

Workshop summary report

Gender, power and militarism: conflict analysis in peacebuilding processes

Conciliation Resources and the Sussex Centre for Conflict and Security Research (SCSR) jointly hosted a workshop to explore the role of gender, power and militarism in peacebuilding processes on 19 January 2015. The workshop, funded by SCSR, took place at Conciliation Resources' office in Tufnell Park, London. By bringing together peacebuilding practitioners from civil society and government with academic experts undertaking research related to the gender, peace and security field, the workshop aimed to:

- Discuss efforts towards integrating gender into the wider international peace and security field and to facilitate exchange on current research developments;
- Share experiences and reflections on the practicalities of integrating gender into conflict analysis in peacebuilding processes;
- Trial aspects of Conciliation Resources' *Gender and Conflict Analysis Resource Pack*, which seeks to promote gender-sensitivity in conflict analyses.

The workshop was structured around three sessions: two panel discussions in the morning, followed by breakout groups in the afternoon and a final plenary feedback session.

Panel one – How do we retain the political when working with gender and peacebuilding?

Panellists

Dr Eleanor O'Gorman, Director of Policy and Practice, Conciliation Resources

Dr Lyndsay McLean, Lecturer in Anthropology and International Development, University of Sussex

Dr Eleanor O'Gorman shared reflections from 15 years of experience working in larger institutions with questions relating to gender, conflict and development. She noted how institutions are still reluctant to make gender an integral part of their work, resulting in it being isolated into smaller side projects. Examples of meaningful gender integration across programmes, particularly on perceived 'hard' issues such as security sector reform are rare. The absence of women's participation in the Geneva peace talks on Syria exemplifies this. Indicators of success on gender remain crude and information mainly qualitative; any quantitative indicators address superficial measures such as 'how many women present?' Both monitoring and evaluation as a result get reduced to generic tick-boxing exercises. A more open, flexible and interrogatory way of working on gender in peacebuilding is needed, along with regular performance reviews of senior managers on this issue.

Dr Lyndsay McLean discussed how while current work on gender and peacebuilding has helped recognise women's contribution to peace and brought broader gender issues to the attention of the international policy community, it has also led to a reductionist understanding of gender. The divergent experiences of women are often ignored and international responses dominated by a strong focus on women as victims. The Women, Peace and Security agenda (WPS) has failed to transform traditional security approaches, and contributed to the securitisation of women's rights language. McLean argued that all forms of violence are gendered and that this recognition should guide the integration of gender into peacebuilding efforts.

The subsequent group reflection discussed the role that gender could play in peacebuilding and peace negotiations. Some felt that there was a danger of overloading delicate processes with unrealistic expectations, whilst others pointed out that the resolution of conflict – breaking with the past to build a better future – offers a unique opportunity for societies to transform existing gender dynamics. The group noted that the learning and evidence base at individual and institutional levels should be improved. Peacebuilding organisations and individual peacebuilders need a greater awareness of their own politics and gendered experiences, and to be careful not to approach gender issues based on preconceived notions or expectations.

Panel two – What challenges do militarised masculinities pose and how can we integrate an analysis of these to inform peacebuilding practice?

Panellists

Dr Claire Duncanson, Lecturer in International Relations, University of Edinburgh

Hannah Wright, Gender, Peace and Security Advisor, Saferworld

Dr Claire Duncanson discussed how militarised masculinities are shaped and valorised in western forces undertaking military or peacekeeping interventions. Militaries continue to be particularly important sites for the construction of masculinities at individual, symbolic and institutional levels. Since the Cold War, the militarised masculine ideal has become both tough *and* tender, justifying 'caring' and 'moral' Western interventions in the face of 'barbaric' and 'backwards' enemies. Meanwhile, root causes of conflict such as histories of colonialism or the arms trade are often negated. Peacebuilders should focus on tackling the symbolic and institutional structures that perpetuate violence on marginalised groups, with Duncanson arguing for an approach that recognises redistribution of resources as a vital component in enabling equality.

Hannah Wright discussed the role of militarised masculinities in fragile and conflict-affected states from a peacebuilding perspective. Although there is recognition of the links between masculinities and gender-based violence, other forms of violence continue to be disassociated from gender dynamics. Societal expectations often encourage men to prove their masculinity by carrying out acts of violence and women are often complicit in reinforcing militarised masculinities. Yet targeted programming to confront militarised masculinities are largely absent, with little effort made to adopt this strategy as a means to prevent conflict. More effort is needed to develop ways to transform masculinities, a practice that can be challenging as in many contexts militarised masculinity is the standard not the exception. It should also be recognised that adopting a strategy of pacification is deeply problematic.

The subsequent group reflection discussed how masculinities are not bounded by the male body. Many ex-combatant women struggle to revert to expected gender norms following conflict and are often shunned by their communities. The group questioned whether attempts to combat militarised masculinities focused too greatly on the individual above transforming the structures that encourage acts of violence. The group also discussed how gender based peacebuilding can be perceived as an agenda imposed by the international community, and the challenges associated with negotiating this with the recognition that gender offers an important agenda for change.

Plenary feedback session – on the development of Conciliation Resources' *gender and conflict analysis resource pack*

In the afternoon, participants were split into three breakout groups to discuss different sections of a set of (currently draft) guiding questions to be included in a CR resource pack on gender and conflict analysis. Broadly, the three groups looked at: the process of conducting gender analysis; the importance of integrating gender into context analysis; and the consideration of militarised masculinities in peacebuilding.

A plenary feedback session brought these three conversations together. Critically reflecting on the draft guiding questions and gender analysis more widely, with participants reiterating the importance of fully acknowledging one's own role in the process. Assessing factors such as who conducts the analysis, its purpose, whose voices are heard and which sources of information used, were recognised as vital. Participants agreed that the content of a gender analysis should seek to go beyond 'the facts' (i.e. who holds power, which group is marginalised from political life) to establish *what* has caused these groups to have experienced differing fortunes. The group agreed that a solid understanding of the gender dynamics in a particular conflict context is crucial for conducting conflict analysis and peacebuilding.

Convenors

Sanne Tielemans: stielemans@c-r.org

Dr Synne L. Dyvik: S.Laastad-Dyvik@sussex.ac.uk

Dr Lauren Greenwood: L.A.Greenwood@sussex.ac.uk

Key messages

1. Gender and other power relations are an inseparable part of peacebuilding programmes – an explicit recognition of this link will lead to more meaningful and transformative work on gender in peacebuilding.
2. Wars and conflicts are 'generative' and 'productive' and can alter, often dramatically, social relations between men and women in both negative and positive ways.
3. Analysis of gender should not be reduced to 'women's issues' but instead address the interconnectedness of all forms of violence across societies, whether political, social or economic.
4. Peacebuilding actors conducting gender analysis must include themselves (opinions, attitudes, identities etc.) in the analysis for it to be effective.
5. Successful gender programming requires institutions to examine their own gendered power relations and privileges, a process that can be uncomfortable, yet productive.