GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SITUATIONS: A REVIEW OF DONOR SUPPORT

This policy paper was prepared by the DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) and the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF)

FOREWORD

Sustainable peace, inclusive institutions and gender equality are rightly at the heart of Agenda 2030. Around the world, conflict, fragility and gender inequalities erode peoples' opportunities to fulfil their potential and undermine our prospects for sustainable development. These challenges also reinforce each other: societal norms that discriminate against women can fuel conflict and violence, and conflict and fragility in turn multiply the burdens faced by women and girls.
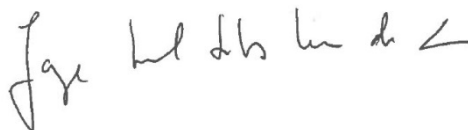
Empowering women and girls and strengthening gender equality in fragile settings can help transform vicious circles into virtuous ones, supporting inclusive societies, sustainable peace and development. Where women actively participate in peacebuilding and statebuilding processes the chances for peace and resilience improve. At the same time, these processes offer unique opportunities to increase women's rights and empowerment.

In recent years, the international community has increasingly recognised the importance of these connections. This is reflected in an increase in DAC members' Official Development Assistance (ODA) in support of gender equality in fragile contexts over the past years. However, more can and must be done to ensure resources are used effectively to achieve meaningful progress towards gender equality, sustainable peace and development in fragile settings.

Aware of the immense stakes and challenges involved, the DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) and the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) commissioned this study to help identify a way forward. What did the research find? It suggests that providing transformative support for gender equality in fragile settings requires not only doing more, but also doing things differently. In particular, it calls for approaches to gender relations in fragile settings that are more holistic and more politically informed. This involves focusing on the root causes of gender inequalities and fragility, on the full range of links between these challenges, and on the power relations that lie beneath them. It also implies understanding women as agents of change, rather than as passive beneficiaries of aid.

This policy paper suggests concrete steps that donors can take to help address these findings and strengthen the quality of their support. Many of the recommendations call on us to break down silos of knowledge and action: to 'join up' disconnected policy frameworks on gender equality and fragility, to develop integrated analytical tools that highlight the wide range of connections between these issues, and to match global commitments with country-level capacity on gender relations in fragile contexts.

Jointly conducted by the GENDERNET and INCAF, and guided by a highly inter-disciplinary group of experts in line with the OECD's commitments to cross-cutting work, this study itself stands as an example of how transcending knowledge barriers can identify important policy gaps and reveal new entry points for more effective development interventions. It is now time to translate its recommendations into action to achieve gender equality and sustainable peace and to realise the vision of Agenda 2030.

Jorge Moreira da Silva, Director of the Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Tables

Figures

Boxes

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany)
BRAC	International development NGO based in Bangladesh
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSPPS	Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front
FARDC	Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo)
FCAS	Fragile and conflict-affected situations
g7+	Voluntary association of countries that are or have been affected by conflict and are now in transition to the next stage of development
GE	Gender equality
GENDERNET	Network on Gender Equality (OECD-DAC)
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
GEWE	Gender equality and women's empowerment

GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (Germany)
GovNet	Network on Governance (OECD-DAC)
IDP	Internally displaced person
IDPS	International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
INCAF	International Network on Conflict and Fragility (OECD-DAC)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MONUSCO	Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en RD Congo (United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo)
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
RMG	Ready-made garment (industry)
SBCC	Social and behaviour change communication
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
UCDP	Uppsala University Conflict Data Program (UCDP)
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

WHO   World Health Organization

GLOSSARY

Conflict: Several criteria are used to define which instances of violence amount to "conflict". They include the nature of the violence; the number of fatalities; the type of actors involved; and their level of organisation. International humanitarian law distinguishes international armed conflicts between states, using armed force, and non-international armed conflict where hostilities reach "a minimum level of intensity" and parties demonstrate "a minimum" of organisation. The Uppsala University Conflict Data Program (UCDP) generally defines armed conflict as the use of armed force between organised groups resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year, and differentiates state-based from non-state based armed conflict depending on whether the government or the state is involved (ICRC, 2008; OECD, 2016; UCDP, 2017)

Fragility: The OECD characterises settings as "fragile" when an accumulation and combination of risks are faced, combined with insufficient capacity by the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate the consequences (OECD, 2016). This situation of exposure to risk can lead to negative outcomes, including violence, conflict, protracted political crises and chronic underdevelopment. The OECD's fragility framework measures risks and coping capacities in five dimensions to include societal, political, economic, environmental and security aspects (OECD, 2016).

Gender: This term refers to the socially constructed roles associated with being male and female and the relations between women and men and girls and boys. Unlike sex, which is biologically determined, gender roles are learned and change over time and across cultures (OECD, 2013; UNEP, 2016).

Gender equality: Gender equality requires that women and men are treated equally, including by ensuring that they have the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities, equal access to public goods and services, and equal outcomes. Gender equality and non-discrimination are fundamental human rights under international law, as established by the International Bill of Rights and subsequent treaties, in particular the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UNFPA, 2017, UN Women, 2009).

Gender blindness: Gender blindness is a failure to recognise that the roles and responsibilities of women and girls, and men and boys, are ascribed to or imposed upon them in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts. Gender-blind projects, programmes, policies and attitudes do not take these different roles and diverse needs into account. Therefore, they maintain status quo or may even exacerbate gender inequalities (EIGE, n.d.)

Gender sensitivity: Gender sensitivity refers to understanding and taking account the societal and cultural factors involved in gender-based exclusion and discrimination. It mainly focuses on structural disadvantages in the positions and roles of women (EIGE, n.d.).

Violence: Violence occurs in many forms and patterns. The World Health Organization (WHO) comprehensive definition of violence captures this wide range of characteristics: the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. It takes the forms of self-directed violence, interpersonal violence, and collective violence (EIGE, 2017; OECD, 2016; WHO, 2002).

Women's empowerment: Gender equality and women's empowerment are linked but distinct concepts. Women's empowerment refers to a process of personal and social change through which women gain power; that is, they are in a position to make meaningful choices and exercise control over their lives. Empowerment requires that women have the ability and opportunity to influence the decisions that affect their lives, both public and private. Women's empowerment is a necessary condition for meaningful gender equality (OECD, n.d.; UN Women, 2010).

Gender inequality, conflict and fragility are key challenges to sustainable development. They are inextricably linked: unequal gender relations can drive conflict and violence, while women's active participation contributes to peace and resilience. At the same time, conflict and fragility place enormous burdens on women and girls, while peacebuilding and statebuilding can provide unique opportunities to advance recognition of their rights. Strengthening gender equality in fragile situations is therefore critical for achieving global commitments to women's empowerment, sustainable peace, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this context, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) commissioned a study to assess how donors can improve the quality of their gender equality and women's empowerment programming in fragile situations. A selection of donor programmes in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia and Nepal were reviewed.

The findings of the study are summarised in this report. They demonstrate the need for a shift in perspective on gender equality in fragile situations. Providing more transformative support for gender equality and sustainable peace requires an understanding of gender, conflict and fragility that is deeper, wider, and more politically informed, with a strong focus on women as agents of change – deeper in focusing on the root causes of gender inequality and fragility, including social norms; wider in grasping the full range of connections between gender, conflict and fragility, including how gender inequality shapes conflict and fragility; and more politically informed in understanding the power relations driving gender inequality, conflict and fragility and the role of women as actors rather than only passive victims or beneficiaries.

Donor programming on gender equality in fragile situations: promising practices, missed opportunities

The study identifies several common gaps in the content of the donor programmes reviewed. Key among the gaps are significant blind spots in donors' understanding of the links between gender equality, conflict and fragility. These blind spots are in part due to limitations in the understanding of gender inequality, including the understanding of women's roles as active agents and of underlying social norms and power relationships in fragile situations.

Donors recognise some of the impacts of conflict and violence on women, but they could strengthen their responses. All the programmes reviewed acknowledged gender-specific impacts of conflict, violence and insecurity, and most of them took steps to address the particular needs and interests of women. However, the quality of the interventions designed to address these impacts varied significantly.

Donors could do more to support women as active agents in peacebuilding and statebuilding. In particular, programmes tended to include women affected by conflict and violence as passive beneficiaries only, rather than as active agents in shaping post-conflict processes. While there were positive exceptions at different levels, more could be done to increase collective impact by empowering women to shape post-conflict processes *across* local, national and international levels.

Donors could link gender equality support more strategically with wider peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts. Donors often missed significant opportunities by isolating gender equality programming from broader processes where decisions about power and resource allocation are negotiated. These disconnects raise significant questions about the potential impacts of interventions.

Donors neglect the impacts of fragility on gender equality. While programmes focused on the impacts of conflict or violence on women, they largely neglected the effects of wider fragility issues – such as rising identity politics, clientelism and corruption, or unstable political settlements – on gender equality and the long-term impacts of interventions. This resulted in missed opportunities and jeopardised the sustainability of the positive outcomes achieved.

Donors rarely use a gender lens to strengthen responses to conflict and fragility. While a conflict/fragility lens was used to understand gender equality challenges, donors rarely applied a gender lens to strengthen responses to conflict and fragility. Programmes largely failed to ask how gender norms shape conflict and violence and could be part of the solution, or how women's active roles in peacebuilding and recovery could contribute to peacebuilding and statebuilding.

Donors could do more to transform gender inequalities and violence by addressing gender norms. Some donors missed opportunities to contribute to transformative change by neglecting a root cause of gender inequality and a catalyst of violence: discriminatory attitudes about what roles are appropriate for women and men, and how these are shaped by other forms of exclusion prevalent in fragile situations.

Donors could strengthen their programming by engaging more strategically with men and with "resistors". Donors often failed to work with the diversity of stakeholders – including men, community norm setters, and potential resistors (e.g. religious authorities, local officials, central or local level political party leaders) – whose participation is required to affect change in gender power relations and to avoid doing harm.

Thinking politically could increase the effectiveness of donor work on gender, conflict and fragility. Serious weaknesses in donors' understanding of how political economy factors and power relations shape conflict, fragility and gender relations contributed to many of the challenges needing to be addressed. Consequently, theories of change employed by many of the reviewed programmes were not well grounded in political realities, raising questions about their potential and sustainability.

Donors' organisational structures and practices: levers for stronger programming on gender equality in fragile situations

The research highlighted several organisational structures and practices that influence the quality of donor programming on gender equality in fragile situations.

Policy frameworks on gender equality, conflict and fragility are insufficiently "joined-up" and incentives are lacking at field level. A disconnect between policy frameworks with respect to gender equality, conflict and fragility, and lack of incentives for implementation at field level, help explain inadequate consideration of links between these issues in donor programming. Few donors have developed guidance or strategies that cover the full scope of concerns and connections involved.

Existing analytical tools are not "fit for purpose". The analytical tools currently available are not effective in bringing gender, conflict and fragility issues together in one framework. Conflict analysis tools neglect gendered drivers of conflict; analytical tools do not explicitly incorporate fragility issues; and political economy analysis tends to be gender-blind and inconsistently used to understand fragility.

A learning phase can strengthen programming. A substantial inception phase to enable research, relationship-building and consultation with stakeholders can significantly improve programme design. Where programmes gathered or generated evidence in the early stages of programme development, they tended to be more attuned to particular gender, conflict and fragility dynamics in a specific context.

Further progress is needed in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and data collection. While the study results pointed to promising developments in M&E, they also highlighted that donors can advance further by increasing attention to qualitative indicators, to progress at the level of outcomes, and to opportunities for learning and adaptation.

Programme approaches need to be more flexible and adaptive to capture the complexity of gender relations in fragile and conflict-affected situations. While several programmes adjusted well to changing country contexts, they were rarely adapted based on learning what works – thus missing opportunities to enhance impacts. There was little evidence of systematic testing of approaches, use of new information, or ongoing reflection about causal assumptions.

Country-level capacity is insufficient and does not match commitments. A lack of gender specialists at country level emerged as a major gap. The capacity of all staff posed another challenge, both in terms of lack of gender expertise among staff working on peacebuilding and statebuilding and of inadequate conflict and fragility expertise among those implementing gender-related programmes. The gender capacity of partners in fragile situations also received insufficient attention – especially in mainstream programmes – while strong partnerships with women's organisations can increase the quality of programmes. These capacity gaps not only risk leading to ineffective support, but also to doing harm.

There is a lack of accountability for ensuring that programmes do no harm. The research highlighted that donors are insufficiently aware of their responsibilities to ensure that they do no harm. In the four countries studied there was little evidence that donor programming systematically recognised and responded to the potential tensions or risks associated with gender-blind activities, or with external actors supporting women's empowerment in politically charged and volatile fragile situations.

Insufficient co-ordination within and between agencies results in missed opportunities. The case studies revealed highly variable use and usefulness of gender co-ordination groups between and within agencies. These groups were mostly not linked up with governance and conflict networks. In Nepal serious weaknesses in donor co-ordination on gender emerged as a major challenge for the quality of gender equality support.

Priorities for action

Based on the findings of the study, a number of actionable recommendations to improve donor support to gender equality and sustainable peace in fragile situations are made in this report. These recommendations (set out in Chapter 5) include:

- Focus on key areas for progress in the content of donor programming.

- "Join up" policy frameworks on gender, conflict and fragility.

- Strengthen country-level capacity to match commitments.

- Increase incentives and accountability, including for doing no harm.

- Base all programmes on "fit for purpose" analysis and strengthen the evidence base.

- Increase the flexibility and adaptability of programme approaches to respond to learning.

- Refine approaches to M&E to capture the complexity of change.

- Strengthen co-ordination within and between agencies.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: GENDER INEQUALITY, CONFLICT AND FRAGILITY – INTERLINKED GLOBAL AGENDAS

> Donors are giving increasing support to sustainable development and peace in fragile situations. They have demonstrated their awareness of the specific challenges faced by countries affected by fragile situations, and of the global consequences of fragility. Moreover, donors recognise the critical importance of achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls as a key development goal and as a crucial enabler of sustainable development and enduring peace. The purpose of this study is to assess how donors can improve the quality of their support to gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS). Chapter 1 describes the background of the research, highlighting links between gender equality, conflict and fragility. It also looks at increases in OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members' support to gender equality in these situations (Figure 1.1). Donors can tailor their support for gender equality to the specific opportunities and challenges of FCAS (Table 1.1).

Over the past decade, donors have strengthened their focus on supporting sustainable development and peace in fragile situations. They have become increasingly aware of the specific challenges faced by countries and of the global consequences of fragility. In addition, donors recognise the critical importance of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, both as a key development goal in itself and as a crucial enabler of sustainable development and enduring peace.

Agenda 2030 includes commitments, in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and, in SDG 16, to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and provide access to justice for all and to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (UN, 2015b). Other "post-2015" agreements and declarations that reflect awareness of the importance of achieving gender equality and addressing the drivers of fragility include the outcomes the 2016 United Nations (UN) World Humanitarian Summit (Agenda for Humanity, n.d.); UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2282 on the UN's peacebuilding architecture, adopted in 2016 (UN, 2016); and the Stockholm Declaration of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS), also adopted in 2016 (IDPS, 2016).

Donors coming together in the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) recognise that achieving these international commitments in fragile situations will require distinct efforts. In particular, the SDGs are calling for effective support to gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile situations, as SDG 16 cannot be achieved without significant progress towards SDG 5, and vice versa. The DAC's international networks on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) and Gender Equality (GENDERNET) therefore commissioned a study to assess how donors can improve their support to gender equality and women's empowerment programming in fragile situations.

This chapter describes the background of the research carried out for the study. It highlights links between gender equality, conflict and fragility; recent increases in DAC members' support to gender equality in fragile situations; and the study's resulting focus.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the four case study countries – Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia and Nepal – and of the 15 donor programmes assessed in these countries (in Table 2.1).

Chapters 3 and 4 present the findings of the study. Chapter 3 highlights gaps in the content of donor programming on gender equality in fragile situations. Chapter 4 looks at organisational structures and practices within donor organisations that influence these gaps, and that may suggest levers for increasing the quality of donor support.

Recommendations for improving donor support to gender equality and sustainable peace in fragile situations are set out in Chapter 5.

1.1. Links between gender equality, conflict and fragility

The research conducted for this study built on the growing recognition that international commitments to gender equality and to sustainable peace are inextricably linked. Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment depends on understanding and reducing conflict and fragility, while building sustainable peace requires gender sensitivity and the empowerment of women and girls. This is true in several ways:

- **Conflict and fragility affect women and men differently, and place significant burdens upon women and girls** (Domingo and Holmes, 2013; Myrttinen, Naujoks and El-Bushra, 2014; UN Women, 2015; World Bank, 2011). Already-existing gender inequalities and discrimination can compound the impacts of conflict on women and girls, while the feminisation of poverty often reduces women's ability to mitigate these impacts. For example, women and children make up a large proportion of conflict-related refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Conflict increases women's exposure to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), widens the gender gap in school enrolment and retention, increases reproductive health problems, and places reproductive and care roles under stress. Women and girls are also especially disadvantaged by features that are characteristic of fragile situations, such as weak institutions and services, ineffective or uneven rule of law, insecurity and restrictions of movement, and the dominance of informal institutions such as patronage networks (Castillejo, 2011; Cordaid, 2012; OECD, 2013; UN Women, 2015, 2012). Moreover, in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS) the relationship of women and girls to the state is often particularly limited or mediated by family or customary institutions (Castillejo, 2012, 2011). Lack of access to information, resources and services (together with gender stereotypes, inequalities and cultural restrictions) can make certain women and girls (e.g. those from disadvantaged socio-economic groups, those

in female-headed households, and widows) more vulnerable to shocks and stresses, ranging from natural disasters to macroeconomic shocks.

- **Peacebuilding and statebuilding processes in fragile and conflict-affected situations can provide new opportunities to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.** Conflict and fragility can disrupt traditional gender roles, propelling women to take on new activities outside the home, for example as main economic providers, and often to mobilise in unprecedented ways to promote and influence peacebuilding (Cardona et al., 2012). This can change attitudes towards women's roles in society and enhance opportunities to increase their agency and decision-making within households and communities. While these changes do not always outlast the crisis, purposeful action to sustain and build on them can advance women's status during recovery. Foundational moments of peacebuilding and statebuilding, such as peace negotiations, constitutional reform processes and the emergence of new institutions, can also provide critical windows of opportunity for advancing formal recognition of women's rights (Castillejo, 2011; Domingo et al., 2013, OECD, 2013; UN Women, 2010).

- **Gender norms and ideologies can fuel conflict and fragility.** Gender norms that associate "being a man" with domination and aggression can fuel conflict and violence. Such ideals for male behaviour can motivate men and boys to participate in violence and can lead women to encourage them. Military and political actors also deliberately use and manipulate such ideals to build support for conflict and to recruit men into armed groups. Moreover, these norms for "what it means to be a man" make those who fail to live up to such standards (e.g. by failing to act as economic providers for the family) more susceptible to recruitment as a way of proving their manhood by other means. Norms also make men more likely to perpetrate violence against those over whom they do have power: women and children in the home (Wright, 2014). Fuelled by unequal gender ideologies, SGBV can destabilise communities over generations – undermining human and economic development, recovery, reconciliation, the rule of law and trust in state institutions (Global Summit to End Violence Against Women in Conflict, 2014; Jenkins and Goetz, 2010).

- **Women's participation and empowerment can contribute to sustainable peace** (OECD, 2013). Meaningful participation by women in peace negotiations and constitutional reform processes increases the likelihood that an agreement will be reached and implemented (Paffenholz et al., 2016; UN Women, 2015). In fact, the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least 15 years is 35% higher when women participate (Stone, 2015). Women's economic empowerment can also contribute to post-conflict recovery and reconstruction (Justino et al., 2012). In addition, women play an important role in building peace, recovery and resilience at family, community and sub-national levels (Cardona et al., 2012; Georgetown Institute, 2015; Paffenholz, 2015; Stone, 2014; UN, 2015; UNSG, 2010; UN Women, 2015).

In view of these links, it is not surprising that several studies have found strong statistical correlations between countries' levels of peacefulness and levels of gender equality (Caprioli, 2005, 2000; IEP, 2011; Melander, 2005). The evidence suggests that gender inequalities, violence, conflict and fragility are mutually reinforcing (Wright, 2013). Achieving gender equality and sustainable peace therefore requires addressing the gender dimensions of conflict and fragility.

Global commitments increasingly reflect this understanding. In a series of resolutions on women, peace and security the UN Security Council has recognised the disproportionate and unique impact of conflict on women, as well as the importance of women's full and equal participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution (Box 4.1). Agenda 2030, in addition to enshrining closely inter-related goals on gender equality (SDG 5) and peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG 16), recognises the importance of supporting women's roles in peacebuilding and statebuilding as part of global efforts to resolve and prevent conflict. It calls for integrating a gender perspective into the implementation of all of the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 16.

International frameworks that specifically address fragility also increasingly acknowledge the relevance of gender issues to peacebuilding and statebuilding. The Stockholm Declaration, adopted by the IDPS in 2016, recognises the particular importance of gender sensitivity and women's effective participation to efforts to tackle conflict and fragility (Box 1.1). In identical resolutions on a new vision for the UN's peacebuilding architecture adopted in 2016, the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly affirmed "the important role of women in peacebuilding" and "the substantial link between women's full and meaningful involvement in efforts to prevent, resolve and rebuild from conflict and those efforts' effectiveness and long-term sustainability" (UNSCR 2282) (UN, 2016).

Box 1.1. The IDPS Stockholm Declaration: commitments to gender sensitivity and women's participation as key ingredients of sustainable peace

The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) is the first forum for political dialogue to bring together countries affected by conflict and fragility, development partners and civil society. The IDPS is composed of members of the OECD-DAC International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), the g7+ group of fragile and conflict-affected states, and the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) a South-North non-governmental coalition of peacebuilding organisations that co-ordinates and supports civil society participation in the IDPS. In the 2016 Stockholm Declaration, IDPS members agreed a set of commitments for strengthening support to sustainable peace and development in fragile situations in the post-2015 era. In this context members recognised that a focus on gender sensitivity and women's effective participation is required to address the root causes of fragility, conflict and violence effectively. They also committed to strengthening practice in this area by linking implementation of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (an action plan for effective support to fragile and conflict-affected situations endorsed by over 40 countries) to implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions (IDPS, 2011, 2016).

1.2. Increased donor support for gender equality in fragile situations

Greater political attention to these connections and to the women, peace and security agenda has contributed to a rise in DAC members' official development assistance (ODA) in support of gender equality in fragile situations. Research by the OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) showed that ODA in support of gender equality in fragile situations quadrupled over the lifetime of the 2000-15 Millennium Development Goals (OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality, 2015) and continued on an upward trend; in 2015, DAC members' aid to gender equality in fragile situations amounted to USD 16.7 billion (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Trends in DAC Members' ODA to gender equality in fragile states (2007-15) in USD billion, 2015 constant prices
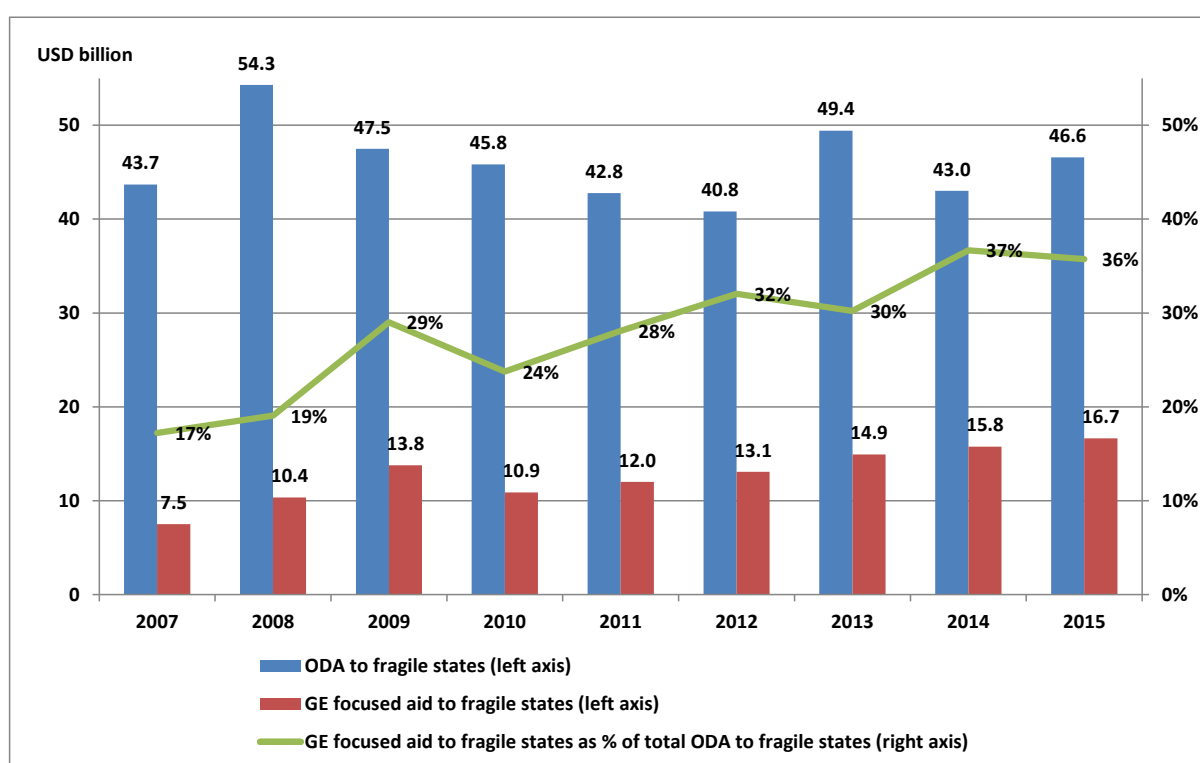
Source: OECD DAC CRS database

The priority given to gender equality in countries affected by conflict and fragility is even higher than that in other developing countries. In 2014-15, 36% of DAC Members' ODA to fragile situations targeted gender equality compared with 28% on average in other developing countries. However, while DAC members are making efforts to mainstream gender equality into their development programming in fragile situations, only a small proportion of ODA goes to dedicated projects focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment. Most of this aid targets gender equality as a secondary objective rather than as its main focus. In 2014-15, only 5% of ODA to fragile situations aimed to promote gender equality as primary objective.

1.3. Focus of the study: the quality of donor support to gender equality in fragile situations

In view of the increasing sums invested to support gender equality in fragile situations and the ambition of relevant post-2015 commitments, it is especially important to understand whether these resources are put to optimal use. However, previous quantitative research did not support any conclusions on whether reported increases in ODA in support of gender equality in fragile situations had translated into effective programming that both advance gender equality *and* tackle conflict and fragility through a gender focus.

The OECD DAC therefore decided to conduct further research to assess the *quality* of donor programming on gender equality in fragile situations. This work focused on four fragile contexts that receive among the highest amounts of gender-focused aid in volume: Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia and Nepal.

In each of the four focus countries, three to four programmes from a variety of sectors were reviewed. These programmes, a total of 15 programmes led by 17 DAC members, were reported to focus on gender equality (Table 2.1). Given the large amounts of aid targeting gender equality as a secondary objective, the research looked particularly at how mainstream programmes are integrating gender equality and how this can be improved. The purpose was not only to describe, but also to explain the quality of programming, and how this is shaped by factors internal to donor agencies as well as by the broader social, political and economic conditions in which programmes are being implemented.

Two key questions were asked:

1. To what extent **do donor approaches reflect current knowledge about how to integrate gender into programming in fragile situations** in ways that both advance gender equality and reduce fragility?

2. **What factors – within donor organisations and externally – influence whether and how donors integrate gender** into their programming in fragile situations?

To answer these questions, a rapid evidence review was carried out on "what works" to advance gender equality, especially in fragile situations, and how drivers of fragility can be tackled through including a gender focus. This evidence served as the basis for developing criteria to assess the quality of donor support.

While general good practices in supporting gender equality were considered, **there was a particular focus on assessing the extent to which donors tailor their gender equality support to the specific opportunities and challenges of fragile and conflict-affected situations.** This was understood to involve:

- **Using a conflict and fragility lens to support gender equality** and women's empowerment by understanding the impacts of the wider political economy of conflict, fragility, peacebuilding

and statebuilding on women and on gender relations, and addressing the resulting challenges and opportunities for gender equality and women's empowerment.

- **Using a gender lens to tackle conflict and fragility** by recognising how gender relations and inequalities shape conflict and fragility (as well as the contributions women can make to peacebuilding and statebuilding) and seizing resulting opportunities to strengthen support for sustainable peace and effective institutions through a gender focus.

- **Reflecting what is known about effective ways of working in fragile situations,** which are highly complex, rapidly changing, and often exposed to a multitude of risks. There is growing international recognition that these environments require tailored approaches that take context as the starting point; are locally led; are politically smart; are capable of adaptation to changing circumstances; and continuously assess and mitigate risks, with a high level of co-ordination among all actors.

What does tailoring gender equality support to fragile situations (by taking the three elements above into account) look like in practice? Table 1.1 summarises implications for donor work on gender equality in fragile situations. This list is not exhaustive, and the relevance of these implications depends on their local context. However, they reflect dominant themes in the literature and provided the necessary focus for the research, serving to guide it in assessing the quality of the donor programmes reviewed. During the field research phase, specific research questions were derived for different groups of stakeholders depending on the nature of the context and programme.

Table 1.1. Tailoring gender equality support to fragile situations: implications for donor programmes

Understanding the local context, including the political economy of conflict, fragility and gender relations
- Identifying and prioritising responses based on a deep understanding of local political economy realities in each specific context, including root causes of conflict, fragility and gender inequality (IDPS, 2011; OECD, 2016b, 2011).   - Understanding the specific impacts of conflict, violence and wider fragility issues (e.g. weak institutions, unstable politics, patronage and corruption), as well as peacebuilding/statebuilding processes, on women, gender relations, and gender equality interventions (OECD, 2013).   - Understanding how gender relations and inequality shape conflict and fragility, as well as the potential of women to contribute to peacebuilding and statebuilding (UN Women, 2015; Wright, 2014).

Addressing connections between gender, conflict and fragility

- Addressing specific gender equality challenges and vulnerabilities of women and girls resulting from conflict and fragility, such as increases in SGBV, the number of female-headed households, intensified care burdens, and particular barriers to accessing state institutions (Castillejo, 2012; Cordaid, 2012; Domingo et al., 2013; UN Women, 2015, 2012).

- Empowering women affected by conflict and fragility as active agents in shaping peacebuilding and statebuilding, and supporting the full range of women's contributions to peacebuilding at all levels (Cardona et al., 2012; Domingo and Holmes, 2013; OECD, 2013; UN Women, 2015, 2012).

- Strategically linking support to gender equality with wider efforts to tackle conflict and fragility, including by seizing windows of opportunity (e.g. constitutional reforms and the creation of new institutions) during the early stages of peacebuilding and statebuilding processes (Castillejo, 2013, 2011; Domingo and Holmes, 2013; El-Bushra, 2012; Justino et al., 2012; OECD, 2013).

- Recognising the positive impact that women's participation in the labour market and control of income can play in post-conflict recovery and the resilience of households and communities, and adopting holistic approaches to support women's control of resources and participation in both large- and small-scale economic programmes and the formal sector (Justino et al., 2012).

- Adequately addressing discriminatory gender norms and relations, and other informal rules of behaviour, which can be in flux following conflict. Engaging with such shifts is necessary to sustain progressive gender norms and avoiding backlash; especially in a fragile situation, navigating informal institutions (e.g. personal relationships and patronage networks) is also critical because they greatly influence how formal institutions function and can create particular barriers for women (Castillejo, 2012; Doming and Holmes, 2013; Koester, 2014; Myrttinen, Naujoks, and El-Bushra, 2014; OECD, 2013).

- Tackling gender norms and ideologies that fuel conflict, violence and fragility, including by focusing on social expectations for masculine behaviour ("masculinities") and recognising interconnections between power and violence at different levels of society (Myrttinen, Naujoks and El-Bushra, 2014; Wright, 2014).

Working with the full range of local stakeholders and supporting locally led change

- Working with a diversity of local stakeholders at all levels, including different groups of women and men, to identify and address pressing problems, underlying causes and potential solutions to conflict, fragility and gender inequality (IDPS, 2011; OECD, 2016).

- Recognising how multiple group identities or forms of marginalisation (e.g. based on religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status or gender) shape one another, and addressing the diverse needs of

different groups of women and men. Such dividing lines can be particularly deep and politicised in fragile situations, and neglecting them can not only undermine the effectiveness of donor support but also risk doing harm (Castillejo, 2011; Koester, 2014; Myrttinen, Naujoks and El-Bushra, 2014; OECD, 2013).

- Recognising that there will be significant resistance to changes in regard to gender equality, understanding incentive structures and sources of resistance and working with groups of people (not necessarily women) whose attitudes and practices most need to be changed and those who are most amenable to change. This approach should be based on an understanding of how gender identities are constructed through power relations between women and men, and girls and boys, rather than equating gender with women (Castillejo, 2011; Domingo and Holmes, 2013; Myrttinen, Naujoks and El-Bushra, 2014; OECD, 2013).

- Recognising and engaging with non-state institutions, e.g. through customary or religious leaders who often exercise strong influence over communities in fragile situations and mediate women's relationship to the state (Castillejo, 2013; Domingo et al., 2013; OECD, 2013).

- Supporting local gender equality priorities and strengthening the capacities of local actors to implement them (IDPS, 2011; OECD, 2016).

Addressing the complexities of social and political change in fluid fragile situations

- Ensuring that programmes are flexible and that they adapt to changing contexts and new learning about what is or is not working in programming. In programmes seeking to advance the complex social and political changes required to achieve gender equality, peacebuilding and statebuilding in rapidly changing environments, donors are rarely certain at the outset which activities will produce which outcomes under the specific contextual conditions of these activities (OECD, 2016b, 2011; O'Neil, 2016; Valters, 2016; Valters et al., 2016).

- Basing interventions on realistic assumptions about how complex, non-linear and long-term social and political change can be in fragile situations (including in relation to gender equality) and supporting realistic short- to medium-term improvements while contributing to longer-term change in gender relations.

- Adopting integrated approaches that recognise how gender equality challenges and gains across different sectors may shape one another. This can be particularly important in fragile and conflict-affected situations, where interlocking risks and limited coping capacities are faced across multiple dimensions, often with disproportionate effects on women and girls (Domingo and Holmes, 2013; OECD, 2013).

Assessing and mitigating risks associated with engaging in fragile situations, including the risk of doing harm

- Effectively assessing and mitigating the wide range of contextual, programmatic and institutional risks involved in working in fragile situations (OECD, 2016a, 2016b).

- Understanding and mitigating the risks of backlash and increased conflict that may result from women's empowerment, especially in fragile situations where gender relations may be in a process of change and societal tensions may be high (Myrttinen, Naujoks and El-Bushra, 2014; OECD, 2013).

- Understanding and mitigating the risks that wider peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions may pose to women and girls and to gender equality (Myrttinen, Naujoks and El-Bushra, 2014; OECD, 2013).

Becoming a systems player and seizing comparative advantage to strengthen the collective response

- Agreeing effective co-ordination mechanisms on gender (within and among donors) with government and other stakeholders, and dividing up roles based on comparative advantage (IDPS, 2011; OECD, 2016b, 2011).

- Connecting gender co-ordination mechanisms with conflict/fragility and governance networks to benefit from synergies (OECD, 2013).

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CHAPTER 2

TRENDS IN GENDER INEQUALITY AND FRAGILITY IN THE COUNTRIES STUDIED: BANGLADESH, THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, ETHIOPIA AND NEPAL

Chapter 2 briefly describes the four countries studied. Despite the differences between them, there are similarities in the factors driving gender inequalities, conflict and fragility. Among these are the prevalence of discriminatory gender norms and practices; widespread sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); weak institutions and women's lack of access to justice and basic services; male dominance of (and women's exclusion from) political and economic decision-making, including in informal and formal networks of patronage; and a narrowing space for opposition or civil society organisations (CSOs). This chapter also presents an overview of the 15 donor programmes assessed in these countries (Table 2.1). These programmes were chosen based on the need to examine a balanced portfolio of sectors and themes, to review programmes that involved a wide selection of stakeholders, and to include both dedicated gender equality programmes and programmes that mainstream gender equality.

This chapter highlights key trends in gender inequality and fragility in the case study countries: Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia and Nepal. It also provides a succinct overview of the donor programmes assessed. Further details on the research design, including how these countries and programmes were selected, will be found in Annex A to this report. This chapter draws on a literature review and primary research conducted for the four case studies.

2.1. The case study countries

While all four case study countries are considered fragile, the nature of their fragility and its drivers, triggers and manifestations vary widely among and within them. For example, authoritarian countries' vulnerability to shocks or breakdown over the longer term is very different from vulnerability in countries where unstable political settlements are teetering on the edge of large-scale political violence, or in those which are in the midst of violent conflict. Multiple pathways also exist from less fragile situations to more stable, secure and equal societies: "what works" may differ according to context.

However, there are similarities in the factors that drive gender inequalities, conflict and fragility in Bangladesh, the DRC, Ethiopia and Nepal. These include the prevalence of discriminatory gender

norms and practices; widespread sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); weak institutions and women's lack of access to justice and basic services; male dominance of (and women's exclusion from) political and economic decision-making, including in informal and formal networks of patronage; and a narrowing space for opposition or civil society organisations (CSOs). These factors are a backdrop to donor programming on gender equality and women's empowerment in the four countries.

2.1.1. Bangladesh: key dimensions of fragility and gender inequality and the links between them

Bangladesh has not experienced large-scale armed conflict since 1971. It has formally been a multi-party democracy since 1991, with a range of civil, political, economic and social rights enshrined in the Constitution. The country's fragility has several dimensions, including polarised and patronage-based politics and weak rule of law (Hassan, 2013; Khan, 2010; Siddiqi, 2010). In parts of Bangladesh, discriminated-against populations (e.g. the indigenous Pahari people and the Rohingya refugee population) face particular types of insecurity and vulnerability to conflict (Amnesty International, 2011; Jahan et al., 2015). Religiously motivated violence and terrorism continue. The high risk of natural disasters such as flooding further contributes to the country's fragility (O'Neil, 2016).

Aspects of gender inequality include women's low status and lack of autonomy, child marriage, unequal access to land and income, labour market segregation, and

Box 2.1. ODA targeting gender equality in Bangladesh

In 2014-15 44% of ODA to Bangladesh was reportedly gender-focused; that is, it was reported to target gender equality as a principal or secondary objective (at USD 922 million per year on average per year). Most gender-focused aid to Bangladesh went to the health and agriculture sectors, followed by education and government and civil society.

Bangladesh

- Others 8%
- Water 5%
- Government & Civil Society 6%
- Agriculture 8%
- Education 10%
- Transport 13%
- Health 20%
- Multisector 30%

Source: OECD DAC CRS database

high levels of violence against women (Amnesty International, 2017; Britt et al., 2010; OECD, 2014; UNDP, 2015a). The Constitution guarantees that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and that women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life. However, Muslim, Hindu and Christian family and personal status laws determine individuals' rights in the areas of marriage, separation, divorce and inheritance, with serious implications for women's agency and well-being. Despite the statutory protection of women's rights, and progress in regard to, for example, female life expectancy and

reduction of maternal mortality, there continues to be a wide gap between women's rights on paper and in practice (O'Neil, 2016).

This gap is in part the result of wider fragility issues: poor quality of and access to the justice system, the lack of affordability of access, and the politicisation, corruption and lack of accountability of state institutions combine with social and gender norms to prevent women from reporting rights violations to formal institutions (Domingo and O'Neil, 2014; Valters, 2016). Women's claims may also be heard by the small-scale *shalish* council. This traditional form of dispute resolution remains the dominant mechanism for resolving disputes in rural Bangladesh, despite having no formal authority. It is convened and overseen by village elders or influential community members (Valters, 2016). These councils are male-dominated, patriarchal forums where women are often not allowed to speak, or sometimes even to be present when their cases are heard (Valters, 2016).

Recent increases in religious conservatism and/or radicalisation in Bangladesh are also tied to gender relations. Some commentators highlight the increase in the number of poor families sending their sons to private religious institutions for education (particularly the Islamic schools or madrassas) as a driver of this trend. Others point out that the madrassa curriculum has not changed, however it does not prepare students for the modern job market, producing significant numbers of poor and disaffected adolescent men and boys vulnerable to radicalisation (Haider, 2008; O'Neil, 2016). In some cases, however, families send their daughters to the (cheaper) madrassas and invest in their sons' education in the expectation that girls will marry and become part of the husband's family while their sons will support them in the future.

The lack of employment opportunities for young men contrasts with the expansion of opportunities for poor rural women in the ready-made garment (RMG) industry. Successive governments have taken advantage of international opportunities and trade preferences and incentivised investment in this industry, which has been a key driver of Bangladesh's impressive economic growth (Hassan, 2013). As the main source of labour, young, poor rural women have been a direct beneficiary of the RMG industry's expansion. Their participation in the labour market has increased and they have migrated to cities, earning wages, working outside the home and interacting with other women – all of which have empowerment dividends, particularly in terms of power relations and decision making within the household (Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a, 2004b).

However, women are driven into paid employment through poverty rather than choice. The overall economic participation of women in Bangladesh is still low. Work and mobility can expose them to new or increased vulnerabilities, such as sexual violence in the workplace or on the journey to work; increased domestic violence; long hours and unsafe working conditions; and a heavy triple burden of reproductive work, such as child care, community-level work primarily undertaken by women, and productive work for income and subsistence (Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004a, 2004b; O'Neil, 2016). These gendered economic trends can increase risks for women. As a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) assessment notes, overall labour force

participation by 20- to 24-year-old women more than doubled in the period 1995-2000 while it declined for men in the same age group. The demographic bulge in the youth cohort could further exacerbate this situation, with growing resentment and frustration sustaining or increasing already unacceptable levels of violence against women (Britt et al., 2010).

Religious trends also influence gender norms and can reduce tolerance of women's rights and empowerment. Women may have less autonomy than previously and face pressure to behave or dress "more piously" or risk increased sexual harassment and gender-based violence (O'Neil, 2016). For example, in 2009 the Bangladeshi High Court directed the Ministry of Education "to take immediate steps to implement the Guidelines on Sexual Harassment and to ensure that no woman working in any education institution, public or private, should be forced to wear a veil or cover her head" (SACW.net, 2010). Two further High Court rulings followed within six months (RNW, 2016). The High Court has also issued rulings to stop police harassing women who do not wear veils in North Rangpur.

The situation is compounded by the reported politicisation of the police and general deterioration of law and order in Bangladesh. Interviewees for this research highlighted that due to the perceived increase in personal insecurity for women and girls, more are now reported to wear the hijab to protect themselves from sexual harassment or assault.

Threats to male dominance and to "tradition" can be instrumentalised by religious and political elites to protect the status quo and increase their support. Both the main political parties have used uncertainty about the relationship between Bengali national identity and Islam, at issue since before the 1971 War of Liberation, to win votes. However, there is also a complex interaction of class and elitism, religion and patriarchy, at both national and sub-national levels, which may not be apparent to outside observers. For example, fatwas issued against women in rural areas may be an expression of patriarchy and class hierarchy and not only of religious considerations (O'Neil, 2016; Siddiqi, 2010).

The interaction of dimensions of fragility, gender inequality and conflict has particular implications for specific groups of women. This is illustrated by the situation of female Rohingya refugees inside and outside the official camps in Cox's Bazar. Their lives are shaped by a combination of factors, including social (religious conservatism, discrimination), political (persecution in Myanmar, lack of recognition by the Government of Bangladesh, lack of access to services, politicisation and criminalisation of local state institutions), economic (extreme poverty) and environmental (natural disasters and environmental degradation) (Jahan et al., 2015; O'Neil, 2016).

2.1.2. Democratic Republic of the Congo: key dimensions of fragility, gender inequality and the links between them

The context in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) highlights the diverse ways that conflict and fragility can be experienced within a single country. Violent conflicts and fragility are most obviously present in areas such as the Beni district of the province of North Kivu in the eastern DRC, where over 650 civilians were killed in the 18 months preceding the research. Conflict-related insecurity is also a constant presence in other parts of the eastern DRC which are not as immediately affected by violence. This insecurity contributes to fragility and inequality. More indirectly, fragility and poor service provision in other parts of the country, for example in the capital of Kinshasa, can be seen as a longer-term consequence of the violent conflicts of the past two decades, as the state has not rebuilt what was destroyed during these conflicts (Myrttinen, 2016).

Box 2.2. ODA targeting gender equality in the DRC

In 2014-15 53% of ODA to the Democratic Republic of the Congo was reported to be gender-focused (USD 585 million per year on average). The largest share went to the government and civil society sector, followed by health, humanitarian assistance and education.

Democratic Republic of the Congo
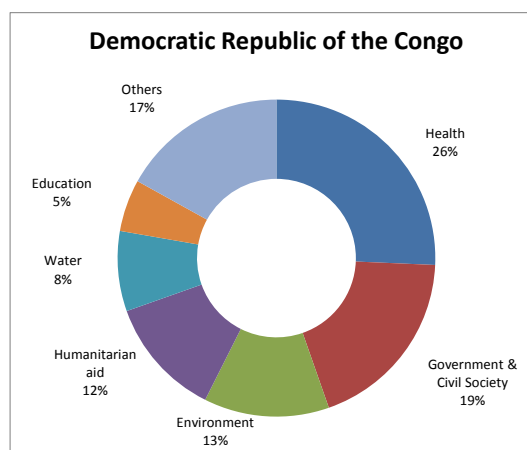
Source: OECD DAC CRS database

The DRC is among the lowest-scoring countries globally in terms of gender equality, with widespread discriminatory social norms and institutions; limited political and economic participation by women; very high maternal mortality; and widespread SGBV (OECD, 2014; UNDP, 2015a). Discriminatory social norms include women's unequal status with respect to inheritance of, or access to, land and other resources; reduced possibilities for girls to gain a secondary education; and prevailing permissive attitudes to violence against women and girls, especially domestic violence (Myrttinen, 2016; OECD, 2014; Slegh et al., 2014).

The case of the DRC underscores in multiple ways – and at various levels – how conflict, gender and fragility are interlinked. Due to prevalent social norms, widows, female-headed households and sexual and gender minorities are often in a position of heightened vulnerability (Myrttinen, 2016). Arguably, the best researched example of links between conflict and gender relations in the country is conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in the east. Conflict, in part precipitated by fragility, has led to CRSV against women and girls, but also against men and boys, which is facilitated by dominant gender norms and frustrations on the part of mostly male soldiers and other combatants. The frustrations result partly from drivers of fragility such as poverty and civilians' lack of respect for the

Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), associated with general lack of trust in the state (Dolan, 2010; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2010; Myrttinen, 2016; Slegh et al., 2014).

CRSV is not the only form of SGBV even in directly conflict-affected areas. Civilian SGBV, including domestic violence and intimate partner violence, may also increase in times of violent conflict or displacement (MPSMRM, MSP and ICF International, 2014; Myrttinen, 2016). Regardless of the perpetrator, SGBV has immediate and medium- and long-term impacts on individuals and communities in terms of survivors' physical, emotional and psychological health; secondary effects on family and community members; indirect loss to the economic and social well-being of the individual and the community due to health-related withdrawal of the survivor from the work force and social life; or death of the victim (Dolan, 2010). All of these impacts increase fragility in the affected community, in the family and direct surroundings of the victim/survivor, and for the victim/survivor herself or himself (Myrttinen, 2016).

Participation by men and boys in armed groups is also linked to gender norms, whether due to norms of "warrior masculinity" (expectations placed upon men both by other men and by women to serve as protectors and economic providers) or a search for meaning, identity and, mundanely, an escape from boredom and inactivity (Myrttinen, 2016). Where men fail to live up to their socially ascribed roles as providers and decision-makers (which is common in situations of economic hardship, displacement or conflict), they often lose self-esteem and standing in the community, which can translate into violence in the family or incentives to prove their "manhood" by other means, including participation in armed groups (Dolan, 2010; Hollander, 2014; Kesmaecker-Wessing and Pagot, 2015; ONU Femmes et l'Ambassade de Suède, 2015). Uneven economic development in the DRC has led to gendered internal migration patterns, with younger men, in particular, relocating to the south and south-east of the country to seek their fortunes in the formal and informal mining sectors (Myrttinen, 2016).

A paucity of state services is also a contributing factor to conflict (and vice versa) that affects women and men in specific ways. For example, it is reflected in all parts of the health sector, contributing to high infant and maternal death rates, which in turn lead to high birth rates (arguably also increasing fragility). Yet dominant social norms tend to militate against young women rather than older women or their husbands, who are more in control of their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) or provision of education on these issues (McLean Hilker et al., 2016; ONU Femmes et l'Ambassade de Suède, 2015; Slegh et al., 2014).

Efforts at statebuilding and increasing the writ of security forces have at times had unintended consequences, including on gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, the deployment of additional, but underpaid and ill-disciplined, security forces in 2012 to a CRSV-affected area in the east led to an increase in SGBV (Adam and Vlassenroot, 2010; Autesserre, 2012).

2.1.3. Ethiopia: key dimensions of fragility, gender inequalities and the links between them

Ethiopia has been subject to conflict, violence and humanitarian emergencies (many in specific regions) in the past decades. However, it remains a comparatively stable country in a volatile region. A major challenge, and an on-going source of fragility, is the lack of political space for active and engaged civil participation, along with the government's limited accountability for human rights abuses (Human Rights Watch, 2016; UNDAF, 2016). Ethiopia also has very high levels of poverty and performs poorly with respect to a range of human development indicators (UNDP, 2015a, 2015c). Regional conflict (e.g. over land and water) is increasingly prevalent and can be linked to inter-ethnic or inter-regional disputes. Inter-clan rivalries and competition for resources further increase people's vulnerability to climate-related shocks, especially droughts and their consequences such as increases in food prices, food

Box 2.3. ODA targeting gender equality in Ethiopia

In 2014-15 49% of ODA to Ethiopia was reportedly gender-focused (USD 938 million per year on average per year). The largest share went to the health sector, followed by agriculture, education, development, food aid and commodity assistance.

Source: OECD DAC CRS database

shortages and outbreaks of livestock disease (UNDAF, 2016). In a context of rapid economic growth, the poorest people have not seen their income grow, the severity of poverty has increased, and access to services remains a challenge (Barnes Robinson, 2016; UNDP, 2015c).
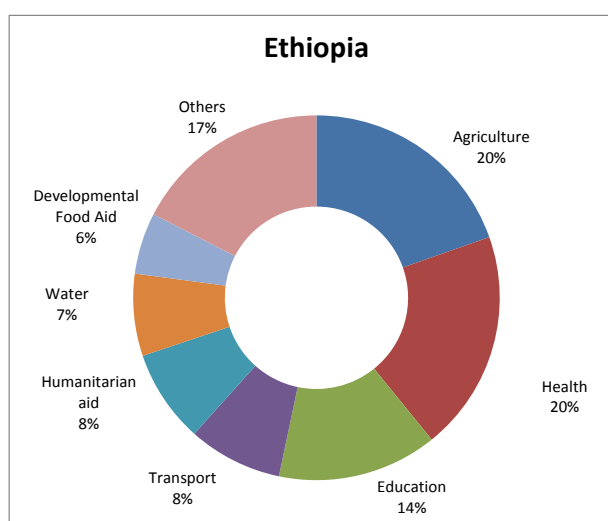
While there are significant variations across Ethiopia, some of the aspects of gender inequality that are most evident include harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation; limited participation by women in household decision-making; lack of access by women to the labour market, property and credit; and discriminatory social practices such as the "bride price" (Barnes Robinson, 2016; OECD, 2014; UNDAF, 2016).

Some of the disadvantages women face can be exacerbated by drivers of fragility. For example, limited space for civic activism reduces opportunities for women to mobilise and to hold the government accountable for recognition of their rights (Barnes Robinson, 2016). A power analysis commissioned by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) highlighted that unequal gender relations in households in turn perpetuate a hierarchical social culture that presents obstacles to inclusive decision-making at all levels. It concluded that, from birth, processes of socialisation teach that people are not equal. Rather, they instil an understanding of the roles and

status assigned to different individuals, marking them as either marginal and disenfranchised or privileged and empowered, based usually on ethnicity, clan, class, gender, wealth or age. This contributes to non-egalitarian distribution of power, which is deeply entrenched and resistant to change. While male heads of households mediate access to family, and to the local political arena, representatives of the state at each level play the same powerful role vis a vis public life and resources, with little likelihood of challenge by their subordinates (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003).

Poor levels of service provision in rural areas and insecurity in some regions (e.g. the Somali region, other border areas, Oromia) can make women more vulnerable to violence (Barnes Robinson, 2016) while unequal gender norms compound the impacts of continued poverty on women (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003). Men and boys are also specifically affected by challenges associated with transition from pastoral livelihoods, as well as rigid societal structures that leave little space for youth to challenge the authority of leaders (Barnes Robinson, 2016).

Climate-induced humanitarian emergencies have strong gender dimensions. Women's vulnerability to droughts and floods is compounded by roles as caregivers and responsibilities related to collecting water and preparing food and firewood. In response to recent drought, for example, men and boys were forced to migrate in search of good pastureland and water. In addition to their existing workloads, women and girls therefore took on tasks previously performed by men and boys. They also had to travel longer distances to fetch water and wait in lines or fight with others. Some women and girls fetched water at night, increasing their risks of SGBV. While school absenteeism and dropouts generally increased in affected areas, more girls than boys left school because they were spending more time on domestic responsibilities such as fetching water. Women and girls were also particularly vulnerable to malnutrition since they traditionally eat last (CARE Ethiopia, 2016).

Research also points to links between identity politics and gender relations in Ethiopia. It suggests that an upsurge in ethnic consciousness following the introduction of the federal system may have led to the revival of certain traditional practices which discriminate against women, as they are seen as ethnic boundary markers by political or ethnic "entrepreneurs". Although the Ethiopian federal state discourages such practices, regional states or ethnic groups may tacitly approve or allow them to be carried out (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003).

2.1.4 Nepal: key dimensions of fragility, gender inequalities and the links between them

In Nepal the conflict between Maoist rebels and state forces ended in 2006 after two decades of violence. In the post-conflict period, identity (regional, ethnic, caste) has emerged as the central axis for political mobilisation. The failure of Nepal's political elites to respond effectively to identity-based demands has resulted in rising levels of extremism, tension and violence. State institutions continue to be weak, corruption is high, and service delivery is limited. Each of these factors exacerbated the impact of the earthquakes that hit the country in 2015. There are high levels of unemployment, poverty, and external and internal migration (Gurung and Drew, 2015; Naujoks, 2016; Naujoks and Myrttinen, 2014).

Nepal is a highly diverse society. Gender norms and practices vary among communities. Nonetheless, common gender equality challenges include SGBV, trafficking, large numbers of out-of-school girls, child and early marriage, and under-representation of women in the labour market and in the political sphere (Gurung and Drew, 2015; Naujoks and Myrttinen, 2014).

The conflict had a profound effect on gender relations in Nepal. Many women joined the Maoist forces. They are estimated to have made up 30-40% of the People's Liberation Army (Naujoks and Myrttinen, 2014). During and following the conflict, women mobilised in their communities around human rights and peace (Castillejo, 2016). Women's economic participation also increased during the conflict (Naujoks and Myrttinen, 2014).

Between 2001 and 2011 the number of female-headed households increased by 11% (Naujoks and Myrttinen, 2014). Widows often face high levels of social stigmatisation, as well as risks of dispossession and destitution; frequently they are forced to become prostitutes, to endure sexual and other physical abuse, and to be separated from their children by family members (Naujoks and Myrttinen, 2014; Thapa, 2011).

Conflict has generally increased levels of SGBV. Yet victims of CRSV have been excluded from definitions of conflict-affected people, and therefore from relief or justice (Castillejo, 2016).

Box 2.4. ODA targeting gender equality in Nepal

While there are limited data on the sectoral breakdown of gender-focused programming in Nepal, 56% of ODA was reported to be gender-focused in 2014-15 (USD 442 million on average per year).

Nepal

- Humanitarian aid 30%
- Health 21%
- Government & Civil Society 17%
- Education 11%
- Agriculture 5%
- Others 16%

Source: OECD DAC CRS database

41
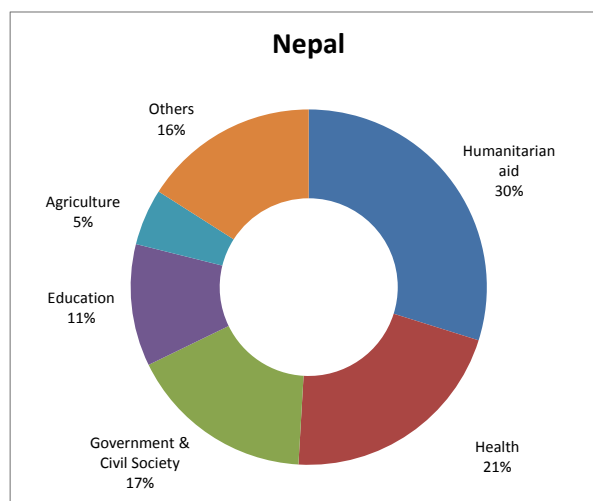
Research suggests that, in some communities in post-conflict Nepal, a yearning for a pre-conflict "golden age" has also led to an increase in banned practices such as *chhaupadi,* which can be harmful for women and girls (Naujoks and Myrttinen, 2014).

Current fragility and gender equality challenges are also connected in a number of ways. Weak rule of law and justice institutions mean there is little access to justice for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (Castillejo, 2016; Naujoks and Myrttinen, 2014). An unstable political situation at the central level and lack of local government present a challenge to implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 and to accountability with respect to gender equality. The new federal structures and future local elections will offer an opportunity to increase women's voice in local governance, but raise the question whether local elites will really give up some power to women and excluded groups (Castillejo, 2016).

High levels of primarily male migration outside and within the country have created a feminised workforce, particularly in rural areas, adding to the heavy workloads of women and girls. However, migration has also resulted in women taking on new economic roles and decision-making responsibilities (Naujoks, 2016; Naujoks and Myrttinen, 2014). Conflict, poverty and disaster have exacerbated patterns of trafficking and unsafe migration for women.

Women in earthquake-affected districts face insecurity and particular barriers in gaining access to relief and recovery. Childcare responsibilities mean women have less time for lengthy administrative processes and waiting periods, or for walking long distances to claim relief materials or support. Lack of documentation or funds, illiteracy, and discrimination within families or institutions are also disproportionate barriers to women accessing support (Naujoks, 2016).

2.2. Programmes reviewed

The 15 programmes reviewed in the four case study countries were chosen based on the need to examine a balanced portfolio of sectors and themes; to review programmes that involved a wide selection of stakeholders; and to include both dedicated gender equality programmes and programmes that mainstream gender equality (Annex A). Table 2.1 provides short descriptions of these programmes.

Table 2.1. Overview of the 15 programmes studied in the four case study countries

BANGLADESH		
Programme	**Focus areas**	**Description**
Grassroots Women's Leadership	Social/welfare services, leadership, political participation	A long-term partnership between the donor and a sub-national non-governmental organisation (NGO). The programme focuses on empowering poor women and strengthening their voice and agency, including their political leadership and influence over decision-making at community level.
Enhancing Food Security and Nutrition in Cox's Bazar	Food security, nutrition, economic empowerment	Supports the economic empowerment and nutrition of the most vulnerable inhabitants of Cox's Bazar, including Rohingya people. The programme works with women to enhance food security and nutrition for themselves and their households by providing monthly allowances, income-generation trainings and support groups.
Justice and Prison Reform for Promoting Human Rights and Prevention of Corruption in Bangladesh	Human rights, access to justice	Seeks to reduce prison overcrowding and pre-trial detention by deploying paralegals to provide prisoners with access to legal assistance and encouraging use of alternative dispute resolution to divert cases from the criminal justice system and keep the accused out of prison. The programme also supports the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs in revising outdated laws and improving Bangladesh's criminal system.
Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Industry	Decent work, occupational safety and health	Seeks to respond to industrial accidents in the ready-made garment (RMG) industry, including the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka in 2013. The programme aims to support implementation of the National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety and Building Integrity, and the commitments made by the Government of Bangladesh to improve working conditions and worker safety in the RMG industry.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO		
Programme	**Focus areas**	**Description**
C-Change	Health, SGBV, maternal and child health, reproductive health and family planning	Seeks to increase positive health behaviours through social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) focusing on family planning, HIV/AIDS, sexual and gender-based violence, malaria, tuberculosis, water sanitation, maternal and child health, and reproductive health and family planning.
Projet d'appui au système de santé de la province de Kinshasa	Health care, infectious disease control, training of health staff, maternal and child health	Supports the health system in the Kinshasa Province. The programme aims to improve service provision in the public health care sector through construction, restoration and equipment of health facilities and training of health staff to develop their administrative, technical and management capacities.
Stabilisation et Reconstruction à l'Est du Congo	SGBV	Focuses on supporting community-based mechanisms for prevention of and protection against SGBV; providing holistic support (medical, psycho-social, economic, juridical and judicial) for survivors of SGBV; collecting data on SGBV in North Kivu; and developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy against SGBV.
Young Men's Clubs Against Violence	Urban violence, social norms change, men and boys	Aims to tackle urban violence by preventing young men and boys from joining, and helping them to leave, local street gangs in Kinshasa. The programme aims to understand how norms around manhood are related to the phenomenon of young men joining these street gangs. It supports the creation of young men's clubs, which will be used as positive coping mechanisms and seek to challenge gender norms and promote positive masculinities.

ETHIOPIA		
Programme	**Focus areas**	**Description**
Peace and Development Programme	Basic services (health, education, water and sanitation), employment generation, security and justice	Multi-sector development programme whose overall objective is to invest in an integrated package of basic services (health, education, water and sanitation), advance economic opportunities for vulnerable groups, and improve women's and girls' access to security and justice.
Civil Society Support Programme	Democratic participation and civil society, human rights	Multi-donor programme which aims to support civil society capacity development in Ethiopia. It prioritises capacity-building for hard-to-reach civil society organisations, working across different regions and focusing on people affected by social marginalisation, geographic remoteness, under-resourcing and development issues. The programme is intended to foster a more active and diverse civil society, empowering civil society organisations to engage directly with local and regional authorities and to foster collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments.
Gender, Peace and Security Programme	Women, peace and security	Designed to serve as a framework to support women's increased participation in the promotion of peace and security in conflict and post-conflict situations in Africa. The programme aims to enhance the capacities of African institutions working on peace and security to mainstream gender equality into their agendas; support advocacy, research and dialogue on these issues; strengthen women's roles in peace and security in Africa; and enhance the protection of women and children in conflict and post-conflict situations.

NEPAL		
Programme	**Focus Areas**	**Description**
Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes	Elections, political participation	Aims to support political parties, electoral institutions, legislative processes, and civil society organisations (CSOs) in promoting a more stable and peaceful democracy in Nepal. The programme is designed to restore public confidence in democratic processes and institutions and promote greater political participation, especially that of marginalised populations. Following the 2015 earthquake a new component was added to the programme, focusing on support for local CSOs in monitoring and advocating on earthquake relief and reconstruction, with a particular focus on gender and social exclusion issues.
Strengthening Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Nepal	Women, peace and security	A programme whose overall goal is to support implementation and monitoring of Nepal's National Action Plan (NAP) on UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and UNSCR 1820. It does so by seeking to enhance the capacity of local governments and other relevant stakeholders to implement the NAP; empowering conflict-affected women economically and socially; and enhancing women's leadership and participation in decision-making structures.
Mediating Local Conflict and Reducing Vulnerability Surrounding Post-Earthquake Recovery in Nepal	Dispute resolution, mediation	Aims to address conflicts and vulnerabilities related to earthquake recovery in Nepal. The programme supports peaceful resolution of disputes related to resettlement and land and resource use; the perceived or real unequal allocation of relief and recovery resources; legal claims and identification; and increased vulnerability of marginalised groups, especially in regard to gender-based violence.
Nepal Peace Trust Fund	Peacebuilding	A joint initiative of the Government of Nepal and donors to support implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and other agreements related to peacebuilding. The Nepal Peace Trust Fund implements projects in four areas: cantonment management and integration/rehabilitation of combatants; conflict-affected persons and communities; security and transitional justice; and elections and peacebuilding initiatives.

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DONOR PROGRAMMING ON GENDER EQUALITY IN FRAGILE SITUATIONS: PROMISING PRACTICES, MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Chapter 3 highlights some gaps in the content of donor programming on gender equality in fragile situations. Overall, while donors recognised the impacts of conflict and violence on women, their responses could be strengthened. Donors could also do more to support women as active agents in peacebuilding and statebuilding, and to link gender equality support more strategically with wider peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts. Donors largely neglected the impacts of wider fragility issues on gender equality, while they rarely used a gender lens to strengthen responses to conflict and fragility. They could also have done more to transform gender inequalities and violence through addressing discriminatory gender norms. Programming could have been strengthened by engaging more strategically with men and with "resistors". Thinking and working politically could increase the effectiveness of donors' work on gender, conflict and fragility.

This chapter highlights the study's **main findings on the extent to which the content of donor programmes reflects knowledge about how donors can advance gender equality in fragile situations and tackle fragility through a gender focus.** Despite diverse country contexts (including both conflict and non-conflict environments), the research pointed to a number of common lessons on how donor programmes address these issues; programmes' strengths and weaknesses; and the challenges, opportunities and constraints that programmes face.

3.1. Donors recognised some impacts of conflict and violence on women, but they could strengthen their responses

All the programmes reviewed (Table 2.1) showed some recognition of the gender-specific impacts of conflict, violence and insecurity, and most of them made efforts to address the particular needs and vulnerabilities of affected women. In Nepal, for example, several programmes recognised that conflict and ensuing large-scale migration had increased the number of female-headed households and women's workloads. All programmes also acknowledged that conflict had increased sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Moreover, some programmes demonstrated an understanding that conflict had led many women to take on new activities, including as combatants, breadwinners and peace activists, and that post-conflict work could build on these changes to increase gender equality.

However, a focus on the gender-specific impacts of conflict and violence was significantly more explicit and prioritised in some countries than in others. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo

(DRC) and Nepal all programmes had a clear and generally strong emphasis on including women affected by conflict, violence or disaster. This reflects both countries having experienced high levels of conflict; widespread recognition of the specific impacts of conflict and insecurity on women among national stakeholders and donors in these contexts; and national frameworks and commitments to address these impacts, notably United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 National Action Plans (NAPs). In Bangladesh and Ethiopia, where donors and national stakeholders were less likely to see conflict and fragility as relevant frameworks (given lower levels of public violence), programmes included women affected by conflict and violence in more implicit ways, for example by focusing on "hard-to-reach populations" which include vulnerable women and girls, or targeting women at risk of personal insecurity and violence (e.g. dowry-related violence or political violence).

While most programmes recognised specific impacts of conflict and violence on women, the quality of interventions designed to address these impacts varied significantly. Some programmes were based on extensive consultation with local women, involved women as active agents, or reached out to the most excluded groups of women. Some, such as a programme in Nepal designed to support the NAP for implementation of UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 1820, deliberately linked activities across different areas (e.g. services, leadership and economic empowerment), recognising that the gender-specific impacts of conflict and gender equality gains across these areas are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. However, other programmes were designed with little consultation and tended to encompass short-term interventions (e.g. one-off training activities), which were frequently disconnected from local needs with little thought given to how they might result in any sustainable change.

In particular, programming to support women affected by conflict and violence appeared to be more sophisticated in some sectors than in others. The design of SGBV programming was particularly strong across all the countries, with a number of frequently recurring approaches such as involving whole communities; addressing norms and power relations; giving local women ownership of SGBV services; addressing victims' immediate and longer-term needs; and linking victims to other justice avenues, services and economic opportunities.

By contrast, programmes supporting women's economic empowerment were generally rather weak. For example, some programmes provided livelihoods training that took limited account of the beneficiaries' real economic opportunities and challenges and did not offer follow-up. Programmes also failed to consider the need to support women's participation in both large- and small-scale economic programmes and the formal sector, or to address structural barriers to women's economic participation and control of resources, both of which are important for real gains in women's economic empowerment (Justino et al., 2012; UN Women, 2015). Work to enhance food security and nutrition in Bangladesh provided a positive exception (Box 3.1). The relative weakness of programming in this area represents a missed opportunity for both gender equality and efforts to tackle fragility, as women's economic participation can make an important contribution to economic recovery and resilience (Justino et al., 2012).

Box 3.1. A promising approach to women's economic empowerment in Bangladesh: improving food security and nutrition

A programme designed to improve food security and nutrition in Bangladesh stood out as an intervention that appeared well placed to support women's economic empowerment in fragile situations. The programme was implemented in Cox's Bazar, where approximately 200 000 unregistered Rohingya refugees have settled since the early 1990s after fleeing religious and ethnic persecution in neighbouring Myanmar. Food insecurity and poverty have been exacerbated for both the host and Rohingya populations by the unrecognised status of the Rogingya; tensions between them and the host community; regular natural disasters and environmental degradation; and high rates of crime and insecurity. Prioritisation of men and boys for food consumption, women's unequal decision-making power in the home, and other unequal gender norms aggravate food insecurity for women, girls and households.

The programme responded to these dynamics through an integrated approach that combined resource transfers to, and livelihood development of, female household members with behavioural change communication and activities aimed at shifting these unequal gender norms that perpetuate food insecurity and malnutrition, such as early marriage and women's lack of household decision making power. It also supported women in strengthening their social networks, and involved ongoing monitoring and support following their graduation from the programme. The programme explicitly supported women's economic empowerment and livelihoods to help build household resilience, including in the face of shocks such as natural disasters. The programme design was also conflict-sensitive, for example targeting ultra-poor communities but ensuring inclusivity in terms of other characteristics (e.g. caste, ethnicity, Bangladeshi/host community or Rohingya) and including efforts to prevent increased vulnerability of women or violence against them as a result of interventions, such as engagement with local leaders, male relatives and mothers-in-law.

3.2. Donors could do more to support women as active agents in peacebuilding and statebuilding

A particular gap in donor responses to the specific impacts of conflict on women was that they largely included women affected by conflict and violence as passive beneficiaries only, rather than supporting them as active agents in shaping post-conflict processes. For example, projects to implement the UNSCR 1325 NAP funded by the Nepal Peace Trust Fund mostly tended to involve women as beneficiaries, recipients of services, or participants in training. Only a few interventions strongly focused on supporting women's active roles in peacebuilding and statebuilding.

Programmes that supported women as active agents did so at very different levels, from micro to macro. They ranged from programmes supporting women at community level to become local conflict mediators (a post-earthquake recovery programme in Nepal), or to raise grievances with local governments (a multi-sector programme in Ethiopia), to those supporting female politicians' engagement with post-conflict national-level constitutional and legislative reform processes (a programme focused on strengthening political processes programme in Nepal) or supporting women's national-level dialogue, networking and roundtables across a number of conflict-affected countries (a gender, peace and security programme).

However, in general the programmes did not support women as active agents in shaping peacebuilding and statebuilding *across* different levels. They tended not to focus on joining up women's action by supporting women's movements or coalitions so as to increase collective impact. They therefore missed opportunities to contribute to structural changes in gender inequality. A programme to support political processes in Nepal (Box 3.2) provided a largely positive exception.

> **Box 3.2. Supporting women as active agents in Nepal's post-conflict processes**
>
> A programme designed to strengthen political processes in Nepal stood out as closely aligned with knowledge about "what works" in supporting women as active agents in post-conflict peacebuilding and statebuilding. There was a strong emphasis on increasing the individual capacity of women Members of Parliament as effective politicians, as well as their collective capacity to work across party lines in a highly politically divided context, in order to develop and advocate for a shared gender equality agenda. The programme supported them in overcoming barriers to influence within political institutions and public life and in taking advantage of key reform moments such as constitutional reform. Critically, it sought to strengthen links between women in politics at the national and local levels, as well as more broadly between Members of Parliament and their constituencies on gender and exclusion issues. However, the programme did not appear to have combined this work with direct and systematic engagement with male political leaders on gender equality and women's political inclusion.

Some programmes that sought to support and empower women affected by conflict and violence as active agents had other weaknesses. Notably, monitoring frameworks did not allow donors to measure which aspects of women's activism were having impacts within peace and reform processes or to adjust their programme accordingly. In some cases inadequate funding and lack of gender expertise also prevented these programmes from identifying opportunities to empower women and advance women's rights, including opportunities emerging from wider peacebuilding and statebuilding processes.

3.3. Donors could link gender equality support more strategically with wider peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts

Compounding this gap, donors often missed opportunities by failing to effectively link support to women's agency and gender equality (including to women, peace and security) with wider efforts to address conflict, peacebuilding and statebuilding.

This included a tendency to isolate programming on gender equality and women's rights from broader processes where decisions about power and resource allocation are negotiated. For example, in work to support women's political participation in Nepal there was a relatively limited focus on linking women in politics to broader coalitions of actors who could shape gender equality outcomes in politics. In particular, the programme did not appear to have worked directly with male political leaders on gender equality in any systematic way, even though another component of the

same programme directly engaged with political party leaders. Such disconnects and the isolation of gender equality work raised questions about the effectiveness of this type of programme.

While addressing local needs and priorities, many of the programmes aimed at supporting women affected by violence did not demonstrate an understanding of how local dynamics may be linked to broader regional or national patterns of conflict and violence. For example, a civil society support programme in Ethiopia provided women and men with tools and strategies to challenge harmful gender stereotypes, particularly those fuelling violence in the household and community. However, it did not appear to consider how this work related to wider tensions and patterns of exclusion (e.g. by asking how increased household-level awareness of harmful gender norms could be used to challenge patterns of exclusion of women from governance, or how gender stereotypes are manipulated to drive conflict at the societal level).

Similarly, the health sector behavioural change project reviewed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) focused on local patterns of SGBV rather than the broader national conflict, even though some of the programme's target areas were directly conflict-affected and the strong links between SGBV and the wider conflict context are widely recognised in the DRC. While it would be beyond the mandate and capacities of such SGBV programmes to seek to address national or regional-level conflicts, more work could be done to understand the links between different levels of conflict and violence and how programming on one level may contribute to positive or negative change on other levels.

Yet several donors demonstrated positive practices in linking gender equality support to wider peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts by supporting women in seizing the opportunities that conflict resolution, peace and reform processes present to redress gender inequalities, promote \gender-sensitive reforms and advance recognition of women's rights. For example, the programme designed to strengthen political processes in Nepal supported women's mobilisation across party lines to influence the constitution-making process, recognising that constitutional reform provides windows of opportunity to promote gender equality. This programme provided them with, among other things, legal knowledge – influencing strategies and campaign tactics that were both timely and relevant. Critically, the programme also promoted coalitions among diverse groups of women to help enhance collective impact (Box 3.3).

A few programmes explicitly recognised that institutional strengthening processes in fragile situations offer an opportunity to build in gender equality. These programmes sought to take advantage of that opportunity by integrating gender issues into wider programmes aimed at strengthening state institutions (Box 3.3).

3.4. Donors neglected the impacts of wider fragility issues on gender equality

While many of the programmes focused on the impacts of conflict or violence on women, they largely neglected the effects of broader aspects of fragility on gender relations, gender equality and the long-term impact of interventions.

To the extent that the programmes reviewed recognised the gender-specific impacts of fragility, they tended to focus narrowly on the effects of weak institutions and services on women. For example, a multi-sectoral development programme in Ethiopia identified women and girls as a specific target group for its work to increase access to justice and services, based on the recognition that they are particularly disadvantaged by Ethiopia's weak institutions, insecurity and restrictions of movement and therefore face particular barriers to such access.

A few programmes also demonstrated awareness of the impacts of unstable, polarised and violent politics on gender dynamics, particularly on space for women's political participation. A programme supporting women's leadership in Bangladesh, for example, recognised the specific risks and barriers that politically active women face in a context of polarised party politics and weak rule of law, including frequent political violence combined with backlash from family and society for acting outside accepted gender roles and disadvantages due to the exclusion of women (particularly poor women) from patronage networks. Programme activities to mitigate these challenges included work to reduce inter-communal tensions; engaging with religious leaders; regular discussions of these risks among women's collectives supported by the programme; building linkages with law enforcement agencies, local political leaders, media and local administration for peaceful participation of women in elections; and building voter awareness of women's candidacies, including through community theatres, leaflets and posters.

In Nepal a number of programmes at local level acknowledged that weak, unelected and unstable local government was a potential obstacle to achieving project objectives of enhancing local women's voice and empowerment. Programmes in Nepal also recognised that natural disasters had increased gender inequalities and that women faced particular challenges in accessing relief and recovery, such as lack of documents, more limited mobility and higher rates of illiteracy. Some interventions explicitly aimed to address these obstacles (Box 3.4).

Beyond disaster, weak institutions and unstable politics, donors and their programmes showed limited recognition of how broader aspects of fragility might impact gender inequalities, or of activities that would take account of these links. For example, donors did not ask how gender relations, norms and ideologies might relate to the rise of identity-based or religious extremism; the nature and limits of state authority; inter-elite contestation over the political settlement; patterns of clientelism and corruption; or the nature of unequal, inaccessible or dysfunctional markets.

In Nepal lack of attention to wider gender-fragility linkages appears to have resulted in missed opportunities to ask how struggles over women's rights at local and national level, or women's continued exclusion from senior political leadership, relate to wider contestations between elites over the nature of the post-conflict political settlement. This would have included recognising how tensions related to Nepal's relationship with India, and the status of its population along the border between the two countries, undermine women's demands for equal citizenship status in the new Constitution and how these tensions could have been addressed; asking how the increasingly hostile political environment undermines women's ability to mobilise across political and identity fault lines; and examining how the disconnect between political elites in Kathmandu and the wider population is mirrored in the Nepali women's movement and how this can best be overcome.

Box 3.4. Addressing gender dimensions of environmental shocks and recovery in Nepal and Ethiopia

A programme supporting earthquake recovery in Nepal explicitly addressed how gender-specific vulnerabilities, inequalities and violence can emerge during post-earthquake recovery due to a weak and unstable governance context; the legacy of conflict; high levels of clientelism and corruption; existing patterns of exclusion; and low state capacity. It responded by providing forums for conflict transformation, facilitated dialogue and community mediation, in particular in relation to disputes about earthquake relief, resettlement, land and resource use, legal claims and identification and SGBV. In this way the programme created opportunities for voice and access to justice to the communities that were most marginalised (due to their caste, class group), whose historical marginalisation was a central driver of conflict, and whose exclusion from earthquake recovery exacerbated their marginalisation and threatened to fuel tensions. In this context the programme specifically supported the empowerment of women as mediators and disputants and took a holistic approach to SGBV, prioritising victims' rights and both immediate and longer-term needs, as well as linking survivors to other justice avenues, services and economic opportunities. This sensitivity to fragility and gender issues appeared to be shaped both by the strong focus on exclusion that emerged from peacebuilding and the conflict context, and widespread concern among donors that conflict could be reignited by lack of government capacity and transparency to manage earthquake recovery.

In Ethiopia recurrent climate-related shocks have also resulted in humanitarian emergencies with strong gender dimensions. For example, women's vulnerability to droughts and floods is compounded by their roles as caregivers and their responsibilities for collecting water and firewood and preparing food for their families. Yet in contrast to Nepal, none of the reviewed programmes addressed these issues (CARE Ethiopia, 2016).

Critically, none of the programmes reviewed in Nepal addressed how the growth of identity politics and rising tensions may shape or be shaped by gender norms, or how the absence of elected local government and the resulting unaccountability and corruption of local political actors affects women

and men differently, including through impacts on services, which in turn have gender-specific effects. From broader discussions with interviewees (beyond a focus on specific programmes) it appears that the gender aspects of fragility are largely not on the agenda of donors, implementers or government counterparts in Nepal.

In the DRC donors acknowledged that a narrow focus on women primarily as victims of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), and utilisation of this narrative by political actors to gain points over opponents at the negotiating table, has diverted attention from other ways in which the country's fragility undermines gender equality and women's rights. This has resulted in women being marginalised within broader political processes relevant to peace and security that are not seen as directly linked to CRSV (Cano Vinas, 2015; Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2010).

In Bangladesh donor support often did not address underlying drivers of fragility, or how these drivers might affect programme objectives and activities, thus jeopardising the sustainability of the positive impacts achieved. One organisation had developed an innovative integrated-livelihoods programme to increase the economic power and food security of ultra-poor women in marginalised communities. Yet programme staff acknowledged that, while increasing household resilience, the programme interventions were largely community-focused and did not address wider aspects of fragility that drive food insecurity, such as state corruption and links with criminal activities; inadequate service provision; and the lack of legal status of some marginalised communities.

Another programme in Bangladesh had been using an integrated approach to reduce the pre-trial prison population, including through purposeful targeting of women. Most programme activities supported women and men in working around weaknesses in formal justice institutions (e.g. by providing paralegal support to push cases through the system, or by diverting cases away from the formal legal process to alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms). However, the donor recognised that the programme also needed to try to tackle the underlying causes of blockages or dysfunction in the justice system. As a result, there were increasing efforts to improve co-ordination among justice sector actors at different levels and to help promote discussion among senior policy makers. One way of doing this was by sharing lessons from pilot activities to encourage change within the system as a whole.

3.5. Donors rarely used a gender lens to strengthen responses to conflict and fragility

While the programmes reviewed used a conflict lens and, to a much more limited degree, a fragility perspective to understand gender equality challenges, there was very little evidence that donors used a gender lens to strengthen responses to conflict and fragility.

The programmes reviewed thus largely missed opportunities to ask how gender norms shape conflict and violence and could be part of the solution. For example, in Ethiopia a peace and development programme did not ask how gender norms and identities impact the ongoing conflict and violence in the Somali region where it was working. An exception to this trend was a programme

in the DRC that aimed to tackle street violence – in part an indirect result of decades of conflict and state fragility – by engaging with young men on gender norms (Box 3.5).

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Box 3.5. Tackling gender norms to reduce violence in Kinshasa

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo a three-year programme used engagement on gender norms to help prevent young men and boys (ages 10-19) from joining local street gangs, as well as helping them to leave. It built on the recognition that younger men may be drawn to violence-prone groups in part to respond to social expectations (from both women and men), for men to serve as protectors and economic providers, and to show dominance and use force to resolve conflicts. The programme set up young men's clubs through which gender norms change; in particular, "positive masculinities" and gender equality were fostered. The curriculum drew on previous experience working on masculinities in the eastern DRC and abroad, but adapted these to local needs and dynamics in Kinshasa. The programme was also to engage with women and adolescent girls who play a role in the lives of these men and boys. In addition, police officers were to be trained as facilitators to support the work in youth centres. This was the only programme reviewed that included an explicit "masculinity focus" in its gender work.

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Across all four countries, to the extent that programmes supported women's active role in peacebuilding and recovery, they promoted this role primarily as important for advancing gender equality goals rather than also advancing broader peacebuilding and statebuilding goals.

An exception was the women's leadership programme reviewed in Bangladesh, which supported women's local leadership both as an end in itself and with the explicit aim of improving the inclusiveness and responsiveness of local government institutions. This programme featured activities to help women manage and reduce inter-communal tensions and political violence. According to the mid-term review, members of women's collectives supported by the programme were increasingly recognised as key arbitrators in local dispute resolution mechanisms by both women and men, with the extreme poor using women members of these groups to resolve conflicts and to advance recognition of their own rights. The mid-term review also pointed to clear evidence of the increased responsiveness of local government and NGO service providers to women, the extreme poor and poor households, based on advocacy by the women's collectives.

In Nepal the focus on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) reflects an understanding that discrimination and exclusion, including those based on gender, are drivers of conflict (Box 3.6).

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Box 3.6. Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) and peacebuilding in Nepal

In Nepal the focus on GESI across government policy and donor programming reflects wide recognition of how multiple forms of exclusion and discrimination (including those which are gender-based) have fuelled conflict and need to be addressed in peacebuilding. Some form of GESI capacity, analysis and monitoring was part of all the programmes studied. Yet GESI analyses and activities were not always well connected to broader programme elements that focused primarily on conflict and peacebuilding.

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Many of the programmes reviewed also did not consider women's economic empowerment as part of wider post-conflict economic recovery, overlooking its potential contribution. Women's

economic empowerment programmes reviewed in Nepal largely aimed to support individual women's capability and empowerment through enhanced livelihoods, but did not consider this as a contribution to economic recovery or reduced fragility in the wider context of the community or state.

In Bangladesh an interesting exception was the initiative aimed at increasing food security in ultra-poor communities (Box 3.1) which explicitly supported women's economic empowerment and livelihoods to build household resilience, including their ability to withstand shocks such as natural disasters. It included activities to change and track women's decision-making power in the household, based on long-term learning that provision to women of inputs such as food and assets is particularly effective in emergency situations, as well as potentially empowering as it enables them to challenge gender inequality in marriages and households.

Lack of attention to how gender inequalities can shape and influence conflict and fragility outcomes in part reflects the more limited availability of research and evidence in this area, as well as a limitation in donor policy practice. Overall, there appears to be a widespread failure to understand gender inequalities as a dimension of fragility in the first place, which is replicated from headquarters-level policies and frameworks for fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS) down to programme design and implementation. This "blind spot" may mean donors are not seizing the potential strategic value of gender-focused programmes for addressing fragility and building inclusive peace.

3.6. Donors could do more to transform gender inequalities and violence by addressing discriminatory gender norms

Some donors missed opportunities to contribute to transformative change by neglecting a root cause of gender inequality and a catalyst of violence: discriminatory attitudes about what roles are appropriate for women and men, and how these attitudes are shaped by other forms of exclusion prevalent in fragile situations.

The programmes studied varied in the extent to which they addressed discriminatory gender norms. In the DRC these norms were a central focus of all four programmes. Many of the respondents in the research interviews, especially Congolese participants, emphasised the role of social norms as a root cause of unequal gender relations. At least one programme reviewed in the DRC (Box 3.5) also demonstrated an understanding of links between gender norms and violence and aimed to help reduce street violence in Kinshasa by tackling understandings of masculinity.

In Bangladesh and Ethiopia there were some positive examples of active engagement with men and with change agents (including religious leaders, political leaders, husbands, mothers-in-law) on issues of gender norms and power relations. One example was the food security and nutrition programme in Bangladesh (Box 3.1). This work resulted from increasing awareness that changing gender relations was critical for household resilience and food security. Where norm change is not

considered integral to the outcomes of mainstream programmes, relevant activities may still be integrated but the results are likely to be more marginal.

In Nepal programmes tended to focus heavily on building women's capacity and on reforming institutions and services to be gender sensitive, with scarce recognition that impact is likely to be limited if such activities are not accompanied by (and effectively linked to) efforts to address discriminatory social norms or structures. For example, a programme that supported community mediation in conflicts over earthquake recovery assistance aimed to empower individual women to participate as disputants and mediators. However, it did not accompany these activities with work to tackle the underlying gender norms that cause women's exclusion and barriers to accessing relief and recovery.

More positively, especially in Nepal, a number of programmes demonstrated understanding of the intersection of gender norms and discrimination with other types of exclusion, and the resulting diversity of women's experiences, needs and interests which can be particularly salient in fragile situations. All of the programmes reviewed in Nepal had a strong focus on reaching out to doubly marginalised women (e.g. Dalits, minorities, the disabled). This reflects overlapping forms of exclusion having driven the conflict and been central to the peace process, resulting in widespread recognition among national actors and donors of the importance of addressing relationships between gender inequality and other forms of marginalisation and adopting the GESI framework as the entry point for achieving this. Similarly, in Ethiopia the civil society support programme considered gender exclusion in the context of other factors such as geographical location or livelihood opportunities that also play a large role in driving exclusion. It emphasised support for girls in rural communities, pastoral women, and women and children in prison as particularly at-risk or hard-to-reach groups.

However, a programme designed to improve working conditions in the ready-made garment (RMG) industry in Bangladesh appeared unlikely to achieve its aim of including women's participation, representation and leadership as a key principle of the programme because it did not have a strategy to address the entrenched structural barriers to participation that relate to both gender norms and discrimination based on other dividing lines. While the programme was successfully increasing the number of female government inspectors in the industry, it generally failed to analyse or address how gender norms and discrimination may affect women's ability to perform their jobs (e.g. by leading to gendered violations of women's labour rights or posing specific barriers to women's voice and participation in workers' committees, unions and management). There was also no recognition of the specific needs of the particular groups of women that make up the garment industry workforce: young, uneducated female migrants from rural areas.

3.7. Donors could strengthen their programming by engaging more strategically with men and with "resistors"

Donors often missed opportunities by failing to engage with men, community norm setters, or those who might resist the desired changes (e.g. religious authorities, local officials, central or local level political party leaders).

Programmes focused primarily on gender equality objectives generally did not engage with men, beyond male officials or others whose co-operation was required for programme implementation. This led to missed opportunities in both targeted and mainstream programmes. For example, a programme reviewed in Nepal that sought to support women's political influence had a limited focus on connecting women in politics with broader coalitions of gender equality stakeholders and did not directly engage male political leaders on gender equality in a systematic way.

Programmes reviewed in the DRC provided positive exceptions. All of these programmes engaged with "resistors" or potential spoilers in support of gender equality. They targeted both women and men in activities that addressed harmful attitudes, behaviours and gender norms (Boxes 3.5 and 3.7). In the case of all programmes reviewed in the DRC, interviewees highlighted the need to see gender as broader than just a women's and girls' issue. Several called for more research on men, boys and masculinities. While it is not possible to establish with absolute certainty why the situation was so different in the DRC, possible drivers include individuals, researchers, donors and implementers who are clearly motivated to work in more depth on these issues, as well as informal networks between them. The trend may also be linked to greater exposure to more comprehensive ways of working being used regionally, such as activities to engage men in transforming gender relations through Promundo or Stepping Stones, and SASA! approaches (Promundo, n.d.; SASA!, n.d.; Stepping Stones, n.d.) as well as work by local civil society organisations (CSOs).

In Ethiopia both the civil society support programme and the peace and development programme reviewed had some elements that involved work with male leaders, including religious authorities. The peace and development programme thus recognised that the high level of influence and reach of key social leaders (e.g. religious actors, clans, and community care structures) made them key partners in ensuring buy-in and the sustainability of work to challenge harmful traditional practices. The programme engaged them on these issues through capacity-building and dialogue, highlighting conflicts between such practices and religious principles. It then worked with these leaders to support wider social mobilisation aimed at transforming attitudes to such practices among their communities. Evidence from the programmes in Ethiopia suggests that identifying and working with this type of partners, with strong roots in local communities and with roles as social norm influencers, has been effective in addressing gender inequalities and transforming attitudes.

Box 3.7. Engaging men in gender equality programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The men against violence programme in the DRC worked primarily with men and boys, with the aim of changing dominant gender norms which contribute to violent behaviour. All other DRC programmes also engaged with men at some level, particularly in terms of attitudinal change with respect to maternal health care and women's sexual and reproductive health rights or domestic violence/SGBV. Thus each DRC programme explicitly used a broader approach to gender than focusing on women and girls, in line with evidence on what works (Conciliation Resources, 2015; El-Bushra, 2012; Myrttinen et al., 2014; Wright, 2014). In addition, the health sector behavioural change programme took the needs of sexual and gender minorities into account as part of its work with men who have sex with men.

The various programmes sought to engage with men and boys in different ways. The men against violence programme did this most explicitly, focusing in particular on young men and boys at risk of joining gangs, with the aim of changing harmful gender norms and working with the men and boys to give them life skills and positive, non-violent coping mechanisms. The two health sector projects reviewed brought in men as partners to promote a better understanding of (and play a more supportive role with respect to) their own and women's sexual and reproductive health. A programme addressing SGBV engaged with men mostly in their respective capacities as service providers and duty bearers (e.g. men working in security or judicial sector institutions) rather than seeking to change gender norms or gendered behaviour. Nonetheless, one of the UN agencies involved in the project also brought in a Congolese civil society organisation to train project staff on transformative approaches to working with masculinities.

3.8. Thinking and working politically could increase the effectiveness of donors' work on gender, conflict and fragility

In a number of programmes a more basic problem seemed to contribute to many of the challenges discussed above: serious weaknesses in donors' understanding of how political economy factors and power relations shape conflict, fragility and gender relations; what these factors and connections mean for trajectories of political and social change in fragile situations, including changes in gender norms and power relations; and what this implies for programme objectives and approaches. In many cases donors did not show awareness of how political settlement and political economy factors create both limitations and opportunities for gender equality reform and recognition of women's rights, or how politically smart approaches might help them seize these openings.

Therefore, theories of change employed by many of the reviewed programmes were not well grounded in political realities, including in relation to gender equality objectives. For example, the theory of change for a programme supporting grassroots women's leadership in Bangladesh assumed women would operate outside patronage-based politics, with implications for the type of support the programme provided and a narrative of women leaders as being inherently more virtuous than men. The programme thus largely supported women in gaining political influence outside established channels, for example by running on platforms of representing the interest of

women and the ultra-poor without aligning with a political party. While women won reserved seats and gained respect in their communities as a result, this strategy is less effective in ensuring political influence where politics is marked by intense competition between political parties and political power is dependent on personal relationships with decision-makers. The programme also sought to reduce corruption and improve justice institutions, recognising the gendered impacts of these aspects of fragility, but did not engage with the wider underlying economic and political conditions allowing these institutional failings to persist.

At the same time, the women's leadership programme in Bangladesh stood out for its relative awareness that changes in gender norms and relations take a generation or more to achieve; are rarely linear; and require modest objectives and slow building of women's individual and collective power. At the other extreme, the Nepal Peace Trust Fund has supported livelihood projects targeting conflict-affected women based on the premise that short-term skills trainings with little follow-up will result in women establishing and sustaining new enterprises.

Across all four countries, it appears that the transformational potential and sustainability of the reviewed programmes are limited by insufficient efforts to engage with (and incrementally shift) the political, economic and social rules of the game, or to link gender equality programming to broader political and social change dynamics that will continue beyond the life of the programmes.

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DONORS' ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES AND PRACTICES: LEVERS FOR STRONGER PROGRAMMING ON GENDER EQUALITY IN FRAGILE SITUATION

Chapter 4 looks at organisational structures and practices, within donor organisations, that could help explain gaps in the approaches of some programmes described in Chapter 3. These structures and practices may suggest levers for improving the quality of donor programming on gender equality in fragile situations. As discussed in this chapter, donors' gender, conflict and fragility frameworks were found to be insufficiently "joined-up" and incentives for implementation were lacking at field level; existing analytical tools were not "fit for purpose"; programming could have been strengthened through a learning or inception phase; more sophisticated approaches were needed for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and data collection; programme approaches needed to be more flexible and adaptive to capture the complexity of gender relations in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS); country-level capacity was insufficient for effective programme design and implementation and did not match commitments; there was a lack of accountability for ensuring that programmes "do no harm"; and inadequate co-ordination within and between agencies resulted in missed opportunities.

The research for this study pointed to several **organisational structures and practices that influenced the quality of donor programming** on gender equality, as well as the integration of gender concerns into wider programmes in the fragile and conflict-affected situations included in the study. These structures and practices can help explain gaps in the approaches of some of the programmes discussed in the previous chapter. They may also suggest levers for strengthening donor programming on gender equality in fragile situations.

4.1. Policy frameworks on gender, conflict and fragility are insufficiently "joined-up" and incentives for implementation were lacking at field level

A disconnect between policy frameworks on gender, conflict and fragility, and lack of incentives for implementation at field level, help explain the narrow consideration of links between gender, conflict and fragility in donor programming. Although donors have frameworks addressing different aspects of conflict and fragility as well as comprehensive gender mainstreaming policies and guidelines, these are insufficiently linked up. Few donors have developed explicit guidance that sets out commitments or a strategy to ensure that gender, conflict and fragility are addressed throughout their development assistance. While most DAC donors have National Action

Plans (NAPs) on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, these do not tend to be well integrated into other conflict and security strategies; to link up with partner countries' NAPs; or to cover the full range of connections between gender, conflict and fragility.

Regarding gender equality policies, most bilateral agencies have explicit and long-standing commitments to integrate gender equality into their development co-operation. These commitments usually promote the twin-track approach of dedicated gender equality programmes alongside gender mainstreaming (BMZ, 2014; CIDA, 1999, revised 2010; Development Co-operation Ireland, 2004; DFID, 2011; Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, 2015; SDC, 2003; USAID, 2012). Over the past five years, in a promising trend, some agencies have updated their policies to reflect recent global commitments, learning, and the greater prominence of gender equality in international debates while senior leadership in some countries has increasingly signalled that gender equality is a priority for development co-operation. Sweden's feminist foreign policy is a case in point (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, 2015).

The majority of DAC donors have also adopted commitments related to UNSCR 1325 and follow-up resolutions over the past ten years (Box 4.1). This has often included the development of NAPs designed to guide their work on gender in conflict contexts. These NAPs frequently identify both priority countries and actions. For example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a priority country in the United Kingdom's current NAP and has also been targeted in the Dutch and Swedish NAPs.

Box 4.1. The eight resolutions of the UN Security Council on women, peace and security

- **UNSCR 1325 (2000)** addresses for the first time the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women; stresses the importance of women's equal and full participation in peace and security; and calls for the incorporation of a gender perspective in all areas of peacebuilding.

- **UNSCR 1820 (2008)** recognises that sexual violence in conflict exacerbates armed conflict and impedes international peace and security; notes that sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide; and calls on all parties to armed conflict to prevent sexual violence against women and girls.

- **UNSCR 1888 (2009)** calls for an end to impunity for sexual violence in conflict.

- **UNSCR 1889 (2009)** calls for strengthening women's participation in peace processes and the development of indicators to measure progress in the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

- **UNSCR 1960 (2010)** requests the UN Secretary-General to provide the Security Council with information on suspected perpetrators of sexual violence during armed conflict as a basis for action.

- **UNSCR 2106 (2013)** calls for further deployment of gender advisors and training of personnel to combat sexual violence.

- **UNSCR 2122 (2013)** calls for efforts to improve women's leadership and participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and for renewed efforts to ensure women's access to justice.

- **UNSCR 2242 (2015)** calls for the integration of a gender analysis on the drivers and impacts of

violence extremism; encourages new targets for numbers of female peacekeepers; restates the need for more senior women leaders in all levels of decision-making in peace and security; and highlights the need to address the funding gap for women's organisations.

However, few of these gender equality policies and commitments are effectively linked to the conflict and security sphere, resulting in a disconnect between these issues and related policy commitments in their application to fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS). Many agencies have established policies or guidelines relating to peacebuilding and statebuilding, or to working in FCAS, reflecting the increased attention donors have devoted to them since 2010. While many of these documents refer in some way to the relationship between gender, conflict and insecurity, they demonstrate varying degrees of sophistication. The link is often made through UNSCR 1325 or "women, peace and security" issues only, which do not cover the full range of connections between gender, conflict and fragility.

For example, references to conflict-related gender-based violence, the particular risks for women in conflict settings, or the roles of women in peacebuilding are more common than discussions of gender norms and inequalities as drivers of conflict or links between gender and fragility. Often these references also tend to be of a technical nature, with goals expressed in quantitative terms such as the increase in the percentage of women in security forces, rather than reflecting more in-depth approaches aimed at more fundamental transformations of gender relations, conflict and violence or drawing explicit linkages with dimensions of the peacebuilding and statebuilding process.

Even the more narrowly framed UNSCR 1325 NAPs are rarely linked to agency-wide frameworks on peace and security. This can lead to their being marginalised or left to gender advisors (rather than governance or conflict advisors) to incorporate into programming at country level in FCAS. Moreover, NAP activities of donor countries are often not linked to the recipient country's own NAP activities nor are donor countries' NAP activities in-country necessarily co-ordinated.

While some donors have begun to put organisational incentives in place and have established concrete accountability mechanisms to encourage compliance with their gender equality commitments, they are not always transmitted effectively down to field level. In particular, these commitments are frequently pushed to the side in FCAS environments because of the high number of urgent and competing priorities.

The findings across the four case study countries confirm that many donors continue to face an implementation gap. There was little evidence of programme staff being subject to specific requirements related to integration of gender, conflict and fragility into their work, or of their being incentivised to carry out such integration. A notable exception is in the area of monitoring and reporting, where many donors do require at a minimum the collection of sex-disaggregated data (usually quantitative, such as how many women participated in training sessions) or consideration of gender equality as a cross-cutting theme in programme design frameworks or of gender-related impacts in programme reports.

In Nepal examples were found of the considerable impact that strengthened organisational leadership on gender (accompanied by concrete incentives) can have on the quality of programming. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) 2012 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy resulted in a strengthened gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) focus throughout its Nepal Mission. USAID Nepal developed a Mission Order requiring all existing projects to be examined to see how GESI could be better integrated and hired a GESI advisor, which resulted in expertise on gender, inclusion and conflict being integrated into all programming, including the USAID programme assessed in this study.

If not institutionalised, the integration of gender equality into programmes (and, more specifically, consideration of the relationship between gender inequality, fragility and conflict) is dependent on the initiative or commitment of individual staff or the requirements of other partners. For example, although women's empowerment has become a core component of the programme to enhance food security and nutrition in marginalised communities in Bangladesh, this was the result of staff championing experimental research on how to improve household food security, and having a specific interest in gender and disability issues, rather than of organisational policies that required these issues to be integrated into programmes as a matter of course. However, there is a risk that ad hoc attention to gender issues in FCAS will lead to programmers missing vital opportunities to strengthen their interventions. It can also be unsustainable in the long term if expertise is lost or diluted when particular staff move on.

4.2. Existing analytical tools are not "fit for purpose"

Research in the case study countries revealed that current analytical tools available to donors are not effective in bringing gender, conflict and fragility aspects together into one framework. Therefore, they do not equip donors with the contextual understanding necessary to integrate gender into their programmes as effectively as possible and strategically respond to the full range of interconnections between these issues. This helps explain why many programmes did not recognise or address the full range of links between gender, conflict and fragility.

4.2.1. Conflict analysis tools rarely addressed gendered drivers of conflict

While the use of conflict analysis was generally uneven across programmes, it also failed to integrate gender comprehensively. To the extent that gender was considered where donors did apply conflict analysis, the analysis tended to focus on the impact of conflict on women and gender inequalities, and on opportunities for women's participation and gender equality reform that have emerged from peacebuilding processes. Rarely did any donor analysis dig deeper to unpack the ways in which gender identities (e.g. the expectation that men will participate in violent conflict, or the changes in gender balance in communities due to violence and displacement) can influence the dynamics of conflict.

Programme staff from some agencies reported that there were mandatory requirements to ensure routine use of gender analysis in their mainstream programmes in the case study countries. These agencies (and ministries) included the Undesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) (BMZ) in Germany, the Department for International Development (DFID) in the United Kingdom, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and USAID. While such requirements can help ensure that project proposals or programme descriptions include some analysis of how a project might contribute to gender equality or women's empowerment, or of the causes of gender inequality, the quality of gender analysis cannot be guaranteed nor does it follow that this type of analysis will necessarily be used throughout the programme cycle. Furthermore, a few lines or a short sub-section in a programme strategy document can often satisfy the requirements, resulting in gender analysis becoming a token or add-on rather than a fundamental analytical lens applied to the programme from design through implementation and evaluation.

4.2.2. Fragility issues were not explicitly incorporated into analytical tools that donors used in FCAS

No donor explicitly used a fragility lens in the programmes under review (Table 2.1). Although many of the programme staff interviewed demonstrated awareness of certain relationships between gender and fragility issues, this was not expressed using the concept of fragility itself, nor were these issues routinely integrated into analytical frameworks.

It therefore seems that while donors are working on a number of aspects of fragility and linking at least some of them to gender equality issues (notably around conflict and violence, weak institutions, political instability, and vulnerability to disaster or crisis, as discussed above) they are mostly not systematically assessing how all aspects of fragility in a given context relate to gender inequalities. Nor are they asking how different aspects of fragility, such as social cleavages and high levels of corruption, may interact in ways that have gendered impacts, and especially how gender may shape fragility. Gaps in knowledge and lack of guidance on the relationships between gender and fragility, as compared to the impacts of conflict on women, help explain these blind spots.

Weak analysis of these connections has important operational impacts. For example, as discussed in the previous sections, donors may miss opportunities to support women's collective action and political participation effectively by overlooking how growing identity politics in Nepal could undermine women's ability to mobilise across political/religious/identity fault lines on gender equality issues of common concern, or how women's lack of resources might limit their political influence in patronage-based political systems like those of Bangladesh and Nepal.

Yet particularly in the more conflict-affected countries, some donors (including SDC and USAID in Nepal and all donors in the DRC) were undertaking regular political and conflict analysis that included a wide range of fragility factors even if these were not conceptualised in this way. The peace and development programme reviewed in Ethiopia was based on an analysis that reflected

both the drivers of fragility and the role of gender in shaping these drivers. As a result, transforming discriminatory social norms was included as a key intended output of the programme (Box 4.2).

Box 4.2. Analysing connections between gender and fragility in Ethiopia

The peace and security programme reviewed in Ethiopia was based on an in-depth assessment and understanding of the context. This analysis deepened understanding of the operational environment, as well as the specific drivers of fragility (particularly marginalisation and discrimination against Ethiopian Somalis) and the identification of vulnerable groups. Women and girls were identified early on as being traditionally excluded and requiring specific targeting through the programme. This understanding was translated into a comparatively robust theory of change, highlighting gender issues and particularly discriminatory social norms as a potential spoiler, with transformation of these attitudes an important intended output of the programme.

4.2.3 Analytical tools did not sufficiently reflect the need to think and work politically on gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected situations

Beyond the lack of a fragility framework as such, a more basic problem in some cases was that donors were not using political economy analysis to understand fragility dimensions such as weak rule of law or patronage-based politics (whether or not these were articulated in the language of fragility) and the impacts of these factors with respect to constraints on and opportunities for gender equality reforms. Past research suggests that even where political economy analyses are used, they tend to be gender-blind (Browne, 2014; Koester, 2015). This reduces donors' ability to tailor gender equality support to each country's institutional, social and political environment; to understand how reform takes place and is sustained; and to identify the principal actors involved, as well as those who stand to lose or are likely to drive resistance to reform.

Consequently, as discussed in Chapter 3, the theories of change used by many of the reviewed programmes were not well grounded in political realities, including in relation to gender equality objectives. Programming on gender equality and women's empowerment is often treated as disconnected from the broader political settlement, power dynamics and processes of social, political and economic contestation and change in fragile and conflict-affected situations. As a result, and as seen across the country case studies and programmes reviewed, gender is often addressed through isolated projects focused on women's special needs rather than gender power relations, and donors neglect the ways in which wider political and economic trends and drivers of fragility may increase or undermine the success and sustainability of programme interventions, including in relation to gender equality.

However, there were positive exceptions that could be built on. In Nepal, for example, both Switzerland and USAID undertook regular political economy analysis that included gender and contributed to their understanding of gender-fragility linkages. USAID had a dedicated gender expert (GESI advisor) who input gender expertise into political economy analysis.

4.3. A learning or inception phase could strengthen programming

The research suggests that a substantial inception phase to enable research, relationship-building and consultation with stakeholders (including around problem identification) can significantly improve programme design, including contributions to gender equality and conflict reduction. Where programmes drew from existing evidence or generated their own evidence in the early stages of programme development, they tended to be more attuned to the particular gender, conflict and fragility dynamics at play in the specific context.

For example, the programme focusing on women, peace and security reviewed in Nepal included a ten-month inception phase involving district- and national-level consultations, gender and conflict situation analysis, a local needs assessment, and analysis at sub-sectoral level (e.g. to investigate what kind of enterprises would be feasible for conflict-affected and ex-combatant women). Mid-term evaluation found that the inception phase was key in ensuring the programme refrained from blueprint planning and had followed bottom-up planning. Similarly, the food security programme in Bangladesh included a long inception phase which enabled design and targeting to be informed by the research and a household survey. This included consultation with, and buy-in from, local stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Both the civil society support and peace and development programmes in Ethiopia included "learning" phases. The latter programme was preceded by an overall research phase, as well as having separate inception phases for some components, which resulted in multiple iterations of the programme's objectives, theory of change and log frame to ensure it was well targeted to the context. Several studies carried out through the project to build the evidence base, such as one on gender, youth and peacebuilding in the Somali region, contributed to an understanding of how gender dynamics interact with conflict and fragility and could influence the project goals and outcomes.

In the civil society support programme in Ethiopia there was a one-year learning period (2012-13) during which significant effort was made to learn about effective entry points and programming opportunities. The overall design of the programme was based on an analysis of the different characteristics of hard-to-reach groups that was deepened during this phase, including identification of gender-related issues as an important strategic priority theme to support.

In Bangladesh the latest phase of the food security programme reviewed had substantial inception phases, which enabled it to conduct research (on the causes of poverty, including gender inequality, conflict and institutional weakness), to collect original household survey data necessary to target the programme properly at the ultra-poor, and to collect data necessary in order to, among other things, monitor the risks of early marriage among participating families. The long inception phase also enabled the programme to engage with and build support and trust by government, community leaders and participating families.

Especially in fragile situations, there may be trade-offs between the need for extensive local analysis and consultation and the need to deliver speedy responses in order to seize windows of opportunity or address emergencies. In Nepal the earthquake response programme addressed this challenge by conducting a rapid situational assessment of four highly affected districts. Drawing on existing global research can be another strategy.

The research found little evidence of explicit links between global research and learning and the design of programmes (e.g. in programme documents, or interviews carried out for the study). Yet programmes applied learning between phases, or drew from broader organisational experiences or often externally led expert inputs. However, while programmes did not explicitly reference this global learning, in the DRC and Nepal some clearly drew on it for programme design. One reason the global evidence base was used to only a limited extent in the design of programmes may be that while there are large amounts of existing learning as a result of the engagement of feminist administrators and activists with development co-operation, this learning is often not applied to specific fragile and conflict-affected situations or is not sufficiently connected to the evidence base on conflict and fragility.

There is a large amount of knowledge and evidence concerning how to improve aid in FCAS, such as that coming out of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS). Failure to give more attention to how this knowledge and evidence relate to gender, and particularly to the connections between gender inequality and fragility, has been a major oversight of much of this literature (Hearn, 2016).

4.4 More sophisticated approaches to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and data collection are needed

While the research pointed to promising developments in M&E, it also highlighted that donors can make further progress by increasing attention to qualitative indicators, to progress at the level of outcomes, and to opportunities for learning and adaptation.

The collection of sex-disaggregated data is the bare minimum needed to understand how interventions affect women and men differently and whether they contribute to gender equality (Myrttinen, Popovic and Khattab, 2016). Including gender-related indicators in monitoring frameworks also helps guard against "policy evaporation", whereby a gender analysis is carried out at the beginning of a project but not incorporated into design, learning and reporting. All the reviewed programmes collected sex-disaggregated data – a promising sign that mainstream programmes with a gender component may be doing this more routinely. Some programmes were also collecting data on other characteristics (e.g. age, caste, disabilities), which is important in order to understand outcomes for different groups of women and men. This was particularly evident in Nepal (Box 4.3).

At the same time, the number of indicators that are disaggregated continues to vary. In addition, most programmes failed to combine quantitative with qualitative indicators to measure women's empowerment. Given that changes in gender equality are as much about shifting underlying attitudes and norms as about improving women's capabilities and participation, it is important to use mixed methods and measures to capture progress, especially in transforming structural causes of gender inequality. The civil society support programme in Ethiopia (Box 4.4) has been notable for its comprehensive approach to monitoring, learning and evaluation, including through combining qualitative and quantitative indicators.

Several bilateral agencies, such as BMZ and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in Australia, are reported to be placing increasing emphasis on qualitative data and indicators

(e.g. encouraging implementers to use video or case study techniques to obtain a more complete understanding of changes in individuals, families or communities). The women, peace and security programme reviewed in Nepal also used case study techniques to capture and disseminate progress in terms of individual-level empowerment experienced by women beneficiaries. In the DRC all four projects reviewed had components for improving quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methodologies. Given the limited domestic capacity for data collection in FCAS, most of the reviewed programmes supported partner organisations in collecting and using data, including gender-related data. Some went further, with organisational capacity-building of partners a specific outcome area to improve sustainability.

Programmes also varied in the extent to which they captured progress at the level of outcomes, rather than only at the level of inputs and outputs. The women's leadership programme reviewed in Bangladesh was a positive example in this area. It featured indicators to measure not only inputs such as training and women's participation in decision making, but also women's actual influence on government decisions and their ability to advance the interests of both women and marginalised groups (e.g. changes in local government decisions, allocations or services).

Mandatory reporting requirements can facilitate the collection and use of disaggregated data and gender indicators. For example, following the establishment of the 2012 Gender Equality Policy, a USAID Nepal Mission Order required all projects to disaggregate data by gender, caste, age and ethnicity; to include GESI indicators; and to prepare GESI analysis and reporting. DFID had corporate targets to which country programmes must contribute, including services or outcomes for women and girls (e.g. greater access to justice for 10 million women and girls in developing countries between 2010 and 2015). These targets were reflected in the results that implementing partners needed to report and could incentivise them to increase activities focused on women and girls. Annual reviews are also an important mechanism donors can use to press for greater or more meaningful integration of gender and/or results for women and girls. For example, GIZ had improved monitoring and follow-up of restorative justice sessions to ensure they are, among other things, gender-sensitive, following an annual review recommendation from DFID.

Learning from mid-term and end-of-project evaluations is likely to be particularly important with respect to the ability of mainstream programmes to contribute to gender objectives, as the implementers are less likely to be gender experts than if they were in targeted gender programmes. It is important for gender experts to be involved in such evaluation and reviews, as some mid-term evaluations of programmes appeared to take quantitative outputs such as the number of women participating in an activity as an indicator that gender equality outcomes were being achieved. Where mid-term or final evaluations included substantive gender analysis, they were able to contribute to improvements in design and implementation in subsequent phases. For example, the food security programme in Bangladesh incorporated more targeted activities to change household gender power dynamics, as well as efforts to track these activities.

As discussed further below, another important limitation of M&E systems was that they often appeared to be focused on bureaucratic accountability and reporting rather than on understanding what works or accountability to beneficiaries. This reduced scope for learning and adaptation, a key factor in improving the effectiveness of donor work on gender in fragile situations.

4.5. Programme approaches needed to be more flexible and adaptive to capture the complexity of gender relations in FCAS

The reviewed programmes were more likely to adapt in response to changes in the country context than as a result of their own learning about the effectiveness of different approaches and activities, thus missing opportunities to enhance their impact.

Several programmes demonstrated changes in response to new or uncertain conditions. For example, when the Constituent Assembly was suspended in Nepal, the programme on strengthening political processes shifted focus from the Assembly to building relationships between representatives and constituents. Programmes also demonstrated the ability to adapt to the operational challenges of working in fragile situations, such as political strikes and blockades that delayed activities in Bangladesh or logistical challenges of working in remote areas in Ethiopia. In the latter case, the donor supporting the peace and development programme in Ethiopia's Somali region conducted regular monitoring visits, allowing significant flexibility to respond to the constraints of the context as the programme evolved. In particular, the donor scaled back the scope of the programme to be more realistic about what was possible in the region within the given timeframe and in recognition of sensitivities in working with the security and justice sectors more broadly.

In some cases, donor requirements with respect to working in emergency situations anticipate and support the need for rapid change in response to context. Following the earthquake in Nepal, for example, USAID asked all its partners to review how their programmes should adapt to the post-disaster context. DFAT required monitoring of field visits every six weeks in its early recovery programmes in Nepal. Generally, strong advocacy and leadership from a range of civil society and international actors in Nepal ensured that gender concerns were well integrated into the immediate earthquake response. By contrast, government resistance to the redesign of the Nepal Peace Trust Fund programme after the immediate peace process ended, and the increasing irrelevance of some of the government's activities in the changed context, contributed to the decision by some donors to withdraw support. It is important for gender not to be overlooked, even in contexts requiring rapid response to changing events or emergencies.

In general, changes to activities appeared to respond to requests by funder or government partners, or to be triggered by milestones such as annual reviews or mid-term evaluations. There is limited evidence of purposeful and systematic testing of approaches and their adaptation, based on new information and reflection about causal assumptions and what was more (or less) effective within gender-related programmes. In addition, while programmes might elaborate the programme logic in their programme documents, or an implicit theory of change might be embedded in their

logistical frameworks, they did not seem to use a theory of change approach that included research and monitoring information in order to reflect regularly on the causal assumptions within and between components of their programme and make necessary changes so as to stay on track to achieve higher-level objectives (Valters, 2016). Some programmes lacked even the basic building blocks, such as a clear programme logic and baseline, necessary to track and analyse programme impact.

Across the reviewed programmes, monitoring tended to be used more for administrative accountability purposes to enable funders to show what aid was being spent on, than for adaptive learning to strengthen programme performance or for accountability to beneficiaries. This was shown by, for example, resourcing being concentrated on tracking and reporting output indicators (and, at times, outcome level indicators) and failure to dedicate resources and/or set up mechanisms able to track, understand and reflect on the programme's contribution to desired outcomes. For example, in the case of Ethiopia's peace and development programme, while the gender balance in community committees as part of the access to justice component was monitored, the programme did not appear able to track or explain how women's participation could contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment or how this might link to the level of vulnerability to violence women face.

4.6 Country-level capacity was insufficient for effective programme design and implementation and did not match commitments

Country-level capacity emerged as a major gap, including a lack of dedicated gender expertise, capacity building for all staff, and attention to the gender, conflict and fragility expertise of partners. This gap risked undermining the effectiveness of intervention or even doing harm.

4.6.1. The lack of gender experts at country level is a key obstacle to the gender sensitivity of donors' work in FCAS

Lack of gender specialists at country level emerged as a key challenge. Dedicated gender experts at country level are critical to the quality of gender-related programming (OECD, 2014). Yet most country offices participating in the research relied on gender focal points. These were mostly co-ordination or administrative roles undertaken by advisors or programme officers in addition to their other responsibilities. Focal points are often at a junior level and do not necessarily have specialised knowledge of gender issues.

Without proper resourcing, there is a danger that gender mainstreaming will be tokenistic or that opportunities to improve programme outcomes, through activities to empower women and transform the norms that underpin gender equality, will be missed. Worse still, poorly defined activities to integrate gender into programmes can make women beneficiaries vulnerable to harm and/or undermine broader empowerment and equality objectives. In the DRC all donor representatives mentioned this risk.

Of the bilateral agencies that participated in the study in Nepal, only USAID had a full-time gender and social inclusion advisor at country level. This advisor not only had technical knowledge and dedicated time for gender mainstreaming, but also a clear mandate to integrate gender across all aspects of programming (e.g. contracting, design, M&E). Moreover, the advisor had strong conflict expertise. The presence of the advisor contributed, for example, to real progress in M&E. It was reported that the GESI advisor was working closely with USAID Nepal's M&E team to strengthen the development and monitoring of gender and inclusion indicators for all programming. While USAID Nepal had strong quantitative GESI M&E, the advisor was also working to improve qualitative measurements of how gender equality change happens at ground level.

In the DRC all of the donors had gender advisors in the country. These advisors all reported being able to draw on resources from headquarters in case of need. In SDC Bangladesh 40% of the time of a single advisor was dedicated to overseeing three transversal (cross-cutting) themes alongside that advisor's main portfolio of programmes; however, the advisor drew on backstopping support from a gender consultant. DFID had dedicated social development advisors in place whose competencies included gender. For example, DFID Bangladesh had three social development advisors who provided technical inputs across all the office's teams and projects.

In Ethiopia, while the picture varied between programmes, in-country and programme-based gender expertise was generally lacking. The management team of the civil society support programme had benefited from different technical advisers over time. At the outset a consultant responsible for gender issues was hired; however, the contract ended in 2015 and the position was not filled. The lead donor for the programme initially had a country-based gender advisor, but when this person moved on that position was also not filled. Some donors reported that responsibility for gender analysis did not lie with the in-country donor staff. In some cases, including that of Canada, headquarters-based gender advisors provided analysis of programmes. Regarding the peace and development programme in Ethiopia, while the lead donor had several social development advisors in place who led on gender-related issues, there was limited capacity on gender issues within this programme's team, specifically when the programme was being designed.

4.6.2. While external consultants can provide additional capacity, this is rarely an adequate long-term solution

While some programmes had used external gender consultants to improve the integration of gender across their programmes, this approach rarely allowed for continuous gender inputs or institutionalisation of the expertise and capacity within the agency.

The Nepal Peace Trust Fund Programme provides one example. Recognising the weakness of gender integration into the programme, USAID funded a GESI advisor to the Peace Fund Secretariat from 2013 to 2015. While this advisor was able to undertake some activities, such as developing templates to integrate GESI into project design and training officials with the Nepal Peace Trust Fund Secretariat and line agencies, follow-up efforts to sustain the work have not taken place.

The gender, peace and security programme reviewed in Ethiopia benefited from the appointment of a consultant to implement the programme. This consultant, who was involved in assessing gender mainstreaming within the peace and security work of the institution the programme supported, as well as in initial consultations to design the programme, had a deep understanding of the opportunities and challenges for context-relevant programming. However, gender expertise was being provided by only one person with little institutionalisation, which raises concerns about the future given the temporary nature of that position.

DFAT Nepal similarly pointed out that reliance on external consultants meant there was a lack of consistency in the gender expertise it received, with different consultants taking on different pieces of work without having a clear overview of the history or background of the broader programme or donor portfolio.

4.6.3. There was a need for stronger capacity-building to develop gender expertise among programme staff

Not only did programme staff working on peacebuilding and statebuilding programmes often lack gender expertise, but conflict and fragility expertise was also often lacking among those implementing gender-related programmes in FCAS. Regular gender training for staff in embassies and country offices is key to ensuring all staff are equipped with the minimum understanding of how gender is relevant to their sector or portfolio (which is necessary for effective gender mainstreaming). In addition to undertaking specific training on gender issues in FCAS, enhancing the capacity of programme staff requires integrating a gender perspective into conflict-sensitivity and political economy analysis trainings more generally.

However, only GIZ (e.g. in Bangladesh), SDC and USAID were found to provide regular gender training for their staff. USAID and SDC also provided conflict sensitivity training. It was reported that all the gender training supported by the Canadian government was provided by headquarters, and that staff travelled to country offices to carry out the trainings with officials and in some cases implementing partners. At least one donor (Sida) and one implementing agency – the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) – had requested one of their local beneficiary non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide capacity-building training for donor staff, in both cases on masculinities, showing a willingness to better understand the context they were working in.

Lack of gender expertise within bilateral agencies at country level directly informed their capacity to absorb and apply knowledge and learning on gender issues within their programmes, and even more so to address complex connections between gender, conflict and fragility. In the absence of such capacity, the application of global and/or country-specific evidence on gender equality in programme design and implementation appears to be largely dependent on sporadic inputs from headquarters-based gender advisers at particular points in the programme (sometimes only at project approval phase) or on ad hoc inputs from external consultants.

4.6.4. Donors need to consider the gender, conflict and fragility expertise of their partners in FCAS

The research highlighted a need for greater attention to, and investment in, the gender, conflict and fragility expertise of the partners that donors select in fragile situations. A lack of in-house gender capacity means many bilateral agencies delegate responsibility for gender mainstreaming and doing-no-harm to their programme implementers. While this means partner selection is critical to whether programmes are likely to contribute substantively to gender equality, gender-related capacity rarely featured among the priority selection criteria for potential partners, especially in the mainstream programmes that represent the vast majority of gender equality-focused aid.

In programmes that targeted gender equality and women's empowerment as primary objectives, the main implementer was often a specialist agency such as UN Women, or a rights-based (women's or development-related) national or international NGO. However, most gender-related aid activities take place in wider programmes that target gender equality as a secondary objective. The gender capacity of their implementing agencies varied considerably, in terms of both the main implementers (e.g. a multilateral agency, an NGO or a private firm/consultancy) and their partners (e.g. national or sub-national NGOs or government agencies).

While funders used due diligence in their selection of partners, only USAID appeared to include GESI and conflict sensitivity routinely in assessing the organisational capacity of potential partners in Nepal. Although the main implementing agencies also tended to report having robust selection procedures for their partner NGOs, unsurprisingly specialist knowledge (including, for example, justice and rehabilitation), in-depth local knowledge and networks, and the capacity to undertake the scope of the work were most often mentioned as key criteria. Gender, on the other hand, tended to be seen as a secondary or instrumental objective and, consequently, as a less important selection criterion.

The presence of gender specialists in implementing agencies can improve the quality of programming. Like the bilateral agencies, however, implementing agencies that do not specialise in gender mostly rely on gender focal points, organisational gender groups and training for sub-national partners. Some implementers had programme staff with gender-related experience that enabled them to input positively into programme design or implementation. However, such good practice was ad hoc and rarely institutionalised, particularly when expertise related to the particular purpose of the project was likely to trump gender capacity in the case of mainstream programmes.

Selecting local or international NGOs with strong gender expertise as main partners led to better integration of gender equality in programming, in particular to more nuanced and sustainable responses. For example, in Nepal the programme for strengthening political parties was able to integrate gender equality effectively into the Election Commission of Nepal largely because of the implementing partners' own organisational expertise and commitment in this area.

Across all four countries, the limited gender expertise and wider capacity of government partners to create and sustain change was a major challenge. Where the primary partner was government, for example in the case of the ready-made garment sector programme in Bangladesh or the Nepal Peace Trust Fund, gender equality activities were generally less based on good practice, less likely to be meaningfully implemented, and less focused on structural or strategic gender equality challenges. This appeared largely to be a result of limited commitment to and capacity on gender within the relevant government institution, as well as wider administrative challenges and high staff turnover.

Even where positive normative frameworks and some political will are in place, as in Nepal, governments' lack of capacity to co-ordinate donors with respect to these national frameworks can result in gender programming that is disconnected from government priorities and activities. A significant challenge in Nepal was government agencies' lack of gender expertise. Most had a gender focal point who had been chosen because she was a woman, even though she did not necessarily possess any gender expertise and was usually junior. In addition, government staff are constantly being transferred. Therefore, once a main implementer or hired expert had built the capacity and commitment of some key staff members on gender, they moved on and this activity had to begin again.

The often limited capacity of gender ministries was also a particular challenge (Box 4.5). This suggests that where donors partner with government institutions on gender equality, more focus and resources may be needed in order to develop gender-related capacity and commitment.

Box 4.5. Lack of capacity in gender ministries: a key challenge for effective donor programming

The capacity and political influence of gender ministries are particularly problematic. While these ministries should ideally play a strong co-ordinating role across government, including through developing gender policies and facilitating intra-government and government-donor co-ordination on gender, they were weak and marginalised in all four countries. This creates a vicious cycle in which donors do not work with the gender ministries, in turn reinforcing the ministries' weakness and irrelevance.

In the case of a gender peace and security programme, a decision was made to place the programme within the Peace and Security Directorate as opposed to the Gender Directorate, in order to ensure that the programme engaged directly with "resistors" to the integration of gender into the Peace and Security Directorate's work. However, this decision also reflected the very limited capacity of the Gender Directorate. While the decision was strategic, it risked undermining the work of the Gender Directorate.

4.6.5. Strong partnerships with women in civil society could improve programming

Close partnerships with women's organisations in particular appeared to lead to a deeper and more contextually relevant programme approach, while supporting women's agency and their capacity to influence peacebuilding and statebuilding.

The ways programmes engaged with local women's organisations varied widely – from more instrumentalist approaches, by which women's rights organisations were used to implement discrete elements of a programme but not involved in decision-making about it, to longer-term partnerships that reached out beyond the usual "elite" women's groups, supported the capacity-building of women's organisations, and empowered these organisations to shape the programme.

In a positive example, the women, peace and security programme reviewed in Nepal deliberately identified and partnered with locally based Dalit women's organisations, recognising their local credibility and outreach. The programme provided them with significant support to meet their capacity challenges, including through intensive training and placing of a UN Women staff member at local level to support project implementation.

This approach had a number of benefits. The programme could better understand and be tailored to the needs of local women including the most marginalised, whose voices are not usually heard. In Nepal the gap between elite women's and other civil society organisations in Kathmandu and local women's organisations at district level is considerable, with the voices of elite women's organisations inevitably being privileged. To some extent, the programme challenged this divide. It also built capacity and confidence in the local women's organisations, as well as their relationships to local power holders, which may be a long-term outcome of the programme.

The programme designed to advance women's political leadership in Bangladesh provided another positive example (Box 4.6). However, such "quality" partnerships with women's organisations appeared less likely to take place in mainstream development programmes than in programmes primarily focused on gender equality objectives.

Box 4.6. "Quality" partnerships with women's organisations to strengthen women's leadership in Bangladesh

Long-term donor support since 1998 to the implementing partner of the women's leadership programme in Bangladesh, a sub-national NGO (non-governmental organisation), enabled this NGO to help rural women set up their own groups, which became independent organisations, in order to support women's collective and individual leadership. These groups engaged in local dispute resolution and local government, including putting women forward to become members of committees and to stand for elections. By including it as a specific outcome area in successive phases of the programme, the donor also invested in developing the organisational capacity of this NGO (e.g. governance, finance and M&E) and, therefore, in sustainability.

4.7. There was a lack of accountability for ensuring that programmes "do no harm"

The research pointed to the need for donors to be more acutely aware of their responsibilities to ensure that they "do no harm". This included being more attuned to the complex ways in which their activities could lead to shifts in gender roles, relations or identities that might further fuel conflict and fragility or negatively impact the coping mechanisms available to vulnerable groups.

Across the four countries there was little evidence that donor programming recognised and responded to the potential tensions or risks associated with gender-blind activities, or with supporting gender equality and women's empowerment as external actors in politically charged and volatile fragile situations. In all of the countries it appeared that risk management was primarily seen in terms of operational risk, rather than in relation to how fragility, conflict and gender inequalities in the local context might mean that programme activities expose women and girls to increased vulnerability or harm.

It is essential for donors to put in place robust requirements to ensure that they and their implementing agencies undertake periodic assessments of any potential negative or unintended impacts of programme activities on women and girls. While this is of great importance in all countries, the risks of doing harm and the need to regularly assess these risks can be even higher in FCAS given the complex, politically charged and rapidly changing nature of these environments.

In Bangladesh some programmes showed an awareness of gender-related risks in relation to programme activities and took steps to reduce the risk of conflict and backlash as a result of supporting women's empowerment. This was done through strategies such as including male leaders and family members, in order to explain the benefits of programme activities for the whole household/community, and engaging men in discussions of the harmful effects of some gender norms and practices.

The programmes reviewed in Nepal demonstrated a mixed understanding of how gender-blind programming can reinforce gender inequalities or women's vulnerabilities in FCAS. In the case of some programmes (including the post-earthquake mediation programme, which involved women and integrated gender concerns at every step) there was awareness of these risks and significant steps had been taken to prevent them.

Other programmes, however, did not demonstrate any recognition of these risks. For example, the Nepal Peace Trust Fund had supported largely gender-blind disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes that did not consider the particular needs or risks faced by women who were ex-combatants. Weak communication with women as part of the DDR process resulted in many of them not understanding that they were eligible for DDR or that gender-specific services and support were available in some cantonment facilities. Pregnant female combatants or female combatants with children younger than three years of age had to remain outside some camps. This isolated women combatants including some who had held senior positions within the Maoist structures. The DDR process also failed to address the particular challenges women combatants faced when returning to their homes and communities, including heavy stigmas and rejection based on their gender.

Other programmes presented challenges in terms of doing no harm as a result of connections with wider societal conflicts. For example, it was suggested that singling out conflict-affected women and ex-combatants in women, peace and security work in Nepal risked causing local tensions, and

that a wider range of marginalised women with similar needs (e.g. migrants and women from socially excluded groups) should have been included.

4.8.   Insufficient co-ordination within and between agencies resulted in missed opportunities

The research highlighted that further strengthening co-ordination on gender, conflict and fragility within agencies, between agencies and with governments could significantly enhance the quality of donor work. The case studies revealed highly variable use and usefulness of gender co-ordination groups, both between and within agencies. Importantly, they were mostly not linked up with governance and conflict networks.

In Ethiopia donors had been working together through two gender-related co-ordination groups: the EU gender taskforce and the donor gender group. This had contributed to shared learning and enhanced co-ordination. For example, the EU gender taskforce was finalising mapping of gender-related programme activities being implemented by all donors in Ethiopia. This would enable identification of areas of comparative advantage and, ideally, a more strategic approach to working on these issues.

In the DRC a number of like-minded donors displayed a high degree of co-operation on gender issues, including information sharing, joint visits to project sites, and jointly commissioned research (see, for example, Davis et al., 2014). In South and especially North Kivu, the presence of the UN peacekeeping mission, numerous UN agencies, and international and national NGOs had led to the establishment of co-ordination mechanisms and forums, both on gender issues more broadly and on more specialised issues such as SGBV prevention and response.

In Nepal, although there was a donor GESI working group, donor co-ordination on gender was very poor, which was a major barrier to effective programming. A number of donors reported that donor co-ordination on gender in Nepal was among the worst they had ever seen, and most donors admitted they knew little about the gender work of others. Different donors were providing support to the same ministries without sharing information with each other. This lack of co-ordination meant donors were not aware of, or addressing, gaps in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment challenges and opportunities; were not aligning with government priorities such as the NAP or gender-responsive budgeting in a coherent way; were having separate and potentially contradictory dialogues with governments on gender equality; and were not building on each other's work and achievements. UN Women stressed that this fragmentation was a problem and advocated for one overall GESI strategy for the Government of Nepal, as well as an overall GESI strategy for donors that would align with it.

Lack of co-ordination mechanisms is part of the challenge relating to under-utilisation of knowledge and evidence on gender inequality and fragility (Box 4.7). As a result, learning was not being communicated and absorbed where it was needed. There appeared to be a lack of vertical

headquarters-to-country communication, as well as of horizontal sharing or inputs at country level from outside agency within countries.

As a result of weaknesses in donor co-ordination, the gender, peace and security programme reviewed in Ethiopia faced challenges in its support to the gender mainstreaming capacities of an African organisation working on peace and security. One of the donors that was part of the programme's joint financing mechanism faced pressure from its headquarters to earmark support for the programme to a particular office appointed by the organisation's chairperson rather than the broader area of work under the gender, peace and security programme. As the programme was already being implemented, the decision was made to place this office administratively (and financially) within the programme, while physically and politically it was placed within the office of the chairperson. This resulted in duplication of activities and lack of coherence and communication among donors with respect to funding, both of which risked undermining the programme's impact. Another donor was reportedly discussing a separate programme with the gender division of the same organisation that would also relate to gender, peace and security, leading to a possible duplication or lack of coherence with the programme. This highlights the need for open communication and collaboration among donors to ensure effective implementation, which can be difficult to achieve when each donor has its own strategy for working on the issues involved.

Use of networks in agencies is one means of supporting more effective transfer or sharing of gender expertise and knowledge. For example, SDC Bangladesh reported having an active gender network which links gender focal points in implementing partners to those in the embassy and meets regularly. The network also links in to the SDC-wide gender network and has included some members of the Bangladesh network attending a GENDERNET meeting. The DFID Bangladesh gender working group undertook a rapid strategic gender review in 2014 to look at areas where DFID-Bangladesh could step up investment in women and girls and gender equality, or deepen its efforts, as well as how the office could improve delivery of results for girls and women.

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CHAPTER 5

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

> The research conducted for this study indicates the need for a shift in perspective on gender in fragile situations. To improve the quality of donor support for gender equality and sustainable peace, an understanding of gender, conflict and fragility will be required that is more holistic, significantly deeper and politically smarter, with a strong focus on women as agents of change. A number of recommendations are elaborated in this chapter: focus on the root causes of gender inequality, conflict and fragility, as well as on the full range of connections between them; "join up" policy frameworks on gender, conflict and fragility; strengthen country-level capacity to match commitments; strengthen incentives and accountability, including for doing no harm; base all programmes on "fit for purpose" analysis and strengthen the evidence base; increase the flexibility and adaptability of programme approaches to respond to learning; refine approaches to monitoring and evaluation (M&E); and strengthen co-ordination within and between agencies.

Taken together, the results of the research conducted for this study call for a shift in perspective on gender in fragile situations. Improving the quality of donor support for gender equality and sustainable peace will require an understanding of gender, conflict and fragility that is more holistic, significantly deeper, and more politically smart, with a strong focus on women as agents of change.

Donors could strengthen their work by building on a more holistic understanding of the interconnections between gender, conflict and fragility in each setting. In particular, they need to move beyond the current limited, if important, focus on the impacts of conflict on women, to assess the gender equality implications of wider fragility issues such as identity politics, patronage and corruption, and unstable political settlements. Importantly, donors should ask not only how conflict and fragility impact gender equality and women's empowerment, but also how gender relations and women's participation can in turn advance transitions out of conflict and fragility.

To respond effectively to the challenges and opportunities emerging from these linkages, **donors need to think more politically**. This will require a deeper understanding of gender as more than a signifier of "women", and of how unequal gender roles interact with wider formal and informal power relations in fragile situations. On this basis, donors can improve the grounding of programmes in political realities; effectively engage resistors and agents of change; take advantage of openings for gender equality and women's empowerment emerging from the wider political economy context; and avoid doing harm. Applying a social norms lens reveals how unequal gender relations perpetuate narratives of women as passive victims or beneficiaries only, as well as

revealing the importance of understanding women as actors and agents of change with a contribution to make to peacebuilding and statebuilding.

Drawing on this understanding, **there is a need to go deeper to focus on the root causes of gender inequality, conflict and fragility**. In particular, increasing attention should be paid to the unequal gender norms that sustain gender inequality and fuel violence and conflict. Donor support will have limited impacts when such powerful norms are left unaddressed. While discriminatory norms can be particularly harmful in fragile situations, these situations also offer important opportunities to shift such ideas.

The following recommended steps can help achieve this shift in perspective and address the gaps identified during the research.

DONORS CAN DO MORE TO:
- 'Join up' policy frameworks on gender equality, conflict and fragility
- Base all programmes on 'fit for purpose' analysis
- Refine approaches to M&E to capture the complexity of change
- Increase flexibility and adaptability of programme approaches
- Strengthen country-level capacity to match commitments
- Increase incentives and accountability, including for doing no harm
- Strengthen coordination within and between agencies

STRONGER DONOR PROCEDURES

DONORS CAN DO MORE TO:
- Support women as active agents in peacebuilding and statebuilding
- Transform gender inequalities and violence by addressing gender norms
- Engage strategically with men and 'resistors'
- Link gender equality support with wider peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER RELATIONS

GREATER AWARENESS OF LINKS BETWEEN GENDER RELATIONS AND FRAGILITY

DONORS CAN DO MORE TO:
- Strengthen responses to impacts of conflict and violence on women
- Recognise impacts of fragility on gender relations and gender inequalities
- Use a gender lens to strengthen responses to conflict and fragility
- Think politically by recognising the political economy factors and power relations that shape conflict, fragility, and gender inequalities

More **transformative** support to gender equality, sustainable peace and development through **deeper, more holistic and more politically-informed** approaches to gender relations in fragile settings

92

RECOMMENDATIONS

Focus on the root causes of gender inequality, conflict and fragility and the full range of connections between them. The research revealed several common gaps in the content of the donor programmes reviewed. To address these gaps donors can, among other things:

- **Strengthen their focus on gender norms as root causes of gender inequality and drivers of violence.** Gender norms are often in flux during and following conflict or other crises, in order to respond to shifting political realities and fulfil basic needs. Engaging with such shifts is key to sustaining progress, avoiding backlash, and contributing to transformative change.

- **Systematically engage with men and increase attention to norms for male behaviour ("masculinities").** This is key to positively transforming gender relations and doing no harm, and provides opportunities to reduce conflict and violence fuelled by negative ideals for masculine attitudes and action.

- **Strengthen support to women as active agents in peacebuilding and statebuilding** rather than only as passive victims or beneficiaries. This would, for example, entail a focus on strengthening the quality of support to **women's economic empowerment** as a key contribution to recovery, sustainable peace and resilience, including by advancing women's participation in both large- and small-scale economic programmes and the formal sector and addressing structural barriers to their economic participation and control of resources.

- **Focus on the full range of links between gender, conflict and fragility and seize strategic connections between peacebuilding, statebuilding and gender equality.** This calls for increased attention to the impacts of wider fragility issues (e.g. patronage and corruption, or contestations over the political settlement) on gender equality, women's participation and the sustainability of interventions. It also requires asking how gender in turn shapes conflict and fragility, and how women's participation can enhance sustainable peace and development.

"Join up" policy frameworks on gender, conflict and fragility. While most donors have established frameworks addressing different aspects of conflict and fragility, as well as gender mainstreaming policies and guidelines, these are often disconnected. Few donors have guidance that covers the full scope of connections between gender, conflict and fragility and provides strategies to ensure these issues are addressed throughout their development assistance. This helps explain the narrow focus of donor programming in this area. To address that gap, donors can:

- **Integrate consideration of the full range of links between gender, conflict and fragility into donor policies or guidelines on working in fragile and conflict-affected situations.** This should include, but go beyond, impacts of conflict on women and/or "women, peace and security" issues to also reflect wider connections such as the impacts of gender norms and relations on conflict and fragility; links between gender and a wider set of fragility issues; the role of informal institutions in this context; and goals relating to structural causes and transformation in gender norms and inequalities. Donors might also consider developing specific guidance on gender, conflict and fragility that cover these issues and set out commitments and strategies for ensuring that gender, conflict and fragility are addressed throughout donors' development assistance.

- **Strengthen integration of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 National Action Plans (NAPs)** with agency-wide frameworks on peace and security and take-up/implementation among governance and conflict advisors, for example by ensuring their close involvement from the initial drafting stage of the plan. In addition, there is a need to effectively link the UNSCR 1325 NAP activities of donor countries to recipient/focus countries' own NAP activities.

- **Facilitate exchanges between gender equality and conflict/fragility specialists** at policy and operational level.

Strengthen country-level capacity to match commitments. Country-level capacity emerged during the research as a major gap. Ensuring that adequate capacity is in place at the country level, and particularly that donor staff have access to dedicated and sustained gender expertise, is critical for effective integration of gender into every stage of programming, such as analysis, design, partner selection, implementation, and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). Ad hoc consultants, or gender focal points with limited experience and available time, cannot play the same roles as dedicated gender experts. This has a direct impact on the ability of donors to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are integrated throughout their portfolio of programmes in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS). Ensuring adequate capacity is also critical for doing no harm. It is therefore important to take steps to:

- **Ensure there is dedicated expertise on gender, conflict and fragility in larger country offices**, with earmarked, adequate resources for deploying gender experts that have specific experience on conflict and fragility to all medium to large country offices in FCAS, equipped with sufficient resources, access and mandates to integrate gender across different aspects of programmes and throughout the programme cycle.

- **Pool resources to equip smaller country offices with relevant expertise** through the establishment of a **joint mechanism to provide context-specific gender expertise** that can be drawn on as needed (e.g. a help desk at country level, a roster of experienced

local consultants), supported by **regional gender experts** with specific experience with conflict and fragility.

- **Enhance the relevant capacity of all donor staff and implementing agencies through tailored training on gender, conflict and fragility** and the integration of a gender perspective into conflict sensitivity and political economy analysis training – where necessary **pooling resources by sharing existing modules for specific training on gender, conflict and fragility** and seizing opportunities to draw on the expertise of local civil society actors and partner organisations.

- **Especially in partnering with government institutions, increase the focus and resources dedicated to developing gender-related capacity** and the commitment of relevant institutions, and strengthen the capacity of ministries of gender to co-ordinate donors and government actors with respect to gender-related priorities.

- **Strengthen partnerships with women's civil society organisations (CSOs)** including in mainstream programmes, establishing partnerships that will be long-term (and that reach out beyond "elite" organisations), that support these CSOs' capacity, and empower them to shape programmes including through identifying which norms, structures and behaviours are most important to address and opportunities to do so.

Strengthen incentives and accountability, including for doing no harm. The case studies revealed little evidence of programme staff being subject to specific requirements relating to the integration of gender, conflict and fragility into their work, or of being incentivised to integrate them. Critically, the research revealed a lack of accountability for ensuring that programmes do no harm. To address this gap, donors should:

- **Strengthen specific requirements/accountability mechanisms and incentives for all staff and heads of country offices to comprehensively integrate gender** into their work in fragile situations and ensure their transmission to field level.

- **Put in place robust requirements to ensure that donors and implementing agencies undertake periodic assessments of any potential negative or unintended impacts of programme activities**, including women's empowerment activities or gender-blind activities, on women, girls and gender inequalities, and take steps to address or reduce any such risks (e.g. by including wider groups of stakeholders).

- Strengthen mandatory requirements that programmes be conflict-sensitive, and strengthen related accountability mechanisms.

Base all programmes on "fit for purpose" analysis and strengthen the evidence base. Basing all programming in FCAS on a robust political economy analysis that examines both gender inequalities and fragility/conflict dynamics – and, critically, the relationships between them – will allow donors to

better identify and seize opportunities, as well as overcome challenges and do no harm in achieving progress on both gender equality and fragility/conflict. Programme staff need to be provided with adequate tools and guidance on how to apply them, to ensure that gender and conflict/fragility linkages are addressed as a matter of course when donors carry out any analytical exercises in FCAS. To ensure progress in this area, donors should:

- **Develop analytical tools that bring together gender and fragility/conflict issues within one framework** by comprehensively integrating gender and fragility issues into conflict and political economy analysis, going beyond impacts of conflict on women to unpack the impacts of gender norms and relations (e.g. expectations of male behaviour) on conflict and violence, the role of gender power imbalances during different stages of the conflict cycle, and links between gender and wider fragility issues (e.g. corruption or social cleavages).

- **Ensure that gender and fragility analysis includes analysis of the norms, structures and behaviours that help to perpetuate gender inequality and fragility,** as well as opportunities to challenge these, and that it covers both formal and informal institutions.

- **Strengthen the use of (gender-sensitive) political economy analysis to understand fragility dimensions** such as weak rule of law or patronage politics and their impacts on constraints and opportunities for gender equality reforms, and to map relevant actors and their interests in order to identify potential allies and resistors and **incentivise the use of such analytical tools throughout the programming cycle,** including the development of a contextually relevant theory of change.

- **Integrate a substantial inception or learning phase where possible** to enable research, relationship-building and consultation with stakeholders, drawing upon existing local and global evidence and generating new learning.

- **Share best practices** by mapping and/or peer-reviewing existing analytical tools and explore opportunities for pooled analyses.

Increase the flexibility and adaptability of programme approaches to respond to learning. Programme approaches need to be more flexible and adaptive to address the complexity of gender relations in FCAS. In programmes that seek to contribute to complex social and political changes in support of women's empowerment, gender equality, peacebuilding and statebuilding in rapidly changing environments, donors are rarely certain at the outset which activities will produce which outcomes under the specific contextual conditions of their project. This complexity makes experimentation, learning and adaptation essential to effective interventions: that is, understanding what is working in a programme and why, and making changes in approaches or activities based on this information. To enable progress in this area, donors should:

- **Build in flexibility from the outset:** Adopt sufficiently flexible contract and funding arrangements to allow implementers to make changes to programmes (e.g. to change activities or the sequence of activities) where new information or learning indicates that this is necessary to achieve higher-level objectives, and work with implementers that show evidence of adaptive ways of working.

- **Purposefully and systematically test approaches** and adapt them based on new information and reflection about causal assumptions and what is more/less effective within gender-related programmes. Relatedly, adopt a theory of change approach that uses research and monitoring information to reflect regularly on the causal assumptions within and between components of the programme, and make necessary changes to stay on track to achieve higher-level objectives building on a clear programme logic and baseline.

- **Use M&E to strengthen adaptive learning**, programme performance and accountability to beneficiaries, rather than only bureaucratic accountability, for example by dedicating more resources and/or mechanisms to tracking, understanding and reflecting on the *contribution of programmes* to desired outcomes rather than concentrating resources on tracking and reporting output or outcome indicators alone.

Refine approaches to M&E. While the research pointed to promising trends, donors can further strengthen their practices through the following steps:

- **Continue to consistently disaggregate data by sex and other characteristics** (e.g. age, caste, disability) to understand outcomes for different groups of women and men, including by strengthening mandatory reporting requirements.

- **Combine quantitative with qualitative indicators** to measure women's empowerment drawing on mixed methods, including fully capturing shifts in the underlying attitudes and norms required for transformative sustainable change in FCAS.

- **Capture progress at the level of outcomes,** rather than only of inputs and outputs.

Strengthen co-ordination within and between agencies. The research highlighted missed opportunities resulting from insufficient co-ordination. To increase collective impact, donors should:

- **Strengthen co-ordination groups and mechanisms on gender** – and more specialised issues such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and response – within and between agencies in a country to improve shared learning, co-ordination, identification of areas of comparative advantage, and more strategic approaches (e.g. joint mappings of programme activities relating to gender being implemented by all donors, joint commissioning of research, joint visits to project sites).

- **Ensure that gender co-ordination groups are linked up with governance and conflict networks**; that gender is considered in wider co-ordination groups/mechanisms; and that their establishment is going forward.

- **Increase exchanges between international networks working on gender, conflict and governance**, including through increased co-operation among the OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET), International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) and Network on Governance (GovNet).

ANNEX A: RESEARCH DESIGN

This research project was designed as a four-step process, involving: (i) Evidence review and development of the assessment criteria; (ii) Country and programme selection; (iii) Country case study research; and (iii) Synthesis and validation.

i.   Evidence review and development of the assessment criteria

The first step of the research involved a literature review to assess the evidence on links between gender, conflict and fragility, and the potential of gender-sensitive approaches to enhance impact in terms of conflict/fragility and gender equality outcomes in fragile situations. This review synthesised key findings on gender-fragility-conflict linkages in five key areas (peace and security; legitimate and inclusive politics; justice; basic services; and economic recovery and resilience) and provided a basis to develop the research questions (Box A.1). During the field research phase, these questions were tailored for different groups of stakeholders and depending on the specific nature of the context and programme.

Box A.1: Research questions

The research project was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do donor approaches to programming in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS) relate to evidence about what works to address the drivers, relationships and impacts of conflict, fragility and gender inequality?

1.1. Do programmes take full account of the local context, including the nature and outcomes of gender norms and relations and the drivers and outcomes of fragility and conflict?

1.2. To what extent do programme approaches reflect current knowledge, as relevant to the country and programme, of:

(a) the gender aspects of the dimensions of fragility; and/or

(b) the conflict and fragility aspects of the dimensions of gender inequality?

1.3. Do programmes that mainstream gender equality use a gender lens to understand and respond to the causes and outcomes of conflict, fragility and gender inequality?

1.4. Do gender programmes use a conflict/fragility lens to understand and contribute to reducing conflict, fragility and gender inequality?

1.5. Are gender equality and women's empowerment activities likely to contribute to women's and men's capacity to engage in conflict prevention and in building resilience?

1.6. Do programmes support the empowerment of conflict-affected women or women in areas of high

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risk of conflict?

2. How do factors internal to donor organisations influence the integration of gender, conflict and fragility into programming?

2.1. How do political interests, organisational commitments and policies influence decisions about programming on gender, conflict and fragility?

2.2. What internal policies, processes and mechanisms promote or hinder:

(a) linkages in programming on gender and fragility/conflict?

(b) context-relevant programming in line with "what works" to reduce gender inequality, conflict and fragility?

3. How do factors external to donor organisations influence the integration of gender, conflict and fragility into programming?

3.1. How does the local context (political, social, economic, security, normative, etc.) and its evolution influence programming on gender?

3.2. How do national frameworks/policies/government agendas influence decisions about programming on gender?

3.3. How do other actors (e.g. civil society organisations, academics, business, implementing agencies, other donors) influence decisions about programming on gender?

3.4. How do international frameworks and commitments influence decisions about programming on gender?

3.5. How do political imperatives influence decisions about programming on gender?

4. What concrete measures can donors take to improve programming on gender equality, conflict and fragility?

4.1. How can donors strengthen the content of their gender and fragility programmes, in order to base them on current knowledge about "what works"?

4.2. In what ways can donors strengthen their internal processes and practices, in order to improve programming on gender and fragility in line with "what works"?

4.3. How can donors best understand and address the external factors that influence their programming on gender and fragility?

ii.   Country and programme selection

The four case study countries were selected to ensure that the widest possible range of fragility contexts and sectors would be included in the research. In particular, the following criteria informed the **country selection** for this research:

- *Level and nature of conflict and/or fragility:* The country case studies were selected to capture the broadest range of dimensions of conflict and/or fragility resulting from violent conflict, natural disasters, economic shocks, political instability, etc. The research includes one country currently experiencing ongoing violent conflict (the Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC]), one post-conflict country (Nepal) and two non-conflict countries (Bangladesh and Ethiopia).

- *Social, economic, and political context:* The countries were selected to reflect a mix of different social, political and economic contexts.

- *Aid picture:* The focus countries receive high volumes of aid in support of gender equality, and donors place a strong emphasis on gender equality in their Official Development Assistance (ODA) to these countries according to data reported by Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors to the OECD's Creditor Reporting System with the DAC gender equality policy marker.

- *Policy frameworks for addressing gender, conflict and fragility*: The countries have adopted policy frameworks on gender equality and/or women, peace and security issues that may play a role in influencing the quality or effectiveness of gender-related programming, such as being New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States pilot country or having a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325.

- *Geographical diversity:* The countries were selected to reflect a broad diversity of regional contexts.

Selection criteria

The programme selection process in the four focus countries was guided by the need to ensure a balanced portfolio of sectors and themes across the four countries, and to include programmes that target different levels of governance and involve a wide selection of stakeholders. More specifically, the following criteria informed the **programme selection**:

- *DAC gender equality policy marker*: All reviewed programmes were reported by donors as targeting gender equality either as a secondary or principal objective – score 1 or 2 with the DAC gender equality policy maker. Particular attention was given to large programmes reported as targeting gender equality as a secondary objective (score 1) to examine how gender has been integrated/mainstreamed into larger sectoral or thematic programmes. A

smaller number of programmes focusing on gender equality as a primary objective (score 2) were also selected.

- *Sectoral/thematic balance*: The selected programmes reflect a range of different themes and sectors (women's participation in peace processes, economic empowerment, security and justice, SGBV, economic empowerment, food security, etc.).

- *Diversity of donors and implementing agencies:* The research looked at a diversity of donors to gain an understanding of the range of tools, mechanisms, policies and processes used by different agencies to support and advance gender equality in fragile situations and capture their specific approaches. In addition, the review included at least one multi-donor programme in each country case study country.

- *Donor engagement*: Donors' willingness to contribute to and engage with the research (in headquarters and on the field) also shaped the programme selection.

- *Activity level:* The programmes were selected to reflect a balance of local and national-level activities and the engagement of a wide range of actors as implementers and beneficiaries.

- *Lifetime of the programmes*: The review included programmes at different stages of implementation (older and newer programmes).

- *Programme cost/size*: The review included programmes with different levels of financial commitment and size.

iii.   Field research

Primary research was conducted in the four countries and was guided by a common set of research questions (Box A.1). During the field research phase, researchers collected information about the programmes through qualitative and quantitative research. This involved interviews with key informants (representatives from donor agencies, government and civil society – in particular women's organisations). This was complemented by remote interviews with donor staff in headquarters.

iv.   Synthesis and validation

In the final phase of the project, a draft synthesis report was shared with the Advisory Group members who were invited to provide feedback and comments. A remote discussion was subsequently organised with the Advisory Group, with a focus on sharpening the key messages.

Limitations of the research design

Programmes were assessed on the extent to which their content and approach were aligned with global evidence of good practice in programming on gender equality in fragile situations. The

evidence base is more robust in some sectors than others (Domingo, P. et al. (2013), *Assessment of the Evidence of Links between Gender Equality, Peacebuilding and Statebuilding: Literature Review*, Overseas Development Institute, London), the research needed to focus on areas where considerable knowledge exists and complement this with conclusions drawn based on understanding of the specific context. Moreover, the study was not an impact evaluation and as such did not assess programme outcomes, but drew conclusions about the quality of programmes based on available evidence of what works.

The findings are based on a sample of four programmes in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Nepal, and three programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Due to the limited number of programmes and the considerable diversity among them, the findings cannot be assumed to represent donor practices in addressing gender in fragile situations in general. It was also beyond the scope of the research to review donors' complete portfolio in the country contexts. It may therefore be possible that donors are addressing some of the gaps identified through their other programmes.

However, the results pertain to relatively large programmes, and are therefore in themselves especially important for donor work in these countries. Most programmes were selected from initiatives suggested by donors themselves, and so are likely to reflect examples of good practice as compared with what would have been found through a random sample. Yet even with these positive examples, there was scope for improvement. Given that these challenges were identified in programmes that can be assumed to reflect disproportionately positive practice, it is likely that many of them can also be found in wider programmes whose gender components have received less attention. That common lessons emerged across a diversity of contexts and sectors also suggests findings are likely to reflect wider trends.

The innovative or particularly effective approaches that have been successful in the specific contexts should also be of interest to donors in further developing their policy and practice in addressing gender inequality and fragility, including as an opportunity to adapt promising practices to other settings.

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