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Abbreviations

ACR	Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración
AFRABU	Association des Femmes Repatriées du Burundi
AMOR	Asociación de Mujeres del Oriente Antioqueño
CSO	Civil society organisation
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
IDP	Internally displaced person
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
WPS	Women, peace and security

Executive summary

This report is based on a three-year research project on gender in peacebuilding, which involved field research in four countries (Burundi, Colombia, Nepal and Uganda), with a thematic focus on four areas of peacebuilding:

- access to justice (including formal, informal, traditional and transitional justice);
- economic recovery (especially of ex-combatants and of returnee populations of refugees, abductees or internally displaced persons (IDPs));
- inter-generational tensions and conflict; and
- permutations and continuums of violence (e.g. self-inflicted, interpersonal, domestic, sexual and gender-based, criminal, communal and political violence).

In addition to examining the particular gendered dynamics of peacebuilding in the four countries around these four issues, the project also had a more conceptual aim of broadening and deepening the understanding of gender in peacebuilding.

The research confirmed Alert's starting hypothesis that peacebuilding can be more effective if built on an understanding of how gendered identities are constructed through the societal power relations between and among women, men, girls, boys and members of sexual and gender minorities. This 'gender-relational' approach is, on the one hand, broader in the sense that it moves away from equating gender with women (and girls) and, on the other hand, deeper in that it examines the interplay between gender and other identity markers, such as age, social class, sexuality, disability, ethnic or religious background, marital status or urban/rural setting. While such an approach requires more nuanced and better-researched interventions, it can also allow for more effective and sustainable targeting of programming.

Our four case studies provide a number of illustrations of how such an approach might be implemented in practice, and make it clear that there is a wide range of variation possible within an overall gender-relational framework. We have attempted to identify in this synthesis report some of the issues and challenges that arise as a result. While a narrowly circumscribed methodology would clearly be inappropriate, we can nevertheless identify some broad lessons for peacebuilding practice that emerge from the research, as follows:

Understanding the context: Gender analysis should be seen as key in the preparation of peacebuilding programmes and policy development, and requires the investment of time and resources. A gender-relational approach to gender analysis for peacebuilding implies a broadly based description of how gender roles and relations work in each particular context, including how gender difference intersects with other identities. It also involves an assessment of how these roles and relations influence a society's propensity for violent conflict, the extent to which these gender roles and relations might themselves be shaped by violent conflict, and the opportunities they present for transformative change.

Identifying who to work with and how: A gender-relational approach to gender analysis suggests a broad range of possible interventions; it also enables a sharper focus on groups of people (not necessarily women) who are particularly vulnerable, as well as on those whose attitudes and practices most need to be changed and those most amenable to change. In doing so, it allows policies and interventions to be more precisely targeted and thus more effectively implemented and

evaluated. In our case studies, an issue arising across the board has been the vulnerability of men as well as of sexual and gender minorities, something that might be revealed by a relational gender analysis but is often overlooked by programming that assumes vulnerability to be associated with women and children. In different contexts, a gender-relational analysis might suggest focusing, for example, on the particular vulnerabilities or strengths of young, rural, widowed women in a particular location; elderly, lower-class urban men; or educated, well-connected female political change-makers.

Identifying best ways of working: Adopting a gender-relational approach to peacebuilding means understanding how gender relations and identities influence peace possibilities in a given situation, as well as facilitating transformational change based on that understanding. The experiences documented in our case studies suggest that those approaches that result in positive transformations seem most often to be characterised by inclusivity, dialogue and empowerment. Initiatives that impressed us are inclusive in that they involve women and men, young and old, powerful and powerless, capturing a wide variety of perspectives and knowledge. They use dialogue as one of their main methods, promoting capacities for dialogue and creating the necessary spaces, so that potentially conflicting components of a community can move forward in concert. They are also designed and managed in such a way that programming is driven by some of the women, men and sexual and gender minorities most directly affected by violent conflict, empowering them to promote sustainable change.

Applying a gender-relational approach to different sectors and themes: The four themes on which our research focused should not be seen as limiting but rather as illustrating the sort of enrichment that a relational approach to gender analysis can bring to peacebuilding work generally. Such an analysis can both inform and be intensified by programming across all areas of work in peacebuilding situations, and can be mainstreamed across all sectors. Building gender analysis and change goals into other peacebuilding initiatives may be just as effective a way of achieving transformation as separate ‘gender programming’. The gender change goals should be just as prominent, and be taken just as seriously in implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as the ‘sectoral’ goals alongside which they sit.

Implications for organisational structures, policies and practices: The guidance articulated here is not new, but is only now beginning to be integrated into the policy and practice of international peacebuilding interventions. This is at least in part due to the slowness of the peacebuilding sector to recognise the need for internal reflection on what gender means for peacebuilding, as opposed to responding to policy imperatives. This points to the need for organisations involved in peacebuilding to examine the extent to which their internal structures, policies and practices enable or disable such reflection. Of the organisations reviewed in our case studies, those who articulated alternative approaches to the mainstream have generally achieved higher levels of effectiveness as a consequence of internal reviews of their on-the-ground experience. This has led them to articulate new understandings of what gender equality means (linking gender with other forms of differentiation, such as age, class and ethnicity) and new strategies for achieving gender equality. The changes they have made have come into play both at the level of policy and in questioning how each and every organisational function can contribute towards that goal. Engaging with a more complex and holistic understanding of gender relations will require the reassessment of approaches from the policy level to the programmatic level, building an understanding of and the capacities for engaging with gender in a new way and possibly revisiting institutional cultures and incentives, staff profiles, progress and impact measures, and ways of working.

Introduction

Gender has long been recognised as a key factor in both violent conflict and peacebuilding: men, women and gender minorities are both differently involved in and affected by the processes involved. It has also become commonplace in peacebuilding to stress that gender does not equal women and that gender needs to be seen in relation to other identity markers, such as age or class, and to social power dynamics. In practice, however, gender in peacebuilding often is reduced to focusing on women only – or, even more narrowly, exclusively on violence against women and girls (VAWG). Debates and interventions often have remained tied to simplistic dichotomies of men as perpetrators and women as victims, contrary to evidence from the ground. Issues of masculinities have seldom been addressed in peacebuilding, nor have issues of male vulnerabilities or women’s agency in reproducing violence. Gendered inequalities are also often not analysed in relation to other social, economic and political inequalities, and the categories of ‘men’ and ‘women’ are often dealt with as if they were static and homogenous. The issues and concerns of sexual and gender minorities, including intersex, transgender and third gender persons, are often completely absent from debates and programming.

However, this narrow approach is steadily changing on the conceptual, policy and practical levels. Gender is increasingly understood as being relational; peacebuilding work is increasingly seeking to address issues of masculinities along with femininities; sexual and gender minorities’ issues are beginning to be addressed; and there is a growing understanding that women and men are often both perpetrators and victims of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Recent examples of this emerging shift at the policy level include United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2106 and the G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict.¹ The former mentions, for the first time in an UNSCR on gender, peace and security, male survivors of SGBV. The latter document calls explicitly for working with men and boys along with women and girls. At the practical level, numerous agencies and civil society organisations (CSOs) are increasingly engaging men and boys, along with women and girls, in peacebuilding efforts. However, as our research also showed, for many grassroots peacebuilders, this broader approach has long been an established part of how they work, even if it is often not framed in these terms.

This report builds on International Alert’s work on gender in peacebuilding both as part of this research project and more generally.² It aims to further a process of re-thinking gender in peacebuilding, of expanding, further nuancing and deepening our understanding of these complex dynamics. The underlying view is that, in order to integrate gender successfully into peacebuilding, a relational approach is often the most promising one, although at times narrower approaches (i.e. looking specifically at the needs of women, men or sexual and gender minorities) may be necessary.

Conflict is a normal feature of human society. It is not inherently problematic, but rather a natural by-product of competition for resources and of societal change. It is also often the source of creativity and ideas for and about change. The problem is when it is not managed peacefully

1 The documents are available at http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SC_ResolutionWomen_SRES2106%282013%29%28english%29.pdf and https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/185008/G8_PSVI_Declaration_-_FINAL.pdf

2 J. El-Bushra (2012). *Gender in Peacebuilding: Taking Stock*. London: International Alert. Available at <http://international-alert.org/resources/publications/gender-peacebuilding>

and leads to violence. At its core, therefore, peacebuilding is the development of the capacity to manage and resolve conflicts non-violently. One of the basic premises of Alert's understanding of peacebuilding is that:

“If we are to be effective as peacebuilders, we need to respond to the power dynamics and norms that influence peace and violent conflict at the household, community, national and international levels. To do this, we need to be aware of the diversity of gender and other identities across groups of men and women. Therefore, gender analysis is key in helping us understand identity and violence, and, as a result, act effectively.”

Through our research, we have sought to assess and further develop our own thinking and approach to gender. This has led us towards a relational approach to gender. This means understanding gender roles and identities as being constructed through the power relations between men, women and sexual and gender minorities – as well as through the power relations within these groups. Gender identities, roles and expectations do not exist in separation from other identity markers, such as class, age, marital status, disability, sexuality and the like, but are closely tied to these.

We believe that taking a relational approach allows peacebuilders to understand how people's responses to violent conflict are shaped by their gender identity, and thus provides clues as to how such responses can be modified. It allows us to better examine and question the power and privilege granted to certain men and certain women but denied to others. In taking a relational approach, we are *not* advocating for shifting away from working towards improving the often dire situation of women and girls. Rather, we argue that a broader and deeper understanding is more effective for increasing gender equality, for reducing the exclusionary processes that affect men, women, boys, girls and gender minorities differently, and for increasing the ability and space available for societies and individuals to manage and resolve conflicts non-violently. As gender dynamics are always about power, it is thus essential to avoid seeing work in this field as merely 'technical' but rather to acknowledge its political nature.

Background and structure of the paper

The paper draws mainly on research that was supported as part of Alert's Programme Partnership Agreement with the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The research was carried out in four countries (Burundi, Colombia, Nepal and Uganda) over a three-year period between 2011 and 2013. In addition to the more conceptual aims of both broadening and deepening the understanding of gender in peacebuilding, the research examined four distinct aspects of peacebuilding through a gender lens:

- access to justice (including formal, informal, traditional and transitional justice);
- economic recovery (especially of ex-combatants and of returnee populations of refugees, abductees or internally displaced persons (IDPs));
- inter-generational tensions and conflict; and
- permutations and continuums of violence (e.g. self-inflicted, interpersonal, domestic, sexual and gender-based, criminal, communal and political violence).

The research was carried out in the following locations:

- Burundi: Bujumbura *ville* and *rural*, Gitega and Rutana;
- Colombia: Bogotá, Cali, Medellín and Riohacha;
- Nepal: Gorkha, Kailali, Kapilvastu and Panchthar districts and Kathmandu; and
- Uganda: Gulu district and Kampala.

In all four countries, extensive consultations were held with a range of local civil society actors, government officials, academics and the donor community. These complemented approximately 20–30 individual interviews and focus group discussions in each country with conflict-affected individuals and communities, including women’s organisations and other civil society representatives, returnee populations and ex-combatants. The research also draws on participatory observation. We do not claim to present a quantitative survey of gender in peacebuilding; rather, the aim has been to use the information qualitatively to raise or ‘flag’ conceptual and practical issues arising through the discussions.

In addition to the field research and attendant literature reviews for the respective country cases, the research drew extensively on other research by Alert, personal experience of the researchers from other contexts and an extensive literature review. Where not otherwise sourced, the material presented here is based on original research by Alert, which is made available online in more detailed country reports on the four case studies. The draft reports have been reviewed and commented on both internally and by the members of a research advisory group consisting of seven experts in the field of gender in peacebuilding. Further critical input came from a workshop organised jointly with the University of Bristol, the University of Lausanne and the Austrian Science Fund in October 2013.³

The paper will first consider the gendered dynamics of peacebuilding in what is commonly referred to as the ‘post-conflict’ moment, followed by an outline of the conceptual goals of the project of broadening and deepening the understanding of gender. This is followed by more in-depth analyses of our four fields of inquiry as outlined above, followed by a look ahead.

Gender, conflict and peacebuilding

Extensive research over the past two decades has shown how women, girls, gender minorities, men and boys are affected differently by violent conflict and peacebuilding processes. Often, there is not a clear-cut moment between violent conflict and peace, but rather peacebuilding takes place somewhere on the continuum between a social condition of full-scale warfare and peace.⁴ This period is also one of flux and redefinition, also of societal norms, power relations and gender roles. Violent conflict creates new spaces, new roles and new vulnerabilities for people according to their gender identity. After the violent conflict abates or changes form, some of these will remain and others will be renegotiated.

In these processes of change, there are a number of different forces working on society. One of the strong factors that we encountered in our research, especially in Nepal and Uganda, and to a lesser extent in Burundi, was what we have termed here ‘golden age-ism’. This is a prevalent societal wish, at times enforced through violence, to return to an imagined golden age before the conflict, when society was supposedly in harmony, when youth respected the elders and when women were subordinate to men. These visions of a better past are often explicitly heteronormative, and questions of increasing gender equality or the rights of sexual and gender minorities can become issues around which opposition to societal change more broadly coalesces.⁵ In Nepal, this societal reversal has meant, for example, that in some cases inter-caste marriages – so-called ‘love’ marriages, which were promoted by the Maoist insurgents – have faced societal censure after

³ The two-day workshop, ‘Identity, Sexuality, and Global Responses to Violence and Conflict’, was held in Bristol on 3–4 October 2013.

⁴ The notion of ‘post-conflict’ as compared with ‘conflict’ seems to indicate a clear break between the two, which is seldom present, with violence continuing to manifest itself in certain geographical spaces and not in others, and the continued existence of unmanaged or unresolved conflicts often containing the seeds of further violence. The notion of ‘post’ can also convey an illusory sense of dichotomy and of moving from one state to the next, obscuring the reality that “a great many people find themselves caught in a prolonged crisis rather than merely passing through it” (H. Vigh (2008). ‘Crisis and chronicity: Anthropological perspectives on continuous conflict and decline’, *Ethnos*, Vol. 73, No. 1, p. 8).

⁵ We use the term ‘heteronormativity’ to mean that heterosexual relationships – and one version of the heterosexual relationship in particular – are imbued with a perceived moral superiority, while other relationships are denied societal legitimacy.

the conflict. There has also been a partial return in western Nepal to the practice of *chhaupadi*, the segregation of menstruating women outside of the house, which had been outlawed by the Maoists in the areas under their control, and remains officially outlawed. Social and political spaces for renegotiating gender identities and power dynamics may also be closed in reaction to a perceived forcible imposition of ‘foreign’ ideas of gender equality by outside interveners.

These societal backlashes often do not go unchallenged. Women and younger men often question the legitimacy of practices and power structures that did not help them through the conflict years, did not prevent conflict or may have been a driving factor in the conflict in the first place. Such practices include discriminatory caste and gender dynamics in Nepal, exclusionary access to resources in Colombia, dysfunctional and ethnicised access to power in Burundi, or the dominant role of elders in northern Ugandan society. It should be kept in mind, however, that the alternative visions of society put forward in processes of societal transition do not necessarily promote gender or social equality in the ‘Western’ sense. The answers presented to the failings of society can also be more radical agendas of gender or socio-economic *inequality*, which excludes individuals and groups from political, social or economic processes based on their gender, sexuality, age, class or ethno-religious and political backgrounds.

In practice, what seems to emerge most often is a compromise solution of rehashing or redefining some of the old, retaining some of the changes brought by conflict and adopting new elements. In many post-conflict societies, these have been enhanced by large-scale outside interventions, such as UN missions, which often have an explicit social engineering mandate, including promoting gender equality. In the cases we studied, the contestation of social freedoms in the post-conflict era has also contributed to migration to urban areas or further abroad. However, while the lure of the bright lights of the city, of ‘modernity’ and attendant freedoms may be a pull factor, especially for younger migrants, it is more often the dire post-conflict economic situation that is the key factor.

From women, peace and security to gender, peace and security

Building inclusive, sustainable, positive peace in societies affected by violent conflict requires analysing and addressing gendered power dynamics as well as gender roles and expectations. Gender identities are social, cultural and political constructs that are dependent on a range of other factors, such as class, age, profession, urban/rural setting, kinship and marital status,⁶ disability, sexual orientation and, depending on the situation, ethnic, religious, cultural or caste background. Gender is also a relational concept, meaning that gender identities are created in relationship with each other, in the context of the whole society. Gender analysis starts from the understanding that we all lead gendered lives, influenced by age, class and other identities.

The importance of one’s gender identity in relation to other identities is dependent on the given societal circumstances. A gender analysis asks open-ended questions about how men and women coexist in society, with the intention of revealing all the colours and complexities of how people actually live in that context. In each context, the political, socio-economic and cultural dimensions of the context, as well as its historical and geographical positioning, combine to produce varied patterns of gender relations.

Thus, a middle-aged, married, urban, upper-middle-class, high-caste woman in Nepal will face other constraints and have other possibilities of agency than a young, unmarried, rural, low-

⁶ This should be understood in a broad sense, including co-habitation, concubinage, customary marriage, widowhood and so on. Local categories may often not match with official, let alone ‘Western’, definitions.

income Dalit woman.⁷ Likewise, an urban, male, heterosexual motorbike taxi driver in the Colombian capital Bogotá will face different restrictions and have different freedoms than his age-mate in the same city who is a homosexual lawyer from a wealthy family. Their respective needs and spaces for agency will have been different before, during and after the conflict period. As obvious as these differences are when one engages with them either theoretically or in practice, they tend simply not to find their way into peacebuilding policies and programming. The reality on the ground often contrasts with normative policy frameworks, such as UN human rights conventions or even national legislation. For peacebuilding to be effective, the varying gendered dynamics encountered in different contexts need to be taken into account.

While these complex and nuanced definitions of gender identities are referred to almost ritualistically in peacebuilding policy documents and research, they are seldom applied in practice, especially by outside interveners. Instead of actually engaging with the intersections between various identity markers and what they mean for peacebuilding, it is far more common to subsume the vast majority of the population under the catch-all category of ‘women, children, youth and other socially marginalised groups’. On a more positive note, however, our research also encountered a growing willingness to rethink approaches to gender and, especially among locally based initiatives, new, nuanced and gender-relational approaches – even if many of these did not label their work explicitly as such.

Women, peace and security

In 2000 the United Nations Security Council passed UNSCR 1325⁸ on women, peace and security (WPS). Although it was neither the first nor the only internationally binding document addressing these issues, the resolution has been seen both as a culmination of years of extensive lobbying by civil society and as a starting point for placing gender issues firmly on the peacebuilding agenda. Subsequently, among other achievements, numerous national and regional protocols on WPS have been passed; more than three dozen countries have adopted National Action Plans to implement UNSCR 1325; and the UN Security Council has followed up the first resolution with around half a dozen ‘sister’ resolutions.⁹ There have also been a vast range of projects and programmes globally, designed to inform women’s organisations about the resolutions and to support them in advocating for their rights with those responsible for implementing their provisions.

In the field of peace and conflict, the issue of women, peace and security has, in rhetoric at least, become one of the defining concerns of the international community in the early 21st century. These initiatives – which, together with other, local initiatives, mainly from women’s CSOs, make up what has come to be known as the WPS agenda – have strengthened the international community’s commitment, at least rhetorically, to addressing the needs, as well as ensuring the protection and participation, of women and girls in conflict-affected situations. They have also strengthened the commitment to taking women and girls’ work in peacebuilding seriously and to combating impunity for those who commit abuses against them. WPS has become a staple part of the international response to conflict and state fragility, such that few international interventions in fragile contexts are now without a corresponding component.¹⁰

7 As Seira Tamang points out, for example, one should not immediately assume, however, that lower-caste Nepali women are automatically more disadvantaged in all ways than higher-caste women: “Women from different communities experience different realities according to the dissimilar patriarchal arrangements within those communities” (S. Tamang (2002). ‘The politics of “developing Nepali women”’, in K.M. Dixit and S. Ramachandran (eds.), *State of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Himal Books. p.163).

8 The text of the resolution is available at http://www.unfpa.org/women/docs/res_1325e.pdf

9 These include UNSCR 1820 (2008), UNSCR 1888 (2009), UNSCR 1889 (2009), UNSCR 1960 (2010), UNSCR 2106 (2013) and UNSCR 2122 (2013), as well as regional treaties such as the African Union’s Maputo Protocol.

10 This is not to say that the rhetoric has actually always been put into action. Looking for example at women’s participation in peace processes, UN Women (2012) states that women were signatories in only 2 of the 61 peace agreements that were concluded between August 2008 and March 2012.

However, this component is often understood in a narrow and simplistic way, which treats women as a homogenous group and tends to focus on technical rather than political approaches, be it to addressing VAWG or to merely increasing the number of women participating in processes and institutions. While many of these interventions have had immensely important impacts, they often do not address more fundamental issues. More complex questions about gendered societal power relations and identities are seldom addressed, and agendas of external interveners may not match with those of local actors.

Questioning voices

In the process of legitimising women's voices and women's activism in conflict and peace, some questioning voices have also been raised. How true is the stereotype of women as victims in war and men as the perpetrators of violence? Many examples can be found of women participating actively in war and violence, and of encouraging and supporting others to do so, while many men oppose violence and militarisation – and often suffer for doing so. To what extent is the WPS agenda founded on such inaccurate stereotypes?¹¹ Does violent conflict not often tend to *target* men as well as being largely conducted by them?¹² Can interventions aimed at increasing gender equality and inclusive peace be effective and sustainable if they do not engage with women and men? If we focus attention exclusively on supporting women, might this not have negative consequences for both women and men?¹³

This questioning approach is a controversial one – there is a fear in some quarters that it may risk the gains for women being lost even before they have been consolidated. One of the strengths of the WPS approach is that it is a necessary counterpoint to the generic male point of view, which dominates the traditional conflict and security discourse. However, it is also possible that approaching gender as a relational concept – putting men, women and gender minorities under similar spotlights and illuminating the variable nature of their interactions – could lead to the emergence of a genuinely new range of insights and understandings, of benefit to all. The focus of policy attention on women has overshadowed more critical debates about power relations in general.¹⁴ These debates must necessarily include examining the power relations between different groups of men and between different groups of women as well as the way that violence, as a social and cultural phenomenon, is co-created by men and women.

Seeing men as men

Essentialising discussions about men as perpetrators¹⁵ or women as victims gloss over the complexities of life and death in contexts affected by violent conflict, and categories of victims and perpetrators are fluid.¹⁶ Furthermore, debates over whether men or women suffer quantitatively more in conflict obscure the very real pain of very real people and tend to lead nowhere, as one person's or group's suffering can neither be quantified nor made comparable to other people's suffering. What is of more importance is that there are important gendered differences with regard

11 See, for example, C. Dolan (2014). 'Has patriarchy been stealing the feminists' clothes? Conflict-related sexual violence and UN Security Council Resolutions', *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 45, No. 1, pp. 80–84; and L. Shepherd (2008). *Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice*. London and New York: Zed Books.

12 See, for example, G. Barker and D. Peacock (2010). 'Making gender truly relational: Engaging men in transforming gender inequalities, reducing violence and preventing HIV'. Cape Town: Aids Legal Network; R.C. Carpenter (2006). *Innocent Women and Children: Gender, Norms and the Protection of Civilians*. Aldershot: Ashgate; and A. Jones (2009). *Gender Inclusive: Essays on Violence, Men, and Feminist International Relations*. London and New York: Routledge.

13 See, for example, S. Chant and M. Gutmann (2001). *Mainstreaming Men into Gender and Development: Debates, Reflections, and Experiences*. Oxford: Oxfam Working Papers Series; and R. Connell (2003). 'The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality'. Paper prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on 'The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality', October 2003, Brasilia, Brazil.

14 L. Shepherd (2008). *Op. cit.*

15 Often, these views of 'naturally' violent men are imbued with strong and pejorative assumptions about the men's ethnic, racial, religious and socio-economic background as well as their age.

16 An excellent example of the complexities surrounding the concept of victimhood in a conflict/post-conflict environment is presented in M. Utas (2005). 'Victimcy, girlfriending, soldiering: Tactic agency in a young woman's social navigation of the Liberian war zone', *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No. 2, pp. 403–443.

to how people respond, or are expected to respond, to conflict, the exposure to and vulnerability to violence, and coping with the aftermath of violence. These differences, in turn, are amplified or reduced by other identity markers.

Whereas men's gender often is rendered invisible by viewing them as 'default humans' – an undifferentiated group standing for the whole population – seeing and naming men as gendered subjects makes it possible to ask about men a similar range of questions to those that gender analysis has tended to ask about women. This process allows us to tease out a range of new understandings of what conflict means to men and to different sorts of men, and of what men mean to conflict, or to peace.

It is not possible to develop a truly gendered approach to understanding conflict and peace without bringing men – *as men* – into the analysis, and in particular without holding a view about men's relationships to violence. Men (especially younger men) are often socially, culturally and politically conditioned, by other men but also by women, to be more liable to engage in public and private physical violence and be exposed to physical violence in the public sphere.¹⁷ The relationship between masculinities and violence is produced through the social valorisation and privileging of certain types of masculinities over others (e.g. tough 'warrior' masculinities over 'effeminate' non-militarised masculinities), which is reproduced by women and men alike in society and through its various institutions, from the family to the state.

These societal expectations of violent male behaviour can also be reproduced among organisations and individuals working on promoting peace and gender equality. Numerous men whom we interviewed who have been working on promoting peaceful masculinities reported having people, including their male and female peers, family members but also even members of women's organisations, question their masculinity and sexual orientation because of this.

The understanding of these processes needs to be tied to the particular context. Here, the work of the Colombian women's organisation *Asociación de Mujeres del Oriente Antioqueño* (AMOR) in Medellín, which we examined, was an example of how this can be done in practice in a gender-relational way. Originally a women's organisation, the group is now actively reaching out to men and initiating discussions on masculinities. These include looking at the roles of men, but also of women, as mothers, sisters, wives, girlfriends, etc., in reproducing expectations of violent male behaviour.

A further aspect of men and boys in violent conflict that is slowly gaining increasing understanding is that of male vulnerability, especially to SGBV. Cases of sexually violated men that go back in some cases for decades are only slowly coming to be acknowledged, and there is evidence that the notion is for some people so shocking that they have refused to believe that it can happen. This includes people who are charged with the protection of the vulnerable, such as refugee-serving agencies.¹⁸ This echoes evidence from studies from various conflict areas that sexual violence against men (one among many forms of male vulnerability) is much more common than

17 The differences can be immense for particular kinds of violence, as, for example, the statistics on (public) gun violence in Latin America quoted by Barker et al (2011) show, where 80%–90% of perpetrators and victims are men (G. Barker, M. Nascimento, C. Ricardo, M. Olinger Marianna and M. Segundo (2011). 'Masculinities, social exclusion and prospects for change: Reflections from Promundo's work in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil', in A. Cornwall, J. Edström and A. Greig (eds.), *Men and Development: Politicizing Masculinities*. London: Zed Books). With intimate partner-related gun violence, which mostly occurs in the private sphere, however, reported figures of female victims tend to be consistently higher than those of men (W. Cukier and J. Cairns (2009). 'Gender, attitudes and the regulation of small arms: Implications for action', in V. Farr, H. Myrntinen and A. Schnabel (eds.), *Sexed Pistols – Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons*. Tokyo: UNU Press).

18 See, for example, C. Dolan (2011). 'Militarized, religious and neo-colonial: The triple-bind confronting men in contemporary Uganda', in A. Cornwall et al (eds.). *Op. cit.*; and C. Watson (2014). *Preventing and Responding to Sexual and Domestic Violence against Men: A Guidance Note for Security Sector Institutions*. Geneva: Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF).

is generally recognised,¹⁹ and that when it happens the consequences for the men concerned – including the absence of services that can deal with their medical and psycho-social complications – can be severe. Here, the work of the Refugee Law Project with male survivors of SGBV, which we examine in our Uganda case study, has in many ways been groundbreaking.²⁰

LGBTI/Sexual and gender minorities²¹

Issues regarding sexual and gender minorities, i.e. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons (LGBTI), have been largely absent from debates on gender, peace and security, apart from relatively narrow rights-based approaches (i.e. the fundamental premise that, in a positive peace, LGBTI persons would enjoy the same rights as all other citizens). However, our country case studies revealed a substantial degree of activism around LGBTI concerns (with great variations between the countries), which is both having practical implications on working with gender in peacebuilding as well as challenging some of the basic theoretical foundations, which often assume a simpler male/female dichotomy.

Moving beyond a narrow rights-based approach to LGBTI issues requires first of all an acknowledgement, as with other gender categories, of their inherent complexities and of their interplay with other identity markers, such as age, class, urban/rural background, and with personal agency. At the risk of stating the obvious, it also needs to be kept in mind that even within the LGBTI rights movement of a single country, goals may vary widely. In Colombia, for example, transgender women have been lobbying for exemption from conscription into the armed forces, while transgender men are lobbying for almost the opposite, i.e. the right to serve.

Both the conflict and post-conflict periods can be highly precarious periods for LGBTI communities, especially if they are already in a societally vulnerable position. They may face increased harassment and exclusion as ‘unwanted others’; their loyalty to the nation or state (or even membership therein) may be called into question based on their sexuality; and anti-LGBTI mobilisation may go hand-in-hand with more general mobilisations of violent intolerance under the guise of patriotism.²² Both in conflict and afterwards, armed groups may often be engaged in policing conservative, heterosexual gender norms, violently targeting LGBTI communities, e.g. through brutal practices such as ‘corrective rape’ of suspected lesbians in South Africa and elsewhere.²³

LGBTI persons are also often susceptible to harassment, abuse, sexualised violence and abuse by security forces, informal violent groups and individuals, especially in environments such as

19 See, for example, C. Dolan [2014]. Op. cit.; J. de Silva [2006]. *Globalization, Terror and the Shaming of the Nation – Constructing Local Masculinities in a Sri Lankan Village*. Bloomington: Trafford Publishing; and S. Sivakumaran [2010]. ‘Lost in translation: UN responses to sexual violence against men and boys in situations of armed conflict’, *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 92, No. 877, pp. 259–277.

20 See J. El-Bushra, J. Naujoks and H. Myrntinen [2014]. *Renegotiating the ‘Ideal’ Society: Gender Relations in the Wake of Conflict and Displacement in Uganda*. London: International Alert. Available at <http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/renegotiating-ideal-society>

21 A lively and at times acrimonious debate exists among academics and activists around the ‘correct’ labelling of sexual and gender minorities. Both the LGBTI designation and the use of the term ‘sexual and gender minorities’ have nuanced and complex benefits and problems, which are extensively discussed in gender literature. The use of LGBTI is seen by its proponents as a way of underscoring diversity, while detractors see it as an artificial categorisation that overlooks very real societal differences between, say, bisexual men and transgender women, creating a false sense of community. The use of ‘sexual and gender minorities’ is promoted as a way of underlining that some categorisations are more dependent on biological sex, others on the social construct of gender and others more on sexual orientation. However, the term has been criticised for the potentially normative and discriminatory connotations of the term ‘minority’.

22 For recent examples, see the homophobic undercurrents in the debates about Chelsea Manning in the USA or the nationalist anti-gay mobilisations in Armenia, Georgia and Russia in 2013.

23 Although there is a tendency for armed state and non-state actors, regardless of their ideology, to instil heteronormative versions of appropriate male and female behaviour, one may also find openness to diverse sexual practices, for example, the first gay marriage in the Philippines organised by the New People’s Army (see, for example, K. Albuero [2011]. ‘Brothers, lovers and revolution: Negotiating military masculinity and homosexual identity in a revolutionary movement in the Philippines’, *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 27–42). Another example is acceptance into Colombian paramilitary groups of transgender women whose boyfriends had already joined (interviews, Cali and Bogotá, February/March 2013).

barracks, police stations, prisons and detention centres, refugee and IDP camps, and at border facilities. In many cases, their sexuality and attendant persecution is one of the reasons for their displacement. Often, certain sections of the LGBTI community may be highly dependent on sex work as a means of primary or supplementary income due to exclusion from other economic opportunities. Moreover, the disruptions brought about by conflict, displacement and post-conflict vagaries may well increase their vulnerability in terms of exposure to violence, a further weakened socio-economic position and exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS.

Nonetheless, although much remains to be done, the advancement of the rights of sexual and gender minorities' rights has progressed greatly over the past decade, both internationally (e.g. with the 2006 adoption of the Yogyakarta principles)²⁴ and at national levels in many countries. In the latter case, it has often been post-authoritarian, non-metropolitan societies that have led the way, such as Nepal, South Africa and Latin American countries. Of the four countries we examined, Nepal is the furthest advanced, at least on paper, having anchored comprehensive LGBTI rights in its draft constitution, although implementation in reality has been a far more mixed affair.²⁵ Colombia does not have the same progressive legal framework, but parts of the state apparatus, such as the *Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración* (ACR), the Colombian Agency for the Reintegration (of Ex-Combatants) and other relevant state institutions, are actively considering the practicalities of LGBTI issues in, for example, reintegration processes.²⁶ In Burundi and Uganda, on the other hand, homosexuality is illegal and LGBTI issues are largely a social taboo, although the debate around the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda has had the unintended effect of raising the issue at least among some sections of society.

This first, more conceptual section has laid out what a broader, deeper, relational understanding of gender in peacebuilding would entail. In the following section, we will examine more closely what this means in practice by focusing on four peacebuilding-related issues.

24 See <http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/>

25 At the time of writing, Nepal continues to be in the process of drawing up a new, republican constitution. Based on interviews in Kathmandu in August 2013, however, it is unlikely to go back on the progressive elements on LGBTI rights included in the previous draft constitution.

26 Issues debated included, for example, possibilities of including necessary hormonal treatment into healthcare packages of transgender ex-combatants and how to provide similar access to same-sex partners of ex-combatants as to opposite-sex partners when the law does not officially recognise same-sex couples.

Thematic findings

As outlined in the introduction, the research focused on four issues of peacebuilding as seen from a gender perspective:

- access to justice;
- economic recovery;
- inter-generational tensions and conflict; and
- permutations and continuums of violence.

As each of these issues on its own constitutes an immense field of study, we will highlight some of the main findings for the research. The delineation between the four aspects is not always clear-cut, as they are often interrelated in multiple ways: for example, access to justice impacts possibilities of economic recovery and is often tied to generational issues, and in turn may have impacts on communal or interpersonal violence.

These four topics of research came out of the research process itself. In the initial stage of the project, consultations were held with a range of CSOs in Burundi and Nepal, during which the two themes of gender and access to justice as well as gender and economic recovery began to crystallise.²⁷ The next stage of field research in Uganda and Colombia brought out the themes of inter-generational conflict (especially in the former) and permutations of violence (especially in the latter). Burundi and Nepal were then revisited to research these aspects as well. The four thematic issues are not exhaustive – there is a vast range of other issues linked to gender in peacebuilding, as well as to these four chosen topics, which deserve further inquiry, such as questions of security, access to resources, state- and nation-building. Thus, these four issues serve as examples to highlight both the importance and complexities of seriously integrating a broadened and deepened understanding of gender into peacebuilding.

Access to justice

In looking at justice, we took a broad approach, including formal, informal, traditional and transitional justice systems, which are present in different ways in all four case studies, with the relative importance of each varying from case to case.²⁸ In the absence of functioning formal justice sectors, justice is often and in some cases overwhelmingly sought through informal or traditional processes. The latter are also increasingly the focus of external peacebuilders, who may seek to strengthen these. Regardless of which form of justice one looks at, access to it is often directly linked to one's social standing: the more power one has in general, the better one's possibilities are in this respect as well.²⁹ This tends to place large sections of society at a distinct disadvantage, often based on gender, age, socio-economic status, urban/rural location and, in some cases, ethnic or religious background.

²⁷ These discussions also formed the basis for the *Gender in Peacebuilding: Taking Stock* report. See J. El-Bushra (2012). *Op. cit.* Available at <http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/gender-peacebuilding>

²⁸ Traditional in this respect refers to justice mechanisms that draw on local cultural resources for legitimacy. However, the term can be slightly misleading, as, even though this legitimacy rests on its claim to have been passed down, in most cases, 'since time immemorial', traditional justice mechanisms are highly adaptive and innovative, often incorporating and hybridising new elements along with the old.

²⁹ Criticising what he sees as a 'romanticisation' of the local and 'traditional', Roger Mac Ginty cautions, "many indigenous and traditional approaches to peacemaking, dispute resolution and reconciliation are conservative and reinforce the position of powerholders. Women, minorities and the young are excluded, and an emphasis is placed on conformity and a numbing of activism, criticism and radical change" (R. Mac Ginty (2011). *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance. Hybrid Forms of Peace*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p.52).

In terms of gender in peacebuilding, the aspect of access to justice that tends to receive the most attention is SGBV, especially violence against women and girls. Addressing these forms of violence effectively is not only a concern for conflict-affected societies. However, in these societies, it tends to be exacerbated by conflict-related SGBV, and often also by weaknesses in the formal justice sector. In all four countries, formal justice sector responses to SGBV have been lacking in spite of existing legal frameworks. However, respondents in all four cases tended to see at least some improvement in this respect, although there have been setbacks as well. The informal and traditional justice sectors have often been deemed to be highly problematic with respect to SGBV, as justice systems tend to be dominated by older men and maintaining social harmony is often prioritised over victims' rights, an issue raised in all four countries.³⁰

A positive development in this respect has been the successful work of the paralegal committees in Nepal, established in 2002 with the specific aim of helping to bridge the gap between formal and informal justice sectors, especially with respect to improving women's access to justice and addressing SGBV cases. The committees consist mainly of women and are to be transformed into Integrated Women's Development Committees under the auspices of the Ministry for Women, Children and Social Affairs.³¹

Key weak points in all four countries with respect to gender and justice, albeit to differing degrees, are the possibilities for male and LGBTI victims of SGBV to seek justice. While there was some acknowledgement of the issue in all four countries at community and civil society levels, it remains very much a taboo topic, in some cases (e.g. Burundi, Uganda) even exposing the victims to potential legal persecution. Much of the violence discussed was linked to the respective conflicts, although peacetime SGBV cases were also mentioned, such as frequent harassment and violence against transgender sex workers and vulnerable men (e.g. refugees), including by security forces.

Transitional justice issues remain problematic in all four cases, with none having functioning transitional justice processes that incorporate SGBV at this time.³² Colombia will be an interesting case to follow in this respect if there is indeed going to be a peace deal between the government and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), which would in all likelihood involve some forms of transitional justice mechanisms, including amnesties. In Nepal, the draft law on a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) also problematically includes amnesties and does not address SGBV committed during the conflict.

The delays and inadequacies in the transitional and formal justice sectors for crimes committed during the conflict often have not only immense emotional and moral implications for the direct and indirect victims and perpetuate impunity, but also very real practical social and economic consequences.³³ These include not receiving reparations, compensation and recognition for their suffering. For dependants of victims who have been 'disappeared' during the conflict without having been officially pronounced dead, lack of a legal status can mean that they are unable to access the resources left behind by their partner. Linked to this, a further issue that has been

30 It should be noted that the importance of non-formal/non-state justice mechanisms differs greatly between the four countries and that there are also great regional differences within the countries. It would also be a mistake to assume that traditional and informal justice systems are always disadvantageous to women and subordinate men – in some cases, they may be more responsive than formal systems.

31 International Alert, Forum for Women, Law and Development, Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre (2012). *Integrated or Isolated? How State and Non-State Justice Systems Work for Justice in Nepal*. Kathmandu: International Alert. Available at <http://international-alert.org/resources/publications/integrated-or-isolated>

32 Transitional justice as defined by the United Nations (2014) encompasses "the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempt to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation. It consists of both judicial and non-judicial processes and mechanisms, including prosecution initiatives, facilitating initiatives in respect of the right to truth, delivering reparations, institutional reform and national consultations." Available at http://www.unrol.org/article.aspx?article_id=29

33 There is a growing body of literature on gender in transitional justice, although here as well the focus has mostly tended to be on women and girls. For overviews on gender and transitional justice, see, for example, S. Buckley-Zistel and R. Stanley (eds.) (2012). *Gender in Transitional Justice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; and S. Harris-Rimmer (2010). *Gender and Transitional Justice: The Women of East Timor*. New York: Routledge.

contentious in a number of peacebuilding contexts is that both formal inheritance laws and traditional practices often discriminate heavily against women.

Key findings:

- Access to justice in post-conflict situations, regardless of whether it is through formal, informal, traditional or transitional justice systems, is often correlated with the gender identity of the individual concerned.
- While justice sector responses to SGBV against women and girls are slowly improving, more needs to be done. Community-based approaches that allow a voice for a wide range of perspectives can be effective in changing attitudes, practices and justice outcomes.
- There is a need to increase the understanding of and responses to SGBV against men and boys, as well as sexual and gender minorities, among justice and referral service providers, policy-makers and in programme interventions.
- Transitional justice mechanisms have stalled in many post-conflict situations and gender-related questions, such as addressing cases of SGBV during the conflict, are often dropped from the agenda.
- There is an overriding need for gendered patterns of access to justice, as linked to gendered patterns of political participation, social status and economic wellbeing, to be better understood and addressed.

Economic dimensions

The lack of economic opportunities and entrenched socio-economic inequalities figure among the underlying causes of violent conflict in all four of our case studies. A level of economic security can be a prerequisite to political participation or improving the security situation. As such, it is important to address economic dimensions in peacebuilding processes, and these dimensions need to be recognised as being gendered. Gender identities are intricately linked to access to economic possibilities as well as the performance of economic roles. The incapacity to fulfil these expected roles, for example, of the ‘male breadwinner’ or ‘caring mother’, can threaten gender identities.³⁴

Our case studies examined the impact of violent conflict on the economic opportunities for returning populations, in particular for ex-combatants and for returnee populations of refugees, abductees or IDPs, as these are often considered to be among the most vulnerable groups and thus targeted through specific support programmes.³⁵ In general, economic recovery and reintegration depends on access to resources, including information and social networks, access to which is often gendered, class-based and dependent on educational levels as well as differences between urban and rural contexts.

In all four case studies, former combatants have had access, at least in theory, to some form of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes, although their scope varied greatly between the four. A common critique of DDR programmes in general has been their lack of gender-sensitivity, above all in terms of not taking the specific needs of women associated with armed groups into account and of favouring those men who are most well-connected to powerful

³⁴ Such a ‘thwarting’ of expected gender roles can also be an unintended consequence of well-meant interventions, as, for example, in our case studies in Burundi and Uganda, where especially older men in refugee and IDP camps felt marginalised and infantilised as their role as supporters of their families was taken over by aid agencies.

³⁵ Assistance thus provided does not always receive unequivocal support. In Colombia, for example, interlocutors raised the issue of why ex-combatants as potential perpetrators of violence should get preferential treatment while victims went unsupported. In northern Uganda, where numerous international NGOs work with former child soldiers, some questioned why non-ex-combatant children and youth who face similar difficulties should go unnoticed by these efforts (see also C. Dolan (2009). *Social Torture. The Case of Northern Uganda, 1986–2006*. Oxford: Berghahn Books).

field commanders. Even where provision for women ex-combatants is made, this tends to be reserved for adult women, with girls being virtually invisible, and preference given to higher-ranking and better-connected women.³⁶

Social and economic reintegration of former combatants is often hampered by the lack of education, appropriate certificates and degrees, and marketable skills. Vocational training given through reintegration programmes is often too brief, based on gendered stereotypes and not linked to available employment opportunities. The most likely employment opportunities are thus in small-scale agriculture or the informal economy, or, as common stereotypes have it, in criminality. Even in Colombia, which had the most comprehensive programme of the four cases examined with a six-year integration and training package, interlocutors conceded that graduates of the scheme in all likelihood would struggle to find jobs that would pay better than the illegal economy of the drug gangs.

Reintegration is often further hampered by prevalent negative stereotypes held by potential employers and by society more broadly. In all four cases, we encountered commonly held stereotypes of ex-combatants being ‘dangerous’ or having ‘seen too much’; they were perceived as perpetrators, as well as suspected of potential violent behaviour and frequent substance abuse, and, especially in the case of women, of having overstepped traditional social and gender mores.³⁷ Women, but also men, often face difficulties finding marriage partners and ‘bush marriages’ may not be recognised or accepted.³⁸ In a number of cases we collected, ex-combatants found the welcome back by their communities running out at the same pace as their reinsertion cash packages.

Communities and former combatants have employed different ways of coping with these frictions. In northern Uganda, some former Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) abductees have undergone traditional cleansing rituals; in Burundi and Nepal, former combatants have formed formal or informal mutual support networks; and in all four cases many have also ‘voted with their feet’, preferring to migrate into cities, other parts of the country or abroad where their past is either unknown or not dwelled upon.³⁹ In both Burundi and Nepal, there was a degree of rural-to-rural migration of former combatants, and in the case of Burundi also cases of urban-to-rural migration in search of better economic opportunities and the possibility of establishing a home and family in the *collines*,⁴⁰ especially for male ex-combatants seeking to live up to traditional notions of masculinity.⁴¹ The former combatants in Burundi and Nepal who have formed mutual assistance networks use these to assist each other economically and also to provide psycho-social support.

Next to the reintegration of former combatants, post-conflict societies also need to accommodate the return of refugees, IDPs and, in cases such as northern Uganda, large numbers of abductees. While one must be extremely careful with generalisations, a comment that came up repeatedly in our discussions, especially with women’s organisations, was a perception that women are better able to cope with the processes of flight and reintegration than men.

This needs to be qualified in several ways: as noted, comparing suffering is both next to impossible and not conducive. Even though the difficulties faced are often gendered, they will not be the same

36 See, for example, D. Mazurana and S. McKay (2004). *Where are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and After War*. Canada: Rights and Democracy.

37 In Nepal, commonly held misperceptions of female ex-combatants as being prone to violence and sexual promiscuity complicated the process of reintegration for some former female members of the People’s Liberation Army and significantly affected their marriage prospects. Anne Menzel details how this ascribing of perceived dangerousness of ex-combatants can also extend to young men who are not former combatants, but merely socially perceived as such (A. Menzel (2011). ‘Between ex-combatization and opportunities for peace: The double-edged qualities of motorcycle-taxi driving in urban postwar Sierra Leone’, *Africa Today*, Vol. 58, No. 2, pp. 97–127).

38 See, for example, C. Coulter (2009). *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers. Women’s Lives through War and Peace in Sierra Leone*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, which explores a number of the moral, emotional, social and economic complexities of returning as a ‘bush wife’.

39 See also A. Branch (2008). *Gulu Town in War... and Peace? Displacement, Humanitarianism and Post-War Crisis*, Working Paper 36. London: Crisis States Research Centre.

40 Rural communities.

41 See also P. Uvin (2009). *Life After Violence: A People’s Story of Burundi*. London: Zed Books.

for all men or all women, but will be affected by individual agency, socio-economic positions, educational background, social capital in the form of personal connections and family ties, and geographical location, to name just a few factors. Women may be socially expected to simply cope and 'get on with' the task of caring for their families and households, even in the face of violence, abuse and trauma, and thus a lack of alternatives may be mistaken for, or even romanticised as, resilience.

Nonetheless, for a large group of men, the experience can be one of 'collapsing' or 'traumatic' masculinities where men feel unable to live up to traditional notions of hegemonic masculinity, thereby paradoxically reinforcing the centrality of these unattainable ideals in society. In many cases, there is even little space for men to openly air, let alone constructively address, their social, emotional and psychological needs.⁴²

Many women, however, face immense hardship upon return, and the number of female-headed households can sometimes rise in post-conflict societies, including widow-headed households, households where the women have been left behind (e.g. due to out-migration) or where the husband has had multiple partners during the conflict years.⁴³ Female-headed households are often among the most socio-economically vulnerable sections of post-conflict societies. Relatively little or no research has been conducted into post-conflict reintegration of same-sex couples, be they ex-combatants, IDPs, refugees or abductees.

Economic empowerment projects aimed at improving the economic conditions of women have long been a staple of both development and peacebuilding interventions. At times, however, these have led to both a multiple burdening of women and to a backlash by men who feel disadvantaged. One of the organisations examined in our Burundi country case study, the Burundian Association of Repatriated Women (*Association des Femmes Repatriées du Burundi* – AFRABU), has been pioneering the use of small-scale, community-based economic recovery projects (e.g. small-scale farming, market stalls, copy shops or restaurants) both as a practical peacebuilding tool and to address gender issues in a relational way, even if the work is not labelled as such. This means that, in spite of its name, AFRABU works with both men and women – with the important proviso of insisting on meaningful women's representation in project committees – and with repatriated former refugees (mostly Hutus), former IDPs (mostly Tutsis) and former combatants of all sides. The small-scale approaches have for the most part been successful in terms of their social reintegration agenda, even if the results in terms of meeting the economic targets have been more mixed.

Key to the economic reintegration of all members of society are the possibilities of accessing resources, capital and information, as well as being able to secure these. As with access to justice, these forms of access are often highly dependent on factors such as gender, age, social status, marital status and geographical location (especially the urban/rural divide).

42 See, for example, C. Dolan [2002]. 'Collapsing masculinities and weak states – A case study of northern Uganda', in F. Cleaver (ed.), *Masculinities Matter! – Men, Gender and Development*. London: Zed Books; and P. Kabachnik, M. Grabowska, J. Regulska, B. Mitchneck and O.V. Mayorova (2013). 'Traumatic masculinities: The gendered geographies of Georgian IDPs from Abkhazia', *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, Vol. 20, No. 6, pp. 773–793.

43 Centre for Conflict Resolution and UNIFEM (2010). *Women in Post-Conflict Societies in Africa*. Cape Town: CCR.

Key findings:

- Violent conflict often changes the economic possibilities open to, as well as vulnerabilities and challenges faced by, women and men; in the post-conflict period, these spaces and dynamics will be renegotiated. These dynamics need to be understood and taken into account in policies and programming focusing on economic recovery.
- Gender is an important factor in determining the possibilities for economic reintegration of former combatants and returning populations. Examining and taking account of the particular dynamics of each case, and the way in which gender intersects with other factors, allows interventions to be inclusive and sustainable.
- The particular societal expectations placed on men and women in terms of providing for themselves, their families and communities in a given situation need to be understood in order to avoid increasing their vulnerability.
- Taking a relational approach to gendered economic empowerment projects can help to reduce suspicions or potentially violent backlash by those who feel excluded (e.g. husbands of women receiving support).

Inter-generational tensions and conflict

An issue which surfaced repeatedly was that of ‘youth’, a term that is often simultaneously a relative concept with no fixed boundaries yet used in very specific ways. Often, the definition is highly gendered, with men in general having more time and social leeway for being considered youth than young women do. Officially, for example, Nepalis are considered youth until the age of 39 years, yet culturally a young woman in rural areas would often be considered an adult after her first menstrual period.

In addition to gender, marital and kinship status, profession, education, urban/rural location, social class and lifestyle choices all can contribute to whether a person is considered youth or not, in addition to generational age. Similarly, the position of an ‘elder’ as opposed to more generally an adult or old person in society is also dependent on other identity markers. The attributes attached to and value given to different generational constructs can vary between societies, even in one country. For example, while rural indigenous and urban non-indigenous Colombians would venerate old age, the forms of doing so would differ.

The socially, culturally and politically constructed category of youth can either be celebrated or devalued.⁴⁴ In the former case, youth is a space that is associated with positive attributes (e.g. freedom, creativity, dominant beauty ideals) and worth prolonging, e.g. in many Western cultures. In the latter case, youth is associated with irresponsibility, lack of experience and thus can be used to side-line or humiliate a competitor of lesser age, perpetuating a culture of gerontocracy. In such societies, youth are traditionally excluded from decision-making within the household, since this is normally reserved for (male) heads. Attaining adulthood is often linked to rites of passage, which, given socio-economic circumstances, become increasingly difficult to attain, such as holding a steady job, building one’s own home or being able to pay for bride-price or dowry, trapping especially young men in the socially and politically disempowered category of youth. Young women, on the other hand, are usually considered adults upon marrying and at the latest by childbirth, which means that they spend a far shorter part of their lives in the youth category.

Both youth and elders as socially constructed and imagined categories can add to societal and domestic conflict in post-conflict settings. While ‘the youth’ are often imagined as rebellious, disrespectful and work-shy, elders are in turn often imagined as set in their ways, unable to

⁴⁴ See also H. Vigh (2006). *Navigating Terrains of War – Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

provide for communities yet unwilling to relinquish power. Considering the demographic pressure in many post-conflict societies – where in some cases up to 50% of people are under 18 years old – it is imperative to address such grievances and undertake focused efforts to build channels of constructive, conflict-resolving communication.

Alternately, youth, children or elderly may be generalised as being, in their entirety, marginalised or victimised. While such generalisations are common, they are usually neither accurate nor helpful in developing successful interventions. While age does often play an important role in terms of defining opportunities or vulnerabilities, it needs to be seen in the context of other factors such as gender, class, ethnic background and other identity markers.

It is thus necessary to question some of the assumed dichotomies that both the local society and external peacebuilders may bring with them. Often, both peacebuilders and broader society alike equate youth with young, mostly urban, lower-class males and elders with older, largely rural, respected men. If one relies on such simplifications, the needs of women and girls, but also of men not fitting into these categories, may well be overlooked. The common generalisations about generational categories need to be taken into account as they are an important part of social reality, but they should not form the basis of peacebuilding interventions without being examined and tested for accuracy.

At times, inter-generational tensions have been seen as a key factor in triggering violent conflict. While younger generations' frustrations with gerontocratic structures are often a source of conflict, the dynamics are often a more complicated mixture of resistance against, collusion with, and dependence upon the age-, class- and gender-based networks of power and patronage. A less researched but important field of gendered inter-generational violence that came up repeatedly in our field research interviews was that of SGBV and domestic violence within extended families, especially involving in-laws.

An example of how inter-generational tensions can be approached at the community level is examined in our Uganda case study. We explore in detail how village-level empowerment projects in the northern Gulu district seek to address the inter-generational and gendered tensions among the returning, formerly displaced populations by enabling communities to create their own spaces and mechanisms for articulating and addressing conflicts. While these have been successful in rebuilding social cohesion and reducing conflict, they have not been wholly unproblematic, especially in terms of increasing gender equality.⁴⁵

Key findings:

- Inter-generational tensions can be a significant factor in conflict-affected societies. Age, class and gender are key factors in determining access to power, information and resources – but the interplay needs to be understood in a more nuanced manner.
- Many of the discussions around inter-generational conflicts are based on generalising, highly gendered stereotypes. While these must be understood as they are a key part of social reality, peacebuilding policy and programming need to be based on more informed and critical analyses.
- While youth (imagined as young, mostly urban and lower-class males) and their frustrations with gerontocratic structures are often seen as a key conflict driver, these dynamics need to be examined more closely in their complexity.
- More attention should be paid to the effects of inter-generational tensions in the domestic sphere and the impact this has on domestic and SGBV in both nuclear and extended families.

⁴⁵ For an in-depth discussion in the Uganda case study, see J. El-Bushra et al (2014). *Op. cit.*

Permutations and continuums of violence

The final thematic category that we examined was the wide variety of different and interrelated forms of direct violence, such as self-inflicted, interpersonal, domestic, sexual and gender-based, criminal, communal and political violence.⁴⁶ Reducing violence is at the heart of peacebuilding, and therefore a nuanced and gendered understanding of its complexities needs to be at the heart of any work on gender in peacebuilding.

Violence is, however, a ‘slippery’ category and separating various forms and manifestations from one another is difficult. While there does seem to be some evidence of causal links between different permutations of violence, these are not simplistic and direct relationships. Violent conflict, for example, leads to more indirect forms of structural violence, such as economic hardship and displacement, or ‘thwarted’ gender identities, which in turn may increase certain forms of interpersonal or self-inflicted violence (e.g. suicides, high-risk behaviour, substance abuse). Political or communal violence often overlaps with more criminally motivated violence, and SGBV may be a factor in all of them. However, the motivations for and dynamics behind SGBV are often complex and related to broader violent renegotiations of societal power and identities.⁴⁷ Instead of trying to establish direct, possibly simplistic causal relationships, it may be more productive to consider various forms of violence both as a continuum and as overlapping, interconnected permutations.⁴⁸

Violence is often used in public and private spaces to police and renegotiate social and gender roles, power relations and expectations in the post-conflict moment.⁴⁹ This can include intimate partner violence, domestic violence, homophobic violence, violence against marginalised groups and criminal violence. Vulnerability to different forms of violence is highly gendered and also dependent on other identity factors, such as age, ethnicity, social status and possible disabilities. It is also highly dependent on the nature of the conflict in question. While VAWG, as often the most widespread form of gender-based violence, has often gained the most (or even exclusive) attention, other forms of SGBV have received less attention, including against men and sexual and gender minorities or violence inflicted by women in the household, also against other women.

In all of our cases, the vast majority of the perpetrators of various forms of conflict-related direct violence were young men, but in none of the cases was this exclusively so. Other segments of society also participated directly and indirectly in acts of violence, and not all young men were violent. Like gender roles more generally, violent masculinities are relationally co-produced by men and women, and there is no inevitability about it. As discussed above, some of the projects we examined, such as AMOR in Colombia (see page 13), have started examining how violent gender roles are reproduced by women and men both in the private sphere of the family and in broader society.

Women as perpetrators and reproducers of violence and violent gender stereotypes have also been only sparsely discussed in peacebuilding literature, be it for example in cases of domestic violence by in-laws and parents, or the role mothers have in socialising their sons into violence.⁵⁰

46 In addition to direct, physical violence, there are also other, more subtle forms of direct violence such as emotional and psychological violence, as well as more indirect, invisible forms such as structural or symbolic (cultural) violence. The focus in the research was mainly on direct, mostly physical violence.

47 For a critical and thoughtful reappraisal of simplistic approaches to seeing sexual violence as a weapon of war, see M. Eriksson-Baaz and M. Stern (2013). *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War? Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond*. London: Zed Books.

48 For a conceptual discussion, see, for example, P. Bourgois and N. Scheper-Hughes (eds.) (2004). *Violence in War and Peace – An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

49 K. Theidon (2009). ‘Reconstructing masculinities: The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants in Colombia’, *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 1–34.

50 While motherhood has often been brought forward as ‘proof’ of women’s ‘innate peacefulness’, our research in Colombia especially brought about more critical reflections from local women’s organisations, which have also been echoed in experiences from peacebuilding in the South Caucasus. For a discussion, see also C. Moser and F. Clark (eds.) (2001). *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors?: Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*. London: Zed Books.

The post-conflict moment can also bring about locally specific, gendered forms of violence. Both in Nepal and Uganda, but also in other peacebuilding contexts, accusations of witchcraft or sorcery as well as violent reactions to them are of societal concern. Often, accusations and violent reactions tend to be targeted at socially marginalised individuals, often in a highly gendered manner, although whether more men or women are targeted depends on the context.⁵¹ In other contexts, certain groups, such as orphans, street children or former child soldiers, may be the subject of targeted violence, such as violent ‘social cleansing’ or, as was rumoured in some cases, child sacrifice. The *perception* of being a dangerous individual, for example a former combatant, may lead to pre-emptive, at times lethal, violence by communities or state actors against individuals. Here, again, gender, age, social status and other factors play a key role in determining vulnerability to suffering from violence but also susceptibility to using (or being forced/expected to use) violent force.

An increasingly popular approach to reducing violence, especially between men and women, is that of focusing on men as ‘change agents’. This is based on the idea that men can change if they are helped to understand the causes and consequences of their predatory and risk-seeking behaviour. These projects mainly operate at the level of individuals, with the goal of thus achieving broader societal transformation as other men are encouraged to follow the example of these ‘role model men’.

In our research, we examined such approaches in Burundi, Nepal and Uganda, where many of these projects have reported impressive successes in changing behaviours, notably reducing levels of VAWG. What these projects bring out, however, is that, while changes in individual behaviour have been achieved, underlying patriarchal values may often be more difficult to dislodge – especially if broader social, political and economic dynamics are not addressed. It is possible to stop male violence against women without shaking its ideological patriarchal foundations, and therefore without addressing other forms of violence or acknowledging how the conditions of violence are constructed by society as a whole. This is particularly seen in Uganda, where some campaigning work against domestic violence specifically targets women whose behaviour is perceived as provoking it.⁵² The end result of interventions that focus only on physical violence but do not question male privilege and attendant expectations of female submissiveness may be a more resilient, if less physically violent, form of patriarchy.

Key findings:

- Different forms of violence are often interlinked, with men, women, boys, girls and sexual and gender minorities facing different challenges and vulnerabilities. Although these links exist, they are often not linear or directly causal.
- Patterns of seeking to ‘resolve’ conflict through violent means – or being accepting of violence – are often linked to gender role expectations, which are reproduced by men, women and sexual and gender minorities in both the private and public spheres.
- Gendered perception of danger, often linked to social class and age, such as of ‘the young, male ex-combatant’ or ‘the old, female witch’, can often increase the vulnerability of the person perceived as being dangerous.
- Reducing societal violence requires taking a gender-relational approach to engaging with different stakeholders in society – for example, working with both men and women to help them understand and begin to change the different ways they each perpetuate violent attitudes and behaviour in response to certain circumstances. These efforts need to examine and take into account gendered power dynamics lest they cement existing disparities.

51 While physical violence is mostly meted out to those in a weaker position, suspicions of witchcraft, black magic, sorcery or the like are also often directed against those in power to explain their success (see, for example, P. Geschiere (2006). ‘Witchcraft and the limits of the law’, in J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff (eds.), *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp.219–246. The issue of gender-based violence and accusations of witchcraft is also highly pertinent to numerous peacebuilding contexts in parts of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania.

52 Based on field research conducted as part of the Uganda country case study of this project, see J. El-Bushra et al (2014). *Op. cit.*

Outlook – How to promote and integrate gender-relational peacebuilding?

We started our research three years ago with the aim of examining and better understanding how Alert as an organisation, and the peacebuilding community more broadly, approaches gender, and how this might be improved. In our earlier research, *Gender in Peacebuilding: Taking Stock*, we identified three forms of peacebuilding interventions: gender-blind, WPS-focused and gender-relational.⁵³

Although, over the past decade and a half, integrating gender has become at least rhetorically part of the standard peacebuilding repertoire, gender-blind approaches are still relatively widespread in peacebuilding. This report aims to inform practitioners on how this can be improved. The increasing understanding of the need to integrate gender into peacebuilding has mostly meant an increased focus on the needs of women and girls. In many cases, this is valid and has helped bring about important improvements. At times, however, it has consisted more of a tokenistic ‘add women and stir’ approach than actually engaging with the complexities of gendered power dynamics.

Our purpose in this research has been to review how a broader and deeper gendered approach can improve the effectiveness of peacebuilding. In no way do we advocate moving away from addressing the needs and possibilities of women and girls, but rather we aim to look at these in a more nuanced manner and in conjunction with the needs and possibilities of men and boys, and also of sexual and gender minorities. Our research has reinforced our conviction that, through this broader understanding and more comprehensive approach, the situation of all members of society can be improved.

In addition to allowing for a more holistic and nuanced understanding of gendered power dynamics and how they relate to peacebuilding, the relational approach allows us to raise fundamental questions about masculinities and femininities, and about social class, age and other identity markers that can either exacerbate conflict and violence or contribute to peacebuilding. It allows us to examine areas that have hitherto often been neglected, such as female perpetrators and shapers of violent behaviour, male-conditioned responses and vulnerabilities, sexuality, or the role of sexual and gender minorities in violence and peacebuilding. It also allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how the political, social and economic dimensions of gender relate to conflict and peace.

Based on our research and interactions with other peacebuilders, the gender-relational approach looks to be gaining momentum both conceptually and in application. Our field research in Burundi, Colombia, Nepal and Uganda revealed what a gender-relational approach can mean in practical terms. It also highlighted, however, many of the complexities involved in addressing gender identities and dynamics, which will need to be addressed at various levels (i.e. personal, local, national, international) for gender-relational peacebuilding to succeed.

There are no simple, generic technical prescriptions emerging from our research. Nevertheless, we have identified a number of broadly actionable recommendations and principles to help guide those seeking to integrate a gender-relational lens more effectively into policies and programmes, to improve their impact on peace, as follows.

53 J. El-Bushra (2012). *Op. cit.*

Understanding the context

Analyse how gender roles and relations impact on peace and conflict in the specific context, as a part of designing all peacebuilding programmes, projects and interventions.

Gender analysis should be seen as key in the preparation of peacebuilding programmes and policy development, and requires the investment of time and resources. A gender-relational approach to gender analysis for peacebuilding implies a broadly based description of how gender roles and relations work in each particular context, including how gender difference intersects with other identities. It also involves an assessment of how these roles and relations influence a society's propensity for violent conflict, the extent to which gender roles and relations might themselves be shaped by violent conflict, and the opportunities they present for transformative change.

Identifying whom to work with and how

Use gender analysis to identify target groups, and others with whom to work, more accurately, rather than use overly broad, undifferentiated categories.

A gender-relational approach to analysis suggests a broad range of possible interventions; it also enables a sharper focus on particular groups of people who are most vulnerable, as well as on those whose attitudes and practices most need to be changed and those most amenable to change. In so doing, it allows policies and interventions to be more accurately targeted and thus more effectively implemented and evaluated. An issue arising in our case studies was the vulnerability of men, boys and sexual and gender minorities, something that might be revealed by a relational gender analysis but is often overlooked by programming that assumes vulnerability to be associated mainly with women and children. In different contexts, a gender-relational analysis might suggest focusing, for example, on the particular vulnerabilities or strengths of young, rural, widowed women in a particular location; elderly, lower-class urban men; or educated, well-connected female political change-makers.

Identifying best ways of working

Tailor programming to the findings of the gender analysis, adopting the range of peacebuilding strategies, methods and actors which emerge from the analysis, rather than simply applying methods which have been used elsewhere.

Adopting a gender-relational approach to peacebuilding means understanding how gender relations and identities influence peace possibilities in a given situation, as well as facilitating transformational change based on that understanding. The experiences documented in our case studies suggest that those approaches that result in positive transformations seem most often to be characterised by inclusivity, dialogue and empowerment. Initiatives that impressed us are inclusive in that they involve women and men, young and old, powerful and powerless, capturing a wide variety of perspectives and knowledge. They use dialogue as one of their main methods, promoting capacities for dialogue and creating the necessary spaces, so that potentially conflicting components of a community can move forward in concert. Moreover, they are designed and managed in such a way that programming is driven by some of the women, men and sexual and gender minorities most directly affected by violent conflict, empowering them to promote sustainable change.

Applying a gender-relational approach to different sectors and themes

Build explicit strategies for addressing gender relationships and roles into programmes working on a variety of peacebuilding issues.

The four themes on which our research focused should not be seen as limiting but rather as illustrating the sort of enrichment that a relational approach to gender analysis can bring to peacebuilding work generally. Such an analysis can both inform and be intensified by programming across all areas of work in peacebuilding situations, and can be mainstreamed across all sectors. Building gender analysis and change goals into other peacebuilding initiatives may be just as effective a way of achieving transformation as separate ‘gender programming’. The goals addressing gender relationships and roles should be as prominent, and be taken as seriously in implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as the ‘sectoral’ goals alongside which they sit or are integrated.

Implications for organisational structures, policies and practices

Review and adapt organisational incentives, structures, policies and practices to enable the adoption of a gender-relational approach.

The guidance articulated here is not new, but is only now beginning to be integrated into the policy and practice of international peacebuilding interventions. This is at least in part due to the slowness of the peacebuilding sector to recognise the need for internal reflection on what gender means for peacebuilding, as opposed to responding to policy imperatives. It points to the need for organisations involved in peacebuilding to examine the extent to which their internal structures, policies and practices enable or disable such reflection. Of the organisations reviewed in our case studies, those who articulated alternative approaches to the mainstream have generally achieved higher levels of effectiveness as a consequence of internal reviews of their on-the-ground experience. This led them to articulate new understandings of what gender equality means (e.g. linking gender with other forms of differentiation, such as age, class and ethnicity) and new strategies for achieving gender equality. The changes they have made have come into play both at the level of policy and in questioning how each and every organisational function can contribute towards that goal. Engaging with a more complex and holistic understanding of gender relations will require the reassessment of approaches from the policy level to the programmatic level, building an understanding of and the capacity for engaging with gender in a new way and possibly revisiting institutional culture, incentives, staff profiles, progress and impact measures, and ways of working.

