

Good Practice on Gender in Peacebuilding Programming



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Below: Director General of the Ministry of Education of Jubaland State asks students about the subject they are currently learning in class. © IOM 2019/Rikka TUPAZ

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Good Practice on Gender in Peacebuilding Programming



Introduction

Gender impacts and determines the experiences of migrants, displaced persons and other crisis-affected populations, especially in fragile settings. Conflict dynamics are fundamentally gendered, and gendered norms and identities affect individual vulnerabilities as well as capacities to contribute to peace. Peace and recovery programming must account for gender dynamics to effectively address the root causes of forced migration in conjunction with delivering humanitarian support.

It is important to recognize that people of different genders are impacted differently during and in the aftermath of crises and to engage in gender-responsive and -transformative programming in order to contribute to stabilization and resilience, durable solution and recovery. Moreover, acknowledging that peace processes are not gender neutral and understanding how to account for disparities in programming to foster more inclusive and equitable peacebuilding, is foundational to breaking cycles of violence and building societies resilient to violent conflict. Finally, as part of a comprehensive gender-sensitive approach, it is crucial to understand the transformative role that women and other gender groups can have during transition phases, including early recovery and community stabilization. This progression from an approach focused on viewing women and girls as victims and survivors and protecting women and girls, to one that empowers them as peacebuilders, is central to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.

Programming on gender in peacebuilding shows high levels of expertise and engagement. The type of interventions designed and the methodologies used are a testament to the Organization's capacity to integrate state-of-the-art concepts of gender equality and gender mainstreaming into approaches that are truly gender-transformative in seeking to change the structures, norms and behaviours that perpetuate conflict and gender inequality.

1. Gender analysis as an integral element in conflict sensitivity. Identifying, understanding and addressing gendered dynamics that contribute to vulnerabilities is key to solving crises, breaking cycles of violence and building resilient societies. Moreover, it allows practitioners to design programming which can shift gendered values and structures at the root of gender inequality without exposing affected populations to additional risks. Failing to do so would be conflict insensitive and likely exacerbate divisions.

Examples

Community stabilization programming aimed at improving social cohesion and border security in the border regions of **Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia** found women (through cross-border trade) and youth (due to increased violence) to be the most active participants in cross-border interactions and recognized them as potential peace champions. Based on past studies, best practices and lessons learned, this project discussed the **differential impact on gender and youth**, along with the need for more inclusive peace committees with women representatives at all levels.

In **South Sudan**, peacebuilding programmes aimed at reducing violence and enhancing social cohesion through youth action considering how a lack of opportunities for the youth led to an

increase in violence through youth gangs and impacted youth gang members as well as the community. Diving into the **gendered impacts of rising conflict and insecurity**, the analysis revealed that men and boys are affected by an inability to live up to the traditional masculinity norms, while women and girls face increased risk of gender-based violence and forced marriage. Project staff were sensitized to gender concerns and a gender-balanced team was composed. Project activities were designed in a gender-sensitive manner to challenge negative cultural and gender norms affecting different groups. Moreover, gender-based needs and constraints were identified through project activities and informed future areas of intervention.

2. Gender Programming for People of all Genders. Gender-based programming is often equated with women and girls. Women and girls continue to be disproportionately impacted by gender inequality, and therefore their empowerment and achieving equality for them is of utmost importance. However, it is equally important to recognize that negative gender norms and gendered dimensions of crisis affect people of all genders including men and boys and people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). Therefore, gender-sensitive programming must include people of all genders to the greatest extent possible. While it is not always possible or recommendable to identify and target people with diverse SOGIESC directly due to safety and security risks, it is important that programme staff are aware and trained on the implications of gendered dimensions in peace and recovery programming.¹

¹ An analysis of the gendered dimensions of the DRR programme in the Lake Chad Basin Region showed the importance of integrating gender considerations into programming.

Engaging men and including men in gender interventions is a key success factor.

Experience shows that engaging men in gender programming will increase their support and that of the community, building trust and sustainable change. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to consider the effects that projects aimed at addressing gender inequality (including challenges faced specifically by women) have on men, and to include men in such interventions. In contexts of fragility, violent behaviour of men is not only tolerated but often highly encouraged and celebrated. When faced with the impossibility of fulfilling their gender roles of providers for the household and the fear of stigmatization in seeking out support, men can be incentivized to join armed groups or decide to flee. Similarly, ideas of masculinities are instrumentalized by recruiters to persuade men, often coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, to enrol in armed groups and forces. Addressing challenges specific to men is critical. For example, projects that seek to address toxic masculinities and expectations of men are efficient ways of engaging men on gender related challenges. However, while entry points and methodologies for working with men and boys have been found, this type of work remains challenging, mainly because of resistance linked to gendered cultural and social norms. Further practice and knowledge generation is necessary to improve methodologies for engaging men and to develop tools and methodologies that will contribute to overcoming negative gender and cultural norms around masculinity.²

Examples

PVE programming in Western Balkans is an example of efficient engagement with both men and women. Using innovative approaches, the programme conducted workshops and trainings on topics affecting both men and women, such as **toxic masculinities**, **objectification** and **misogyny**, and impacts of **rigid gender norms**. The participation of men in the trainings was very high and a key success factor. In parallel, the programme also worked with parent community networks where women are active participants or leaders and reported having an opportunity to discuss and address personal grievances.

In **Morocco**, the Favorable Opportunities to Reinforce Self-Advancement for Today's Youth (FORSATY) programme conducted **gender**

mainstreaming workshops with local CSO partners, social workers, and programme staff to **identify interventions** and **long-term approaches to address gender issues**. The workshops identified gender-based violence, toxic masculinity and restrictive gender norms as key challenges. Crucially, the discussions also highlighted the differences in women's and girls' experiences, opportunities and vulnerabilities based on their geographical location (urban versus rural), education and cultural norms. For instance, women in urban areas received greater support from family for pursuing higher education while those in rural areas had limited education and career related opportunities which were compounded by a lack of family support. The programme reflected on specific vulnerabilities and accordingly designed gender-specific activities.

² A [study](#) on addressing harmful masculinities in cattle-related violence in South Sudan helped generate evidence for the contextual adaptation of a gender-transformative approach to peacebuilding under the South Sudan Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund Peacebuilding Project.

3. Intersectionality – Multiple and Multisectoral Interventions. Project beneficiaries of various gender groups are often exposed to multiple and intertwined spheres of violence or threats (cultural, social, communal, personal, etc.) and therefore solutions must be offered in different dimensions simultaneously. Combining various approaches within a single project and working simultaneously in different realms and with different counterparts (typically local entities, national institutions, and families) and for various direct or indirect beneficiaries, significantly increases project efficiency.

Gender groups are not homogenous. Another critical dimension of intersectionality is that of representing the heterogeneity among and within gender groups depending on their intersection disability, race, ethnicity, age, religious beliefs, socioeconomic status and other characteristics. Successful programmes understand and reflect such contextual differences among various groups of genders. In some contexts, for example, it is necessary to not only hold separate focus group discussions in communities for men and women to ensure that participants are confident to speak out, but also by age brackets, as cultural norms may prevent younger women to speak up when older women are present.

Example

Youth gangs in South Sudan's Wau town are believed to be partly responsible for the increasing insecurity and crime in the community, which affects community relations and puts women and girls at risk. In response, the project engages directly with youth gang members and "at-risk" youth to reduce violence and enhance social cohesion, increase their positive social and economic engagement, and improve community perceptions. It uses **creative methods of engagement** such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Engaging Men in Accountable Practices (EMAP), body mapping and art to promote psychosocial well-being and behavioural change with opportunities for improving emotional skills, literacy, livelihoods and vocational training.

The project uses **gender transformative approaches to challenge negative cultural**

and gender norms. The EMAP curriculum was adapted for the South Sudan context and used for trainings of trainers and youth dialogue sessions. The dialogue sessions employed a balanced group of facilitators and were designed to address the different issues faced by young men and women. As a result of the project activities, youth involved in the project are said to be less affected by harmful masculinities. Additionally, women were also provided leadership trainings to help them engage effectively in decision-making processes. Crucially, these sessions recognized the barriers to meaningful participation by the female participants' and focused on building up their self-esteem. The success of the interventions so far has prompted interest in scaling up activities to focus on persons with disabilities and women and girls.

4. Collaboration. Collaboration with international organizations, governments and civil society, including grassroots organizations, helps promote gender-responsive peacebuilding practices and leverage resources and expertise. These multi-stakeholder partnerships ensure a diversity of perspectives and resources. Alliance-building, such as women's peace networks, can play a crucial role in building trust and resilience within communities as well as in advancing the peace agenda.

Example

The project “**Women for an inclusive reintegration in Cameroon**” has been contributing to gender equality and the empowerment of women in national and regional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes in Cameroon by supporting and empowering women's organizations to increase their involvement in the coordination and implementation of the national DDR programme. This has been done by building their capacity on DDR,

reconciliation, prevention of violent extremism, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and project development for women's organizations, by providing a funding mechanism for women's and civil society organizations to engage in DDR, by supporting the national DDR commission (NDDRC) and by putting in place a coordination system with women's organizations/civil society and the State on DDR for the implementation of the Government's gender strategy.

5. Meaningful Participation. Ensuring the meaningful participation of gender groups in project design and implementation is key for their empowerment. It is also the main challenge encountered in peace and recovery programmes. Participation of women, for instance, may be limited or non-existent because of exogenous factors such as security risks, lack of access to or inadequate sanitation and hygiene or the unavailability of child support. Barriers to participation may also emanate from context-specific gender and cultural norms. For example, gendered societal structures may impede programme staff from identifying gender groups, including women or women's groups. It is therefore important to ensure for example, the availability of female programme staff to improve women's participation, amongst others.

Even when initial obstacles to identify and access gender groups are surmounted, they may still be hesitant or unable to actively take part in project design and implementation, for multiple reasons. For instance, women may be discouraged or inconvenienced by the presence of men, elder community leaders or religious leaders. They may also feel pressured to agree with their male counterparts or older women even if they have diverging opinions. Therefore, it is critical to create environments in which women are confident that they can be heard safely and that are culturally sensitive to avoid creating further risks. Should that not be possible in a mixed-sex setting, sex disaggregated workshops and focus group discussions can provide an alternative.

Practice shows that moving beyond commonly accepted roles and emphasizing the multiple possible roles of women and other gender groups is beneficial to peacebuilding projects. Moving away from the common notion that women are inherently vulnerable or categorized as victims and/or persons without agency, is key in facilitating women's contributions to peacebuilding efforts. For example, women religious leaders have an important role to play as community mobilizers and often respected moral authorities. Women should not merely be seen as trust builders or gatekeepers at the family and community level, but formal participation in institutional processes at local, national, regional and international levels should be promoted as well, including in negotiations, decision-making and implementation of peace agreements, planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration or the design and implementation of conflict and violence reduction or stabilization programmes. Increased participation and engagement will also likely lead to the development of gender-sensitive legal frameworks and policies that promote gender equality and non-discrimination.

Example

Cross-border **community stabilization** programming in **Tajikistan and Afghanistan** presents an example of how activities can be **adapted to the local norms**. The programme worked towards improving security and resilience among the border communities through capacity-building for border agencies. Specialized curriculum and joint trainings were designed for female border guards to improve their abilities to respond to security concerns. However, local norms in these areas discourage

women's interactions with strangers, especially men. To overcome this, female border guards from Afghanistan were accompanied by chaperons for the trainings. Moreover, project monitoring activities for female beneficiaries were carried out by female staff. The trainings reportedly contributed to an increase in the knowledge and skills of the female border-guards as well as led to an increase in enrolment of female border guards.

6. Innovative Approaches. In the sampled projects, the methodologies used to address gender issues are very innovative and show a high level of technical expertise. Several innovative approaches such as media literacy, arts and MHPSS-oriented activities illustrate promising practices, based on the respective project's results reports. For example, *Body Mapping exercises*³ and *Engaging Men through Accountable Practices (EMAP)*⁴ are shown to be a useful tool to addressing GBV and CRSV. Furthermore, creating and strengthening group

³ [Here](#) is an example of how body mapping was used in Kenya to challenge prevalent ideas about violent extremism and less visible experiences of violence, amongst others. More guidance can be found [here](#), for example.

⁴ For more information, please consult the IRC [guide on EMAP](#) or [E-motive](#), for example.

capacity, Gender Action Learning System (GALS)⁵ and Positive Deviance⁶ have proven efficient to increase community engagement. Notably, engaging both men and women through the GALS methodology has produced positive changes in perceptions of women's roles, also leading to positive changes at individual, household and community levels. Positive Deviance helped identify local good practices for development and peacebuilding, which were also used by GALS beneficiaries. These methodologies efficiently combine individual support with far-reaching transformative impacts on structural inequality and should therefore be expanded and built up. The sampled projects also show that **access to economic opportunities and resources for women, including land and credit, enhances their economic independence and contributions to peacebuilding**.

Example

In Kyrgyzstan, migrant women and girls are especially vulnerable due to negative gender norms directly contributing to migration or being reproduced as a consequence of migration. However, women and girls are often excluded from dialogue and peacebuilding efforts. The programme aimed at **improving the recognition of their role in peacebuilding and community development**. It focused on improving their access to socioeconomic opportunities, building their capacities and promoting socially inclusive and gender-responsive policies at the national and local levels. Migrant women and girls were mobilized into **Self-Help Groups** for social, economic and political empowerment, resulting in increased awareness of rights, social activism, trainings on income generation activities and participation in local councils. An innovative **Positive Deviance** approach was implemented to identify good practices and solutions from within the community which were then used

as a basis for the awareness-raising materials, campaigns and activities. The programme also leveraged the **GALS** methodology of community-led empowerment for shifting community perceptions of harmful gender norms.

Within this project, small grants mechanisms for economic activities were found to effectively highlight women's role in community development to the larger community. Activities aimed at changing perceptions related to gender norms were also found to be impactful, and local authorities showed greater cooperation with women. However, the project also recommends improving women's participation as decision makers and to implement a whole of society approach by increasing engagement with men and boys as well as ensuring inclusion of women from vulnerable communities for diverse representation.

⁵ For more information, please consult the [Gender Impact Platform](#) or [Gender Action Learning System Implementation Toolkit](#), for example.

⁶ For more information, please see the [Positive Deviance Collaborative](#).

7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in line with IOM Data Protection Principles are needed to assess gaps, successes and impacts of peacebuilding interventions on the various gender groups, thus increasing accountability to affected populations. This can be done, for example, through the involvement of diverse gender groups in data collection exercises and the development of gender-specific indicators measuring the participation of a particular gender group in a process, etc. Strategies and interventions should be adjusted based on findings. Particular attention should be put on ensuring doing no harm when conducting data collection and selecting target beneficiaries as this could lead to protection risks and further stigmatization of gender groups, such as persons with diverse SOGIESC. Experience has shown that it is of utmost importance to train relevant staff on issues of gender, diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, documenting and sharing lessons learnt is key to continued learning.

Example

In Colombia, the evaluation team of the “Victims’ Institutional Strengthening Program” (VISP) ensured that it interviewed a **diverse range of evaluation participants representing various genders**, ages and ethnicities, following strict ethical considerations. The recommendations of the evaluation were thus based on a diverse sample of voices and acknowledged different

life experiences and forms of knowledge. **Gender-specific indicators** highlighted some successes of interventions, for example more women victims were able to access financial compensation, but it also underlined shortcomings, including the lack of participation of men in the Community Agent Model (CAM), which addressed mental health and post-trauma symptoms through a peer-based care approach.



Women collective in Guinea. © IOM 2022/Koundara

CONCLUSION

Gender-sensitive, responsive and transformative approaches to peacebuilding are vital and there are many good practices and examples to highlight. Gender analysis as an integral element in conflict sensitivity is essential to build understanding of existing gender dynamics and how peacebuilding programming could boost positive changes in this regard. Inclusivity, age and diversity considerations, particularly the role of youth in peacebuilding, need to be carefully considered to create meaningful intersectional programming. It should be highlighted that gender programming should not equal programming for women and girls, but instead consider all gender groups and their heterogeneity. While it is not always possible to openly engage particularly with non-binary gender groups due to cultural sensitivities, innovative approaches should be considered to include them into programming without creating additional risks. The engagement of men is particularly important in interventions aiming to boost gender equality and preventing GBV by addressing notions around toxic masculinity and other harmful gender perceptions. In order to boost gender equality in peacebuilding, it is important to support alliance-building of grassroots organizations of various gender groups as well as collaborate with a wide range of partners to increase impact and avoid duplication of efforts. Stakeholders need to consider ways to encourage meaningful participation of gender groups in peacebuilding processes and programmes, for example, through the deployment of female staff for programming targeting women. IOM staff needs to consider a variety of innovative approaches to ensure the inclusion of gender groups in peacebuilding programming that also address community perceptions on gender. Finally, to ensure efficient programming, it is important to include gender-specific indicators, lessons learnt and disaggregated data into monitoring and evaluation approaches.



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