

Foreword

When I visited Camp Corail, Haiti, in 2011 as Norway’s Development Minister, a young woman welcomed me into her house. I listened to her story: her surroundings had descended into chaos following the earthquake and sexual assault had become a constant threat. One day the young woman was raped. After surviving the ordeal, she found out that she was pregnant.

She showed her baby son to me with immense pride and there was little resignation in her voice. She had many plans and expectations for the coming years. And she seemed determined to do all in her power to help create a better future – for herself and for her little boy.

Listening to this woman’s story was a stark reminder that in Haiti and elsewhere women often experience fragility, conflict and transition very differently than men. Women frequently bear disproportionate burdens including the brunt of widespread sexual violence and sole responsibility to care for children and the sick, while they tend to be excluded from the decisions that determine their future.

Yet the young woman’s strength, energy and concern for the future well-being of her son also add one more testimony to the well-documented fact that women are a powerful force for peace and development. Ensuring space for the role of women as leaders in building a better future for their states and societies is the real state-building challenge. This is essential for achieving better futures for their families and communities. It is also their right.

What does this mean for donors aiming to support statebuilding in these situations? It means that to be effective they must base all of their interventions on an understanding of the distinct experiences of men and women and help seize opportunities to promote gender equality. But donors have tended to overlook these concerns. While they are increasingly aware of the need to redress this omission, there is limited knowledge and guidance on how this can and should be done.

Gender and Statebuilding in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States addresses this gap and significantly advances our understanding of how to integrate a gender perspective into statebuilding. Based on an examination of key

challenges involved, it calls for a more politically-informed approach: We need to be more realistic about how long change takes and more aware of the links between women’s ability to participate in statebuilding and the wider distribution of power between different groups, institutions and individuals.

On the basis of this analysis, this new paper makes a series of concrete recommendations to help donors effectively integrate a gender perspective into their work on statebuilding – and thereby strengthen gender equality, peace and development in some of the situations where they are most needed. The challenge now lies in translating these recommendations into action. And to do so in time for achieving real, positive change in the lives of the more than 1.5 billion women, men, boys and girls living in fragile states today.



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