

Study

**Conflict-affected and fragile states: opportunities to
promote gender equality and equity?**

June 30, 2011

Helen O'Connell with Wendy Harcourt

Acknowledgements

The Study was supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), but does not necessarily represent the views of DFID.

Authors:

Helen O’Connell MA, OBE
helen.m.oconnell@btinternet.com

with

Dr Wendy Harcourt
wendy.harcourt@fastwebnet.it

Research assistance provided by:
Katia Taela

June 2011

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Study provides a review of current evidence and lessons on how gender equality can be effectively strengthened in the context of conflict-affected and fragile states. It looks in particular at women's political and economic empowerment and women and girls' access to quality services. Its aims are to inform DFID and partners on implications for policy and practice, and future research needs for strengthening gender equality in conflict-affected and fragile contexts.

The authors explore the extent to which shifts in gender roles for women's empowerment have occurred in the processes of peacebuilding and statebuilding in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, and have led to greater social, economic and political inclusiveness and justice. They take a gender and rights approach to peacebuilding and statebuilding, with explicit attention to the rights of women and girls, and see women and girls in conflict-affected and fragile contexts as a heterogeneous group with differentiated needs, interests and capacities to engage in empowerment processes.

Scope and methodology

The Study is based on desk research carried out by a principal investigator with advice and research assistance, in the period March 1 to April 30, 2011. The desk research focused on independent evaluations and studies available in the public domain and peer-reviewed studies and articles. Overall, the authors found few robust evaluations or studies on successful efforts to promote gender equality and equity in conflict-affected and fragile states. **The evaluations and studies found the focus to be more on the challenges and barriers to women's political and economic empowerment and access to quality services rather than on effective interventions.** Analysis of what has worked and why tends to be slight and is rarely documented fully in evaluations.

Overall conclusions

Statebuilding in conflict-affected and fragile contexts has been regarded as an opportunity for securing greater gender equality and equity. While there has been some success in relation to women's participation in elections and formal politics and engagement in small-scale economic enterprise, inequitable gender power relations within the household and wider society have not been considered or understood, and thus opportunities have been lost.

Donor and national partners' stated commitments to international human rights standards and norms, including CEDAW, have all too often been sidelined in the rush to achieve a political settlement, elections and an end to the conflict. Legitimate and accountable states and sustainable development can only come about if external and national actors are willing to confront and deal with the root causes of gender-based

discrimination and inequalities at several levels, economic, political, social and cultural.

The Study did not find any examples of country programmes or large-scale sectoral programmes where gender analysis had been fully integrated throughout the programme cycle. The conclusion of the authors is that gender analysis in interventions is not fully understood as an analytical framework that enables effective interrogation of and changes to gender power relations. Gender mainstreaming by the donor community is regarded as gender components within mainstream programmes rather than a comprehensive strategy not only in the interventions but also requiring a fundamental re-look at development, donors and their partners' own institutional structures and capacity, approaches, programme design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Given the varied context of each location and history, as in all developing country situations, there is no blueprint for promoting women's empowerment and gender equity in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. The evidence shows that in responding to the specificities of each situation progress towards gender equity can be made through systematic action in a number of areas and at several levels. These include constitutional and legal frameworks that enshrine gender equality and equity, inclusive and equitable political institutions, gender-responsive economic and social policy-making, and clear accountability mechanisms. Progress on women's political empowerment, on economic empowerment and on access to quality services is mutually reinforcing. Fulfilling women and girls' human rights is an intensely political, controversial and long-term project, and one that, ultimately, has to be locally driven. In this, vibrant women's organisations and a gender-aware media have crucial roles to play. Donors and international NGOs, can also assist in many ways. They need to set ambitious, explicit and unambiguous gender equity objectives with national partners and resource their achievement.

Key findings

What follows are the key findings from the review.

- **Missed opportunities:** the opportunities opened up in peacebuilding and statebuilding for securing gender equality and equity have been missed, such as the negotiations around the peace agreement, the political settlement and in building gender-responsive service provision.
- **Women's political participation:** there has been considerable success in relation to women's increased political participation in elections and formal politics. The opening up of democratic space at national and local levels in the aftermath of conflict has facilitated women's political engagement. Support for free and fair elections with an explicit commitment to women's participation was effective in many contexts, for example, in Liberia, DRC and Afghanistan. An explicit strategy to promote the inclusion of women in local government was effective in Nepal. More support to building the capacity and political expertise of newly elected women parliamentarians and local councillors, especially from the most

disadvantaged communities, would enhance their effectiveness. There is some evidence that with sufficient numbers of gender-aware representatives, and support, elected women are able to promote a gender equality and equity agenda.

- **Women's economic empowerment needs to build on political gains:** interventions to support women's economic activities in the post-conflict period need to reflect and build on women's political empowerment gains by enabling women to challenge gendered economic relations and constraints and take leadership positions in economic and political structures; interventions should avoid reverting to programmes that solely target women's gender roles as carers and household managers.
- **Cross-over interventions are more successful:** combining support to women's strategic gender interests and practical needs was effective in building women's self-esteem, obtaining family and community respect, and giving women more autonomy to take part in community and local decision-making. For example, linking practical training for women with wider awareness raising on the benefits of inclusive governance (Nigeria); linking support to livelihoods and access to public services with the development of municipal fora (Angola); increasing women's access to financial services and their voice and representation (Ethiopia); investing in water and sanitation infrastructure and in measures to promote the inclusion of women and the poorest and most marginalised groups in service decision-making (Nepal); improving selected health services and at the same time stimulating demand for and accountability of these services and strengthening the government's oversight role (Nigeria).
- **Stronger accountability mechanisms for UNSCR 1325:** these are needed to translate 1325 into a comprehensive policy based on analysis of gender power relations
- **Supply-side and demand-side action is needed to address deep-seated barriers to women and girls' access to quality services:** investment in improving infrastructure and hiring, training and paying teachers and gender-responsive school management needs to be combined with attention to the quality of education available and investment in awareness raising to address social and cultural attitudes to the status of girls and women that shape policy and priorities and donor's responses. Poverty and insecurity worsen the situation.
- **Increased capacity building support to women's organisations:** increased support to local and national women's organisations could boost the impact of their work in raising women's awareness of their rights and opportunities, mobilisation and advocacy, political participation and ability to hold state structures to account.
- **Gap between donors' policy commitments and practice in their approach to political settlements:** donors need to promote and support compliance with international human rights conventions and standards, such as CEDAW, and the alignment of customary law with these standards in order not to perpetuate discrimination against women and girls.
- **Approaches to conflict-affected and fragile contexts:** these would benefit from the integration of gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive political economy analysis, and the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data.

What knowledge and research gaps?

Conceptual frameworks

- The current conceptual frameworks on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, statebuilding and service provision in conflict-affected and fragile contexts lack an understanding of, and attention to, women's rights, gender-based discrimination and how gender, poverty and other inequalities intersect.

Gender issues in fragile states

- The political, economic and social implications of fragility for gender equality and equity are under-researched as are the gender implications of political and service sector decentralisation.
- Research is needed on men, including young men, and masculinities in conflict-affected and fragile states, including the immediate and longer-term impact of conflict on men, and the roles men play in supporting or blocking women's empowerment.

Impact of interventions

- There is a dearth of robust interrogation of small and larger-scale efforts to increase women's political participation, foster women's economic empowerment and improve women and girls' access to quality services.
- Evaluations of large-scale mainstream interventions do not integrate gender analysis or systematically collect and use sex-disaggregated data.
- There is little systematic attention to and evaluation of the roles and impact of local and national women's organisations in evaluations and studies.

Recommendations

How to close the knowledge and research gaps

Undertake:

- Elaboration of gendered conceptual frameworks on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, statebuilding and service delivery.
- More rigorous evaluation of mainstream and gender-specific interventions using gender analysis.
- Systematic use of sex-disaggregated data and tracking and analysis of progress on gender-related indicators to obtain robust information to inform future interventions.
- Consistent and integrated use of gender expertise in country programme and sectoral evaluations and studies; this expertise is available in multi-lateral and bilateral agencies and NGOs and in research institutes and women's organisations in partner and donor countries.
- Specific research programmes are needed to interrogate some key questions and issues in conflict-affected and fragile states, including, for example:
 - How does gender inequality intersect with poverty and other inequalities, such as caste, ethnicity, age, and what are the implications for policy and practice?

- What is the social, economic and political impact of women's increased political participation (as voters, candidates and elected representatives)?
- What measures have been successful in fostering the inclusion of women from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds in local governance?
- What are the roles and impact of local and national women's organisations and movements and how could these be strengthened?
- How does targeting women's gender roles for specific interventions and poverty reduction programmes affect gender roles and power relations?
- What is the longer-term impact on gender roles and power relations of interventions that combine support to women's strategic gender interests and their practical needs?
- What is the impact on gender roles and relations of programmes focusing on men and gender issues?
- What roles do men and male violence play in relation to women and girls' empowerment and access to quality services, especially in health and education?

Recommendations to development partners

The following recommendations are directed to development partners, mainly donors and international NGOs, and indirectly to national governments.

Approaches

- a) Approaches to conflict-affected and fragile contexts need to be informed by gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive political economy analysis, and informed by a gender perspective of the wider geo-political regional and international context.
- b) Approaches to peacebuilding and statebuilding should include a lens that pays attention to human rights and to the rights of women and girls from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds. Such an approach would address the fundamental social and cultural attitudes that underpin gender-based discrimination and inequality, and while recognizing that a post-conflict context can potentially offer opportunities to transform political, economic and social institutions so that they become more gender-responsive and sustainable.

Programming and dialogue

The following areas should receive systematic attention and action:

- a) **Gender analysis:** integrating an analysis of gender power relations from the outset in all programme interventions and aid modalities, drawing explicitly on local gender expertise from research institutes and women's organisations in partner countries and that available in donor agencies.
- b) **Legal frameworks:** support to gender-responsive partner country constitutional development, national legal frameworks and institutions and compliance with international human rights standards.
- c) **Policy coherence:** in policy and political dialogue, whereby stated donor commitments to gender equity and equality are explicitly articulated and promoted; the decentralisation of donor offices facilitates on-going dialogue on gender objectives and their achievement.

- d) **Advocacy:** at international level all development partners need to strengthen accountability mechanisms on SCR 1325 and other instruments.

Specific programme recommendations (emerging directly from evidence)

Subject to a thorough gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive political economy analysis of each context, support to the following could be significantly increased by:

- a) **Facilitating women's long-term and effective political participation:** through, for example, support to free and fair elections with explicit gender equity objectives; affirmative action at local and national levels; support to building political expertise and capacity in budget scrutiny, policy development, research, administration and organisation to increase the effectiveness of elected women representatives at local and national levels; support to cross-party gender-aware women's caucuses to enhance their capacity to better promote gender-responsive policy and begin to transform political structures, procedures and processes (see sub-sections 3.2.1/2).
- b) **Enabling collective action and advocacy:** increased support to women's organisations for their work at local and national levels in rights awareness-raising, mobilising and advocacy, their engagement in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, the political settlement, statebuilding, scrutiny and accountability mechanisms, including support to feminist and women's movements.
- c) **Addressing women's strategic gender interests and practical needs:** through, for example, economic development programmes that combine business development support with support to women's leadership in economic and political decision-making structures to build on the political empowerment gains; assistance to enable women to challenge the gendered division of power and labour inside and outside the household that constrain their economic empowerment (sub-section 4.3).
- d) **Opening gender-responsive spaces at local level:** support the creation and development of spaces, such as municipal fora, inclusive local governance structures, where women and men are able to engage as citizens with the state and bolster government accountability (sub-sections 3.4, 4.3).
- e) **Integrating gender into DDR programmes:** ensuring women in ir/regular armies have access to assistance through tracing and reaching women before the programmes start (sub-section 4.1).
- f) **Decentralising service sectors to benefit women and girls:** design service sector decentralisation to meet the diverse needs and interests of women and girls (sub-section 5.1.1)
- g) **Strengthening gender expertise and analysis:** within national partners' key ministries (finance, economic development, education, health, agriculture, justice, etc.) and local structures; including support to gender-responsive budgeting at national and local level where feasible.

Specific programme recommendations (inferred from evidence)

- h) **Investing in access to non-traditional and decent employment:** investment in the generation of non-traditional and decent employment for women and men, including young women and men in both urban and rural areas.

- i) **Supporting gender-responsive quality public service provision:** in education, health, water and other essential services, including building the capacity of the national and local state to establish policy, to dialogue with non-state providers and agree contracts, facilitate, oversee and regulate gender-responsive service delivery.
- j) **Promoting quality education services:** support to programmes that seek to conceptualise and promote quality education services that are transformative and empowering for girls and boys, and that address gender power relations and sexual and gender-based violence.
- k) **Building media and public awareness:** programmes, such as human rights and citizenship education, media and public awareness, to promote understanding of the impact of cultural attitudes and beliefs and the gender division of household labour on girls and women's empowerment, enjoyment of their human rights, and contribution to the wider society.

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Research assistance provided by Katia Taela

1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this Study is on the key issues and challenges encountered in efforts to promote greater gender equality and women's rights in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. It looks in particular at women's political and economic empowerment and women and girls' access to quality services.

Gender-based power inequalities, and their cultural underpinnings, exist in all societies. They shape girls and women's enjoyment of their human rights, their claim on entitlements, their capabilities to have their views heard, their control over economic resources and access to public services.¹ Gender-based inequality exposes girls and women to many risks, including the persistent threat or experience of violence. In conflict-affected contexts, the intersection of gender-based inequality with other determinants of inequalities, such as class, race and caste, can further undermine girls and women's rights and progress towards empowerment.

Conflict impacts differently on women and men, girls and boys. The negative impact of conflict on gender relations has been documented, examining violence, human rights violations, displacement, disruption to livelihoods and public services, and additional workloads for women both within the home and outside². The upheavals of conflict, it has been suggested, may bring about potentially positive shifts in gender roles which can outlast the conflict period. A new post-conflict political settlement, constitution and political regime may provide opportunities to enshrine the principles and promote the practices of gender equality and women's rights and empowerment in social, economic and political arenas, and also to strengthen women's citizenship. This Study explores the extent to which shifts in gender roles for women's empowerment have occurred in the process of peacebuilding and statebuilding in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, and have led to greater social, economic and political inclusiveness and justice.

Section 2 of the Study outlines the purpose and approach taken and the methodology and scope. Section 3 examines the evidence on interventions for women's political empowerment within the arenas of peacebuilding, political settlements and formal politics. It includes a short review of support to national gender machineries and the opportunities presented by decentralisation. Section 4 explores interventions aiming to promote women's economic empowerment, interventions that target women's gender roles and those that attempt to address women's strategic gender interests alongside their practical needs. This section includes a brief review of micro-finance and cash transfers. Section 5 looks at support to increase women and girls' access to quality services, including the challenges and barriers which tend to be the focus of many studies. The gender impact of service sector decentralisation is examined briefly, and there is also a review of current thinking on quality

¹ Public services is used to denote basic and other essential services, not necessarily provided by the public sector

² See for example: Geneva Declaration 2008; UNRISD 2005

education. Section 6 contains the Study's conclusions, knowledge gaps identified, and recommendations.

2. THE STUDY

2.1 Purpose of study

The Study provides a review of current evidence and lessons on how gender equality can be effectively strengthened in the context of conflict-affected and fragile states. Its aims are to inform DFID and partners on implications for policy and practice, and future research needs for strengthening gender equality in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, particularly in political and economic spheres and with regard to women and girls' access to quality services.

2.2 Approach

The authors take a gender and rights approach to peacebuilding and statebuilding, with explicit attention to the rights of women and girls. Gender analysis highlights gender-based inequalities and differences in power relations and access to resources and services. A rights approach emphasises equity and inclusion. Combined these focus attention on the needs and interests on the most marginalised members of a society. Current peacebuilding and statebuilding frameworks could benefit from the integration of gender analysis and the use of rights perspectives. These frameworks contain channels where women's political and economic empowerment and women and girls' access to quality services could be advanced, for example, through bringing gender analysis into peace agreements and political settlement work, the design of core services and accountability mechanisms, and state and civil society capacity development.

Women and girls play many roles in conflict situations. They may be combatants or supporters, peace activists or marginalised civilians. They may be simultaneously agents/subjects and objects/victims of conflict. The authors see women and girls in post-conflict contexts as a heterogeneous group with differentiated needs, interests and capacities to engage in empowerment processes and achieve greater gender equality. These differences are shaped by age, ethnicity, race, ability, sexuality, religion, HIV status and other factors. Where the information is available, the authors examine the issues and challenges for women from different social, ethnic and other groups of being and/or acting as citizens. The authors differentiate between intrinsic and instrumental approaches, and between interventions that address women's practical needs and those that address their strategic gender interests,³ especially those actions that aim to transform gender relations.

The authors are mindful that promoting and protecting women's rights, women's empowerment and gender equality, and offering redress when these are neglected or abused, is an intensely political and long-term project, and is ultimately a locally-driven process. External actors can assist in many ways, but they can also do harm. In short, interventions can improve, worsen or reinforce the status quo in terms of empowerment and gender-equity.

³ As differentiated by Molyneux (1985) and Moser (1989). Practical needs: concrete and immediate needs and necessities such as water, shelter and food. Women's strategic gender interests: enabling women to challenge the fundamental structures that produce and perpetuate discrimination, through, for example, legislation, reproductive choice, increased participation in decision-making.

Hence the importance of combining gender analysis with a political economy analysis of each local and community context, within the broader national and geo-political regional and international context. The framework of the study takes into account that conflict, peacebuilding, reconstruction, statebuilding and development are overlapping and non-linear processes.

The authors use the following definitions of the concepts of women's political and economic empowerment and women and girls' access to quality services:

Women's political empowerment: women's ability and capacity to engage in decision-making and influence policy-making, make demands on state institutions and bodies and hold them accountable to respect, protect and fulfil women's full human rights, and provide means of redress if these rights are denied or abused.

Women's economic empowerment: women's rights and access to economic decision-making (within the household and in the wider economy), to resources (like land and finance) and to decent employment, including rights and access to inputs, such as training, information, equipment, and control over earnings.

Access to quality services: access to affordable and appropriate services that are gender-responsive, that foster girls and women's wellbeing, and offer the opportunity to challenge and transform gender roles and relations towards greater gender equity and equality and empowerment.

2.3 Scope

Overall, the authors found few robust evaluations or studies on successful efforts to promote gender equality and equity in conflict-affected and fragile states. **The evaluations and studies found focus more on the challenges and barriers to women's political and economic empowerment and access to quality services rather than on effective interventions.** Analysis of what has worked and why tends to be slight and is rarely documented fully. The disaggregation of women from different social and ethnic backgrounds is weak in many evaluations. There is little research on the outcomes of women's increased political participation, or on the gender impact of decentralisation processes. There is surprisingly little systematic attention to and evaluation of the roles and impact of local and national women's organisations in evaluations of humanitarian aid and development co-operation despite the dependence of international agencies on these organisations' access to marginalised communities, their energy and efforts.

The authors draw on evidence from a range of conflict, post-conflict and fragile contexts and examine 'mainstream' and 'specific' interventions and a range of aid mechanisms. The limited number of robust evaluations and peer-reviewed studies on gender issues in conflict-affected and fragile contexts limits the Study and its geographical scope.

In completing the Study, the authors found the term conflict-affected to be more useful than conflict and post-conflict. The line between conflict and post-conflict is rarely clear as tensions and violence can continue into the so called post-conflict period and in some instances open conflict re-emerges. Likewise there is a blurring in practice in the documentation between conflict-affected and fragile states. The term conflict-affected is used in the Study to describe situations currently in, or emerging from, recent conflict. The OECD/DAC's definition of fragile states is taken: 'A fragile state has weak capacity to carry

out basic functions of governing a population and its territory and lacks the ability to develop mutually constructive and reinforcing relations with society' (2011b: 21). The Study draws on evaluations and studies on the following conflict-affected and fragile contexts: Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Burundi, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Kosovo, Liberia, Nepal, Nigeria, (Northern) Uganda, Palestine, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Southern Sudan, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste and Zimbabwe. The Study's depth of country focus varies depending on the availability of robust material.

The scope of the Study and its timeframe did not allow for a thorough examination of the issues of insecurity, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), or security sector and justice sector reform. These require a separate investigation. However, the Study takes these issues into account in relation to progress towards women's empowerment and rights. For example the impact of SGBV on women's wellbeing, mobility and economic and political activity is noted, and the problems posed by the conflict between customary law and international standards. It was not possible within the scope to look at social protection. The scope of the Study also prohibited any systematic analysis of the issues of men and conflict and masculinities but where possible these issues are flagged.

2.4 Methodology

The Study is based on desk research carried out by a principal investigator with advice and research assistance, in the period March 1 to April 30, 2011. The desk research focused on independent evaluations and studies available in the public domain and peer-reviewed studies and articles prepared by scholars in research institutes and think-tanks. The evaluations were of a range of interventions in political, economic and social sectors by multilateral, bilateral and NGOs, working in partnership with national or local partners. The evaluations that form the core of this Study were those that included some analysis of the impact of the intervention on gender roles and relations, or as a minimum some analysis of women's lives and roles. Almost all of the evaluations were based on desk research, field visits and interviews with key informants. Some as identified in the text, included focus groups, surveys and stakeholder understanding and attitude mapping. The studies and articles reviewed were based on country-level research. Some synthesis evaluations and studies were reviewed but where possible the original evaluations and studies were read. The time allocated did not permit a detailed review of components within Sector-wide Approach programmes (SWAp) or general budget support (GBS). Evidence and lessons from those require a separate study. It was not possible to review interventions within 'vertical funds' nor those of large private foundations. Chinese investment/aid in countries, such as Angola, was also not reviewed. Furthermore, the Study did not review policy and programme documentation, or promotional and campaigning materials.

3. INTERVENTIONS TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

This section reviews current evidence emerging from evaluations and studies on approaches and strategies that have challenged power disparities between women and men, and strengthened women's effective political participation. The evidence on the implications for gender equity of women's participation in peacebuilding and political settlements is mixed. UNSCR 1325 has reaffirmed and made visible women's roles in peacebuilding but its expectations remained unfulfilled. Engagement in conflict prevention and peacebuilding at

local, national and international levels presented opportunities for some women to have their voices heard, but did not guarantee a strong gender analysis or inclusion of women in the political settlement or in decisions on post-conflict statebuilding; women were largely excluded from formal peace and political settlement negotiations. In some contexts women's movements have been able to mobilise around the political settlement to communicate their views, albeit with limited success, and become more politically active. Negotiations about political settlements generally do not regard gender inequality as a factor in security or power- or resource-sharing, and even more inclusive peace processes did not necessarily bring longer-term strategic benefits for women. In some situations, women's movements with support from external actors were able to use the leverage of international conventions and agreements⁴ to make the case for enshrining gender equality within constitutions and for new national legislation. However, external actors side-lined gender equality and equity issues in some contexts.

Women's increased engagement in formal politics as voters and as candidates brought some political empowerment, but many obstacles persist in translating political presence into political power. To date there has not been any systematic evaluation of the medium- and longer-term impact of women's increased political participation. There is some evidence that ministries or government bodies with responsibility for women's affairs and gender equality contributed to building an enabling policy environment for gender equity and equality, but, many such structures were hampered by lack of resources and political influence. Governance decentralisation opened space for women's political empowerment in some contexts; this, too, is an under-researched area.

3.1 Peacebuilding and political settlements: opportunities for women's political engagement?

3.1.1 UNSCR 1325

UN Security Council 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) reaffirmed women's roles in maintaining and promoting peace and security. The Resolution was found to be a useful and important instrument for giving visibility to women's views and priorities and making space for women's skills and capacities in peacebuilding activities in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Schoofs et al 2010). Stronger accountability mechanisms are required to ensure 1325 meets its stated expectations.

Women were active in peacebuilding in many contexts. In Northern Uganda, women's organisations used radio, Radio Apac, to communicate their voices and views, raise community awareness, and narrow the gap between marginalised rural communities and capital-based policy-makers (Baksh and Munro 2009). Women were able to participate in the conflict-management structures set up by CSOs in North and South Kivu in DRC to deal with land-related and family feuds mainly through awareness raising and capacity building. However, Morvan and Kambale-Nzweve found that women's presence in debates remained marginal, that women were rarely represented as parties in their own right (2010: 51).⁵ Bennett et al (2010) found that women were not fully included in peace committees or formal networks in Southern Sudan, 'mainly due to cultural gender discrimination'. Women were

⁴ Such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols⁴, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), continental frameworks, such as the African Union's Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality, and the four specific UN Security Council Resolutions, 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889

⁵ Morvan and Kambale-Nzweve (2010) carried out an inventory and analysis of 171 CSOs involved in peace, governance and human rights work

invited to peacebuilding workshops but were not given the resources to host their own (2010: 123).

The assessment of UN-Women is that women's exclusion from peace processes persists, as does sexual and gender-based violence against women in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and the lack of attention to women's needs and interests in recovery plans. The culture of impunity for those who abuse women's rights continues and undermines peacebuilding (2010: 3,7).⁶ The limitations of SCR 1325 as a 'practical framework for action' was highlighted by Schoofs et al (2010) as it leaves too much scope for interpretation. The main lesson, they suggest, from 10 years of working with 1325 remains how to translate high-level policy into peacebuilding mechanisms that adequately address women's security, political and economic concerns and lead to gender equality action plans and legislation (2010: 2/4). UNIFEM saw the **need to strengthen accountability mechanisms on 1325 and for greater investment in building the capacity of women's peace coalitions** to engage better in peace processes and advocate for a gender equality issues (2009: 29). The big challenge of the coming years, in Smits' view, is 'the transformation of the currently limited gender policy, focused on women, into a more comprehensive policy', where gender is used as a 'meaningful analytical framework' (2010: 3,6). There is a wealth of academic literature on interrogating gender power relations⁷, but this has yet to fully inform international policy making.

3.1.2 Mobilising to influence the political settlement

The political settlement provided opportunities for women's movements in some contexts to mobilise and articulate their gender equity and equality demands. **External support was valuable in supporting women's engagement in the peace talks** in Uganda. Even where women were organised, as for example, in Southern Sudan, their demands were resisted by male political elites. More inclusive peace processes, as in Guatemala, did not ensure longer-term political empowerment.

Women were excluded initially from the 2006 Juba Peace Talks despite the key role they played in peace activism at local level during the conflict in Northern Uganda. The Uganda Women's Network organised a protest march for peace in October 2007 to highlight SCR 1325. While not achieving the one-third representation of women at the peace talks they demanded, they were successful in gaining observer status and four women on the government team. UNIFEM's funding and advocacy support was critical in ensuring women could participate in the Juba Peace Talks and have their voices heard in the negotiations (International Alert 2010: 30). Castillejo (2011) found that women were largely excluded from the negotiations around the political settlement in Burundi, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Kosovo. Women's demands for inclusion were resisted by male elites who commanded the formal and informal processes, even where women had been prominent as peace activists as in Sierra Leone and Southern Sudan (2011: 3).

The Sudanese women's movement held a Women's Gender Symposium during the Oslo Donors' Conference on Sudan in April 2005 and set out interim 'minimum urgent priorities', including a 25% quota for women of the total membership of the Legislative Assembly, and 25% of the Council of Ministers. Women were largely kept out of the negotiations around the political settlement and the quota was not included in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) or in the new constitution, a development regarded by Abbas as a

⁶ UN-Women assess that since 1992 fewer than 10% of peace negotiators were women, and, in a sample of 45 conflict situations since 1989 only 10% of peace agreements or ceasefires mentioned SGBV

⁷ Rosalind Petchesky, Cynthia Enloe, and others.

‘deliberate strategy’ by male politicians to maximise flexibility (2010: 104). The assessment of Bennett et al is that the 2005 CPA is ‘gender blind’. They write that ‘gender inequality was never considered to be a factor in security or in the sharing of power and wealth because, other than in occasional ‘side-meetings’, gender identity was not considered a category of concern or analysis’ (2010: 121). Bennett et al (2010) recommend **long-term support to the fostering gender-responsive policies and legislation to counter gender-based discrimination and a ‘systematic strategy and guidelines for integration and participation of women in governance’**. They suggest the government should be encouraged to set up structures that would enable women to be involved in the promoting gender equity in land matters (2010: xiii). Following the political settlement, the women’s movement turned its attention to the electoral law and a 25% quota was adopted in 2008 using a list system which was not what the women’s movement had demanded (Abbas 2010: 104/5).

A more inclusive peace process does not necessarily bring long-term political empowerment for women. Women participated in the ‘Dialogue Tables’⁸ set up by MINUGUA (UN Verification Mission in Guatemala) to discuss aspects of the peace process and in the temporary institutions, such as the peace commission and the land fund, to assist in conflict resolution (Pillay 2006: 15). The gains made in the peace process did not result in any meaningful shift in political power relations. Laws on indigenous women’s rights and equal opportunities, for example, were adopted but not implemented and thus have little impact on the daily life of women. The demands of women’s organisations to the Commission on Electoral Reform for recognition and regulation of women’s participation in the leadership of political organisations and as candidates for publicly-voted posts were unsuccessful. The lack of political will by successive governments and the ruling elite is seen as the main obstacle to women’s empowerment and the effectiveness of the Presidential Secretariat for Women⁹ (Quintana and Alamilla 2010: 3/4). Castillejo argues that continued donor support for a range of ineffective state institutions and policies serves to conceal ‘an unreformed and exclusionary political settlement (2011: 4). Quintana and Alamilla recommend a range of actions to international actors, including, **developing clear strategies and action to integrate gender into all programmes and ensuring adequate budgetary allocations, specific programmes for women’s political empowerment; and strengthening processes for monitoring and achieving objectives in state mechanisms for women**, especially SEPREM (2010: 22).

3.1.3 Gap between external actors’ policy and practice

There appears to be a marked reluctance on the part of external actors who support peace negotiations and the political settlement to act on their own policy commitments or encourage national partners’ compliance with international human rights standards. The impact of this on women’s political empowerment can be significant. A number of explanations emerged from the evidence. Cultural assumptions about women’s status and lack of awareness and understanding of the impact of gender inequality play a part, as does fear of derailing a fragile political settlement by advocating equality and social inclusion. The opportunities presented in political dialogue for discussing gender equality and equity issues were underused.

The international community’s apparent hesitancy to act on their policy commitments and international obligations (CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, etc.) is noted by Sorvald (2009) who

⁸ The Dialogue Tables were composed of representatives from government, the military, guerrillas, political parties, the church, indigenous groups, civil society and the private sector

⁹ Secretaria Presidencial de la Mujer (SEPREM) established in 2000

suggested that: ‘In male dominated cross-cultural contexts women and gender issues could be perceived as something not important enough to bring up’ in peace negotiations, conflict prevention and macro-economic donor conferences. She cited evidence from the Palestinian context where women’s roles in politics ‘seem to be underestimated’ even though 1325 is particularly relevant in that context. Evidence of donors’ acceptance of a lack of gender awareness in elite-controlled political settlements in Burundi, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Kosovo, while voicing commitment to SCR 1325 and inclusive processes, was found by Castillejo (2011). The lack of attention to gender inequality in the Sudanese CPA was highlighted by Bennett et al (2010). From her research in the DRC, Autesserre (2010) concluded that the dominant view among most international peacebuilders is that violence including SGBV were ever-present and inherent in Congolese society, as part of cultural norms that could not be changed (2010: 75ff). She found that although the UN and most international actors involved in the peace process advertise their commitment to ending gender-based violence, re-installing the rule of law, protecting human rights, promoting good governance and sustainable development, in practice, concentrated most time and money on interventions regarded as vital to the success of an electoral process (2010: 114). Autesserre concludes that **policy makers need to revise their approach to local peacebuilding, entailing a re-conceptualisation of their approach to state reconstruction and a re-evaluation of their approach to post-conflict intervention** (2010: 261/2). Benard (2008) also noted the international community’s cautiousness in advocating for gender equality and equity goals. She found no evidence that such donor advocacy would lead to instability.

Political and policy dialogue is an opportunity, often underutilised by international agencies, for promoting gender equity and equality and women’s empowerment in conflict-affected and fragile states. Gender issues were not explicit in political dialogue between partner countries and Norwegian ministry officials in the three countries reviewed by Sorvald (2009).¹⁰

3.2 Women’s formal political participation

The participation of women from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds in formal and informal political affairs is seen by many international agencies¹¹ as an intrinsically valuable end in itself and also as a means to advance gender-responsive policy, legislation and programming. There has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of women elected to local councils and national parliaments over the last two decades, including in conflict-affected and fragile states.¹² Rwanda, which now heads the list on women’s representation at national level, is the best known example. South Africa, Mozambique, Angola and Nepal, the FYR of Macedonia, Burundi and Timor Leste also appear in the top 25 countries with 29% or more seats held by women (Inter-Parliamentary Union). Reasons for this increase are many. The political space that opens up in some contexts following conflict is an important factor. The absence of men due to conflict may also make it easier for women to engage politically. Support from external actors for free and fair elections, for media and voter education, and the adoption of more equitable electoral systems and quotas¹³ all facilitate women’s participation. Some support included a specific objective to promote women’s participation. A common strand in many of the interventions was the roles played by women’s movements in mobilising women and raising their political awareness. Participating in elections is one step towards the transformation of political processes, structures and procedures necessary to

¹⁰ Ethiopia, Palestine, Zambia

¹¹ See for example, UNDP, UN-Women, International IDEA

¹² An increase from 11.6% in 1995 to 18.4% in 2008 (Goetz 2008: 21)

¹³ See Dalerup 2007, Pedwell 2008, Goetz 2008, International IDEA and others

allow women's political empowerment. There is little or no evidence of the longer-term impact of women's greater political empowerment as this has been inadequately researched to date.

3.2.1 Free and fair elections

The post-conflict opening up of democratic space in which elections can be held has resulted in more women voting and standing for election. The international community's support for elections in many post-conflict contexts, including support to electoral commissions and women's political participation, has resulted in freer and fairer elections (Kaldor et al 2006, Chapman and Vaillant 2010). Ensuring security and protection around the elections was vital in enabling women to vote in large numbers. Building inclusive and stable states is a long-term process.

The following are examples of successes in strengthening women's political participation in elections. UNDP was successful in DRC in registering 25 million voters and organising a referendum. Support to ensuring security around the elections was also regarded as effective: UNDP provided training, equipment and logistical support to approximately 60,000 police and security officers. The participation of women as voters and candidates was an important element of the overall support to the electoral process (Kaldor, 2006: 34). In Liberia, special measures were adopted to ensure the voting process was hassle-free, accessible and safe for women and others: pregnant women and women with babies, the elderly and disabled people were allowed to vote without queuing, and trained security forces were present at the polling stations including many women security personnel (UNMIL Office of Gender Adviser 2005). DFID's support to elections in DRC, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sierra Leone (through a UNDP administered trust fund) included assistance to projects aimed to strengthen civic participation through the whole election process from campaigning to vote counting. Gender empowerment was a specific target in Afghanistan and DRC (Chapman and Vaillant 2010: 19). Media work was judged highly relevant in Sierra Leone and DRC given the threat from partisan media. A Good Governance and Equity in Political Participation project managed by UNDP in Southern Sudan was assessed by Bennett et al (2010) to have met most of its key objectives: 'strengthening the capacities of potential Sudanese women leaders and institutions' and highlighting the importance of the political participation of women through raising women leaders' awareness and skills so they could press for a 25% quota (as mentioned above).¹⁴ The project was judged as less successful in 'improving the conditions for gender-sensitive policy reform for political participation'. Bennett et al are unsure if women's increased participation in political life is due to the project or the opening up of democratic space following the CPA (2010: 121/123). The roles played by the Southern Sudanese women's movement are not discussed by Bennett et al.

Although the international community's emphasis on organising quick elections has been criticised¹⁵ as diverting attention from the longer-term project of statebuilding, participating in elections as voters (often for the first time) is valued highly in many contexts.¹⁶ Findings from focus groups with men and women in Burundi in the immediate post-2010 election period showed that citizens regard elections as very important but were not their only concern (Levy 2011). The violence and upheaval surrounding the elections had not diminished their interest in the democratic process: 'They believe in the power of elections to produce competent leaders who are held accountable to the electorate.' A major concern of all was physical and economic security, followed by anger about the widespread injustice, for

¹⁴ The 25% quota in the Legislative Assembly was attained but not in the Council of Ministers.

¹⁵ See Autesserre (2010) and Kaldor et al (2006)

¹⁶ South Africa is one obvious case

example, abuse of civil liberties and human rights, impunity for those who commit crimes, discrimination against those who don't follow the ruling party, and the need to use bribes to get justice. The on-going nature and impact of land disputes was another major concern (2011: 42/43).

3.2.2 Building inclusive and effective politics

Externally supported interventions were effective in promoting women's political participation in elections, but appear to offer little support to women parliamentarians or local councillors. **Few support structures exist to assist inexperienced women and men parliamentarians** and national parliaments in conflict-affected states are characterised by weak research, administrative and policy-making capacity (Kaldor et al 2006, Chapman and Vaillant 2010, and others). There are a few examples of capacity building support to women parliamentarians and political parties. The challenges of performing effectively politically are daunting for all but the most privileged women. These barriers and challenges include: negative cultural attitudes, male-and elite-dominated political parties and structures, violence and insecurity. Illiteracy and political inexperience, coupled with lack of confidence, time pressures in balancing family caring and household roles with a full-time political career and lack of funds can be big obstacles too.¹⁷ Achieving some socio-economic gains does not guarantee political empowerment. The authors of this Study found little independent evaluation of support to women and gender issues in political parties.¹⁸

What follows are some examples of support to women parliamentarians. UNDP supported a Gender Resource Centre for women members of parliament in Timor Leste (O'Connell forthcoming), a forum of political parties to develop a Code of Conduct including acknowledgement of gender and ethnic issues in Burundi (ibid) and provided technical support to all political parties in Lebanon to enable them to build capacity (UNDP/BCPR 2009a: 12). Mobilising across party lines proved successful in Rwanda. The Forum for Rwanda Women Parliamentarians, a cross-party coalition set up in 1996, has enabled women to progress equal opportunities and social justice, including in the new 2003 constitution. The Forum established a gender desk to assist women parliamentarians to scrutinise and amend draft bills and the annual budget (Kantengwa 2010: 77). UNDP worked with the Women's Ministry in Pakistan to run 'women's political schools' to train women local councillors (Khattak 2010: 54) The longer-term impact of UNDP's support and the Forum in Rwanda has yet to be evaluated fully. There is some evidence that greater numbers of women in national parliaments result in greater attention to issues of concern to women.¹⁹ The impact of increased numbers of women parliamentarians in conflict-affected and fragile states has yet to be researched.

Of course, not all women elected will be gender equity champions as documented in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. Translating presence into power and transforming politics require a vision of gender justice and social inclusion, and organisational capacity and support. Kottegoda found 'a marked lack of commitment to a more gender equality sharing of power within political parties' and little support from women in parliament for any measures to increase women's representation in Sri Lanka (2010: 85). Many women are active politically but predominantly at the level of local mobilising, involved in party political programmes and campaigning 'for (the mostly male) candidates at election times'.

¹⁷ See Goetz 2008, International Alert 2008, Pedwell 2008 and others

¹⁸ Westminster Foundation for Democracy (UK) and others support political party development in developing countries but independent evaluations were not found in the public domain

¹⁹ Goetz cites a large-scale survey by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in which 90% of respondents agreed that women bring different perspectives (2008: 26).

Noteworthy in Sri Lanka is that relatively high social development indicators and women's socio-economic gains have not fostered political empowerment; discrimination against women in the political sphere is persistent.²⁰ Kottegoda concluded that: 'The control over the process in the political arena, in the party hierarchy and at the electoral level has been, and remains, the forte of men' (2010: 85). This situation is not unique to conflict-affected or fragile contexts; it is evident also in western 'advanced' liberal democracies. Kottegoda recommends placing greater **emphasis on strengthening democratic processes to facilitate interaction between the state and civil society groups** based on rights and equality principles (2010: 98).

3.3 Building an enabling environment at national level

Gender-responsive legislation, strong gender-aware leadership, robust government and parliamentary institutions and vibrant women's organisations characterise a policy environment that facilitates the realisation of women's rights, women's empowerment and gender equity. These are rarely present in the immediate post-conflict period. Even if present to some extent in fragile contexts, they are hampered by the overall incapacity of state institutions to implement laws and plans and deliver public services, and by the contradictions between customary law and international standards. Evidence of successful support to women's ministries or institutions in conflict-affected and fragile states, in the form of institutional capacity building, donor influence and sectoral gender audits, is slender and very context specific. The challenges faced by these bodies are common to many contexts: no clear political agenda, marginal influence within government, and few human and financial resources. The **evidence indicated that support to constitution-making processes lacked integration of gender issues**. While there was more success in providing technical and advisory support to legislation drafting law enforcement can be blocked by the power of male leaders.

Support in the form of institutional capacity building was effective to a limited degree in Afghanistan. UNDP supported the new Ministry of Women's Affairs, established following the fall of the Taliban, and its 34 provincial offices, with institutional capacity building – focusing on building capacity for advocacy and training – and helped provide computer equipment and training. UNDP also provided gender training to 11 line ministries, including Justice, Education, Economy, Interior, Foreign Affairs, etc.). Faubert et al (2006a) warned that was hard to ascertain the benefits for women of UNDP's support or how gender issues influence policy decisions as such data were not collected. She concluded that while the situation of women in urban areas had improved, 'the reintegration of women into the mainstream of government and economic life is still at an early stage' (2006a: 36). The international community supported concrete measures, like gender audits of specific sectors (including finance, agriculture and education) in Nepal in order to strengthen the integration of gender concerns into national policies and development plans. A Gender Responsive Budget Committee was set up by the Ministry of Finance (with support from UNIFEM and others) to begin to operationalise the findings of the gender audit (Ingdal and Holter 2010: 12/15). Donor influence and funding working with women activists nationally and internationally were credited with the launch of the National Policy for Empowerment and Development of Women in 2000 in Pakistan, including a 33% reservation for women in all three tiers of local government. The quota was successful in bringing thousands of women into local government structures in the 2000/1 and 2005 elections. The government reduced the overall number of local council seats for the 2005 election but was forced by the protests

²⁰ A Women's Rights bill first formulated in 1999, and redrafted several times, is still pending. Opposition to the bill coalesced mainly around the inclusion of women's reproductive rights in the bill (2010:82/84).

of women councillors and NGOs to keep the 33% quota; the reduction in the number of quota seats led to some women contesting general seats (albeit with limited success) (Khattak 2010: 54).

The women's ministry or government body with responsibility for women's rights and equality legislation in Palestine, Ethiopia and Zambia was found to have 'a marginal role in the government structure, limited budget allocations and implementing capacity' (Sorvald, 2009: no page nos.). Likewise, Castillejo (2001: 14) found that the gender institutions in Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Guatemala 'are chronically underfunded and lack human capacity'; in Kosovo, for example, the Agency for Gender Equality had no funds and had to rely on the good will of other ministries to implement programmes. The absence of a clear political agenda and good connections with women's civil society in all three countries added to the ineffectiveness of these institutions.²¹

UNDP provided support to institutional infrastructure, human resource development and technical assistance for constitution-making in Somalia, Southern Sudan, Kosovo, Afghanistan and elsewhere. The capacity building included support to information sharing on constitutional issues and training of legal professionals in constitution making, for example, study tours to South Africa (UNDP/BCPR 2009b). There was little evidence that the programme included building gender expertise among lawyers and constitutional experts or that draft constitutions were subjected to gender analysis (O'Connell, forthcoming).

The majority of conflict-affected and fragile countries have ratified CEDAW, some with reservations. Women's organisations have taken the lead in many of these countries to press for equality legislation on domestic violence, for example. In Kosovo, UNDP provided technical and advisory support to national partners to support the drafting of the Law on Domestic Violence. However, even where gender equality legislation exists enforcement can be hindered by the power of traditional leaders. The 'misalignment' of customary law and international human rights standards was signalled as a key challenge by Jones et al (2011: 82). Bennett et al (2010), too, pointed to the 'fundamental contradiction' between the bill of rights laid out within the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan which granted equal rights to women and men and the established principle that customary law is legitimate law. Customary law, they suggest, is a vital part of cultural identity but one which 'reinforces and institutionalises elements that perpetuate gender inequality and human rights violations' (2010: 121). A recent study (Musawah 2011) of 44 countries with majority or significant minority Muslim populations explored the justifications those states parties give for not complying fully with CEDAW and other international standards and how the CEDAW Committee responds. It calls for a **'deeper engagement and more meaningful dialogue' on the connections between Muslim family laws and practices and international human rights law.**²²

3.4 Decentralisation: opportunities for women's political empowerment?

Decentralisation processes and programmes were supported by development partners in many conflict-affected and fragile states and have opened spaces in which women may engage politically and act as citizens. A range of support was found to be effective, including to the drafting of a local government act, the establishment and development of local councils,

²¹ Gender institutions were not researched in the other countries in this study, namely, Burundi and Sudan.

²² See also: Women Living Under Muslim Laws International Solidarity Network which provides information, support and a collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam. <http://www.wluml.org/>

training and support to local elections. An explicit commitment to promoting gender and social inclusion, through for example mandatory representation, contributed to success in one context. However, local politics and governance can be an intensely contested and conflictive space in all contexts.²³ The extent to which political decentralisation incorporated gender issues and fostered women's political empowerment has yet to be robustly evaluated.

From her field study of civil society organisations (including women's organisations) in the context of chronic violence²⁴ in Colombia and Guatemala, Pearce **concluded that an enabling local state, even in the context of a weak or oppressive national state, can assist civil society** to be more effective. Civil society's 'promotion of public civic interaction and communication' can open spaces for citizenship by off-setting the freezing effects of violence on interactions and social heterogeneity (2007: 9).²⁵ Support to the development of local councils in Sierra Leone was found to have 'exceeded expectations' in some areas. This was part of a programme of support to the decentralisation process, including establishment of local councils and ward committees, training and activities aimed at local service delivery and resource mobilization funded by UNDP (Kaldor and Vincent 2006: 25). UNDP assisted also in the drafting of the Local Government Act and supported the National Election Commission in conducting the local elections in 2004 and managing the election funds. Kaldor and Vincent found little attention to gender matters. In Nepal, the Local Development Act and Regulations emphasise gender sensitivity of local development programmes and mandatory representation in structures. Guidelines have been issued by the Ministry of Local Development (MLD) to district offices on gender-aware local policies and programmes as per the gender budget audit report (Ingdal and Holter 2010: 13). There was an explicit commitment in the Local Governance and Community Development Programme²⁶ to increase the involvement of women and of Dalits, Adibbasi Janajatis and other disadvantaged groups in local governance. Ingdal and Holter (2010) assess that gender is high on the agenda of the Minister of Local Development and a separate Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) strategy was commissioned in 2008/09 to provide guidance and ensure results and an experienced GESI advisor has been appointed. The 'lack of political stability and cultural and societal norms' were regarded by the GESI advisor and the evaluators as barriers to an effective GESI approach (2010: 28). To date there has not been a systematic evaluation of the gender impact of local government in Nepal.

3.5 Summary of key findings

- **Missed opportunities:** the opportunities opened up in peacebuilding and statebuilding for securing gender equality and equity have been missed, opportunities, such as the negotiations around the peace agreement and the political settlement.
- **Women's political participation:** there has been some considerable success in relation to women's increased political participation in elections and formal politics. The opening up of democratic space at national and local levels in the aftermath of conflict has facilitated women's political engagement. Support for free and fair elections with an explicit commitment to women's participation was effective in many contexts, for example, in Liberia, DRC and Afghanistan. An explicit strategy to promote the inclusion of women in local government was effective in Nepal; capacity building support to the

²³ IDRC (2008) found that decentralisation does not automatically benefit women and men equally; it can reinforce elite power and discrimination against women.

²⁴ 'Chronic violence' defined as three dimensional, with space, time and intensity components (Pearce 2007: footnote 4).

²⁵ The study contains a valuable analysis of gender-based violence and masculinity norms

²⁶ The Local Governance and Community Development Programme in Nepal, a 3 year continuation programme from 2009 jointly funded by several donors, aims to contribute to poverty reduction through inclusive, responsive and accountable local government and participatory community-led development.

establishment and development of local councils and elections brought results in Sierra Leone. More support to building the capacity and political expertise of newly elected women parliamentarians and local councillors, especially from the most disadvantaged communities, would enhance their effectiveness. There is some evidence that with sufficient numbers of gender-aware representatives, and support, elected women are able to promote a gender equality and equity agenda.

- **Stronger accountability mechanisms for UNSCR 1325:** SCR 1325 has been a useful instrument in many contexts to create space for women to highlight their views and interests but has yet to be translated into a comprehensive policy based on analysis of gender power relations.
- **Increased capacity building support to women's organisations:** with increased support local and national women's organisations could boost the impact of their work in raising women's awareness of their rights and opportunities, mobilisation and advocacy, political participation and ability to hold state structures to account.
- **Gap between donors' policy commitments and practice in their approach to political settlements:** donors need to promote and support compliance with international human rights conventions and standards, such as CEDAW, and the alignment of customary law with these standards in order not to perpetuate discrimination against women and girls.
- **Approaches to conflict-affected and fragile contexts:** these would benefit from the integration of gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive political economy analysis, and the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data.
- **Limited impact of women's machineries:** To enable women's machineries to play a catalytic role institutional capacity building support needs to have specific objectives, be adequately resourced, rigorously monitored and combined with enhanced policy and political dialogue and the integration of gender expertise into key ministries.

4. INTERVENTIONS FOR WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The economic opportunities open to women in conflict-affected and fragile are shaped, as in all contexts, by culture and tradition, education, and access to economic resources like land. There is a considerable body of literature and analysis on measuring women's economic empowerment²⁷ but little of this relates directly to conflict-affected and fragile states. Research for this study found very few evaluations or studies of support to women's economic empowerment or indeed support to general economic development in conflict-affected or fragile states.²⁸ There were some evaluations of agricultural and income-generation programmes. This section examines the evidence and lessons from these evaluations and studies.

Taking on non-traditional roles in the formal or informal military does not appear to bring post-conflict benefits for women; women are usually bypassed by DDR programmes. While conflict has a significant impact on women's lives and status leading to more women becoming heads of households, for example, this has to be balanced against the displacement and trauma women may experience. Interventions, such as micro-enterprise support, that target women's gender roles, as carers and household managers, brought immediate tangible

²⁷ See for example: BRIDGE, 2007, 'Gender and Indicators', Cutting Edge Pack, Bridge, IDS, Brighton; Kabeer, N (2001) 'Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment' pp 17-59 in *Discussing Women's Empowerment - Theory and Practice*, SIDA, Stockholm

²⁸ It is worth noting that Huma Haider's GSDRC Helpdesk report on Economic Growth and Statebuilding dated 15.1.2010 found no information on the gendered nature of these linkages.

results for women and their families and gave some women greater control over household economic decision-making. Women's assumption of new economic roles did not appear to change men's gender roles or gender relations: men's control over economic resources continued, as did their resistance or indifference to women's empowerment, and their use of SGBV. In addition the scale of women's economic activities was constrained due to lack of access to resources and capital. In short, women's strategic interests were not addressed. Interventions seeking to enhance women's economic empowerment in the post-conflict period need to reflect and build on women's political empowerment gains and avoid reverting to programmes that solely target women's gender roles as carers and household managers.

Interventions that tried to address women's strategic interests (such as, enabling women to participate in decision-making inside and outside the home and challenge gender power relations) alongside their practical needs brought greater political, economic and social empowerment results, for example, combining support to improve livelihoods or service provision with creating spaces for state/citizen engagement at local level. Adopting an affirmative action approach to tackle marginalisation was effective in some contexts, and factors, like the choice of local implementing partner and number of women staff members (Ethiopia) and the feminisation of agriculture due to the conflict (Nepal) were influential; these factors are often mentioned in passing in the reviews and rarely analysed thoroughly. Talking to men and to the wider community (or not, as in some cases) was decisive in shaping the effectiveness of many interventions. Meaningful consultation with women, and the use of gender analysis, could bring results if followed through to planning and implementation, but weak political will on the part of programme management lead in some contexts to the evaporation of policy commitments to women's empowerment.

4.1 Impact of conflict on gendered economic roles and relations

Women and men engaged side by side in the formal or informal military may experience different gender relations. Bouta (2005) wrote that while there was some evidence that gender relations were different in the military in so far as women were expected to behave like men – to become masculinised – and may benefit from non-gender stereotypical education and training, this had to be set against the frequency of sexual slavery and violence against women and girls within armies. She cited a 2004 study by McKay and Mazurana (2004) of three countries where the prior egalitarian relations of the military were not evident in the post-conflict period (2005: 9). Indeed women ex-combatants faced particular gender-related challenges during the DRR period, such as ostracism, single motherhood of children born from rape, and negative stigmatisation (2005: 10). Most women and girls in armies play support roles as cooks and medics (UNDDA 2003 quoted in Bouta 2005: 7). El Bushra, quoted in Bennett et al (2010) pointed out that that while conflict-related displacement does change women's status, for example, more women-headed households, the upheaval to households and the trauma and difficulties of reintegration may lead to negative survival strategies like sex work.

UNDP in Burundi was successful in developing new criteria²⁹ so that women involved in the conflict could benefit from the DRR programme. However, this is a rare example as in most contexts women and girls miss out on the economic, social and psychological benefits of DDR programmes. Bouta's (2005) analysis from existing research is that DDR programmes

²⁹ Women who executed tasks for combatants; women who lost their homes, children or husbands because of the rebel movement; women who participated in the activities of the movement by providing it with their children; women who supplied foodstuff to the movement either by transporting food from the capital city market or by growing food; and women imprisoned in connection with the FNL (personal communication)

do not target women: women ex-combatants are not seen as a security threat (unlike men) and DDR programmes usually define an ex-combatant as one who carried a weapon in the conflict. Women tend to become invisible after the conflict as traditional gender roles are reinstated. Women and girls who had been forcibly abducted into the army escape as soon as possible (called spontaneous reintegration) and are not counted for DDR purposes (2005: 10-11) and those who fought in irregular armies are likely to benefit even less. Bouta's study contains six policy steps for the Dutch government, including, for example, **ensuring that all women in (ir)regular armies have access to assistance, tracing and reaching women before the start of the DDR programme and gender-sensitisation of the DDR trajectories** (2005: 13-22)

The feminisation of households due to conflict-related displacement and widowhood has significant implications for women's economic empowerment in some countries. The percentage of households headed by women in Rwanda grew from 19% to 37% between 1992 and 2000. Research based on a large household survey³⁰ found 'no evidence that the genocide led to a more flexible division of domestic and paid labour per se' (Schindler 2011: 16). Schindler found that in men-headed and in widow- or women-headed households women and men spent their time very differently in both household and income-generating activities.³¹ In short, in woman- or widow-headed households, women's roles changed but men's did not. She drew a number of conclusions: 'traditional' gender roles continue in male-headed households, but matter less for the division of labour in widow-headed as women become the main earner. On average men in women-headed households do less household and income-generating work than their counterparts in men-headed households, and traditional gender roles and division of labour continue to shape activities in the household and public sphere. She also found that in areas of the country where there is a shortage of men, young women strive to increase their marriage prospects and display their suitability as future wives by working in traditional female activities.

4.2 Support to women's economic activities: targeting women's gender roles

There is evidence that support to income generation, micro-enterprise, loans and business development can bring immediate and longer-term tangible benefits to women and their families and some economic empowerment. These programmes target women's gender roles for the benefit of the family. Women themselves benefited directly in very tangible ways, but they also took on extra roles while men's roles remained largely unchanged. The same approach, namely targeting women's gender roles, brought different results in terms of impact on gender relations and women's political empowerment in another intervention. Although explicit measures to enable women to challenge gender roles and relations were not considered, in some instances women did take on leadership roles in the community; access to money brought greater self-esteem and some respect from men. Women's gains were more substantial where the impact of the conflict was particularly severe on men. The extent of women's economic empowerment and its impact on gender roles and relations in the household and outside, and on women political empowerment, were constrained by many factors. Targeting women and improving their economic endeavours, and by implication bypassing men, may have an adverse impact if men withdraw from household responsibilities.

³⁰ Carried out by the National Institute of Statistics in 2005/06

³¹ Women in men-headed households spent 24.3 hours on household tasks and 25.9 hours per week in income-generating activities while men spent 7.7 and 32.2 hours. In widow- or women-headed households, women spent 21.2 hours in household tasks and 24.7 hours per week in income generation. Men in the same household spent 10 hours in domestic tasks and 33.5 in income generation (in both case around 2 hours less than in a male-headed household). Schindler used a multivariate econometric analysis to account for households' different levels of education, age, wealth and size (2011: 15).

An income-generating, micro-enterprise, business development and loans programme working with 50,000 IDPs (75% women) in camps in Northern Uganda assisted women to meet the daily food and clothing needs of their family, pay school fees, have savings of their own and repay loans (2008: 22). Empowerment was ‘measured’ through focus group discussions on three aspects: enhanced capacities, independent decision-making and control over economic resources (Nsabagasani et al 2008). Women were targeted specifically because of their gender roles: they were seen by women themselves and men as the backbone of the family, and as easier to mobilise; the programme did not address women’s strategic interests. The evaluation team concluded that while at project level women and men relate as equals with equal entitlements, ‘the economic empowerment of women has not necessarily translated into significant improvements in gender relations at household levels’ as men continue to dominate economic resources and are uninterested in the improvement of women’s situation (2008: 31). The discussions also showed that greater economic empowerment can have adverse implications for women as some men responded by neglecting their household responsibilities (2008: 22).

Similar findings emerged from a survey of the economic activities of 200 women returnees³² in two districts in Northern Uganda but here women’s economic empowerment was more substantial. What is interesting in this case is that women retained these new roles after the conflict and became the primary income earner in men- and women-headed households; a key factor here was the severe impact of the conflict on men.³³ The war, displacement and men’s engagement in the conflict led to women taking on head of household roles: they farmed with more of a commercial eye, engaged in trade and cash-based activities, were economically better off in very concrete ways and took a greater role in family decision-making (International Alert/ East African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women 2010: 16). Furthermore, women’s mobility and public visibility changed: they took leadership positions in savings and co-operative groups and were ready to vote, with a majority willing to vote for women (2010: 25/29). This has yet to be reflected in women’s formal political representation in any significant numbers. There were, however, clear limits to the scale of most women’s business activities; only 18% of those surveyed reported incomes over \$US\$135 per month (2010: 33). Barriers, such as household responsibilities, lack of capital, exclusion from land ownership, male dominance and hostility to women’s empowerment, and violence persist (2010: 35). Changing women’s gender roles – in essence adding new economic roles to the usual caring and household maintenance roles – did not fundamentally alter gender attitudes and values (2010: 46).

There is a growing body of research on cash transfer programmes but to date little of this has focussed on conflict-affected or fragile contexts. A recent study of cash transfer programmes in two rural and one urban area in Indonesia, Kenya and Zimbabwe (Concern Worldwide and Oxfam GB 2011) found results similar to the Northern Uganda programmes (above). The cash transfer programmes brought immediate tangible benefits and improved women’s self-esteem and confidence. Targeting women brought some positive changes in gender relations, such as improved communications between partners, for example, and some women took on community leadership roles (2011: 14/15).³⁴ However, the programmes also had the effect of underlining women’s traditional gender roles in the household and outside and at the same time reinforcing negative male stereotypes. A major limitation of the programmes and the

³² One adult women per household

³³ International Alert and EASSI found that the conflict has had a heavy impact on many men leaving them disabled, demoralised, traumatised and unable to act as household head.

³⁴ The cash transfer programmes did not make any adjustments for polygamous households

benefits women obtained was the negative impact on the community in all three cases. Targeting women, without participatory implementation processes caused community division and jealousy (2011: 17). DFID's Cash Transfers Evidence Paper (2011) found that evidence is limited (anecdotal only) on the impact of cash transfers on promoting social cohesion and the social contract for conflict prevention and peace-building.

Kottegoda (2010) challenges donor agencies' targeting of women with 'poverty alleviation' (her quote marks) programmes in Sri Lanka. Men, she writes, are regarded by donors and government as 'legitimately' dominating and controlling decision-making in family and public life, but 'there is an unquestioning and uncritical acceptance that men have little role/responsibility to play in the economic well-being of the family-based household', especially in poor households. Women are targeted because of the 'their (assumed) social identities as carers and nurturers' (2010: 96). Kottegoda is not questioning women's capacity to provide for the family, but rather the 'highly gendered conceptualisation' of the family unit, and lack of discussion about the division of rights, roles and responsibilities within families. She concludes that **the targeting of women for poverty alleviation blocks the 'transformation of the 'empowerment' of women into political activism'** and that a 'political agenda' is needed to address directly gender equality and the sharing of power within a strengthened democratic process (2010: 97-98). Echoing Kottegoda's point, an ADB evaluation suggested that positive action in favour of women may make their position worse, for example with respect to micro-finance loans directed towards women whose families may benefit but women retained the repayment responsibility (2009: 14/15).

4.3 Addressing women's strategic interests and practical needs

Although there is a shortage of rigorous evaluations on interventions addressing women's strategic interests alongside their practical needs, and little rigorous interrogation of (anecdotal) impact on gender relations, it is possible to identify some valuable approaches and lessons. Interventions that linked practical support, for example, to improving women's livelihoods, providing training, access to public services or financial services, to strategic measures aimed to strengthen women's voice in business, community or municipal decision-making were effective in several contexts, such as Angola, Nigeria and Ethiopia. Adopting an explicit gender equity strategy and affirmative action that linked gender and social inclusion proved successful in Nepal. An important factor in Pakistan was consulting women about their needs and interests and carrying out an analysis of market gaps. In contrast to the interventions targeting women's gender roles (discussed above) talking to men was an important part of the planning process to obtain their support for programmes with women. Likewise, sensitising community leaders and creating spaces where women could engage with local government elected leaders and officials, on for example water services or participatory budgeting, contributed to women's economic and political empowerment. The use of gender analysis to understand the context underlines most successful interventions. In one instance, the choice of local implementation partner and the partner's quite high number of women staff members were decisive factors.

The approach of a UNIFEM/UNDP three year project in the Niger Delta³⁵ was to combine support in the form of ICT facilities and training, technical and entrepreneurship skills and access to equipment with advocacy meetings to sensitise community leaders, women groups and local government elected and appointed officials on the benefits of participatory budgeting and inclusive governance at the local level (Fakoya 2008: 7). An evaluation found

³⁵ Aiming to increase the access of 120 women from three communities to information for economic decision-making

that the project had ‘performed particularly well’ on its own terms in both dimensions. On the strategic level it was assessed to have built the capacity of local government, women development centres and community stakeholders and contributed to creating a ‘facilitating environment that protects and promotes the rights of women’ (2008: 17). There was anecdotal evidence from the women project participants describing how their self-esteem and contribution to the household economy increased, how they felt more respected within the household and had more independence to attend meetings and trainings. A thorough interrogation of these changes and their durability following the project’s closure is needed.

The Luanda Urban Poverty Programme³⁶ in Angola was found to have brought important results in terms of ‘empowerment and an increasing sense of citizenship’ amongst those involved in its various initiatives. Earle (2011) found an interesting cross-over between tangible benefits to improve livelihoods and access to basic services and greater political engagement of marginalised people in the peri-urban areas of Luanda. Civil society organisations had grown in the *musseques* and, in Earle’s view, ‘are likely to survive’ beyond the end of LUPP funding, evidenced by interactions and political engagement between CSOs and the local state. The municipal development fora established in the five municipalities where LUPP worked, provided a space for community members to express themselves, build relationships with local authority officials, and close the gap between state and society (2011: 50). Earle concludes that while governance reforms at the national level are critical, LUPP demonstrated the **potential of work at the municipality level to act as a catalyst for national level change, to contribute towards progress in decentralisation and to formalise spaces for citizen-state dialogue and exchange (2011: 52).**

The WEDGE (Women’s Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality) Project in Ethiopia adopted a three-prong interconnected strategy: promoting knowledge about women’s entrepreneurship; supporting voice and representation for women entrepreneurs; and developing services targeted at women entrepreneurs and their financial service providers. Each prong supported the others, for example, current information informed advocacy on service provision (ILO 2007: 12). This project has been put forward as an ILO model for women’s entrepreneurship development. ILO’s evaluation of women’s entrepreneurship and the promotion of decent work³⁷ (2007) found that projects that used a gender-specific³⁸ strategy were better at ‘achieving sustainable and systemic change than gender-mainstreamed³⁹ projects as they pay particular attention to women entrepreneurs and their economic and social context and advocate for change’ (2007: 11). The longer term impact for women, the wider economy and poverty reduction was not assessed (2007: 9).

³⁶ Luanda Urban Poverty Programme (LUPP) financed in three phases by DFID from 1999 to 2010, focused primarily on microfinance, water and sanitation, early childhood development and participatory governance, implemented by Save the Children, CARE and Development Workshop with One World Action providing support from London, dissemination work and international policy advocacy

³⁷ Based on evaluations of 15 projects in a range of countries, including Ethiopia and Pakistan – the projects, varied in scale, all aimed to build women’s capacity, enhance women’s employability and their social and political empowerment. They aimed to increase the management skills of private financial service providers, women entrepreneurs’ associations, microfinance institutions, local government administration and training institutions, and undertake market research. .

³⁸ ILO defines gender-specific as projects targeting both men and women as ultimate beneficiaries, but with specific activities for women, that analysed the specific needs of women and men before starting activities and adapted their activities and tools to the specific needs of each (2007: 6).

³⁹ ILO defined gender mainstreamed projects as those targeting both men and women as ultimate beneficiaries and taking concrete steps to ensure the equitable participation of and impact upon both sexes (2007: 6).

Making an explicit link between gender equality and the social inclusion of those discriminated against on the grounds of caste and ethnicity⁴⁰ was effective in Nepal in ensuring a representative proportion of women and excluded groups were among the beneficiaries. The programme⁴¹ sought to increase employment opportunities through skill-enhancement programmes, to develop microenterprises by providing rural financial services, and to provide gender-responsive service delivery for more effective participation in the development process. An evaluation⁴² found that women's participation in decision-making and livelihood generation had increased to over 50%; women were taking on more decision-making roles within water user steering committees and that there was greater acceptance of women as leaders. Women also comprised over half of the representatives from disadvantaged caste and ethnic groups. Aside from the programme's affirmative action stance, another factor here, the evaluators suggest, may have been the feminisation of agriculture in Nepal due to the conflict (ADB 2009: 14).

ILO's Evaluation (2007) also found that projects which designed their interventions on the basis of preparatory studies, such as action research or gender-sensitive business analysis, were better tailored towards the direct beneficiaries. The TREE (Training for Rural Economic Empowerment) project in Pakistan illustrated this point. It worked with community-based organisations of women and young people to assist them to build up savings through providing training in vocational skills and creating links with financial service providers. Key to its success was that project staff met first with men in the communities to get 'permission for the women to follow the training' and get some commitment that men would take over household family care work during the training (2007: 12). The project also carried out an assessment of local economic opportunities and tailored the training accordingly so that trainees could offer services to the community not previously available (2007: 6). Consultation with women and the use of gender analysis was strong in the SIDA Amhara Rural Development Programme (SARDP III) in Ethiopia. Women's fora and gender analysis groups were set up to enable women to articulate their views.⁴³ The anecdotal evidence (the only evidence available) is that the some cultural farming-related taboos were dented and some men assumed household tasks (Rozel Farnworth 2010: 48/49). The programme, however, failed to implement planned gender components within its agriculture and natural resources pillar (discussed below in 4.3.1).

The choice of local partner was a significant determinant in the effectiveness of support to women's agricultural activities in Ethiopia through a NORAD-funded dry land agriculture programme. The Afar Pastoralist Development Association, for example, successfully combined support to women's basic needs alongside their strategic interests, through cash in hand and knowledge/education projects, including 6 co-operatives for women, and advocating for an end to FGM⁴⁴ (NORAD 2009: 18). An important factor here may have been that 38% of APDA's staff members were women including 23 women extension workers. Another partner, Ogaden Welfare Development Association, established local development committees with eight men and two women (a big step in the Somali region where girls and women have no public voice) and peace building committees to encourage women and young people into decision-making structures. This work was combined with

⁴⁰ The Evaluation points to the gender, caste and ethnicity inclusion implementation plan that was developed by the Nepalese Resident Mission in 2006 with activities, outputs and performance indicators, and that the design and monitoring framework was revised to include a range of gender, caste and ethnic indicators (2009: 14 footnote 36).

⁴¹ Funded by ADB and Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction

⁴² Carried out by ADB's independent evaluation department

⁴³ Gender training was provided covering 88% of the targeted *woredas*, 178 Gender Conversation Groups were developed and followed-up, and 890 facilitators were trained.

⁴⁴ The partner says FGM is not a religious matter in Afar region, and claims to have seen a small change in attitudes to FGM

revolving credit groups and water resource groups (2009: 19). Other partners were less committed to integrating gender analysis (2009: 15-18).

4.3.1 Hindering factors: weak use of gender analysis and policy evaporation

There is a gap between external actors' policy commitment to integrating gender analysis in all interventions in political, economic and social spheres and their practice in conflict-affected and fragile contexts.⁴⁵ Gender analysis is not systematically used in situation analysis, programme design or evaluations. Factors such as policy evaporation, feeble management will and interest, competing priorities and weak planning, reporting and accountability systems create this gap. Inappropriate staff training did not assist. Work on gender-related issues was also not covered in many reports and so remained invisible and impossible to evaluate. Even where gender-based exclusion was understood as a core cause of fragility, resources were not channelled to address this (Chapman and Vaillant 2010: 51).

The challenges of successful gender mainstreaming to meet women's practical needs and/or their strategic gender interests was well illustrated by the SARDP III⁴⁶ in Ethiopia (mentioned above). The agricultural and natural resources pillar commissioned gender studies and collaborated with national and international experts to build a sound database on the gender needs of women farmers and labourers, and gender components were designed with detailed recommendations and budgets and included in programme log-frames and budgets. However, as an evaluation by Rosel-Farnworth (2010)⁴⁷ found, in practice dedicated funds were almost never set aside to realise these components and so the results were disappointing. Some women did gain from support to vegetable growing and from small loans but had little market access. The pillar did not acknowledge or work with the gender-specific constraints identified, and thus brought little benefit to women farmers. The Evaluation attributed the failure to management processes whereby funds were transferred by SIDA en block so that money for gender mainstreaming could not be tracked (2010: 38). Another important factor, according to the gender consultants, was that the management was not pro-active in ensuring the components were funded and implemented and instead went along with the national counterparts' disinterest in promoting gender targets (2010: 39).⁴⁸ Confusion about strategic concepts may also curtail results for women's empowerment. The Evaluation of ADB's support in Nepal pinpointed a confusion in language between 'gender equity' and 'gender equality' and stated a preference for the former, clarifying that 'gender equity' 'implicitly takes account of women's and men's different needs and roles in a society, rather than treating them alike'.

4.3.3 Can micro-finance⁴⁹ bring economic empowerment for women?

Support to women in conflict-affected and fragile contexts often included some form of micro-finance (financial services, credit, etc.) to assist small-scale enterprises. This Study did not carry out a comprehensive review of the vast literature on micro-finance however findings from the following studies were regarded as useful. Overall there was evidence that micro-finance can be a useful entry point and can bring benefits to some women in certain situations. Its contribution to women's economic meaningful empowerment was less clear.

⁴⁵ See Assen et al (2009); Sorvald (2009); Kaldor and Vincent (2006); Kaldor et al (2006); Chapman and Vaillant (2010); Vaillant et al (2010).

⁴⁶ SARDP aimed to improve the food security of people in 30 *woredas* (fourth administrative level) in East Gojjam and South Wollo (totally 4.4 million inhabitants) and is one of SIDA's largest programmes

⁴⁷ Cathy Rozel Farnworth (2010) – a comprehensive study on SIDA's gender-aware approaches in agriculture in five countries, including, Ethiopia, the only fragile state included

⁴⁸ Rozel-Farnworth writes that women did benefit from SARDP's improvement in sexual health and education and on land titling which were not gender mainstreaming measures (2010: 37). Annex 5 (the Ethiopia study) to Gabriela Byron and Charlotte Örnemark (2010) evaluation of SIDA co-operation could not be located.

⁴⁹ Defined as the provision of financial instruments, such as credit to individuals or groups

A synthesis study by the Centre for Economic and Business Research (2008)⁵⁰ concluded (even allowing for biases in the selection of micro-finance project participants), that there was evidence from different contexts that micro-finance can provide economic empowerment to women and ‘to some extent assist the process of social and legal empowerment’. In Bangladesh where women’s mobility limited women’s empowerment opportunities but also assisted the micro-finance programme the evidence was strongest. Women who previously had no credit option now had one (2008: 32-3).⁵¹ In her article on findings from South Asia, Kabeer concluded likewise that micro-finance can make a positive contribution in certain contexts. The impact was greater for very poor women and longer-term schemes may enable women to invest in economic assets rather than day-to-day survival items (2005: 4711). She found evidence that microfinance can improve women’s status and decision-making within the household but this impact was uneven and very specific to the context and kind of decisions made (2005: 4713). Overall, she judged that access to financial services was just one entry point and did not automatically empower women (2005: 4718).

Other analysts, such as Mayoux, wrote (on her website) that the contribution of micro-finance to women's empowerment was generally less than assumed. Mayoux pointed out that credit was also debt; that women may continue to work in saturated markets earning very low incomes; that women's access to even a little income may lead to men withdrawing their contribution to household expenses; and finally, that the formation of groups for debt repayment may increase tensions between women within the community without bringing any significant improvement to women’s position. ILO’s conclusion from its evaluation is that enterprise development **projects ‘must strive towards more systemic change’ by removing the barriers to women’s entrepreneurship** and working with social partners and service providers to build their understanding of the needs and interests of women entrepreneurs (2007: 11).

4.4 Summary of key findings

- **Women’s economic empowerment needs to build on political gains:** interventions to support women’s economic activities in the post-conflict period need to reflect and build on women’s political empowerment gains by enabling women to challenge gendered economic relations and constraints and take leadership positions in economic and political structures; interventions should avoid reverting to programmes that solely target women’s gender roles as carers and household managers.
- **Cross-over interventions are more successful:** combining support to women’s strategic gender interests and practical needs was effective in building women’s self-esteem, obtaining family and community respect, and giving women more autonomy to take part in community and local decision-making. For example, linking practical training for women with wider awareness raising on the benefits of inclusive governance (Nigeria); linking support to livelihoods and access to public services with the development of municipal fora (Angola); increasing women’s access to financial services and their voice and representation (Ethiopia); blending support to skill enhancement and affirmative action to ensure representation of women and ethnic minorities in decision-making (Nepal).

⁵⁰ The study looked at education, micro-finance and legal aid

⁵¹ The conclusion on education (from research in Mexico and Kenya) was that an increase in the supply of education can improve women’s empowerment (2008: 39). Evidence from Nepal and Ecuador on the contribution of legal aid was inconclusive due to methodological problems; the Nepal research showed a link between owning land and empowerment, but causation is unclear: were women empowered because they owned land or were empowered women more likely to own land? (2008: 42).

5. INTERVENTIONS TO IMPROVE WOMEN AND GIRLS' ACCESS TO QUALITY SERVICES

In their international literature review Pavenello and Darcy (2008) found little evidence and research on gender issues, especially for education and health sectors in conflict-affected and fragile states (2008: 25). The literature on the relative merits and roles of state and non-state service providers in conflict-affected and fragile contexts and the contribution of access to public services to conflict prevention contains little gender analysis. A synthesis of impact evaluations on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) (Jurgen 2009) found few studies that were methodologically robust in terms of measuring equity⁵² and a 'meagre' evidence base on best practices, cost-effective and innovative interventions and approaches to reducing gender inequity or analysis of its effect on SRHR. The gender impact of the decentralisation of service provision has yet to be fully interrogated; one large study found some interesting and mixed results.

The following sub-sections draw on available evaluation and studies on education (primary level mostly), health and water. However, studies on education, for example, tend to focus more on the barriers and challenges to improving girls' access to quality education rather than evaluating service provision. There was little evidence that interventions in the areas of health and water have been informed by gender analysis or by a more holistic view of women and girls' health.

The MDGs have focussed attention on aspects of gender equality, including girls' access to education and maternal mortality, but have had the effect of concentrating attention on quantitative data rather than qualitative. The collection of sex-disaggregated data though increasing is still not widespread. Investment in primary education, such as infrastructure, has increased the enrolment of girls and boys in many conflict-affected contexts but has not addressed the social and cultural attitudes to girls' education, and enrolment does not equate to completion or access to quality education. Advocacy for gender equality by external and local actors has been useful in some fragile contexts. The immediate post-conflict period offers opportunities to transform, rather than rehabilitate, public services; opportunities that are largely missed.

5.1 Service provision: state and non-state providers and external actors

The challenges and issues surrounding the provision of services in conflict-affected and fragile contexts are the focus of much investigation within the OECD/DAC and elsewhere.⁵³ A fundamental question is how to balance quick and efficient service provision to meet people's immediate needs while also laying the groundwork to enable state bodies to take on at least the 'indirect' facilitation of public service provision, in other words to work alongside and not side-line state institutions. The literature reviewed⁵⁴ appears to agree that in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, where state capacity⁵⁵ is weak, a division of roles between state and non-state providers is best. Non-state providers have key roles to play with regard to coverage and availability of basic services while the state develops its 'indirect' roles, such

⁵² Defined by Jurgen as achieving universal access to reproductive health

⁵³ See: OECD/DAC (2008) *Service Delivery in Fragile Situations: Key concepts, findings and lessons*. Discussion Paper; Richard Batley and Claire McLoughlin (2009); S G Jones et al., 2006, *Securing Health: Lessons from Nation-Building Missions*, RAND Corporation US; L Zivetz (2006) *Health Service Delivery in Early Recovery Fragile States: Lessons from Afghanistan, Cambodia, Mozambique and Timor Leste*, USA: BASICS; and others.

⁵⁴ See for example, Sara Pavenello (2009) and Richard Batley and Clare McLoughlin (2009)

⁵⁵ Batley and McLoughlin define state capacity as organisational and wider institutional factors, as well as the connections between the actors, including government, state agencies, non-state providers and donors (2009: 16).

as, establishing policy and dialogue with non-state providers, regulating and facilitating, contracting out, and agreeing mutual and informal arrangements (Batley and McLoughlin 2009: 33/35). The literature reviewed did not analyse the implications of such a division of labour for the provision of gender-responsive services.

5.1.1. The gender impact of service sector decentralisation

Decentralisation of service delivery to local government level may be possible in some conflict-affected and fragile states, with external support, and may open opportunities for improving women and girls' access to services. However, from the limited evidence available, service sector decentralisation appears not to automatically benefit women, and may worsen their situation.

Thirteen research projects supported by IDRC in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America examined how decentralisation affects women's access to services, resources and local power in order to test the assumption that decentralisation of the management of water, health, education and other public functions can bring empowerment for women (MacLean, 2008). Decentralisation in Sudan was found to have a 'limited, if not negative' impact on women's access to services as fiscal decentralisation went hand-in-hand with sectoral, resulting in (local) states having to raise resources through the introduction of user fees, effectively prohibiting the access of girls and women in poor families to services. Research in Pakistan showed that women were rarely members of local budget or finance committees and thus had little influence over decision-making. In Nepal, where by law women must be represented on local committees on education, irrigation user groups, and so on, not all women had the confidence to speak up in public in front of men; it was also found that elite women were able to capture the committee places in several communities and exclude women from marginalised social, caste and ethnic groups (MacLean 2008).

The research projects proposed a number of measures to meet the challenges identified, including, for example, ensuring that general programmes allocate funds for women's needs alongside specific programmes for women, and the use of gender analysis in budget monitoring and audits. The importance of state policies recognising how identities such as class, caste, ethnicity and age shape women's access to decision-making, services and resources was emphasised by the Nepal research. **The main lesson from the research was that to benefit and empower women service sector decentralisation has to be designed to meet women's diverse needs and interests** (MacLean 2008).

5.1.2 Does access to services foster peace?

Many external actors give priority to service delivery to meet immediate needs in conflict-affected contexts, some of least, with the hoped-for added benefit of diminishing conflict. The state's ability to deliver services, or ensure their delivery, to citizens is an important dimension of legitimacy. However, there is little evidence that access to public services, though essential for wellbeing, is sufficient to prevent conflict or promote peace. The adoption of the Basic Package of Health Services approach in DRC was seen by Waldman (2006) as a political and technical event, bringing together health authorities from across the spectrum of armed political factions, and showing 'at least a small role for the health sector is possible in forging and possibly in maintaining the fragile peace'. He concluded, however, that there is no evidence in DRC that even significant health service improvements will consolidate the peace process or assist progress towards political stability' (2006: 20). There is no gender analysis of health issues in DRC in Waldman's case study. Bennett et al query the assumed linkage between service provision and conflict prevention and peacebuilding, arguing that international support to services, such as security, policing and rule of law are a

greater priority than basic services (2010: 94). As mentioned above, Bennett et al report that many interviewees and focus group participants in Southern Sudan regarded livelihood and employment opportunities, especially for young people,⁵⁶ as critical to preventing or reducing tensions (2010: 86).

5.2 Education

The Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2011) focused attention on what it called, ‘the hidden crisis’ in education in conflict-affected states, where 28 million children of primary school age are out of school. Armed conflict reinforces inequalities in access to education. The available evidence shows that meeting this need will require strategic and significant investment during and post-conflict, not just in infrastructure and enrolment campaigns but in addressing economic, social and cultural attitudes and barriers to girls’ education. Achieving gender parity or near parity in enrolment in primary education, though important, was not the same as girls accessing and completing gender-responsive education.

5.2.1 Addressing barriers to girls’ access to education in conflict-affected contexts

Although barriers to girls’ access to education are multiple, evidence from a number of studies points to social perceptions of and cultural attitudes towards women and girls as a fundamental obstacle to their access to quality education. Other critical factors were poverty, insecurity, early pregnancy and marriage and child labour (Jackson 2011,⁵⁷ de Kemp and Eilor 2008,⁵⁸ Bangladesh Directorate of Education 2010⁵⁹). Lack of qualified women teachers, poor school infrastructure and shortage of educational materials were other factors. The perception of parents about the kind of education girls received was found to be a decisive factor in Afghanistan. Conflict and teacher absenteeism were important causes of school drop-out in Northern Uganda. The E4 conference⁶⁰ identified another dimension that requires attention, namely, how poverty intersects with gender and other inequalities to limit girls’ access to education.

5.2.2 Effective strategies for girls’ education

The rapid increase in enrolment in primary education in the period from 1995 has posed many challenges. From the limited evidence it is possible to identify strategies and enabling factors that have been effective in ensuring girls, alongside boys, access primary education, stay in school, learn and complete their education. Investment in infrastructure and training teachers can achieve gender parity or near parity but may not improve quality. The evidence points to the need to address supply-side and demand-side constraints, and that quality is a fundamental aspect in both. The use of advocacy on girls’ education was found to be more

⁵⁶ This would appear to refer mainly to young discontented men

⁵⁷ 16 Afghan and international NGOs carried out field research in 17 provinces in Afghanistan in the period January to April 2009 on girls’ access to education: structured interviews with 1,649 respondents (630 parents, 332 teachers and 687 school-aged females) selected randomly and gender-segregated group discussions at each interview location. Women and men researchers were used to ensure acceptance of the participants.

⁵⁸ An evaluation of primary education in Uganda – a joint effort of the Education Planning Department of the Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda and the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁵⁹ Report of workshop, Gender equality in education: Beyond numbers. Dhaka, Bangladesh, December 2010. Workshop participants were Ministers of Education and women parliamentarians from Bangladesh and Nepal, the Campaign for Popular Education, UNICEF and others.

⁶⁰ E4 was an international electronic discussion and conference of practitioners, scholars, government representatives and development partners, ‘Engendering Empowerment: Education and Equality (E4)’ in 2010, to mark the 10th anniversary of the UN Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI). E4 discussed four themes: linkages between poverty and other intersecting inequalities (race, class, gender, location, etc.); the gendered nature of education and the role quality education can play in promoting gender equality; the impact of the threat or experience of SGBV on girls’ education.

effective than investment in contexts where national partner commitment and performance were weak. It is clear from the evidence that more resources are required to meet girls' educational needs and aspirations. The post-conflict context offers an opportunity to transform the education system for gender equality and equity; there is little evidence that this opportunity is taken.

An evaluation by Rose and Subramanian (2005)⁶¹ identified four **strategies which have been shown to be effective in relation to girls' education: affordability of education for girls; availability of local schools; making schools more girls-friendly; and quality schooling**. This evaluation and others, including the Dhaka Workshop Report⁶² stress the importance of an enabling environment, the role mothers and role models play with regard to girls' education, and gender sensitisation and mobilisation within communities to challenge 'compromising attitudes' around religion, class and gender inequality.⁶³ A gender-sensitive curriculum and gender-sensitive management systems were additional aspects. Evidence from Afghanistan and Uganda found that investment in primary education and enrolment campaigns led to parity or near parity but did not guarantee girls' access to quality education.⁶⁴ Jackson (2011) found that girls in Afghanistan had high educational aspirations but these were rarely attained. De Kemp and Eilor (2008) found drop-out and repetition rates were high, for girls and boys, in Uganda, and the quality of education low.

Jackson's analysis from Afghanistan was that: '[d]ecision-making by families about whether girls attend school and, if so, for how long, are complex and extremely varied across Afghanistan' (2011: 19). He concluded that there was 'complex interplay' between demand and supply factors that means building more schools, training more women teachers and paying them on time were not sufficient on their own to offset the impact of family and community attitudes, insecurity and poverty on girls' education (2011: 8). The de Kemp and Eilor evaluation questioned if the focus on meeting quantitative targets and input and process indicators lead to under-investment in remote rural areas, and also, asked if it were realistic on the part of government and development partners to expect to raise access and quality simultaneously. Based on experience from Masindi⁶⁵, the evaluation pointed to the need to equip school managers and district level officials with management skills and to set up an inspection body in order to make the most effective use of investment in teachers, schools and materials, and improve the quality of education (2008: 19). The evaluation differentiated between girls and boys in its data collection but did not analyse its policy questions and recommendations from a gender perspective.

Support to school construction and rehabilitation, teacher training, and technical and vocational training was found to be effective in Palestine. Skotnes et al (2008) found that in

⁶¹ In four countries: Bangladesh, Ghana, India and Malawi

⁶² Bangladesh Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, et al (2010) Workshop report. Gender equality in education: Beyond numbers. Dhaka, Bangladesh, December 2010.

⁶³ Ibid p16

⁶⁴ The 'Back to School' campaign, a joint Government of Afghanistan and UN-led initiative launched in 2002, was successful in increasing the enrolment of girls and boys. Since 2001 international agencies contributed around US\$1.9 billion to building schools, hiring teachers and developing curricula. This funding is now tailing off and suggestions are that funds are being redirected to security (see Annie Kelly, February 24 2011, '*Afghan girls' education backsliding as donors shift focus to withdrawal*', The Guardian. In Uganda, the Government's introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1996, the abolition of school fees and local campaigns (such as the Girls' Education Movement) resulted in enrolment parity by 2005.

⁶⁵ In Masindi, significant improvements in schools and exam results were found to have come from the work of the Regional District Office, the Education Standards Agency and the NGO Link Community Development (LCD) since 2000 to improve district and school management, through the training of district officers, management and teachers, as well as regular monitoring and inspections (2008: 16)

quantitative terms huge progress had been made on girls' education and reaching a balance of women and men teachers; quantitative gender indicators only were addressed in the programme documents. **More systematic gender analysis of the sector, for example to understand how education could promote gender equality and a better understanding of the rights of women and girls**, remained a challenge (2008: 13).

Combining investment and advocacy (ADB) and support to community level projects and advocacy (Oxfam GB) has been effective in Pakistan. A Country Assistance Programme evaluation (2007) judged that ADB's 'consistent advocacy for improved girls' access to education' and its broader advocacy on gender issues were more effective than its investment projects.⁶⁶ Insufficient budget allocation, ineffective use of resources, and leakage due to corruption were among the factors they identified as contributing to weak government performance in the education sector (2007: 24). Advocacy is also a key part of Oxfam GB strategy: it worked with 200 schools in five rural districts to train teachers and mobilise parents to join School Management Committees and engage in advocacy and policy change at district, provincial and national level (Shaukat 2009: 11/12). It used male community activists to raise men and boys' awareness and understanding of girls' education and mobilise them to lobby, for example, for more women teachers and improvements in school facilities. Shaukat sees the **need to work at both the demand and supply sides of education** in Pakistan, and sees an important role for local government to administer the service and train school management (2009: 16). She also highlighted ambiguity at the level of policy whereby different target dates were set for achieving universal primary education for boys (2005) and girls (2010). This, in her view, explicitly reinforces and takes for granted the gender gap – girls' education is not seen as a right – and results in lack of attention to community attitudes, proximity and quality of school facilities in rural areas (2009: 5).

5.2.3 Beyond numbers: transformative education for all

What is meant by quality education for girls and its role in building peaceful and gender-sensitive societies where women and girls can enjoy their rights and live free from the threat or actual experience of SGBV are the focus of a number of papers. The opportunity presented in the aftermath of conflict and in fragile states to transform education systems and services and the contribution transformative education can make to gender equity and equality and to conflict prevention and statebuilding are highlighted.

The E4 conference's view is that **'gender equality must be at the heart of any definition of quality education – it can be transformative and empowering for girls, and also for boys'**. Furthermore, it emphasised that it is 'not possible to address gender equality in schools without addressing experiences of violence' and that addressing unequal power structures has to be central to this enquiry (UNGEI 2010: 5/6). The need for 'protective and innovative learning opportunities' for girls, boys and young women in armed conflict and emergency situations was also stressed (2010: 7).

Education systems have to be inclusive to assist in building a peaceful social fabric was the view of Huma Haider (2009) drawing on lessons from several post-conflict societies and thus she concluded, there is a **need to reform the whole education system in the aftermath of conflict**, rather than rehabilitating education services. Jyotsna Jha went further than this in a gender review (2011) of the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report. She praised the GMR's analysis of the impact of armed conflict on girls' education, but saw a lack of in-depth analysis of the qualitative and relational aspects of gender equality issues in conflict contexts.

⁶⁶ ADB's investment in social sectors (education and health) and in water was not regarded as effective; investment in agriculture, using gender affirmative measures, was more successful (ADB 2007)

She writes: ‘Widespread use of rape and sexual abuse as a weapon of war reflects a prevalent, disturbing socialization and mindset towards women and girls that exist in these societies. This mindset is not a result of conflict, as deep-rooted gender images and symbols are very much part of societies and manifest during times of conflict. Education can maintain the status quo or play a transformative role in the context of gender as well. Hence, it is important to emphasise the need for developing the school as a transformative, gender-responsive institution during post-conflict situations as well in times of relative peace...’(2011: 15).

5.2.4 More resources: which modality, which provider?

The evidence points to the need to increase resources for quality education provision in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. How, on what conditions, and from where these resources should come and who should be the service provider are debated.

The conclusion of the ADB evaluation is that ADB should direct more resources to education with three provisos: a change of approach towards greater attention to learning outcomes, non-state provision, and sector performance information; analysis of prior poor performance and its causes; and more staff resources in the Pakistan Resident Mission directed to support the programme (2007: 25). Shaukat calls for more public resources to provide education to the underserved areas and reach girls in Pakistan as non-state actors and the private sector cannot make the scale of investment required (2009: 16). Rose and Subramanian (2005) draw attention to the gender implications of the expansion of private schooling and of new aid modalities. Private schools may provide better education for those who can afford it, but could also be the only option where public provision is insufficient; parents may make financial choices about paying schools for boys over girls. Alternative schools, such as BRAC schools in Bangladesh, can open opportunities for girls who otherwise may miss out (2005: 10).

Sector-wide Approach (SWAp) can streamline responsibility to one ministry, but may also result in policy evaporation, donors de-emphasising gender equality issues, and an over-focus on enrolment at the expense of attention to gender power relations and addressing the underlying gender inequalities in relation to girls’ education. Specific measures for gender equality may be difficult to implement in the transition from project to SWAp or budget support (Rose and Subramanian 2005: 25, 28). By contrast, the use of SWAp and general budget support later was evaluated as contributing to the successful implementation of two development plans and the introduction of universal education in Northern Uganda (de Kemp and Eilor 2008). Funds were pooled allowing resources to be allocated more efficiently and effectively to the education sector (2008: 13). The evaluation report did not include any analysis of the gender implications of the shift to new aid modalities. An evaluation of DFID’s support to Rwanda, found that the 10 year MOU with the Government and the use of poverty reduction budget support was regarded as contributing to progress in the education sector and gender equality at primary level (Kanyarukigo et al 2006: 35). What seems key here are **explicit policy commitments and follow-through attention to ensure stated gender equity and equality objectives in education are met.**

5.3 Women and girls’ access to quality health and water services

The challenges of delivering quality health and water services to women and girls in conflict-affected and fragile contexts are multiple ranging from poor or non-existent services to restricted access due to conflict, insecurity, cultural attitudes and household workload. In situations of conflict and crisis, women may also be at greater risk of sexual coercion and

rape leading to physical and mental health problems including unwanted pregnancy and maternal and peri-natal mortality (WHO 2009: 11). Weak government will and state capacity were found to be determining factors in service provision that limit what international agencies can achieve, as can non-alignment of national partner and donor priorities.

Slow progress in improving the health of women, infants and children and in reducing mortality rates is raised in some reports. Thompson (2008) points to the exclusion of women health professionals from the health services under the Taliban regime as having a significant impact on the health of women and girl, mainly because women are prohibited from attending clinics staffed by male health workers. Gender attitudes inherent in culture and tradition are seen by Jones et al (2006) to influence health in a number of ways in Afghanistan: ‘... prevailing gender attitudes directly impact health, life quality and life expectancy – especially for women, infants and children’. Other significant factors are girls’ early marriage, men’s reluctance to spend family money on the health care needs of girls and women, inequitable distribution of food within the family, and the acceptance of physical violence against girls and women (2006: 193/4). Surprisingly, there was no analysis of the impact of cultural attitudes to gender in the other countries included in the Jones et al study, namely, Somalia, Haiti, Kosovo and Iraq.

The WHO has consistently pressed for a holistic approach to the health of women and girls. A UN Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health has devised a framework for global reporting, oversight and accountability on women’s and children’s health. The Commission reported in May 2011.⁶⁷ WHO (2009) reiterated the primary health care reforms set out in 2008⁶⁸ calling urgently for ‘**more coherent political and institutional leadership**’ and ‘**visibility and resources for women’s health**’ to save the lives and improve the health of women and girls. The People’s Health Movement has advocated for ‘Health for All’ since 2000, setting health firmly within economic globalisation and the political priorities of powerful international and national elites.⁶⁹ Jurgens found that the limited number of studies available on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) were focused mostly on maternal and peri-natal health, family planning and the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents, with little attention to safe abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, and the linkages between reproductive rights, sexual health, gender issues and gender-based violence (2009: 61ff).

5.3.1 Qualified successes: Some health and water interventions

There is a dearth of evidence on the gender impact of interventions in the areas of health and water provision in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. From the available evidence it is possible to identify some effective approaches. Specific and focused interventions, such as, building selected parts of the health system’s institutional capacity, brought better results. Some interventions focussed strategically on the supply- and demand sides of health and water provision, for example, linking practical measures to address immediate needs, such as improving the quality of the health service, with strategic interventions to stimulate demand for and accountability of key health services. Also successful was the adoption of an explicit strategy to address gender equity issues and the inclusion of women and marginalised groups in decision-making about services. Investing in community awareness on reproductive health led to increased demand for contraceptive services in some contexts; this in turn led to more national funds being allocated.

⁶⁷ http://www.who.int/topics/millennium_development_goals/accountability_commission/en/ accessed 28 May 2011

⁶⁸ The World Health Report 2008: Primary health care – now more than ever, cited in WHO (2009)

⁶⁹ People’s Health Movement: <http://www.phmovement.org/> See also the People’s Charter for Health (2000) at <http://www.phmovement.org/sites/www.phmovement.org/files/phm-pch-english.pdf>

In Palestine, Norwegian NGOs were judged to have made an important contribution through support to primary and more advanced health care in areas which were not covered at all or inadequately covered by the public health system (Abdelsalam et al 2009). The support had a 'sustainable impact' on the organisational capacity of a range of Palestinian organisations and institutions by building capacity to improve planning, management and transparency; the wider societal impact could not be measured (2009: 15). A DFID-funded Partnerships for Transforming Health Systems (PATHS) programme in Nigeria had a clear agenda on gender equality and rights (Macdonagh 2005 29/30). It sought to strike a balance between achieving immediate results and tackling fundamental systemic problems by working in four parallel areas: improving quality and sustainability of services; increasing access to quality essential drugs; strengthening the government's oversight role; and stimulating demand for and accountability of priority health services (2005: 29/30). Progress in tackling gender-based discrimination was slow, given the dysfunctional nature of the health sector in Nigeria (2005: 30). By contrast, BMZ/GTZ learned it was not possible in Cote d'Ivoire to combine practical delivery with building government capacity. They found that a 'narrower technical and sector-specific focus' in the health sector could be more appropriate and effective in the short term than broader approaches aiming to build government capacity.

Linking a gender, poverty and social inclusion, with the explicit intention of tackling the exclusion of women and the poorest and most marginalised groups from decision-making, was found to bring positive results in the water, health and sanitation programmes of NEWAH and WaterAid in Nepal. A survey⁷⁰ of the impact found that greater gender, caste and ethnic balance was achieved on user committees and in paid project-related jobs, and that this had helped to achieve the overall goals of improved access to safe water and hygienic sanitation. Gender awareness training for women and men assisted women's involvement in project activities and decision-making and participation in terms of contributing unpaid labour, cost sharing, management and decision-making increased (2009: 8). Barriers, such as illiteracy, physical strength, low self-confidence and socio-cultural norms limited women's abilities to participate fully, nonetheless, they benefitted from paid jobs, access to information, services, and involvement in public fora and community decision-making (2009: 9). The survey found some evidence of changes in traditional roles, alongside differences in how these changes were accepted; the changes were welcomed more in the Janajati groups in the hills where traditionally gender roles are more equal compared to other caste groups in the hills and elsewhere (2009: 23).

A useful approach in some contexts was setting health, and specifically reproductive matters, in the wider context of development and not targeting women specifically. A DFID Evidence paper found that demand for contraception services in Kenya and Rwanda was increased by a reframing of family planning in terms of social and economic development, stressing its linkage to HIV/AIDS and other reproductive health issues and its benefits for men and children alongside women. Increased demand led to the allocation of funds in the 2005 national budget for family planning services in Kenya and a rapid increase in funds in Rwanda (2010b: 34). The same paper found a correlation between investment in communications promoting social and behaviour change and the use of family planning services (2010b: 35).

⁷⁰ Using desk research, a field study of six projects and 79 semi-structured interviews with individual community members and key informants (58 women, 21 men)

5.3.2 Constraints to improving access to health and water services

Shortage of resources to invest in health and water services that would reach all members of the most marginalised communities is a key factor in shaping service delivery but not the only one. Lack of national or local partner interest and will in promoting gender equity may hamper what external actors can achieve. External actors' wish to align support to national partner priorities can place the service needs of women and girls low on the agenda. Evidence of the use of gender analysis in programme design, planning, implementation and monitoring was slight, and overall, a quite narrow view of women and girls' health and water needs predominated.

Drawing on evidence from DFID's support in Nigeria, Cambodia and India, Macdonagh (2005) identified the following constraints in relation to meeting the health needs of women and girls: the national partner giving priority to infrastructure over gender equity (as in Cambodia); gender being regarded as a social development and not a mainstream matter; and also senior management's commitment to maternal mortality not equating to a commitment to gender mainstreaming. She found that the increasing use of new aid modalities and a focus on harmonisation with other partners and on alignment are resulting in gender policy evaporation (2005: 33/4).

A BMZ/GTZ (2006) report on service delivery in four fragile contexts recognised the differential impact on women and girls of inadequate education, health care and water services but did not analyse the issues of fragility from a gender perspective. The persistence of fragility in Eritrea was seen as having very negative implications for the water sector, leading to a realisation of the need to 'calibrate analysis and action to particular country circumstances' and find ways of dealing with 'difficult governments'. It was considered as perhaps 'more pragmatic and promising' to continue strengthening the municipalities and the existing water supply alongside (political) attention to moving towards a sustainable water policy and a sector-wide system (BMZ/GTZ 2006: 14).

Pavanello (2008) found little on gender issues in the literature apart from occasional mentions of women and children as 'vulnerable groups'. An exception is some discussion of the involvement of women in community development councils in Afghanistan; women's needs are generally regarded in relation to the health and education needs of their children, as well as health, hygiene and reproductive health (2008: 23). Programmes that set out to address gender issues and women's inclusion did not always integrate gender analysis. The Abdelsalam et al review of interventions in Palestine found that gender issues and women's participation were promoted within many programmes but there was a lack of 'specific analysis of gender' corresponding to a general 'lack of explicit conflict and situation analysis' (2009: 5).

5.4 Summary of key findings

- **Missed opportunities:** the opportunities opened up in peacebuilding and statebuilding for securing gender equality and equity have been missed, such as building gender-responsive service provision.
- **Supply-side and demand-side action is needed to address deep-seated barriers to women and girls' access to quality services:** investment in improving infrastructure and hiring, training and paying teachers and gender-responsive school management needs to be combined with attention to the quality of education available and investment in awareness raising to address social and cultural attitudes to the status of girls and

women that shape policy and priorities and donor's responses. Poverty and insecurity worsen the situation.

- **Cross-over interventions are more successful:** for example, linking support to livelihoods and access to public services with the development of municipal fora (Angola); investing in water and sanitation infrastructure and in measures to promote the inclusion of women and the poorest and most marginalised groups in service decision-making (Nepal); improving selected health services and at the same time stimulating demand for and accountability of these services and strengthening the government's oversight role (Nigeria).
- **Little use of gender analysis and the collection of sex-disaggregated data**
- **Narrow view of women and girls' health needs:** a focus on reproduction has neglected the social, cultural, economic and political determinants of these needs.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Overall conclusions

Statebuilding in conflict-affected and fragile contexts has been regarded as an opportunity for securing greater gender equality and equity. While there has been some success in relation to women's participation in elections and formal politics and engagement in small-scale economic enterprise, inequitable gender power relations within the household and wider society have not been considered or understood, and thus opportunities have been lost.

Donor and national partners' stated commitments to international human rights standards and norms, including CEDAW, have all too often been sidelined in the rush to achieve a political settlement, elections and an end to the conflict. Legitimate and accountable states and sustainable development can only come about if external and national actors are willing to confront and deal with the root causes of gender-based discrimination and inequalities at several levels, economic, political, social and cultural. Working in partnership with women's organisations will increase the understanding of how to transform gender relations in specific contexts. Evidence points to this being challenging but necessary to bring about security and gender-responsive development that remove the barriers for women's participation and tackle deep-seated masculine biased cultures which perpetuate discrimination and inequalities. Donors and national partners need to set ambitious, explicit and unambiguous gender equity objectives and resource their achievement.

The authors did not find any examples of country programmes or large-scale sectoral programmes where gender analysis had been fully integrated throughout the programme cycle. Gender analysis in interventions is not fully understood as an analytical framework that enables effective interrogation of and changes to gender power relations. Gender mainstreaming by the donor community is regarded as gender components within mainstream programmes rather than a comprehensive strategy not only in the interventions but also requiring a fundamental re-look at development, donors and their partners' own institutional structures and capacity, approaches, programme design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The evidence gathered indicates that external actors' policy commitment to gender equality, women's human rights and gender mainstreaming are not explicitly articulated in political dialogue.

There is surprisingly little systematic attention to and evaluation of the roles and impact of local and national women's organisations in evaluations of humanitarian aid and

development co-operation despite the dependence of international agencies on these organisations' access to marginalised communities, their energy and efforts. It would appear from the evidence that women's organisations are regarded primarily as implementers rather than change agents.

Given the varied context of each location and history, as in all developing country situations, there is no blueprint for promoting women's empowerment and gender equity in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. The evidence shows that in responding to the specificities of each situation progress towards gender equity can be made through systematic action in a number of areas and at several levels. These include constitutional and legal frameworks that enshrine gender equality and equity, inclusive and equitable political institutions and gender-responsive economic and social policy-making, and clear accountability mechanisms. Progress on women's political empowerment, on economic empowerment and on access to quality services is mutually reinforcing. Vibrant women's organisations and a gender-aware media have crucial roles to play. Fulfilling women and girls' human rights is an intensely political, controversial and long-term project, and one that, ultimately, has to be locally driven. However, with ambition and the appropriate approaches external actors can assist in many ways.

6.2 What are the key knowledge and research gaps?

Conceptual frameworks

- The current conceptual frameworks on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, statebuilding and service provision in conflict-affected and fragile contexts lack an understanding of, and attention to, women's rights, gender-based discrimination and how gender, poverty and other inequalities intersect.

Gender issues in fragile states

- The political, economic and social implications of fragility for gender equality and equity are under-researched as are the gender implications of political and service sector decentralisation.
- Research is needed on men, including young men, and masculinities in conflict-affected and fragile states, including the immediate and longer-term impact of conflict on men, and the roles men play in supporting or blocking women's empowerment.

Impact of interventions

- There is a dearth of robust interrogation of small and larger-scale efforts to increase women's political participation, foster women's economic empowerment and improve women and girls' access to quality services.
- Evaluations of large-scale mainstream interventions do not integrate gender analysis or systematically collect and use sex-disaggregated data.
- There is little systematic attention to and evaluation of the roles and impact of local and national women's organisations in evaluations and studies.

6.3 Recommendations on how to close the knowledge and research gaps

Undertake:

- Elaboration of gendered conceptual frameworks on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, statebuilding and service delivery.
- More rigorous evaluation of mainstream and gender-specific interventions using gender analysis.

- Systematic use of sex-disaggregated data and tracking and analysis of progress on gender-related indicators to obtain robust information to inform future interventions.
- Consistent and integrated use of gender expertise in country programme and sectoral evaluations and studies; this expertise is available in multi-lateral and bilateral agencies and NGOs and in research institutes and women's organisations in partner and donor countries.
- Specific research programmes are needed to interrogate some key questions and issues in conflict-affected and fragile states, including, for example:
 - How does gender inequality intersect with poverty and other inequalities, such as caste, ethnicity, age, and what are the implications for policy and practice?
 - What is the social, economic and political impact of women's increased political participation (as voters, candidates and elected representatives)?
 - What measures have been successful in fostering the inclusion of women from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds in local governance?
 - What are the roles and impact of local and national women's organisations and movements and how could these be strengthened?
 - How does targeting women's gender roles for specific interventions and poverty reduction programmes affect gender roles and power relations?
 - What is the longer-term impact on gender roles and power relations of interventions that combine support to women's strategic gender interests and their practical needs?
 - What is the impact on gender roles and relations of programmes focusing on men and gender issues?
 - What roles do men and male violence play in relation to women and girls' empowerment and access to quality services, especially in health and education?

6.4 Recommendations to development partners

The following recommendations are directed to development partners, mainly donors and international NGOs, and indirectly to national governments.

Approaches

- a) Approaches to conflict-affected and fragile contexts need to be informed by gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive political economy analysis, as well as a gender perspective of the wider geo-political regional and international context.
- b) Approaches to peacebuilding and statebuilding should include a lens that pays attention to human rights and to the rights of women and girls from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds. Such an approach would address the fundamental social and cultural attitudes that underpin gender-based discrimination and inequality, and with a clear recognition that a post-conflict context can offer the opportunity to transform political, economic and social institutions so that they become more gender-responsive and sustainable.

Programming and dialogue

The following areas should receive systematic attention and action:

- a) **Gender analysis:** integrating an analysis of gender power relations from the outset in all programme interventions and aid modalities, drawing explicitly on local gender expertise from research institutes and women's organisations in partner countries and that available in donor agencies.
- b) **Legal frameworks:** support to gender-responsive partner country constitutional development, national legal frameworks and institutions and compliance with international human rights standards.

- c) **Policy coherence:** in policy and political dialogue, whereby stated donor commitments to gender equity and equality are explicitly articulated and promoted; the decentralisation of donor offices facilitates on-going dialogue on gender objectives and their achievement.
- d) **Advocacy:** at international level to strengthen accountability mechanisms on SCR 1325 and other instruments.

Specific programme recommendations (emerging directly from evidence)

Subject to a thorough gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive political economy analysis of each context, support to the following could be significantly increased:

- a) **Facilitating women's long-term and effective political participation:** through, for example, support to free and fair elections with explicit gender equity objectives; affirmative action at local and national levels; support to building political expertise and capacity in budget scrutiny, policy development, research, administration and organisation to increase the effectiveness of elected women representatives at local and national levels; support to cross-party gender-aware women's caucuses to enhance their capacity to better promote gender-responsive policy and begin to transform political structures, procedures and processes (sub-section 3.2.1/2).
- b) **Enabling collective action and advocacy:** increased support to women's organisations for their work at local and national levels in rights awareness-raising, mobilising and advocacy, their engagement in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, the political settlement, statebuilding, scrutiny and accountability mechanisms, including support to feminist and women's movements.
- c) **Addressing women's strategic gender interests and practical needs:** through, for example, economic development programmes that combine business development support with support to women's leadership in economic and political decision-making structures to build on the political empowerment gains; assistance to enable women to challenge the gendered division of power and labour inside and outside the household that constrain their economic empowerment (sub-section 4.3).
- d) **Opening gender-responsive spaces at local level:** support to the creation and development of spaces, such as municipal fora, inclusive local governance structures, where women and men can engage as citizens with the state and bolster accountability (sub-section 3.4, 4.3).
- e) **Integrating gender into DDR programmes:** ensuring women in ir/regular armies have access to assistance through tracing and reaching women before the programmes start (section 4.1).
- f) **Decentralising service sectors to benefit women and girls:** design service sector decentralisation to meet the diverse needs and interests of women and girls (sub-section 5.1.1).
- g) **Strengthening gender expertise and analysis:** within national partners' key ministries (finance, economic development, education, health, agriculture, justice, etc.) and local structures; including support to gender-responsive budgeting at national and local level where feasible.

Specific programme recommendations (inferred from evidence)

- h) **Investing in access to non-traditional and decent employment:** investment in the generation of non-traditional and decent employment for women and men, including young women and men in urban and rural areas.
- i) **Supporting gender-responsive quality public service provision:** in education, health, water and other essential services, including building the capacity of the national and local state to establish policy, to dialogue with non-state providers and agree contracts, facilitate, oversee and regulate gender-responsive service delivery.

- j) **Promoting quality education services:** support to programmes that seek to conceptualise and promote quality education services that are transformative and empowering for girls and boys, and that address gender power relations and sexual and gender-based violence.
- k) **Building media and public awareness:** programmes, such as human rights and citizenship education, media and public awareness, to promote understanding of the impact of cultural attitudes and beliefs and the gender division of household labour on girls and women's empowerment, enjoyment of their human rights, and contribution to the wider society.

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