Overview of Women, Peace and Security projects

The Research Council of Norway

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY (Gender-EQ)

Strengthening women's role in research and knowledge development

Presenting research findings and policy implications of eleven research projects within the area of Women, Peace and Security funded by the NORGLOBAL programme.

Women and Gender Equality activity (GENDER-EQ), is a follow-up of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) *Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation*. GENDER-EQ is a part of the research programme Norway-Global partner (NORGLOBAL) launched in 2009.

NORGLOBAL is the Research Council of Norway's main tool for strengthening Norwegian research on development in low- and lower-middle income countries (LMICs) and for strengthening research capacity in those countries. GENDER-EQ was specifically aimed at strengthening the participation of women in research and knowledge development through increased participation by women researchers and a stronger focus on thematic areas related to women's issues.

NORGLOBAL was granted NOK 14 million annually for research on women's rights and gender equality. The funding came from MFA through Norad and had to be used in accordance with the priorities set out in the action plan. The plan ran from 2007 to 2009, but was extended to 2013.

The GENDER-EQ project portfolio consists of 21 projects worth NOK 84 million in total. The project portfolio is a result of calls for proposals issued in 2009, 2013 and 2015. The portfolio is based on the four thematic priority areas from the action plan: women's political empowerment, women's economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and violence against women. An important condition for conducting the projects is the requirement set by Norad/MFA that 60 per cent of the funding must be used by partners in the LMICs and 40 per cent by research groups in Norway.

An important policy recommendation from a majority of the projects on Women, Peace and Security is to avoid simplifying analyses of gender, power and justice when designing security and development policies in post-conflict areas. Here, Jerrilyn Mulbah, sings before an estimated 20-thousand concert audience, marking the end of the first phase of the «Stop Rape» campaign in Liberia. Photo: UN Photo/ Christopher Herwig.

Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (SCR 1325) was adopted in 2000 to increase women's participation in all efforts related to peace and security, and to strengthen the protection of women in armed conflicts. The action plan includes SCR 1325 by having gender mainstreaming in development policy as a cross-cutting priority in four other areas, including peacebuilding, human rights and humanitarian assistance, and it is addressed in 11 of the projects in the GENDER-EQ portfolio.

These projects particularly focus on women's rights and gender equality in conflict and post-conflict areas. The aim is to increase knowledge about the role of women and the gender dimension of disarmament, political reintegration and transition to peace in countries affected by conflict.

Project countries

The first three projects involving Women, Peace and Security (WPS) started in 2010, four in 2011-12, three in 2014 and one in 2016. The total amount of funding received by these 11 projects is NOK 48 491 447 million. All but one project were carried out by independent research institutes specializing in international relations, peace and security: PRIO, NUPI and Chr. Michelsen Institute. These are leading research environments on gender in peace and conflict in Norway. One project was situated at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU).

All projects collaborated with one or more local partner institutions regarding field research, analysis and dissemination. The projects were set in Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Bolivia, Ecuador, Pakistan, Northeast India, Nepal, Myanmar, Sudan, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Afghanistan.

Project themes and methods

Thematically, the projects include one or more of the overarching categories:
- Governance, justice and gender (6)
- Women's empowerment, political organizations and social movements (5)
- Gender-based violence (including sexual violence) (5)
- Post-war gender equality and women's participation in peace and security processes (3)

Most of the projects study political representation and legal structures, using a multi-method in-depth qualitative approach to explore the dynamics of formal structures and gendered effects in practice, some in combination with quantitative methods. Some projects had the explicit purpose of exploring and testing new methodological approaches and to make theoretical contributions to gender studies within the field of WPS.

Close cooperation with women's rights and human rights activists and associations also play a key role, either as project participants or as project partners. The cooperation also aims to contribute to

strengthen their work for social justice. Empirically, the project's contributions represent a rich knowledge base on gender relations, struggles and activism, showing how they are local issues yet at the same time are closely linked to global discourses.

## Gender equality in post-conflict transition

Several projects show the possibilities that exist for implementing change during the transition period after a conflict, when legal or representational structures are renegotiated. They also look at the effects of the complex conditions for gender justice between formal and informal dynamics. Do improvements in legal frameworks imply real change for women in practice? Does increased female representation in decisionmaking bodies constitute increased gender justice?
The project's findings clearly show that measuring the effects of gender equality in terms of change in numbers and formal rights will not produce satisfactory answers unless their actual implementation is also monitored. This can only be accomplished by examining justice and gender as situated processes and within the context of legal pluralism.

Torunn Wimpelmann examined the role of women in processes of local governance in post-2001 Afghanistan: "The research on local governance in Afghanistan showed that while aid interventions had increased participation by women, their participation was dependent on male support and largely reproduced 'traditional' forms of governance; patron-client relationships." Thus, future aid interventions must support women beyond mere participation, and build coalitions between feminist-oriented actors.

"Women": not a homogenous group

During the programme, feminist researchers also criticized how gender perspectives are used in policymaking and action plans. The essentialized gender perspectives that often form the basis for international policymaking on peace and security – reducing gender perspectives to women and their particular gendered qualities – are problematized in most of the projects.
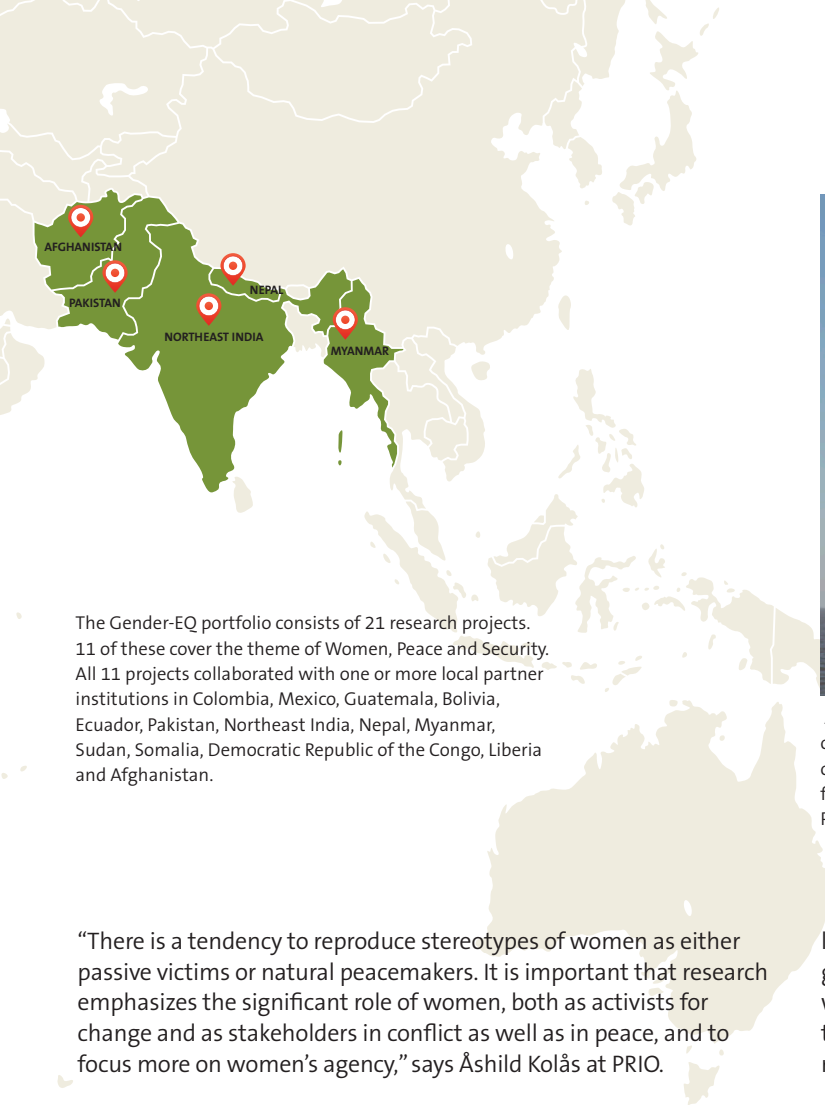
The Gender-EQ portfolio consists of 21 research projects. 11 of these cover the theme of Women, Peace and Security. All 11 projects collaborated with one or more local partner institutions in Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Bolivia, Ecuador, Pakistan, Northeast India, Nepal, Myanmar, Sudan, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Afghanistan.

A collective finding in the WPS projects is that political-legal transitions provide opportunities for gender equality, however, gender egalitarianism during periods of conflict can easily be dismissed in peacetime in order to restore social order. Here from a commemoration in Buenos Aires to the victims of Argentina's «Dirty War». Photo: UN Photo/Mark Garten

"There is a tendency to reproduce stereotypes of women as either passive victims or natural peacemakers. It is important that research emphasizes the significant role of women, both as activists for change and as stakeholders in conflict as well as in peace, and to focus more on women's agency," says Åshild Kolås at PRIO.

Based on findings from Nepal, Kolås also problematizes the fact that increased female representation in decisionmaking bodies in Nepal guarantees the promotion of women's rights and empowerment in their everyday lives. Which women we are talking about? Differences in caste, religion, language and ethnicity continue to reflect considerable variations in gender equality in Nepal.

Several projects promote *an intersectional approach* to gender; the importance of recognizing that gender is always co-constructed with other social categories in creating social divides.

Cultural sensitivity and local analysis

In conflict and post-conflict settings, the international community operates with a WPS agenda, aiming to, among other things, increase women's political participation. This is assuming that increased participation leads to a more inclusive society and more sustainable peace. The WPS projects in the GENDER-EQ portfolio strongly question the efficacy of this assumption.

Findings from the projects raise the importance for policymakers to avoid taking a working liberal state as their point of departure for interventions. According to Morten Bøås, studying women's access to justice in Liberia, this may result in a mismatch: "One reason is that both policymakers and those who study such interventions rarely focus on how ordinary citizens of such states construct their realities."

An important implication for policymaking is to move away from simplifying and generalizing understandings of gender and to see always view gender as a culturally situated, complex and intersectional construction. Instead, several projects show how

learning from women's political activism is a central strategy for gaining situated knowledge, by cooperating closely with local women's rights and human rights activists, and by viewing routes to empowerment as being embedded in relations of power, resistance and change.

For example, Rachel Sieder, who worked with a research team based in five countries in Latin America, demonstrates how gendered forms of violence, (in)security, and access to justice are interlinked, especially when focusing on the situation for indigenous women. Framing indigenous women's demands for gender justice *within* indigenous peoples' organizations is important: "Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Bolivia and Guatemala are all countries with marginalised indigenous populations. The individual and collective rights of indigenous women are advanced as part of claims for the defence of indigenous peoples' group rights."

Increasing research capacity in LMICs

Two important goals for the GENDER-EQ projects are to contribute to strengthening both women's participation in research in low-income and lower-middle income countries (LMICs) and to develop gender research at cooperating institutions in LMICs. Capacity building was a central objective in all projects, and was emphasized through the 60/40 division of funding set by the Research Council of Norway. Sixty per cent of the allocated project funding had to go to collaborating institutions in LMICs. The projects have been working systematically and strategically throughout the project period, using a range of approaches to create as sustainable effects as possible by:
1. increasing competence through PhD and master degrees,
2. providing research stays at research institutions in Norway,
3. increasing gender studies and research methodology competence at cooperating institutions in LMICs among senior scholars and students through workshops and courses,
4. organizing international conferences and workshops in partnering countries and funding participation at international conferences for LMIC partners and Norwegian project leaders, and
5. co-publishing in English and local languages.

Short-term capacity building, however, is an inadequate means of strengthening institutions of higher education in LMICs. Another important issue is that while individual candidates are supported, the partnering institutions may not be: "Like their colleagues elsewhere, Afghan researchers need access to good quality educational institutions in order to build their capacity," says Torunn Wimpelmann, who cooperated with the Peace and Training Organisation (PTRO) in Afghanistan.

The effect of the 60-per-cent funding allocation is mentioned by many as positive for research cooperation, particularly for those projects that already had established partnerships from previous projects. However, the 40-per-cent funding allocation to the Norwegian research partner is insufficient to cover the real costs, particularly since the cooperation is conditioned by time-consuming factors such as cultural and academic divides and practical conditions. Adjusting the allocations according to differences in exchange rates would make a significant difference.

POLICY POINTS

Policymaking on women's rights and women's empowerment in conflict and post-conflict contexts should take the following insights into account.

- **Political-legal transition provides opportunities for gender equality:**
  Major conflicts can have disruptive egalitarian effects, catalyzing women's increased legislative representation as well as gender equality legislative reforms. However, gender egalitarianism during periods of conflict can easily be dismissed in peacetime in order to restore social order.

- **Avoid simplifying analyses of gender, power and justice:**
  When designing security and development policies in post-conflict areas, it is vital to take into account how men and women experience conflict in complex and diverse ways. Results from the WPS projects show that ignoring this by generalizing men's and women's security and development interests results in ineffective responses, increased social, economic and gender inequality, and increased conflict. It is also important to leave aside stereotypes and recognize that women's agendas are just as diverse as those of men.

- **Women's empowerment must come about within their cultural context:**
  The promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment must be based on dialogue with women and on respect for their needs and priorities within their respective cultural settings. When promoting societal change to women's empowerment, the changes need to build on the various ways in which women are engaged in formal and informal arenas rather than on the formal political sphere. Women's empowerment agendas can both receive support from and be delegitimized by influence from abroad. For the WPS agenda to be meaningful in local contexts, norm adaptations within

the 'global agenda' might be necessary. For instance, NGOs and the UN cannot afford to engage a-religiously in societies where religion plays a dominant role.

- **Efforts to punish and reduce gender-based violence must be approached qualitatively:**
  There is a need to look beyond the numbers, and address local factors affecting the judicial treatment of gender-based violence. Introducing reforms is only one piece of the puzzle; actual implementation is a different matter. It is important for international donors to not be tempted to "tick the box" and define a new law as a victory and a success without monitoring its implementation. Women's protection against violence must be seen in connection with their access to economic and civil rights. Without substantive changes in the factors that fundamentally shape all women's lives – their rights in marriage and their access to independent economic survival – targeted interventions are of limited value.

- **Learn from local women's movements:**
  Women often play important roles in grassroot efforts towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding, despite their absence in formal participation in peace negotiations, governance and policies affecting social change. The existence of and support for an independent women's movement (in both post-conflict and non-conflict settings) is important when governments introduce gender equality legislative reforms and policy changes. Change requires local mobilization and attention to more fundamental issues such as women's independent access to resources and income, and control over their own bodies.

An important recommendation from alle projects is that governments and aid donors must learn from local women's movements. Support for an independent women's movement, in both post-conflict and non-conflict settings, is vital for introduction and implementation of reforms and policy changes. In Sudan, in North Darfur, women and girls march to celebrate International Women's Day on March 8th. Photo: UN Photo/Olivier Chassot

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY (Gender-EQ)

Gender-based violence and customary law in Liberia

In the project *Mapping Gender-based Violence and Access to Justice: Retraditionalization in Liberia,* Morten Bøås and NUPI have cooperated with colleagues from the Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation (KAICT) at the University of Liberia and the Platform and Dialogue for Peace (P4DP).

Project goals and activities

The primary objective of the project was to gain better knowledge about the situation for women affected by gender-based violence in Liberia and their access to justice as the United Nations mission is slowly coming to an end. **The secondary objective** was to contribute to capacity building in Liberia by establishing a database on Liberia's justice system and legal practices concerning gender-based violence.

The civil wars in Liberia began in 1989. The first war lasted until 1997, and the ensuing peace was short-lived before the second war began in 1999. It ended officially in 2003. At least 250,000 people were killed in the civil wars, and reports have stated that more than 80 per cent of Liberian women became victims of sexualized violence. Today, gender-based violence is a comprehensive problem in Liberia. There is a lack of reliable statistics, but 25 per cent of unmarried women are believed to have been subjected to gender-based violence.

Reducing sexualized and gender-based violence has been one of the major goals of the United Nations Mission to Liberia (UNMIL). Before the wars, a considerable number of anthropological studies were conducted on the topic of Liberia's traditional justice system. This project has aimed to examine how the traditional systems work in the post-war context when it comes to the problems of gender-based violence. The research results are based on two main fieldworks in Nimba County and Grand Bassa County.

The project examined customary Liberian courts that play an important role in rural Liberia. Here a picture from a «peace hut», a women-run community court serving to resolve domestic disputes and dispense informal justice in Liberia. Photo: UN Photo/ Andi Gitow

Formally, there is supposed to be a statutory legal system in Liberia, but the reality is different. Judges and court officers are absent, preferring to live in the capital Monrovia. The police are rarely paid their salary, and lack the basic equipment needed to conduct investigations, such as cars, motorbikes and petrol. This means that ordinary Liberians must seek justice elsewhere. Customary courts can therefore play an important role in rural Liberia. The customary courts are based on traditional ways of handling punishment, sanctions and justice. The functioning of these courts can vary between areas and groups, but mainly differ from the statutory system by not being based on written laws.

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Significant project results

The project has contributed to highlighting the fact that the majority of Liberians still lack access to formal statutory legal systems:

- The project has shown that one of the main goals of UNMIL – to restore the rule of law in Liberia – has not been achieved.
- The research shows how Liberian men and women have developed alternative methods to navigate their complex reality by creating flexible categories that allow them to define how to make sense of various institutional and social tensions. Contrary to the modern legal system, perpetrator and victim are categories constructed in relation to dynamics within the local community. How serious a crime is considered depends on the identities of the perpetrator and the victim. If they both belong to the local community, the case is treated differently than if someone from outside the local community violates a member of the community. The construction of guilt is therefore a matter of sustaining social cohesion within the local community.
- Flexible interpretations of customary law allow Liberians to navigate between the modern principles of equity, equality and human rights introduced by the international community, the weakness of the state, and the cultural institutions that guide their lives.

The project built research capacity in Liberia:

- A database has been established at the local partner, the Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation, University of Liberia, and will in particular contain information on Liberia's justice systems in some of the more remote counties and on legal practice in cases of gender-based violence and women's access to justice.

Impact on policymaking on women's rights/ empowerment of women in post-conflict areas

Attention should be paid to the mismatch between people's aspirations for justice and the kind of justice that is available to them.

- International interventions in post-conflict areas most often aim at (re)building a working liberal state, even though this strategy so far has produced very mixed results. One reason is that both policymakers and those who study such interventions rarely focus on how ordinary citizens of such states construct their realities. In Liberia there is a mismatch between people's aspirations for justice and what kind of justice is actually available to them. The latter only becomes known when people are given the opportunity to explain what social and economic constraints they must take into consideration and the type of arrangements these constraints allow.

The project aimed to gain a better understanding of the situation for women affected by gender-based violence in Liberia and their access to justice. Here from a campaign meeting launched by the UN Mission in Liberia to strengthen the rights of women and stop gender-based violence. Photo: UN Photo/Christopher Herwig

Donors and aid programmes should recognize the weakness of the Liberian state, and take a more pragmatic approach that takes into account the role that customary courts play for most Liberians.

- In the Liberian hinterland, the customary categories of situation, offence and offender may not be aligned with the principles of an effective modern statutory legal system. To ordinary citizens, these provide a form of justice that does not jeopardize the social cohesion and community networks people need for economic survival.
- External stakeholders wanting to contribute to state-building and women's rights in Liberia through rule of law programmes should bear this in mind, as they need to relate to how and why people practice justice, rather than base interventions on how justice ideally should be implemented.

Facts

Project name: Mapping Gender-based Violence and Access to Justice: Retraditionalization in Liberia (GENTRA)
Project period: 2014–2017
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Allocated: NOK 5 889 446

Women, Peace and Security – Project presentation

Female ex-combatants in Myanmar and Nepal

The project *Gender Equality, Peace and Security in Nepal and Myanmar (WOMENsPEACE)*, is led by Wenche Iren Hauge at PRIO. The project is a collaboration with the local partners Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR) based in Kathmandu, Nepal and Ar Yone Oo (AYO), based in Yangoon, Myanmar.

Project goals and activities

The project, one of the last to be funded under the Gender and Equality activity, started in 2016. It compares gendered experiences of war and post-conflict demobilization and reintegration in armed conflicts with different types of fault lines – ideological in Nepal and ethnic in Myanmar – and with different political frameworks for addressing group and identity-based rights. The project builds on the NORGLOBAL project *Making Women Count for Peace*, led by Åshild Kolås, who is also participating as researcher.

The primary objective is to generate new policy-relevant knowledge on the effects of gendered war experiences and of post-conflict reintegration of female ex-combatants with a focus on their political participation. **The secondary objective** is to synthesize lessons learned about the effects of gendered peace and security processes on post-war gender equality and about the political participation of women in post-conflict society in general. The project encourages cross-case learning by comparing experiences in two countries with different political frameworks, Nepal and Myanmar.

A considerable amount of theoretical studies has been conducted on the gender dimensions of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes, but very few case studies exist so far. This project compares the gender equality dimension of armed groups in Myanmar and Nepal during the conflicts in the two countries. The war in Nepal was an armed conflict between the Maoist party and the government of Nepal lasting from 1996 to 2006, with the main aim of overthrowing the Nepalese monarchy. In Myanmar, the Burman majority, which makes up 60 per cent

The project aims to generate new policy-relevant knowledge on the effects of gendered war experiences and of post-conflict reintegration of female ex-combatants through case studies in Nepal and Myanmar. Here from a workshop for women involved in peace processes from Indonesia, Myanmar, and Nepal. Photo: Flickr/ Inclusive Security

of Myanmar's population and staffs its army, has been engaged in armed conflict with the many different ethnic groups in the country since the end of World War II.

In Myanmar the project is focusing on female participation in the peace processes, and in Nepal on gendered experiences of the DDR process. In Nepal the project is looking at the impact of reintegration on post-conflict political participation, especially how and why female ex-combatants are politically active. The project also addresses the broader implications of female participation in peace and DDR processes for post-conflict gender equality and women's rights in Nepal. In Myanmar fewer female fighters have so far been demobilized, but the project will include analyses of interviews with some of those who are, adding a comparative perspective to the research from Nepal.

The data collected in Myanmar mainly covers the participation of women in the peace process. The data collected in Nepal data covers the DDR process – to what degree it was adapted to the

needs of female fighters – and how women's participation in the DDR process has affected their post-conflict political participation.

The project also works with local women's associations in Nepal and Myanmar, to bring politicians, activists and civil society together to share experiences on the role of women in conflict. One way this is being done is through the organization of workshops in Nepal and Myanmar.

Anticipated project results

The project began in 2016, and more results will follow until it ends. However, there are already some significant findings from the fieldwork in Nepal.

Project results from Nepal reveal that many female ex-combatants have experienced relatively good gender equality within the Maoist movement:
- According to their views, many of the problems began with the DDR process after the armed conflict. The DDR process was a major challenge to the Maoists, and many of the female ex-combatants blamed both their own leaders and the international community for mistakes made during the DDR process.

The project is providing new case studies on a highly policy-relevant topic:
- Very few empirical case studies have been carried out on the gender dimensions of DDR processes. WOMENsPEACE will fill this research gap, including case studies from two different types of conflict: the primarily ideological conflict in Nepal and the ethnic conflicts in Myanmar.

Giving female activists from Myanmar a voice:
- The peace process in Myanmar is still ongoing. In collaboration with its local partner AYO in Myanmar, the project will also aspire to give female activists a voice to express their views on gender equality related to the peace process and to future DDR challenges.

The project is bringing civil society, policymakers and politicians together:
- In 2016 NCCR organized a workshop in Kathmandu, and in 2017 AYO will organize a workshop in Yangon. These workshops bring together academics, NGOs, women's organizations, female and male politicians, activists and civil society to share experiences on the role of women in conflict, peace processes and post-conflict contexts.
- The workshop in Kathmandu in 2016 was attended by a wide variety of participants, including national and international academics and NGOs, journalists, politicians, bureaucrats and Maoist ex-combatants, many of them female. This combination of participants is rarely seen in academic seminars and workshops.

The project is ongoing, but preliminary results from Nepal reveal that many female ex-combatants have experienced relatively good gender equality within the Maoist movement, and their problems began when peace came. Photo: Chiranjibi Bhandari

Anticipated impact on policymaking on women's rights/empowerment of women in post-conflict areas

Knowledge about how female ex-combatants, activists and politicians from Nepal perceive the post-conflict challenges is important for policymaking.
- Post-conflict settings like Nepal have received considerable attention in the research on Women, Peace and Security. However, this attention has focused on measures for gender equality as prescribed by the international community. This project will give more space to silenced voices through fieldwork, interviews, workshops and publications, and with the help of the local Nepali partner NCCR.

Knowledge about how female combatants and activists in Myanmar perceive of their participation in the peace process is important for their potential participation in future DDR processes and in post-conflict politics.
- Through the project, more knowledge will be collected about why the level of participation by female fighters and activists in the peace process in Myanmar is so low and about how this can be changed in the future.

Facts
Project name: Gender Equality, Peace and Security in Nepal and Myanmar (WOMENsPEACE)
Project period: 2016–2018
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Allocated: NOK 5 861 000

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY (Gender-EQ)

Political organization of displaced women in Colombia

In the project *The Significance of Political Organization and International Law for Displaced Women in Colombia: A Socio-legal study of Liga de Mujeres,* Kristin Bergtora Sandvik at PRIO has collaborated with colleagues at Universidad de Los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia.

Project goals and activities

The primary objective of this multidisciplinary project was to explore the importance of political mobilization and organization for the realization of human rights and for the long-term peaceful resettlement of internally displaced women in Colombia. The project aimed at providing new insights for Colombian decisionmakers and international actors engaged in work with internally displaced persons.

Colombia is a constitutional democracy with a strong administrative state and a steadily growing economy, but is characterized by the long-lasting conflict that has resulted in massive displacement. There is a vigorous presence of internally displaced people (IDP) among the numerous grassroots organizations asking the Constitutional Court for relief. Before this project, the phenomenon had been little studied.

In the years before the project started, international actors and academics had placed great emphasis on legalization strategies, particularly through the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. In Colombia, a progressive law from 1997 provides a comprehensive framework for implementing IDP rights. In addition, the Colombian Constitutional Court advocates actively for IDPs. A Victims Law of 2011 and the 2016 Peace agreement have further transformed the legal situation of internally displaced women. However, the impact on the situation on the ground has been limited.

The project explored how the progressive, top-down orders from the Constitutional Court affected women's organizing at the municipal level and the actual rights members of women's IDP organizations gained. The Embera indigenous people were among those displaced by the armed conflict in Colombia. Photo: UN Photo/Mark Garten

The research findings are based on an in-depth, multi-method study of women's IDP organizations in Colombia: case studies of *Liga de Mujeres Desplazadas* and *Mesa de Organizaciones de Población Desplazada*, visits to various women's IDP organizations around the country, and extensive interviews with 63 leaders of women's IDP groups and key officials. The project set out to explore how the progressive, top-down orders from the Constitutional Court affected women's organizing at the municipal level and the actual rights members of women's IDP organizations gained. The project also focused on the ways in which women's IDP organizations deal with violent contexts, including the management of risk.

Significant project results

The project has provided a better understanding of the co-existence of legal regimes, internal displacement and transitional justice:
- The findings from the project have been disseminated to displaced communities, grassroots NGOs, bureaucrats, judges, and politicians in Colombia, international organizations,

Colombian and international scholars (humanitarian, refugee studies and international legal feminist scholars in particular) and to the Norwegian public.

The project has collected and analyzed a large dataset on internally displaced women's organizations across Colombia:

- The Liga proactively employed research-generated data to advance its own agenda in its interactions with donor bodies and the government.
- Political insecurity is a specifically gendered harm. The project reflected on the concrete circumstances of insecurity, on the relevance of traditional gender roles in the constitution of insecurity, and on the challenges for court-ordered remedies.

The project served as the launch pad for more structured collaboration between PRIO and Universidad de Los Andes in Colombia:

- A MoU (memorandum of understanding) will be signed in 2017.

Impact on policymaking on women's rights/ empowerment of women in post-conflict areas

Policymakers and humanitarian actors can understand more about the agency of beneficiaries in the legal and political spaces created around humanitarian crises.

- Literature on evidence-based action in humanitarian crises commonly focuses on how humanitarian actors can produce better knowledge and thus improve programming. The case study of the *Liga de Mujeres Desplazadas* showed how the Liga proactively used research to advance its own agenda in interactions with donor bodies and the government. Their agency is also limited by poverty, violence, and local power dynamics.

The project provided a theory of legal mobilization in violent context that takes insecurity into account.

- By studying the use of legal claims and tactics under precarious conditions of internal displacement and armed conflict that characterize Colombia, the project has developed a theory of legal mobilization in violent contexts that takes insecurity into account by adapting concepts commonly used to explain collective action: frames, resources and political opportunities. This theory has the potential to be a major contribution to socio-legal scholarship, which is increasingly focused on legal mobilization outside liberal democracies.

The project is bridging the knowledge gap of gender-specific injuries in conflict and post-conflict contexts by examining political insecurity as a specifically gendered harm.

- The growing literature on gender in armed conflict, as well as the debates over post-conflict reparations for women, focuses on the prevalence and harms of sexual violence. While this focus has recently been critiqued, there are few articulations of other types of gendered injuries. This project reflects on the concrete circumstances of insecurity and on the potential

The case study of the Liga de Mujeres Desplazadas showed how the Liga proactively used research to advance its own agenda in interactions with government and donors. 2 million people were internally displaced during the violent conflict in Colombia, here an IDP family in Rio Sucro. Photo: UN Photo/Mark Garten

of women's political activism in a violent context. Political organization can be a response to gendered violence, and gendered violence can constitute an obstacle to organization. Looking towards a Colombian peace, a widening of the scope of attention also invites complex reflection on the possibility of transformative reparations in post-conflict situations.

Facts

Project name: The Significance of Political Organization and International Law for Displaced Women in Colombia: A Socio-legal study of Liga de Mujeres
Project period: 2010–2014
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Allocated: NOK 3 008 001

Women, Peace and Security – Project presentation

The Research Council of Norway

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY (Gender-EQ)

Women's leadership and political influence in Somalia

In the project Gender in politics in Somalia: Access and influence in a post-conflict state, Cindy Horst and PRIO cooperated with colleagues from the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS) in Mogadishu, Somalia.

Project goals and activities

The project set out to examine the current dynamics of women's political agency in Somalia by assessing women's *access to* and *influence in* leadership roles in society. **The primary objective** was to contribute new knowledge to a growing body of academic literature of gender studies in the Global South with particular relevance for post-conflict and Islamic states. **A secondary objective** was to inform national and donor policies supporting women's political empowerment in Somalia by examining international empowerment approaches within their local context and study how these approaches relate to women's lived experiences in Somalia today.

Post-independence politics in Somalia has largely been defined by instability, inter-ethnic conflict and state failure. During the regime of President Siad Barre (1969–1991), women gained greater societal freedom and were encouraged to take on leadership roles amidst an otherwise increasingly repressive dictatorship. The project looked at what impact the two decades of conflict have since had on women's engagement in formal politics and civil society. It examined the history of political influence and decisionmaking power women in public office and outside formal governance structures in Somalia since the 1960s.

Significant project results
The project has improved the understanding of the public role of women in Somali society.
- Women's 'unorganized' movements across Somalia, premised on working within a religious framework, suggest the need for

The project examined the current dynamics of women's political agency in Somalia by assessing women's access to and influence in leadership roles in society. Here from a civil society conference organized by the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), in Mogadishu. Photo: UN Photo/Stuart Price

understanding women's agency in patriarchal and non-liberal contexts in new ways.
- Debates on women's roles in public spheres are taking place irrespective of the women's empowerment agenda from abroad. Global cultural and religious trends are influencing post-war Somalia. In this complex socio-cultural landscape, the international focus on women's political participation can support but also risk delegitimizing 'local' processes and perspectives.

The project's research output has been influential in number of ways:
- The outcome of the project with the greatest transformative potential is that it has created female role models through creating networks, recording stories and presenting a film.
- The film can be found on YouTube by searching for *Somali Women's Civic Engagement Past, Present and Future*.
- Articles in international journals have highlighted Somali women's forms of activism centred on engaging Islamic discourses; Somali women's roles in public spheres; and the female elite's experiences in bringing in agendas from abroad.

- The project staff has presented the research material at four international academic conferences.
- The project staff has conducted project briefings for the Somali Stability Fund and DFID in Mogadishu in 2015, and given presentations in courses held in London and Uganda. A documentary film about the project was screened during several seminars and conferences directed at policymakers and general audiences in Norway and elsewhere. The film has been viewed over 4,500 times online.

The project built research capacity in Somalia:
- The project leader, Cindy Horst, held methodology courses at the University of Hargeisa aimed at students and researchers in the region.
- The project provided mentorship for HIPS staff member Maimuna Mohamud, who has now begun a PhD in gender studies at Cambridge University.

Impact on policymaking on women's rights/ empowerment of women in post-conflict areas

Somali women's political agency should be acknowledged.
- Until equitable gender representation – rooted in legislation or custom – is achieved, a quota system whereby women are allocated credible political and civil service positions should be implemented at all levels of government. This quota system should operate separately from the so-called 4.5 system of clan representation, ensuring four major clans and the minority clans political representation. Considering the fact that married women often have multiple clan affiliations through their father's and husband's clan, and considering the fact that women do not have political representation in the clan system, the 4.5 system structurally disadvantages women.
- Somali governments and stakeholders must invest in civic education across the region, recognize Somali women's past and present civic contributions to society, and educate children on civic values, responsibilities and volunteerism.

The women's empowerment agenda can both receive support from and be delegitimized by influence from abroad, in the shape of international funding or diaspora leadership.
- For the Women, Peace and Security agenda to be meaningful in local contexts, norm adaptations within the 'global agenda' may be necessary. For instance, religion has a large influence globally on ideas of what men and women's roles should be. NGOs and the UN therefore cannot afford to engage a-religiously in places where religion plays a dominant role in society.

Rather than focusing exclusively on the formal political sphere, promoting societal change focused on women's empowerment needs to build on the various ways in which women are engaged in formal and informal arenas.
- In the current political configuration, Somali women's involvement in decisionmaking roles at federal and local political levels has been limited. Yet across the region, women serve as breadwinners and are present in large numbers in

Female Somali National Army (SNA) soldiers stand at attention at a camp in Belet Weyne, Somalia. The outcome of the project with the greatest transformative potential is that it has created female role models through creating networks, recording stories and presenting a film. Photo: UN Photo/Tobin Jones

higher education institutions, formal and informal businesses, and NGOs.
- Somali women are often portrayed as victims of mutilation, patriarchy, famine and war. While these injustices must not be ignored, it is important to highlight that they are not passive bystanders, and history is replete with stories of extraordinary Somali women. The contributions of Somali women to society span numerous sectors and arenas including the family, civil society and business. To fully reflect their experiences of civic and political engagement throughout contemporary Somali history, it is essential to look beyond formal domains of political power and influence and include those driving change in other areas.
- Clearly not all Somali women feel a need to become more involved in formal politics, or even that they need more representation from women. Yet many women, particularly in urban, educated classes, are working to increase women's visibility in, and influence over, political life.
- Somali women's identity is defined by more than just being a woman. Women in the Somali region approach civic and political engagement from different standpoints informed by varying understandings of what constitutes oppression and the best strategies for social development and empowerment. For example, some women may advocate for children's rights motivated by their role as mothers, while others may advocate for minority clan rights motivated by their own membership in a marginalized group.
- Gendered realities are by nature interconnected, and it is impossible to discuss the women's empowerment agenda without discussing the empowerment of men after decades of violent conflict.

Facts

Women, Peace and Security – Project presentation

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY (Gender-EQ)

Gender, empowerment and conflict in South Asia

In the project *Making Women Count for Peace: Gender, Empowerment and Conflict in South Asia*, Åshild Kolås at PRIO collaborated with seven partner institutions in India and Nepal.

Project goals and activities

The primary objective was to investigate women's empowerment both in the context of protracted conflict without third-party mediation (northeast India), and in a post-conflict setting with heavy international involvement (Nepal). The project studied local understandings of gender equality, disempowerment, empowerment and political participation in conflict as well as in peacebuilding. Fieldworks in both northeast India and Nepal were carried out to investigate the participation and inclusion of women in local governance and politics.

Nepal has received a lot of attention in research on women's participation in peacebuilding. The focus has primarily been on the situation of women and measures for equality prescribed by international organizations. The decades-long armed conflict (1996–2006) caused widespread human rights abuses, destruction of infrastructure, and socio-economic disruption, but, importantly, it also challenged the patriarchal status quo. During the process of transition and social reconstruction, women achieved unprecedented representation in constitution making, and Nepal's first female president and female speaker were elected in 2015.

In India, on the other hand, gender perspectives have been rather peripheral in the study of armed conflict and of women's contributions to peace processes**.** After the constitutional reforms of 1993, local self-governing institutions became mandatory. With this reform, a female reservation scheme was introduced in local administrative councils, but this does not apply in areas governed by customary institutions. In spite of efforts over recent years to change the gendered nature of customary law and male-dominated traditional councils, most village councils in the northeast still disapprove of reserving seats for women.

The question is whether and how women's presence in political debates should be achieved.

The project studied local understandings of gender equality, disempowerment, empowerment and political participation in conflict as well as in peacebuilding. Fieldwork was conducted in northeast India, in several states. Here from the Mothers' Market in the northeastern state of Manipur. The market is run and managed entirely by women. Photo: Flickr/Oaxley.com

The project was a collaborative effort by PRIO, six partner institutions in India and one partner in Nepal. These were: Malaviya Centre for Peace Research at Banaras Hindu University, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group in Kolkata, Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace in New Delhi, the North East India Studies Programme at Jawaharlal Nehru University, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development in Assam, and Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research in Kathmandu.

Significant project results

The project has helped Indian researchers of gender and conflict in connecting with international research on women, peace and security:
- The project included seven partner institutions in Nepal and India, and provided the opportunity to connect with international researchers, both at PRIO and at international conferences organized by the project.

The diverse forms of collaboration illustrate the varied conditions under which partners in low- and lower-middle income countries are working:

- Some are better funded than others, some are bureaucratically run while others are more flexible, and some are better endowed with human resources. National legislation is of course common to all partner organizations within one country, but even here, organizations are not equally well informed about the law.

The project has directed attention to the significance of women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution:

- As for Nepal, the research is significant in providing a critique of liberal peacebuilding assumptions about the post-conflict 'empowerment' of women. Post-conflict settings like Nepal have received considerable attention in the research on women, peace and security, though primarily with a focus on the socio-economic situation of women, and measures for equality as prescribed by the international community. In India, on the other hand, gender perspectives have been peripheral to the study of armed conflict.

The research findings have been widely disseminated:

- Events, academic publications and policy briefs have informed activists, members of NGOs, politicians, policymakers and researchers about the dilemmas of post-conflict empowerment of women.
- Two workshops were organized specifically for civil society interaction, one in Shillong, northeast India (2012), and another in Kathmandu, Nepal (2013). The project further held four partner meetings to ensure close collaboration on research activities.

Impact on policymaking on women's rights/ empowerment of women in post-conflict areas

The positive effects of women's participation in peace processes cannot be taken for granted.

- A key finding regards the need to understand underlying cultural and socio-political premises as well as the complexities of the concerns, interests and agendas of conflict actors and civil society in conflict-affected areas (women and men alike). Politically, women are just as divided and competitive as their male counterparts.

Current peacebuilding templates in use must be examined critically, and the feasibility of pursuing women's empowerment in conflict settings must be considered carefully.

- The importance of women's participation in peace processes notwithstanding, it is difficult and potentially counter-productive to promote women's equality and agency in a politically volatile setting without regard for the unique socio-political situation, cultural norms, and political complexities.

During the process of transition and social reconstruction, women achieved unprecedented representation in constitution making in Nepal. In 2015, Bidhya Bhandari from the Communist Partu of Nepal was elected as the first female president in Nepal. Photo: Wikimedia Commons/ Ganesh Paudel

All measures to support women should be context-specific, locally grounded and culturally sensitive.

- In India and Nepal, as elsewhere in the world, there are massive differences in the socio-economic and political status of women. Support for women's equality and participation can easily become politicized by conflict actors who may either oppose their cause or compete to champion it; both of which are potentially problematic. In Nepal, 'Western' initiatives were subject to much criticism. Women's organizations appreciated international assistance towards women's equality, but felt the need to protect themselves from critics who portrayed the initiatives of multilateral agencies and international NGOs as culturally inappropriate or even dogmatic. In northeast India, conflict resolution tends to involve negotiations behind closed doors, without civil society participation. In this context, engagement with women's participation in peacebuilding is important, although again, the local political sensitivities need to be acknowledged.

It is important that research and policy emphasize the significant role of women as activists for change and stakeholders in conflict as well as in peace.

- While women actually do participate in peacebuilding, there is a marked reluctance to acknowledge their participation and agency on the part of the media, policymakers and even academics. Although they may be absent from formal participation in peace negotiations, governance and politics, their contribution in informal, community-level or NGO-led initiatives should not be underestimated.

Facts

Project name: Making Women Count for Peace: Gender, Empowerment and Conflict in South Asia
Project period: 2012–2016
Project manager: Åshild Kolås, PRIO, *ashild@prio.no*
Allocated: NOK 5 750 000

Women, Peace and Security – Project presentation

The Research Council of Norway

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY (Gender-EQ)

Indigenous women's access to justice and security in Latin America

In the project Women and Law in Latin America: Justice, Security and Legal Pluralism, Rachel Sieder at the Chr. Michelsen Institute cooperated with a Latin America-based research team coordinated through the Center for Research and Graduate Studies in Social Anthropology (CIESAS) in Mexico City.

Project goals and activities

The primary objective of this project was to explore the relationship between legal pluralism and indigenous women's access to justice and security in Latin America. **The secondary objective** was to study organized social movements' strategies for securing greater gender justice in the context of the struggle for recognition of indigenous peoples' collective rights.

Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Bolivia and Guatemala are all countries with marginalised indigenous populations. The ambiguities and violence of state practices have led many indigenous peoples in Latin America to organize and demand higher degrees of legal and territorial autonomy. The individual and collective rights of indigenous women are advanced as part of claims for the defence of indigenous peoples' group rights.

The project looked at how the struggle for individual human rights –and gender rights – on behalf of indigenous people can be located within the broader struggle for collective rights as indigenous peoples. According to indigenous organizations, the former cannot be achieved without the guarantee of the latter.

Policy discussions often tend to assume that group rights are bad for women and that individual, liberal conceptions of human rights are always beneficial. To examine this argument empirically, this project has carried out ethnographic studies, focusing particularly on the organizing of indigenous women for justice and security, and the gendered outcomes of these processes.

The project explored indigenous women's access to justice and security in Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Bolivia and Guatemala. A Mayan woman from the Quiche region of Guatemala wears here traditional attire. Photo: UN Photo/John Olsson

Significant project results

Broader policy debates about legal pluralism, custom and indigenous women's rights:
- The research results offer insights into local understandings of what security and access to justice mean for indigenous men and women. Sources of insecurity and lack of access to justice are interconnected, including both structural and interpersonal forms of violence. Solutions must include indigenous peoples'

collective rights guarantees as well as women's individual rights. This is particularly urgent, given the top-down, state-centric and institutionally focused nature of much policy debate on security and justice in Latin America, which favours institutionally-driven, often highly militarized, solutions to security challenges and access to justice prescriptions prioritizing individual rights over and above collective rights guarantees.

- Although indigenous justice systems discriminate against women, the research confirmed that they still provide more accessible forms of dispute resolution and recourse when compared with state justice systems, which remain highly discriminatory and are difficult to access, due to cost and linguistic, ethnic and gender discrimination.

A deeper understanding of gendered forms of violence, (in)security, and access to justice:

- The research demonstrated that greater respect for autonomous group rights, including rights to exercise indigenous forms of law separate from the state justice system, provide important spaces for women to advance culturally specific forms of gender justice.

Indigenous women have advanced new understandings of "justice" and "security":

- This has been done within the context of the struggle for recognition of indigenous peoples' collective rights, but such efforts have inevitably involved tensions and conflicts within organizational spaces. The project demonstrates the importance of organizational spaces and initiatives for indigenous women, of language, and of framing indigenous women's demands for gender justice *within* indigenous peoples' organizations.
- The language of human rights has resonance in all the research countries, and therefore provides leverage for women's claims. But, the language of "gender" can elicit counter-reactions within indigenous organizations, which continue to be dominated by men, certain communities and families.

Impact on policymaking on women's rights/empowerment of women in post-conflict areas

The theoretical concept of intersectionality should be deployed in studies of women's rights and empowerment in conflict/post-conflict areas.

- Intersectionality adds depth to the analysis of gendered forms of violence, (in)security, and access to justice, especially when focusing on the situation of indigenous women.

Opportunities for organized groups of indigenous women to articulate gendered justice claims are provided by certain periods of political-legal transition.

- When autonomy rights are being discussed and legislated at national level, demands for new forms of representation and treatment of issues affecting women can be provided. This was particularly the case with intra-familial violence. This occurs

through a variety of mechanisms, including the elaboration of "community law" and social movements preparing to lobby for specific constitutional clauses or laws.

Supposedly "non-state" types of repression are intrinsic to new state forms linked to accelerated exploitation of natural resources.

- Extraction of oil, minerals, forest and water resources, and resistance by indigenous communities against it, has led to deployment of military or paramilitary powers in order to guarantee extraction. Protesters are met with violence, including sexual violence directed particularly against indigenous women. The effects of such political situations on indigenous women and their prospects in accessing justice and security need to be considered.

The obstacles to greater gender justice in post-conflict contexts can be grouped into three broad categories:

- *Internal resources:* in the absence of consolidated organizational spaces for women, it is extremely difficult to challenge gender inequalities.
- *External resources:* Male allies within indigenous justice and authority systems are crucial for women's empowerment and access to justice. NGOs and governments can provide discursive resources, material support and framing mechanisms, thereby strengthening indigenous women's organizational processes and building broad alliances to support processes advancing gender justice. However, failure to maintain support programmes over time affects spaces for organizing. In addition, culturally insensitive approaches failing to adopt intersectional perspectives on violence against women or to take local perspectives into account can prove counterproductive.
- *Structural factors:* Legal rights and guarantees often prove ineffectual against decentralized forms of violence and the accumulation of assaults on indigenous peoples' territories. Forced displacement and attacks against communities' defence of their territories often involve highly gendered forms of violence, and the communities' response tends to favour militarized, hyper-masculine forms of leadership and defence. Such dynamics can limit fragile gains made by women for greater gender justice.

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY (Gender-EQ)

Governance, justice and gender in Afghanistan

In the project *Governance, Justice and Gender in Afghanistan: Between Informal and Formal Dynamics*, principal investigator Torunn Wimpelmann cooperated with Orzal Ashraf Nemat and other colleagues at the Peace and Training Organisation (PTRO) in Afghanistan.

Project goals and activities

The primary objective was to build capacity in gender research and that of female researchers in Afghanistan. **The thematic objective** of the project was to examine women's role in processes of local governance and how incidents of violence against women were acted upon by state institutions.

After decades of war and instability, the Afghan university system has been severely weakened. It continues to suffer from politicization and a relative lack of interest from donors who focus on primary, and to some extent secondary, education. As a result, social science research in Afghanistan remains dominated by Western academics, with Afghan researchers in junior roles. This project sought to rectify this balance, with a particular focus on gender research.

In post-2001 Afghanistan there has been a considerable focus on violence against women. Success in challenging existing gender roles and sexual ideologies in Afghanistan has been limited, as has the transformative impact of this focus. Women's rights became strongly politicized in Afghanistan after the removal of the Taliban government and thus attracted the attention of a large number of actors who otherwise had very little interest in feminism or progressive social change, such as male Western diplomats.

At village level in Afghanistan, important decisions centre around resources, particularly distribution of resources flowing into the locality through aid programmes and local land ownership. Decisions on such matters are generally presided over by 'traditional' elites; powerful families with land holdings and claims of being the original settlers of the area or of noble religious lineage. After 2001, new formal structures were set up, such as

The main questions for this project have been: what is the role of women in processes of local community councils in Afghanistan, and how is violence against women treated in state institutions? Photo: UN Photo/Eric Kanalstein

community councils designed to create more inclusive forms of local governance. Little has changed, however; the leaders in the new councils tend to be identical with the existing power holders or to represent their own interests.

The research consisted of fieldwork in the provinces of Bamyan and Nangahar in the period 2011–2012, and draws on several other case studies from Afghanistan and the research portfolio at PTRO. Astri Suhrke has been the project manager, while Torunn Wimpelmann has been the principal investigator in the project.

Significant project results

The project built research capacity in Afghanistan:

- A female Afghan researcher was awarded a PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in 2015 through a scholarship provided by the project. She taught at SOAS in London for a year before returning to Afghanistan in 2016. There she took up directorship of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, a well-recognized research institution in Kabul. She is the second Afghan and the first woman to hold this position.

- From having no research projects specifically focusing on gender at the outset of the project, PTRO is now one of the main institutions in Afghanistan for research on gender and women.

The research represented genuine contributions to the literature, as little work had been done on the role of women in local government.

- The research findings showed how aid interventions in local governance did not empower women or transform power relations at the local level. An approach to gender which satisfied formal requirements to be 'gender-sensitive' seemed merely symbolic, and did not change the gender difference in respect of access to political and economic resources. Thus, while there may have been a slight increase in the level of public participation by women in local decisionmaking processes, these women did not represent a feminist agenda. Instead, the existing, hierarchical relations that run along patriarchal lines continued to dominate in local governance.

Impact on policymaking on women's rights/empowerment of women in post-conflict areas

Short-term capacity building is not an adequate alternative to higher education.

- Like their colleagues elsewhere, Afghan researchers need access to good-quality educational institutions in order to build their capacity. In the long run, such institutions might be found in Afghanistan, but in the more immediate term, international scholarships are fundamental to the emergence of local academic capacity and more equal relations between local and international researcher in knowledge production.

Future aid interventions must support women beyond mere participation, and must build coalitions between feminist-oriented actors.

- The research on local governance showed that while aid interventions had increased the level participation by women, their participation was dependent on male support and largely reproduced 'traditional' forms of governance; patron–client relationships.

Change requires local mobilization and attention to more fundamental issues such as women's independent access to resources and income and to control over their bodies.

- In Afghanistan there has been a tendency to favour 'fast-track' technocratic measures such as women's quotas. Thus female participation and visibility are promoted without sufficient attention to underlying gender relations. There is a danger that external support promotes the rise of a class of women 'leaders' with little interest in more fundamental issues, who in turn may block the emergence of younger, more feminist voices.

Research on local governance showed that aid interventions had increased participation of women, but it was dependent on male support and largely reproduced 'traditional' forms of governance. Here policewomen from the Afghan National Police train at a police training centre in Kabul. Photo: UN Photo/Fardin Waezi

Efforts to address violence against women must go beyond punitive measures if they are to support women's access to divorce, child custody and independent survival.

- They must also address constructions that label women who live or even travel on their own as immoral or criminal. The cases examined reveal how incidents of gender violence were routinely translated into questions of male (or family) status, or violations of 'honour'. In other words, violations were articulated as illegitimate assaults on kinship authority over female sexuality as opposed to offences against the women themselves. To some extent, such notions were challenged; punishments meted out by state courts for 'honour killings' and for the dissolution (if not prosecution) of forced marriages meant that women were recognized as independent legal persons who had rights over their bodies vis à vis their families. However, legal practices did not go as far as to recognize women's rights over their bodies outside the framework of marriage. Because non-marital sexual relations was criminalized, and because women travelling or living on their own were often apprehended as adulterers by the state, the kind of public protection women in reality could access was very limited.
- The findings of the project suggest that unless the parameters of acceptable female behaviour are expanded, and as long as the government retains wide-ranging authority to regulate and punish women who step outside these narrow parameters, it is difficult to see how the recent activism around the legal responses to violence against women can translate into substantial change.

Facts

Project name: Governance, Justice and Gender in Afghanistan: Between Informal and Formal Dynamics
Project period: 2010–2014
Project manager: Astri Suhrke, Chr. Michelsen Institute, *astri.suhrke@cmi.no*
Allocated: NOK 3 276 000

Women, Peace and Security – Project presentation

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY (Gender-EQ)

Survivors of Sexual Violence in Democratic Republic of the Congo

In the project *Female Empowerment in Eastern DRC*, Ragnhild Nordås and a team from PRIO cooperated with colleagues at the International Center for Advanced Research and Training (ICART) in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Project goals and activities

The primary objective of this project was to improve understanding of the barriers to and opportunities for female empowerment in DRC. Furthermore, to provide recommendations for improving efficiency and quality of assistance programmes for women who are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. **The secondary objectives** were, among others, to build research capacity at ICART; to analyse the impact of programmes to empower and reintegrate survivors of sexual violence; and to produce collaborative research publications and disseminate results to local communities, NGOs, embassies, and policymakers.

Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has become known for high levels of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women as part of armed conflicts lasting many years. Several support programmes have been put in place in the region to assist in empowerment of vulnerable women and women affected by SGBV. The programmes provide either material goods, such as loans, school fees, seed, livestock or training in literacy, management, entrepreneurship or leadership.

Not much has been known about the impact of such support efforts. Several programmes provide vulnerable women and survivors of SBGV with socioeconomic support in the South Kivu province. Many of these are managed by Panzi hospital and Panzi Foundation DRC – initiatives that are also partners in ICART. This project looked at the general impact of being part of a support programme – both for survivors of SGBV and for other vulnerable women. A subproject looked into the support programme *City of*

The project aimed to provide recommendations for improving efficiency and quality of assistance programmes for women who are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in DR Congo. Here from a women's shelter for victims of sexual abuse in Goma, DRC. Photo: UN Photo/Marie Frechon

Joy for women with traumatic experiences of SBGV from all over DRC, aimed at increasing gender awareness and promoting female leadership.

Significant project results

Evidence from the research project indicates that survivors of sexual violence feel less socially included compared to other women:

- Support programmes for vulnerable women have a significantly positive effect on perceived improvements in economic wellbeing. They also make women feel more socially included. However, the latter effect appears to be weaker for SGBV survivors than for other women. In other words, survivors of sexual violence have particular needs for improving their social inclusion, and support programmes currently in place seem to have difficulty in meeting them.

The project provided recommendations to improve the support programmes:

- The main lesson in the support programmes was to focus more on social inclusion, in particular through involving

other members of the community, not only the survivors. In December 2016, at the end of the project, the project team met the programmes in Bukavu. The results for what specific types of training and support the women found most useful were presented, and the findings and recommendations were discussed with the programmes.

Project results have been widely disseminated, both within and beyond academia:

- Results from the project have been presented and discussed in DRC through meetings with stakeholders and distribution of policy briefs in English and French. In December 2016, at the end of the project, a designated workshop was arranged for policymakers and stakeholders in Bukavu to which representatives from the support programmes were invited, as well as Panzi hospital, Panzi foundation, local universities, the provincial ministry of gender, representatives from international and local NGOs, local churches, and the media. The results have received significant interest amongst various stakeholders, who have found the insights and main lessons from the project useful for policymaking.

The project built local research capacity in DRC:

- Training sessions offered throughout the project have benefited local researchers, practitioners, students, and faculty from the Université Evangelique en Afrique (UEA) and the ICART project team members in particular.
- ICART now has a team of junior researchers capable of designing and implementing research projects.
- The training has led to improving the capacity of some core local female research staff, who can in turn act as role models in the local community and, hopefully, contribute to influencing future research priorities, which in turn will also be beneficial for directing the focus towards topics such as women's rights and empowerment.

Impact on policymaking on women's rights/ empowerment of women in post-conflict areas

Additional work and programming is needed to work actively with the families of SGBV survivors and the local population more broadly in order to encourage social inclusion of SGBV survivors.

- Survivors of sexual violence tend to feel less socially included compared to women who have not experience SGBV. Sexual violence is associated with heavy stigma, and this is clearly a challenge when it comes to improving gender equality overall.

Support programmes for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence must take into consideration the needs of survivors of sexual violence for improving their social inclusion.

- Research findings from the project show that programmes have positive effects on economic wellbeing and social inclusion. However, the effects on social inclusion are weaker for SGBV survivors than for other women.

The project collaborated with ICART and Panzi hospital and Panzi Foundation DRC. The latter is a non-profit health centre focusing on improving the quality of medical care for the population, reducing the maternal and infant death rate, and providing treatment for the victims of sexual violence. Photo: UN Photo/Marie Frechon

The long-term changes and impacts of support programmes on gender equality should be assessed in future research.

- A subproject looked at changes in the opinions and attitudes towards female empowerment, gender equality, and female leadership over the course of the six-month support programme *City of Joy*. After six months, most participants exited the program with strong egalitarian attitudes towards gender equality, a positive view of women as leaders, and other indicators of female empowerment. But they also seem to have growing concerns about the problems facing women in the DRC and the possible pushback they may face when trying to assert their rights, such as from men who resent them gaining power. Future research should look at the long-term effects and see whether and how lessons from support programmes are put to practical use after the end of such programmes.

Policymakers should pay attention to the major obstacles to female empowerment.

- *Poverty* is a significant barrier to empowerment for women in DRC.
- *Lack of security* is another important factor. The women in Congo are facing the constant threat of SGBV, both in general and in their own homes.
- *Domestic violence* is highly prevalent, and poses an obstacle to female empowerment.
- Another important determinant is access to *equitable education*. Increased poverty may force parents into taking their daughters out of school to avoid direct costs. During times of conflict, resources are scarce, and families focus mainly on survival. In such periods, education discrimination could increase, so that boys are prioritized. Many informants in this project explained that they could not afford to send all their children to school.

Facts
Project name: Female Empowerment in Eastern DRC
Project period: 2014-2016
Project manager: Ragnhild Nordås, PRIO, *ragnhild@prio.org*
Allocated: NOK 5 000 000

Women, Peace and Security – Project presentation

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY (Gender-EQ)

Gendered experiences of security in Swat Valley, Pakistan

In the project *Gender and Human Security in Post-Conflict Pakistan*, Ingrid Nyborg and colleagues from Comsats Institute of Information Technology (CIIT) explored gender differences in the perception and experience of insecurity in post-conflict Swat Valley, Pakistan.

Project goals and activities

The primary objective was to explore, using the concept of human security, how women and men's local experiences and understandings of insecurity, vulnerability and development relate to security and development discourses, policies and programmes in post-conflict situations.

The Taliban-led insurgency started in the Swat Valley in 2007–2008. In 2009, the Pakistani army took control over the area and banished the Taliban. The armed conflict led to more than two million people fleeing south to Peshawar. Three months later, people were able to return to their homes in Swat. Less than a year later, in July 2010, the same area was hit by devastating floods. The floods, caused by heavy monsoon rains, added a further dimension of crisis to the conflict. It is estimated that 20 million people were affected by the floods.

The research team investigated the ways in which women and men have different opportunities and strategies as they manoeuvre round the many traditional institutions and authorities, civil society groups, NGOs, local government, the judiciary, the police and the military in order to secure their lives.

Qualitative research conducted in six villages of the Swat Valley aimed to answer the following questions: how do men and women experience the situation immediately after a crisis?; how can we understand the complex relationship between the desire for personal security and the need for development?; and what part does the gender dimension play in this context?

In 2010, devastating floods hit Pakistan's Swat valley. The area was already marred by violent conflict between Taliban and Pakistan's army. 2 million people were displaced by the conflict while 20 million were affected by the floods. Photo: UN Photo/Evan Schneider.

Local understandings differ from those of state and non-state institutions at local, district, province, national and international levels when it comes to (in)security, threats, vulnerabilities, rights, conflicts and negotiations. What might the implications of these differences be in terms of changes in policies and programmes in order to strengthen the position of women and achieve gender equality in Swat?

Significant project results

The study clearly shows that local experiences of insecurity are highly gendered, diverse, and embedded in a wider social, political and economic context:

- This is often invisible to policymakers and development actors, who continue to see security and development as one-dimensional concepts.

The project has influenced the way in which the partner universities study sensitive post-conflict contexts:

- Theoretically, by focusing on human security rather than exclusively on state security.

- Methodologically, by providing a field methodology where gender and class differences were central, as opposed to focusing on data aggregation.

Local partners have had an advantage in building relevant networks for sharing knowledge and influencing policy in Pakistan:
- The quality and accessibility of the data have been greatly improved through longer-term engagement with local partners.

Two Pakistani candidates have completed their PhD studies.
- They have returned to CIIT to teach, advise and conduct research in the fields of development studies, gender and development, and peace, conflict and development.

The results and experiences from this study led directly to the successful bid for a larger EU H2020 project.
- The project *Community-Based Policing and Post-Conflict Police Reform* is a five-year study of community–police relations in 11 countries in South Asia, Africa, Latin America and south-eastern Europe. CIIT is one of the project partners.

Impact on policymaking on women's rights/ empowerment of women in post-conflict areas

The project provided evidence on the importance of looking at the complexity and diversity of women's and men's experiences.
- Research shows that when generalizations rather than differing male and female experiences of conflict and security are used when designing development and security policy in a post-conflict area, it results in:
  a) ineffective responses
  b) increased social, economic and gender inequality, and
  c) increased conflict

Improving the following areas will likely reveal unanticipated opportunities and be beneficial for other areas of conflict and crisis.
- If the bullet points below are taken into consideration, opportunities for supporting positive processes of equitable development and real human security for all can be brought about. The list is relevant not only for the Swat Valley, but also for other areas of conflict and crisis in the region:
  - A focus on capacity building of locally based organizations, including gendered aspects.
  - A re-examination of the powered processes of institutional response by government and the international community.
  - A focus on trust building between the international community and government.
  - The full participation of community women and men in the re-negotiation of government and community relations through programmes promoting community-based policing, links between formal and informal conflict resolution and justice systems, and non-discrimination in terms of ethnicity, gender, religion and social status.

The project aimed to explore men's and women's differing experiences immediately after a crisis. Here a mother gives her child a bowl of clean water in Charsarda District, in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, an area severely affected by 2010 floods. Photo: UN Photo/UNICEF/ZAK

These lessons have been shared with policymakers in both Norway and Pakistan.

The project identified several obstacles working against gender equality in post-conflict areas.
- There was the total lack of commitment to ensuring the safe and equal participation of women in both local and provincial decisionmaking bodies. Women in post-conflict areas are underrepresented as development organization staff, and as government staff (ministries, police and military), and this in turn has led to an under-prioritization of women's issues. This lack of commitment is also apparent in the international development and security sector reform community.
- Post-conflict contexts are often dominated by security interests, where women's perspectives are absent or simplified. Approaches remain top-down, elitist, and often exclude women's organizations and activists.
- The challenge lies in ensuring a locally owned process of raising awareness, and communication that is rooted in participatory discussions of everyday needs and insecurities as they are experienced by both women and men. It requires changes in men's attitudes towards women and their position in society.

Facts
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Violence against women in Afghanistan

In the project *Violence against Women and Criminal Justice in Afghanistan*, Torunn Wimpelmann cooperated with Wazhma Frogh, Mohammad Jawad Shababi and Farangis Elyassi at Research Institute for Women Peace & Security (RIWPS) in Afghanistan. The project was led by senior researcher Astri Suhrke at Chr. Michelsen Institute.

Project goals and activities

Increasing and strengthening criminal accountability for violence against women (VAW) has been a key objective for the post-2001 Afghan women's movement as well as for Western aid donors. Yet statistics on actual prosecution and conviction rates have not been available. In particular, there has been a need for systematic research on why a seemingly high number of cases registered with the authorities are dismissed or withdrawn prior to prosecution. **The primary objective** of the project was to generate empirical knowledge necessary to strengthen advocacy and aid programmes that can increase accountability for violence against women in Afghanistan.

The project collected data on the number and type of incidents registered, prosecuted and adjudicated over a two-year period in eight of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. It then contextualized this quantitative data with qualitative material on a smaller number of incidents to ascertain why and when cases exit the legal system and under what conditions a conviction for violence against women is secured.

Significant project results

The research provided a nuanced understanding of the low conviction rates for VAW crimes:

- For cases registered with the prosecution within the project period, the conviction rate was 20 per cent. Most cases exited the legal system at the level of prosecution; only 27 per cent of

Even though violence against women has been a key priority for the post-2001Afghan women's movement as well as for Western aid donors, data on conviction and prosecution rates have been unavailable. The project collected statistics over a two-year period in eight of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. Photo: UN Photo/Eric Kanalstein

cases registered with the prosecution were referred to court. Once cases had been brought to court, a conviction was the most likely outcome: 59 per cent of all cases referred to court led to a criminal conviction.

- Research findings suggest that, overall, the prosecution (and not the courts) constitutes the most significant bottleneck for criminal accountability for VAW crimes.
- The low conviction rates have generally been attributed to a 'lack of political will' to professionalize and pressurize the legal system. In other words, prejudice and corruption within the justice sector and the failure of leaders to address this have been identified as the main obstacles.
- Researchers found that many cases of gender violence were withdrawn on the initiative of the complainant or her family. Most surprisingly, many claims were lodged with intentions other than to secure a criminal conviction. Instead, a potential criminal charge served as leverage to achieve a different objective, often divorce or economical compensation, cases where Afghan women have few or no rights compared to their male counterparts. These dynamics – where claims were withdrawn once other objectives had been secured – significantly inflated withdrawal rates.

The research pointed to notable regional differences:

- The two large urban provinces of Kabul and Herat were comparable in terms of the number of cases registered with the prosecution. However, the differences in the number of cases brought to court were huge: 13 per cent in Kabul, 62 per cent in Herat. This difference was partly evened out at the court level, where the amount of cases exiting the system was somewhat higher in Herat.
- In more rural and conservative provinces, the main bottleneck for women complainants is at the level of registration. Prosecutors are extremely reluctant to register cases, both because of gender prejudice and because of undue influence from the perpetrators. As a result, many women can only register their cases by mobilizing outside pressure groups such as the Human Rights Commission. The caseloads in these provinces are much lower than in Herat and Kabul, also when population size is taken into account.

The research pointed to weaknesses in the specialized prosecution units for VAW crimes, such as weak management, unqualified staff and pressure on victims to withdraw cases or submit to mediation.

- During 2016, the government of Afghanistan took measures to address these issues. Most significantly, a Deputy Attorney General for VAW crimes has been appointed, and changes to the management of the VAW unit in Kabul have been made, signalling the government's intention to increase political accountability for VAW prosecutions.
- A new code of conduct prohibiting prosecutors to authorize mediation in cases involving criminal claims concerning VAW has been put in place.
- Specialized VAW units have been set up in all of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

The project findings have been influential in a number of ways:

- Preliminary findings have been disseminated at academic and practitioners conferences in Kabul, Oslo and Stockholm. They have also been informally shared with legal officials and aid workers in Kabul.
- Two reports have been broadly disseminated to local groups and provincial actors, including women NGO's and local justice officials. The reports were launched at an event at the American Embassy in Kabul attended by the head of the VAW prosecution unit in Kabul and other Afghan legal officials, diplomats from the US, Canadian and other embassies, representatives from UN Women, the United Nations Mission to Afghanistan, and other key aid agencies in the field of women's access to justice in Afghanistan.

Impact on policymaking on women's rights/ empowerment of women in post-conflict areas

Looking at statistics in isolation can be misleading; in-depth qualitative research is crucial.

- Gender violence has been a key focus area in the field of women's empowerment in conflict and post-conflict countries, but there is a need to look beyond the numbers and address

A young girl walks across rooftops in Herat, Afghanistan. In this urban province the number of cases on violence against women that were brought to court were high- 62 per cent. Photo: UN Photo/Eric Kanalstein

local factors affecting the judicial treatment of gender-based violence.

The research findings point to the need to address structural issues beyond 'political will'.

- More focus should be directed at the family courts and at women's ability to obtain their rights there. A narrow focus on criminal justice will have limited impact. The family courts deal with matters of divorce and child custody, and women have unequal rights to both. This negatively affects conviction rates for VAW in several ways. For instance, they might register criminal claims with the purpose of getting a husband to agree to a divorce or a more favourable divorce. Then the claim is withdrawn, creating high withdrawal numbers, but without the underlying story being evident.

Women's protection against violence must be seen in connection with their access to economic and civil rights.

- Without substantive changes in the factors that fundamentally shape all women's lives – rights in marriage and access to independent economic survival – targeted interventions are of limited value. In Afghanistan many, if not most, interventions have focused on women's presence in politics and government, as well as on the criminal prosecution of VAW. However, women's unequal rights to divorce, property and economic assets have been relatively neglected. This means that women's access to public life and to protection is often only granted at the discretion of their families.

Facts

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WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY (Gender-EQ)

Sexual violence, legislative reforms and court practices in Sudan

In the project Caught between rape and adultery: Women's fight against sexual violence and for justice in Sudan, Liv Tønnesen cooperated with colleagues from the Ahfad University for Women in Sudan.

Project goals and activities

The primary objective of this multidisciplinary project was to contribute to the scant research on rape legislation in Sudan. **The secondary objective** was to build research capacity at Ahfad University for Women to encourage and support research and publications on violence against women.

The project looks at how the law in an Islamic state defines rape, how the law is applied by the formal courts and in the customary law system, and how women are fighting to reform the law. Article 149 of Sudan's Criminal Act defines rape as adultery and fornication (*zina*) without consent, and thereby constitutes a serious legal obstacle for rape victims attempting to bring their attackers to justice. *Zina* is defined as sexual intercourse between a man and women outside a valid marriage contract. It is punishable by 100 lashes for unmarried persons and by stoning to death for married persons. Since *zina* is not sufficiently differentiated from rape in the existing legislation, the offence needs to be proven according to the rules of evidence applying to adultery. The consequence is, in the words of an activist, that "if you cannot prove rape, you become the perpetrator".

Significant project results

Informed policy makers and stakeholders in Sudan and public debate:
- The findings suggest that women's mobilization for reform of Sudan's rape laws has been polarized, especially on the question of marital rape. Rape reform has further been politicized in the wake of the International Criminal Court indicting President Bashir's use of sexual violence as a war tool

The project looks at legal definitions of rape in an Islamic state (Sudan), and women's fight for reform. Women leaders in Malakal, Upper Nile State, South Sudan. Photo: UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

in Darfur. This politicization has led to branding of women activists as enemies of the state.
- Research findings generated debate on marital rape and thus bridged a gap between women activists and Islamists in the fight for women's protection against violence. A workshop was organized at the University of Khartoum with stakeholders from both the women's movement and the government to discuss the findings in light of the rape law reform of 2015.

The project publications on sexual violence have been influential in number of ways:
- The research has been used in capacity building of parliamentarians at the sub-national level and of journalists.
- The project findings on rape/*zina* issues in Sudan have provided groundbreaking background information to Sudanese and international women's activists.
- A report on Sudanese women's activism and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 have served as reference documents in support of activist Safia Ishaq Mohammed Issa's complaint of sexual violence while held in detention in 2014.

- The project's results were delivered to Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women of the United Nations and is mentioned in the UN General Assembly's country report.

The project built capacity on violence against women in a number of ways:
- The project has had several co-publications with researchers at CMI and Afhad University.
- One PhD student successfully defended her PhD at Ahfad University for Women. Four master students were trained at Ahfad University for Women researching different aspects of violence against women, including child marriage. Male senior scholars were tutored to research and publish on topics related to violence against women.
- The project has provided theoretical and methodological literature and training for Ahfad staff and students, including Liv Tønnessen lecturing at the Regional Institute of Gender, Diversity, Peace and Rights (RIGDPR), Ahfad University, on a master course on gender and global governance.
- The project built capacity by providing research stays at CMI for four researchers. It provided funding for researchers to participate at international conferences, and also organized an international conference in 2014 at Ahfad University for Women.

Impact on policy making on women's rights/ empowerment of women in post-conflict areas

Sudan follows the trend whereby major conflicts can have disruptive egalitarian effects, catalyzing women's increased legislative representation as well as gender equality law reforms.
- After the historic peace agreement between Sudan and South Sudan in 2005, the Interim National Constitution of 2005 included a bill of rights for women, 25 percent of seats in the national and sub-national legislative assemblies were reserved for women in 2008, a human trafficking law was introduced in 2014, and Sudan is close to criminalizing female genital mutilation (FGM). In 2015, after broad mobilization by women, Sudan reformed Article 149 of the 1991 Criminal Act by clearly differentiating between the crime of rape and that of *zina*.

Introducing new laws to protect women and children from violence is an important step, but it is a long way off providing actual protection.
- It is important for international donors not to be tempted to "tick the box" and define a new law as a victory and a success without monitoring its implementation.

Introducing reforms is just one piece of the puzzle; actual implementation is something else.
- One important legal change that has taken place during the course of the research project is the definition of persons aged under 18 as children in the Child Act of 2010, as opposed to the Criminal Act, where a person is defined as an adult on the first signs of puberty. On paper the Child Act should prevail over the Criminal Act, this has consequences for statutory rape victims as any sexual act against a child is defined as rape whether the

An important finding shows that while Sudan has introduced a series of legal reforms, it has simultaneously oppressed an emerging independent women's movement in the country. Photo: UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

child resists or not. In reality it is a matter of luck whether a girl meets a judge that applies 18 years or signs of puberty as definition of adulthood.
- Sudan introduced a reform on rape that differentiated between rape and *zina* in February 2015. One of the major limitations of the reform is that it does not address marital rape. Another limitation is that rape and *zina* remain conflated in the Evidence Act of 1994. Activists and stakeholders are highly skeptical as to whether the government will implement the reform. To them, the reform is mainly an attempt to save face internationally and send a signal to the International Criminal Court that they are tackling the problem of sexual violence.

An *independent* women's movement (in both post-conflict and non-conflict settings) for governments to introduce gender equal legal reforms and policy changes is important.
- An important finding from the project is that while Sudan has introduced a series of legal reforms, it has simultaneously oppressed an emerging independent women's movement in the country. A possible obstacle for influencing gender equality in authoritarian post-conflict states is that advocates of gender equality are labeled as enemies of the state who are blindly following a Western and foreign agenda. The long-term implication is that it weakens the foundation for generating further policy changes on violence against women.

Facts
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