

## Executive summary

Integrating a gender perspective into international support to statebuilding is key to improving the quality of international engagement in fragile states. This means basing all interventions on an understanding of the distinct experiences of men and women and acting on opportunities to promote gender equality in these contexts. It is essential because gender equality is important in its own right and statebuilding processes offer opportunities to advance it. At the same time, promoting gender equality and adopting gender-sensitive statebuilding approaches can strengthen peace and development.

However, statebuilding theory and practice currently neglect the importance of gender relations. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) policy guidance on *Supporting Statebuilding in Situations of Conflict and Fragility* (2011) recognises the political nature of statebuilding and the importance of paying attention to the power dynamics at play in these situations. Yet it does not offer guidance on how to integrate a gender perspective and help seize opportunities to promote gender equality in the context of statebuilding. Evidence also suggests that traditional approaches to programming on gender equality in fragile states often achieve limited success because they insufficiently take into account the political nature of statebuilding.

*Gender and Statebuilding in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States* aims to fill this gap by providing an overview of the challenges, opportunities and prospects for more systematic consideration of gender relations in the context of statebuilding. It is primarily directed at those within the donor community who are specifically involved in designing and implementing support to statebuilding activities. Its conclusions will also be of interest to a wider audience, including gender equality advocates seeking to engage more explicitly with statebuilding.

### Challenges and limitations of current international approaches

Many of the challenges donors face in integrating a gender perspective into their work on statebuilding are common to wider programmes of support to peacebuilding and statebuilding initiatives. They include the need

to manage tensions between the endogenous process of statebuilding and normative international commitments to gender equality, and between the short-term goal of stability and longer-term goals of promoting inclusion and gender equality. Donors must also effectively engage with the full diversity of women's interests and drivers of resistance to reform, both of which tend to reflect broader political issues. Moreover, translating formal gains in women's rights into real change in women's lives requires navigating informal institutions, including customary institutions, which can be difficult for donors to grasp and access.

Limitations within donor agencies further constrain their ability to manage these contextual challenges. Staff working on statebuilding often have limited skills in gender analysis, and existing conflict analysis tools are generally gender-blind. Limited evidence is available on which approaches are most effective in integrating a gender perspective into donor support to statebuilding. The lack of such evidence intensifies the challenge of mobilising the resources and the high-level political will that are needed to implement commitments on gender equality in fragile states. Moreover, responsibility for integrating a gender perspective can be assigned to gender advisors with junior status and limited access to key decision makers. That is one reason why policies on the need to prioritise gender equality in statebuilding work tend to be weakly integrated in broader peace and security policy.

## **Key ingredients and recommendations for integrating a gender perspective into statebuilding**

A more politically informed approach to integrating a gender perspective into international support to statebuilding can help tackle these challenges. This involves greater awareness of the links between women's ability to participate in statebuilding and the wider distribution of power. It also calls for greater realism about how long change takes, particularly in situations where state institutions are weak. Key ingredients of a more effective approach include:

**Developing a highly nuanced understanding of the local context**, including the ways in which gender inequalities are tied up with wider issues of how resources are distributed. This can be crucial, for example, in addressing drivers of resistance to reform, which often reflect wider political issues such as the balance of power between formal and customary institutions.

**Making use of a variety of different strategies** that will allow donors to seize whatever opportunities exist to help advance women's rights in the short term while also pursuing longer-term and more indirect approaches.

In the area of political empowerment, for example, effective interventions could combine training for women candidates, local advocacy for quotas, campaigns against electoral violence and sensitising male community leaders.

**Supporting women’s agency and mobilisation at different levels and for different purposes** – including for the pursuit of grassroots initiatives and engagement in national and local peacebuilding or political processes – while taking into account the diverse views and interests among women.

**Engaging with a wider range of actors and institutions and facilitating identification of common interests and partnerships to promote gender equality.** Donors can help achieve this, for example, by drawing on South-South contacts with relevant experience or framing gender equality issues so they appeal to the interests of a diversity of key power holders.

**Using political influence and senior-level commitment to advance the gender and statebuilding agenda, and seizing opportunities particularly in the early stages of statebuilding.** Supporting women’s participation in constitution-making processes is a prime example.

Based on its fresh and focused analysis, this publication makes a series of concrete recommendations to help donors address obstacles to integrating a gender perspective into statebuilding and achieve more effective, more politically-informed approaches. Key entry points include action to:

**Strengthen analytical tools**, including by revising existing conflict analysis and statebuilding frameworks to incorporate gender analysis and ensuring that all staff have adequate training and knowledge to apply gender analysis.

**Enhance the accountability mechanisms and funding available to support gender-sensitive statebuilding**, including by strengthening co-ordination of in-country funding allocations to support gender-related statebuilding activities.

**Contribute to building an evidence base on gender-sensitive statebuilding**, including by ensuring that all programmes incorporate detailed monitoring and evaluation components that encompass indicators relating to gender issues.

**Use international forums and networks to support change at the national and local levels**, for example by exchanging lessons learned on integrating gender into statebuilding within the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding.

**Identify skills and capacity gaps within donor agencies and take measures to address them**, including by ensuring that gender advisors have access to high-level policy discussions relating to statebuilding.

**Build on entry points to integrate a gender and statebuilding lens into the piloting of the New Deal and the development of the post-2015 framework**, including by using the New Deal piloting as an opportunity to strengthen implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

**Foster linkages with local women’s organisations and grassroots networks and ensure that they are able to access funding and programming opportunities**, including by establishing quick-disbursing, smaller-scale funding streams that are accessible to community-based and grassroots organisations.



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