 2012; Otto, 2007). This policy approach deals with the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse on "an individual level, with application and sanctions restricted to UN personnel" (Jennings & Nikolić-Ristanović, 2009: 20). Administrative rules and regulations, however, cannot eliminate the economic incentives for sex work and the culture of violence against women. In post-conflict countries where there are usually few income-generating alternatives, unless plans for women's economic empowerment are prioritised, peacebuilding processes tend to create new forms of gendered exploitation (early marriage and sex trafficking, for example).

Securing women's economic and social rights

If women's and girls' rights to security and justice are to be systematically promoted and longer-term efforts to prevent and respond to SGBV are required, then women's economic and social rights must be prioritised (cf. UNGA & UNSC, 2010: para. 46). At present these rights are not at all operationalised in peacebuilding processes so as to create more economic opportunities for women. In many post-conflict countries there is a lack of information to assess the status of women's economic and social rights and loss of resources during conflict. Legislation to ensure economic protection, compensation and labour rights is also often not in place in post-conflict contexts. Yet the marginalisation experienced by women in post-conflict societies is the result of gendered economic discrimination, exploitation and violence as much as any other single factor. Gendered

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1   In an analysis of adult mortality as a result of armed conflict, political scientists, Li and Wen (2005) find that over time women's mortality attributable to war is as high as men's due to war's lingering social and economic effects. Ghobarah et al. (2003) also show that the risk of death and disability from infectious diseases rises sharply in conflict-affected countries, and that women and children are the majority of long-term victims.

socioeconomic inequalities make women more vulnerable in conflict and post-conflict situations, exclude them from participation in security decision-making, and reinforce a culture of impunity for violence against women. UNSCR 1889 (2009) stresses the need to support women's socio-economic rights in post-conflict settings (UNSC, 2009: para. 10), but it does not provide specific mechanisms or a plan of action for realising these rights through peace-building institutions. Policy frameworks such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP)'s Eight Point Agenda for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in Crisis Prevention and Recovery is a starting point (UNDP, 2010a).

Women's capacity to access economic resources after conflict affects their access to justice and physical security. If key economic and social rights such as those to land and housing, to transact in one's own legal name, to equality in marriage, and to freedom of mobility are not secured early enough after conflict, then many women who are already poor and marginalised will be denied opportunities for both economic and political participation in peace and recon-struction (see Ibanez & Moya, 2006). For example, in post-genocide Rwanda the 70% of households headed by females fell into poverty at greater rates than male-headed households because they lost their access to or ownership of land (Rombouts, 2006: 205). Land was either transferred to a son or other male relative or sold for survival reasons.[2] For women survivors of SGBV, recovery, protection and the prevention of future violence are "often tied to their ability to move on and generate incomes for themselves and children" (Anderlini, 2010: xiv; see also *IRIN News*, 2009). In spite of this most resources are directed toward legal justice remedies for violence in post-conflict contexts, which do not create economic security and may inadvert-ently marginalise women's basic needs.

Reparations for women's economic empowerment
Funding for implementing individual or collective repara-tions for women survivors of war/conflict and gross violations of human rights disproportionately affect the economic livelihoods of widows, female heads of house-holds, young women and former female combatants. Reparations help to either reinforce or subvert some of the pre-existing structural gender inequalities that result in systematic discrimination against women (Rubio-Marin, 2006: 25). Attending to reparations shifts our attention away from the overwhelming attention given to criminal justice and what to do with the perpetrators toward the victims of violence and how to assist them to reclaim their lives and potentialities (Rubio-Marin, 2006: 23-24). Shifting the focus from individual to collective reparations helps us think further about violent social structures and the prevention of future violence. And, finally, designing reparations programmes that address community develop-ment in a future-oriented way is a crucial strategy for addressing the unequal gender dimensions of recovery and peacebuilding. Thus, reparations targeted at women survivors – widows and family members of deceased combatants, as well as combatants themselves and victims of conflict-related SGBV – should be designed for the long-term economic development and empowerment of women and their families. Individual compensation or the delivery of basic needs through social welfare institutions will not address existing gender inequalities and deficits in women's post-conflict participation (Rees, 2012).

In Timor-Leste, where 40% of the population lives in poverty, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (known by its Portuguese acronym CAVR) framed reparations and its recommendations in broad recovery terms with key measures for women (CAVR, 2006). Social services, material support and economic empowerment through livelihood activities, group counselling and community education were all conceived as reparations programmes. Women-friendly recommendations that emerged from the CAVR process included support to single mothers and victims of sexual violence, and scholarships for their children; support for the disabled, widows and torture victims; and support for the most affected communities. Specific measures were suggested to encourage women's participation and were largely successful. Transitional justice mechanisms must create gender-sensitive spaces (cf. UNGA & UNSC, 2010: para. 48), but they must actually provide the financing so that reparations can be fully imple-mented.

Post-conflict gender budgeting
The UN has committed to increasing the financing for gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment in post-conflict situations (UNGA & UNSC, 2010: paras. 35, 36), which is crucial, since gender analysis of post-conflict budgets shows that up until 2010 only meagre resources were committed to these goals. In a 2010 report, UNDP conducted a gender-specific budget analysis to reveal the gendered priorities of peacebuilding (UNDP, 2010b). While gender equality and women's needs were low priorities in the overall peacebuilding budgets of 12 post-conflict countries, the least attention to gender issues was evident in spending on economic recovery and infrastructure, demonstrating the lack of integration and bias toward political/military security even in gender mainstreamed programmes. At the same time this UNDP report reviewed economic reconstruction aid to four post-conflict countries (Timor-Leste, Sierra Leone, Kosovo and South Sudan) that addressed the economic security pillar of peace operations and found that only very limited resources had been allocated to promote gender equality or women's specific needs. (In the post-conflict needs assessments less than 5% of activities and only 3% of budget lines mentioned either gender equality or women's needs.) Yet in all four post-conflict countries, critical gender gaps between women and men exist, including, for example, with respect

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2   See Justino and Verwimp (2006), based on panel data on Rwanda following the same households before and after conflict. Brück and Schindler (2009) and Bundervoet (2006) find similar results for Mozambique and Burundi, respectively.

to access to education and health, water for domestic consumption, agricultural inputs, and economic opportunities (UNDP, 2010b: 35). Women were also excluded from the planning of economic reconstruction in these four post-conflict countries. This UNDP evaluation found that none of the countries had an economic policy adviser with gender-budget-analysis training and skills. Thus, to implement UNSCR 1325 in post-conflict contexts, the UN, multilateral economic institutions and development banks, and donor governments must focus on actually implementing gender-responsive financing, planning and budgeting, as well as strengthening in-country and donor accountabilities.

Gender equality in the security sector
Women's participation in post-conflict peacebuilding extends to the security sector and the political and economic spheres. Yet there are pervasive gender biases in DDR programmes that target the needs of former male rather than female combatants (Mackenzie, 2012). Male combatants who return to civilian life frequently express a sense of entitlement as breadwinners, employees, managers and owners. However, women combatants – often economically driven to join armed groups in the first place – suffer not only SGBV, but also economic marginalisation after conflict.[3] To adequately mainstream gender concerns and ensure that women's economic and social rights are upheld in post-conflict DDR programmes, women should be involved in all stages of these programmes, from design to implementation and evaluation.

Moreover, governments need to recruit and train women for decision-making positions in *senior positions relating to the protection and physical security of citizens*. In Liberia, for example, women have begun to assume formal positions in the security sector involved in protecting human rights. This change is starting to have an impact on the social and economic empowerment of all women across Liberian society (Cordell, 2010; Willet, 2010). For example, the presence of the all-female (Indian) police unit, which was deployed in Liberia in early 2007 (now replaced by a Ghanaian unit seconded from the African Union) inspired Liberian women to join the local police force, with the number of women officers in Liberia's own police force rising to 15%.[4] There is increased reporting of SGBV because women who were targeted in the civil war or suffered abuse by fighting forces are more comfortable reporting these crimes to women. Girls' enrolment in school has also increased and observers have noted that girls have been inspired by the female faces that they see in the police and security sector to seek greater future employment opportunities available to them (Cordell, 2010).[5]

Recommendations: an integrated framework for action

Mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment goals in post-conflict peacebuilding requires an integrated framework for action. This framework needs to address institutional and structural barriers to equality in both the political/security and socioeconomic realms. Women's capacity to participate in peacebuilding is closely linked to their enjoyment of socioeconomic security and rights. Poverty, unequal gender norms, impunity for – and fear of – violence taken together prevent women from participating in and benefiting from post-conflict processes. This is a major setback for peace, reconciliation and the long-term recovery of societies. Governments and the international community must attend to the protection of women's economic and social rights in post-conflict settings, and integrate this with efforts to build the political and military order. The recommendations given below suggest concrete ways to do this.

1. Equal governance is not negotiable
- Women should be recruited and trained for decision-making positions across the public and private sectors, but crucially in *senior positions relating to the protection and physical security of citizens*.
- Accountability mechanisms for ensuring women's descriptive representation in post-conflict governance should be bolstered. Governments should compile data on the presence/number of women and men (and their positions) in a census of women's participation in post-conflict governance, and interventions should be planned and implemented where women's presence is below one-third (cf. APEC, 2002).
- Women's substantive representation in post-conflict governance should be improved by providing direct technical and capacity-building support to women's involvement "at the table" in the peacebuilding processes.

2. Post-conflict budgets must be gender equal
- Post-conflict financing and needs assessments must involve gender mainstreaming assessments and gender budgeting so that resources on the ground benefit women and men equally. Regular audits of post-conflict financing should be put in place to hold governments (donor and recipient) accountable.

3. Protection of women's socioeconomic rights
- Research should be conducted on the state of women's economic and social rights and, with this knowledge as a benchmark, a plan and strategy should be devised for achieving women's economic and social rights and

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3   Annan et al. (2011) analyse the gender differences in the post-conflict impacts of war and reintegration on Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) soldiers in Uganda with a quantitative dataset building on earlier qualitative studies. During conflict they found that "unlike males … females have few civilian opportunities and so they see little adverse economic impact of recruitment" into the armed group. Negative economic effects persist in the post-conflict period for soldiers, especially where opportunities for schooling and work experience have been lost. Males returning from the LRA were well behind their peers. But this is not the case for most females, however, who appear to have had few economic opportunities prior to and during the conflict if they were not abducted.
4   Women make up just 9% of the 14,000 police officers and 2% of the 85,000 military personnel in UN peace operations. The UN has set a goal of 20% female participation in police/military personnel operations by 2014 (see Cordell, 2010).
5   At the end of the civil war women's employment in the government sector was very low, representing 0.8% in the judiciary, 5.3% in bureaus and agencies, and 10.3% in ministries. See also <http://www.visionews.net/india´s-female-peacekeepers-inspire-liberian-girls/>.

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socioeconomic empowerment after conflict as a priority, and integrated with plans to establish/strengthen the rule of law and military security.

4. Reparations for women's economic empowerment
• Collective reparations programmes for gendered harms should be designed through transitional justice mechanisms in order to develop the economic and political capacities and livelihoods of women and girls.

5. Accountability mechanisms for preventing SGBV
• Donors should ensure that there is a strategy for the prevention of SGBV and for adequate gender-sensitive policing and justice mechanisms to protect women and girls from violence. The international community should support civil society organisations to monitor the implementation of anti-violence against women laws. It should also assist with local capacity-building to sensitise post-conflict security, police, and judicial institutions and personnel to gender issues in the application and enforcement of the law.

6. Gender equality in the security sector
• Through international peace and security assistance, the increased participation of women in the armed forces of post-conflict countries should be supported and women's involvement in high-level and local-level decision-making positions in the security sector should be strongly encouraged.

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