

**Emerging Issues: Governance, Democratization
and the Revisioning of Gender, Youth and Relations of Power**

February 2008

Preface

Over the course of the development of Peacebuild's five-year Strategic Directions Document(2008-2012), consultations with network members reaffirmed a strong interest in generating and articulating new evidence, analysis, and policy and programming options relating to the changing nature of armed conflict, and governance and democratization processes. Within these broader areas of interest, five priority themes were identified by Peacebuild's membership, one of which was *Identity, Communities and Conflict*.

This report on Governance, Democratization and the Revisioning of Gender, Youth and Relations of Power represents a first step in a larger, ongoing process of identifying emerging issues, challenges and opportunities for action on this priority theme by the community of practice Peacebuild is a part of. The research areas and recommendations advanced in this report will be considered by Peacebuild's members, Board of Directors, staff and Working Groups to ensure that youth and gender dynamics are effectively mainstreamed.

The methods used to generate this report were loosely modeled on the 'Fast Talk' process developed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). In January 2008, experts in the fields of gendered and youth identities, governance, democratization and armed conflict were identified by Peacebuild. Three experts, Dr. Doris Buss, Dr. Richard Maclure and Lauryn Oates, submitted written contributions to a set of questions developed by Peacebuild (listed in Annex 1).¹ These were circulated to the five experts listed below, who were then invited to discuss the collective responses. Of the five experts, Jennifer Johnson Martinesi and Dr. Doris Buss partook in the discussion, which was recorded and subsequently circulated as an audio file to all participants to elicit further comment. Dr. Jackie Kirk drew on both the written submissions and the oral contributions to produce the following report, which summarizes and expands upon all the previous inputs to identify conceptual frameworks, programmatic options, and areas for further exploration and analysis.

Peacebuild would like to extend its gratitude to all the participants who so readily lent their expertise to the development of this report.

¹ Written contributions submitted by expert participants are available on the Peacebuild Forum: <http://www.peacebuild.ca/action/?page=whatsnew&lang=e>.



Expert Participants:

Dr. Doris Buss, Associate Professor, Department of Law, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario

Dr. Jackie Kirk, Specialist in Education in emergencies, post-emergency and fragile states with a particular focus on gender equality, Montreal, Quebec.

Jennifer Johnson Martinesi, Consultant and former Director of War Child Canada, Toronto, Ontario

Dr. Richard Maclure, Associate Professor & former Acting Dean in the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario

Lauryn Oates, Professional human rights advocate and international development practitioner, Vancouver, British Columbia

Executive Summary:

Gender and age are critical factors in the ways in which conflict is prevented, experienced, mitigated, reconciled and resolved. Yet rarely do post-conflict democratization and governance policy and programming adequately respond to the diverse needs of men and women, girls and boys of different ages and therefore social positions, opportunities and challenges. Although areas such as human rights, grassroots participation, reconciliation and rehabilitation, and education are sites of gender-age convergence, and of possibility for meaningful and more nuanced gender-age-responsive interventions, approaches tend to be either gender or age specific. Such approaches have limited impact for those whose vulnerabilities are heightened precisely because of intersecting identities. For example, youth and gender often work to compound the risks of sexual violence of girls and young women and to marginalize them from relevant support services. For young male youth, intersecting identities are too readily associated with violence, crime and delinquency. Recommendations for ensuring that the opportunities for restructuring and re-visioning of gender-age-power relations which may exist in conflict and post-conflict are taken up and include the systematic inclusion of women and youth in policy development processes at all levels, the expansion of youth networks and support for youth-led initiatives that link into political dialogues and debates at different levels, the integration of the principles of practices of inclusive, participatory process into education reform and reconstruction, and enhanced commitments to participatory, advocacy-focused evaluations.

Introduction:

Explicit discussion of gender and age in the context of governance, democratization and violent conflict is highly pertinent to current policy debates and to the development of appropriate programming approaches. It is clear that age and gender should not be considered as ‘new elements’ of violent conflict; historically conflicts have for many years been formally fought by men but ‘played out on the bodies of women’. There have been stark gender differences in the experiences of and perspectives on conflict, and if one digs deeper, roots of conflict may be related to gender-based inequities, even where the conflict has been deemed an ‘ethnic conflict’. Furthermore, it is important to understand that power dynamics related to gender and age exist in pre-conflict and in post-conflict times and there are no specific points at which very different gender-age-conflict dynamics start or stop.

Yet, new dynamics in relation to gender, conflict and governance relate to the changed/ changing nature of armed conflict, as well as to the more systematic exposure of gender dimensions of conflict, in particular that of large scale, brutal sexual violence against civilian populations. In recent years – and especially since the introduction of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 – women, peace and security advocates have been able to draw more attention to both the protection needs of women during and after conflict as well as the need for women to be engaged in peacebuilding processes.

In relation to youth, attention to the protection of children can also be related to the changed nature of armed conflict, for example, to the introduction and widespread use of light arms (which make it much more possible for children to be engaged in combat), to the involvement of non-state actors in civil conflict. Linked to the international commitment to rights mechanisms such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Security Council Resolutions on children and armed conflict, advocates for children and youth have, in recent years, been able to draw attention to the protection threats and needs of young people, and to insist that they are important stakeholders to be included in peacebuilding processes.

However, such attention to age and gender has not necessarily been systematically tied into macro-level policy dialogue related to governance and democratization. Although UNSCR 1325 speaks to women's roles in peacebuilding, it stops short of a broader attention to governance and democratization. Furthermore, no mention is made of girls and their role in peacebuilding. Further exploration of the age and gender intersections of conflict, democratization and governance are, therefore, of particular value. This is particularly true when we emphasize a broad notion of democracy, which comes from 'the bottom up' as a result of inclusive, community and local level discussion, consultation, decision-making and follow up actions.

Conceptual Frameworks:

Where democracy and good governance are denied, the politics of identity tend to be unleashed in wholly destructive ways. Consequently, given the significance of the politics of identity in the current era, it is vital that such politics be channeled into forms of genuine and sustainable democratic practices within established institutions of good governance. (Dr. Richard Maclure)

Conceptually, where do gender, age, democratization, governance and conflict intersect?

The intersections may be seen at different levels: international, nation and local, all of which interconnect across four key areas identified by discussants – human rights protection and promotion, grassroots participation, post-conflict rehabilitation and reconciliation, and education.

The **protection and promotion of human rights** – and specifically the rights of women and children – are processes that tie age and gendered identities to governance and democratization, especially in post-conflict contexts. Post-conflict democratization may be characterized as processes whereby international norms are integrated into national legislation, governance systems and processes. Indicators of a deep democratization process should include the special rights and freedoms that are assigned to women and children because of their particular age and gender-based protection needs. This is especially so in a context of violent conflict where age and gender usually create heightened vulnerabilities to

rights violations for women and children. For these groups, the barriers and challenges to the fulfillment of governance and democratization-linked civic and political rights are also usually very high.

“Sustaining local governance models which include women means bringing women to the table at every opportunity and at every level of decision-making in a peace and democratization process, and making space for women activists’ lobbying and advocacy.” (Lauryn Oates)

However, while gender-age intersections with democratization and governance may be evident in international and national legislative and policy documents, the manifestations are perhaps more evident at the community level. Processes of **grassroots participation**, where, for example, community-based women’s and youth organizations act to influence decisions and policies affecting the lives of their community members are a critical example, as is the increased emphasis at the community level on girls’ education. There are examples of child and youth-led movements being highly influential and lobbying at regional, national and local level for protective policies - and their enforcement in areas such as police behaviour.

The **rehabilitation and reconciliation** into communities of children and youth whose rights have been violated during conflict are also processes in which gender and age intersect with democratization and governance. The involvement of children and youth in combat is a complex issue with very indefinite lines between concepts such as ‘forced recruitment’, ‘voluntary recruitment’, ‘abduction’, child soldiers, and ‘civilian victims’. It is clear, however, that diverse experiences are also gendered.

“Forced marriage, much like aspects of child soldiering, can blur the lines between civilian/victim and participant/combatant, and this has consequences for, among other things, post-conflict access to resources and justice. Finally, forced marriage highlights the importance of specifying young girls as a category distinct from women and young boys (Park 2006) to appreciate how gender and age intersect to position young girls at particular sites of disadvantage.” (Dr. Doris Buss)

Concepts such as ‘forced marriage’ and ‘bush wives’ are also far from clear-cut definitions, but they do relate to gender and age specificity. Research highlights that girls involved with fighting forces are more likely to be subjected to forced sexual relations, to sexual violence, to household chores than boys. Early pregnancy, childbirth and early motherhood in a context of extreme violence, limited social relationships and substandard nutrition and health facilities are also gender-specific experiences which call for gender and age-responsive rehabilitation processes which allow girls to come to terms with their experience and to understand that they are valued members of a post-conflict society and have a role to play in the establishment and maintenance of democracy and good governance. Boys – who may have been more actively involved in acts of horrific violence, for example – also require gender and age-responsive rehabilitation processes to enable them to come to terms with

their gender and age-based experiences of child soldiering and to find ways to (re)integrate into communities, and to re(establish) collaborative relationships of trust and mutual respect.

Education – and schooling in particular – is another site in which gender, age, democratization and governance intersect in a context of violent conflict. Internationally, commitments such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) targets build on the CRC’s assertion of the right to education for children and youth. In fact, in defining the type of education to be made available, the CRC is the most explicit in relation to democracy and governance². The MDGs and EFA targets highlight the importance of addressing gender disparities as a critical factor in achieving universal school participation. They also highlight the relationships between girls’ education and the empowerment of women. Inclusive, age and gender-responsive education should provide the basic concepts and skills for boys and girls to understand and engage in processes of democratization and governance in their communities and societies – and should be ‘safe spaces’ in which young people work with adults to build a community of trust, accountability, of respect for rights and thus experience democracy and good governance in action and have opportunities to practice new skills, as well as encouragement and opportunities to use them in interactions with the community beyond the school.

What are the realities?

We may map the conceptual intersections of gender, age, democratization and governance in ways which promote more nuanced understandings of the needs, perspectives and possibilities for young women and men in conflict contexts and which can inform more responsive policy and program development. However, there is far too little evidence of genuine attention to gender and age-based identities in processes of social and security sector reforms and in the broader processes of democratization and governance in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

Women and girls have been consistently marginalized in processes of post-conflict reconciliation and redress. In Sierra Leone, for example, where the strong and vocal role of youth in collective recovery efforts such as the Truth and Reconciliation Council, has been recognized, women and girls have been systematically marginalized from legal redress, especially in relation to sexual violence. The occasional prosecution of a perpetrator of sexual violence in an international court is far from addressing the entrenched inequalities in

² Article 29 of the CRC defines the right of children to: Education that is “directed to: (a) The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations; (c) The development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own; (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin; (e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

access to justice, to redress and to opportunities for full reconciliation and engagement in a new post-conflict society that young women and men need.

This failure on the part of justice and security sector to provide gender and age responsive redress may in part be related to the limitations of population-specific rights instruments, such as the CRC or the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination of Women (CEDAW). They are limited in their ability to respond to the rights at the intersections of two or more key instruments, for example, the rights of girls and young women. While CEDAW is gender specific, its attention –and applicability –to the specific circumstances of young girls’ or young women’s lives is less obvious. Similarly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child makes specific provisions for children, based on a very clear age-based definition (under 18 years old), yet does not address the gendered nature of children’s experience, rights and protection needs. Such structural limitations may then be integrated into national law, justice and security systems in ways that make more specific legal and security sector protection for young women and young men more challenging to establish. However, even where legal provisions are in place and are adequate, implementation is slow and is rarely adequately enforced. This may be attributed to lack of sustainable resourcing, low levels of capacity, or other related factors.

The educational realities in most conflict contexts are also limited in their responsiveness to age and gender. Although there are also challenges for boys – and for poor, rural, ethnically or otherwise marginalized boys in particular – in general, girls face greater barriers to participation in education. In contexts of conflict this is often related to security concerns, to distances required to find functioning schools, and to the expanded gender-related demands on time (such as household chores, income generation, siblings) as well as gender differentiation in the allocation of scarce family resources, for school fees, and other schooling costs. This gender-differentiated resource allocation at the family level is compounded by gender stereotypes and life expectations. Furthermore, girls may also face the additional threat of sexual violence in and around schools, and on their routes traveling to and from their schools. The availability of water and adequate sanitation facilities in schools to enable girls and women to manage menstruation, or even to cope with a young baby is also limited. Age is also a determining factor in access to and achievement in education. While conflict may interrupt education and result in many young people with incomplete (or even un-started education) there are far too few opportunities for average students to study basic education skills (in lower grades) comfortably and meaningfully with teachers who can ensure that the learning opportunities build on their extensive life experiences. Often, the only option for a student is to enter Grade 1 class with far younger children, age-inappropriate learning materials and teachers who are ill-prepared to meet the diverse learning needs and styles of the class.

Moreover, if enrolled in school, the experience of schooling for girls and boys is unlikely to be attuned to notions of democratization and governance. Rather than ‘living and experiencing’ democracy in the school, lesson content is likely to be heavily theoretical and

‘traditional’ and the teaching processes repetitive and directive. Compliance to the school rules and norms is often enforced through disciplinary measures such as corporal punishment. The social positions of boys, opportunities for interaction with other community members and activities, as well as relationships with predominantly male teachers, may provide some opportunities for boys to learn about, discuss, and generally engage on broader issues related to politics, society, democracy, governance and development, but such opportunities are usually missing for girls. In a post-conflict context of increased attention to re-visioning and restructuring, to peace education, trauma healing and so on, education may be one of the most promising avenues for positive attention to gender and age as they relate to governance and democracy. However, it is recognized that the pressures of more conventional reform soon assert themselves in the system and the emphasis may far too quickly shift to measures of school effectiveness based on numbers (teachers, students, schools, textbooks, exam scores, etc.) rather than students’ experiences and long term outcomes.

While failure to identify and respond to the gender and age specificity of certain rights violations and needs for responsive protection, rehabilitation and education systems prevails, a counter-tendency of simplistic association of gender and age with certain identities is also noticed. This is particularly the case in relation to male youth-to-youth crime, youth gangs and organized youth violence, which have become major security concerns especially in the capitals of many countries, particularly across sub-Saharan Africa. Here we see very negative linkages made between age-based (i.e., youth), gender (usually male) identities and insecurity which often feed into ‘get tough on crime’, militaristic type police and security responses. Rather than addressing some of the root causes of the crime – such as gender-age related exclusions from education, from employment, from productive activity, as well as from the processes and structures of governance and democracy – youth are instead incarcerated and/or fined and thus further marginalized from peaceful, constructive engagement in their communities.

This related tendency of the reassertion of masculinity and particularly of authoritarian and even violent masculinity into post-conflict governance is also of note. Under the guise of authority and stability, patriarchy is reaffirmed, male perspectives and experiences are privileged and the voices of women are diminished. This results in compromise of the international, national legislative and policy changes which may have been instituted or at least advocated in the aftermath of peace talks, agreements etc.

Opportunities for Action:

What needs to be done? What are the policy and programming priorities?

“Gender and youth inequality is not simply a matter of lack of representation, and the gendered effects of democratization, governance and conflict are not simply issues of identity. The gendered and age-related impacts of these phenomena are structured through political, economic and social systems

that are themselves problematic. ‘Representation’ is a very small part of how inequalities are manifest and maintained.” (Dr. Doris Buss)

Immediate protection for the most vulnerable populations – usually women and children - from violence is an imperative in contexts of conflict; this may be in safe spaces, ‘zones of peace’, refugee camps or other locations. Yet, in the longer term, deeper changes are required in the way democracy and governance is understood, practiced and how its structures, systems and processes are designed and implemented. It is critical to ensure the increased engagement of women and youth in the structures and processes of governance - but ‘representation’ (or ‘a seat at the table’) is not enough if substantive, political, economic and social issues related to inequalities are not addressed. The economics of democratization and governance have to be addressed: who wins, who loses, what does it cost to the different constituencies to engage and what are the returns?

With the shifts in gender and age identities, roles and hierarchies that take place before, during and after conflict, there are challenges such as the reassertion of conservative values, of authoritarian, male-centred models of authority. It is very difficult for women’s, youth groups and community-level initiatives to challenge the powerful patriarchal institutions, which may have been in existence for many years; NGOs and other organization that take up more critical positions in relation to authority may be ‘silenced’. Yet there are also opportunities in a post conflict context for new models of democratization and governance to evolve which are more responsive to gender and age-based identities. There are power shifts, often linked to regime change and to the establishment of new institutions and structures; war-peace transition times are often a period of optimism, of reassessment of priorities and re-visioning of future society. Such opportunities are highly nuanced and context specific; they cannot be taken up by outside agencies which lack the deep understandings of the root causes of conflict, of its multiple manifestations and of other prevailing factors such as HIV/AIDS prevalence. Rather, it is communities themselves which need to be supported, and in particular the women and youth within their communities, in the identification of opportunities for change and of strategies to act on them. Support may be especially through access to professional expertise. However, opportunities to support and sustain such initiatives have far too often been missed, or they have faded with inadequate and unsustainable and inappropriate attention.

Below are a number of areas identified by discussants for particular policy and programming attention:

1. Despite the numerous agreements, instruments and tools, systematic enforcement of norms such as quotas for women in parliament, in government bodies, UN agencies, peacekeeping missions, and for gender specific legal provisions need to be articulated and implemented. Policy dialogue, decision-making fora and other consultative processes must be rigorously monitored for their inclusiveness – in terms of representation and of content addressed. Mechanisms such as UN Security Council Resolution 1612, which endeavours to

protect children in armed conflict, must be fully operationalized. Even through the implementation of what might be considered ‘neutral’ disaster relief activities there is a need to “nudge gender relations” along.

2. The operationalization of norms, rights instruments and commitments related to youth, gender and governance is manifested most clearly at local levels – through, for example, more inclusive and dynamic local governance structures, through which men and women can be actively engaged in creating their future communities, in consultation with and based on the perspectives and priorities of male and female youth. Support for the participation of women activists and actors is particularly important; through the structures of democracy and good governance, they can hold others (e.g. national government, sector specific actors) accountable for legislative and policy commitments made to young people, and also support the implementation processes of such.

3. The creation of and support for youth associations and the expansion of networks at local, national and international levels is one promising area for further action. Such groups should be encouraged in constructive political engagement and provided with opportunities for legitimate dialogue, involvement in decision-making, policy setting and implementation. They should be linked up with other civil society organizations which may be supportive of their claims and support interaction with actors in local government, in the law enforcement agencies, in local businesses and the private sector.

4. Similarly, democratization needs to be systematically integrated into education systems to ensure that schools are places in which children and youth can discuss, question, think and engage in decision-making processes which affect their lives. Indicators of governance and democratization should include educational signals such as equity in access to and outcomes from education (enrollment and completion rates) as well as the establishment of legitimate student councils, and regular student consultations. Also important are efforts to engage teachers and parents as key stakeholders in the definition, implementation and evaluation of holistic, student-centred education reform processes.

5. The support and financial commitment of international agencies, bilateral and multi-lateral donors is critical in the promotion of such approaches; in particular their role in advocacy with governments should promote such inclusive visions of rule of law, social sector (education especially) and governance reform, and should do so in ways which build the capacity and legitimacy of national actors.

6. Participatory research and evaluation, which are foundational to accountability and to democratization, should be supported because, working with the key stakeholders (youth and women especially), such processes can help to identify what is working and why in relation to gender and youth. Such findings can – and then should - be integrated into social justice advocacy efforts at local, national and international levels.

Areas for Further Exploration and Analysis:

The above discussion presents very broad themes, ideas and recommendations, and many generalizations, which may not necessarily hold true in every context. Yet, there are also trends and issues which were not addressed and which warrant more in depth examination and investigation. These include, for example:

1. The role of globalization and transnationalism in relation to age and gender identities in contexts of conflict and democratization.
2. In relation to the promotion and protection of women's rights in particular, the role of religion in shaping opportunities – or limitations – for women is one area that also requires in depth attention.
3. It is clear that purely economic models (\$input → output) cannot adequately reflect the sort of improvements that are called for by advocates for youth and gender equality; neither can models which fail to engage with the multiple causes and consequences of violent conflict. Yet at the same time, critical economic analysis of diverse social processes is necessary in order to understand the realities of individual lives, the options available and the 'choices' made.
4. Finally, it is clear that further attention is required to the challenges of truly thinking and acting at the intersections of age and gender; there is a marked tendency to revert to either talking about women (non-age specific) and/ or to youth (non-gender specific), to the exploration of the particular points of vulnerability as well as the particular points of strength and leverage which might exist at this nexus.

Annex 1. Questions for Discussants

Gender and Youth Dynamics as they relate to Governance, Democratization and Violent Conflict

1. How and at what points do gendered and age-based identities intersect with processes of democratization, governance and armed conflict?
 - a. How and at what points do gendered and age-based identities intersect with processes of democratization – for example judicial and legislative reform?
 - b. How and at what points do gendered and age-based identities intersect with processes of security sector reform?
 - c. How and at what points do gendered and age-based identities intersect with democratization and re-conceptualizations of citizen-state relations?
2. Which elements of the interconnections between identity, democratization, governance and armed conflict are new (if any)?
 - a. What conflicts in particular do you see as representative of these new interconnections?
 - b. How do these new interconnections affect men and women, and girls and boys different (in the conflicts that you have named)?
 - c. What are the most compelling needs of women, girls and boys in the context of these new interconnections?
 - d. When considering these new interconnections, what have been the greatest failures in responding to the needs of women, girls and boys?
3. Are there any opportunities for changing the way that policy makers and civil society actors respond to conflicts that arise out of these new interconnections (between identity, democratization, governance and armed conflict)?
4. How can civil society work to ensure that women and/or children/youth have an active role in legitimate decision-making processes, particularly as relates to the prevention or resolution of conflict and the maintenance of peace? What obstacles impede such efforts?
5. Given that armed conflicts often force a shift in traditional roles and hierarchies (female or child-headed households, for example), does this represent an opening for changes in relations of power? Does this represent an opportunity to support the development of models of local governance that integrate women and children's rights? How to support the development of such models in a way that is sustainable and resonate with local needs, realities and worldviews?
6. What other critical areas or questions should be explored as relates to the intersection of identity, democratization, governance and armed conflict?

