



**Gender, Development,
and Humanitarian Work**

Edited by Caroline Sweetman

The books in Oxfam's *Focus on Gender* series were originally published as single issues of the journal *Gender and Development*, which is published by Oxfam three times a year. It is the only British journal to focus specifically on gender and development issues internationally, to explore the links between gender and development initiatives, and to make the links between theoretical and practical work in this field. For information about subscription rates, please apply to Carfax Publishing, Taylor and Francis Ltd, Customer Services Department, Rankine Road, Basingstoke, Hants RG24 8PR UK; fax: + 44 (0) 1256 330 245. In North America, please apply to Taylor and Francis Inc, Customer Services Department, 325 Chestnut Street, 8th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19106, USA; fax (+1) 800 821 8312. In Australia, please apply to Carfax Publishing Company, PO Box 352, Cammeray, NSW 2062, Australia; fax: +61 (0) 2 9958 2376. E-mail: journals.orders@tandf.co.uk or visit <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals>

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Front cover: *Working together to build a cement platform for the water tank at Gode hospital, Ethiopia.*
Photo: Crispin Hughes, Oxfam

© Oxfam GB 2001
Published by Oxfam GB, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, UK.
<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/publications>
Typeset in Palatino by Oxfam; printed by Information Press, Eynsham
Oxfam is a registered charity No. 202918
Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International

ISBN 0 85598 457 0

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Editorial

Millions of people world-wide are currently living in a state of emergency, thrown into crisis by conflict or natural disaster to the extent that they and their communities are no longer able to meet the needs of everyday life. It is now well-recognised that war and natural disasters affect men and women in different ways. At a global level, women and children form by far the largest proportion of civilians displaced by conflict (both internally and internationally). Complex emergencies often result in a demographic shift such that women make up the majority of the post-emergency population.

Men and women are vulnerable to different types of risk and threat in emergencies, related to their physical security, food security, health, or other issues. Yet the fact that women bear the brunt of world poverty, with fewer assets and greater reproductive burdens, have less power and status than men, less mobility, and less defence against violence, makes them particularly vulnerable during crises. Roles and responsibilities change during disaster, with men often being forced to migrate in search of work or to take up arms, leaving women to bear an increased burden of responsibility for home and family.

In spite of women's particular vulnerabilities during crises, they have a specific contribution to make towards the reduction of vulnerability to disasters, to preparing

for future disasters, mitigating the impact of disasters, alleviating suffering, and rebuilding community life. Women's specific contribution may be different from and complementary to that of men. Not only do women bring a gender-specific range of skills, experience, knowledge, authority, and leadership to coping with crises, but they are also powerful agents of change, often adapting more quickly than men to new situations, and more easily finding alternative means of survival.

This collection of articles from development policy makers, practitioners, and researchers explores the interface between gender issues and humanitarian work. While some articles in this collection focus on humanitarian work during natural disaster, others analyse humanitarian responses to conflict. A third group of articles considers the post-crisis period: the time when immediate work to save lives gives way to work that aims to promote reconstruction. In the case of natural disaster, much of this work aims to promote emergency preparedness; in the period after conflict, peace-building is the aim.

Current challenges to humanitarian policy

During the 1990s, there has been an increase in both the value and volume of humanitarian assistance, only partly due to

increased need. In addition, it is due to the greater reach of humanitarian agencies into territories that had been off-limits prior to the end of the Cold War (Macrae 1999). Parallel to the increase in humanitarian activity has been debate within the aid community on the current challenges of working in emergencies that arise from complex political situations. In turn, these debates have taken place concurrently with debate within the women's movement (including feminists in humanitarian agencies) on the responses from the humanitarian agencies and their impact on women's status and practical wellbeing. This debate is concerned with three sets of issues: the immediate needs of women in emergency situations and their role in relief work; understanding and challenging the different forms of subordination of women in these situations; and the role of women in reconstruction and reintegration (El Bushra 1999, 97). While there has recently been greater – and timely – attention to men's gender issues in peace-building, this collection of articles focuses in the main on the three sets of issues identified by El Bushra, although individual articles do discuss masculinity in relation to the militarisation of society.

Accountability and standards

The debate about the role of humanitarian agencies in intervening in emergencies, and whether or not it is possible to be impartial or desirable to be neutral, has led, among other things, to a renewed awareness of the need for agencies to be accountable to the populations who are targeted by relief activities. In turn this has led to calls – at least within the English-speaking humanitarian community (Macrae 1999) – for internationally-agreed standards for humanitarian work. Deborah Clifton and Fiona Gell discuss the rationale for standards in their article, focusing in particular on the development of the Sphere initiative in the late 1990s.¹ They emphasise the importance of ensuring that standards

are seen in perspective, as part of a strategy for institutional transformation. Standards must also include an analysis that ensures that humanitarian work is performed as efficiently as possible by understanding the connection between social identity, power, and survival itself.

Development and humanitarian work: what is the relationship?

Another key difference between schools of humanitarian thought that underlies the articles in this collection is the relationship between relief and development work. Perceived by some as distinctly different kinds of interaction between agencies and societies on the ground, these concepts are seen as part of a continuum by others, who may speak in terms of 'developmental relief', or reject the terms completely. In some contexts of political emergency, this is not a departure from the norm; rather, crisis is the norm itself. This state of affairs calls into question the classic conceptualisation of relief as being a short-term, practical delivery of essential resources to enable populations to ensure survival before stability returns. Currently, conflict over resources in poverty-stricken contexts where rapid economic change is challenging age-old ways of life, and growing fears of recurrent environmental crisis due to climate change, are adding to the number of such chronic emergencies.

Gender-sensitive responses to these dilemmas

Gender perspectives on the problems raised in the previous section are, firstly, to understand that humanitarian interventions will always have some impact on gender and other social relations, and, secondly, to understand humanitarian response in a long-term perspective, gaining an understanding of how life is connected before, during, and after crisis.

Current debates in development and humanitarian agencies include the

importance of understanding social relations and the ways in which institutions discriminate against marginalised groups. These debates have implications for how agencies should respond to changing dynamics between different social groups which come about as a result of crisis, and how they can ensure that change is positive for women. While some argue that women, men, and children all have the same basic needs in a crisis, and that challenging social inequalities is outside the remit of humanitarian response, evidence from countless different contexts bears witness to two facts. Firstly, women's needs are distinct from those of men. This means that humanitarian agencies must give attention not only to sectors such as reproductive health or protection from violence against women, but also to the need to integrate a gender perspective throughout all of their work. This occurs through understanding women's unequal power to control and access resources, and to participate in decision-making at household or community level (Moser and Clark 2000). It follows that it is actually impossible to remain detached from power dynamics within a community in an emergency response. In the absence of gender analysis and appropriate action to ensure that women's interests are addressed on an equal basis with those of men, interventions are likely to be detrimental to women's interests and therefore to be of lower quality and efficiency. All interventions, *regardless of their aim*, inevitably challenge, alter, or entrench power relations between different social groups. In their article, Deborah Clifton and Fiona Gell rehearse the arguments around this issue, arguing that in order to be impartial, a gender-sensitive approach has to be taken in humanitarian work.

The second dilemma concerning the relationship between development and humanitarian response is debated by feminists as follows. Gender-sensitive responses in emergencies depend on developing a long-term understanding of

the specific context in which an emergency occurs. This involves drawing on people's local, rooted knowledge of prevailing social dynamics and power relations, and challenges to these, as processes. This leads to a rejection of older ideas of emergencies as isolated, sudden events. A focus on women's lives, or on the lives of other marginalised groups within a society, highlights the same underlying power dynamics which lead to unequal outcomes for women and men. In poor communities in peace and in conflict, or prior to a natural disaster and during the period afterwards, male or female social identity gives individuals very different opportunities and methods for obtaining resources crucial to survival. In the majority of societies throughout the world – and not only in 'developing countries' – women's identity as wives, mothers, and daughters places them in a position of having to gain resources through their relationships with men. Another constant for women in crisis and stability is the issue of unequal gender power relations in conjunction with norms of female and male sexuality.

Understandings of women's differential access to resources and control over their bodies are common to crisis and stability; the key is to understand how emergency situations affect social relationships between women and men to worsen the outlook for women. In a conflict, or following a natural disaster, the men on whom women and children depend may be lost, dead, or absent. Women's access to resources may be threatened, and there may be a profound threat to women's human rights to bodily integrity, and to physical and mental health. This is because the physical locations in which women feel safe are no longer refuges but places to be escaped; normal restraints on male behaviour may have broken down; and, in situations of conflict, women's reproductive and sexual capacity is abused as a weapon of war to degrade and destroy not only women themselves, but their men

and their society. The role of humanitarian agencies in ensuring that women are protected on a day-to-day basis is equalled by their role in challenging 'official failure to condemn or punish rape [which] gives it an overt political sanction' (Vickers 1993, 21).

To relate this insight to the debates about distinctions between humanitarian aid and development, it is clear that the duty to ensure that women have access to resources and protection against attack exists both in times of stability, when governments and international agencies may talk of development, and in times of crisis, when they talk of humanitarian aid. Yet, for many reasons, stemming from the male-dominated institutional culture of those organisations involved in delivering humanitarian aid, women's gender interests are currently vastly more likely to be addressed in a 'development' intervention than in a humanitarian operation. In her article, Suzanne Williams discusses these issues and the wider relationship between development and humanitarian work in relation to Oxfam GB's work in different contexts, including Afghanistan and Kosovo.

Harnessing the opportunities offered by crisis

Crises offer opportunities for marginalised groups within society to adopt new roles and challenge stereotypes. Prior to a crisis, women's contribution to income-generation may be enormously important, but unacknowledged, and women may be distanced from decision-making at all levels of society. The role of wife and mother is often the only one which receives wide recognition, and this work may simultaneously be praised while the skills and energy that it requires are underrated. In crises, women's roles in contributing to household livelihoods and in other roles outside the domestic sphere (including decision-making in community bodies and

organisations) may become much more visible, and also increase significantly. This brings new opportunities for leadership. How can humanitarian response ensure that women's need to ensure family and community survival is supported, that their potential for leadership is realised, and that wherever possible women are supported in challenging gender stereotypes to ensure a sustained change in gender relations?

In their article, Hisham Khogali and Parmjit Takhar provide an example of humanitarian work which sets out simultaneously to provide greater benefits to households and communities through channelling aid through women, and to challenge gender stereotypes surrounding women, work, and money. Their discussion focuses on the impact on communities, households, and individual women and men of channelling resources to households in the form of money rather than food, and via women rather than men. In their article they consider the strategies of targeting women as potential workers on cash-for-work programmes in the wake of emergencies. They ask whether or not, in the medium-term, women's enhanced contribution to household livelihoods has an impact on gendered patterns of decision-making power within the household.

An additional useful insight from this kind of study is that it highlights the synergy which can be built up between efficiency-based rationales for working through women, and equity and empowerment-based rationales for focusing on unequal gender relations. However, caution is needed. Targeting women only and not giving full attention to the social dynamics between women and men leads to ignoring an obvious point that will impact on both sets of aims. Workers implementing this type of programme must consider the entire workload of the family – including both productive and reproductive work, work within the home and work outside it – when determining whether or not this provides immediate practical assistance for

women, or simply over-burdens them. In the absence of male willingness to shoulder some of the domestic burden, coercing women to undertake cash-for-work activities will reduce the effectiveness of the project from a practical point of view and can lead to conflict within the household as men feel marginalised and women become targets for their anger.

How do we ensure that aid fosters peace and stability within households, communities, and wider society, rather than unwittingly becoming a tool to be used to promote conflict and instability? To an extent, of course, all development and humanitarian interventions will promote social conflict since, as discussed above, they all – albeit sometimes unwittingly – pose a challenge to the economic and social status quo. In the case of cash-for-work, a full knowledge of gender relations within a particular context, and strategies for supporting both women and men within households, are critical before embarking on interventions that seek to challenge the gender division of labour.

In confirmation of this, in her article focusing on the impact of Hurricane Mitch on communities in Nicaragua, and agency responses, Sarah Bradshaw discusses the findings of a social audit carried out by the Civil Co-ordinator for Emergency and Reconstruction, a coalition of 350 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other community-based organisations. In the audit, women's experience of participating in reconstruction projects is considered. Audits of this nature are essential if humanitarian work is to improve in relation to gender issues. The picture that emerges is complex and sometimes contradictory. Critically, Bradshaw highlights the tension between short-term survival goals and longer-term goals of women's empowerment, as well as highlighting the dangers of targeting women as efficient conduits of relief to their families, which may only serve to entrench inequality within the household. The audit

reveals that violence against women increased in the reconstruction period, with approximately half of the respondents to the audit identifying problems with reconstruction projects and between couples, including increased domestic violence. Bradshaw suggests that, 'Getting reconstruction wrong may impact not just on people's material well-being, but may also affect their health, safety, and emotional well-being.'

One article in this collection discusses the ways in which displaced people, powerless in the highly bureaucratic context of a temporary settlement, are vulnerable to inappropriate and even abusive interventions. Esther Hertzog analyses the treatment of women and men from Ethiopia in Israeli 'absorption centres' of the 1980s and 1990s. Ethiopian women immigrants were labelled backward in terms of their skills in traditional female tasks, and obliged to learn how to perform these roles in the manner of the wider Israeli community, while being prevented from seeking paid work outside the camp. While Hertzog's article is not concerned with humanitarian relief as such, the power of state bureaucrats over each and every aspect of inmates' lives can be taken as a cautionary tale of the vulnerability of the displaced in relation to those who are in charge of refugee camps or resettlement initiatives.

Moving from palliative aid to peace-building

As stated at the beginning of this introduction, some of the articles in this collection discuss the gender issues within peace-building, reconciliation, and reconstruction.

In their contribution, Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark discuss the outcomes of a conference on 'Latin American Experiences of Gender, Conflict, and Building Sustainable Peace', held in Colombia in May 2000, and attended by representatives of civil society, governments, and inter-

national organisations. Their analysis straddles conflict and post-conflict periods, and emphasises the poverty of vision which depicts women as victims of conflict while men are actors in both war and peace. Groups such as women ex-combatants are invisible from this analysis, as are women leaders who could take their place around the table at peace negotiations. Moser and Clark argue for a holistic vision that understands 'the multifaceted relationship between women, men, violence, and peace', and the different experiences of women depending on other aspects of their social identity, including age, ethnicity, and geographical location, as well as their social, economic and political status. Finally, they discuss strategies for healing war-torn societies, including 'truth commissions' and the provision of psycho-social support to survivors of trauma.

When psycho-social support has been a feature of responses to emergency situations, this has tended to focus on women and children who have survived sexual violence and other mental and emotional trauma – for example, the rehabilitation of child soldiers. This collection includes an article which looks critically at the rationale for such work, its relationship to male perpetrators of such violence, and the wider need for peace and reconciliation in society. In her article, Helen Leslie presents a model of healing, drawn from the experience of an El Salvadorean NGO, Las Dignas. Las Dignas uses feminist theory as a tool to enable women to move beyond the abuse they have suffered, and rebuild their lives.

Finally in this section on peace-building and reconstruction, L.M. Handrahan discusses the implications for organisations promoting peace and democracy of recognising differences between women's and men's understandings of ethnic identity in Kyrgyzstan. She argues that women's concept of ethnicity appears to depend less on aggression than that of men. Men see themselves as the main 'bearers' of

ethnic identity. Their sense of masculinity depends on extreme pride in their ethnicity, and on participation in violent activities associated with ethnicity. In contrast, women associate ethnicity with cultural factors; and appear to be more receptive to working across ethnic divisions to end conflict. While these insights into male and female gender and ethnic identity have interesting implications for all those involved in promoting peace and democracy, Handrahan emphasises how women are seldom represented on the decision-making bodies that can create peace at national level. While women are active in NGOs, these typically remain at the periphery of the peace process. Everyone involved in peace-building must pay attention to the need to give women their place in official peace talks by ensuring that they are represented in government.

Notes

- 1 The Sphere Project is a programme of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and InterAction with VOICE, ICRC, and ICVA. The project was launched in 1997 to develop a set of universal minimum standards in core areas of humanitarian assistance. The aim of the project is to improve the quality of assistance provided to people affected by disasters, and to enhance the accountability of the humanitarian system in disaster response.

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Saving and protecting lives by empowering women

Deborah Clifton and Fiona Gell

Women and men face different risks and vulnerabilities during disaster, and they bring different resources to preparing for and coping with disaster. Less well recognised are the ways in which humanitarian interventions themselves influence the nature of gender relations during crises. A gender-blind humanitarian response which does not address gender-specific issues and does not pay particular attention to the situation of women can worsen both the immediate survival prospects for women and their families, and women's long-term position in society. This article contends that the process of providing humanitarian aid and the institutions that deliver it tend to be inherently male-biased and thus discriminatory against women, and that a commitment is needed both to understanding how institutional bias works against women, and to challenging the status quo.¹

Humanitarian agencies and their multi-million pound interventions have enormous power to challenge gender discrimination, perpetuate it, or even exacerbate it. The use of gender analysis to determine a gender-fair response is a critical factor in determining the outcome. A review of the literature on gender in humanitarian response reveals very little use of comprehensive gender analysis. The information available is anecdotal rather than analytical, and the inability to identify specific impact in terms of gender relations is a result of the fact that few programmes set out to challenge gender inequity. It is no wonder that achieving gender-equitable outcomes remains one of the great unmet challenges of humanitarian work.

How humanitarian interventions shape gender relations

Until quite recently, disaster-affected women have been viewed and portrayed

primarily as passive and needy victims, a 'vulnerable group'. This limited view has almost always resulted in humanitarian responses focusing solely on meeting women's immediate practical needs. Good practice on gender in emergencies has come to mean paying attention to the role of women in food distribution, providing sanitary towels, and ensuring adequate lighting and health services for women. These are important steps, but they remain rooted in an approach that is oblivious to social relations and power dynamics. It is true that gender inequality is a root cause of vulnerability, creating or contributing to particular risks for women. However, focusing on women's vulnerability – to the neglect of their capacities and resources, and their longer-term interests – misrepresents the actual experiences of women and men and negatively affects the culture and practice of emergency management (Enarson 1998).

Gender analysis recognises women's work and decision-making influence as central to preparing for, responding to,

recovering from, and mitigating community disasters. By building on this analysis, gender-fair humanitarian aid puts women's immediate and longer term interests at the heart of the assessment and planning process, thus ensuring that their chances of survival are increased, their coping strategies strengthened, and their status in the community raised with consequent improvements for the well-being of the whole community. It requires inclusive, participatory, democratic models of response that involve women not only as victims but also as resourceful community actors. In practice, however, women's representation is still often lacking in disaster response teams, emergency programme management, and the formal and informal participation needed to rebuild communities.

Gender-fair emergency management also seeks to challenge the longer-term structural barriers to women's vulnerability to disasters. Since disaster mitigation seeks to address the underlying causes of vulnerability, in addition to physical measures such as raising land or building dikes it must also address longer-term strategic factors such as unequal land ownership, wealth distribution, and gender inequality. Communities are safer and more resilient to crisis when they are more egalitarian, and when all social groups are empowered in a way that enables them to contribute their respective opinions and resources.

When external agencies provide resources without considering gender issues they can seriously jeopardise the position of women. With already fewer opportunities for education, employment, and leadership than men, women are likely to be further disadvantaged by interventions that reinforce traditional roles and relationships. If too many resources are targeted to women without adequate analysis of the risks involved and without adequate participation of women, their security and position may be further jeopardised by

backlash from men. Women must be fully involved in determining the pace of change, as they are the best judges of resistance and how to overcome it.

If gender equity goals are considered at all, they are typically equated with post-emergency rehabilitation or development work, where it is more straightforward to address gender inequities than in relief work. However, the role of relief in laying the foundations for rebuilding the social, economic, and physical infrastructure of communities is now well recognised. The long-term course of a humanitarian response can be set by programme decisions made within the first few days of relief work. Hence, getting the relief response right for women as well as men from day one is of paramount importance.

Why gender equity and women's empowerment are vital to saving and protecting lives

The aims of humanitarian intervention

Gender analysis in any programme needs to take as its starting point the following questions. Are the overall goals sensitive to the interests of both women and men? If so, how can these aspirations to achieve gender equity be made explicit and developed into actionable plans?

The aim of humanitarian response is to save and protect lives quickly and effectively in the event of an emergency, in order to ensure that fewer people die, fall sick, or suffer deprivation.² Underlying these aims are two fundamental principles recognised by the humanitarian community: that those affected by disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance; and that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering arising out of conflict and calamity (Sphere Project 2000). This includes the right to an adequate standard of living,

and to freedom from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

Two further principles with significant implications for gender equality are laid out by the Red Cross Code of Conduct for NGOs in Disaster Relief. Firstly, 'proportionality' – humanitarian aid should be provided in measures proportional to the degree of suffering it seeks to address. Secondly, 'impartiality' – the provision of aid must be made on the basis of need 'regardless of race, creed, or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind'. This principle implies that the aims of saving and protecting lives must apply equally to women and men, and that we must strive for equity, or fairness, of outcome. The Code of Conduct also states that interventions should support and not diminish the role of women in disaster-affected populations.

This section sets out why a gender-fair approach is essential to fulfilling the principles and aims set out above. The rest of the article discusses how to achieve this.

The efficiency rationale

It is widely recognised that women's empowerment³ and greater equality between women and men are a necessary pre-requisite for social justice, sustainable development, and for peace (United Nations 1995). This applies equally to the humanitarian context. Empowered women will be able to make a much greater contribution to preparing for and coping with disaster. In addition, the experience of participating on an equal footing with men in disaster management can be a very empowering one for women. Communities and agencies therefore need to seize any opportunities resulting from the crisis for improvements in the relative condition and status of women. Such opportunities are often created by shifts in demographic patterns, when women and men may assume new roles and responsibilities.

Communities and agencies also need to support women to hold on to gains in gender relations made during the crisis.

A series of structural barriers work against women's active participation and empowerment in disaster response, including their reproductive burden, lower levels of education, lower access to and control over resources, lower status, and limited mobility. Humanitarian agencies need to recognise and challenge these barriers, and at the very least ensure that their interventions do not exacerbate them. They need to address the practical and protection needs of both women and men in the immediate crisis, recognise and build on the roles and resources that men and women bring to coping with the crisis, and address the longer-term needs and interests of women and men. If these needs are appropriately addressed, the coping capacity of communities for future disasters will be strengthened. Steps must be taken to include a fairer distribution of power between women and men, and this may imply an extension of the typical sectoral scope of humanitarian response which precludes attention to several critical gender issues. Strengthening women's leadership role will involve finding ways to share their reproductive burdens, and strengthening men's role in household work.

The focus of the approach needs to be on analysing the situation of both women and men, and working with both to achieve gender-equitable outcomes. However, the fact that women start from a relative position of greater suffering, poverty, and disempowerment means that, if the aims of proportionality and impartiality are to be achieved, special attention must be paid to the situation of women, and resources must be allocated accordingly. Only then can progress be made in restoring a balance in gender relations.

Such a gender-fair approach has the potential to increase humanitarian impact in the following ways:

- Lives can be saved and protected (i.e. mortality, morbidity, and malnutrition reduced) by the *most effective and efficient* means when gender-specific needs are met appropriately and gender-specific capacities and resources fully utilised. Improvements in the condition and status of women will have overall benefit for the survival and well-being of the whole family.
- Lives can be saved and protected with a greater degree of *proportionality* and *impartiality* because achievements in 'fewer people dying, falling sick, or suffering deprivation' will benefit women and men in better proportion to their relative suffering. However, it is important to note that in order to achieve an *outcome* (lives saved and protected) which is impartial to gender, the *process* needs to focus on the interests of women in order to restore balance to an unequal situation.
- The chances of a *life with dignity* being enjoyed by women and men equally will be significantly increased with women having greater control over their situation during the crisis and hopefully in the longer-term.
- The overall capacity of communities to prepare for and cope with future disasters will be enhanced through harnessing the resources and active participation of both men and women in more productive ways

The rights-based rationale

Because gender-based discrimination is a critical inhibitor to poverty alleviation, sustainable development, and good governance, gender advocates argue for an approach that recognises and confronts gender inequities and the denial of women's social, economic, and political

rights. The right to life with dignity, to exercise one's human rights, and the right to self-determination are significantly dependent on gender. A rights-based approach to humanitarian aid involves the equal protection of the human rights of women and men, special attention to the violation of human rights of women, and the equal and active representation of women and men at all levels of decision-making.

The *Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards* represent a rights-based approach to humanitarian intervention. The principles of impartiality, proportionality, and a right to life with dignity are concerned with achieving equal rights for all social groups regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, or any other form of social identity. Equal rights for women and men are fundamental to this approach. This is reflected in the fact that among the wide range of human rights instruments that underpin the *Humanitarian Charter* is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW legally obliges the states that are party to the convention to take measures to prevent violence against women, and to eliminate discrimination in issues such as access to health care, ownership of property, and participation in public life.

The *Beijing Platform for Action*, which resulted from the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, is another key rights-based agreement. It sets out the most radical global agenda yet for the empowerment of women. Most of the twelve Critical Areas of Concern in the *Platform for Action* relate in some way to the humanitarian context, but the most critical strategic objectives are those set for violence against women, women and armed conflict, and the human rights of women. While not legally binding, this agreement is signed by 189 states, and represents an important lever for change. It provides a set of benchmarks towards

which international actors can strive in humanitarian as well as development practice.

A rights-based approach aims to enable all poor and marginalised people, women and men, to exercise their rights. It must therefore address the many ways in which women and men can be marginalised as a result of other aspects of their social identity such as ethnicity, class, caste, disability, and age.

The rights-based rationale for a gender-fair approach to humanitarian aid supports the efficiency rationale. Acknowledging women's rights as human rights is essential if gender awareness and analysis are to help determine the most appropriate response. But this will only happen if there is an understanding of why upholding women's rights is essential in both efficiency and human rights terms, and a commitment to seek opportunities to make this happen from all actors within the humanitarian operation. If agencies fail to follow these principles, they risk becoming complicit in further discriminating against women and worsening their position in society.

Understanding and challenging resistance

There remains a baffling level of resistance in the humanitarian community toward an approach that seeks gender equality. This seems to stem from lack of understanding, skills, and commitment to identify and challenge gender discrimination. More fundamentally, it reflects an inherent male bias in humanitarian institutions, and the fact that the personal relations of many staff may also be based on inequitable gender relations. Here we cite and respond to some of the arguments raised against striving for gender equity during emergencies.

There is a concern that attempting to empower women during disasters is to unfairly manipulate local culture when a

community is at its most vulnerable and has little power to challenge humanitarian agencies on which it depends. Yet, how often is this concern cited by crisis-affected women? Striving for gender equity is part of a universal human rights agenda. It is, of course, imperative that local communities regulate the pace of change and shape its course to ensure their own protection from cultural backlash. Hence the need to strive for full and active participation of women in programmes.

There is an understandable but misguided concern that a gender-equity approach to humanitarian aid is actually a development agenda, fed by the fact that empowerment work with women has traditionally been done during rehabilitation work which often, but not always, leads into a development phase. It is important to be clear that the approach is primarily about delivering relief and rehabilitation equitably, and that this needs to be accompanied, where possible, with an attempt to tackle the longer-term barriers to women's development. It is not about in-depth, time-consuming social research that will see months of inaction before any suffering is alleviated. Nor is it simply about setting up women's projects, though these may be needed as part of a strategy to engage and strengthen the capacity of women to participate. It is about working with men as well as women to ensure the equitable delivery of aid.

There is an underlying resistance to the perceived threat of the feminist or 'politically correct' agenda to the humanitarian imperative, a suspicion that gender advocates attempt to use humanitarian programmes to further the aims of the unrelated agenda of gender equity. The case of Oxfam GB's shift from delivery of winter relief to advocacy on women's rights following the Taliban take-over in Afghanistan in 1996 and the banning of women's rights to education, employment, and freedom of movement has been cited in this regard (Williams 2001). For some

time, the principles of the humanitarian imperative and gender equity were unhelpfully juxtaposed as competing agendas that polarised the debate and masked the fact that with no access to women, Oxfam GB did not believe it could deliver humanitarian aid with impartiality and proportionality, and without further undermining the position of women. However, the Afghan situation was, and still is, unusually complex. In most cases the upholding of women's rights clearly strengthens humanitarian impact.

Others argue that addressing gender equity costs more in terms of time, human, and financial resources. Yet the need for extra gender specialists would be minimal if gender-fairness became a perspective, a lens through which all humanitarian workers viewed the work in their respective sector. It may well involve targeting more resources specifically at women, but this should increase the equity and efficiency of the overall response as we have seen above.

Achieving gender-fair outcomes depends largely on changing humanitarian culture and attitudes. Part of this work will be to demonstrate and communicate that a gender-fair approach does not threaten but enhances humanitarian aims. This requires long-term research to gather baseline data on gender relations, track change over the course of crises and humanitarian interventions, and measure its impact. We need to collect and document case studies where comprehensive gender analysis has led to good practice, and communicate this in dynamic ways across the humanitarian community.⁴

Gender mainstreaming strategies

Several humanitarian organisations attempting to improve their performance on achieving equity have developed strategies for mainstreaming gender⁵ within their work and organisations.

While there has been a great deal of rhetoric about gender mainstreaming over the past decade, there are few examples of where it has been achieved. This is partly owing to confusion about what it means, the promulgation of myths about the dangers of including equity as a humanitarian goal, and, no doubt, partly owing to organisational reluctance once its implications are thoroughly understood.

Mainstreaming is a process undertaken to achieve gender equality, not a goal in itself. It requires gender-specific measures for advancing equality throughout organisational mandates, within a coherent policy approach focused on the empowerment of women. To propose or adopt mainstreaming, as many organisations have done, without substantial accompanying changes in the policies, mandates, and doctrines that govern organisational action, is meaningless. While there has clearly been increased will on the part of international organisations to address gender issues, this commitment has not been backed up by the systematic changes necessary to translate it into reality.

The first step in successfully mainstreaming gender equity goals in any institution is high-level commitment to establishing a cohesive framework, including a rationale for why gender equity is important, a clear strategy, with specific goals and standards for achieving equity, sufficient gender expertise, and adequate resources, mechanisms, and regular reporting to hold staff accountable.

The ways in which gender is integrated, particularly in humanitarian emergencies, also need to be situation-specific, seizing opportunities as they arise. It requires attention to how change happens at both a technical and political level. At the technical level, gender mainstreaming requires solid data, sound theory, and skilled people who recognise opportunities and can act as credible advocates for gender equality. At the political level it

requires advocacy and action on the implementation of policies and mandates, whether these are international mandates such as those provided in the *Beijing Platform for Action*, national mandates such as legislation, or the internal gender policies of humanitarian agencies. The political level also requires inter-agency support and collaboration.

Performance standards on gender

One of the ways Oxfam GB has chosen to advance its gender mainstreaming efforts is through the development of performance standards on gender in humanitarian response. Attempts to establish minimum standards for humanitarian work go back more than a decade in response to widely felt needs for improved response and accountability, but it is only recently that steps have been taken to improve performance and accountability on gender. The Sphere Project was the first major effort to succeed in translating abstract humanitarian ideals into specific standards, achieving a wide consensus across a broad spectrum of humanitarian agencies. The purpose of the *Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards* is to increase the effectiveness and quality of humanitarian assistance and to make humanitarian agencies more accountable. The *Humanitarian Charter* is a recognition and elaboration of the right to assistance of persons affected by calamity and conflict based on existing laws, conventions, and practices, while the *Minimum Standards* outline the goods and services to be provided in fulfilment of that right. Standards are prescribed for five service sectors: water supply and sanitation, nutrition, food aid, shelter and site planning, and health services, along with indicators which can be used to judge whether the standard has been attained.

A review of the gender-blind draft of the Sphere standards (Sphere Project 1998) resulted in significant improvements on gender-sensitivity in the 2000 edition which does, to some extent, address the

specific vulnerabilities of women, protection from violence, and women's participation. However, it falls short of asserting gender equity as a guiding principle of humanitarian work, of explicitly acknowledging women's rights as human rights, and of recognising the importance of understanding gender relations and barriers to equal participation.

Because of these shortcomings, Oxfam GB has developed a set of standards on gender equity in humanitarian response designed to be used alongside the Sphere standards (Clifton 2001). These include standards for integrating gender throughout the programme cycle including protection from violence, and for modelling gender equality within Oxfam itself. These standards are now being piloted to assess their impact on gender equity in humanitarian programmes.

So how useful are standards on gender? The Sphere standards have been widely acknowledged as a useful practical guide and reference point for attempting to provide a consistent, comprehensive response to disaster. Although their impact is still being assessed, they have certainly proved effective as an awareness-raising tool. Gender equity standards provide a language to articulate concrete practical objectives and make a complex subject more tangible. It is, however, crucial that accountability mechanisms are put in place and monitored.

Standards also have limitations and associated risks (Brabant 2000). There has been a hot debate about the universality of Sphere standards, and their applicability in different socio-cultural contexts and in the initial phases of emergency response or in volatile contexts. Achieving standards can become a technocratic process of 'bean counting' without any underlying contextual analysis. Standards can inhibit innovation and be misused as tokenistic measures to gain cheap credibility with managers or donors. They also require broad consensus

if they are to be effective, and, as the Sphere Project has found, setting standards on gender can be particularly controversial.

Most importantly, standards are only a first step in a process of changing attitudes and practice toward increasing equity. Like rules, they do not lead to meaningful or long-term change in isolation. They can simply set a process in motion. Once implemented, the focus must be on examining actual outcomes and impact on the lives of women and men. And they must be accompanied by a much wider process of institutional change and transformation to achieve real impact. 'Practice only changes when practitioners themselves acknowledge that change is essential, and accept that the "old way of doing things is over". To be successful practice standards must be owned equally by the agency and its personnel.' (Lancaster 2000)

Until organisations, donors, and governments are trained to measure 'results' on gender beyond countable outputs, and to looking at competence and performance in achieving sustainable long-term impacts on gender relations, there will be a temptation to subscribe to gender standards as a superficial measure of gender sensitivity.

In addition to implementing practice standards, agencies seeking to integrate a gender perspective fully into their humanitarian work must take action on a number of other levels. The use of gender analysis, and the collection of gender-disaggregated data, need to become a systematic and mandatory part of intervention, as do procedures for ensuring the active engagement of women. Plans to increase gender expertise in staffing, to conduct gender training at all levels, and to implement gender policies, need to be time-bound, with management and staff held accountable for their achievement. Most importantly, rigorous evaluation criteria need to be developed to measure success in closing gender gaps, both within

organisations, and in the programmes they seek to implement (Women's Eyes on the World Bank 1997).

Mainstreaming gender also means building the capacity of women and women's organisations to advocate for their legal rights and priorities on their own behalf. A commitment to mainstreaming does not preclude a focus on women. Rather, supporting strong groups and networks of activist women to acquire know-how, and to identify opportunities to intervene in mainstream development and humanitarian processes, is a core part of strategy, enabling women collectively to assess their situation, express their priorities and concerns, strengthen their public voice, advocate and lobby for policy reform, and develop approaches to influence decision-making. It is the only way to ensure that ongoing work for gender equality and development at the national level is sustainable after the outside involvement has ended (UNICEF, undated).

Institutional transformation

A recent development in the discussion of achieving equity in emergency aid work is the growing recognition that humanitarian agencies, like many other institutions, are themselves inherently resistant to gender equality. Organisational and feminist theory suggests that organisations, like society, have unconscious or submerged values in their culture, and a history that influences their ways of working. When organisations themselves are historically deeply gender biased, trying to 'add gender' into their structure through policy and program initiatives is unlikely to bring about significant change (Goetz 1997; Rao *et al.* 1999). Helping humanitarian agencies to learn to operate in equitable ways and achieve equitable results requires examining all aspects of the organisation through a gender lens. It means understanding and

transforming the conditions and factors that enable or prevent gender practices within each of the technical, political, and cultural subsystems of an organisation, and transforming those towards greater gender equality and social justice. Fundamental issues such as power structures and relations, organisational values, staff attitudes, and decision-making systems all need to be addressed. The process of organisational transformation is complex and requires debate and space for reflection between institutions.⁶

In order to pursue a social-transformation agenda, organisations need to address the underlying assumptions and values that inhibit gender equality. Examining 'how the job gets done' in emergency response reveals a lot about the dissonance between espoused organisational values of gender equity and the deeper culture of humanitarian agencies.

Humanitarian interventions carried out in situations of conflict operate within a highly militarised and masculinised external environment which has resulted in the internalisation of some elements of military language, behaviour, and culture in aid agencies. Emergency staff need a heightened awareness of security issues, knowledge and skills such as radio operation and off-road driving, and the ability to work alongside rebel, government, or UN military forces. These areas are typically the domain of men, although to some men they will be less familiar. Women and men both face risks in militaristic environments, but women staff are often constrained in their actions and mobility by the threat of gender-specific forms of abuse.

The urgency, chaos, and scale of crisis response also provokes a militarised and masculinised internal environment for agencies, whether in a situation of natural disaster or conflict. Hierarchical, typically male-dominated, top-down structures tend to be adopted, where action-orientation, quick decision-making, efficiency, risk-taking, and heroism are valued as important

attributes of professionalism, and a significant level of internalised subordination is often accepted without question. 'Soft' behaviours such as consultation, cautious shared analysis, gender-sensitivity, or empathy with those affected by the crisis, more often displayed by women, are often disregarded as unimportant and irrelevant if not ridiculed. This reflects the predominance of a masculinised value system. It is exacerbated by the fact that the 'hardware' sectors of water, shelter, food aid, and logistics which represent the backbone of humanitarian response, and command the greatest resources, are mainly staffed by men, whereas the 'software' sectors of health, community mobilisation, education, and human resources tend to be staffed by women.

The masculinised emergency culture places high value on staff who are willing and able to take personal risks, work long hours under high pressure, live under difficult conditions with little privacy, travel at short notice, be unencumbered by personal commitments, and remain emotionally detached from crises. Women, partly due to their greater reproductive and family responsibilities and partly due to internalised female values, less readily meet these criteria for the 'ideal' committed humanitarian worker. As a consequence, they may need to work harder to prove themselves, they may adopt a stance of male bravado becoming 'one of the boys', often suffer ridicule and discrimination in the workplace, and in some contexts simply find themselves excluded from certain areas of work. Male staff who do not live up to these ideals of masculinity may suffer discrimination in similar ways.

These usually dysfunctional and highly gendered organisational attitudes and behaviours unfortunately characterise emergency management, and help to explain why mainstreaming gender has proven so difficult in this field, and why, as a consequence, humanitarian programmes

have little positive impact on gender equity. The challenge for humanitarian agencies is to recognise and expose the masculinisation of their environment by listening to and validating the experiences of their women staff, to provide appropriate support and training, and to find ways to moderate the values and culture of their internal working environment so that women feel able to contribute on more equitable terms with men.

As this article goes to press, the world faces the threat of international conflict following terrorist attacks on the USA. The debate over the balance to be struck between retaliatory action and efforts toward peace is strikingly gendered. The voices of women in the debate have almost been silenced. Virtually all the central actors in the crisis are men: men perpetrated the violence, men are organising the response, and providing the public and media analysis. Women are depicted as passive victims of the crisis. The peace protests, organised principally by women's organisations, are receiving little media coverage. The protagonists of military retaliation are mainly men, while women are becoming the sceptics of a war devised, controlled, and reported by men. This bears out the old gender stereotype of women's tendency to nurture life rather than destroy it. Women are less assured than men that a war on terrorism will make the world safer. 'Men are socialised to intellectualise the world, analyse and objectify it, in a bid to emotionally distance themselves and control it. Women, brought up to empathise, have few distancing techniques.' (Bunting 2001) While men's 'outrage translated instantly into concrete demands', for women, 'the extent of the horror was in itself a bar to certainty... it demanded that we ask questions rather than furnish answers.' (Miles 2001) The domination of men in the crisis has exposed the prevailing power structure and marginalised women in a way that would have seemed barely possible before the crisis began.

Changing the way that states negotiate conflict and humanitarian agencies deliver aid will require fundamental institutional transformation. It will require bringing feminist goals of social transformation together with espoused organisational values to effect a major cultural shift. It will mean changing the way we think and make decisions, and recognising that these new ways of working will not only contribute to greater gender equity but will also save and protect more lives. In the process of evolving, organisations will need to articulate and take action to establish the direct connection between women's empowerment, gender transformation, and the explicit values and aims of humanitarian intervention.

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Notes

- 1 There is a large literature on institutional discrimination against women in development situations (Goetz 1997; Rao *et al.* 1999) but very little that addresses this issue in the humanitarian context specifically.
- 2 This is the Oxfam GB definition of its humanitarian objectives.
- 3 Women's empowerment can be understood as a process whereby women, individually and collectively, become aware of how power relations operate in their lives, and gain the self-confidence and strength to challenge gender inequalities.

- 4 Examples can be found in Oxfam GB (1997, 2001); Gell (1999); Walker (1994).
- 5 The UN defines gender mainstreaming as 'the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's, as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women can benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.' (ECOSOC 1997)
- 6 The recently founded Gender at Work Collaborative aims to build a north-south network dedicated to institutional change on gender equity. <http://www.gendematwork.org>

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Contested terrain:

Oxfam, gender, and the aftermath of war

Suzanne Williams

In this paper I explore the terrain of the international NGO (INGO) – in this case Oxfam GB – and some of its difficulties in integrating gender equity goals in the institutional structures and policies which govern its activities in conflict and its aftermath. I look at terrain that is divided into areas that are treated very differently. These are, on one hand, the field of humanitarian interventions in the throes of an emergency, and on the other, the ‘non-conflict’ field of reconstruction and development. Historically, these two fields of activity have been governed by very different ways of thinking and acting, often in conflict with each other. Gender analysis and gender-sensitive programming are central to these differences, and essential tools in the attempts to overcome them. In Oxfam GB at present, the differences in approaches to gender equity in these two territories are acknowledged, if not routinely addressed; but the importance of addressing gender equity in order to overcome some of these differences, is more complicated and controversial.

Introduction: setting out the terrain

The aftermath of war itself unfolds in unstable and dangerous terrain, contested at all levels. Social and political groups begin to re-organise, jockeying for position and power, mistrustful of old alliances while seeking to form new ones. Community-based networks, patterns of social interaction, and other forms of social organisation will have been affected to different degrees depending on the nature of the conflict and the networks and organisations pre-war. Displacement, flight, and experience of refugee camps have dramatic impacts on individuals, social relationships, and social roles and responsibilities.

Women and men struggle to re-establish their livelihoods. Patterns of land ownership and land use, disrupted by the conflict, take new forms. Amongst victors

and vanquished, and those who do not fit neatly into either of these categories, women, men, and children have to deal with the emotional, psychological, and physical injuries inflicted during the war, with loss and bereavement, with uncertainty and fear. Feelings of hatred and the desire for revenge may still run high, and reprisal attacks increase in the absence of effective judicial institutions and in the context of impunity for human rights violations during the war. The use of violence as a means to resolve problems and disputes, backed up by increased circulation of weapons, and nurtured by the militarism which governs the conduct of armed conflict, bleeds on in the post-war context. This commonly translates into high levels of criminal violence and increased violence within households and families. The end of war rarely brings peace. The post-war terrain can be particularly dangerous for women.

'Oxfam and its partners have observed that from the townships of Natal to the shanty towns of El Salvador, the result of many years of armed conflict is that violence has become the socially accepted means of resolving conflict and achieving change which infiltrates all aspects of society, including family life.'

(Oxfam 1998a)

Allegiances and identities come into question during conflict and in its aftermath, usually identified and described in political and/or in ethnic or religious terms. The struggle may be about control of territory, assets, resources, political status and power, and opposing groups mobilised around class, ethnic, religious, or regional identity, or combinations of any of these. But there is another fundamental form of identity that is commonly ignored or regarded as secondary to the ethnic and nationalist divides. Gender identities are central to war-making, as they are to peace-making. War is gendered. Male and female identities are manipulated in the preparation for war, its conduct, and its aftermath. This may be through the dissemination of militaristic ideology, which promotes male aggression, dominance, and the capacity for violence, and praises female passivity, family nurturing, and support to fighting males. Individual men and women are affected differently by these gendered stereotypical constructs.

While it is now widely recognised amongst INGOs that armed conflict presents women with opportunities as well as threats, and the chance to re-negotiate gender roles following *de facto* assumption of male responsibilities in the absence of men, understanding of how war constructs gender has been more elusive. Gender is not identified by INGOs as a key defining factor of identity in relation to how war begins, what it is about, how groups are mobilised to fight, and how ceasefires and peace agreements are reached. The power relations which define gender identity, the allegiances, the beliefs and behaviours

which are gender-based, are rarely built into the analysis of violent conflict or the planning of interventions to address its consequences. Failure to do this can be attributed to lack of expertise in gender analysis, but also to a profound resistance to incorporating it, for a number of reasons that will be examined later in this paper. To address gender relations in the context of conflict entails entering highly contested terrain, not only within the war-torn society, but within all the institutions intervening in the situation, including the INGOs.

In this paper I look at some of the 'institutional imperatives' which govern Oxfam's work during conflict and its aftermath, and discuss problems inherent in some key conceptual and programmatic divides which make programme implementation in this area complicated and difficult. Thinking and action can polarise in relation to relief and development responses, conflict and post-conflict contexts, technical and social interventions. Interwoven with these are different perceptions of the division between the public and private domains, and what constitutes peace. Violence against women in wartime, such as strategic rape, is located in the public domain. 'Domestic' violence, is commonly regarded as a private affair, within the household and family. The essential feminist insight that the public/private divide must be broken down to understand gender relations and the organisation of power has only recently begun to inform Oxfam's thinking.

Taking examples from Oxfam's programme I look at some of Oxfam's experience in addressing gender equity in the aftermath of war. In conclusion, I consider some of the current changes within Oxfam GB, and point to some of the areas needing strengthening to underpin the positive changes which are taking place.

Oxfam GB's institutional imperatives

Oxfam GB's mandate is to relieve poverty, distress, and suffering, and to educate the public about the nature, causes, and effects of these. In recent years, Oxfam GB has defined its purpose as helping people to achieve their basic rights, drawn from relevant articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the two International Covenants. Work to achieve gender equity, expressed as 'women and men will enjoy equal rights' is a core institutional goal.

Oxfam GB has had a Corporate Gender Policy since 1993, but its implementation throughout the organisation has been patchy. The profound transformations envisaged by the Gender Policy in human resources policy and the structure and culture of Oxfam GB as a whole have not taken place. Other strategies are currently underway to try and address these issues. Progress in implementing the Gender Policy was mapped in 1997, and pointed to little overall consistency. Strengths revealed by the study were considerable success in working at grassroots level with women's organisations and in Oxfam GB's gender publishing programme. There has been less success in relation to mainstreaming gender in large-scale emergency or development programmes, and little to point to in relation to gender-sensitive advocacy and campaigning work (Oxfam GB 1998b).

Oxfam GB has a number of sets of guidelines and standards relating to gender for its emergency programming, and these have been implemented successfully in some instances, but are not routinely applied. Oxfam GB was a key collaborator in an interagency initiative known as the Sphere Project, which aims to 'improve the quality of assistance provided to people affected by disasters, and to enhance accountability of humanitarian system in disaster response' (Sphere Project 2000; Clifton and Gell 2001).

Oxfam GB has worked on the concept of 'net impact' or 'net benefit' in relation to humanitarian relief. This arose from the work – and the challenge – of Mary Anderson's 'Building Local Capacities for Peace' project. The question addressed by Anderson's work is this:

'How can international and local aid agencies provide assistance to people in areas of violent conflict in ways that help those people disengage from the conflict and develop alternative systems for overcoming the problems they face? How can aid agencies and aid workers encourage local capacities for peace?'

(Anderson 1996)

Oxfam GB, along with other international humanitarian agencies, has to ask itself some difficult questions. When does our presence do more harm than good, by exacerbating the conflict through diversion of aid, inadvertent support to perpetrators of human rights violations in conflict, or perpetuation of the war through provision of humanitarian relief that enables national resources to be allocated to arms and the war itself? What are the alternatives to providing immediate help to victims of violent conflict? How do we balance high profile advocacy with the security of staff and partners? How do we continue to provide humanitarian aid within all these constraints and difficulties?

These questions could well be applied to gender equity and the impact of external agencies on women and on gender relations. When do our interventions bring more harm than good to women? Are we exacerbating inequitable gender relations by intervening in ways that do not positively address gender inequality, and tackle male dominance? Are we inadvertently exacerbating male violence against women by targeting our aid without a clear analysis of gender power relations? Are we making it easier for male oppression to continue by focusing on women's projects that do not disturb the status quo? Are there times when we

should be making a judgement and deciding to pull out of a direct intervention, or choosing to focus on high profile lobbying and campaigning for women's rights? In the context of conflict, and in highly militarised societies, these dilemmas are particularly acute.

Oxfam GB had to address these issues in Afghanistan, when the Taliban took control of Kabul in 1996, and Oxfam's local female staff were prevented from coming to work. Oxfam had to find a way to balance the delivery of humanitarian aid with a principled stance on the abuse of the rights of women under the Taliban regime. There was considerable debate between those who thought Oxfam GB should take a high-profile position on what was happening to women, and not implicitly support an unjust system by working with 'approved' women, and those who thought Oxfam should try to find ways of working with women wherever possible, within the constraints. In the end, it was judged that the net benefits to women of Oxfam GB staying and working with the opportunities which could be found, were greater than abandoning direct interventions to focus exclusively on advocacy for women's rights.¹

This judgement is not routinely applied in Oxfam GB's work, nor are the tools to make them consistently available to staff. However, Oxfam GB is currently in the process of developing standards and frameworks of analysis that will begin to help staff make these difficult decisions.

Programming in conflict-prone areas: overcoming the classic divides

Gender equity programming in conflict-prone areas is itself prone to conflict. Although INGOs like Oxfam GB have theorised the end of the 'development-relief' divide, the division still persists institutionally, and in field policy and

practice.² A second fault-line divides conflict and 'post-conflict', in spite of recent thinking in both academic and NGO circles which describes an analytic framework of turbulence and cyclical dynamics in conflict-prone societies, rather than a linear progression from conflict to peace. A third divide separates technical and social approaches to programme planning and implementation. Threading in and out of these issues, as was mentioned above, is the divide between the public and the private, and the implications for perceptions of violence against women in war, and outside armed conflict. All of these divides have critical implications for gender equity goals in responses to conflict and to its aftermath.

Programming in conflict-prone areas still tends to be divided into emergency relief response, focused on immediate and life-saving objectives, and response based on longer-term developmental aims, seeking to improve people's life options and prevent further conflict. The divide is gradually narrowing, but its persistence in both policy and practice means that the nature of the relief effort is only peripherally influenced by the longer term prospects for the victims of the conflict. Often, the aims of relief and recovery themselves seem to be in conflict – particularly if resources are limited. Moral claims by each raise the temperature. Staff focused on rapid, large-scale response accuse those emphasising the social impacts of the emergency of fiddling while Rome burns. While the 'technicians' are saving lives, the 'social workers' complicate the issues, achieving little that is measurable – or worse still, exacerbating social and political tensions they do not fully understand. Social development staff, on the other hand, accuse the technical staff of rushing in blindly, treating people like objects, potentially doing more harm than good by ignoring social and gender differences in the population, creating

dependencies, and paying little attention to the long-term consequences of the relief aid itself.

Add gender equity to the mix and the environment may become explosive. It is common to find strong resistance to building gender equity goals into emergency response on the grounds that (a) lives have to be saved quickly, information is not available, and there is no time for social surveys; (b) there is immense pressure from donors and the media to show that measures are in place rapidly and having an immediate impact, while the gender dynamics in the society are of less concern, and certainly less visible; (c) while we know distribution is more effective through women, often there is no time to organise it that way; (d) an emergency is not the right time to challenge gender power relationships; and (e) why should special attention be paid to women when everyone is suffering?

While this may sound exaggerated, I have heard all these arguments in the field. They are familiar arguments which frustrate practitioners on both sides of the debate, *all of whom are trying to get the job done as best they can*. There are complex issues which are not easily resolved in the clash between speed of response and the social, cultural, and political composition of groups which will determine the quality of that response.

Oxfam GB in Kosovo

Oxfam GB's response to the Kosovo crisis brought these issues out quite clearly, and managers of the programmes made real efforts to work across the relief-development, technical-social, and conflict-post-conflict divides. The process was fraught with difficulties. And yet, it seemed to have had a good start.

Oxfam GB had been in Kosovo since 1995, working closely with women's groups and associations in several regions in the country. Oxfam-Pristina had strong

relationships with partners, many of whom were women's organisations, and a strong local team. The focus was on long-term development initiatives aimed at the social and political empowerment of women, through capacity building with women activists. With the intensification of the conflict in 1998, Oxfam's work focus shifted to the needs of displaced women and children. Women's Centres were funded in Viti, Pristina, Obiliq, and Gjilan as relief distribution points as well as meeting places for psychosocial support. The programme also included substantial work on water and sanitation and public health.

In March 1999 with the onset of the NATO campaign, Oxfam evacuated with other INGOs, setting up an office in Skopje with several of its staff from Pristina. The existing Albania programme was rapidly expanded to cope with the refugees flooding into Albania. During the period of exile and displacement, Oxfam GB continued to work in Macedonia with its highly committed ex-Pristina staff, and some of its Kosovar partners, principally in the refugee camps. With the continuity provided by the ex-Pristina staff, and programme experience from several years in Kosovo, the chances of a well-integrated programme building the relief response within longer-term strategies for recovery and return, with gender equity goals at its core, seemed to be high, if not optimal.

However, this integration did not happen, for a number of reasons. A large-scale humanitarian relief programme was mounted, with an enormous budget raised by emergency appeals in the UK, and in the limelight of the high media interest in the crisis. The pressure was on Oxfam GB to spend the money, and spend it fast. A large number of expatriate staff, mostly water technicians and engineers, flew into Macedonia to set up Oxfam GB's water programme in the camps. Money flowed freely for the emergency response. But the dynamic between the social and technical

responses, when I arrived to look at gender, human rights and protection issues in April 1999, was difficult and competitive. Kosovar staff members, themselves refugees, were dealing with their own personal and family trauma, and with loss and uncertainty, as a result of the war. The problem was heightened by the fact that the new arrivals who came to run the relief programme were expatriates, some with no previous experience of the region. The ex-Pristina Kosovar staff felt overrun by the new technical 'expats', misunderstood, and alienated from a programme which had been theirs, and had now inflated beyond recognition.

Kosovar refugees – mostly educated young men and women – were taken on by the technical and social programmes to carry out the work in the camps. There was a heated debate about payment of the young workforce. In the old Pristina-based programme, much of the work was based on voluntarism. But in the refugee situation, many of the other international agencies were paying their local recruits. Initially, the debate was played out in gendered terms – the young men working with the water engineers were paid, and the young women, working as hygiene promoters, were not. This was subsequently adjusted.

The 'hard' and the 'soft'

'The thing about this programme,' one of the water engineers said to me in Kosovo in 1999, 'Is that it's the soft side of the programme that is the hardest to do.'

The technical staff, running the water programme (the 'hard' side of the programme), were almost exclusively male, and were perceived by the almost exclusively female staff working on gender, disability, social development, and hygiene promotion (the 'soft' side of the programme) to have privileged access to the emergency resources. The technical aspects of the programme were thus perceived by those working on the other parts of the programme to be valued more highly than

the social aspects. In fact, as in any emergency, all staff were clamouring for more resources, whether logisticians, engineers, managers, or social development staff. Where all eyes are on the crisis, and the pressure is there externally as well as from the desperate plight of the refugee population, competition over resources is inevitable and, where other divisions exist, very difficult to manage.

As is often the case, strong feelings focused on access to vehicles. I travelled with staff from all three parts of the programme, and observed that indeed the water programme staff in each camp had access to their own new four-wheel drive vehicles. Meanwhile, the hygiene promotion, disability, and social development staff had to share older vehicles, one of which was quite unsafe, with a cracked windscreen and a field radio which did not work. I vividly recall sitting on the dusty roadside at the exit of one of the Stankovic camps for some time trying to hitch a lift back to Skopje because the social development programme did not have its own vehicle. This put extra pressure on the social development, disability, and hygiene promotion teams, and made it harder for them to accomplish all they had to do in the dispersed camps where they worked. There were other specific and more general problems around access to programme resources that exacerbated the divisions between teams responsible for different responses. This in turn militated against the integration of the social and technical aspects of the programme.

I reported at the time that Oxfam's programme was a three-pronged effort (community development, with special emphasis on women and disabled people; hygiene and public health promotion; and the provision of clean water) with many strengths, particularly Oxfam's long and established reputation in the fields of emergency relief and development, and skilled and experienced staff.

My report recommendations included the following:

'For further development of Oxfam's response, its three elements need to be built into a single integrated programme, with the three aspects based on a clear analysis of the needs and rights of women, men and children. Data collection and appraisal methods sensitive to gender and age are needed to provide the information Oxfam needs for planning of all parts of the programme. Oxfam will then be well placed to make a significant contribution not only to the current crisis but to the future in Kosovo.'
(Williams 1999)

Nonetheless, and in spite of not managing to achieve the desired programme integration, Oxfam GB's programme in Macedonia was respected for both its technical and social achievements, and some of the key issues were addressed. Specific needs related to gender and disability were taken into account by the technical team in, for example, the design of washing facilities in the camps. The work of the social development and gender team in providing separate tents for social spaces for women and men set the context for beginning to address the gender-related violence experienced by women and girls, and Oxfam GB lobbied UNHCR to provide better protection measures for women and girls in the camps.

One of the real difficulties, common to all humanitarian response, was the tension between the pace and style of work of quick-impact emergency relief, and longer-term social processes, and the substantial differences in scale and funding levels of these programmes. Staffing patterns in humanitarian relief are based on rapid scaling-up of numbers, high turnover, and short-term contracts. Induction processes for these staff members are usually sketchy, and the culture of 'hitting the ground running' is not favourable to training in social and gender awareness in the field. In

the Kosovo crisis the result was the running of parallel programmes in Macedonia, which was carried forward into the post-conflict work of reconstruction and recovery after the refugees returned.

The nature of the funding environment during a crisis and in its aftermath has important implications for longer-term work. 'Red' money is tied to specific donor-defined goals; 'green' money comes from Oxfam GB general programming budgets, offering more flexibility. The 'red' appeal money that sustained the Kosovo humanitarian programme ran out in due course. The Oxfam GB programme had to fund its development and gender work under the Kosovo Women's Initiative (KWI), managed by UNHCR, but which came from an emergency budget-line in the US State Department. Although the KWI project set long-term empowerment goals, the spending for this Fund, totalling US\$ 10 million, was short-term. This created considerable pressure on Kosovar NGOs as well as on the international NGOs, such as Oxfam GB, acting as brokers or 'umbrellas' for this fund, to get new projects up and running and spending money, often beyond the organisational capacity of the partner groups. The KWI is in itself an example of the tension between short-term emergency funding demanding quick and visible returns, and developmental goals whose benefits are only measurable in the longer term. When the emergency money moves on to the next crisis, the gap left can be devastating to organisations which were mobilised, or created, in the plentiful funding climate, who subsequently find themselves without support, and often collapse, amidst their dashed expectations.

Gender assessments were carried out during the Kosovo crisis in both Macedonia and Albania. The consolidated recommendations drawn up by gender advisers for the response in both countries hold for Oxfam GB programming in general. They include the following:

- Gender and social development issues need to be fully integrated in the emergency response and future programme development, with every aspect based on a clear analysis of the needs and rights of women, men, and children, and disabled people.
- The social and technical aspects of the programme should inform each other effectively for maximum impact. Social and community services must run hand-in-hand with distribution of non-food items and water, sanitation, and health/hygiene planning from the start, must be as well resourced, and should operate concurrently in Kosovo as soon as Oxfam has access to the designated sector.
- Unified programme aims and objectives for social and technical interventions need to be set for the region, within the framework of Oxfam's strategic change objectives, to which gender equity is central and gender-sensitive indicators for success should be set.
- Setting up a new programme in Kosovo presents an excellent opportunity for Oxfam to implement best practice in gender-sensitive programme response in view of the above recommendations. Baseline data and indicators for gender equity should be set at the earliest stage in programme planning for effective monitoring and impact assessment. (Clifton and Williams 1999)

Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper I highlighted conflict-related nationalism, militarism, and post-war violence, and their consequences for women. Examples of the brutalisation of men by extreme nationalism and military action have been well documented in Bosnia, Uganda, Sierra Leone, and other parts of the world. The 'post-TV news syndrome' where men violently attacked women and children in their households after listening to bellicose,

nationalistic broadcasts on the evening news in Bosnia, has been reported by Bosnian women's groups running rape crisis hotlines and support services. In South Africa, a township gang of ex-combatants formed to rape women, seeing this as a way of recovering male identities lost after the fighting. These ex-combatants replicate militaristic patterns of discipline and punishment while asserting dominant behaviour through acts of gendered violence – raping women. The leader of the organisation stated in an interview:

'I was a comrade before I joined this organisation. I joined it because we were no longer given political tasks. Most of the tasks were given to senior people. Myself and six other guys decided to form our own organisation that will keep these senior comrades busy all the time. That is why we formed the South African Rapist Association (SARA). We rape women who need to be disciplined (those women who behave like snobs), they just do not want to talk to most people....'

(Vetten 1998)

Where do we go from here? In setting out the terrain for this paper, I discussed the links between militarism, gender identities, and the role of men and women in war and the construction of peace after the end of hostilities. I explored some of the problems Oxfam GB faces in working on gender equity, and looked at some of the institutional obstacles and resistances that affect Oxfam GB's work in conflict and post-conflict recovery. I briefly mentioned changes that are underway in Oxfam GB to enhance its effectiveness in addressing gender in conflict and its aftermath. To underpin these changes, some key areas need attention:

- Oxfam GB must deepen its analysis of gender identities, gendered power, and the way male and female roles and behaviours are linked and manipulated in war and peacetime. This would bring together all aspects of programming

(development, relief, and advocacy) and generate strategies to address causes as well as effects of gender inequities in the context of conflict.

- A clearer analysis of militarisation and war and its impact on male and female identities and behaviours is required. This would deepen Oxfam GB's understanding of the social and political processes underlying conflict, and generate strategies to address conflict prevention, as well as indicating ways of engaging with the military in the context of emergencies.
- Programming in post-conflict must move away from a perception of women as a 'vulnerable group', and should work to build strategic alliances amongst women's organisations, and between women's and mixed-gender organisations. Women's organisations and individual women must be part of national political structures and policy making for reconstruction and peace-building.
- Systematic integration of gender equity goals within all aspects of emergency response programming during conflict is essential. This would help to establish greater coherence between immediate emergency relief and longer-term recovery work, and begin to overcome some of the divides outlined in this paper.
- A clearer analysis of the dynamics between violence and conflict and the maintenance of gender identities, interests, and power, and of the different stakes women and men have in war and peace is needed. Gendered violence and armed conflict are fundamentally linked, and a clearer understanding of this would help Oxfam GB overcome the divide between the private and the public spheres and direct its programmes towards peace and human security at all levels – from the household to the nation.

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This article is based on a paper delivered to an Expert Seminar at the Humanist University in Utrecht in October 2000, convened by Professor Cynthia Cockburn and Dubravka Zarkov, on gender relations in the aftermath of war. The original paper will be published as Williams, S. (2002 forthcoming) 'Conflicts of interest: gender in Oxfam's emergency response', in C. Cockburn and D. Zarkov (eds) *The Post-War Moment: Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping – Bosnia and the Netherlands*, London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Notes

- 1 This situation is discussed in an internal Oxfam GB programme report on Afghanistan (1999). See also the article by Deborah Clifton and Fiona Gell in this publication, for a further discussion of the decision-making surrounding Oxfam's work in Afghanistan in 1996 (Clifton and Gell 2001).
- 2 Many writers have emphasised this. Oxfam's Regional Representative for the Great Lakes region from 1991-4, Anne Mackintosh, writes, 'Even agencies who recognise the inappropriateness of regarding "relief" and "development" as separate phenomena perpetuate this false dichotomy, through resourcing long-term and emergency programmes in different ways and having them managed by different departments and staff. This often leads to unhelpful tensions and rivalry.' (Mackintosh 1997)

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Gender, conflict, and building sustainable peace: recent lessons from Latin America

Caroline O.N. Moser and Fiona C. Clark

Latin American experiences of conflict and building sustainable peace have tended to show a clear neglect of a gender analysis of the impacts of conflict and the peace negotiations that end it, much to the detriment of many women and men affected by and involved in the civil conflicts that have ravaged the region during the last thirty years. What do Colombian women and men have to learn from these experiences? In May 2000, a workshop entitled 'Latin American Experiences of Gender, Conflict, and Building Sustainable Peace' was held in Bogotá, Colombia with representatives from several Latin American countries. This paper briefly highlights some of the issues raised at the workshop and aims to provide lessons and recommendations for others working in the fields of conflict analysis and resolution, humanitarian assistance, and interventions for peace and development.

Humanitarian aid is only one stage in the process of post conflict reconstruction, as war gives way to peace and development. Just as the gendered causes, costs, and consequences of violence and conflict are frequently marginalised in international and national debates, so too are the gendered nature of conflict resolution and the associated humanitarian aid and development. In all cases, the diversity of experiences that women and men have in conflict and peace-building are largely ignored, and their multiple identities obscured by simplistic representations in conflict and peace. These deny men and women their agency as both victims and actors of armed conflict and building sustainable peace (Moser and Clark 2001a).

As one of the most violent regions in the world today, Latin America has witnessed both civil wars and political unrest in recent decades (Ayres 1998). Consequently, it is also an important region in terms of

conflict resolution, violence reduction, and peace-building. However, in countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Peru, recent experiences of post-conflict reconstruction have failed to incorporate a gender perspective into preparations for sustainable peace.

While Colombia is still in the midst of a bloody civil war, serious attempts to negotiate peace have already begun. As this process gets underway it is important to consider what lessons Colombian women can learn from their counterparts in other countries in the region in order for them – and indeed those in other parts of the world struggling to make peace – not to repeat the same mistakes but to include a gender perspective to place women's needs and demands firmly on the negotiating table.

To explore this question, a global conference was held in Washington DC in 1999, followed by a regional follow-up workshop entitled 'Latin American

Experiences of Gender, Conflict, and Building Sustainable Peace' in Bogotá, Colombia, in May 2000.¹ The workshop, on which this article is based, took a practical and operational approach and was attended by some 170 representatives of civil society, government, and international organisations. It brought together men and women from El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru to discuss their experiences of gender in conflict and building sustainable peace, and to identify lessons for Colombia (Moser and Clark 2001b).

The objectives of the Bogotá workshop

The purpose of the Bogotá workshop was to carry forward key global themes identified at the Washington conference (see Moser and Clark 2001a) at a regional level, with increased practical and operational focus. More specifically, its objectives were to increase understanding of the gendered nature of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction for peace in Latin America; and to identify practical initiatives at the policy, programme, and project levels to build peace during and after conflict. The conference was structured around six main themes, considered key to a holistic and integrated understanding of conflict and peace in Colombia and elsewhere.²

1. *The gendered nature of conflict and building sustainable peace*

'It is true that men and women share a set of circumstances during armed conflict that exposes them to particularly adverse conditions and to the abuse of their human rights. However there are certain gender-based risks, dangers and disadvantages, which particularly and disproportionately affect women.'

(Giulia Tamayo 2000)

The need to recognise conflict and building sustainable peace as gendered, with implications for both women and men, became evident early on in the work programme. By introducing the importance of a gender analysis into conflict and humanitarian emergencies, and breaking down oversimplified understandings portraying men as the actors and women as the victims, the Bogotá workshop emphasised the need for a holistic approach to conflict and peace.

A holistic approach to conflict and peace

A full understanding of the causes, costs, and consequences of violence and conflict, and their implications for peace and development, requires a holistic approach encompassing several issues.

- Different types of violence – political, economic, and social – coexist and overlap, and can be identified at four different levels – the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural (see Table 1). Violence and conflict erode levels of physical, human, natural, and social capital with differing effects on men and women (Moser 2001).
- The historical, social, cultural, and economic antecedents to conflict must be taken into account as the contextual background within which conflict develops.
- A broad conceptualisation of human security takes into account macro and micro levels, the public and the private, the material and the psycho-emotional, and shifts responsibility for human security beyond being solely that of the State, to include individual and collective responsibility.
- A gender perspective recognises that men's and women's experiences and actions during conflict are determined by gender roles and identities assigned by society.

Recognition of the multiple relations between women and men, violence and peace.

It is important to recognise the multifaceted relationship between men, women, violence, and peace. Since these have been seen predominantly as male domains, women – and gender issues – have generally been excluded from discussions and interventions for conflict and peace. Recently, women have become more visible as refugees and internally displaced people, as victims of sexual violence and abuse in conflict zones, and as war widows.

Vulnerability and agency

Recognising men's and women's vulnerability in conflict situations is key if they are to be actors in their own survival and rehabilitation. To portray women solely as victims denies them their agency, and fails to identify the opportunities that conflict may create up for them. Similarly, men are not always the perpetrators of violence, but are also victims of violence and conflict.

2. Diverse voices of conflict and peace

'Despite human rights being universal, each proposal and intervention has to be adjusted to the specificities of age, culture, ethnicity, gender and geography of the context to avoid standardised solutions.'

(Maria Eugenia Vasquez Perdomo 2000a)

People's experiences and capabilities in armed conflict can be influenced by their age, ethnicity, and geographical location as well as by their socio-economic and political status. A myriad of identities were represented in the meeting – young and old, rural and urban, indigenous and Afro-Colombian. All people have multiple identities, which interact, overlap, reinforce, and contradict one another in daily life. This precludes standardised 'all fits one' policies and interventions for assistance to conflict-affected populations and countries.

Indigenous communities affected by conflict

Particular attention needs to be paid to indigenous populations, who often live in very independent and self-contained communities with specific values and mechanisms for interaction among themselves as well as with surrounding

Table 1: *Categories of violence*

Category	Definition	Manifestation
Political	The commission of violent acts motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, to obtain or maintain political power.	Guerrilla conflict; paramilitary conflict; political assassinations; armed conflict between political parties; rape and sexual abuse as a political act, forced pregnancy/sterilisation
Economic	The commission of violent acts motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, for economic gain or to obtain or maintain economic power.	Street crime; carjacking; robbery/theft; drug trafficking; kidnapping; assaults, including rape occurring during economic crimes
Social	The commission of violent acts motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, for social gain or to obtain or maintain social power.	Interpersonal violence such as spouse and child abuse; sexual assault of women and children; arguments that get out of control

Source: Moser 2001

society. Frequently, their indigenous identity overrides their gender identity, separating indigenous women from contemporary women's movements and feminist debates. Similarly, Afro-Colombian women face particular discrimination, often exacerbated in conflict and difficult to rectify during the transition to peace.

Gendered experiences over the life course

Women's and men's experiences of conflict and peace vary according to their age, their stage in the life course, and their related responsibilities. Young people, for example, are at risk of disillusionment by war if their life opportunities are circumscribed or destroyed by violence, armed groups, and conflict itself. Older people are often 'de-sexualised' (Marquez 2000) and excluded as a target group for gender and development debates (Clark and Laurie 2000). Similarly their specific needs and potential contributions may not be included in humanitarian and developmental interventions (HelpAge International 2000). Latin American women's movements have tended to ignore the age dimension, or failed to acknowledge the cumulative effects of lifelong gender disadvantage for older women.

3. Forced Displacement

'Forced displacement is the clearest violation of human, economic, political and social rights and of the failure to comply with international humanitarian rights law.'

(Gloria Tobon Olarte 2000)

Forced displacement from the repeated threats and attacks on local communities of armed conflict and political violence is also a gendered experience, according to men's and women's roles as fathers, mothers, husbands, and wives (Benjamin and Fancy 1998; Segura and Meertens 1998). Experiences of displacement in Guatemala, El Salvador, Peru, and Colombia provide a number of lessons that were identified in the third theme of the conference.

Gendered experiences of displacement

Research from Colombia shows that although women find the process of displacement itself more traumatic than men, they show greater flexibility in their adaptation to new environments and in the development of survival strategies. Men tend to expect assistance from formal institutions, and their skills are often not transferable (Segura and Meertens 1998). This leads to a change in roles and relations, which can be both empowering and challenging. It is important to provide accompaniment to returning and resettling populations to support the continuation of positive social change – and to include both men and women.

From victims to actors

Identity is of critical importance – the identity displaced people lose when they are uprooted from their homes, the identity imposed on them when they arrive in their location of refuge, and the identity that emerges from the crisis situation. Displaced people are often perceived merely as 'victims of displacement', obscuring these multiple identities, and resulting in an overemphasis on welfare rather than capacity building in humanitarian intervention. Participants identified a need to shift from programs that focus solely on humanitarian aid to those prioritising the longer-term development of individuals and their communities.

Rebuilding human and social capital

The human, social, and psychological changes that displaced populations and the recipient communities experience are not fully understood, and the gendered differences within these populations even less so. It is important to take into account the effect of conflict and displacement on families and households, often torn apart and fragmented. The middle generation may have been killed, recruited, or have fled, leaving children with grandparents or other relatives. At times the older generation

remain behind due to mobility constraints or a reluctance to abandon home and land (Project Counselling Service 1999). It is essential to create an environment where social relations, networks, and inter-generational support structures can be rebuilt, and where the stories and experiences of displacement and conflict can be told and processed. The critical importance of psycho-emotional support programmes for the displaced, as for all conflict-affected populations, to aid this process cannot be overstated.

4. *Ex-combatants: gendered experiences of war and peace*

'Ten years have passed since our groups laid down their arms in Colombia, and we women who formed part of this process still have paths to tread, pains to process, and rebuilding to do. For various reasons the process of reintegration was not a homogeneous one for everyone who took part in it and women, especially, have had to face greater economic, social and cultural inequalities and inequities because of our gender.'

(Luz Estela Navas Murimacho 2000)

One of the most invisible groups to date in interventions in conflict and peace are women ex-combatants. Increasing numbers of women are joining armed groups as combatants and supporters. The ELN, the FARC,³ and the right wing paramilitaries recruit largely in rural areas. Many 15-17 year old rural women, with little education, join up to escape the oppression and drudgery of their families and communities (Navas Murimacho 2000). Despite this, women are invisible within armed groups.

Invisibility of women combatants

The exact number of women combatants in Latin America's revolutionary armed forces is not known. Figures from El Salvador suggest they made up 60 per cent of the FMLN's⁴ support base, and 30 per cent of demobilised soldiers (Herrera 2000; Ibañez 2001). However, these numbers are not

officially acknowledged, leaving women invisible subjects during the peace negotiations and decisions concerning their country's future. The speed and euphoria surrounding the peace negotiations in El Salvador meant there was no time or space for the inclusion of gender issues, and, while heralded as highly successful, the peace accords failed to include women. With their contributions not valued, women were made invisible in their organisations. On returning to their communities they were stripped of the autonomy, political role, and leadership they had gained as combatants. Precise numbers of women combatants therefore need to be established to make visible their needs and demands in peace negotiations and reconstruction processes.

Reinsertion and reintegration

As a result of their invisibility, women ex-combatants in Latin America as elsewhere have not benefited from the demobilisation programmes as much as men. Women's emotional and mental health needs did not receive adequate attention on reintegration into civil society despite the gendered challenges of combatant life, and its implications for reintegration (Herrera 2000; Ibañez 2001; Vasquez Perdomo 2000b). Women combatants had adapted to life under a masculine regime in which strength, courage, and control were valued, and submissiveness, weakness, and sensibility were seen as fundamental failures. When demobilised they encountered severe feelings of personal guilt and societal rejection relating to the suppression of their feminine role, and to the perceived transgression of the parameters surrounding the exercise of their sexuality. Such recriminations were not generally held against men who often were promiscuous or abandoned their parental responsibilities. Through making visible women's multiple roles and experiences of combatant life, women must gain equal access to demobilisation programmes. These pro-

grammes must be designed with a gender perspective that recognises the specific needs of men and women on return to civilian life (Vasquez Perdomo 2000b).

Memory

A critical step towards meaningful reintegration into society is to recoup and value one's history in 'memory'. The multiple personal and collective stories of combatant and non-combatant men and women must be told in order for communities to process and come to terms with the pain that invariably accompanies conflict. Women combatants, who face particular social stigma due to their perceived transgression of political and social norms, need to find the space to express, value, and re-interpret their history in a positive and meaningful way, instead of denying their past (Vasquez Perdomo 2000c). Only then can they maintain their independence and leadership and become actors in a peace process to which they have much to contribute. Oral histories, written accounts, and collective recollection of the lives of those who fought in armed groups are important to bridging the gap in understanding and trust between ex-combatants and civil society.

5. Women's organisation and participation in peace

'We see the great need for a strong, resistant and coherent women's movement in order to influence all public and private spaces, to address not only the peaceful resolution of this conflict, but all manifestations of social, political and cultural violence.'

(Sara Gomez et al. 2000)

After discussing in detail the gendered impacts and effects of conflict, the conference then looked towards building peace and reconciliation. The fifth theme identified opportunities and obstacles for women to participate in peace processes, where their presence and acceptance is still very limited. Experiences from the region show that

despite women's presence in revolutionary armed groups, and civilian women's efforts to protest against conflict, they have not gained the necessary space to contribute in a constructive and influential way to peace processes.

Danger of community organisation

The presence of armed conflict severely jeopardises community interaction and organisation. In many cases, different warring parties misconstrue community organisation as mobilisation against them. Community leaders, both men and women, come under threat. This is especially true if they are advocates for human rights, such as the right to life, security, and peace. Armed groups and government forces particularly suspect men's mobilisation, but women's organisations are also threatened. Increasingly, women are forced into hiding or exile by threats against them, attacked, and even killed. As a result, women's organisations often disband, which not only loses them their foothold in local organisation and politics but also destroys a vital source of mutual support and reciprocity, crucial for family survival. Protection measures need to be put in place to shield community and women leaders from violent attacks.

Lack of gender-sensitive peace processes

Lack of gender awareness in peace negotiations further marginalises women's needs and contributions to peace. Gender, social exclusion, and human rights are all too often relegated as secondary issues to be dealt with once peace accords are signed. Yet, if the equal rights and opportunities of marginalised groups of the population are not written into the peace accords, they are likely to be absent from reconstruction processes. Other Latin American experiences convey the clear message that women's participation is crucial from the outset of negotiations if there is to be a gender perspective at the negotiating table.⁵

The women's movement in Colombia needs to find space in the current peace process if it is to ensure women's visibility in any peace agreement. Similarly, government departments, ministries, and organisations working with conflict-affected populations need to ensure the greater participation of women in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and practice. In addition to assisting women to restore their economic and social well-being, they need support to strengthen their political participation.

Women's common project for peace

Before they can find a legitimate space in the peace process, the different groups within the Colombian women's movement must collaborate to develop a clear vision within civil society, and thereby to obtain 'space' at the negotiating table. This vision needs to be inclusive of women in all sectors of society. The challenge is to find the common ground among the myriad

representations of women to ensure a coherent and strong movement. Only then can they put forward concrete interventions for the inclusion of women in the public arena. See Box 1 for an approach to finding this vision.

6. Justice and reconciliation

'If those responsible for the atrocities of war are not identified it is not possible to repair the physical and psychological injury inflicted. That which is ignored cannot be punished and therefore cannot be forgiven.'

(Edelberto Torres Rivas 2000)

Justice and reconciliation, the key issues addressed in the final theme of the conference, are contradictory but necessary components of any peace process. While there are high expectations that the perpetrators of abuses will be brought to justice, at the same time national reconciliation is necessary if a society is to move on, and to unite in the (re)construction

Box 1: Challenges for the women's movement in a gender perspective for peace

To build a plan for the country with the active participation of women, taking into account their differences and diversity, as political and cultural actors in the search for their social, economic, and cultural inclusion	
<p>Challenges during conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there clear gender-sensitive diagnoses that explain the impacts of violence and conflict on women? • Has it been possible to create plans and programmes that allow us to address the effects of violence on women? • Have we sufficiently analysed the participation of women in conflict? • Do women have strategic plans to address the current situation of the country? • Do women have the energy or the organisational force to make women visible and position their strategic plans in the peace process? • Have women undertaken actions that allow for the creation of alliances with other sectors to raise awareness, input, and support for these strategies? 	<p>Post-conflict challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have women developed a proposal to mainstream a gender perspective into the socio-cultural, economic, and political arenas of the country? • What is the role that women could play in the transition from war to peace, the reconstruction of social capital, in justice and reconciliation, and in the democratisation of institutions?

Source: Rosa Emilia Salamanca 2000

of a peaceful country. Three important components of a programme for justice and reconciliation were identified.

Processing pain

The anxiety of conflict relates to the inability to express and share the pain and deep-seated feelings of abandonment and abuse by the State or other authority. Again, memory plays a crucial role as part of a national reconciliation process. This refers to the importance of recollection of people's experiences, sufferings, and actions – allowing for their visibility, their public processing, and their acknowledgement as a part of 'official' history. This includes documenting human rights abuses, and in particular acknowledging women as victims of sexual assault and rape, and the forced recruitment of young girls and women into armed groups. It would also include compensations for widows and orphans of the conflict. Similarly, the experiences and associated pain of all combatants must be included if the reconciliation process is to be complete.

Psycho-social support is key to survival

The importance of psycho-social support for dealing with emotional burden was stressed in all six themes, but none more strongly than justice and reconciliation. For people to come to terms with their past, it is crucial to redress psychological imbalances as much as economic and material losses. This is essential if the cycle of vengeance, hate, and violence is to be broken, and communities are to be restored. Programmes need to be designed and delivered with a gender perspective, and to pay particular attention to indigenous populations' traditional healing and reconciliation methods, and other linguistic and cultural specificities.

Gender, justice, and truth

Truth is the most powerful tool for coming to terms with loss and pain, but needs to be accompanied by adequate measures of justice for the perpetrators of atrocities.

A number of countries have gone through the process of a truth and reconciliation commission with varying successes at justice. Guatemala is the most prominent example in Latin America. Its experience highlights the fact that for a truth commission to be truly effective and lead to real reconciliation, the government, and other forces involved in the conflict need to be fully committed to the process and its findings. The main hindrance to the REMHT⁶ project in Guatemala was the commission's inability to identify the perpetrators, and to call them to justice. In addition, the fact that neither senior government nor military officials agreed to receive the report considerably diminished its legitimacy and the potential for debate around its contents and implications. Justice is a vital part of any peace and reconstruction process, but it has to be meted out very carefully and with great sensitivity. Political will and commitment are key for justice and reconciliation, and one is meaningless without the other.

Recommendations and follow-up

'Peace is democracy, self-esteem, and the absence of individual and structural violence.'

(Magdala Velasquez 2000)

In positioning these six themes firmly inside the current wartime discourse in Colombia, the conference played a part in increasing the profile of a gender perspective for conflict and peace. Furthermore, it facilitated the exchange of experiences and contacts between women of very diverse groups and backgrounds, supporting the informal networks so important to overcoming the obstacles to peace and reconciliation and to women's participation. A number of concrete recommendations were made at the conference (see Box 2). Three particular priority areas were identified:

1. The lack of voice of afro-Colombian and indigenous women in the peace process;
2. The important role that ex-combatant women can play in providing a support-structure for other female ex-combatants as they experience reinsertion back into civil society; and
3. The need for a greater common voice and unity among women's organisations in particular, and in the women's movement as a whole, in Colombia.

In response to these priorities, and the widespread interest in issues raised at the conference, a seed corn fund, supported by Sida,⁷ was established. Its objective is to provide modest resources to women's organisations in Colombia to strengthen their capacity to participate in peace processes. Eleven projects have been funded in 2001, reflecting a diversity of women's organisations and groups including indigenous and Afro-Colombian women, a female youth group, and a network of ex-combatant women among

Box 2: Recommendations for interventions for gender, conflict, and building sustainable peace

1. A holistic approach to violence reduction, conflict resolution, and building sustainable peace must incorporate a gender perspective, and must take account of different, interrelated types and levels of violence, the historical, cultural, social, political, and economic antecedents in the conflict, and a wider understanding of the concept of human security.
2. We need to acknowledge and support women's and men's multiple roles as victims and perpetrators in conflict and peace.
3. Women's and men's vulnerability and agency require recognition, especially in policies relating to displaced people, where interventions need to move from a focus on people as victims of war to people as actors in their own development.
4. There exists an urgent need for comprehensive, concrete, and reliable information on the situation of women during conflict, relating to numbers involved in armed groups, types, and levels of violence affecting women, and the survival strategies they may employ.
5. We must identify the diversity of experiences of conflict, displacement, reintegration, and the transition to peace based on gender, age, ethnicity, and geography, and avoid standardised, blueprint policies.
6. We need to develop psycho-emotional and social support interventions for conflict victims and combatants to restore destroyed human and social capital.
7. We must recognise and value the 'memory' of all experiencing conflict to assist reconciliation across the country, and in processing the pain and anxiety relating to these traumatic events.
8. We must provide opportunities for ex-combatant women to address the stigma attached to their past, to initiate dialogue with their families, communities, and civil society organisations, and to establish their space in the construction of peace.
9. We need to include a gender perspective in demobilisation processes for armed groups to guarantee women combatants the same rights and access to reintegration programmes and fair political representation.
10. We must ensure women's participation throughout the peace process through the promotion of a gender perspective from the outset. We must protect and promote women leaders at all levels, and remove barriers to women's political participation.
11. We need to build on the richness of women's diverse identities to find a common agenda for peace.
12. We must develop a new culture of peace, based on a new social contract that replaces violence, retribution, and punishment with values of dialogue and non-violence in the peaceful resolution of conflicts at family, community, and national level.

others. The interventions include establishing networks between marginalised groups, research on the situation of women in conflict, developing a communication strategy between women in civil society and women in the armed groups, and promoting women's role in an agreement of a code of conduct between an indigenous community and the armed groups present in their region. It is hoped that these pilot projects will provide clear indications of the opportunities and constraints in carrying forward the recommendations outlined above.

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Notes

- 1 The background to this event was the Urban Peace Program, an initiative led by Caroline Moser as the World Bank's lead specialist for social development in the Latin America and Caribbean region, in close collaboration with the World Bank's Colombia field office, with financial support from the Swedish International Development Corporation Authority (Sida). Key components of this programme included the development of a conceptual framework for violence reduction (Moser 2001), and participatory urban appraisals of perceptions of violence in urban poor communities of Colombia and Guatemala (Moser and McIlwaine 2000a, 2000b).
- 2 For a full account of the conference proceedings, see Moser and Clark 2001b,

available from the authors.

- 3 ELN: Ejercito de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army); FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
- 4 Frente Farabundo Marti de Liberación Nacional
- 5 Bearing in mind that merely being a woman does not qualify them as gender experts, these women will need support and training.
- 6 Proyecto para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica
- 7 Swedish International Development Corporation Authority

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Empowering women through cash relief in humanitarian contexts

Hisham Khogali and Parmjit Takhar

This paper discusses the rationale behind cash transfer strategies as an alternative means of channelling resources to women and men in humanitarian contexts. It highlights key gender-related considerations that contribute to the success of the strategy. Food aid remains the largest part of United Nations appeals, but it is often delayed, inadequate in quantity and quality, and donated as a means of disposing of surpluses from developed countries.¹ Despite these criticisms, little consideration has been given to alternatives – more specifically, to cash – as a means of ensuring entitlements. This paper highlights the factors that should be considered in determining the appropriateness of cash interventions, and explores the potential of cash interventions directed to women for improving household food security and women’s status in the household and community.

The use of food aid has been criticised for some time in disaster situations for the reasons given above (Clay and Stokke 2000). Conversely, cash transfer strategies are not used often. However, when they are used, they have proven to be effective. A review of Oxfam GB’s response in Kenya and Ethiopia, undertaken in 2000, recommended the use of cash interventions as an alternative to food aid (internal Oxfam document). This recommendation was made on the basis of conclusions regarding the inadequacy of food aid in emergency responses in general, and the success of a cash-for-work recovery programme implemented in Wajir, Kenya.

This article gives an overview of Oxfam GB’s and other organisations’ experience of cash interventions. Oxfam’s cash interventions have usually occurred in response to a loss of employment opportunity (Naik and Brown 2000). Until recently, they have predominantly occurred in Asia, reflecting the dominance of waged labour in the region as the primary means of ensuring entitlements amongst the most

vulnerable. A case study is presented as an example of recent Oxfam GB cash transfer experience. The article highlights a case study of flood rehabilitation in Bangladesh, to highlight some of the key differences in the use of cash between male and female recipients, and the impact on gender relations of targeting cash to women.

The rationale for cash interventions

Entitlement theory

The rationale for cash interventions is implicitly based on entitlement theory, which fundamentally changed our understanding of famine dynamics. Entitlement theory is based on the premise that famines seldom result from a straightforward lack of food in a region; rather, famines result when people lose their entitlements – that is, the means of acquiring food (Sen 1981). Two forms of entitlement failure are described by Amartya Sen (1986). A ‘pull’ failure occurs

where, for example, loss of employment leads to the loss of the means to purchase food. In essence, it refers to a loss of demand. In contrast, a 'response' failure occurs when there is an absence of food supply, including when traders corner the market. In essence, it refers to a loss of supply. Entitlement theory has guided a more informed approach to famine prevention and response, through an increased focus on the processes of famine, rather than the outcome.

During the Maharashtra drought in Western India in 1970-3, large-scale loss of agricultural production and income-generation opportunities occurred. Rural areas of Maharashtra had suffered from environmental degradation and a decline in agricultural production, and these had threatened rural livelihoods prior to the drought. The drought therefore served to damage an already precarious way of life. The Government of India adopted a policy to avert famine through protecting people's entitlements through large-scale public works programmes, and increasing food availability through the public distribution system.² Payment for the public works was made in cash, with free food relief provided to those unable to work. However, an important feature of famine prevention during the Maharashtra drought was the non-government-controlled movement of food by private traders into Maharashtra from surrounding states. This was essential for the prevention of famine, since the Government of India's efforts to improve food availability through the public distribution system would not have been adequate. These private food movements in fact bypassed government restrictions on inter-state movement of food, demonstrating the strength of market forces (Drèze and Sen 1989). The Government of India's success in averting famine in Maharashtra demonstrated the key elements of entitlement theory. The interventions addressed both the 'pull' and 'response' failures, in order to avert famine.

Arguably, without an understanding of how people access food, it would not have been possible to avert famine in Maharashtra.

Coping strategies

The fact that entitlement theory focuses on the processes of famine is particularly important in that it recognises that famine or disaster victims are rarely passive bystanders. In order to recover their food entitlements, people caught up in disaster or famine often seek an income (Wilson 1992; Dreze and Sen 1989; Corbett 1988). This income is secured through different mechanisms; however, its importance cannot be underestimated by humanitarian agencies in determining an appropriate response to emergencies.

Famine-affected populations attempt to adapt to the changing environment brought about by shocks such as prolonged droughts or conflict. These coping strategies are planned and sequenced, and focus on reducing the threat to household livelihoods. Judgements are made on the trade-offs between maintaining current food consumption, and protecting future income-generating capacity (Corbett 1988). For instance, reducing food intake (either by eating fewer meals, or consuming smaller quantities) is often an early coping strategy in famines. Economic migration in search of employment, often to urban centres, is another. Households consider two important factors when deciding on appropriate coping strategies:

- What is the commitment of resources required?
- How reversible is each response? (Corbett 1988)

Since seeking an income plays such a crucial role in household coping strategies, the provision of cash to famine or disaster-affected populations may be justified.

An overview of cash transfer strategies

A range of 'income-transfer strategies' have been used by humanitarian aid providers in response to disasters. These often reflect the coping strategies adopted by disaster-affected populations. For example, restocking of pastoralists is a form of income transfer, since pastoralists rely on the sale of livestock for purchase of grain and other commodities. Another income transfer strategy has been the use of cash. There are three different forms of cash programming. These include the provision of a cash grant,³ cash for work,⁴ and vouchers.⁵ There are contrasting benefits and problems with each of these approaches (Peppiatt *et al.* 2001). In this section, I will offer a summary of Oxfam GB's experience of cash interventions in different contexts (see Table 1), and discuss each of these.

Oxfam has provided cash grants in two contexts in the Horn of Africa and Asia. The first, in Ethiopia in 1985, was a cross-border operation during the liberation struggle against the Dergue regime in Ethiopia. The trigger was a rebellion in Tigray, northern Ethiopia, and Eritrea, in response to food insecurity resulting from drought (Darcy 1991). More recent analysis suggests that the conflict, and the Ethiopian government's failure to respond to needs, had a greater part to play in the crisis than did drought (de Waal 1997). The aim of the programme was to support food purchasing and agricultural production. The programme

was undertaken as part of a diverse range of interventions. The second example was during the prolonged flood in Bangladesh in 1998. Cash, up to 400 *taka*,⁶ was distributed during food distribution. The cash injection was provided in order to revive a stagnant local economy affected by the prolonged floods (Oxfam GB 1999).

The most recent example of a cash intervention by Oxfam GB in humanitarian work in Africa is a cash-for-work programme in Kitgum, northern Uganda. Despite concerns over security, cash-for-work programming in Uganda has proved successful. The programme was implemented in response to raids by the Karimojong people on the Acholi people in Kitgum. The Karimojong, a pastoralist population, migrate with their herds on an annual basis in search of pasture. Their migration route means that they cross neighbouring districts where the Acholi live. Tensions between the Acholi and Karimojong arise from the grazing of animals on Acholi lands, and recurrent raids dating back approximately fourteen years. As a result of the raids, Acholi people lost their homes and assets, as well as a potential harvest, since there had been no planting.

Oxfam GB's experience of cash programming consists predominantly of cash-for-work programmes in Asia, in response to natural disasters such as floods or droughts. Cash-for-work programmes have usually been implemented after or during food distribution programmes, by local partner organisations working with Oxfam.

Table 1: *Oxfam experience of cash interventions*

Cash grants		Cash-for-work		
Floods	Conflict	Drought	Floods	Insecurity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladesh 1988, 1998 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethiopia 1980s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wajir, Kenya 1998 • Rajasthan/Gujarat, India 2000 • Hazarajat, Afghanistan 1998 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladesh 1998 • Orissa, India 1999 • West Bengal, India 2000 • Bangladesh 2000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kitgum, Uganda 2001

The most recent programme was implemented in 2001 in west Bangladesh in response to flooding, and is discussed further in the case study later in this article, which traces the links between women's involvement in cash-for-work, and changing gender relations in the household and community.

Cash transfer, household welfare, and women's empowerment

What are the links between cash transfer strategies and the twin aims of increasing the efficiency and equity of humanitarian work and empowering women?

Empowering women to allocate resources within the household

The way in which resource allocation takes place within households plays an important role in determining what kind of humanitarian intervention is appropriate for a particular context.

Gender analysis challenges conventional theories on intra-household resource allocation that suggest that households act as a single or unitary decision-making body (Haddad *et al.* 1997). Other theorists understand the household as a collective entity, in which the (sometimes conflicting) preferences of individuals within the household are combined in various ways to reach a final outcome (Visvanathan *et al.* 1997). This understanding of the household means that programmes targeting particular individuals within households will have different outcomes depending on the identity of the person targeted. This identity, and the relative amount of bargaining power that the person commands in the household, will affect how benefits from the programme are used. To sum up, the unitary approach to understanding the household predicts that the success rate of a programme will be the same regardless of who in the household is targeted, while the collective

approach predicts that the identity of the recipient will affect how the transfer is used, and who benefits.

This approach recognises that women tend to use resources differently from men, as they tend to spend more on their children. Empirical studies have shown that the percentage of income that a household spends on children and its allocations of food and medical care vary, based on the proportions of income earned by women and men (Visvanathan *et al.* 1997). Studies have shown that where women retain control over income, there is a greater positive effect on food expenditures and child well-being, compared to men retaining control (Hoddinott and Haddad 1995). Similarly, the control of resources by men as opposed to women is also associated with low rates of schooling for girls, lower status of women, earlier marriage, and high rates of malnutrition (Ramalingaswami *et al.* 1996). These findings suggest that it is critical to target women with cash interventions, if the objective of the project is to improve child nutritional status or food security. If it is impossible to target women in cash interventions, it may be better to distribute food rather than cash, since women are the main contributors to food preparation. In contexts where women cannot participate in cash for work programmes for some reason, men can be paid in food rather than cash to increase the likelihood that the benefits of the programme will reach women and children.

Increasing women's status and decision-making power

Ensuring that women have some control over the distribution of resources within the household involves challenging prejudice about what women are capable of in their households and the wider community, and increasing their status and self-esteem.

1. Challenging prejudice about 'women's work'

There is evidence arising from Oxfam GB's experience of cash-for-work of its role in challenging the gender division of labour, and prejudices about women's capabilities, at both community and household level. In 1999-2000, a cash-for-work programme was developed by Oxfam in response to devastation caused by a cyclone in Orissa, India. This demonstrated that women could contribute to work that was usually associated with men. The programme specifically targeted women to receive cash, and women were hence engaged in all aspects of the work. Free food relief was provided for vulnerable groups who could not participate in the work schemes. Involvement in the programme allowed women to demand equal wages for equal work after the intervention, as a result of equal wages being paid to men and women during the programme (Naik and Brown 2000). The evaluation of Oxfam's Orissa Cyclone suggested that the status of women improved as a result of the cash-for-work programme. However the review also stated that because of the programme's temporary nature, it was unlikely that this would have a lasting impact on women's status (Taher *et al.* 2000). In the case of Kitgum, Uganda, men stated that they were impressed by women's ability to contribute to work, which in some cases they said was better than that of men.

2. Increasing women's status with others

Evidence from Oxfam GB's humanitarian interventions during floods in Bangladesh in 1998 suggests that the ability of women to contribute a greater share of household income is linked to their increased status within communities and increased decision-making authority within households. Women reported that they were involved in decision-making at household level, and were accorded respect for participating in the work. They also reported a greater acceptance and respect accorded them by community members,

due to their wage-earning capacity, which was either equivalent to, or greater than, the wages earned by men through other employment.

Overall, women beneficiaries of the cash transfer strategies reported that they felt empowered by receiving cash. However, women were undecided how permanent this change of status would be, with some suggesting that when men were able to return to normal wage-earning opportunities, the benefits of the cash-for-work programme would not have the same effect (Clifton 1999).

3. Increasing women's self-esteem

An increase in women's self-esteem due to being given cash grants in a humanitarian response is reported by ActionAid Ghana, which provided cash grants to approximately 1000 beneficiaries in response to a drought affecting Bawku West District. The cash grants were provided to *tarims*, a social group that includes vulnerable sub-groups such as disabled people, widows, elderly people, members of women-headed households, and people who lack poultry or livestock assets. As a result of being able to participate in market and other economic activities due to cash-for-work, the *tarims'* social status improved. Targeting the *tarims* also resulted in a reduction of pressure on those households that would have been obligated to support the *tarims* through the drought. The grants were spent predominantly for the purchase of food. However, some *tarims* were able to invest in livestock. An evaluation of the programme states that, 'One of the least expected positive impacts of the cash grants was the increased confidence and self-esteem exhibited by the *tarims*.' (Buchanan-Smith *et al.* 1995, 36) The reasons for this increased self-esteem were given as follows:

- Ability to contribute to household food security;
- Ability to control a significant amount of money and make decisions about its use;

- Participation in community life.

The following case study illustrates the points made in this section.

Case study: cash-for-work flood rehabilitation programme, Bangladesh

As a result of heavy rains in West Bengal, India, and Bangladesh in 2000, the south-west and north-west of Bangladesh suffered flooding. Estimates suggest that the flood affected 3.3 million people. The areas most severely affected were Meherpur, Chaudanga, Kustia, Jhinaidah, Jessore, Satkhira, Rajshahiand, and Chapai Nababgonj. These areas are not usually flood-prone, in contrast with other parts of Bangladesh. Consequently, the affected communities were not prepared for flooding. For example, houses in these regions are not constructed to withstand floods, being made of mud, which makes them susceptible to water damage.

Damage to people's shelter was widespread, and possessions were lost and damaged. The affected areas are renowned for vegetable production, and important vegetable crops as well as the staple rice crop were damaged as a result of the flooding. Livestock losses were also considerable. Fish ponds were inundated with flood water, resulting in fish being carried away.

The most vulnerable households in these areas are those relying on daily waged labour for income. People from these households experienced a severe loss of employment opportunities, since agricultural work was not available because of the crop damage and loss. Women-headed households relying on waged labour are particularly vulnerable. The programme aimed to ensure that at least 50 per cent of its participants should be women. Despite concerns by partner organisations about this quota, the programme was estimated to have an 80 per cent female enrolment.

Oxfam's relief response, through partner organisations, included provision of food, shelters, water and sanitation inputs, and curative and preventive health care. As the floods receded, a recovery programme was designed by Oxfam GB to address employment opportunities amongst other things. The resulting programme targeted 10,000 beneficiaries, who would receive 30 days' employment each. The aim of the programme was two-fold in nature: first, to provide employment in order to support vulnerable households' normal livelihood strategies; and second, to stimulate the local economy. The programme was designed to be implemented through partner organisations, and the aim was for 50 per cent of those employed to be women. Committees would be formed to decide on activities. The government minimum wage of 50 *taka* per day would be paid. Oxfam GB staff were to engage in monitoring activities and accounting. Only one person per family was allowed to participate; however, household members could replace those registered if they were not able to participate. For example, if a woman fell ill her husband could replace her in order to receive the payment.

The population of the programme area is Muslim. Women were often restricted to household chores and limited household-based income-generating activities, such as basket weaving or cigarette making. Women reported that it was normally forbidden for them to work outside the village, particularly if they did not have a chaperone. This was one reason why women had not worked on feeder road construction; the other reason was that the physical nature of the work meant that it was widely viewed as more suitable for men than women.

After the programme had been running for four months, a series of separate discussions with women and men beneficiaries of the cash-for-work programme were conducted, in order to determine the effectiveness of the programme, and to

draw lessons from the implementation of the programme. A number of issues were discussed with beneficiaries, including problems faced as a result of flood, the question of how the cash was used, workload, household dynamics, and people's preferences for food or cash.

Problems caused by the flood

Those involved in the discussions said that the majority of households faced similar problems. The predominant response was that shelter and food were the two immediate problems faced as a result of the flooding. In some instances, the term 'shelter' was used to include latrines, with privacy being emphasised as an important factor by both men and women. Women identified the problem of needing to have privacy when relieving themselves, while men found it difficult to provide for this privacy.

It was reported that during the floods the price of rice had risen from 12 *taka*/kg to 18 *taka*/kg. This was as a result of many markets being closed, due to a lack of supply as a direct effect of the flood on access to markets, and damage to infrastructure. This finding suggests that, at this early stage of flooding, the injection of cash to workers on the Oxfam programme may have resulted in increasing food prices further as a result of diminished supply of food on the market.

How the cash was used

Women reported using cash to purchase food, pay loans, buy books for their children's schooling, pay school fees, purchase clothes, purchase fertiliser, and to save to buy animals/livestock. Men reported using the cash to repay debt, purchase food, purchase clothes, and buy books for school.

Women reported that they often made joint decisions on how to spend the money that they earned with their husbands. However, women also withheld some of the cash from men. The reason women

gave for this was that there might be a need for unforeseen expenditure in the future and that the money should be kept for these contingencies. Men reported that they often kept the money earned but gave money to women for specific purchases. Men reported that they did not have a propensity to save, sometimes spending money on cigarette purchase. Women appeared to be thinking more than men of the future, investing in productive asset creation, maintaining savings, and paying off loans – often loans provided by NGOs. Paying off their loans meant that they were then eligible to take out a larger subsequent loan to tide them over the crisis and invest in the future.

Workload

When asked whether the extra workload was causing difficulties at home, most women reported that it wasn't. Men could not find employment, and often the wage earned by the women was the only income for the household.

Most women reported that they were managing the additional workload created by involvement with the programme. Only one group suggested that a reduction of programme working time of one hour would be helpful. Women would rise earlier in the mornings to prepare food and carry out other household duties. Some women reported that in some instances men were participating in household activities such as cooking and child care as a direct response to the participation of women in the programme. Men undertook household work because they were unable to secure work outside the household. In some cases women also reported that children undertook household activities.

Intra-household dynamics

No women reported that they had been persuaded not to participate in the programme. When asked about others, they also said that although some women had doubts about participating, they

eventually did so. The most likely reason for this was that the programme was one of the few employment opportunities available at the time in the affected area. Those women who had experienced persuasion not to join the programme reported that this persuasion was often not on the part of their husband, but primarily came from mothers in law, extended family members, and religious leaders. While some husbands were sceptical of women working on the programme, women reported that they became less so once the women began to earn income. Where difficulties arose regarding women joining the programme, committee members would act to mitigate between husband and wife, or disputes would be resolved within the household. As mentioned above, when it came to decision-making on spending women's income, women reported that decisions were often made by men and women together.

Of course, the fact that women reported joint decision-making does not account for the possible use of domestic violence during decision-making. An attempt to determine whether there were any cases of such violence suggested that there was none. However, the researchers recognised the difficulties in reporting such cases by women. Women reported that the programme resulted in little dispute over decision-making, since the households targeted were vulnerable and their needs were basic essentials. Women suggested that were the situation different and their needs no longer merely for basic commodities, there may have been more problems.

Many women suggested that their status in the community was improved, because they were seen to earn a wage. However, they suggested that this empowerment was short-lived, because the employment opportunity was only for one month. Women reported that despite the additional workload, the improved social standing was worth the additional work.

Although some men felt that the work should go to men, the majority thought that the women had worked well, and were impressed by women's ability to carry out work previously associated with men.

Food versus cash

Both men and women said they preferred to receive cash wages rather than food. They considered that the receipt of cash gave them the choice to prioritise their needs. They also thought that receipt of food instead of cash would result in losses as a result of transport costs.

Evaluation conclusion

Overall, the cash-for-work programme in Bangladesh seemed to be an appropriate strategy. The use of cash at an earlier stage in the crisis may have proved inappropriate, particularly because markets were reported to have been closed by the flooding for three weeks. Although initially it was felt that achieving a 50 per cent enrolment of women would prove difficult, it appears that in fact a much higher rate was achieved. Beneficiaries often thought this to be the most useful programme available, especially in the face of prolonged unemployment resulting from the floods. Different groups also appreciated the social benefits of the works carried out as part of the programme, through raising land, feeder road construction, and burial site raising.

Conclusion

This article has discussed Oxfam GB's experience of targeting cash to women in humanitarian work, tracing the links between delivering an efficient and timely programme, men's and women's different patterns of resource allocation and their impact on the household, and the aim of empowering women to take a greater part in decision-making. It has suggested that channelling cash to women is likely to have a beneficial impact on overall household

food security, since women's decisions on expenditure focus less on personal spending, and more on food and other essentials for the household. In particular, involving women in cash-for-work also challenges long-held assumptions about the gender division of labour and women's capabilities, assisting women to improve their status in the community and household, and increase their self-esteem. However, such programmes need to be aware of the danger that women will increase their workload without support from men in performing more work within the home. In addition, programmes may not challenge inequitable food distribution patterns within the home, which stem from either ideological or practical considerations regarding men's role in earning outside the home.

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Notes

- 1 Disposing of surpluses results in the distribution of inappropriate commodities, and sustains an arguably less competitive agricultural sector in developed countries.
- 2 The public distribution system of India provides subsidised food commodities to the most vulnerable in the population. It operates to varying degrees of efficiency in different states.
- 3 'Cash grant' refers to the distribution of cash for free.
- 4 'Cash-for-work' refers to the distribution of cash in remuneration for work done
- 5 Vouchers can either be denominated in money terms or in physical quantities of specific commodities.
- 6 The minimum wage stipulated by the Government of Bangladesh is 50 *taka* per day; however, daily wage rates for landless labourers are normally 25-30 *taka*.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of the Oxfam GB Bangladesh team, in particular Anamul Haque and Provash Mondal. The authors have also received valuable support from Elsa Gill, Sue Chowdhury, Caroline Sweetman, and Jean McCluskey.

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Healing the psychological wounds of gender-related violence in Latin America: a model for gender-sensitive work in post-conflict contexts

Helen Leslie

This article presents a model of healing which conceptualises and addresses the psychological effects on women of gender-related violence in the post-conflict context. The model is drawn from the experience of an El Salvadorean NGO, Las Dignas, and from key insights from gender and development literature.

The need to support survivors of gender-related violence is increasingly being perceived as important in relief and development programmes. This situation has transpired partly as a result of increased awareness of gender-related violence amongst development practitioners, and partly because of changes in thinking about development over the last two decades. Such changes have emphasised the emancipation of women as the key to sustainable development, and, as a corollary, the importance of formulating practical strategies to address the barriers that impede women's participation in the development process.

Despite such understandings, and despite the importance currently being accorded to mental health in humanitarian work (Costa e Silva 1998), there remains a dearth of information within the gender and development literature on practical strategies for dealing with the impacts of gender-related violence. The strategies which are put forward do not generally focus on gender relations, and tend to rely

too heavily on aid and development models addressing psychology, rather than on social development models which address suffering (Summerfield 1996).

In contrast, Las Dignas, a women's organisation in El Salvador, utilises a gender-specific approach to heal the traumatic impacts of gender-related violence suffered by women members of the opposition movement during the 12-year-long civil war. Las Dignas' approach recognises the differing impacts of gender-related violence on men and women, and employs feminist theory to enable women to reconstruct their sense of themselves as women, and as strong and capable citizens.

I learnt of Las Dignas' work when working for a justice and development NGO in New Zealand. I subsequently undertook fieldwork with the organisation from June 1997 to February 1998, to learn more about its approach and to fulfil the requirements for my PhD research in development studies. My background is in mental health nursing, and I had viewed

the study of development as a significant departure from my previous experience. However, I believe that the model of healing I developed during my time with Las Dignas not only integrates mental health issues into gender and development debates, but also offers a constructive tool that can be applied to gender and development practice in the many countries that have experienced political conflict.

Before discussing the model in more detail, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the forms of gender-related violence enacted against women in Latin America in the era of authoritarian rule, and the intense psychological trauma that this has caused. While women's experiences of gender-related violence do vary, it can be argued that there are similarities to be found in the nature and context of these experiences. The following section thus generalises Latin American women's experiences where appropriate, and offers specific examples where possible.

Gender-related violence in Latin America

From the early 1960s, Latin American women's participation in social movements has been a response to the rise of military dictatorships and the concomitant closing of channels of popular participation (Jelin 1990). These movements have enabled groups of women in Latin America to politicise social spaces, and to struggle for recognition and identity as citizens. As members of mothers' movements, feminist organisations, peasant unions, and guerrilla armies, Latin American women have pushed back the boundaries of their traditional gender identities, empowering themselves and their communities.

Initially, because women in Latin America have been understood by military regimes as apolitical social actors, their actions for social change were largely ignored by the State (Safa 1995). As these

actions began to impact more and more on the power of the authoritarian State, however, women involved in social change movements were detained and tortured along with various other opposition groups. In the case of El Salvador, 'After women established the street as their territory through participation in marches, sit-ins, hunger strikes and public meetings, the members of El Salvador's security forces began to view all women in public spaces with suspicion and treated them accordingly.' (Stephens 1995, 812)

Latin American women paid dearly for disrupting dominant cultural constructions of femininity by participating in social movements for change. As well as becoming specific targets of military and paramilitary repression, they faced growing misogynistic attitudes. Escalating assassination, torture, and disappearances of women were accompanied by a legitimisation of violence against women in society more generally, causing an increase in violence and rape in the domestic arena (Hollander 1996).

State-sponsored gender-related violence embodies the power imbalances that exist in patriarchal societies (El-Bushra and Piza Lopez 1993). Gender-related violence in political conflict, particularly sexual violence, is often consciously designed to violate women's dignity and identity (Bunster-Burotto 1994). Gender-related violence acts to disempower women by terrorizing them into submission and by instilling in them the impossibility of struggling for social change.

Torture was one form of gender-related violence employed by the military against women in many Latin American countries. Gang rape, body slashing (especially of nipples and breasts), various forms of beating, rape by trained dogs, the penetration and decimation of women's genitalia by electric rods, and the introduction of live rodents, were some of the forms of gendered violence employed in order to debase women (Bunster-Burotto 1994).

Along with these physical forms of sexual torture, the military, in countries such as Argentina, Chile, and El Salvador, also used psychological torture, designed to exploit 'the female psychological connection with others' (Hollander 1996, 69). This took many painful forms including the threat of and actual torture of a woman's children in front of her; the rape of heavily pregnant women in front of other women; women having to endure the screams of other women being tortured and raped nearby; and the delivery of false news concerning the death or torture of a loved one (Bunster-Burotto 1994).

Disappearance, or, '...the kidnapping, illegal detention, torture and execution of real or imagined opponents of military rule' (Fisher 1993, 104), was another form of psychological torture central to the military State's campaign of gender-related violence. By removing loved ones from their lives, the military State was attacking women's roles as wives and mothers (*ibid.*). The military had invaded the very private sphere that women had occupied and nurtured for centuries and women were powerless to prevent it. Moreover, by pursuing a form of 'censorship of memory' (*ibid.*) through the tactic of disappearance, the military also prevented the mourning that is necessary to remember and to valorise the actions of the disappeared.

The long-term psychological effects, both individual and collective, of the types of gender-related violence that have been outlined above should not be underestimated. As El-Bushra and Piza Lopez stress (1993, 1), gender-related violence affects women's mental health, 'by sapping their self-esteem and self-confidence, limiting their capacity to solve their own problems, as well as their capacity to develop relationships with others'. Thus, gender-related violence inflicted against women involved in political conflicts throughout Latin America has resulted in some level of disempowerment for many.

The psychological effects of gender-related violence

In a volume dedicated to the prevention of, and appropriate responses to, sexual violence in the context of women refugees of warfare, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR 1995) cited terror, intense self-disgust, powerlessness, depression, denial, and an inability to function in everyday life, as some of the psychological effects of gender-related violence. The UNHCR concluded that all victims experience psychological trauma and that in the worst cases this trauma can lead to chronic mental illnesses.

The psychological trauma of gender-related violence may also be expressed through psychosomatisation, when its symptoms are the constant physical ailments such as headaches, sore backs, and gastrointestinal disturbances that often plague victims of gender-related violence. Allodi and Stiansny's (1990) study of 28 tortured women from Central and South America, for example, revealed that these women were suffering from physical symptoms such as insomnia, headaches, body pains, stomach discomfort, and lack of appetite, in addition to their affective symptoms of depression, fear, feelings of hopelessness, loss of self-esteem, crying, irritability, and sexual anxiety/avoidance.

In attempting to understand the dynamics of trauma following torture in Chile, Agger and Jenson (1996) identified the psychological dynamics of dissociation and victimisation as concepts useful not only in understanding the experience of torture, but also, in understanding a person's subsequent reactions to it. Dissociation, or 'turning yourself off' during the torture process is a common psychological survival mechanism necessary to avoid an 'overwhelming anxiety which would lead to total disintegration' (Weinstein and Lira 1987, 49 in Agger and Jenson 1996, 92). In contrast, victimisation is a form of moral death where the tortured

betray their families and their political beliefs to escape physical pain (Agger and Jensen 1996).

The trauma resulting from gender-related violence thus extends beyond the individual (Herman 1997). As Martín-Baró (1988) stresses, the nature of repression that took place in the political conflicts of Latin America (silencing of opposition, rape, torture, disappearance, massacres, displacement, isolation, economic pauperisation) was also responsible for the traumatisation of families and of society in general. It is then a 'psychosocial' trauma, or, the 'traumatic crystallisation in persons and groups of inhuman social relations' (Martín-Baró 1988, 138).

Judith Zur (1993) in her study of the psychosocial effects of 'La Violencia' (a period of government-sponsored terrorism [1980-83] directed against the civilian population during the 30 year civil war) on widows of El Quiché, Guatemala, attests further to the wider implications of gender-related violence for society. She states that La Violencia led to a loss of identity for women whose roles as carers and partners were destroyed through their inability to protect those they loved from torture and death. This in turn led these women to experience feelings of anxiety and powerlessness (Bunster-Burotto 1994).

The physical consequences of gender-related violence impact, in addition, on women's psychological states. Through rape and other forms of gender-related violence, women are exposed to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. They are also exposed to unwanted and often highly traumatic pregnancies and as a result may attempt dangerous abortions (Byrne 1996). It is hard to imagine that such women experiencing these forms of violence could escape psychological traumatisation. Even for those women who are successful in dissociating themselves from their experiences, widespread normative understandings of violence against women can result in them being

held responsible and blamed for the violence perpetrated against them (Byrne 1996; El-Bushra and Piza Lopez 1994).

Recognising and defining post-traumatic stress disorder

From the early 1980s, psychiatrists have often identified the types of psychological effects of gender-related violence discussed above as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (MacDonald 1996). PTSD refers to:

'A response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have been begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event.'

Caruth 1995, 4

However, defining the psychological trauma of gender-related violence in such a universal way is problematic. Experts in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and social sciences have argued that the effects of violence, its manifestation, and recovery from its psychological impacts, are largely determined by factors that are context-specific (Bracken and Petty 1998). It is not always appropriate then, to view the psychological impacts of conflict in medicalised terms, when, as Kleinman (1995, 185) states,

'[They are] more than and different from a disease condition even though [they have] physiological effects The experience itself is characteristically cultural, elaborated in ways that differ from its development in other societies.'

Viewing the impacts of gender-related violence as a 'disease' or 'disorder' also acts to remove the political, social, and economic forces from which trauma has arisen. Women who experience psychological trauma in conflict situations are the victims of a political project intended to

harm them. Hence, while women victims of gender-related violence do often suffer traumatic symptoms as a result of this systematic harming, it would be dangerously remiss to say that they are suffering from a disease condition.

There are, therefore, many issues related to the labelling and subsequent treatment of victims who are suffering the psychological effects of gender-related violence. Knowledge of these issues should not detract, however, from the fact that these effects are a major health concern. Given this, the healing of the psychological effects of gender-related violence should be a priority for gender and development practice, or development practice that promotes a change in inequitable gender relations (Rathgeber 1990), in those countries that have experienced conflict.

An approach to healing

The development literature gives us some pointers on how healing can be achieved. Summerfield (1996, 87) states, for example, that it is crucial for development workers to reflect on their own assumptions about the personal impact of conflict. Western notions of the universality of trauma, and the need for psychological treatment of this trauma, may not be appropriate in all settings, as, 'Every culture has its own constructions of traumatic events and recipes for recovery.' (Ibid.) Conflict obviously causes suffering and distress, but only a small minority of victims of conflict develop 'mental illness' requiring psychological treatment.

That is not to say, however, that women's mental health should be disregarded as a luxury concern for only the wealthiest countries (Paltiel 1993). While a global review of women and mental health has concluded that women are excellent copers despite their subordination, economic deprivation, and lack of control over their life circumstances,

the needs of women who are suffering the impacts of gender-related violence must still be addressed (Paltiel 1987).

Joining social movements

As conflict results in the shattering of the social fabric of society, interventions that attempt to reconstitute a sense of community, rather than the treatment of a 'mentally ill' individual, would be more helpful in this regard (Summerfield 1996, 87; Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good, and Kleinman *et al.* 1995, 131). Socially-based interventions also acknowledge the ethos of fear and violence that persists in post-conflict societies. This acknowledgment ensures that the social harm of political conflict, 'from the demoralisation of society to the dislocation of entire communities,' is not delegitimised or neglected (Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good, and Kleinman *et al.* 1995, 134).

Here, therefore, the formation of social movements becomes a way of both reconstructing the militarised authoritarian State into an institution that is responsive to the needs of civil society, and of collectivising the shared experiences of women to gain the identity needed to initiate social change actions. Hence, participation in social movements, even though it has the potential to place women at risk of further violence, can also form part of healing.

Being part of a social movement also enables women to elaborate more readily on their traumatic experiences, as, through participation, they gain a sense of the importance of links beyond the family (Hollander 1996). A woman may experience healing through participation in a social movement:

'Her loss is no longer individualised, detached from its historical context and from the collective process, but is now part of the political struggle which produced it and can now potentiate its reparation It is this transcendence of isolation and this commitment to act as historical agents that

many Argentine mental health professionals believe is essential to the resolution of the pathological effects of State-induced trauma.' (Hollander 1996, 74)

Giving testimony

A related way of approaching healing, particularly in the Latin American context, has been in *testimonio*, the giving of testimony (Agger 1994, 115). Through the process of giving testimony, women have the opportunity to challenge entrenched power structures and to rebuild the moral and social order for themselves and for their communities.

The creation of a safe space is crucial for the giving of testimony, especially for women, who may feel responsible for the violence inflicted upon them. A conspiracy of silence may also occur where women feel so disempowered that they view their experiences as unworthy of public hearing. Whatever the case, what emerges clearly from the development literature is the need to approach healing in post-conflict environments in culturally sensitive ways, and in ways that build on communities' own capacities (Richters 1994).

Psychological approaches and women's empowerment

Given the disempowerment that has resulted from the trauma of gender-related violence in Latin America, an approach to healing must centre on the notion of empowerment. While this may seem an obvious corollary to our discussion thus far, with the exception of Jane Stein's (1997) comprehensive study of empowerment and women's health in international development (defined in a holistic sense to include physical, psychological, socioeconomic, and cultural factors), very few commentators in the field of health and development seem to have made this connection.

Stein's work has shown us that there is an obvious relationship between strategies that support an empowerment approach to development, and an improvement

in women's health. Such a relationship, Stein (1997) concludes, is based on the fact that empowerment improves women's situations, thus reducing inequity.

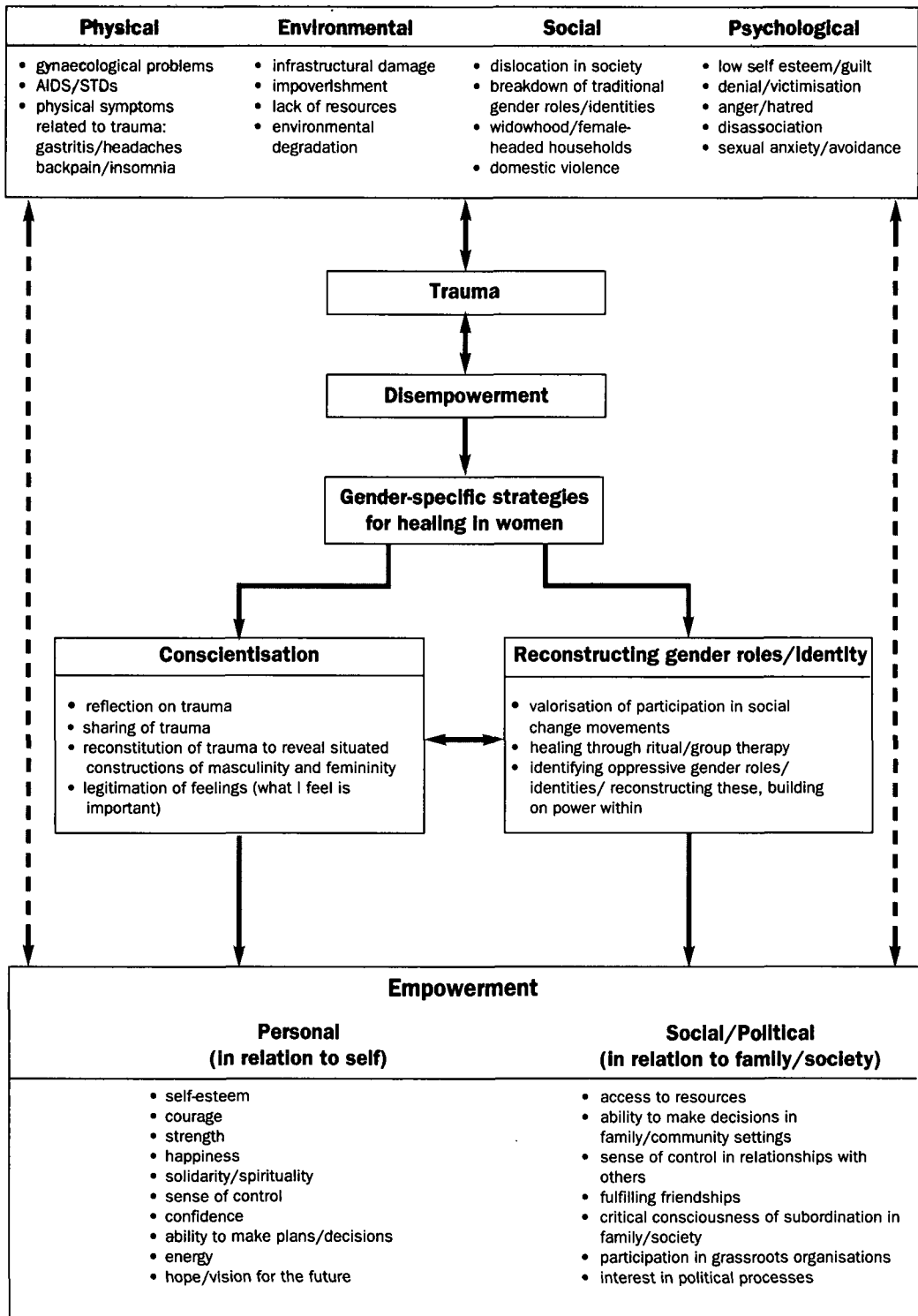
In the field of psychology, feminist therapists and others have long recognised the need for an empowerment approach in their dealings with survivors of traumatic experiences. In her comprehensive analysis on the aftermath of violence (from domestic abuse to political terror), Judith Herman (1997, 133), for example, has stated that, 'The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others.' Recovery is, therefore, dependent on the ability of the survivor to experience empowerment and establish meaningful relationships. Herman's stages of recovery – a healing relationship, safety, remembrance and mourning, reconnection, and commonality – all integrate empowerment principles to accomplish the complete recovery of the survivor (Herman 1997).

Keeping the above connections between empowerment, health, and development clearly in mind, we could argue that an empowerment approach to healing the trauma of gender-related violence would not only benefit those who are participating in such a process, but would also contribute to the well-being of society. In view of this argument, an approach to healing for women in post-conflict contexts could look something like the model presented in Figure 1.

The Las Dignas model of healing

This model places Friedmann's (1992) and Rowlands's (1997) views of empowerment in the context of my research with women in El Salvador. The research, conducted in 1997-8, employed a feminist research methodology to determine the effectiveness of the mental health programme employed by Las Dignas for gender and development practice in post-conflict El Salvador.

Figure 1: *The Las Dignas model: a gender-sensitive approach to healing in post-conflict contexts*



In-depth interview and extensive participant observation with women participants of the mental health programme enabled me to conceptualise the impacts of gender-related violence and to summarise the empowerment outcomes for women participants. The model was developed after I had worked with Las Dignas and the women survivors of the El Salvador civil war.

The model of healing identifies the connections between the disempowering impacts of gender-related violence during conflict, and the empowering outcomes of gender-specific approaches to healing. These approaches recognise the importance of healing political trauma through conscientisation, or reflection, and the reconstruction of shattered gendered identities. Such gender-specific approaches enable women survivors to heal themselves and their communities in ways that will contribute to the breaking down of the very same patriarchal structures (militarisation, authoritarianism, machismo) from which their disempowerment has arisen.

As empowerment is not a linear process whereby a disempowered individual necessarily experiences empowerment through gender-specific healing strategies, a dashed line has been used in the model to show the relationship between the impacts of gender-related violence and empowerment. This highlights the fact that empowering outcomes often contribute to the further perpetuation of gender-related violence against women because of the conflict engendered by those empowered women who challenge the status quo.

Consonant with the impacts of gender-related violence, the levels of empowerment shown in the model are also fluid and interrelated. For sake of clarity, empowerment has been divided into personal and social/political levels. The reality for many women throughout the world, however, is that changes relating to the self are simultaneously social and political. Personal empowerment outcomes such as

self-esteem and happiness have associated effects in the realms of the social and political. Women who have a sense of personal potency, are, for example, more likely to participate in development initiatives aimed at promoting structural change in society, while women who feel in control of their own lives are more likely to develop a critical consciousness of their subordination within their families and society at large.

The model thus offers a practical tool that can be used in gender and development practice in post-conflict environments. Despite its potentially important contribution to humanitarian aid, however, it is necessary to be honest and realistic in regards to expectations when applying the model in practice. Achievement of the kind of fundamental societal transformations for which the empowerment approach aims is time-consuming and fraught with conflict and difficulties. Indeed given the enormous impact of the disempowerment of women in Latin America over the last three decades, it may be difficult to find evidence of social and political empowerment for some time following the establishment of an empowerment programme for women. Social and political empowerment may also be impeded by the absence of effective development programmes for men in post-conflict contexts.

By placing the empowerment process in the context of gender-related violence, the model of healing presented has attempted to confront some of the problems associated with gender and development practice. Not only does the model clearly show the inter-relatedness of personal and social/political empowerment factors, but it also acknowledges the need for constant reflection on the disempowering outcomes of the empowerment process. This is reflected in the model through a reciprocal relationship between empowerment and the physical, environmental, social, and psychological impacts of gender-related violence. Hence while the model has not

solved all the problems associated with the empowerment approach, it has provided a framework which could assist development practitioners in developing circumspect views on the empowerment process.

The model has been disseminated to women's organisations working in peace-building in the post-conflict nations of the Pacific, and could be of benefit to women's organisations working to heal the trauma of war in other nations. Future work with the model could reflect the outcomes of mental health programmes, and importantly, of research that considers the perspectives of men and the challenges and transformations that conflict brings to gender relations in varying cultural contexts.

Conclusion

This article, through its discussion of the scope and impacts of gender-related violence perpetrated against women in Latin America, has established the importance of mental health programmes for women in post-conflict contexts. Rather than placing this trauma and its subsequent strategies for healing in the context of western disease models, this article has shown that the trauma of gender-related violence in Latin America is primarily social rather than medical in nature. Thus, an approach to healing for women should be rooted in the notion of empowerment, enabling women survivors of gender-related violence to pursue individual and collective strategies for social change in ways that are appropriate to the political and cultural nature of the trauma.

A model of healing was presented as a way of conceptualising and addressing the psychological impacts of gender-related violence for women in post-conflict contexts. The model was formulated after extensive research with women survivors of gender-related violence in El Salvador, and draws on the empowerment approach to enable women to participate in social

change activities on both an individual and a collective basis. Given this focus and the well-established significance of women's participation in development processes, the model of healing presented in this article not only provides a novel way of imagining mental health provision in humanitarian aid, but also, a tool to assist organisations working towards the goal of women's empowerment.

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Gender and power relations in a bureaucratic context: female immigrants from Ethiopia in an absorption centre in Israel

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In this article,¹ I discuss the ways in which the bureaucracy of absorption centres in Israel disempowered Ethiopian women immigrants by promoting a strict gender division of labour within a 'family unit' that reflected wider social structures in Israel. In their interactions with Ethiopian immigrants, the officials running the absorption centres enhanced the idea of a 'family unit', and the gendered power relations within it, by transferring resources to family units through the men, and trying to restrict women to the home and to the absorption centre. The different ways in which women and men were treated by officials grew out of bureaucratic needs, as well as reflecting Israeli social arrangements and bureaucrats' own gender and ethnic stereotypes. My arguments have wider implications for other forms of temporary settlement of displaced or migrant populations, where bureaucratic structures mediate between them and the resources that they need.

Some 50,000 immigrants from Ethiopia were brought to Israel between 1982-99, and were sent to absorption centres² owned by the Jewish Agency.³ In 1999, the Ethiopian community in Israel numbered 74,000 people, including those who were born in Israel (Central Bureau of Statistics 2000). Between one and three thousand immigrants from Ethiopia who continue to arrive in Israel every year are also sent to absorption centres. Literature analysing the immigration of Jews from Ethiopia to Israel considers that the principal reason for their migration was a Zionist motivation, and the dream of returning to Jerusalem. However, a few studies (e.g. Kahana 1977) list additional reasons for their collective migration, including discrimination against the Jews within Ethiopia, particularly concerning the right to own land, and the danger of assimilation due to the heavy pressures put on Ethiopian Jews by Christian missionaries. In addition, economic issues including food insecurity have probably

increased the urge of Ethiopian Jews to emigrate to Israel.

Emphasising 'cultural' differences

Most of the vast research on absorption of immigrants published in Israel since the 1950s has emphasised 'cultural' differences on the part of immigrants, to explain integration processes (e.g. Eisenstadt 1954; Patai 1970; Shokeid and Deshen 1977). These studies, which focus on immigrants from Islamic countries in particular, imply that, collectively, immigrants are inferior and 'backward'. This perspective also suggests that the family structure of the immigrants and the gender power division within it are derived from a patriarchal culture brought by immigrants from their countries of origin.

Most of the studies of migrants from Ethiopia to Israel continue to focus on such explanations (Messing 1982; Rozen 1985;

Ben-Ezer 1985). Ben-Ezer describes the Ethiopian family structure thus:

'A big patriarchal, traditional family, with a clear role division based on gender. In the Ethiopian family the husband-father is responsible for economic, employment, educational and religious spheres. He usually represents the nuclear family in relation to the extended family or the community. Much respect is given to the woman-mother, who is responsible for taking care after the children, their education at home and different home tasks. Clearly, the children's rights and obligations are determined by their sex.'

(Ben-Ezer 1985, 21)

Schoenberger (1975) states that:

'There is a great gap between the woman's position in the Ethiopian family and that in the Israeli... the position of men and women in the Falasha⁴ society is such that men's position is superior and women's position is inferior. A woman is expected to perform only service jobs and she can not voice her opinion... all she is expected to do is to fulfil her obligations to her father or husband... women are just a property, like donkeys.'

Aside from their common stereotypical and ethnocentric approach, these two descriptions appear to contradict each other. Ben Ezer suggests that 'much respect is given to the woman-mother' while Schoenberger claims that the women were considered to be 'property, like donkeys'. Moreover, various studies suggest that in Ethiopia women have participated in work outside the home, including agricultural work and trading their craft works (Banai 1988). A study conducted between 1992-3 also indicates that a dichotomised gender division of labour cannot be inferred from interviews with immigrants about their past. Rather, these studies indicate that in Ethiopia some 26 per cent of women worked outside their homes, and that no gender differences were found concerning agri-cultural work, even though women were more occupied with making hand crafts than men were (Benita *et al.* 1993).

Reinforcing a gender division of labour through bureaucratic procedures

A few scholars have revealed the patronising nature of the policy of 'absorbing' immigrants into Israel, and criticised ethnocentric 'cultural' theories that have lent academic credibility to the absorbing systems (Marx 1976; Bernstein 1981). They have indicated the central role played by the intensive bureaucratic intervention in integration processes of immigrants in Israel, and described how state authorities turn the immigrants into a needy category that is dependent on state officials. I follow this approach, in describing and analysing the bureaucratic control of women immigrants from Ethiopia and the use of cultural explanations by the bureaucratic establishment to justify its control over these women.

Once in Israel, Ethiopian immigrants in absorption centres were treated as members of a homogeneous group of 'new immigrants in special need of help', implying their weakness and 'otherness'. Resources were directed to 'family units', and by allocating these through the men, the officials enhanced the idea of the 'family unit' and the gendered power division within it. Within this view of the family unit, women were considered to be 'housewives' and 'mothers', while men were 'family heads' or 'providers'. Housing was delivered to the family through the men; sustenance allowances were passed to 'family heads', most of whom were men; health insurance for the family was issued in the man's name; and vocational training was granted mainly to men. Women were largely ignored in relation to employment opportunities, and were excluded from vocational training.

Limiting women's prospects of employment

The workers in the centre used different means to limit the women's prospects in

the labour market and their motivation to work outside the centre. Only men were sent by them to vocational training, which was offered for the purpose of attaining better employment opportunities. Men were considered responsible for providing a living for the other members of the family. When women who were mothers went out to work, they were reproached by the officials for 'neglecting' their children.

The following quotation from the absorption centre director illustrates this:

'On the one hand, we want to advance the women [and] give them some tools, so that we can advance them to the level of women in Israel. We tell them that it is impossible to make a living with only one salary. We have to help them to a stage where they can begin to work. On the other hand if they go to work, the children will be neglected. They do not have the same responsibility that men and women of the twentieth century have. They do not know that if they go out to work the house has to be in order and the children looked after. They do their day's work and they come home and lie on the bed. The children wander about outside all day. I have experience in this area. It is a disaster to push these women into work. A disaster. My social worker in my previous work-place, said that the children were neglected, ran about in the streets and were filth-dirty. They had no proper food. The immigrants began to fight with each other. This destroyed the family. She got them to return home and started to invest in improving their self-image as housewives. It was not only the kids who were destroyed, but also the wife and the home. It caused fights. The woman runs off and he murders her.'

In such discourses, immigrant women appear to exist only as mothers to their children and wives to their husbands. They are perceived as primitive and irresponsible people whose primary *raison d'être* is to enable their children's integration into the host country. They are expected to weather the impact of the 'cultural crisis' of immi-

gration, and prevent the 'destruction of the family'. When resources are allocated to them for activities and training, this is for the purpose of empowerment for the sake of their children. The centre director went on to add:

'The immigrants are going through such a severe crisis, and harsh dissolution of all frameworks and values, that's why we must preserve one fraction linked with reality. Someone has to pay the price of the tough cultural crisis they are going through. The women have to be empowered as mothers and wives. They don't know what is cleanliness, cooking and child-care. All they know is extended family.'

An Absorption Ministry supervisor told how vocational training for women had been attempted and then stopped when it became clear that children were not receiving care:

'I have stopped women's vocational training. We had the experience in Pardes Chana, where the women had started to work and then they have ignored any responsibility. They were leaving the children alone all day at home or thrown outside. Then I said that it is impossible to do this and we must think how much damage it will cause the Israeli society in the future. The changes are so drastic anyway because the men did almost nothing in Ethiopia. There they used to work three months a year in agriculture doing nothing afterwards, all the work was on the women, the water, grinding the coffee, and the men were near the fire and did not even always nurture it. Now we want them to co-operate and help at home, as the woman goes out to work.'

The officials' actions and perceptions derived from the gendered economic and social reality in Israel, where 'homesphere' activities are most commonly dominated by women, and the public sphere is primarily dominated by men. The labour market is characterised by a limited range of poorly paid 'female occupations', and a large

range of better paid occupations, occupied mainly by males. Organising vocational training for male immigrants as family-heads, rather than for women, stems from Israeli ideas of 'normal' roles for women and men. However, discrimination against Ethiopian women with regard to vocational training was rationalised by the Absorption Ministry in terms of the immigrants' 'traditional' cultural background, rather than with reference to the pre-existing gender division of labour within Israel. For example, a bureaucratic working paper stated that:

'The integration process of the Ethiopian women is slow and complicated in comparison to the men's because they not only have to overcome the cultural gap, they also have to adapt themselves to a sex role that will result in readiness to go out to work. In addition, the women must, like women in the modern world, fill a variety of roles, as woman, wife, working woman, and achieve some balance between them. Considering this process as a slow one, which will not take months or years, but rather generations, will help to see the changes in a realistic perspective and with realistic expectations for change.'

(Eran et al. 1989, 221)

However, the officials' antagonistic attitude towards women's work outside their homes and beyond the centre was capable of change when this was in the interests of the centre's bureaucracy. When the director became interested in sending the women to work outside of the centre, he changed the rules. For the sake of organisational networking, and in order to present himself as efficient in supplying workers, the director used the immigrant women as a resource in his interactions with external contacts. For example, when the manager of a factory for medical gloves asked the centre's director to send women to work in the factory as a matter of urgency, the director had instructed the staff in these words: 'There is the problem with children. It is needed to be arranged for the working

hours of the mothers. It should not be difficult to lengthen the opening hours of our kindergarten, if it won't work by the women's self-organised babysitting in the caravans. But this must be done quickly, because otherwise the factory managers will turn to other centres.'

While the absorption centre workers channelled women into taking care of children and other dependants, ultimately bureaucratic control and policies could not prevent Ethiopian women from working outside the home and centre. Economic needs, no less than personal aspirations, induced women to work outside the home. Single incomes, especially those of low-paid workers, and immigrants' special need for greater resources in order to get settled, made an additional income essential in many cases. Therefore, women who managed to find a substitute to look after their children went out to work. Typically, they would go to work in distant places, in seasonal, poorly paid, and physically taxing jobs.

The findings of the survey mentioned earlier in this article (Benita and Noam 1995) lend support to the claim that the absorption policy has had significant negative effects on women's prospects in the labour market. It appears that discrimination against women in vocational training leads to discrimination against them in the wider labour market later on. While only 26 per cent of untrained women immigrants were employed, 60 per cent of those who had some vocational training were employed.

Reinforcing women's role within the home

In the absorption centres, female welfare aides – *somchot* (singular: *somechet*) – instructed the immigrant women. *Somchot* are 'grassroots' workers with a relatively limited education, supervised by social workers. They were introduced into the welfare services in Israel some 25 years ago, with the aim of instructing women,

usually in 'families with disabilities in social functioning', in housework and child care (Etkar 1977). The welfare department in the Jewish Agency describes them as 'guide[s] for implementing trained skills ... a tutor, an educator and an orientator for the Ethiopian family... for implementing learned skills needed for integration in the Israeli society' (Jewish Agency 1984, 9).

There were six *somchot* in the absorption centre. Each of them was attached to some ten families. The unique role of the *somechet* was to embody a first hand role model for women as mothers and housewives, according to Israeli 'standards', thus transmitting the social structure outside the centre. The bureaucratic control in the absorption centre enabled organised interference in the most intimate details of immigrants' lives in general, and women's lives in particular. Being confined to their homes in the centre made it easier for the *somchot* and other officials to approach the women. The women-immigrants became captive residents in the hands of the officials who needed them to reaffirm the importance and necessity of their positions.

The hierarchical structure of the absorption centre introduced formalised inequality into the relationships between the *somchot* and the immigrant women. These bureaucratically constructed encounters forced the immigrants to comply with the intensive scrutiny of their lives, and with constant criticism of their behaviour as housewives and mothers. While I was chatting in the office one day with a *somechet* and another worker, an immigrant woman came in. The *somechet* turned to her and told her aggressively, 'Enough with the coffee. You sit for two hours with one woman, then she sits for two hours at your place.' Then she turned to us and added, 'Instead of drinking coffee all day long, she should wash her child's head. What do I do? Every day I comb my daughter's head and check it. The child herself says, "Ma, look and see if I have lice".' I asked the *somechet* what was wrong with drinking

coffee with your friends, commenting that I do the same. She said, 'We too have this problem in our neighbourhood, but I'm not like that. With me, the house has to be clean before I do anything else.' Then she turned to the woman, saying, 'Enough coffee,' and pushed her towards the door.

Criticising women over their personal affairs and behaviour was a key way of exerting social control over them. Immigrant women were vulnerable to humiliation by officials. Pushing the woman was a physical expression of the unequal relations that developed between the *somchot* and the immigrants. *Somchot* would enter immigrants' caravans without knocking on the door, criticising the women whose homes they entered about dirt, cooking, child care, and so on, on an everyday basis.

Intrusion into the privacy of immigrants

Blaming women for failing to clean their homes resulted in the confinement of women to the home and care of children, and a profound stigmatisation. By criticising the women's cleanliness, the *somchot* created a social distance between themselves and the immigrants, asserting their authoritative position. An Ethiopian friend of mine in the centre told me, 'My *somechet* is not good. All the time she says, "Why don't you clean up?" I tell her that I am pregnant, my back hurts, and I can't stand, but nothing changes her attitude.' The *somchot* seemed to take it for granted that cleaning was an exclusively female task. While my friend complained about the unkind and inconsiderate attitude of her *somechet* regarding special circumstances, such as being pregnant or having guests, she did not, however, reject the interference in her private life. Neither did she complain about the *somechet's* treatment of her as responsible for cleanliness while ignoring her husband's share in this responsibility.

One day I was invited by one of the *somchot* to accompany her in visiting one of 'her' women. I followed her into the

woman's caravan, which she entered without knocking on the door. The woman who lived there was washing the floor. It was flooded with water. The radio was loud. With no hesitation, the *somechet* went straight to the bedroom and came back with a baby on her arms. She was excited and full of pride, saying, 'I am crazy about this baby.' I asked her cautiously if the baby was not asleep. She answered, 'This is not what I care about.' She came closer to me and showed me how sweet the baby was, boasting about how much money she could get from allowing the American visitors⁵ to take pictures of this baby. She said, 'This is the prettiest baby in the centre.' All that time, the mother continued to wash the floor. The radio went on playing, and the *somechet* seemed very triumphant over every smile of the baby, who was trying to close his eyes. Then the *somechet* has turned to the woman, reproaching her loudly, 'All you need is that the maintenance worker sees you washing the floor like that.' When I asked her what was wrong about the way she was washing the floor, the *somechet* explained, 'This is a PVC floor, and flooding it with water spoils it. It must be washed only with a rag.' Later on, I asked her if she was instructing the woman. She replied, 'What for? She does not need to be taught any more. She knows everything. I come only to see how things are... if everything is OK.'

Feeling free to enter without knocking on the door, to step inside the caravan when it is being washed, to take the baby without his mother's permission, disregarding the fact that he is asleep, reproaching the woman like a little girl in front of me, all reflect the structured control of the *somchot* over the immigrant women, in 'women's affairs'. The immigrant woman seemed to behave in a passive helpless way, as having no choice. It seems that she did not perceive it as possible to reject the intrusion into her private life or to object to the *somechet's* treatment of her baby. All she

seemed to be able to do was to ignore the offence by continuing her existing task.

The following case reveals how far a *somechet* could go in interfering in 'her' women's lives. A short time after a one-year-old baby died, the mother's *somechet* told me, 'I am going to take out her diaphragm, I have fixed her an appointment with the doctor for tomorrow.' The *somechet* meant well, believing that taking the diaphragm out would be for the woman's own good because it would help her to become pregnant and overcome her agony. Needless to say, she did not think it was a much too intimate matter for her to interfere with.

The issue of women's sexuality played a significant role in daily power relations between *somchot* and immigrant women. Women were firmly encouraged by the matron and the *somchot* to use diaphragms to prevent pregnancy. They did not recommend the contraceptive pill, because the immigrants were considered as too forgetful and irresponsible to stick to the daily routine of taking it. Thus, the bureaucratic construction of gender identity of Ethiopian women involved both pushing them to adapt to 'modern' Israeli concepts of birth control, and an ethnocentric attitude toward the 'primitive' Ethiopian women. In extending their power over the immigrant women into affairs such as the use of devices for birth control, the *somchot* presented themselves as experts on 'female' issues.

A case involving the question of breast-feeding illustrates further the interference of the *somchot* in women's most intimate affairs. A young immigrant woman had difficulties in breast-feeding her premature baby. I witnessed an encounter in which a woman's *somechet* asked the matron for infant formula powder to provide for the baby. The matron told her that she must try to convince 'her' woman to continue trying to breastfeed the baby. The *somechet* said she had tried persuasion already, and the

mother 'did not want to hear about it'. The matron said, 'You have to tell her she must breastfeed the baby. She is so lazy. She is so apathetic. She must try. You give her [formula] only if there is no choice. Tell her that if she does not breastfeed the baby, he will die.'

Withholding the infant formula was a means of ensuring the mother's continuous dependency on the *somchet* and her superiors, and diminishing her choices. The matron expressed a total disrespect for the mother, disregarding her difficulties, and treating her as being so stupid that she could even be told that her baby would die if she did not breastfeed it. This belittling of the immigrant women as rational human beings, as well as reasonable mothers, was inherent in many encounters between immigrant women and the *somchet*.

'Taming' the women immigrants also included positive gestures, encouragement, and compliments, when they conformed to Israeli stereotypes of the 'ideal woman'. For example, one day the centre's director attended a cooking workshop. The centre's secretary and I accompanied him. In the room where the workshop was taking place, 20 women were sitting around the table. The cultural co-ordinator was there, tasting the baked cookies. He complimented the women on their work. A *somchet* was standing at the head of the table, kneading cookies and cutting slices for baking. She talked very loudly, almost shouting at the women. The director tasted the cookies and commented that he wished the women would learn to cook so well that they would be able to invite him to taste cakes at their homes. Then he patted the *somchet's* back in a fatherly way.

Motivations of somchet in a slack female labour market

It should be stressed that dependency in the relations between *somchet* and immigrant women was not one-sided. The *somchet* depended on the women for their jobs, in what was a slack female labour market.

This goes some way to explain the obsessive intrusion, and the pretence of the work being vitally necessary. In fact, the actual work performed of instructing the women in housework was marginal or even non-existent and the *somchet* had to convince their superiors constantly of their exclusive and unquestioned 'expertise' in women's affairs, in child care, and home making. In contrast, the centre's secretary offered me an explanation of how she chose *somchet*: 'I didn't know a thing about what a *somchet* is and what is expected from her, so I asked each of them if she had children.'

In conclusion, the officials in the centre – especially the *somchet* – needed to promote the idea of the 'the family', with a strict gender labour division, in order to justify the need for their work. The main 'expertise' of the *somchet* was to provide a role model of a mother and housewife, exercising extensive social control over the female immigrants in the centre. Through the *somchet*, the bureaucratic social environment influenced the women's compliance with gender norms and roles derived from the wider social and economic context in Israel. The supervision and control exercised by the officials – again, especially the *somchet* – over the Ethiopian women increased the latter's dependence and vulnerability.

Conclusion

I have discussed the bureaucratic treatment of women from Ethiopia, in terms of power relations, focusing on how and why they were patronised and socialised into 'Israeli female' identity and status by the officials. The case of Ethiopian female immigrants in an absorption centre has been used to illustrate the role of state agencies – and more widely, the role of agencies in charge of the welfare of immigrant populations – in constructing gender inequality and the notion of the 'family unit'.

I conclude that intensive bureaucratic care of women within an environment such as an absorption centre offers a powerful opportunity to officials to influence the gendered role division and power relations within the 'family'. By treating the immigrants from Ethiopia in the absorption centres as 'family members' above all, the officials channelled them into the gendered power structure prevailing in wider Israeli society. The officials treated the family as a closed and distinct system, and its members as belonging to different sub-categories within it. While distributing resources on a family basis according to a strict notion of a gender division of labour, the officials influenced the immigrants' gender roles and, ultimately, power relations between women and men.

I emphasised and discussed the role of the *somchot* in particular in recognition of their powerful role in socialising women immigrants and channelling them into a 'female niche' in Israeli society. It should be noted that the fact that *somchot* instructed women immigrants from Ethiopia, but not immigrant women from other countries, reveals patronising attitudes toward the Ethiopian immigrants in particular.

What alternative courses might policies towards the immigrants have taken? 'Direct'⁶ rather than 'indirect' absorption, allowing the immediate integration of the immigrants in permanent housing, schools, and employment instead of concentrating them in absorption centres, and transferring resources directly to the immigrants themselves and not through the mediation of the absorption bureaucracy, would have accelerated the integration processes, as well as avoiding the humiliating scrutiny that immigrants were subjected to. Turning the immigrants, and the women in particular, into captive citizens in the absorption centre while being supervised by officials prolonged their dependence. Women reacted by behaving in a deliberately passive way when interacting with the officials, to make themselves 'invisible', as

an indirect defence-mechanism response to the intensive interventions in their lives. Officials' stereotypical attitudes and behaviour towards the women were largely rationalised by them on the grounds of the immigrants' cultural background. I suggest that while the bureaucratic establishment had a major role in the emergence of gender gaps and differences, it used cultural explanations to justify its policy. In fact, cultural explanations were often used to mask gender-based discrimination.

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Notes

- 1 This article is based on 18 months of fieldwork, conducted by the author between 1984-5 while living among the immigrants in a caravan in an absorption centre (Hertzog 1999).
- 2 Absorption centres form an Israeli social framework, owned by the Jewish Agency. They concentrate Jewish immigrants into Israel and offer them various services, intended to facilitate their adaptation to their new context. Absorption centres were established in the 1960s to accommodate immigrants from Eastern Europe and Anglo-Saxon countries. In the 1980s and 1990s they were used mainly for immigrants from Ethiopia and a few immigrants from Russia. The immigrants were taken directly from the airport to the absorption centres. Forty-five centres were made available to accommodate the Ethiopian immigrants who arrived during Operation Moses towards the end of 1984. Another 13 centres were filled by March 1985, and about 11 hotels were rented and used as temporary accommodation for the immigrants. As this arrangement was very costly, the

immigrants were transferred to absorption centres after about a year. Only immediate families were sent to the same place by the Jewish Agency officials. Extended families were sent to different sites, according to available space. Young immigrants were sent to special absorption centres. Children under 17 who arrived without their parents were referred to youth boarding schools. Soon after arrival at the centre the immigrants underwent medical examinations and treatment. A few days later they started their language studies in the 'Ulpan', Hebrew classes for adult immigrants. The Ethiopian immigrants were offered ten months of Ulpan studies. Immigrants were meant to stay in the absorption centre for one year, but the majority of them stayed there for two or more years. Today (August 2001) five centres are active and some six additional centres are about to be opened for immigrants from Ethiopia, who continue to be sent straight from the airport to the absorption centres.

- 3 The Jewish Agency is a world-wide Jewish organisation, founded in 1929, that encourages and assists Jews to settle in Israel. The absorption centres founded by the Agency are one of its main means of assisting immigrants during their first years in the country.
- 4 *Falasha* is the name given to a Jew in Ethiopia by the Christian Amhara. It means stranger, or foreigner, someone who does not have the right to own land in Ethiopia.
- 5 Busloads of visitors, mainly from the US, were often sent to the centres by the directors of the Jewish Agency as a technique for raising money. The visitors would be presented with the 'needy Jewish immigrants' who are treated by the organisation's staff 'with great devotion'.
- 6 'Direct', as opposed to 'indirect', absorption refers to the immediate integration of Jewish newcomers to

Israel, without staying in absorption frameworks beforehand. This term has been introduced into the 'absorption' discourse since the beginning of the 1990s, when the mass immigration from Russia started. Over the 1990s around a million people arrived in the country, and received generous financial aid from the State. This absorption is considered as having been very successful. Most of the immigrants were rapidly integrated in the labour market, and have been successful in all spheres of life: the professional, the cultural, and the political (Siegel 1998).

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Gendering ethnicity in Kyrgyzstan:

forgotten elements in promoting peace and democracy

L.M. Handrahan

Women's potential positive role in preventing and arresting ethnic conflict, and their obvious absence in conflict resolution initiatives, has been largely ignored and negated from community level to the level of international donors. Traditionally, ethnicity has been treated as a gender-neutral identity, when, in fact, academics and development professionals have tended to examine ethnic issues from a male perspective. The following article shows how ethnicity is a gendered concept by drawing on research conducted in Kyrgyzstan in 1999. This research demonstrates that women, more often than men, reject an ethnic identity in favour of a gender identity. This favouring of a gender identity over an ethnic identity allows women to be more open than men to working with ethnically 'different' women across contested ethnic lines. This gendered aspect of ethnicity provides a powerful device for preventing ethnic violence that has, to date, been overlooked by those involved in promoting peace and democracy through development assistance.

Ethnicity and its relevance to the promotion of democracy

Ethnicity is defined as the means by which community leaders maintain boundaries between social groups, through markers of ethnic or group identity such as religion, language, lifestyle, kinship, homeland, visible characteristics, and gender roles and relations. These markers do not have a permanent order of priority, and ethnic groups do not always assume all these boundary markers. Rather, ethnic boundaries allow a community, largely regulated by its male leaders, to establish, understand, and define their internal and external identity. Features chosen during the process of identity marking are not necessarily objective elements of reality but have meaning for that community, representing expressions of group ideas, values, and history (Mach 1993).

During times of political transition, concepts of identity, including ethnicity, are in flux. Democratic 'transitions', thus, often occur alongside heightened feelings of nationalism and ethnic conflict. What is strikingly constant in conflict situations is the 'link between citizenship and the division between women and men that war, and the preparations for war, enforces' (Benton 1998, 27). It is only through separation from the household, i.e., women and children, that the creation of a male community, a fraternity, becomes possible (Charles and Hintjens 1998, 17). Thus, if fraternity can only be maintained outside the home, the 'selfless, communal experience of brotherhood, which is the model of civic virtue' is unsustainable without war (Benton 1998, 43). Therein, male conflict becomes a necessary component of citizenship, civil virtue, ethnic identity, and communal belonging and value. 'It is this fraternity that makes it possible, over

the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.' (Anderson 1991, 7) The relatively unexamined gendered constructs of identity are important in these situations because gender divisions assist in understanding the 'fraternal' and violent aspects of ethnic conflict (Allen 1998, 59).¹

Civil society, gender, and democracy promotion

The promotion of democracy within the practice of development assistance has been popular, in western development circles, throughout the 1990s. Within democracy development, support for civil society has been, and remains, a favourite programme 'tool', as it is widely accepted that an active civil society will necessarily encourage, if not secure, democracy in so-called 'transition' countries.

Promoting civil society is a goal so popular that it rarely provokes critical thought. Those few who have begun to think critically about the issue, such as Carothers and Ottaway (2000), often fail to consider it from a gender perspective – although the gender distinctions between civil societies, largely comprised of women, and global political and foreign assistance structures, largely comprised of men, seem apparent.² Thus, uncritical promotion of civil society is compounded by ignoring a key variable, gender.

In addition to an absence of rigorous gender analysis, the influence of ethnicity within democratic transitions is often overlooked. Since democracy aid is meant to assist countries in overcoming barriers that might block democratic consolidation, and ethnic conflict represents a potentially formidable deterrent, programming around issues of ethnicity should be a priority within democracy assistance design. Yet, despite the relevance of ethnicity to the success of democracy assistance, many donor agencies, including the United States

Agency for International Development (USAID), have failed to include substantial consideration of ethnicity within their programmes.

This article attempts to address these analytical gaps through considering both gender and ethnicity as variables in research into United States (US) democracy assistance, administered by USAID, to Kyrgyzstan, a formerly Soviet country in Central Asia. The former Soviet Union (FSU) is an excellent location to examine gender and ethnicity within the framework of democracy, because these countries, emerging from communist rule, have been the context for pilot programmes testing western democratic theory and assistance. Kyrgyzstan was selected by USAID as a 'laboratory' for democracy assistance programming, and consequently received the largest per capita amount of USAID democracy assistance allocated to Central Asia during the 1990s (USAID 2000).

Kyrgyzstan, the context

On August 31, 1991, the Soviet Kyrgyz Republic became the independent secular state of Kyrgyzstan. This was not the result of an independence movement. Instead, the Soviet Union removed itself from Central Asia, resulting in 'an abrupt and unexpected end to membership in what most residents regarded as a legitimate political community' (Huskey 1999, 3).

Original western euphoria over Kyrgyzstan's commitment to democracy and economic reform, embodied in President Akaev, has significantly diminished since 1991 due to increasing government repression and corruption. The first serious retardation of democratic development began in 1994, when President Akaev launched a number of authoritarian offensives. 1996 brought Akaev's February referendum, which violated both the Constitution and the Law on Referendums, and greatly extended presidential powers

(US Department of State 1995; 2000). Akaev has also taken serious measures (mainly via the courts) to silence and subjugate the media (Pannier 1997, 94). These controls were evident in the February/March 2000 parliamentary elections, when Akaev attempted to control both the process and the outcome of the elections through the courts and the media.

The relevance of ethnicity

Ethnicity in Kyrgyzstan lies at the centre of a complex web of economic, social, and political relations with origins in the 1920s Soviet forced population movement of minorities and the arbitrary redesignation of districts containing Central Asia's ethnic groups. When creating the republics of Soviet Central Asia the Soviets hoped to 'modernise' Central Asia and prevent any unified anti-Soviet force. This was accomplished through a divide-and-rule tactic of creating five distinct national entities, each with sufficient ethnic diversity that no one 'minority' held a majority.

There were also two major immigrant streams during Soviet rule that further complicated ethnic relations. First, there was a massive influx of Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Tatars, Armenians, and other Europeans between 1926-59.³ Second, Stalin's deportation policies brought Koreans, Crimeans, Germans, and Turks to Central Asia as punishment for collective disloyalty during World War II. Under the USSR, ethnic Russians accounted for 22-59 per cent of the population and were concentrated in the capital cities of Central Asia. Ethnic Central Asians were largely excluded from the best education and employment opportunities, as well as health services that were primarily created and set aside for Russians and concentrated in the capital cities.

Currently, the entire political culture in Kyrgyzstan exists under a shadow of ethnic

tensions and patronage. Important governmental institutions, such as the *akims* (regional governors), internal police, the White House, and law enforcement organs such as the courts and the police, blatantly function as ethnic Kyrgyz preserves. The system of rewards, favours, bribes, perks, and punishment in Kyrgyzstan today is clearly ethnically Kyrgyz and male (Anderson 1999, 23-62). This ethnically based corruption interferes with the government's ability to provide citizens with the most basic social and economic rights, creating increased public frustration. The disgruntled population includes the new ethnic minorities, the Russians, Muslim insurgents in southern Kyrgyzstan, and alienated Kyrgyz male youth who represent a serious threat to public order and provide a potentially strong support for extremist politics.

The relevance of gender

An overview of Kyrgyz history since independence (1991-2000) demonstrates the constant pressure on women to conform to various aspects of new identities that are in competition for dominant socio-political power. Within the framework of Kyrgyzstan's 'democratic' transition, Muslim ideas of female identity vie for attention alongside 'western' or democratic concepts of a 'woman', and both notions are attempting to replace the established norm of the Soviet model. These conflicting male definitions of ethnicities and their gendered identities are resulting in extremely high levels of violence against women.⁴ The increased reports of female slavery (*sharoo*), prostitution, trafficking in women, rapes, gang rapes, murders, bride kidnapping, sexual and domestic violence, and extreme poverty are indicative of a society in turmoil with conflicts of gender (as defined by each competing socio-political identity) and, hence, women, situated at the centre of the crisis.

Yet events and trends in Kyrgyzstan are often paradoxical, and gender roles are no exception. While violence against women is reaching emergency levels, women's participation as leaders of civil society is also extremely high. Bride kidnapping may be on the increase yet so are the numbers of women graduating from post-secondary education. As the Asian Development Bank reports, 'While women are among those groups most seriously affected by the overall decline in social indicators, they have also become a major driving force in the political and economic reform.' (Kuehnast *et al.* 1997, 2)

The research

As a human rights specialist, I was working on a United Nations democracy project in Kyrgyzstan from 1996-7. Frustrated by the way democracy assistance was, or rather was not, functioning, I set out to examine more fully the weakness of democracy promotion in Kyrgyzstan – in particular in relation to gender and ethnicity – in the context of academic study. This article is based on my doctoral research at the Gender Institute of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The field research was conducted in Kyrgyzstan during August to November 1999 and was funded by a US Department of State grant. It focused on a random sample of clusters of the adult population, chosen by entering local markets in the capital cities of each region, known in Kyrgyzstan as *oblasts*. Research methods included self-report techniques mixed with interviews consisting of closed-end quantitative questions and informal, open-ended qualitative questions. Finally, an informal observational component proved critical in overcoming tainted survey results, building trust in the target population, and contributing to the qualitative research.

Two survey sets were used. The first survey set targeted Kyrgyz citizens including adults, children, government

officials, and non-governmental organisation (NGO) leaders. Interviewees were asked to define their understanding of the concepts of ethnicity, democracy, gender, and citizenship, and to describe their own 'primary identity'. The second survey set targeted foreigners who worked for USAID as 'partner' organisations delivering aid for democracy to Kyrgyzstan. This group was asked to give their views on local concepts of democracy, ethnicity, citizenship, civil society, and gender. The findings of both survey sets were compared for similarities and differences in international and local understanding. Unfortunately, only two people agreed to interviews for the second survey set. This high no-response rate is not surprising when compared to USAID's own staggering no-response rate for a 'stocktaking' survey USAID conducted of its own staff and partner NGOs in the late 1990s.

Research results

The results of my research demonstrate that understanding gendered aspects of ethnicity may prove vital to the development of civil society within the framework of democracy assistance. Analysing democracy assistance in Kyrgyzstan by gender and ethnicity demonstrates, first, that women are more fully involved in civil society than men; and, secondly, that women's sense of identity is bound up more with their gender than with their ethnicity, and that when they do identify with their ethnicity, they understand this differently from men; and finally, that there is a greater male identification with ethnicity and with official identities such as citizenship and political representation.

Gender and 'primary identity'

The responses to questions relating to primary identity provided overwhelming evidence that for women, gender is more of a primary identity than ethnicity, and that men view ethnicity more as a primary

identity than gender. A typical view was, 'Anyone can be a man but I am a Kyrgyz man!' This close identification by men with their ethnicity was particularly true for younger men in the south of Kyrgyzstan.

When questioned about how the opposite sex perceived their own self-identity, *vis-à-vis* gender or ethnicity as the primary identity, both men and women responded that gender was more important for women, and ethnicity was more important for men. The women interviewed also appeared to understand their ethnicity in a less antagonistic way than men, with women less likely to define their ethnicity with adjectives and events that presumed a conflict with 'the other'. Women associated ethnicity with cultural artefacts such as jewellery, food, and clothing while men made more active, and sometimes violent, associations between ethnic identity and practices including sheep polo, national games, and female subjugation such as bride kidnapping. These results provided evidence of the association of male violence with ethnic identity.

In response to questions about what human qualities people associated with their ethnicity, more than half of the men responded with negative adjectives, denoting dissatisfaction and negative self-images, while more than half of the women responded with positive adjectives. More women and men in the southern region gave negative answers, and younger people were more likely to give negative answers than older people. The negative impressions of self on the part of male youth from the southern region is a concern that should be factored into development programmes dealing with southern poverty and identity issues.

Overall, these results provided greater insight into the apparent willingness of women to cross ethnic boundaries and work together in situations of ethnic conflict. If, indeed, gender is more important than ethnicity for women, the fact that women are willing to co-operate in

bridging ethnic communities is not surprising. Correspondingly, if men, particularly young men, hold a higher affinity for ethnic identity, then it is not surprising that a man who feels his ethnic identity is threatened may resort to defensive tactics, including violence.

Who passes on ideas about ethnic identity?

The majority of respondents stated that notions of ethnic identity were transmitted by men. Most respondents said their children's identity was defined by the father's family. Kyrgyzstan is a highly patriarchal society, and the survey results indicate that women have little control over the content and means of passing on information regarding ethnic identity to their children. This differed in the southern region where more women than in any other region responded that it was mothers who determined ethnic identity and educated children about these issues. This response came predominantly from younger, non-Kyrgyz women.

Most adults claimed that they had learned about ethnicity in school, yet only a small percentage indicated that their children learned about ethnicity at school. Despite these differences, schools still emerged as the main source of education on ethnic identity. This is important for future donors seeking to promote education about tolerance of ethnic difference.

Gendered views of citizenship and political participation

The second important finding of the research was that, while NGO work was perceived as appropriate for women, citizenship and political participation were considered to be male concerns. The NGOs, *akims*, and USAID partners interviewed all thought that gender was highly significant in concepts of citizenship, with citizens perceived and expected to be men. One USAID partner stated, 'Women are

submissive and it is the culture for them to be in the background. The majority accepts this role. The few that don't are, quite literally, outcasts.'

Paradoxically, all those interviewed shared the perception that women were overwhelmingly prominent in the associations of civil society. However, unlike western understandings of the close link between civil society and democracy, the Kyrgyz recognition of women's role in civil society was not taken as evidence of their centrality to processes of democratisation. On the contrary, the strong association between women and civil society was understood as a marker of the lesser importance of NGOs in comparison with elected and appointed political positions. Men welcomed women's involvement in the 'less important' sphere of civil society, seeing it as work appropriate for women, while politics was viewed as 'men's work'. All *akims* thought that all or most NGOs were led by women, should be led by women, and are part of democracy.

NGO leaders claimed that women were dominant in NGO work because it is the 'dirty, unwanted' work of society with which the (male) government does not want to be bothered. Women dominate civil society, according to NGO leaders, 'because women always get the most difficult tasks to deal with,' and, 'because it's available and it's not paid'. Therefore, the NGOs reported, women are allowed, even encouraged, to manage the NGO sector. *Akims* confirmed this notion with one *akim* stating, 'We need them [NGOs] for our society... they do the difficult work.'

NGO leaders also suggested that women participate in civil society because this is a more accessible route to public service than participation in government. One NGO leader described NGOs as, 'the only way for women to manifest themselves'. While government positions were deemed both important and desirable to women, NGO leaders, male government officials, and USAID partners all stated that

women were not free to participate actively in formal political structures due to patriarchal behaviour and systematic institutional and societal restrictions. A female NGO worker commented that, 'Men don't want women in parliament, they [men] do everything to push them behind.'

While *akims* encouraged women to manage the NGOs, when asked if women should be involved in politics all *akims* responded that women's place was not in politics but 'in the home'. Men, *akims* claimed, belonged in politics because men are more responsible than women. A typical view was expressed by one *akim*, who said, 'Kyrgyz [women] should stay at home and look after children,' as opposed to entering politics. Another said, 'Men better understand the concepts of citizenship because they feel a responsibility for their family and the republic.' However, the *akims* demonstrated a distinct lack of understanding that government officials were representatives of the population and/or public servants, by responding that 'government' was understood to mean President Akaev.

A different analysis of women's presence in NGOs came from within the organisations themselves. Predictably, an overwhelming majority of the NGOs surveyed thought that NGOs were beneficial for society. Among NGOs surveyed on issues relating to democracy and governance issues, progressive democratic elements of society were seen to originate from civil society, citizens, and the population. Conversely, regression in democratic advancement was blamed on government action.

There was some indication that USAID partner NGOs were aware of the complex gendered nature of participation in government and civil society, with USAID partners claiming that women were treated 'as second-class citizens'. USAID partners, like NGOs and government officials, thought NGOs were beneficial for society and that they exist within the domain of

women. USAID partner responses also mirrored the local NGO responses in that they perceived women as being more responsible and therefore 'better' at NGO work. However, my research suggested that USAID partners lacked the ability to inform USAID programming about these dynamics due to weak, if not non-existent, USAID feedback mechanisms between USAID staff and the USAID partner organisations that implement USAID's programs in the field.

Conclusions

This research confirms the body of academic literature that argues that concepts of democracy, citizenship, and civil society are highly gendered, to the disadvantage of women. As Reid and Burlet (1998) note, 'Critics argue that, in practice, women's attempts to (re)articulate and forge social change within communities have often been interpreted as a threat to the status quo by both community members and the wider system of power.' (Reid and Burlet 1998, 274) Thus, while women may be 'agents of positive change' because of the way in which they understand ethnicity and their active participation in civil society, their power to catalyse change, promote democratic values, and prevent ethnic conflict appears to be, at the very least, circumscribed by their own national male governments as well as by male-dominated foreign donors, such as USAID, which fail to conceptualise both the paradoxes and power of gender.

There is an evident frustration, expressed by women NGO leaders, that they are not included in decision-making positions that hold real political power. Democracy practitioners affiliated with USAID rarely questioned the gender mismatch between who represents civil society through involvement in NGO work, who makes up national government, and who dominates foreign assistance decision-making structures. For instance, during my

research in Kyrgyzstan, 93 per cent of US democracy assistance senior-level managers, both of USAID staff and partner organisations in Washington DC and Kyrgyzstan, were men.

USAID's development assistance has neither examined nor understood the complex social realities within which women operate. In addition, it has failed to recognise the powerful potential role that women can play in consolidating real democratic gains. Women must be allowed and encouraged to translate their local social action into the political decision-making arena. The non-recognition of the female ability to reject an ethnic identity in favour of a gender identity and then work across ethnic lines within their universal role as caretakers and leaders of civil society, indicates that a powerful tool for the prevention of ethnic violence has also been overlooked (Reid and Burlet 1998). Moreover, the promotion by USAID and other international donors of male leaders has largely reasserted the public-private dichotomy and helped to foster the establishment of dominant male ideologies, particularly within 'new democracies'.

The rhetoric about the importance of civil society will remain such unless theorists and practitioners of democracy incorporate gendered aspects of both civil society and political power into understandings of how civil society, democracy, and ethnicity operate. Thus far, the type of critical gender analysis that would reveal these dilemmas has not occurred within USAID assistance. Instead, there appears to be a naïve and ill-informed celebration of civil society, lacking in any comprehensive understanding of gendered dimensions and the implications these have in preventing authentic political power and representation for women as well as the untapped potential of promoting democratic institutions and preventing ethnic conflict.

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Notes

- 1 'Women are used in defining boundaries and asserting the dominance of some men over other men through the protection of "their" women... to protect "their" women they engage in violent conflict and rape the women of "their" enemies.' (Allen 1998, 59) Also described in the Reid and Burlet (1998) study.
- 2 This finding reflects a wider global norm, whereby 13.7 per cent of members of national parliaments globally are women and seven per cent of the world's total cabinet ministers are women (<http://www.learningpartnership.org/stats.html>, accessed 29 May 2001, and Inter-Parliamentary Union, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>, accessed 29 May 2001).
- 3 All white Eurasians are thought of as European in Central Asia. As Fyodor Dostoyevsky said of Russians and Russia's interest in Central Asia, 'In Europe we are hangers-on and slaves, whereas we shall go to Asia as masters.... In Europe we were Asiatics, whereas in Asia we, too, are Europeans.' (Dostoyevsky in Meyer 1999, 169)
- 4 Carley calls these the murky aspects that are crucial and hard to pin down, some of which plague the entire FSU, like the absence of reformed legal institutions, and some of which are particular to Central Asia, such as the identity crisis. In sum, Central Asia exhibits many ambiguous determinants with few absolutes (Carley 1995, 293). 'During the transition, female enrolment in higher education has risen from 55 per cent to 66 per cent of all students.' (Kuehnast et al. 1997, 39) So extreme has the

violence against women become that the UN issued a report warning the government to address the issue.

'In the face of widespread violence against Kyrgyz women – including domestic violence, gang rape, and systematic assault and battery – expert members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women... urged Kyrgyzstan to re-evaluate its programs and policies.... Astonished at the rise in the number of vicious crimes against women, they pressed the Government to identify the root causes of those grave phenomena and devise ways to suppress it.'
(United Nations 1999)

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Reconstructing roles and relations:

women's participation in reconstruction in post-Mitch Nicaragua

Sarah Bradshaw

Hurricane Mitch, which took place in October 1998, affected millions of people in Central America, in Honduras and Nicaragua in particular. In Nicaragua, following the hurricane, many civil society organisations mobilised to participate in reconstruction, and to present alternatives to the government's reconstruction plans. The newly-formed Civil Co-ordinator for Emergency and Reconstruction (CCER), a coalition of NGOs, undertook a large-scale social audit of the reconstruction process. This article presents the results of the audit alongside more in-depth research to provide a gendered analysis of the reconstruction. It focuses on the roles of women in reconstruction, their participation and leadership in reconstruction projects and in individual household responses, and questions whether reconstruction projects have had any impact on transforming gender relations in post-hurricane communities.

In October 1998, Central America suffered one of the worst disasters in over 200 years. Hurricane Mitch affected almost 3.5 million people in the region, leaving 18,000 dead or disappeared – the majority in Honduras and Nicaragua. In Nicaragua, the hurricane brought inequalities and vulnerabilities into sharp focus. However, there were hopes that the destruction would create links between civil society, national and local governments, and the international community, in order to construct strategies for sustainable human development that would focus on people, and poor and marginalised people in particular.

Mitch did act as a catalyst for the organisation of civil society and the development of plans for the transformation of the region through processes of reconstruction. One outcome in Nicaragua was the formation of the Civil Co-ordinator for Emergency and Reconstruction (CCER), a

coalition of 350 national NGO and other civil society organisations. The CCER from the outset sought to combine practical, research, and advocacy roles, to use information gathered on the emergency and reconstruction process to lobby national and international policy makers, and thus to improve response to the needs of the people.

In order to understand the situation better, a social audit was conducted by the CCER. Two phases of this large-scale social survey are now complete and the third is close to completion. The first stage, carried out in February 1999, surveyed some 10,500 households in 61 of the worst-affected municipalities on their opinions about the relief operations and the damages they suffered. The second stage, in September of the same year, focused on reconstruction efforts and involved 6,000 households in 48 of the municipalities affected.¹

Working for *Puntos de Encuentro*, a Nicaraguan feminist NGO, I have been involved with the CCER since its inception, and have been a member of the commission responsible for the design and analysis of the social audits completed to date. The results of the social audit, and of a more in-depth, complementary study in four communities affected by the hurricane which I co-ordinated for *Puntos de Encuentro*, will form the basis of this article.²

The results of the social audit highlight how reconstruction in Nicaragua, to the extent that it has taken place, has occurred largely via national and international NGOs. Government initiatives have been few, and largely centred on large-scale transport infrastructure projects. Indeed to the question, 'What is the most important thing the government has done in the reconstruction process?', 60 per cent of those interviewed in the September social audit replied, 'Nothing.' This figure rose to over 90 per cent in some regions.

In the face of this lack of action by the government, civil society began to criticise government plans and to present alternatives. The CCER proposal for reconstruction, which was presented at international consultative group meetings in Washington and Stockholm, calls for reconstruction guided by a shared vision of sustainable human development. The proposal places as central the need to reduce social and environmental vulnerability, and stresses that this will only be achieved if unequal relations of power based on age, ethnic origin, class, and gender are challenged and overcome. An analysis of the extent to which this has been attempted and successful 'on the ground' will be the focus of this paper. It will consider the roles of women in reconstruction, and their participation and leadership in reconstruction projects and in individual household responses.

Household response to crisis

In general, the level of damage suffered by those affected by the hurricane did not vary significantly by sex.³ One area where a gender difference in the impact of Hurricane Mitch can be perceived, however, is in terms of its emotional effects on those who were affected by it. In the February following the hurricane more than one in five people interviewed for the social audit reported that someone in their household was very emotionally affected. Three quarters of the people reported as affected were women or girls. More female heads reported a person in the household being affected emotionally by the hurricane, as compared with male-headed households. However, this result may be better explained by the fact that the data also suggests that men, and younger people, are less likely to report emotional impacts – rather than being the result of any inherent characteristics of female-headed households.

The passing of Hurricane Mitch

During the crisis, and in the immediate aftermath, when communities were isolated due to damaged infrastructure, men and women worked together to evacuate people, move belongings, and later to clear the roads and make safe passages.

From in-depth interviews with men and women in affected communities,⁴ a small proportion of the men suggested that during this time the women were inactive. This was sometimes cited as general inactivity, 'They only went about with their arms folded, the poor things, crying for their things that were flooding,' or specifically the result of their child care responsibilities, '[They did] nothing, the poor things, sought ways to take care of the children who were becoming ill.' Thus, while women were performing 'traditional' female activities such as child care, preparation of what little food was available,

and caring for the sick, they were seen by men as 'doing nothing'.

The majority of men recognised the work of women, however, when this work was outside the traditional:

'As the river started to rise more quickly we started to organise and we helped those that had more things to lose, to rescue youngsters, belongings, to evacuate them, the women helping, rescuing other women...all the people struggled'

While recognising women's contribution on one level, women's activities were often presented as 'helping' men in their activities. There was a noticeable division between men and women, who performed different activities, and who organised into separate all female or all male work groups. One man noted of his wife's activities: 'She went with the women looking how to repair the road.... The men in front and they [the women] coming behind with rocks....'

After the initial passing of the hurricane, even for those men who recognised women's 'help' with more traditionally male activities, sharper divisions between men's and women's activities became clear, 'The women on their own account have not done anything more than to organise to do a census,' and women's important activities once again became undervalued.

Women mentioned activities such as mending roads, walking many miles in search of food and other types of help, and making makeshift shelters during the immediate crisis. In their opinion at least, their work during this time was of equal value to that of the men. Many women noted, however, that men had a different opinion about either the value of their contribution, 'The men say that women work less - "You don't work equally to me, women can't work, they don't know how to",' or about whether they contributed at all. 'Men recognised our contribution at the time. Some have now forgotten.'

Reconstruction responses and their consequences

In the longer term, Mitch has had a number of consequences for the roles that men and women typically perform. However, these changes are not necessarily in line with those suggested by the literature on the theme around coping responses. For example rather than women entering into productive work or diversifying their productive activities, as predicted by the literature, the proportion of women in productive activities has in fact declined post-Mitch, both in absolute numbers and relative to men's employment in income-generating activities.⁵ What this means is that a larger proportion of households now rely on a single, male income earner. This typically decreases women's access to and control over household resources.

However, differences are apparent between women in different types of households. More women in male-headed households than female heads of household ceased to perform productive activities post-Mitch. Thus, while female heads who could not continue with their pre-Mitch activities sought alternative income-generating work, women in male-headed households appear not to have done so to the same extent. Women in male-headed households who lost their income-generating activity appear to have returned to the home rather than seeking alternative activities. This suggests one impact of Mitch to be a reinforcing of 'traditional' women's roles rather than a transformation and diversification of gender roles. Other trends suggest that the situation is not quite so clear cut. During the social audit, women were asked about their ideas of who made (pre-Mitch) and makes (post-Mitch) the most important contribution to the household.

Women's perceptions of their contribution, pre- and post-Mitch

Before proceeding to discuss the changes in women's opinions around contribution to the household, it is important to note that they are opinions only. The perception that a woman, or her male partner, has of who contributes most to the household does not necessarily reflect who actually earns the most, or who works hardest.

Perceptions of contribution are complex to analyse. They are based on more than just monetary valuations, being dependent also on social norms and individual characteristics, such as levels of self-esteem, for example. Nonetheless, income-generation, and the amount of money brought to the household, strongly influence perceptions of contribution.

Perceptions of contribution are also relative. A woman in a male-headed household may well devalue her own contribution in comparison with that of her male partner, especially if hers is non-monetary. This is compounded by the fact that men's perceptions may influence those of women. Women heads of household may be assumed to be free from such influence and thus have a greater recognition of their own contribution to the household. However, the presence of an adult son in a female-headed household can complicate matters, with women often naming him as the head of household, for example, thus granting him power in the household, be it real or imagined.

The research shows that in the pre-hurricane context, the majority of women with no male partner named themselves as the person who made the most important contribution to the household. Only a small proportion of women living with a male partner named themselves as the person who contributed the most. Although more did respond that the two of them contributed to the household, the perception of the man as the main contributor was strong. Responses about the post-Mitch situation

showed changes in perceptions. In male-headed households, more female partners stated that it was they who made the most important contribution to the household after Mitch. However, more female heads of household stated that, post-Mitch, someone else in the household, usually an adult son, was making the most important contribution.

Post-Mitch then, the research suggests a decline in female heads' perceptions of their own contribution at a time when it would appear that such women are actually contributing more: not only continuing with their productive work but also participating in higher numbers than married women in the reconstruction process.

On the other hand, the proportions of women in male-headed households who mention themselves as contributing to the household have increased, in spite of the decreasing proportion involved in income-generating activities. This appears strange given there is a positive relation between productive work and perceptions of contribution. It would appear that some other factor is influencing perceptions of contribution post-Mitch. While reconstruction projects may be assumed to be important in this context, as the following discussion shows, they do not fully explain the processes at work.

Before considering the reconstruction process further, it is important to note that not all women in male-headed households share the same experience. Young female partners/wives (under 25 years of age) appeared to have had a different experience of reconstruction than both female heads and older women. While the proportion of women partners in productive work has fallen generally, this is greatest among young female partners (already least likely to be in productive work pre-Mitch). Moreover, while the evidence suggests that women partners perceive an increase in their own contribution to the household post-Mitch, the pattern with young female partners is the reverse – more young

women named their husband as making the most important contribution post-compared with pre-Mitch.

Since perceptions of contribution, along with productive work, influence the position of women within households in terms of their access and control over resources, the situation of young female partners – already of concern before the hurricane – may be deemed, from a feminist perspective, to have worsened.

Gender perspectives in the interventions for reconstruction

Case study evidence from the four communities in the more in-depth study shows the range of types of reconstruction initiatives post-Mitch. After the hurricane, a number of international NGOs and agencies arrived in Nicaragua for the first time and initiated reconstruction projects, sometimes intervening directly in affected communities, and sometimes working through national NGO counter-parts. National NGOs in general became involved in the reconstruction process. Although a number of them did not radically alter their activities, others modified their programmes to include reconstruction of damaged housing.

The gender perspective employed in these projects for reconstruction varied, and the communities in the *Puntos de Encuentro* study illustrate a range of gender perspectives. In one community, for example, the continued lack of recognition of women's practical contribution was apparent in the following quote from the representative of the national NGO working there: 'Men participate more ...in that more men than women work in agriculture....'⁶ One international organisation working directly in another community was very honest in admitting that, 'We have initiated some actions, but we don't have anything defined as gender as such....'

In contrast, international aid delivered via a partner national NGO in a third community demonstrated the continued use of women as service providers. A representative stated that: 'We have positively discriminated towards women. Some of the resources to rehabilitate livelihoods we have given to the women after hurricane Mitch,' adding that, 'The men accepted that the women are in the project because they have seen that it has supported them in their household economy... the women have their cows and the men are drinking the milk.'

A fourth scenario also existed: a reconstruction approach that attempted to include more 'strategic' as well as practical gender needs via consciousness-raising activities. The entrance into the project may be 'practical' but this is only the gateway:

'We work with training women that come to get credit from us, we invite them to participate in workshops on gender awareness, their situation of subordination, the need to organise, improving self esteem... to take decisions in their lives.'

A range of organisations and means of operating were employed post-Mitch, and their gender perspectives also varied, up to and including one project that performed consciousness-raising activities with men. These different approaches to reconstruction may be assumed to have different impacts on women. Before exploring the outcomes a little further it is important to note that the evidence from the social audit suggests that the people who most obviously feel the benefits of reconstruction are not men compared with women, or women compared with men, but younger compared with older people. This appears to be related more to young people's ability to gain access to the available resources for reconstruction, rather than a targeting policy by NGOs.

While young people were not targeted in reconstruction, female heads of household were targeted. While this may

be taken as a positive intervention, given female heads' 'vulnerable' position in society (itself a contested idea), its impacts need to be considered closely. For example, while similar proportions of female heads as male heads received help in order to sow crops after Mitch, fewer actually did so. Similarly, while higher proportions of female than male headed households received help for housing, fewer felt that their opinion had been taken into account in the construction process.

Providing material resources to women then is not itself sufficient to ensure that they benefit. Giving seeds to a woman who no longer has land on which to sow them, or has no money to pay labourers to prepare the land, will be ineffective. Access to resources is necessary, but is not sufficient, if the capacity to use those resources is lacking. We must also ask how and to what extent female heads are really benefiting from this targeting in terms of their longer-term more 'strategic' needs.

To explore the impact of reconstruction on strategic needs demands a closer analysis of how women are being incorporated into reconstruction. It demands a shift from an analysis of material gains to an analysis of the other benefits that 'participation' is assumed to bring.

Women's participation in reconstruction projects

Participation rates of women in community-based projects and programmes have increased post-Mitch, rising from under a quarter to over half the women interviewed in the four communities studied. However, simply ensuring women's inclusion in the reconstruction process does not necessarily bring benefits for women. It is important to note that the majority of women participating in reconstruction are doing so, perhaps not surprisingly, for practical ends. Women's perceptions of projects as fulfilling practical needs may be contrary to the ideas of those instigating them. As a representative from

one women's organisation notes, 'We have found that training [conscious-raising activities] is not the women's priority now, their priority is survival... looking for a penny in order to live.'

Yet even on this level, the data suggests a lack of 'success' if the aim is to provide material benefit for women. While over half the women interviewed thought that women were participating most in reconstruction (compared with men) only a quarter stated that women were benefiting the most from reconstruction. The majority saw benefits as being for the family. If the aim of the programmes is to target women simply as better deliverers of services and resources, then the indirect outcome may be to reinforce traditional gender roles and relations rather than to transform them.

In terms of more strategic or transforming roles of reconstruction, the research shows no real evidence of success, at least at this time. Taking a concrete example, no positive relation between participation and increased perceptions of contribution exists. Women who are participating in reconstruction projects do not show improved perceptions of the importance of their contribution to the household, nor is it the case that more women who are participating recognise their own contribution compared to those women who are not participating.

Moreover, even if 'positive' changes occur, such as the noted increased recognition of women's own contribution in male-headed households, their impact may be limited since power relations in households are based on more than productive/reproductive divisions, or who brings in the resources, as the following illustrates:

Interviewer: *'If only you were working in the household, your husband was here without work, who would be the head?'*

Respondent: *'It would be me because there would be no one else besides me. But really it would be him... because if a woman is working it is because he gave his consent.'*

Moreover, while women's perceptions of their own contribution to the household may change, these may not be shared by male partners. In the two communities in the study where women's male partners were also interviewed, high levels of disagreement were found on many issues. Only about half of the couples interviewed shared the same opinion around issues such as who made the most important contribution to the household, or who was the key decision-maker in the household. Post-disaster changes in perceptions of ideas around contribution may actually increase conflict between couples, as men's and women's opinions diverge.

The research suggests one clear outcome of reconstruction to be increased conflict, both between and within communities and households. A third of all the women interviewed felt that there had been problems with the organisations working in reconstruction in terms of establishment of the needs and priorities of the communities. Moreover, half felt that the distribution of aid had been unfair.⁷ Most worrying in gender terms is that problems with reconstruction projects appear to have had an impact on relations between men and women in households.

Indirect impacts of reconstruction projects

A relationship exists between perceptions of problems with reconstruction projects and perceptions of conflict and increased violence in the household. While less than a fifth of those who did not think there had been problems of some sort with the reconstruction projects thought that there had been conflict between couples over reconstruction, this rose to over half of those who perceived problems with reconstruction projects. Similarly, around a quarter of those who did not perceive problems with reconstruction projects suggested that violence against women had risen post-Mitch, compared with almost half of those who felt there had been

problems with the reconstruction process. The evidence appears to suggest that getting reconstruction wrong may impact not just on people's material well-being, but may also affect their health, safety, and emotional well-being.

Interestingly, the research shows no direct relation between perceptions of conflict between couples, and perceptions of increased violence. The mechanisms by which violence is transmitted in situations of crisis and reconstruction still need further research. Overall, the figures from both the *Puntos de Encuentro* research and the social audit results are inconclusive in terms of levels of household violence post-Mitch, with half of the respondents stating that violence had increased or stayed the same, and half that it had decreased. In this context three concepts are important: conflict (arguments/discussion), violence (conceptualised by the women as physical violence alone), and fear (typically a fear of abandonment, not of physical violence). To a large extent, fear of abandonment appears to stem from the perceived problems of female headship, in social not economic terms. The fear of social stigma through abandonment keeps women in male-headed households, and can increase their tolerance of men who drink, or are violent or unfaithful.

In one community, an integrated reconstruction project had been implemented that included an element of 'masculinity' training with men, and was reported by the women as having a positive effect on violence. The women in the community had been organised for many years, and had been involved in consciousness-raising activities pre-Mitch, and these factors may have provided the necessary conditions for this 'success'. However, the outcome of this project is not clear, since in this same community we find the highest proportion of women who name the man alone as the decision-maker in the household. It is important to remember that changes in the levels of violence against women can come

about without fundamental changes in gender relations.

Reconstruction: transformation or reinforcement?

The extent to which change in gender relations in situations of crisis and reconstruction has occurred in Nicaragua is questionable. While female heads have largely managed to maintain their income-generating activities, and at the same time participated in reconstruction projects, it appears that the final outcome may be material gain at the expense of their physical and mental well-being. The decrease in their recognition of the importance of their contribution to the household stands in contrast to their increased workload post-Mitch. Moreover, the research suggests that participation has not necessarily meant that women have had more of a voice in the reconstruction projects or in the community. Those involved in designing reconstruction projects should pay careful attention to the effects on women heads' self-esteem, and not assume that since these women are heads of household this is greater than amongst women with male partners.

For women in male-headed households, while the experience may be different, the outcome appears to be much the same. Decreases in women's income-generating activities may be seen to reinforce traditional gender roles and increase women's dependence on men. Women's participation in reconstruction projects may not compensate for this, having similarly reinforcing tendencies given their often practical focus on women as service deliverers for the family.

While men's perceptions have not changed, women's perceptions of their own contribution to the household have improved. While the study suggests that changes in income-generation and

participation post-Mitch are not responsible for this improvement, it sheds little light on which factors have influenced this positive change. What this highlights is the need to take care when initiating reconstruction projects focused on women, given that we still have much to learn about the processes at work in terms of gender roles and relations following a disaster of this sort.

What the present study does show, however, is that women's participation in reconstruction generated conflict with male partners. This tendency highlights the need to pay attention to the possible negative indirect impacts of projects designed to 'empower' women. While work with men may be seen as being important in this context, the real impact of 'masculinity' projects on gender relations remains to be seen.

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Notes

- 1 The aim of the social audit has been to collect data on material and psychological damage suffered and aid received in both the emergency and reconstruction periods. The audit sought not only to collect information on the extent to which aid had been received, and from whom, but attempted to give a voice to those included and excluded in the reconstruction process on the nature of that aid. Key elements were the equity and transparency of its distribution, the utility of the resources received, and the involvement of the people in the decisions around the reconstruction of their communities. The social audit also collected information on psychological effects, and on violence against women.
- 2 The full results of the social audit and the research undertaken by *Puntos de*

Encuentro (in Spanish) are available on the CCER web page:

<http://www.ccer-nic.org/>

An English version of the research will be available shortly:

<http://www.puntos.org.ni/>

- 3 While some suggest that more men than women died as a result of Mitch in Nicaragua due to men's more 'risky' behaviour patterns, this data is far from reliable.
- 4 The research undertaken by *Puntos de Encuentro* focused on four communities affected by Mitch. It utilised three research methods: a questionnaire census of the women in the community; semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of the women; and focus group discussion with a small number of the women interviewed. In two of the four communities, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were also undertaken with the male partners of the women. Here, men were included as partners rather than as 'people' in their own right.
- 5 Before the hurricane, half of the women interviewed in the *Puntos de Encuentro* study were involved in an income-generating activity. Afterwards, this fell to below a third.
- 6 Although women themselves may underreport their agricultural work – for example, over half of those women who stated they were not working also reported that they 'helped' in agriculture – such statements by organisations working with agricultural communities are worrying.
- 7 Moreover, it is interesting to note that while the assumption may be that the problem arises because agencies set priorities with little or no dialogue with the community, this does not appear to be the case. Indeed the problem may actually lie with agencies attempting to employ 'best practice' criteria. In Nicaragua, some areas have been much more likely than others to receive assistance from international relief agencies. This has created a situation where several agencies are working in the same community. Agencies' entry routes have been via discussion with local leaders who help to identify those households with most need. That a number of projects have talked to the same local leaders and thus targeted the same 'needy' households has resulted in more exaggerated feelings of inclusion/exclusion in these communities, and highlights the continued lack of co-ordination between high-profile funding organisations.

Resources

Compiled by Nittaya Thiraphouth

Publications

Gender, Emergencies and Humanitarian Assistance (1995), Bridget Byrne and Sally Baden, BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK. Available on-line at:

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/reports>

This report was commissioned by the European Commission to stimulate internal discussion of gender issues in emergency and humanitarian assistance. It examines approaches to emergencies that are focused on needs, coping strategies, power and decision-making, and changing gender relations and identities. It also reviews a range of responses to emergencies including food aid, health, human rights issues, and rehabilitation from a gender perspective, and explores the policy and institutional environment for integrating gender issues into emergency responses and humanitarian assistance.

The Gendered Terrain of Disaster: Through Women's Eyes (1998), E. Enarson and H. Morrow (eds), Greenwood Publishing Group, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881, USA.

The articles in this collection challenge stereotypical views of women as hapless victims of disasters. Several authors observe that disaster relief is managed largely by men, even if women are instrumental in

hands-on delivery. The editors conclude that, 'Disaster specialists rarely speak in the language of empowerment, but social justice is in fact the linchpin of effective disaster mitigation; women's services, organisations and grassroots advocacy can and must make the voices of women heard – in risk assessment and hazard planning, in crisis, and in reconstructing human settlements.'

Focus: Women in Emergencies (1997), UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

Available on-line at:

http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/pub/dhaneews/issue22/index.html#toc

In this special edition of *DHA News*, produced following the celebration of International Women's Day, internationally prominent figures, journalists, academics, and specialists involved in emergency management contribute a on variety of related subjects reflecting a wide spectrum of perspectives, experiences, and practices. Concise articles discuss policies and strategies for integrating gender into humanitarian response, and analyse the effects of natural disasters and conflict on women.

Women and Emergencies (1994), Bridget Walker (ed.), Oxfam GB, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, UK.

The papers in this short book explore some of the dilemmas for those engaged in the

planning and implementation of emergency relief programmes, and record the experience of women in situations of crisis. Demonstrating how action in emergencies holds the potential both to deepen existing inequalities or to act as a positive force for change, it argues that relief and development need to be seen as parts of the same whole. It is aimed at development policy makers and practitioners and is written in accessible language.

Gender and Natural Disasters (2000), Elaine Enarson, InFocus Programme Crisis Response and Reconstruction Working Paper 1. Available on-line at:

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/recon/crisis/publ/wp1.htm>

This report augments the gender perspective of the ILO's InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction by focusing on natural disasters. Based on agency reports and field worker accounts, it identifies the complex ways in which gender relations shape human experiences before, during, and after natural disasters. Written for a general audience, the report has four main themes: the social construction of vulnerability to 'natural' disasters, particularly on the basis of gender relations; the specific impacts of disasters on women's paid and unpaid work; six core action issues arising from these patterns; and policy and research implications for using knowledge about gender, work, and employment in natural disasters.

Gender and Catastrophe (1997), Ronit Lentin (ed.), Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF, UK.

Brings together a wide variety of feminists, academics, and activists to explore the gendered effects of violence against women in war and other disasters. The contributors explore the ways in which women are targeted as ethnic subjects in extreme situations such as major wars, genocides, famines, slavery, the holocaust, mass rape,

and ethnic cleansing. All cases are subjected to in-depth feminist analysis and the result is a book which integrates women's differing experiences of war and violence into a wider framework which seeks to uncover the consequences of identifying women as simultaneously sexual objects, transmitters of culture, and symbols of the nation.

Weaving Gender in Disaster and Refugee Assistance (1998), InterAction, 1717 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Suite 701, Washington, DC 20036, USA. Available on-line at:

<http://www.interaction.org/caw/gender/>

This comprehensive report comprises 'lessons learned' from two 1998 InterAction Forum seminars, co-sponsored by InterAction's Commission on the Advancement of Women, the Committee on Migration and Refugee Affairs, and Disaster Response and Resources. It includes an array of perspectives from the InterAction community, NGOs, donors, and refugees, and presents specific strategies for enabling both women and men to be full participants and beneficiaries in humanitarian and refugee assistance. A booklet that accompanies the report is a useful tool for field staff and others who are attempting to integrate gender into disaster relief and refugee programs.

Responding to Emergencies and Fostering Development, the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid (1999), Claire Pirotte, Bernard Husson, and François Grunewald, Zed Books.

This multi-authored book is the result of a dialogue between practitioners from leading emergency relief and development agencies about how to respond to the difficulties thrown up by different humanitarian crises. The collection has a global reach and includes a good chapter on social differentiation between men and women in humanitarian interventions in the third section.

Improving Social and Gender Planning in Emergency Programmes (1995), Eftihia Voutira, Refugees Studies Programme, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.

Commissioned by the World Food Programme, this report reviews models of food distribution in their current policies and practices and seeks to improve equity in food distribution. It focuses on reconsidering the role of women in food distribution practices; ensuring their access to food; increasing their participation in decision-making generally, and in particular, concerning participation in food distribution in emergency operations. Examining the impact of humanitarian work on communities it argues that the integration of gender into planning and implementation of emergency programmes requires community participation.

Gender Aware Approaches to Relief and Rehabilitation (1996), E. Kasmann and M. Körner, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH, Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5, 65760 Eschborn, Germany.

Aimed primarily at GTZ staff and local partners, this book puts forward guidelines for the treatment of gender concerns within the context of African relief and rehabilitation programmes. It first reviews the conditions of average women at household level in post-crisis situations, in terms of major variables such as nutrition, health, sexual violence, shelter, and education. It further assesses their societal roles, with brief case studies of Mozambique, Eritrea, and Somalia. An exploration of practical approaches to the integration of these considerations into project organisation and procedures follows. Further chapters examine the prospects for greater incorporation of gender-aware perspectives by aid agencies, and provide recommendations and references towards this end.

The Sphere Project, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (2000), The Sphere Project, PO Box 372, 17 Chemin des Crets, CH-1211, Geneva 19, Switzerland. Also distributed by Oxfam. Available on-line at:

<http://www.sphereproject.org/>

The Sphere Project charter and minimum standards set out what people affected by disasters have a right to expect from humanitarian agencies. The cornerstone of this book is the humanitarian charter, which is based on the principles and provisions of international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law asserting the rights of populations to protection and assistance. The charter is followed by minimum standards in five core sectors: water supply and sanitation, nutrition, food aid, shelter and site planning, and health services. It makes a start with identifying minimum standards for gender equity in humanitarian response and with the aim of helping agencies focus on gender concerns from the start of an emergency.

The Oxfam Handbook of Development and Relief (1995), Deborah Eade and Suzanne Williams, with contributions from Oxfam staff and others, Oxfam GB.

This major reference book is the product of the experience of Oxfam GB in its work in over 70 countries around the world. The handbook analyses thinking, policy, and practice in fields as diverse as health, human rights, emergency relief, capacity building, and agricultural production, and is the only book of its kind to incorporate a gender analysis throughout. Chapter two, focusing on people, includes a section explicitly on gender concerns complete with a general checklist of questions on gender-sensitive programme development. Chapter six deals with emergencies and development and includes brief sections on consulting women during emergency assessments, and the needs of specific social groups, as well as gender consideration in food distribution.

A Framework for People-Oriented Planning in Refugee Situations Taking Account of Women, Men and Children (1992), Mary B. Anderson, Ann M. Howarth (Brazeau) and Catherine Overholt, UNHCR, C.P. 2500, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland.

Presents the analytical framework for People Oriented Planning (POP), a tool developed by UNHCR to assist refugee workers in improving the participation of refugee women. POP provides a framework for analysing the socio-cultural and economic factors in a refugee society, which can influence the success of activities.

Gender and Armed Conflicts: Challenges for Decent Work, Gender Equity and Peace Building Agendas, (2001) Eugenia Date-Bah, Martha Walsh *et al.*, InFocus Programme Crisis Response and Reconstruction Working Paper 2.

This document attempts to provide an analytical synthesis of research and insights based upon country studies, undertaken by the ILO between 1996 and 2000. It has been prepared to guide policy formulation, effective pursuit of gender-sensitive programming, and other activities, to stimulate and advance current debate on women and gender issues in the wake of conflict.

Victims, Perpetrators or Actors: Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence (2001), Caroline O. N. Moser and Fiona Clark (eds), Zed Books.

The objective of this book is to provide a holistic analysis of the gendered nature of armed conflict and political violence, and a broader understanding of the complex changing roles and power relations between women and men during such circumstances. Through empirical case studies from different regions of the world the book addresses key issues such as the complex and interrelated stages of conflict and peace; gendered expressions of violence; gendered experiences of conflict and peace;

and the role of women's organisations in conflict resolution and peace building. Written to inform analysis of violent conflict it also contains operation-ally relevant issues for those designing policy or programme level interventions.

Gender, Conflict and Development (1995), Bridget Byrne, BRIDGE. Available on-line at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/reports>

Volume I of this report provides an overview of issues of gender, conflict, and development, drawing selectively on case study material. Its focus is on the ways in which gender relations are affected in an armed conflict, and the strategies that can be pursued to enhance women's bargaining power in decision-making processes in conflict and peace negotiations. Full case studies of conflict situations and relief responses in Kosovo, Algeria, Somalia, Guatemala, Eritrea, Cambodia, and Rwanda are provided in Volume II.

Conflict and Development (1996), In Brief Issue 3, Bridge. Available on-line at: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/dgb3.html>

This Conflict and Development issue of the quarterly bulletin produced by Bridge looks at how militarisation affects men and women and how new opportunities which arise in conflict situations can be used both to empower women and to promote conflict resolution. Included are case studies of Guatemala and Rwanda.

Integrating Gender into Emergency Responses (1996), In Brief Issue 4, Bridge. Available on-line at: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/dgb4.html>

This issue of the Bridge bulletin asks how constraints to integrating gender in relief can be overcome, highlights the potential for tackling biases in the distribution of food aid and support for coping strategies, and debates whether rehabilitation offers an opportunity to redress inequalities between men and women.

The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict (1998), Cynthia Cockburn, Zed Books.

This book is the outcome of participatory action research examining the processes sustaining conflict in countries where there is war. Through close involvement with three women's projects, the Women Support Network, Belfast, the Medica project in Zenica, Bosnia and the Israeli-Palestinian Bat Shalom project in Northern Israel, the author seeks to understand how they work across ethnic divides in situations of conflict and how they create democracy out of difference. Written in accessible language.

States of Conflict: Gender Violence and Resistance (2000), Susie Jacobs, Ruth Jacobson, Jennifer Marchbank (eds), Zed Books.

This book examines gendered violence at various social and political levels and explores the complex links from a feminist perspective. Can national and international regimes actually offer women security? What is the meaning of women's recruitment to the military and the importance of social cleavages other than gender in women's and men's experience of violent conflict? Aimed at students and academics of women's studies, international relations, and political theory.

War's Offensive on Women: The Humanitarian Challenge in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan (2000), Julie A. Mertus, Kumarian Press Inc., 1294 Blue Hills Avenue, Bloomfield, CT 06002 USA.

Argues that attempts by humanitarian groups to provide assistance and protection will fall short unless women are enlisted as major actors in such efforts. Chapter 1 provides analytical tools for approaching gender and suggests the ways in which women experience war differently from men. Chapter 2 reviews recent experiences of tackling gender issues in humanitarian organisations and in situations for conflict.

The final chapters outline the supportive framework offered by international law and how agencies can make use of these developments.

Common Grounds, Violence against Women in War and Armed Conflict Situations (1998), Indai Lourdes Sajor (ed.), Asian Centre for Human Rights, ASCENT, Suite MJB Building, 220 Tomas Morato Avenue, Quezon City, Philippines.

This book contains a collection of papers presented in the International Conference on Violence against Women in War and Armed Conflict Situations in Tokyo, 1997. Written by academics, scientists, and activists, the papers aim to: identify various forms of violence against women in war and conflict situations; present statistics to establish a pattern of violations; concretise the role and the capacity of women human rights groups in advocating issues in armed conflict situations; and explore legal strategies in national and international courts in defence of women victims.

Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect: Women Speak out about Conflict (1995), Olivia Bennett, Jo Bexley, Kitty Warnock (eds), Panos, 9 White Lion Street, London N1 9PD, UK.

A collection of testimonies from women from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Uganda, Somaliland, Liberia, Bosnia, and Croatia revealing their views and experiences as fighters, participants, refugees, victims caught between warring factions, organisers of peace and rehabilitation, carers, mothers, relatives, and partners of the dead and the disappeared. They talk about their efforts to rebuild their lives and those of their families and communities, of taking on new roles and extra responsibilities, and of finding a way to break the cycle of war and revenge. Chapters are organised by country.

Women and Conflict (1993), Helen O'Connell (ed.), Oxfam GB.

This short book for policy makers and practitioners concentrates on gender issues in situations of military and civil strife. Themes explored are gender-related violence, the effects of armed conflict on women's lives, including the psychological and social impacts, and the situations in which many women refugee women and displaced find themselves. Articles show that women are not passive victims but are at the forefront of work for change, peace, security, and equitable relations.

Women and War (1993), Jeanne Vickers, Zed Books.

This book is an investigation of the impact on women of war in general and in recent conflicts, such as the Gulf War, and a survey of the various ways in which women have worked and can contribute towards peaceful settlement of confrontations between nations and communities. Aimed at students, activists, and policy makers.

Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict: United Nations Response (1998), UNDAW, Two United Nations Plaza, DC2-1226, 100017 New York, USA. Available on-line at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/pub/cover.htm>

This report considers the failure of the international community to address the issue of sexual violence during wartime in the early years of the UN. Developments are traced to the early 1990s when the international community finally recognised that human rights violations committed against women during armed conflict, including sexual violence, violate fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law. In the second part of this issue, the manner in which sexual violence during armed conflict emerged as an item of serious concern within the UN is examined. The role of women's NGOs in exerting pressure for

change is highlighted, and the UN's response described. The concluding section examines how the issue may be advanced in the next century. Useful for policy makers.

What Women do in Wartime: Gender and Conflict in Africa (1998) Meredith Turshen and Clotilde Twagiramariya (eds), Zed Books.

Describes and analyses the experience of women in African civil wars. A mixture of reportage, testimony, and scholarship, it includes contributions from women in Chad, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, and Sudan. The book profiles women's responses to war, as combatants as well as victims, and describes the groups women organise in the aftermath.

Development in Conflict: The Gender Dimension (1993), Judy El Bushra and Eugenia Piza-Lopez, Oxfam Discussion Paper 3, Oxfam.

This report arose out of a workshop held by Oxfam's Action for Gender Relations in South East Asia. The report analyses the impact of conflict on women and gender relations, and the implications for the work of NGOs, assesses the appropriate research and planning tools, gender-sensitive implementation of programmes and training needs of staff and partners. Also includes case studies from Cambodia, Somalia, Uganda, Sri Lanka, Burma, Philippines, and Lebanon.

The Gender Dimensions of Internal Displacement: Concept Paper and Annotated Bibliography (1998), Judy A. Benjamin and Khadiji Fancy, Office of Emergency Programmes Working Paper Series, UNICEF, New York, USA. Available on-line at: <http://www.unicef.org/emerg/IDPgen.pdf>

Identifying the main issues concerning the rights of displaced women and girls, this concept paper aims to raise awareness of the gender dimensions of internal displacement. It reviews and critiques the current role of the UN and other agencies and

suggests ways to promote an action plan for international agencies to respond more effectively to the rights of internally displaced women and girls by using a gender perspective.

Women at the Peace Table, 2000: Making a Difference (2000), Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, UNIFEM, 304 East 45th Street, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10017, USA. Available on-line at:

<http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/peacebk.pdf>

Argues for the full inclusion of women in peace processes and asserts that the absence of women from peace negotiations results in setbacks to the development of society at large and undermines democracy. Drawing on interviews with prominent women peace leaders in different parts of the world, it highlights the strategies that women have employed to make a positive impact on peace negotiations. Published by UNIFEM to promote cross-regional learning in its leadership and peace-building programme for women,

Aftermath: Gender Issues in Post-conflict Societies (2001), CD-DIS, Development Experience Clearinghouse, USAID, 1611 N Kent St., Suite 200, Arlington, VA 22209-2111, USA.

A series of concise reports evaluating gender issues in post-conflict societies. Country studies include Cambodia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, Rwanda, Georgia, and Guatemala.

Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Issues and Sources (1998), B. Sorensen, UNRISD, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Available on-line at

<http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/toc.htm>

Reviews literature dealing with political, economic, and social reconstruction from a gender perspective. One of its objectives is to go beyond conventional images of women as victims of war, and to document

the many different ways in which women make a contribution to the rebuilding of countries emerging from armed conflicts. Special attention is given to women's priority concerns, to their resources and capacities, and to structural and situational factors that may reduce their participation in reconstruction processes. A second aim is to shed light on how post-war reconstruction processes influence the reconfiguration of gender roles and positions in the wake of war, and how women's actions shape the construction of post-war social structures. Should be of interest to both practitioners and scholars.

Refugee Women (1995), Susan Forbes Martin, Zed Books.

Examines the discrimination and violence faced by refugee women and the steps needed to protect them. Stressing the importance of refugee women's participation, it surveys the current international commitment to refugees and offers practical recommendations for their empowerment. Written for researchers and academics as well as relief organisations.

Refugee Survey Quarterly: Special Issue on Refugee Women, Vol. 14 (1995) Centre for Documentation on Refugees, UNHCR/CDR, C.P. 2500, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland.

Brings together reports, documents, and bibliographic references that relate specifically to the challenges confronting refugee and displaced women. The special focus of this issue is the Select Biography on Refugee Women. It contains a section of country reports addressing the situation of refugee women in China, Pakistan, and Russia, and a section of documents that trace policy steps taken on refugee women and sexual violence against women during the session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme.

The Blue Room: Trauma and Testimony Among Refugee Women. A Psychosocial Exploration (1994), Inger Agger, Zed Books.

This book provides an interdisciplinary model for the therapeutic understanding and treatment of traumatised women for psychologists and those working with survivors of trauma. It focuses on the sexual abuse of women and examines how this is related to surrounding gender and political power structures. Drawing on interviews with refugee women from the Middle East and Latin America, the innovative narrative is structured around a metaphor of rooms and borders that represent women's life experiences.

South Asian Women: Facing Disasters, Securing Life (1997), Priyanthi and Vijitha Fernando, Duryog Nivaran Publications (ed.), 5 Lionel Edirisinghe Mawatha, Colombo 5, Sri Lanka.

This collection of articles and case studies explores the interaction of gender and politics in the management of disasters in South Asian societies from an 'alternative' perspective of disaster and development. It emphasises that for effective long-term disaster mitigation, the relations and institutional structures that make people – and especially women – vulnerable to disasters must be changed. Aimed at development and relief agencies and policy makers.

Migrant Women, Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities (1993), Gina Buijs (ed.), Berg Publishers, 150 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JJ, UK.

The papers in this book are concerned with the dynamic of change in gender relations brought about by migrancy. Several chapters have been written by women social scientists who are themselves migrants. The different chapters examine the varied and complex responses of women to migration; whether forced by political circumstances or by the need to

escape poverty and destitution. Some are forced to adapt to roles which they would have rejected at home, while others achieve an economic and social mobility they would have otherwise been denied.

Organisations

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Committee of the Red Cross, Public Information Centre, 19 Avenue de la Paix, CH 1202 Geneva, Switzerland.

Tel: + 41 22 734 6001; fax: + 41 22 733 2057
ICRC general; + 41 22 730 2082 Public Information Centre

<http://www.icrc.org/>

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral, and independent organisation whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and co-ordinates the international relief activities conducted in situations of conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, PO Box 372, CH-1211, Geneva 19, Switzerland.

Tel: +41 22 730 4222; fax: +41 22 733 0395

<http://www.ifrc.org/>

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is the world's largest humanitarian organisation. The Federation carries out relief operations to assist victims of disasters, and combines this with development work to strengthen the capacities of its member National Societies. The Federation's work focuses on four core areas: promoting humanitarian values, disaster response, disaster preparedness, and health and community care. The

network of National Societies – which cover almost every country in the world – is the Federation's principal strength. Co-operation between National Societies gives the Federation greater potential to develop capacities and assist those most in need. At a local level, the network enables the Federation to reach individual communities.

World Food Programme, Via C.G. Viola 68, Parco dei Medici, 00148 Rome, Italy.

Tel: +39 06 65131; fax: +39 06 6513 2840

<http://www.wfp.org/>

Created in 1963, WFP is the front-line United Nations agency in the fight against global hunger. In 2000, WFP fed 83 million people in 83 countries, including most of the world's refugees and internally displaced people.

UNHCR, C.P. 2500, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland.

Tel: +41 22 739 8111

<http://www.unhcr.ch/>

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established by the UN General Assembly in 1950 to provide protection and assistance to refugees. It promotes inter-national refugee agreements and monitors government compliance with international refugee law. Its staff work in a variety of locations ranging from capital cities to remote camps and border areas, attempting to provide the above mentioned protection and to minimise the threat of violence, including sexual assault, which many refugees are subject to, even in countries of asylum. The organisation seeks long-term or 'durable' solutions by helping refugees repatriate to their homeland if conditions warrant, and by helping them to integrate in their countries of asylum or to resettle in third countries.

UNOCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations, S 3600 New York, NY 10017, USA.

Tel: +1 212 963 1234; fax: +1 212 963 1312

http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance is part of the UN Secretariat and has the mandate to co-ordinate UN assistance in humanitarian crises that go beyond the capacity and mandate on any single humanitarian agency. OCHA works with governments, NGOs, UN agencies, and individuals to ensure that there is a coherent framework within which each actor can contribute effectively to humanitarian response efforts. It provides support to the humanitarian community with support in policy development and advocates on humanitarian issues to ensure that the views and concerns of the wider humanitarian community are reflected in overall recovery and peace-building efforts.

Médecins sans Frontières, International Office, Rue de la Tourelle, 39 Brussels, Belgium.

Tel: +32 2 280 1881; fax: +32 2 280 0173

<http://www.msf.org/>

Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) is an international humanitarian aid organisation that provides emergency medical assistance to populations in danger in more than 80 countries. In countries where health structures are insufficient or even non-existent, MSF collaborates with authorities such as the Ministry of Health to provide assistance. MSF works in rehabilitation of hospitals and dispensaries, vaccination programmes, and water and sanitation projects. MSF also works in remote health care centres and slum areas, and provides training of local personnel. All this is done with the objective of rebuilding health infrastructure to acceptable levels. In carrying out humanitarian assistance, MSF also seeks to raise awareness of crisis situations.

Action Against Hunger, 1 Catton Street, London WC1R 4AB, UK.

Tel: +44 171 831 5858; fax: +44 171 831 4259

<http://www.acf-fr.org/aahuk/main.htm>

Founded in 1979, Action Against Hunger is a non-governmental, apolitical, non-denominational organisation. Although it is an independent organisation, it is part of a larger French 'sans frontières' movement.

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 122 East 42nd Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10168-1289, USA.

Tel: +1 212 551 3088, +1 212 551 3111;

fax: +1 212 551 3180

<http://www.womenscommission.org/>

Operating under the auspices of the International Rescue Committee, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children is an expert resource and advocacy organisation that monitors the care and protection of refugee women and children. It speaks out on issues of concern to refugee and displaced women, children, and adolescents, who have a critical perspective in bringing about change but often do not have access to governments and policy makers. It also provides opportunities for refugee women and youth to speak for themselves through briefings, testimony, participation in field assessments, and international conferences.

Electronic Resources

Gender and Humanitarian Assistance Resource Kit

http://www.reliefweb.int/library/GHAR_kit/

This resource kit is intended to help IASC members and others to implement the policy on mainstreaming in humanitarian response.

Gender and Disaster Net

<http://www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn/>

The Gender and Disaster Network is an educational project initiated by women and men interested in gender relations in disaster contexts. An international forum for discussion, networking, and information exchange, it offers access to topical bibliographies and reports on applied projects or research in progress, book reviews, current information about relevant conferences and other events, a bulletin board for employment, scholarship, or funding opportunities, and contact information for other network members.

International Committee of the Red Cross

<http://www.icrc.org/eng>

Has a special section on women and war which offers topical papers, stories from the field, video clips, and a photo gallery, as well as updates on the initiatives of ICRC.

UNHCR

<http://www.unhcr.ch>

Contains links to articles relevant to gender issues in *Refugees* magazine and other UNHCR publications.

ReliefWeb

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf>

ReliefWeb is a project of the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It serves the information needs of relief workers and agencies. It contains updates on the latest emergencies, reports and papers on humanitarian concerns, and useful links and contacts.

