USAID/CMM Gender and Conflict Speaker Series—Causes & Consequences of Post-Conflict Violence: Examining Gender Dimensions

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The U.S. Agency for International Development Gender and Conflict

Speaker Series

Causes & Consequences of Post-Conflict Violence: Examining Gender Dimensions

March 13, 2013

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USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Wilson Center

USAID'S OFFICE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION
&
THE MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM AT THE WOODROW WILSON CENTER

PRESENT A SYMPOSIUM ON

CAUSES & CONSEQUENCES OF POST-CONFLICT VIOLENCE: EXAMINING GENDER DIMENSIONS

Wednesday, March 13, 2013

COMMENCEMENT 1:00 PM

HALEH ESFANDIARI, DIRECTOR, MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM, WOODROW WILSON CENTER
JOSE GARZON, OFFICE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT & MITIGATION, USAID
CARLA KOPPELL, SENIOR COORDINATOR FOR GENDER EQUALITY & WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT, USAID
RAFIF JOUEJATI, DIRECTOR OF FREE SYRIA FOUNDATION

PANEL I: 2:00 PM

"What causes the violence spillover post-conflict for men and for women?"

LORI HANDRAHAN, INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT
FIONNUALA NÍ AOLÁIN, PROFESSOR OF LAW, MINNESOTA LAW SCHOOL & TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE INSTITUTE
PATTI PETESCH, CONSULTANT, WORLD BANK

PANEL II: 3:30 PM

"How do stakeholders in post-conflict reconstruction prevent and address violence against each gender?

NAOMI CAHN, PROFESSOR OF LAW, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
NAHLA VALJI, PROGRAM SPECIALIST, RULE OF LAW AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE, UN WOMEN
JOSEPH VESS, SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER, PROMUNDO

RECEPTION

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
6th Floor Flom Auditorium
Ronald Reagan Building & International Trade Center
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Speakers & Discussants
Naomi Cahn is the Harold H. Greene Professor of Law at The George Washington University Law School. Professor Cahn has written numerous law review articles on family law, feminist jurisprudence, and reproductive technology. She is the author of several books, including *The New Kinship* (2013) and *Test Tube Families: Why the Fertility Market Needs Legal Regulation* (2009). She has co-authored *On the Frontlines: Gender, War, and the Post-Conflict Process* (2011) (with co-authors Fionnuala Ni Aoláin and Dina Haynes); *Red Families v. Blue Families: Legal Polarization and the Creation of Culture* (2010) (with Professor June Carbone); and she has co-written casebooks in the fields of family law, trusts, and estates. From 2002 to 2004, Professor Cahn was on leave in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.
Haleh Esfandiari is director of the Middle East Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. She received her doctorate degree from the University of Vienna. Her experience includes former Deputy Secretary General of the Women's Organization of Iran; journalist; Fellow at the Wilson Center, 1995-96; educator at Princeton University, 1980-94; and frequent lecturer on current Iranian and Middle Eastern affairs. Her expertise involves democratic and political developments in the Middle East, Middle Eastern women's issues, and contemporary Iranian intellectual currents and politics.
Jose Garzon is Deputy Director of the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation. A career Foreign Service Officer, Jose has led Democracy and Governance Teams in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Guatemala, and Bolivia. He served as Democracy and Governance Team Leader in the Europe in Eurasia Bureau from 2002-2003, and later as Rule of Law Division Chief 2003-2005. Other Foreign Service assignments include Philippines, where he headed the Mt. Pinatubo disaster recovery effort, and Bangladesh, where he worked on strengthening civil society and disaster relief. Jose's essay "Democracy and Development Reconsidered", which examines the importance of governance effectiveness, has been selected for publication in USAID's Frontiers of Development series. Jose joined USAID in 1988 after working 6 years in development programs in Peru and El Salvador. He holds a Ph.D from the University of California, Berkeley and a B.A. from Whittier College in political science.
Lori Handrahan, Ph.D. Dr. Lori Handrahan's Ph.D. is from London School of Economics. She holds over twenty years of practitioner work, in Central Asia, Asia, Africa and the Balkans, focused on gender-based violence, international human rights, humanitarian response, conflict and post-conflict environments, masculinities and men/boys in development and violence, and gender within UN reform and organizational change. She has served as a UN consultant for UNFPA, UNDP, OCHA, UNHCR and UNICEF. She was UNHCR's first gender expert in emergency operations in Chad during the Darfur genocide and Regional Gender Advisor for UNHCR in The Balkans. She was lead researcher for CARE's Girls' Leadership Assessment in Yemen, UNFPA's Gender-Based Violence Information Management System pilot in Uganda, and OCHA's Gender Review. Dr. Handrahan's first book, Gendering Ethnicity, was published by Routledge in 2001. She is published in peer-review journals such as *The International Feminist Journal of Politics* and *Security Dialogue,* has been a guest on CNN, FOX, CTV, with op-eds in *The New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Huffington Post*, *Fox News, Forbes* and is a National Security Expert blogger for *National Journal*. http://security.nationaljournal.com/contributors/lori.php
Rafif Jouejati is the English spokeswoman for the Local Coordinating Committees in Syria, a grassroots network designed to align the activities of pro-democracy Syrians in each of the country's 14 governorates. Ms. Jouejati is also the Director of FREE-Syria (the Foundation to Restore Equality and Education in Syria), a nonprofit humanitarian organization that focuses on women's empowerment through education, leadership training, and civil society development. FREE-Syria has also provided humanitarian relief in the form of food, blankets, and tents to women, needy families, and orphans. As an Executive Committee member of the Day After

Project, Ms. Jouejati helped bring together key actors of the Syrian opposition and develop a transition plan for Syria. At a Women's Democracy Network event and at the Olof Palme Center in Stockholm, Ms. Jouejati advanced a charter demanding 50% representation of women in every aspect of Syria's governance. She upholds a commitment to women's equality and is on a mission to change the social narrative regarding rape in Syria. Ms. Jouejati frequently travels to the Middle East, including Syria, where she speaks at events and coordinates with other activists. She publishes editorials and reports and has appeared on Charlie Rose, Al-Jazeera, and CNNi.
Carla Koppell currently serves as USAID's Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and a Senior Advisor to the USAID Administrator. In that role, she is spearheading enhancement of US development assistance efforts to serve and empower women around the world and to ensure that programs are designed and implemented in a gender sensitive manner. Previously, Koppell served as director of The Institute for Inclusive Security and the Washington, DC office of Hunt Alternatives Fund where she worked to ensure that peace processes around the world involve women and civil society. While there, she worked extensively with leaders from volatile conflict zones including Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sudan. Earlier in her career, Koppell was senior adviser and, prior to that, interim director of the Conflict Prevention Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, where she authored "Preventing the Next Wave of Conflict: Understanding Non-Traditional Threats to Global Stability." Ms. Koppell served as deputy assistant secretary for international affairs of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. She was also special assistant to the administrator of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), director of the USAID climate change program, and has worked for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. She received her M.A. in public policy from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and her B.A. from Cornell University.
Professor Ní Aoláin is concurrently the Dorsey and Whitney Chair in Law at the University of Minnesota Law School and a Professor of Law at the University of Ulster's Transitional Justice Institute in Belfast, Northern Ireland. She was a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies Hebrew University (Jerusalem)(2011-12); Visiting Fellow at Princeton University's LAPA Program (2001-02); Visiting Professor at the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University (1996-2000); Associate Professor of Law at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel (1997-99); Associate-in-Law at Columbia Law School (1994-96); and Visiting Scholar at Harvard Law School (1993-94). She has published extensively in the fields of emergency powers, conflict regulation, transitional justice and sex based violence in times of war. Her book *Law in Times of Crisis* (CUP 2006) was awarded the American Society of International Law's preeminent prize in 2007 - the Certificate of Merit for creative scholarship. Her book *On the Frontlines: Gender, War and the Post Conflict Process* has recently been published by Oxford University Press. She has served as expert and consultant to the UN OHCHR and UN WOMEN, and for the Office of the UN Secretary-General. She has twice nominated twice to the position of Judge at the European Court of Human Rights by the Government of Ireland.

INTRODUCTION

In post-conflict situations, what role does gender play in the ways that both men and women experience violence? What causes this violence? And, what are some of the international and local strategies that are best serving the needs of those most affected by it? These were among the questions explored during a symposium on March 13, 2013 that was co-hosted by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (WWICS). Speakers from academia, the United Nations and civil society shared their research and field experience on these subjects as a means of exploring how development programs could better address the gender dimensions of post-conflict violence. Haleh Esfandiari from the Wilson Center's Middle East program opened the symposium. The event consisted of opening remarks followed by two panel discussions; this report is organized thematically to highlight the main themes they addressed.

Post-Conflict Environments for Men and Women

The causes and manifestations of violence in post conflict situations was the main theme of the symposium, particularly what a post-conflict situation looks like for men versus women. Although the term "post conflict" implies a condition where hostilities between combatants have ended and a peace agreement has been signed, it is rarely free of violence. In fact, violence can increase in various ways. USAID Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation Deputy Office Director Jose Garzon pointed out in his opening remarks that the ending of wars is often followed by continued or new forms of violence. "Post war states often suffer from features that can predispose it to violence," he noted. These features include a wartime economy, demobilized soldiers, disaffected populations, organized crime, and lack of basic services.

He encouraged the audience to consider how post-conflict situations may affect men and women differently. Some research indicates that domestic violence often increases during this period, for example, because male ex-combatants return home and feel powerless to provide for their families and/or have difficulties readjusting to community life. USAID Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Carla Koppell suggested that the kinds of violence in peacetime, conflict, or post-conflict, may all be different and that the challenge is to know "what path to chart on this continuum."

Naomi Cahn from George Washington University suggested that the focus in post-conflict settings is often on the violence committed by soldiers, "rape raids" carried out by armed forces, and allegations of rape by U.N. peacekeepers. However, she said, this "selectivity in emphasis has its own gender fault lines and these lines are symbols of other problems dealing with gender." Rather, and as Fionnuala Ní Aoláin from the University of Minnesota Law School also pointed out, Cahn drew attention to the continuity of violence that exists before, during, and after conflict. Ní Aoláin encouraged the audience not to try and do a "clean segregation between phases of conflict and types of violence" because violence is "part and parcel of most women's lives in most societies."

In that context, Cahn focused some of her remarks on patterns of domestic violence and noted that different studies pointed to different conclusions on whether domestic violence increased in post-conflict settings. She reiterated, however, that the "hyper masculinity involved in returning from war can exacerbate already troubling high rates of intimate violence that occurs in the society." Cahn highlighted a study in the *American Journal of Public Health* that describes intimate partner sexual violence as the most pervasive form of violence against women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or affecting 200 out of every 1,000 women.

Rafif Jouejati, with the FREE-Syria foundation, spoke passionately on some of the sexualized violence that is taking place in Syria. Jouejati noted that "girls as young as 10 are being

prostituted in refugee camps so that their families can pay for food, shelter, and basic needs." She cited the rise in gang rapes and described some of the methods of sexual torture that she claimed were being used by Assad's troops. "Sexualized violence and torture in Syria … are Assad's systematic tools of war on strategic, political, and ideological levels," said Jouejati. "It breaks down the family structure, weakens the social fabric, and causes unthinkable, and sometimes irreparable, psychological damage." Jouejati added that, while most of these abuses are committed against women, they also happen to men and are used as a tool to dehumanize opponents.

Nahla Valji with UN Women approached the topic from a legal perspective. She stated that the international community's focus on civil and political rights has not changed the fact that women in post-conflict situations "disproportionally bear the brunt of socio-economic rights violations, whether it be the loss of property and shelter, the impact of forced displacement, [or] the loss of medical services and education." Ní Aoláin echoed this sentiment and offered the example of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, which did not take into account the economic disenfranchisement that apartheid had caused for women. "When women are paid less and excluded from economic decision-making," she added, "their vulnerability to violence is heightened."

Joseph Vess from Promundo addressed the continuity of violence that also exists for men. He added that if men are not getting psycho-social support to deal with the violence that they have experienced, they are more likely to commit violence themselves. Men whose identities are tied up in conflict and their status as combatants are less likely to support peace, said Vess, but they also have other roles "as victims, witnesses to violence, and agents of change." Vess reiterated that men face high levels of economic stress in post-conflict settings, especially since a man's identity in so many cultures is linked to his provider role. "Combat offers a way for men to have the status or money that they have lost," he noted.

Patti Petesch, a field researcher on gender equality for the World Bank, challenged the completely negative view of post-conflict periods. These environments can provide "windows of opportunity," where women can "get out in public spaces in their communities in ways that they could not during peacetime" or take up new earning roles. Citing the examples of Afghanistan and Cambodia, she added that both men and women are often forced to find alternative livelihoods after conflict, which not only can offer them better deals economically, but can also lead to establishing new social norms and behaviors.

Rethinking Gender Narratives

How one thinks about gender affects the programs and policies that organizations put in place to advance the status of women, and support men, in countries in transition. Ní Aoláin suggested that focusing on women's victimization "perpetrates the status of women as less able, less resourceful, and less autonomous." Focusing on women as victims is a comfortable space for international organizations, she added, but it "reinscribes the very notions of vulnerability, dependency, and frailty that are the causalities that produce the violence in the first place."

Many of the panelists at the symposium pointed to the broader issue of promoting gender equality as an operating principle. Jouejati talked, for example, about her foundation's work on restoring equality and education in Syria and involving both men and women in that process. The eventual rebuilding of the country, said Jouejati, will require "the active participation of all citizens regardless of gender, ethnic background, or religious belief." She strongly advocated, however, for any new government in Syria to have at least 50 percent representation of women. "A new government in its infancy cannot afford to marginalize more than half of its population," she said. "We need to chip away at the myth that women are not suited for certain tasks".

Explaining an analysis that she conducted in eight countries, Petesch claimed that the "normative framework shifts when you have more local level gender equality and it creates space for women to contribute more effectively to peace and prosperity on the ground." Her struggle, she said, is trying to convince economists to do more systematic work on the role that these local level institutions can play in violence prevention.

Vess reminded participants that men's needs also have to be considered. If we do not deal with the destabilizing effects that conflict has on men, contributed Vess, "then it's harder to achieve the ends we want on women's economic empowerment. It's not a zero sum game. … Violence is a behavior that societies choose to teach men. And, so, if we want to do violence prevention with men, we have to realize that this is not just at an individual level, but at a relationship level and a community level and a societal level. And, we have to work with men and women to break this down."

Policy and Practice

The symposium speakers offered a number of practical suggestions for addressing post-conflict violence. Ní Aoláin cited the dearth of data in post-conflict settings, for example, and called for increased data collection—especially on women's lived experiences—in these environments. One arena where there is "robust evidence," said Ní Aoláin, is what one can do to "manage military forces" to reduce sexual violence. The problem, however, is making sure that consequences for sexual violence are applied. Who has command and control responsibilities and the way that deployments are structured matters, she said. Cahn, too, commented on the importance of having female police and military liaisons in peacekeeping missions, as they may have greater sensitivities to working with victims of violence.

Lori Handrahan, formerly with American University, centered her remarks on the rapes and sexual harassment that female humanitarian aid workers suffer at the hands of their own colleagues during field missions. Pleading for this "cone of silence" to be broken, she advocated for congressional hearings to be held on this topic and for money to be committed to a large-scale research project that examines how many humanitarian and development workers are raped on the job. Handrahan also called for "zero immunity" for senior U.S. and U.N. officials involved in the "violence against women, children, and men … [that] is a booming business in post-conflict environments."

Valji focused on changes needed in the justice sector. "Redressing past crimes and rebuilding of the justice system is incredibly important … as a symbolic message about equal rights and about equal application of the rule of law." She stressed the importance of reestablishing the rule of law and justice institutions in post-conflict settings as an important precondition for stemming the tide of gender-based violence. Valji spoke for some time on reparations programs, adding that they are underfunded and, thus, do not have a transformative impact on women's lives. Overall, she advocated a "rethink" of the some of the mandates, timeframes, institutions, and mechanisms that deliver justice so that they take gender considerations into account.

In response to a question about the need for support services, Valji admitted that the stigma attached to reporting incidents of sexual violence was very high and, hence, the need for legal aid, trauma counseling, and protections for survivors who testify. "We can't expect victims to speak about their experiences if we don't have the support services they require," she pointed out. In response to a related question on the inappropriate way that some Western organizations work with women in other countries, Jouejati agreed that the social stigma attached to rape in Middle Eastern countries made it infeasible to expect that interventions like support groups were going to work. Rape victims need time and slow coaxing in order to speak, she said, and "victims need to understand that what happened is a crime that is punishable."

On the legal front, Cahn suggested that cases of violence against women may be more effectively addressed through the civil system than the criminal justice system. The former "gives the victim much more control over what happens," she said. Under a domestic violence protection order, said Cahn, "the individual herself goes to a court to ask for protection." If the cases are going through the criminal justice system, she noted, "then one is dealing with police, prosecutors, and the judicial system so control is taken away from individual survivors."

Anchoring in the Local

Several of the panelists commented on the imperative of more engagement with local communities. Garzon addressed this topic briefly in his opening remarks. "Many issues that affect women and girls, or marginalized men and boys, are neglected in security reforms," he said, "Security sector reform goes beyond police and military; it also includes the role of communities, civilian authorities and civil society and it's those places where women can have a greater chance of participating."

Jouejati described her foundation's work with Local Coordinating Committees (LCC's) in Syria to implement training programs in that country. "We sometimes train more than 300 people a day in liberated areas," said Jouejati. Her goal is to open more centers employing Syrian staff so that more men and women can "recognize the perils of domestic violence" and can understand how violence has been affecting them.

Much of Petesch's work, too, revolves around examining the role of local-level institutions. The literature about the causes of violence, she stated, is about whether leaders are implementing laws for protecting civilians. However, there is also a lot of agency on the ground. She referenced some work on Hindu/Muslim violence that revealed the important role that intra ethnic networks in peaceful communities played in quickly dampening violence. "We know about how to structure our local level institutions to have more capacity to hold leaders accountable … [and] we can build institutions that cut across risky societal divides," said Petesch, "but, it's not a central driver of programming." She counseled that work on gender inclusion has to happen at multiple entry points. Outsiders can play a role by "insisting that women are at the table."

Ní Aoláin added that in communities in Northern Ireland, "certain forms of sexual violence did not appear." She emphasized how important it was to identify these restraints so as not to end up in the same conflict loops. She also clarified how vital it was to "anchor in the local" and asserted that, in too many conflict zones, there was a reliance on experts who were "parachuted in." Working with local non-governmental organizations also has a cost, she admitted, "but it is required for deep and fundamental buy-in to the process that actually prevents that conflict from becoming repetitive or cyclical."