

CHAPTER 9

Financing for Gender Equality: Post-conflict Reconstruction and Peace-building

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Overview

The devastating impact of conflict results in widespread destruction of infrastructure, livelihoods, services and communities and massive dislocation of populations. Years of bad governance and fiscal breakdown leave war-shattered failed States with no reserves and little capacity for financial management. Huge amounts of resources have been and continue to be expended on large and medium-level conflicts in countries such as Afghanistan, Bougainville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Liberia, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and the former Yugoslavia. Millions of dollars have been spent on attempts to reconstruct these countries with no guarantees of sustainable democratisation or economic development.

While massive costs are entailed in waging wars, the extreme poverty of vulnerable populations, particularly women and children, is always exacerbated by conflict. In many cases, following the cessation of hostilities there has been an outpouring of donor funding for post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building, but the extent to which this has promoted gender equality or benefited women and children has yet to be determined.

Women's involvement as equal players in national reconstruction is essential if they are '... to influence decisions that affect their lives and those of their families, and their political, social and economic empowerment must form part of the democratic ideal that contributes to sustainable development' (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005:26). In the immediate aftermath of conflict there exists a short, critical window for women to be 'included at the highest levels of peace-building, peacekeeping, conflict mediation, resolution, and post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction activities' (ibid:28).

This has to be translated into a gender-inclusive, participatory process of reconstruction with equal decision-making about access to and allocation of resources. Achieving this raises a number of questions. What is the involvement of women in peace negotiations and donor conferences? To what degree are their priorities, concerns and values integrated into in-country donor needs assessments? Are they consulted in developing frameworks for national reconstruction and given serious consideration in defining priorities and resources? To what extent are systems of donor accountability for disbursement of

funding during and after crises gender sensitive? How can a gender lens be applied to audit both the inputs and outputs of the billions of dollars spent globally for humanitarian aid, reconstruction and peace-building?

Post-conflict Reconstruction: A Window for Gender Equality

In the immediate aftermath of conflict and the conclusion of a peace agreement there is usually an influx of international actors charged with undertaking social and economic recovery in order to prevent a reversion to violent conflict. If planned and executed from a rights-based approach, this period of transition to sustainable peace can serve as a unique 'window of opportunity' to establish new norms and rules, engage new leaders and build new institutions with a focus on women's rights and their invaluable contribution to their nation's rebuilding. The period must be used not to reconstruct what has failed, but rather to build a new model of democratisation and development.

From the very beginning of the reconstruction phase, the full and equal involvement of women is an issue of gender justice. This concept encompasses equitable treatment and participation of women in the negotiation of peace agreements, the planning and implementation of UN peace operations, the creation and administration of new governments (including agencies and institutions focused on the needs of women and girls), the provision of the full range of educational opportunities and the revival and growth of the economy. It also includes fostering a culture that enhances the talents, capabilities and well-being of women and girls.

Thus it is essential to engage all stakeholders in the reconstruction process, which begins with a peace agreement and is often followed by peace-keeping or peace support operations mandated to create conditions to restore internal security and repair communications, roads and transportation. The focus then shifts to restoring the rule of law, administration, governance, a judicial system and rebuilding basic social services such as health and education (Anderlini, 2004:52), requiring substantial contributions by donors. These key players in national rebuilding – including the United Nations, World Bank, bilateral funders and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)¹ – all have policies upholding the centrality of gender mainstreaming and should be in the forefront of ensuring that women are equal partners in, and equal beneficiaries of, all reconstruction programmes and activities.

This would give centrality to gender equality, which implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration from the outset (OSAGI, 2001), because for women in particular the peace table is a forum not only for negotiating an end to war, but also for laying the foundations of a new society guided by the principles of social justice, human rights and equality (Anderlini, 2000:10). Participation can offer women the opportunity to secure gains on a wide range of issues – such as economic security, social development and political participation – related to the advancement of women's rights and gender equality. While there is evidence that more recent peace agreements are starting to underscore the economic and security needs of women, such provisions are rarely backed by sufficient resources and will. Donors are in

a powerful position not only to insist that women participate equally in all negotiations and to support their involvement, but also to ensure that gender budgetary frameworks are put in place to embed gender equality into every stage of reconstruction planning and implementation.

One of the most immediate ways in which this can be done is in the initial post-conflict aftermath during the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR) phase. The 'invisibility' of many female ex-combatants and the definition of a 'combatant' as someone with weapons serve to compound the assumption that women who have undertaken supportive roles for male combatants are not entitled to benefits. This occurred in Timor-Leste in 2000, when the World Bank provided reintegration support and job training for former Fretilin² fighters with no benefit packages for the hundreds of women who had worked clandestinely supporting the 25-year liberation struggle. Before the official processes, women are often engaged in grassroots disarmament, as witnessed in Bougainville, Sierra Leone and Solomon Islands.

Although the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 calls for all those involved in planning for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependents, only 6 per cent of DDRR participants in Sierra Leone were women and 0.6 per cent girls, although women and girls constituted an estimated 12 per cent of combatants. In northern Uganda, girls and young women maintained that education and skills training would be the most meaningful contribution that local and international agencies could provide to assist their reintegration. Yet few released from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)³ have benefited from internationally funded reintegration programmes.

Article XXVIII, paragraph 2 of the Lomé Peace Accord, which ended hostilities in Sierra Leone, stated that since women 'have been particularly victimized during the war, special attention shall be accorded to their needs and potentials in formulating and implementing national rehabilitation, reconstruction and development programmes, to enable them play a central role in the moral, social and physical reconstruction of Sierra Leone'. Yet despite such acknowledgements, support services and legal aid were rarely provided to women during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC),⁴ and those involved in the judicial process were not provided with gender-sensitivity training to eliminate the gender bias that impeded women from receiving fair treatment as witnesses, as complainants and in investigations. If a donor-supported gender justice fund were to be made available to women and girls, with training resources and capacity-building provided for those involved in all such processes, then justice and reparations for victims of gender-based violence and other human rights abuses might be realised.

In order to heal war-torn societies, social justice, which also encompasses health and education issues, has to be accorded a high priority. Pre-conflict state failure diverts human and financial resources away from public health and other social services, a situation compounded by widespread destruction of facilities and resources during war. Immediate attention has to be given not only to the plethora of injuries sustained, but also to the spread of disease, including increased rates of HIV transmission. While

women and girls are victims of the general violence and lack of health care, along with men and boys, they also experience the physical, psychological and societal repercussions of sexual violations. Special resources have to be allocated to addressing their rehabilitation and to the restoration of public health services, particularly in areas of reproductive health.

While immediate assistance is required to rebuild war-shattered economies, particular attention should be accorded to the gendered dimensions of economic reconstruction. Often during times of conflict women assume the role of bread-winner, taking on jobs traditionally undertaken by men. In addition to their domestic roles as primary caregivers, many women seek work outside the home in order to sustain their families as single parents. The percentage of female-headed households escalates during and after conflict, with widows often having no rights to the land they cultivate. With national reconstruction, many women lose their employment in the formal sector and return to working within the household or in the informal sector.

The establishment of peace support missions, coupled with the huge injection of foreign capital and influx of a short-term international community, results in the development of a dual economy, juxtaposing a wealthy foreign elite that enjoys a luxury lifestyle with a totally impoverished local population without access to basic goods and services. The gendered impact of this immediate, short-lived economic imbalance has yet to be fully analysed, but in many instances it inflates prices for local household items and foodstuffs. It also results in many women and girls seeking employment informally in the service sector, as household domestics or prostitutes. Lack of workplace contracts and unstable conditions exposes them to abuse, as well as loss of family income with the downscaling of peace-keeping and donor operations. Failure to address income-generating skills training, short-term emergency credit provisions and sustainable employment opportunities leads to a gender imbalance, with women excluded from economic reconstruction.

Post-conflict reconstruction programmes must prevent such discrimination by providing equal opportunities to women and men. While it is crucially important to focus on employing men, missing the opportunity to engage women in formal economic activities is a strategic oversight. The major development challenge is to take advantage of and assist in sustaining positive gender role changes regarding work by designing economic assistance programmes that build on newly acquired skills and encourage women and men to continue in their new activities.

Without economic support, women face huge barriers in attaining an equal voice in decision-making at a time of flux when they should play a key role in determining the nation's political future. Ensuring that non-discrimination and gender equality are embedded in new or revised constitutions is essential to build a legal and political framework based on rights. Lack of funding and capacity to build strong, unified civil society organisations (CSOs) and caucuses can prevent women making the most of the crucial interim period between a peace agreement and the first post-conflict elections. While in many countries, such as Afghanistan, Rwanda, South Africa and Timor-Leste, the post-conflict period witnessed a substantial increase in female parliamentary representation,

in others, such as the Solomon Islands, it did not. A variety of factors are responsible and comparative studies need to be undertaken, but one of the key barriers facing women seeking political office, particularly those who contest as independents, is lack of financial support and capacity-building, regarded by women in the Solomon Islands as the key obstacle to their failure to secure a single seat in the 2006 elections.

Engendering Post-conflict Recovery and Peace-building Budgets

How can post-conflict gender gaps be redressed? The answer lies largely in adopting an inclusive, rights-based transformational approach to ensure constructive change, moving war-torn populations from extreme vulnerability and dependency to self-sufficiency and well-being. However, 'post-conflict reconstruction programmes rarely recognise the impact of decisions on resource allocations to different sectors on women, men and gender relations. Removing gender barriers in setting priorities may affect development outcomes significantly...' (Sweetman, 2005:5).

A key international instrument for ensuring that women are not marginalised is United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which recognises that '... peace is inextricably linked to equality between women and men' (Annan, 2000). The resolution addresses itself to all actors involved in negotiating and implementing peace agreements, calling on them to adopt a gender perspective, particularly regarding the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for involving women in all the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements. Special focus is accorded to ensuring the protection of and respect for the human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary (United Nations, 2000).

The full budgetary implications of implementing Resolution 1325 have yet to be assessed. UN financing of post-conflict recovery, reconstruction and sustainable peace-building draws on a number of budgetary sources, most notably peacekeeping, the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), the recent Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), covering all humanitarian crises, as well the budgets of UN agencies and funds that cover economic, social and political reconstruction. While there are numerous UN directives, mandates and resolutions on mainstreaming gender equality into all policies and programmes, there is as yet no gender budget for peace-keeping operations or peace building. Nor do many reconstruction efforts and budgets specifically target women or undergo a gender-budget analysis. For example, in the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), the peace-keeping mission in Timor-Leste from 2000–2002, there was no budget allocated to the Gender Unit for programme implementation, all funding having to be raised independently from international external donors.⁵ There are still no systems in place to monitor and evaluate the allocation and disbursement of funding to ensure that women and girls are equal partners in and equal beneficiaries of the full array of peace-keeping and national reconstruction programmes falling under the aegis of the UN.

The largest multilateral funder is the World Bank, which in its Operational Policy states that it 'aims to reduce gender disparities and enhance women's participation in the economic development of their countries by integrating gender considerations in its country assistance program' (World Bank, 2002:30). Through its Post-Conflict Fund (PCF), established in 1997 to enhance the Bank's ability to support countries in transition from conflict to sustainable peace and economic growth, grants are made to a wide range of partners (UN agencies, transitional authorities, governments, institutions, NGOs and other civil society bodies) to provide earlier and broader Bank assistance to post-conflict countries (www.worldbank.org). In a recent analysis of its role in conflict and development, the Bank stated clearly that 'the design of post-conflict reconstruction programs needs to adopt an explicit gender focus...' (World Bank, 2004:20), and that the PCF has played 'an important role in supporting innovative approaches to gender in conflict-affected countries' (ibid:21). Among the initiatives supported have been community actions for the reintegration and recovery of youth and women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, employment projects for women in Bosnia and capacity-building for rural women leaders in South Africa, as well as a special project for war widows in Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

While specific women-focused projects can undoubtedly promote women's empowerment, such an approach fails to mainstream gender equality throughout all aspects of reconstruction and nation-building programmes. For example, credit is a popular post-conflict reconstruction tool, but even though it is a particularly difficult challenge for women without collateral, many credit programmes for post-conflict reconstruction have failed to integrate gender equality, as was seen in the World Bank Sierra Leone Economic Rehabilitation and Recovery Credit Project, which did not even acknowledge women's important role in the economy (ibid:6).

Donor coordination is essential during this critical period if women's equal involvement is to be assured. A sudden huge injection of funding into countries that have been shattered economically, politically and socially has to be carefully managed. Unless a donor co-ordination mechanism is established that is able to monitor disbursement, duplication can occur. Women's organisations that may have been active as freedom fighters or peace-makers have to be able make the transition to promoting the role of women's rights in reconstruction. Unless a structured women's network is established and strengthened, the in-pouring of donor funding can lead to divisiveness, with new NGOs cropping up or others breaking away from a larger organisation in order to take advantage of the brief window of abundance. Both multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as other international actors, need to encourage unity of vision and a common agenda for women. This can be greatly facilitated by supporting a Women's Congress or National Women's Conference at the outset, as in Afghanistan, Iraq and Timor-Leste. Such inclusive conferences can produce a 'gender blueprint' for transformative reconstruction based on gender equality.

Despite commitments to the importance of gender equality, the percentages of donor funding actually allocated to women's economic, social and political empowerment in the wake of conflict remains miniscule compared with the total outlay. While there has

been a recent recognition of the need for resource allocation to combat gender-based violence, other key women's rights areas in the rule of law, governance and economic reconstruction are being neglected. If a gender audit were to be undertaken in selected post-conflict countries at various stages of redevelopment, it would be evident that when the overall impact of the reconstruction aid agenda is assessed, gender equality and women's rights have been largely overlooked.

Both the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) and the OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality have recognised that gender equality and women's empowerment are critical for development effectiveness (IANWGE/OECD-DAC, 2006). Yet reviews of poverty reduction strategies, Millennium Development Goal (MDG) progress reports and sector-wide approaches suggest that, with some notable exceptions, these have largely been gender-blind, take a very narrow perspective on gender, lack empirical evidence and/or fail to translate gender analysis into plans with budgets. There is a clear acknowledgement that to be effective in influencing the agenda, donors need to forge partnerships and develop clear goals and strategies for joint work to foster gender equality (Network on Gender Equality, 2006). This is very relevant to the critical interim stage between the end of hostilities and building the foundations for a successfully operating State out of the ashes of one that has failed.

All post-conflict reconstruction programmes should support initial gender impact assessments, gender budget analyses and advocacy to improve spending patterns so that more donor funding benefits men and women equally (ibid). The OECD (2005) 'Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States', in conjunction with the partnership commitments of the Paris Declaration,⁶ can be engendered and applied as a guide to evaluating the effectiveness of such programmes. As considered by the OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality and the OECD-DAC Working Party on Aid Effectiveness at their meeting in July 2006, one possible adaptation could be the following:

- *Ownership* can incorporate gender equality issues and women's concerns into the reconstruction agenda, with full support given to the strengthening and inclusion of women's national machineries and civil society organisations in implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- *Alignment* necessitates donor acknowledgement of the application of mutual commitments to gender equality and international instruments to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment.
- *Harmonisation* of ways of addressing gender equality in evolving new programme mechanisms and rationalisation of donor support for countries emerging from conflict should be undertaken.
- *Managing for results* should demonstrate gender equality results and impacts, with monitoring of the gender impacts of donor-funded reconstruction reflected in all performance assessment frameworks.
- *Mutual accountability* should be the responsibility of all multilateral and bilateral donors involved in post-conflict reconstruction programmes, with women included

in the mechanisms; accountability must be monitored using gender-responsive indicators (Network on Gender Equality, 2006)

The priorities of women in reconstructing their war-torn nation were very clearly enunciated in the Sudanese women's recommendations to the Oslo Donors Conference in April 2005, where they called for a commitment to principles of gender-responsive resource allocation so that at least 80 per cent of budgetary allocations and resource support to Sudan's reconstruction met at least three of the following criteria:

- directly benefiting women, contributing directly to women's empowerment and increasing women's capacities, opportunities and access to resources;
- reducing gender inequalities in law, policy and practice;
- directly benefiting young people, especially girls, in disadvantaged communities;
- targeting rural areas.

The women also called for the provision of financial support for the hosting of an all-inclusive Sudanese Women's Conference that would define a coherent, long-term agenda and strategy for accelerating women's empowerment and gender equality.⁷ They argued that for such an agenda to become a reality, donors and multilateral agencies would need to use their combined strengths and forge partnerships to foster gender equality as a clearly defined joint goal and shared task. This would necessitate a greater pooling of resources, increased use of programmatic approaches, joint analytical work, a clear division of roles and responsibilities, and agreements on strategic priorities and approaches by donors and multilateral agencies (Network on Gender Equality, 2006:6).

Commonwealth Commitment to Transformative Reconstruction

As a key international actor, the Commonwealth has long been an advocate of the integral importance of gender equality, regarding the principles of gender equality and inclusion as fundamental values on which every attempt at democracy and peace building must be based. With a mandate encompassing human rights, promotion of democracy and good governance, electoral support to post-conflict countries and technical cooperation, the Commonwealth has also played a leading role in developing resources for gender budgeting.

The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government urged governments to 'take vigorous action to promote and defend women's rights, and advocate for their political participation in peace processes and democratic decision-making' (www.thecommonwealth.org). The Sixth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (WAMM), held in Delhi in 2000, recommended that 'the Commonwealth take action in collaboration with other international organisations and civil society to include women at the highest levels of peace-building, peacekeeping, conflict mediation, resolution, and post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction activities ...' (ibid). It encouraged a 30 per cent target for women's

participation in peace initiatives by the year 2005. The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 recognises that women's empowerment and gender equality are intrinsic to achieving sustainable development and democracy. It aims to advance Commonwealth action in gender, democracy, peace and conflict; gender, human rights and law; gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment; and gender and HIV/AIDS. All of these four areas are critical to rebuilding war-torn states.

The many gender-responsive budgetary tools developed by the Commonwealth – including gender-aware policy appraisal, beneficiary assessment, gender-disaggregated expenditure incidence analysis and the gender-aware medium-term economic policy framework – can be adapted to prepare a gender-responsive budget assessment of the application of funding resources in post-conflict reconstruction and peace building. The capacities of national machineries for women and women's CSOs can be developed to examine and monitor inputs, activities, outputs and impacts of multilateral and bilateral donor interventions and provide comprehensive feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of donor expenditure (Budlender and Hewitt, 2002). Gender budgeting models such as those undertaken in Rwanda and South Africa can be further developed and improved, and adapted to other Commonwealth countries such as Bougainville, Sierra Leone and Solomon Islands that are currently developing good governance programmes.

Both the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) have direct experience in furthering Commonwealth principles in post-conflict development and democratisation. The CFTC regards itself as a force for peace, democracy, equality and good governance and is utilised to fund policy advice, build capacity, develop resource materials and give technical assistance (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005). The CPA works in the fields of good governance, democracy, elections and human rights, with special attention paid to gender sensitising.⁸ Such capacity for outreach and direct involvement in post-conflict transitions enables these Commonwealth bodies to undertake a key role in evaluating the extent of resource allocation for women's empowerment and gender equity.

Conclusions

In order to advance gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment in post-conflict reconstruction, adequate resources must be earmarked, monitored and evaluated to determine to what extent they are advancing equality for development and democracy. Gender-disaggregated measures of inputs, outputs and outcomes for reconstruction budgets need to be developed and gender audits undertaken in countries at various stages of recovery and rehabilitation.

The Commonwealth is in a prime position to evaluate existing gender budgetary resources, experiences and expertise. It can take the initiative in developing inclusive budgetary frameworks and models for rebuilding war-torn countries. With its direct access to governments, it can work to build the capacity of women's ministries and national machineries to work with finance ministries, CSOs and international donors to develop appropriate gender equality objectives and strategies. The capacity of

women parliamentarians to monitor budgetary expenditure can also be developed and strengthened.

Failure to ensure that reconstruction and peace-building budgets are consultative, inclusive and equitable will result in rebuilding from a flawed perspective. Peace building must be a participatory process that does not reconstruct what has failed, but develops a new paradigm based on gender equality and the protection of women's social, economic and political rights.

Notes

1. NGOs such as, for example, Oxfam, CARE and Save the Children Fund.
2. Fretilin (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) was the resistance movement that fought for independence in East Timor, first from the Portuguese and then from Indonesia, 1974–98.
3. Nearly all captive girls, including those who are pregnant and/or have small children, are trained as fighters in the LRA.
4. A TRC was also established in Sierra Leone by an Act of Parliament on 10 February 2000. It directs that that TRC pay 'special attention to the subject of sexual abuse'.
5. As Head of the UNTAET Gender Unit, the author was responsible for developing proposals and raising external funding for gender mainstreaming projects in the transitional administration, dealing with gender-based violence, conducting a situational analysis of the documentation of the impact of conflict on women and organising women's political training for elections.
6. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, signed in March 2005, established global commitments for donor and partner countries to support more effective aid in a context of significant scaling up of aid.
7. 'Sudanese Women's Priorities and Recommendations to the Oslo Donors Conference on Sudan, 11–12 April 2005', Oslo Donors Conference on Sudan, 2005.
8. See the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) website, www.cpahq.org

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