

# Exploring Gender Mainstreaming in Post-Conflict Reconstruction

Theodora- Ismene Gizelis (Department of Government, University of Essex)

Jana Krause (Department of War Studies, King's College London)

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## **Abstract**

This chapter brings forth the debate on the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming approaches in post-conflict reconstruction by connecting key findings in the security and development literature with research on gender equality. The underlying theme of the theoretical synergies developed in the chapter is that long-term stability and development are intertwined with policies that promote gender equality. Yet, the relationship between security, development and gender equality in post-conflict environments depends on how security is addressed as well as on the economic and social institutions that emerge in the aftermath of violent armed conflict.

## **Introduction**

Post-conflict reconstruction seeks to modify the structural conditions that contribute to conflict. This is central as research strongly suggests that low post-conflict growth contributes to a higher risk of recurring violence (Collier, Elliott, Hegre, Hoeffler, Reynal-Querol and Sambanis 2003; Sen 1999; World Bank 2011). Today, policy makers tend to agree with social

scientists that gender equality is likely to be related to the success of such post-conflict reconstruction. This has been developed more broadly for development and peace for states as a result of the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Gender mainstreaming as a global strategy to promote gender equality in development and peace was then adopted and defined by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1997.<sup>1</sup> The use of this approach in redefining security, not least security sector reform, after armed conflict was further formalized in the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000, which calls for a gender perspective in peace operations (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2002). UNSCR 1325 and developments initiated during the UN Decade for Women, 1975-1985, increase the pressure on UN peacekeeping missions as well as other organizations and national governments to include a gender perspective in post-conflict reconstruction and to incorporate the rhetoric and practices of gender mainstreaming in all policies, including those that target security, poverty reduction and development in agreement with the United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted by the General Assembly in August 2000 (United Nations 2000). This discussion is continued in the negotiations to create a new UN post-2015 development agenda (United Nations High-Level Panel 2013).

In research, the gender dimensions of security and development are potentially related to post-conflict reconstruction in three overarching respects. First, the impact of gender equality on long-term development demonstrates its relevance for understanding the prospects for successful post-conflict reconstruction (Duflo 2011; Sen 1999).<sup>2</sup> Second, research indicates that gender equality can have an effect independent of development that may help lower the risk of recurrent conflict (Gizelis 2009; Melander 2005a and 2005b; Sambanis 2006). Third, civil wars destroy the previous social economic and political structures, and lead to changes in individual social identities and cultural practices, offering opportunities to transform gendered

power relations. This turn also provides a window of opportunity for new and more effective policies and institutions conducive to long-term economic and social growth (Fuest 2008; Kuehnast, de Jong Oudraat and Hernes 2011).

As gender equality can be central for success, the policy of gender mainstreaming has been used as a tool to improve the situation for both women and men after armed conflict. Thus, the new policies and institutions created after armed conflict may incorporate gender mainstreaming approaches to a lesser or greater degree. To date, however, there is limited research on how and under what conditions gender mainstreaming policies can be successfully implemented (Beardsley, Blair, Gilligan and Karim 2013; Duflo 2011) as well as on what consequences such approaches have in practice. The current dearth of systematic and disaggregated data on gender, security and development limits empirical research, despite recent efforts to compile such datasets (Olsson and Gizelis 2014).

A further challenge arises from largely separate academic debates within the empirical conflict literature on the one hand and feminist literature on security and development on the other. Profound theoretical and methodological divides have precluded fruitful engagement. Both research streams differ not only on the conceptualization of gender and approaches to gender equality but also on the normative understanding of peace, security and implications for post-conflict reconstruction. While for empirical research peace is defined as the absence of armed conflict, feminist and other critical approaches have advocated a broader and more comprehensive understanding of peace related to the concept of human security (Hudson 2009; Krause and Jütersonke 2005; Barnes and Olonisakin 2010). Furthermore, conceptually different approaches to achieving gender equality have historically emerged. Liberal feminism has emphasized the promotion of equal treatment and representation while positive action

approaches have sought to address women's specific needs and rectify discrimination. By contrast, gender mainstreaming "deconstructs power relations" and aims at a more fundamental transformation of systems and structures (Rees 2005: 558). This transformative agenda informs feminist and critical approaches to post-conflict reconstruction, which question the assumptions and power relations behind liberal peacebuilding.

This chapter makes two contributions. First, it brings together the largely separate debates within feminist and empirical research on the development and the security component of post-conflict reconstruction. Second, it revisits the major theoretical and methodological divides between these debates and suggests synergies to promote further academic and policy research on gender mainstreaming and post-conflict reconstruction.

The chapter proceeds with a brief discussion of post-conflict reconstruction and gender mainstreaming before examining gender mainstreaming and development. Since development and security have become linked in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts, the chapter then analyzes gender mainstreaming in security sector reform and UN Peace Missions, reiterating the importance of gender equality for preventing recurrent conflict. The last part of this commentary engages feminist critiques with empirical findings and provides suggestions for future research.

### **Gender equality and post-conflict reconstruction**

The signing of a peace agreement usually marks the official end of war and the beginning of post-conflict reconstruction. Contemporary post-war reconstruction programs are rarely designed to "merely reconstruct" but entail a "significant institutional overhaul" reflecting a vision of modernization and development that has been referred to as the "liberal peace",

including the promotion of the rule of law along with human rights and gender (Suhrke 2007: 1292; see also Newman, Paris and Richmond 2009). The notion of post-conflict reconstruction originated from development circles. A narrow understanding relates to the socio-economic and development dimensions for durable peace. With the expansion and transformation of UN peacekeeping missions after the Cold War, a broader understanding of post-conflict reconstruction has become dominant in scholarly discourse and policy practice (Hudson 2013).

International peacebuilding efforts have resulted in the so-called “security-development nexus”, a merging of security and development policies along the notion that “there can be no development without security and no security without development”. The expectation that development efforts foster security has been much criticized (e.g. Duffield 2001). With the emergence of security sector reform (SSR) practices in post-conflict environments, the Development Cooperation Directorate of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC) has given recognition to the security-development link and provided donors with corresponding guidelines (OECD-DAC 2005: 16). The World Bank’s 2011 Development Report re-stated that security and development are inextricably linked and that conflict and post-conflict armed violence threatens and undermines development (World Bank 2011). In the so-called “New Deal”, the members of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding comprised of the G7+ group of 19 fragile and conflict-affected states<sup>3</sup> reiterated this linkage, while also placing “the empowerment of women, youth and marginalised groups as key actors for peace (...) at the heart of successful peacebuilding and statebuilding” (International Dialogue 2011).

How does gender equality relate to sustainable peacebuilding? Feminist scholars have long advocated for an analysis of the differential impact of conflict on women’s lives and the

integration of women's knowledge into peacebuilding and development efforts. Women's civil society organizations have argued that women's distinct security concerns need recognition and tailored approaches (see, for example, Aoláin 2006; Bell and O'Rourke 2010; Chinkin and Charlesworth 2006; Hudson 2009). In terms of women's protection, conflict related sexual violence is one important dimension of women's security (Cohen 2013a, 2013b). Another aspect that is often overlooked relates to public and maternal health. Urdal and Chi (in this volume) demonstrate that women are more vulnerable to the indirect consequences of conflict. The authors suggest that two possible mechanisms might be present in explaining the higher levels of vulnerability that women experience during and after conflict. The destruction of infrastructure and the often precarious access to health facilities is a contributing factor. In addition to limited access to medical facilities, the increase in fertility rates at the wake of a conflict increases the chances that women will die because of childbirth complications. In the case of public health security concerns become intertwined with developmental goals and the type of social and economic institutions that emerge in a post-conflict environment.

Beyond women's protection, feminist scholars regard gender mainstreaming in post-conflict reconstruction as crucial because "the exclusion of women and/or the failure to consider gender in peacebuilding processes risks not only women's rights, but also the general failure of peacebuilding as an enterprise" (Hudson 2009: 288). Although women are often absent from peace negotiations, leadership positions and government representation, women tend to dominate local civil society movements for peace. Local and international elites often rely on these grassroots networking and social support structures to embed peace processes (Aoláin, Haynes and Cahn 2011: 6).

Quantitative studies on gender equality and conflict have given feminist arguments further relevance. There is a strong and consistent correlation between domestic gender inequality and a tendency of states to resolve conflicts violently. Using different indicators for gender equality and for violent conflict and drawing on different databases, these studies agree that gender inequality is a significant predictor of violent conflict that in some models even outweighs other explanatory variables such as democracy (Caprioli 2003, 2005; Hudson, Ballif-Spanvill, Caprioli and Emmet 2012). Thus, the conflict literature suggests that gender equality has an independent effect on long-term peace and security. Societies where women have higher social and economic status and greater political representation are less likely to become involved in conflict (Caprioli 2003, 2005; Hudson, Caprioli, Ballif-Spanvill, McDermott and Emmet 2009; Melander 2005a, 2005b). Hudson, Ballif-Spanvill, Caprioli and Emmet (2012) argue that the systemic treatment of women shapes human interactions at all levels, and that gender inequalities adversely affect state security and world peace. Gizelis (2009, 2011) expands these arguments to post-conflict reconstruction and argues that the prospects for successful post-conflict peace-building under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) are generally better in societies where women have greater empowerment.

Although conflict and feminist researchers agree on the importance of promoting women's protection and participation in post-conflict reconstruction, they are divided by a normative gap that pertains to the depth and breadth of social engineering and transformation of gender relations in post-conflict societies. A related issue is the feminist imperative of reflexive critical analysis of "Western" institutions and peacebuilding practices as rooted in norms of inequality and patriarchy. Feminist scholars proceed from a different level of analysis and present a fundamental critique beyond issues of data collection and country comparisons. A key dividing line between empirical and feminist research concerns their standpoints on

whether “gender” can be used as an analytical tool to understand post-conflict reconstruction or whether a gender focus should be used to fundamentally challenge our understanding of post-conflict reconstruction (see Olsson and Gizelis 2014). Some feminist scholars have voiced rather severe criticism on empirical approaches on gender mainstreaming, arguing that such approaches “empty gender of its radical political potential and shift our attention away from the people who are *affected* by peacekeeping missions and towards those who *conduct* those missions” (Whitworth 2004: 121). According to Cynthia Enloe, “patriarchy – in all its varied guises (...) – is a principal cause both of the outbreak of violent societal conflicts and of the international community’s frequent failures in providing long-term resolutions to those violent conflicts” (Enloe 2005: 281). Lori Handrahan concluded that the post-conflict backlash against women’s social and economic empowerment gained during war times may in part be due to the characteristics of the international development community “whose own sense of patriarchy-as-normal is quite intact” (Handrahan 2004: 436).

Against this background of differing approaches and fundamental critique, this review chapter examines gender mainstreaming policies relating to development and security in post-conflict reconstruction and suggests further avenues for research.

### **Gender mainstreaming and development**

In the international development of women’s status and gender equality, the UN Decade for Women had development and peace as two central themes. These have, over time, become increasingly intertwined in peacebuilding endeavours. What can research on gender equality and development tell us about the relevance of gender equality for successful post-conflict reconstruction? Even though most policy makers at least pay lip service to the promotion of gender equality in post-conflict reconstruction, there is actually little systematic knowledge on

how or whether greater gender equality contributes towards the successful rebuilding of societies to avoid the recurrence of violence.<sup>4</sup> Economic development provides a possible key mechanism linking gender equality to peace. We will therefore look closer at the empirical literature on the possible links between gender equality and development (Baliamoune-Lutz and McGillivray 2009; Buckingham-Hatfield 2002; Sen 1999).

As early as the 1970s, Boserup (1970) criticized modernization theory for neglecting the role of women in economic development in third world countries. Indeed, economic development measured in GDP per capita is not linearly linked to gender equality or a transformation of social institutions and hierarchies to empower disadvantaged groups (Padgett and Warnecke 2011; Ross 2008). Values concerning the status of women tend to often lag other social and economic variables, such as decline in fertility rates and increase in literacy rates (Hughes 2001). Moreover, gender equality might not be a by-product of higher economic development, but an independent dimension of development with distinct effects on other outcomes such as respect of human rights and democratic governance as well (Fish 2002).

Gender and development theories (GAD) focus on how cultural, political and socio-economic factors interact in shaping masculinity and femininity. GAD theories hold that women are not mere recipients of developmental aid, but engage their communities in problem solving activities and economic development. This is particularly the case in countries and regions, like Western Africa, where women traditionally have held central roles as farmers, traders, entrepreneurs, leaders in religious and civil organizations, and matriarchs in complex and large households (Gizelis 2011). As faith in the efficacy of central planning and top-down approaches to development has waned, there has been increasing interest in the potential role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community organizations in bottom-up civil

society mobilization, where women are often active. Community organizations and cooperatives can create the space necessary for individual women to articulate their interests, as well as develop institutional structures that allow women to organize more effectively in agricultural production and trade and exert greater influence in local economies and the financial well-being of their families (Gizelis 2011). Thus, both cross-sectional comparative research and case study evidence from developing countries indicate that gender equality contributes to long-term development.

Several studies have suggested links between economic growth and gender equality through education, health, and decision-making processes (Baliamoune-Lutz and McGillivray 2009; Buckingham-Hatfield 2002; Wang 2007). Women's improved social status is also linked to lower fertility rates, more efficient decision making within the family unit, and different decisions compared to men regarding the distribution of public goods (Duflo 2011). Research on long-term development and demographic transitions suggests that societies that manage to reduce the female-to-male gap in human capital tend to exhibit higher growth rates and social change more similar to the industrialized world (Forsythe, Korzeniewicz, and Durrant 2000; Klasen 2002; Lagerlof 2003).

Higher female participation in the labour force and nonagricultural sectors of the economy is associated with lower fertility rates, sustainable development, and higher literacy rates based on comparisons of large populations (Baliamoune-Lutz and McGillivray 2009; Michael 1985). Moreover, economic development that supports export-oriented businesses, specialized labour, and high human capital increases female labour participation, albeit not necessarily female wages. The economic empowerment of women in this context erodes patriarchal structures and modifies gender relations, as illustrated by the historical experiences

of countries as diverse as Bangladesh, South Korea, and Turkey (Klasen 2002; Ozler 2000; Park 1990; Park 1993).

Although overall economic development can improve gender equality, economic growth arising from greater trade openness and higher integration in global markets may increase gender inequality, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (Balioune-Lutz 2007; Duflo 2011). Moreover, policies that follow neo-liberal economic development models and target female empowerment through project management and education also often fail to improve conditions for large segments in developing post-conflict countries (Momsen 2004; Visvanathan 1997).

Large-n empirical studies are further supported by experimental research that tries to isolate the impact of female empowerment on economic development from other confounding variables. Experimental research finds that women consistently make different choices regarding children and families than men, at least in developing countries. Higher female financial and political empowerment leads to better child nutrition, as well as community projects that target policy outcomes favoured by women, such as access to clean water and sanitation. Moreover, controlling for social and economic status, empowered women tend to have fewer children, leading to lower fertility rates, and demographic transitions that foster economic development (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Duflo 2003; Duflo and Udry 2004).

If gender equality is important for post-conflict recovery, are there some approaches more effective than others to improve gender equality? Moreover, what factors can undermine the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming policies? Following the policy of gender mainstreaming adopted by ECOSOC, and recommendations of UNSCR 1325, post-conflict

reconstruction programs should assure that gender and development are pursued in terms of national policy and economic development in the post-conflict phase. At present, there are a number of approaches used. One key approach to gender mainstreaming is gender budgeting. In its essence, during a reconstruction process, national budgeting processes incorporate gender mainstreaming mechanisms and adjust government expenditures to promote gender equality. Gender budgeting provides a framework to build capacity and implement development policies that support greater gender equality. It is especially salient in post-conflict economies as a structural strategy for poverty reduction and development (African Women's Development Fund 2009).

Unfortunately, despite the plausible rationale for such efforts and the good intentions, there is little systematic research and evidence on whether the currently implemented gender mainstreaming programs actually have any discernible independent effect on promoting gender equality and increasing the presence of women in the post-conflict economy (Barnes and Olonisakin 2010). One of the few studies on gender mainstreaming implementation by Barnes and Olonisakin (2010) looks at the implementation of gender mainstreaming in specific countries/case studies. While this is an interesting first step, it is still difficult to identify whether any changes in gender equality and the status of women, or lack thereof, can be directly attributed to the specific interventions due to gender mainstreaming policies or whether other factors may be at play in the observed outcomes in just a few cases. There is here a dire need for larger studies to take this further.

There is even less research on how gender mainstreaming policies, such as gender budgeting, interact with the underlying economic conditions in post-conflict environments. Breierova and Duflo (2004) suggest that while gender equality is strongly linked with

development, policies that target female empowerment and development need to be pursued over long periods of time to be successful, and although they can enhance developmental goals in some areas there may be tradeoffs in terms of development. Another example of possible avenues for exchange, related to research on peacekeeping implementation, concerns the methodological innovations adopted in comparative political economy and conflict studies – in particular, the use of field experiments to analyze the effectiveness of policies often promoted by peacekeeping that target gender equality. Field experiments can separate the conditions under which specific policies might produce the desired outcome, but often might lead to undesirable consequences. This raises questions as to whether gender mainstreaming programs can make a difference on gender equality without also taking into account and addressing the economic opportunities that are actually available to women and men, and the economic structures that prevail within a country.

The relationship between development and gender mainstreaming in post-conflict reconstruction depends on existing economic and social institutions (Hudson, Ballif-Spanvill, Caprioli, and Emmett 2012; Rees and Riezman 2012). Ross (2008) highlights the role of natural resources and their impact on both social and economic institutions and structures. Women's rights in particular tend to suffer in societies that are highly dependent on revenues from natural resources. The economic structures associated with resource dependence reinforce gender segregation in labour and reduce the opportunities available to women. As the wage gender-gap increases, there are fewer incentives for women to seek employment away from home. As women retreat from the economic arena, their opportunities to develop and participate in social networks, acquire skills, and have access to information on health also decline. Moreover, girls become more expensive for families, ultimately leading to a loss of economic influence for women, and a subsequent decline in their political and social standing (Ross 2006, 2008).

If correct, Ross' argument also has serious implications for development as well as security in post-conflict countries. Development that is based on wealth from resource extraction can have negative effects on gender relations and, hence, undermine long-term growth prospects (Hadden and London 1996; Varkey, Kureshi, and Lesnick 2010). The institutional structures that emerge in post-conflict societies can have dramatic impact on individual women's choices and their economic role and employment outside their homes (Morrisson and Jütting 2005).

Angola and Mozambique provide two illustrative cases of how post-conflict development may be linked with gender mainstreaming policies and outcomes. These two former Portuguese colonies have both experienced devastating civil wars, yet they have seen dramatically different post-conflict trajectories. During their armed conflicts, Mozambique and Angola had largely similar levels of (low) gender equality, but they experienced very different post-conflict outcomes. Based on conventional measures of economic development (i.e. GDP per capita and growth), Angola would appear to have experienced a post-war reconstruction boom, while the economic progress in Mozambique seems far less impressive.

Despite a steady economic recovery from a very low initial GDP per capita, Mozambique remains heavily dependent on foreign aid, and its overall development has been hampered by unfavorable extremes environmental events such as cyclones, flooding, and drought. However, Angola with a GDP per capita (PPP) of roughly 6,000 USD in 2011 has worse gender equality and lower human development indicators than Mozambique with a GDP per capita (PPP) of roughly 1,000 USD per capita for the same year.<sup>5</sup> Mozambique outperforms Angola in two out of four gender equality indicators (i.e., economic participation and

opportunity as well as political empowerment). Mozambique has roughly equal educational attainment with Angola, while Angola performs better in health and survival due to its higher life expectancy (Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi 2009).

The diverging paths of Mozambique and Angola on post-conflict gender equality raise the question of why some countries experience an improvement in gender equality net of other factors after armed conflict, while others experience a reversal in women's status. One plausible explanation is that differences in natural endowments interact with social and economic institutions in post-conflict societies in ways that affect the priority of gender issues both in terms of policy implementation and gender equality outcomes such as reducing the gender gap in employment, education and political participation. Adopting gender policies such as gender budgeting shape social and economic institutions and reduce the future risk of conflict, even if the initial economic conditions imply a high risk of recurrent civil war as in the case of Mozambique. Thus, researchers and policy makers need to consider whether the countries that adopt and implement gender mainstreaming policies are systemically different compared to countries that tend to under-perform in the implementation of gender equality. If that is the case, then what are the alternative ways to improve gender equality?

### **Gender mainstreaming and security sector reform**

The academic debate on gender mainstreaming and security has been dominated by feminist researchers who consistently point to the lack of women's participation in peace processes and decision-making processes more generally to explain failures of gender mainstreaming in post-conflict reconstruction. Reform of security sector governance in post-conflict environments relates to efforts to widen the understanding of security beyond its traditional state-centred focus toward the security of people. Feminist research has been at the forefront of widening

and humanizing the understanding of security. First introduced by the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) 1994 report, the human security concept has linked security to development (UNDP 1994). Although broad versus narrow understandings of human security exist, at the heart of the concept is a normative understanding of "ethical responsibility to re-orient security around the individual in line with internationally recognised standards of human rights and governance" (Newman 2010: 78).

'Funmi Olonisakin and Awino Okech have linked a gendered peace to human security, arguing that the visibility of women's and men's differential (in)security in security governance arrangements reflects the extent to which an inclusive human security agenda has been realized (Olonisakin and Okech 2011: 2). Feminist research has made visible women's insecurity and differential vulnerabilities in post-conflict environments. From a feminist standpoint, the term post-conflict generally refers to the period "when predominately male combatants have ceased to engage in 'official' war" (Handrahan 2004: 430) because levels of violence against women – including sexual violence – tend to be high during the post-conflict period (e.g. Cohen and Nordås 2014).

The restructuring of the security sector during the post-conflict period is one of the key aspects of post-conflict reconstruction and a crucial moment for promoting gender equality. A comprehensive report by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Elisabeth Rehn concluded in 2002, "it is indisputable that despite numerous UN Resolutions passed by consensus by governments from around the world, the UN system still needs to improve staff capacity, organizational practices and systems, and high-level commitment to more effectively address the gender dimensions of war and peace" (Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf 2002: 5). In 2004, the UN Department of Peace Operations acknowledged the gender dimension of war and peace and established the office of

a gender advisor. Yet, progress in implementing the provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 has been slow. In 2009, the Organizations of Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) acknowledged, “in many countries, security sector reform policies and programming currently fail to involve both men and women in decision-making processes and do not adequately acknowledge gender dynamics in attempting to understand issues” (OECD-DAC 2009: 1).

The UN Mission for Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), established in 1999, attracted much criticism for failing female combatants during the DDR process and perceiving women narrowly as “war victims”. Megan MacKenzie argued, “the exclusion and silencing of women in the post-conflict context in Sierra Leone is representative of the systematic and historical omission of women from post-conflict planning and development activities” (MacKenzie 2009: 241). Karen Barnes concluded that UNAMSIL “failed to take gender mainstreaming and UNSCR 1325 on board as anything more than ‘add women and stir’”, and “did not perceive women as legitimate actors in the formal peacebuilding process” (Barnes 2011: 123). Only from 2007 onwards, as one of the first countries on the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) did the country benefit from stronger emphasis on integrating gender issues (Barnes 2011: 133).

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), deployed in 2003, was the first mission with a mandate to mainstream UNSCR 1325. Women with the political will to mainstream the resolution, namely the UN Special Representative to the Secretary-General Ellen Margarethe Løj and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, were appointed and elected (Wamai 2011: 52). The Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) had acted as deal broker between the rebel groups and Charles Taylor (Gizelis 2011). Nevertheless, women were largely ignored

“despite their roles in both contributing to and resisting conflict, due to security decisions associated with masculinity” (Wamai 2011: 53). UNMIL failed to consult and cooperate more closely with the existing strong network of grassroots women peace organizations, which could have played a crucial part in implementing protection policies of women against sexual violence and reintegrating former female combatants (Wamai 2011: 55). Helen Basini (in this volume) argued that issues of structural inequality and gender-based violence largely remained ignored, particularly in the latter part of the process involving more development focused integration. An unprecedented number of women registered for the Disarmament Demobilization Rehabilitation Reintegration (DDRR) program. However, they were referred to as “women associated with the fighting forces” even though the women themselves reported their primary role within the armed groups as “combat soldier” (Jennings 2009: 482). This official designation reinforced perceptions of “men as inherently vicious warriors, and women as inherently passive victims”, which became part of a “post-conflict ‘backlash discourse’ against women” around “restoring” a social order associated with peace in the past even though this discourse undermined women’s rights in favour of an unambiguously male gender politics (Jennings 2009: 483).

Such narrow and essentialist understandings of masculinities and femininities undermine long-term security for both women and men. For example, international post-conflict reconstruction efforts tend to frame young men primarily as a security risk around the notion of the “idleness” of men – particularly male ex-combatants - while women and girls are primarily perceived as victims (Bastick 2008; Jennings 2009). Implications of such perceptions are problematic for both women and men. In Liberia, young men were framed as “idle” and therefore as a security risk in contrast to female ex-combatants who were primarily perceived as only “associated” within fighting forces and bound to family care in the post-conflict society

(Jennings 2009). With regard to Sierra Leone, Megan MacKenzie noted, “while there is concern that idle men will become violent, the greatest concern regarding idle women and girls seems to be their participation in prostitution” (MacKenzie 2012: 51). In Sierra Leone, this gendered narrative of idle male ex-combatants who threaten the peace partly served engagement with the donor community in securing long-term funds for ex-combatants who “had little bargaining power, beyond the threat of renewed conflict, to lobby government and its partners to prioritize their welfare needs” (Mitton 2013: 327). International organizations’ gendered expectations and perceptions meant that “men’s reintegration is perceived as more critical than women’s, owing to the assumption that organised violence will recur if men are left idle” (Jennings 2009: 485).

Despite the presence of gender advisors and gender units, UN peace missions seemed to have had only a “marginal impact” in terms of transmitting the values of UNSCR 1325 to the national contexts that they operated in (Olonisakin and Ikpe 2010: 229). In countries where the leadership of a UN Peace Mission has not been keen on implementing gender mainstreaming policies national authorities have largely ignored the issues, as happened for example in Nepal (Olonisakin and Ikpe 2010: 228). Too often, “gender remains an afterthought to the dominant model of security and security sectors” rather than being a major concern of how security is conceptualized at the highest levels (Salahub and Nerland 2010: 268). Thus, the implementation of UNSCR 1325 risks being reduced to a mere “add women and stir” technical approach where gender is “added” onto pre-existing structures, institutions or policies without fundamentally questioning power structures and recognizing “the roots of systemic discrimination against women” (Barnes 2011: 133; Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn 2011: 12). The challenges of gender mainstreaming in post-conflict reconstruction further reflect the general dilemmas of implementing the “liberal peace”, most notably the lack of consultation and

cooperation with local organizations, the establishment of local ownership and adaptation to local needs and structures (Olonisakin and Ikpe 2010: 230).

Experimental studies, using a different methodology, provide further evidence that a narrow gender balancing approach cannot successfully introduce gender mainstreaming to support gender equality. Beardsley, Blair, Gilligan and Karim (2013) examine the effectiveness of gender balancing in the police force in Liberia, a policy enthusiastically pursued in post-conflict countries by international organizations. The authors use a field experiment involving 612 Liberian National Police officers randomly assigned to groups with different compositions of male/female staff. They find that there is little evidence supporting the effectiveness of the gender balancing policy as it is broadly advocated and applied. One of the key results is that when women outnumber men in groups, men become more aggressive. On the other hand, highly skilled officers of either gender are better at interpreting crimes as gendered and allowing women to participate in the process. This experiment complements and substantiates the criticism of gender balancing policies by feminist scholars. The experimental study by Beardsley et al (2013) highlights that without emphasis on the training of staff, especially women, gender balancing can be counterproductive and reinforce gender stereotypes (Olsson and Gizelis 2014).

### **Concluding remarks**

Despite very different analytical standpoints, feminist and empirical researchers agree that gender equality is crucial for security and development and that the track record of gender mainstreaming in post-conflict reconstruction is weak. Women's social status reflects the existence of multiple social networks and domestic capacity not captured by purely economic measures of development such as GDP per capita. In societies where women have relatively

higher status, women have more opportunities to express a voice in peacemaking and elicit broader domestic participation in externally led peacekeeping operations. This higher level of participation in turn implies that UN Peacekeeping operations can tap into great social capital and have better prospects for success. However, international actors in post-conflict reconstruction understand gender equality too often as “a long-term ideal that can be postponed until more immediate concerns have been dealt with” (Barnes and Olonisakin 2010: 9). The consistently low number of women involved in peace negotiations to date further questions international commitment on gender mainstreaming for truly enhancing women’s participation.

Further research on gender equality, post-conflict reconstruction and the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming is, thus, central to address the questions raised in this commentary. Future research can benefit from more rigorous theoretical development and systematic comparative studies that focus on the short-term and mid-term impact of specific gender mainstreaming policies. For example, so far the literature has not fully explored whether gender mainstreaming policies such as budgeting are effective or not in enhancing gender equality. Experimental research such as the work by Blattman, Fiala and Martinez (2012) and Duflo (2003) that evaluates the success of specific policy programs can provide valuable insight as to whether gender mainstreaming interventions are successful or not and under what conditions, while theoretical research can identify possible mechanisms that link gender equality to sustainable post-conflict reconstruction. More fundamentally, empirical research “often suffers from a lack of well-developed theoretical arguments on the broader implications of gender and power in peacekeeping and the institutions that emerge in post-conflict countries” (Gizelis and Olsson 2014).

Feminist research has taken critical approaches on the “liberal peace” into account by focusing on the interaction of international donors and UN agencies with local stakeholders, and women’s groups in particular. The edited volume by Olonisakin, Barnes and Ikpe (2010) showed that many shortcomings in addressing the gender dimensions of security and development in post-conflict environments relate to the insufficiency of taking local knowledge into account and building local ownership. Technical approaches to gender mainstreaming, such as budgeting policies, will need to be embedded within a broader reflexive perspective on the interaction of international and “local” stakeholders. At the same time, feminist research would benefit from more systematic comparison of case studies to identify promising practices and lessons learnt in engaging with the richness of women’s organizations in particular. Statistical research can also be linked to feminist studies in a fruitful way by situating case studies in a broader analysis of global patterns and trends that would help identify outliers (Gizelis and Olsson 2014).

In conclusion, the adoption of UNSCR 1325 signalled an increasing awareness by social scientists and practitioners of the significance of gender equality in post-conflict reconstruction. Despite the overall interest on the topic, there is a dearth of systematic research that explicates the mechanisms that link these processes. The commentary has outlined possible theoretical and empirical approaches to expand and substantiate our current knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> Most definitions of gender mainstreaming follow the definition developed by the Economic and Social Council (1997/2): "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality".

<sup>2</sup> Gender is defined as the environmental, cultural, polar yet complimentary construction of roles and behaviours associated with the male and female sexes. Hence, when outlining the attributes, roles and responsibilities of

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“man” one also infers the complimentary and polar opposite of those characteristics associated with the “woman”. Gender entails the cultural conceptualisation of sexual identity and depends on the human interaction between sexes and with respects to the natural environment. As such, gender roles are not fixed or given, but an evolving set of ascribed sexual characteristics.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the countries and organizations that participate in the New Deal see <http://www.pbsdialogue.org/about/participatingcountriesandorganisations/> (accessed January 15 2015).

<sup>4</sup> The conflict literature suggests that low economic development facilitates rebel recruitment and results in governments with fewer resources and less capacity to deter violence (Collier and Hoeffler 2002; Collier 2007; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Hegre, Ellingsen, Gates and Gleditsch 2001; Hegre and Sambanis 2006).

<sup>5</sup> The data on GDP per capita are based on the IMF data (2011). Variation in absolute GDP per capita figures across different source (for example International Monetary Fund (IMF), Human Development Index (2009)) does not alter the relative differences between the economies of Mozambique and Angola.