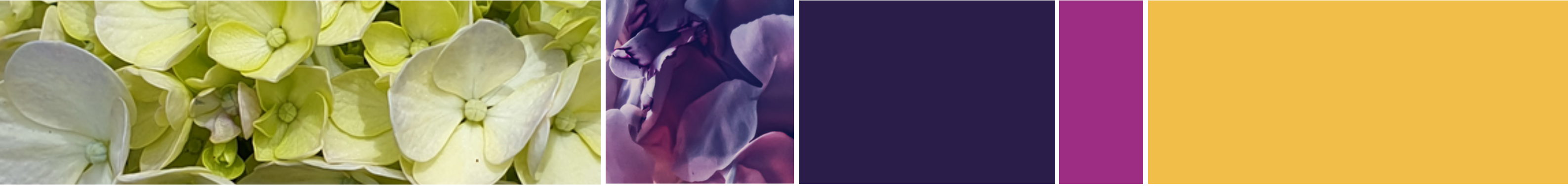

GENDER AND PEACEBUILDING

Exerpts from "Toolkit: Gender Analysis and Conflict" [1]

WHAT ARE GENDER NORMS?

'Gender' refers to the socially and politically constructed roles, behaviours, and attributes that a given society considers most appropriate and valuable for men and women. Gender is also a system of power which shapes the lives, opportunities, rights, relationships and access to resources of women and men [2], and SGMs.

'Norms' are standards or patterns of social behaviour to which people may experience significant pressures to conform. Gender norms are sets of expectations about how people of each gender should behave. They are not determined by biological sex but rather are specific to particular cultures or societies, and often to particular social groups within those societies. Thus, what may be expected behaviour for a man or woman in one culture may be unacceptable in another.

'Masculinity' refers to anything which is associated with men and boys in any given culture, just as 'femininity' refers to that which is culturally associated with women and girls. Ideas about what is masculine and what is feminine vary over time, as well as within and between cultures.

In most societies, those attributes and behaviours seen as masculine are more socially valued than those viewed as feminine.

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[1] Gender Analysis of Conflict Toolkit. Saferworld. https://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/gender-analysis-of-conflict-toolkit.pdf

[2] References to women and men should be taken as also including girls and boys. It is important to think about all aspects of identity which intersect with gender, of which age is one

Gender norms are not just about the attitudes and beliefs held by individuals, but are produced and perpetuated by political, economic, cultural and social structures, including education systems, the media, religious institutions, welfare systems, and security and justice systems.

For example, in pastoral communities in Karamoja, North-Eastern Uganda, masculinity is closely connected to ownership of cattle, a norm which has in the past driven many men and boys to participate in cattle raiding, which sparked violent conflict between communities. Women also encouraged men to participate in these raids. This norm is not only a set of ideas, but is reinforced by material circumstances and social and economic structures: the bride wealth system requires men to pay for their wives with cattle, and environmental and economic conditions mean that some tribes are almost entirely dependent on cattle for their livelihoods. [3]

It is important to distinguish between norms and people's actual behaviours: whereas norms describe social pressures to behave in a certain way, people's behaviours (how they act or conduct themselves) do not always conform to those norms. The cost of not conforming to gender norms vary, but can be high, including shaming and social exclusion, violence and even death. In Karamoja, scarcity of cattle in recent years means that many men are unable to live up to masculine norms, and men who do not own cattle are sometimes described as 'dogs' and considered less marriageable as a result. In conflict situations, gendered behaviours often adapt to changing circumstances, whereas norms may be much slower to change.

[3] Saferworld and Uganda Land Alliance (2016), 'Gender, land and conflict in Moroto', available at www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/1077-gender-land-and-conflict-in-moroto; also Mkutu K (2008), 'Uganda: pastoral conflict and gender relations', in Review of African Political Economy (116); Saferworld (2010), 'Karamoja conflict and security assessment'.

SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITIES

‘Sexual and gender minorities’ (SGMs) is an umbrella term which refers to people whose sexual orientation or gender identity does not fit within conventional societal norms. Internationally, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, transsexual and intersex identities are gaining increasing recognition. Yet sexual and gender identities are understood differently in different contexts. For example, people who are identified as ‘third gender’ in parts of South Asia might be thought of as ‘non-binary’ or ‘genderqueer’ in the Western lexicon. Furthermore, in some societies, sexual behaviour is seen as a practice rather than something which reflects personal identity.

SGMs are often absent from discussions of gender in the peacebuilding and development world, which can mean that their specific vulnerabilities are ignored, their needs unmet and their contributions overlooked. [4] In this toolkit, Saferworld emphasises the importance of including SGMs when doing gender analysis of conflict. At the same time, we recognise that this can be a sensitive issue, particularly in contexts where there are high levels of discrimination against SGMs, or even laws which make discussion of these issues difficult.

[4] For more on sexual and gender minorities and expanding understandings of gender in peacebuilding, see Myrttninen H, Naujoks J, El-Bushra J (2014), ‘Rethinking gender in peacebuilding’, (London: International Alert).

‘THWARTED’ MASCULINITIES AND VIOLENCE IN SOMALIA

The experiences of men who are unable to meet societal expectations of manhood are sometimes referred to as ‘thwarted masculinities’. In Somalia, protracted conflict and the resultant economic hardship have made it difficult for many men to fulfil the traditional masculine gender role of economic provider for and physical protector of their families. Many men who became refugees or were internally displaced have returned to their homes to find that women are now fulfilling roles which were previously reserved for men. [5] In Somalia’s clan system, manhood is associated with becoming an elder, and power and status is traditionally concentrated in the hands of a subset of older men. It is possible for younger men to become elders, for example through respectable personal conduct and realisation of certain socially valued characteristics such as marriage, children and employment.

However, in a context where unemployment and insecurity is widespread, fewer opportunities exist for younger men to attain such status. For some young men, joining al-Shabaab offers the prospect of an economic livelihood as well as social status and power, which can provide an alternative pathway to manhood. [6] It has also been suggested that the desire to salvage thwarted masculinity is implicated in inter-clan conflicts, with unemployed men participating in fighting to gain status and acceptance within the clan.9 Somali women have also played a role in encouraging this view of masculinity by cooking for militia and shaming men who were defeated in battle. [7]

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[5] Op cit Rift Valley Institute (2013).

[6] Op cit Oxfam (2013), p 10.).

[7] Ibid..

MANIPULATION OF MASCULINITIES AND WAR IN KOSOVO

In Kosovo in the 1980s and 90s both Serbian and Albanian nationalist narratives drew on national myths about masculinity to mobilise support for the war. Yugoslav state-run and Serbian media portrayed Serbia's national identity of toughness, dominance, and heroism as being emasculated by Kosovo's Albanian population. They offered militarism "as a way of winning back both individual manliness and national dignity", which played a role in "making war thinkable – even attractive". [8]

Meanwhile, Kosovar Albanian nationalists invoked national myths and histories applauding dominant masculine men as freedom fighters, while the Kosovo Liberation Army spread the message that men who refused to join up were "like girls". [9]

Clearly, a large range of factors drove conflict and violence in Kosovo in the 1990s, but manipulation of existing stereotypes of masculinity appear to have been an important tool for ensuring support for and participation in violence.13 This example shows how gender norms are not only constructed and reinforced by everyday practices at the community level, but also by political and military leaders as a deliberate war-making strategy. [10]

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[8] Munn J (2008), 'National myths and the creation of heroes' in Parpart J, Zalewski M (eds), Rethinking the man question: Sex, gender and violence in international relations, (London: Zed Books) pp 146, 153.

[9] For more in-depth analysis of the role of masculinities in conflict dynamics in Kosovo, see op cit Saferworld (2014), p 9.

[10] This case study is described in more detail in op cit Saferworld (2014), p 9 .

DEEPENING PARTICIPATION

This toolkit sets out how to gather information and conduct a gender analysis of conflict with the participation of community members in contexts affected by conflict and insecurity. However, we believe that a participatory approach should go further than inviting communities to contribute information: it should give them ownership over the process and the results, so that they can put them to use in the ways that make most sense to them.

The exercises in this toolkit are designed such that they can be carried out in order, with the outcomes from each exercise feeding into the next stages of the process, though some may work as standalone exercises. Working through the whole toolkit takes a considerable amount of time, depending on factors such as the number of participants and the number of conflicts you want to focus on. It is therefore vital to ensure that the process does not simply take up participants' time and energy without giving much in return. While testing the toolkit in Moroto, North-Eastern Uganda (see page 10), the need to avoid taking up too much of participants' time meant that we were selective about which exercises to use. However, a better solution would be to design a process together with community members in which they are willing to invest their time, because it is part of a longer-term peacebuilding plan in which they themselves can put the analysis to use.

One way of doing this would be to use the toolkit as a starting point for a process of participatory action research. [11] This would involve setting up an action group made up of people from the community in which the analysis takes place, who take ownership of the process, working through the exercises themselves, with participation from others where needed. Using the analysis generated, the group would then draw up and implement an action plan to address the issues identified as driving conflict and insecurity.

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[11] For more information on action research methods, see Greenwood D, Mevin M (2007), Introduction to action research (second edition), (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage).

Pending the outcome of those activities, the group would then update the analysis in light of any changes in the context and come up with a new action plan, repeating this cycle as many times as they see fit. This model has been employed widely in development work, and Saferworld has used it to good effect to address drivers of conflict and insecurity through its community security programming. [12]

TEN KEY QUESTIONS FOR GENDER ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT

Understanding gender norms and behaviours

1. What roles do people of different genders play in the community?
2. What are the predominant gender norms for different social groups?
3. How do people's actual behaviours compare to the gender norms?

Gender analysis of conflict

4. How have norms relating to masculinity and femininity been shaped and changed by conflict?
5. How are men, women and SGMs and their gender roles affected by the conflict?
6. What roles are men, women and SGMs playing in the conflict?
7. What roles are men, women and SGMs playing in bringing about a peaceful resolution to the conflict?
8. How do gender norms and behaviours shape how violence is used, by whom against whom?
9. Do norms relating to masculinity and femininity fuel conflict and insecurity in this context?
10. Are there norms relating to masculinity and femininity which (could) help build or facilitate peace?

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[12] See Saferworld (2014), 'Community security handbook'. For more information on integrating gender sensitivity in community security programmes, see Saferworld (2016), 'Gender and community security'.