TALKING POINTS: WHY INCLUDING WOMEN IN PEACEBUILDING PAYS DIVIDENDS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Post-conflict, all hands are needed to rebuild, but women have fewer opportunities to shape peacebuilding processes. This represents a missed opportunity to leverage a society's full human capital to prevent the recurrence of conflict and move forward on the road to recovery. In addition, transition periods present a unique time during which countries reorient their cultural, political, and economic norms. These are moments to transform negative gender norms for women and men in ways that advance peace and prosperity.

Benefits: Women's inclusion improves conflict mitigation and strengthens peace processes

TP1. Women can draw on their skills, standing, and experiences to help mitigate conflict

- In some cultures, women are perceived as less threatening than men and can be important entry points for starting dialogue and resolving conflict.
    - In Cambodia, police and military personnel sent their mothers to negotiate with rural families over land disputes.[i] This nonviolent dispute resolution prevented the parties from resorting to violence.
    - Christian and Muslim women came together to pressure violent warlords and the Charles Taylor regime to end the Liberian civil war in 2003. By creating a diverse coalition that crossed religious and other divides, they compelled the parties to move the stalled peace process forward.
- Women's traditional roles can provide access they can leverage to prevent or reduce violence.
    - In Mozambique, women played roles in preventing a return to violence particularly as ex-combatants active in community peacebuilding and resettling male ex-combatants after the accords were signed.[ii]
    - Among the Naga in northeastern India, women have capitalized on cultural traditions of women's peace activism in helping maintain a fragile ceasefire since 1997[iii].

TP2. Women's participation can enhance the scope of peace agreements

- Over half of all peace agreements fail within the first 10 years of signature.[iv] Preliminary research indicates that peace agreements are more durable when women formally participate in their negotiation.[v]
- Women broaden the perspective on issues of peace and security.[vi] While security is typically defined as the termination of active fighting, women are more likely to suggest a view of security that includes living without fear of violence or sexual assault inside and outside of their homes.[vii] This can lead to more durable and widely-accepted peace agreements.[viii]
- Women, often perceived as "not political," are sometimes more able to access information and pressure authorities to provide services that minimize the impacts of conflict on the civilian population.[ix]
    - In Darfur, women helped insert physical security and protection of vulnerable and displaced persons into talks with negotiators.
    - In Uganda, women spotlighted during negotiations the need for compensation funds for victims of violence, and health and education for former combatants.[x]

TP3. The post-conflict period offers unique opportunities to further gender equality—a key to sustainable development

- In conflict environments, women frequently take on roles traditionally assigned to men such as providing for family welfare and security.[xi] Building on these transformations while supporting men's contributions to the family is a way to rebuild the family unit after conflict.

- Women participate more actively in labor markets during and immediately after conflict. Research shows that women's labor force participation in conflict-affected areas is in some cases associated with increases in overall household and community welfare.[xii]
- Peace processes often provide a unique opportunity to renegotiate the political settlement.[xiii] The establishment of quotas for female parliamentarians in post-conflict Rwanda, Afghanistan, Iraq and South Sudan opened a dialogue on women's roles in political decision-making.
- Numerous studies by the World Bank and other institutions show that societies benefit when women actively participate in their economies and public life, because women reinvest the majority of income they control on goods that benefit their children and families.[xiv]

TP4. Research shows a strong and significant link between state security and women's security.[xv]

- Evidence suggests that the larger the gender gap, the more likely a country is to be involved in intra- and interstate conflict, be the first to use force, and escalate levels of violence. Addressing gender inequalities and fostering stability and security go hand in hand.

Barriers: Key constraints to women's participation in peacebuilding

TP1. Women's distinct post-conflict needs do not receive adequate attention

- Gender bias inadvertently underlies many reconstruction initiatives because men often participate more fully in public life and have better access to economic resources and education than women.[xvi]
- Peace processes often fail to recognize women's roles as fighters. In Sierra Leone, an estimated 30-50 percent of combatants were female, but only eight percent of participants in the formal disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process were female.[xvii] Services for women and girls, limited to rehabilitation for victims of sexual violence, neglected to address their economic, social, and health needs as former combatants.[xviii]
- DDR programs often also exclude those who were involved in conflict forcibly or voluntarily as followers, cooks, or sexual slaves, roles often played by females. Like combatants, these women and girls can experience significant stigma upon return to their home communities.[xix]
- Where wars have officially ended, women and girls often continue to be plagued by high levels of violence and insecurity, in part due to widespread impunity and a breakdown in the rule of law.[xx]

TP2. Despite a robust international legal framework,[xxi] women are still marginalized post conflict

- The UN Security Council has recognized women's needs and contributions to peacebulding in resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, and 2106.[xxii] But since 1992, women have represented fewer than 3 percent of mediators and 8 percent of negotiators to major peace processes.[xxiii]
- Women often play a leading role as activists and in civil society, but are far less likely to be included in "formal" processes. The international community and host governments often overlook leaders in civil society and informal institutions when identifying partners to work with in peace processes.
- Many women in situations of conflict are responsible for dependents due to the death or displacement of male heads of household.[xxiv] Programming that assumes women are only dependents will leave out females who generate income and be less effective.
- The international community has made concerted efforts, but as of August 2013 women comprised fewer than 3% of UN peacekeepers, 2.7% of UN military personnel and 16% of UN police.[xxv] These operations are less able to leverage women's capacity and identify their needs.

TP3. Women's rights can be rolled back in post-conflict transitions

- Women who assumed nontraditional economic roles during conflict frequently lose these positions post-war.[xxvi] In Iraq, the government reportedly required all state ministries to restrict women working outside the home in 2000 as male former combatants sought employment,[xxvii] thus negating the benefits of increased female employment during the conflict.

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