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Building a state that works for women: Integrating gender into post-conflict state building

CLARE CASTILLEJO

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FRIDE is an independent think-tank based in Madrid, focused on issues related to democracy and human rights; peace and security; and humanitarian action and development. FRIDE attempts to influence policy-making and inform public opinion, through its research in these areas.

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Building a state that works for women: Integrating gender into post-conflict state building

CLARE CASTILLEJO

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This working paper presents the findings from a project that was carried out from 2009-2011 entitled “Strengthening women’s citizenship in the context of state building”. This project involved case studies in Burundi, Guatemala, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Sudan. Research was conducted at capital and local level and with a broad range of government, civil society and community stakeholders, as well as with donor representatives. FRIDE’s research partners for this project were ASIES (Guatemala), Campaign for Good Governance (Sierra Leone), ITEKA (Burundi), KIPRED (Kosovo), and Overseas Development Institute (UK). The country case studies are available at www.fride.org. FRIDE would like to extend its thanks to the organisations that supported the project: The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD).

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Goya, 5-7, Pasaje 2º. 28001 Madrid – SPAIN
Tel.: +34 912 44 47 40 – Fax: +34 912 44 47 41
Email: fride@fride.org

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»» Support for state building has become the dominant model for international engagement in post-conflict and fragile contexts. The OECD DAC defines state building as “an endogenous process to enhance capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state driven by state-society relations”. It identifies the role of international actors as “supporting and facilitating the political and institutional processes that can strengthen the foundations of a resilient state and society”.¹

Donor approaches to state building currently lack any substantial gender analysis.² They have not engaged with existing knowledge about women’s relationship to the state; examined how state building processes impact women and men differently; or asked how women can participate in shaping the state building agenda. While the relationship between state and citizens is weak in most fragile contexts, this is much more pronounced for women citizens. In many fragile contexts women have very limited access to state institutions and their relationship to these is often mediated through family, community or customary institutions.³

The intensive state building processes that follow the end of conflict can fundamentally transform power relations, political processes and the relationship between state and citizens. They therefore offer an opportunity to develop a state that is accountable and responsive to women. However, as gender issues are inadequately addressed within donor support for state building, these opportunities are often missed.

This working paper presents key findings from a joint FRIDE-ODI research project that investigated the impact of state building on women’s citizenship. The project was developed in response to gaps in the current state building work. On one hand, theoretical models on state building are elaborated at an abstract level that makes gender power relations invisible.⁴ For example, these tend to model the relationship between state, elites and an undisaggregated “society” without asking who is represented within each group, who

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1. OECD DAC, “State Building in Situations of Fragility: Initial Findings”, 2008.

2. This report uses the term “donors” to refer to the range of bilateral and multilateral international actors that provide support for state building in fragile contexts.

3. There is a strong body of research on women’s citizenship, although this is not focused on fragile contexts. See Goetz, “Gender Justice, Citizenship and Entitlements”, 2007; Kabeer, “Inclusive Citizenship: Meanings and Expressions”, 2005; Mukhopadhyay & Singh, “Gender Justice, Citizenship and Development”, 2007; Robins et al, “Rethinking ‘Citizenship’ in the Postcolony”, 2008.

4. See for example, Fritz & Menocal, “Understanding State-Building from a Political Economy Perspective”, 2007; Clingendael Institute, “Strengthening Governance in Post-Conflict Fragile States”, 2009; Ghani, Lockhart & Carnahan, “Closing the Sovereignty Gap: an Approach to State-Building”, 2005; Jones, Chandran et al, “From Fragility to Resilience: Concepts and Dilemmas of Statebuilding in Fragile States”, 2008.

participates in state-society negotiations, and whose expectations and demands are expressed within these negotiations. On the other hand, although donor policies do stress that state building should be an inclusive process, they are vague on how this – and specifically the inclusion of women – is to be achieved.⁵

The project involved research in five post-conflict countries, Burundi, Guatemala, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Sudan. It investigated three central questions: What role do women play in state building? How do state building processes affect women's political participation? How do state building processes affect women's rights?⁶

The findings highlighted that post-conflict contexts do provide new opportunities for women to mobilise. However, their ability to influence state building processes is limited both by structural barriers and by opposition from elites. While women have made some significant gains in terms of formal equality and inclusion, informal patterns of power and resource allocation have been much harder to shift. It appears that gender inequalities in these contexts are innately linked to the underlying political settlement, including the balance of power between formal and customary authorities. It is therefore critical that donors address gender as a fundamentally political issue.

Women's participation in the politics of state building

»» Post-conflict state building is an innately political process. It can involve a profound redistribution of power, as well as the establishment of new forms of political governance. It can therefore represent an opportunity to reshape patterns of power and political systems to include and deliver for women and other excluded groups. This section explores how women participate in political negotiations about the nature of the post-conflict state. It asks to what extent they can engage in new political governance systems that emerge, and how donors can foster a post-conflict politics that works for women.

● Renegotiating the political settlement

State building models place the political settlement at the heart of state building. The OECD defines the political settlement as an “agreement (among elites principally) on the ‘rules of the game’, power distribution and the political processes through

5. For example DFID, “Building Peaceful States and Societies”, 2010.

6. In each country the research involved five steps. A context analysis of the current state building agenda and challenges for women's citizenship within the country; identification of 2-3 state building processes as focus areas for research; field research on the gender implications of these state building processes (through interviews and focus group discussions with a variety of international, national and local level stakeholders); a national stakeholder workshop to share and discuss findings; and the production of a country report. The conceptual framework and methodology for the research are available at www.fride.org.

which state and society are connected”.⁷ As the political settlement effectively sets the framework for state building, the inclusion of women’s interests in political settlements is critical if these are to result in a state that delivers for women. Moreover, as peace processes often provide a unique opportunity to radically renegotiate the political settlement, the benefits of women’s full participation in these processes is significant.⁸

In Burundi, Sierra Leone, Kosovo and Sudan, women have been largely excluded from negotiations regarding the post-conflict political settlement. Formal processes such as drafting peace agreements and constitutions, as well as informal power negotiations, were controlled by male elites that resisted women’s demands for inclusion. Even in contexts where women played important political roles as peace activists, such as Sierra Leone, or within rebel forces, as in Southern Sudan, they were marginalised within the political settlement.⁹ This experience of being pushed out of public life and back into traditional roles is common for women following the end of conflict.¹⁰

Donor approaches to women’s inclusion in negotiations on the political settlement appear contradictory. Donor state building models accept that initial political settlements will be negotiated by elites, but stress the importance of broadening out political settlements to become more inclusive.¹¹ However, this implied sequencing contradicts international commitments under UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 to “[women’s] equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution”.¹² As state building processes are endogenous, donors’ ability to influence who negotiates the political settlement is inevitably limited. However, this contradiction reflects a broader dilemma for donors between pragmatic power-based approaches and normative international commitments. Faced with this dilemma donors need to be more strategic in identifying opportunities for inclusion, otherwise they risk missing opportunities to broaden the political settlement.¹³

One such example of a missed opportunity is in Kosovo where, despite much rhetoric, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) conspicuously failed to implement SCR 1325. It did not meaningfully promote women’s participation in Kosovan peace processes or give women leadership roles within its own structures. This failure by UNMIK – in a situation where it had enormous influence – resulted in women’s representatives being excluded from negotiations on the Comprehensive Proposal for Kosovo Status Settlement. Not only did this mean that the framework for the Kosovan state was established without women’s input, but it also created deep mistrust of the international community among women’s civil society organisations (CSOs).

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7. OECD DAC, “International support to statebuilding in situations of fragility and conflict”, 2010.

8. It is important to bear in mind that peace processes may result in new formal “rules of the game”, while the informal rules that define the allocation of power and resources remain unchanged. This poses particular problems for women who may experience high levels of formal inclusion and equality, without any real influence.

9. In Sudan women were not able to participate in negotiations on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, or in constitution drafting processes. Although women had taken on more political roles as fighters in the SLPA, once peace negotiations were underway they were excluded from these political processes and presented simply as passive “victims” of the conflict. In Sierra Leone women’s demands for their political interests to be included in constitutional reforms were blocked by male leaders.

10. See, for example, Lyytikäinen, “Building Inclusive Post-Conflict Governance”, 2009 and Itto, “Guests at the table? The role of women in peace processes”, 2006.

11. State building models stress that the political settlement will be primarily between those elites with power to threaten the security of the state, which inevitably does not include women. Among donor policy papers DFID is clearest on the need to move from an exclusive to an inclusive political settlement. See DFID, “Building Peaceful States and Societies”, 2010.

12. UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted 31 October 2000.

13. This issue is discussed in more detail in the section on gender equality institutions.

In some cases extensive formal gains for women following conflict are not matched by meaningful changes in power relations. For example, in Guatemala an inclusive peace process resulted in comprehensive rights for women and a range of state institutions and policies to promote gender equality. However, despite these new formal “rules of the game”, there has been no real shift in exclusionary power relations in Guatemala and these new gender equality structures are politically sidelined and under resourced. Worryingly, donors continue to channel most of their gender funding through these ineffective mechanisms, despite the fact that they serve as a “cover” for an unreformed and exclusionary political settlement.

Despite exclusion from the political top table, women have influenced the formal political settlement from the outside. In all five countries women had lobbied for their rights to be recognised in peace agreements and constitutions and for political governance systems that enable women’s participation. For example, in Northern and Southern Sudan women successfully campaigned to get women’s rights recognised in both interim constitutions, while in Kosovo a strong women’s lobby achieved electoral quotas. However, in all the countries women have been much less able to influence the informal “rules of the game”. In many instances this has resulted in women being formally included within political institutions while in practice they remain powerless. It demonstrates that donor support for formal change, while very important, needs to be accompanied by longer term efforts to transform power relations.

● Reform of political governance systems

The political settlement determines the nature of political governance and of state-society relations. Post-conflict political settlements often result in democratisation and electoral reform processes that can provide opportunities to enhance women’s political participation.¹⁴ It appears that women have been quite successful in influencing political governance reform processes, even where they have been excluded from initial negotiations regarding the political settlement. In some cases donors have supported such efforts by women, for example by promoting quota systems within electoral reform. However, donors tend to focus on the more “technical” aspects of political governance, rather than addressing the sensitive power relations that exclude women from the “high politics” of the political settlement.

In all five countries women lobbied for electoral quotas as part of post-conflict reforms. In Kosovo, North and South Sudan and Burundi these campaigns were successful and quotas are in place.¹⁵ In Sierra Leone the campaign for quotas was blocked by political parties, while in Guatemala political fragmentation has prevented women from building effective coalitions on this issue. The support of the international community appears to be an important factor in the success of campaigns for quotas. Some interesting commonalities emerge regarding the impact of quotas in these countries.

In Burundi, Kosovo and North Sudan women activists expressed disappointment that quotas have not resulted in more gender sensitive policies.¹⁶ There are a number of reasons

14. According to the OECD DAC, the political settlement determines three key elements of political processes: accountability mechanisms, levels of political inclusion and rules of political participation. OECD, DAC, “International Support to Statebuilding in Situations of Fragility and Conflict”, 2010.

15. In Kosovo there is a quota of 30 per cent women in the Kosovo Assembly. In Burundi there are quotas of 30 per cent for the upper and lower houses. In Northern Sudan there is a quota of 13 per cent for women in the National Assembly. In Southern Sudan there is a 25 per cent quota in the Legislative Assembly.

16. It is of course impossible to know whether policy making would have been even less gender sensitive without so many women in the legislature.

for this. Firstly, despite more women in the legislature, women have not been given decision making roles within the executive or seats on the most important parliamentary committees. For example, in Kosovo, where there is a 30 per cent quota for women in the national assembly, at the time of research only 2 out of 17 ministers were women.¹⁷

Secondly, these new women parliamentarians have mostly not championed gender issues or engaged with women's civil society. This is both because political parties have deliberately selected socially conservative female candidates, and because women parliamentarians are unwilling to challenge party leaders by raising gender issues.¹⁸ This reluctance is unsurprising as the electoral list systems used in these countries make women candidates entirely dependent on party patronage to get elected, and therefore more accountable to party leaders than the electorate.¹⁹ Moreover, in Northern Sudan the women's list system was weighted to favour the conservative ruling National Congress Party (NCP). Of course issues of party patronage and lack of accountability apply equally to male parliamentarians. However, given the marginalisation of women's issues within the policy agenda, if party patronage structures prevent gender equality champions from emerging this has serious implications for government responsiveness to women.

Thirdly, these quotas systems are very new and their policy effects may take time to be felt. The large numbers of women now entering politics in these countries will need time to understand and operate effectively within political institutions, to develop networks, and to find ways to "work around" discrimination. However, it is also important to note, as research in Latin America has shown, that women elected to public office do not necessarily have a shared political agenda, or prioritise gender issues even if they have the opportunity to do so.²⁰ Quotas must therefore be understood as important in giving women greater voice and changing perceptions about women's role in politics, rather than engineering a particular policy outcome.

● Structural barriers to women's political participation

In all five countries serious barriers exist that prevent women from taking full advantage of new opportunities for political participation following conflict. Many of these barriers are related to the specific nature of post-conflict politics, where political stakes are high and politics is highly personalised and characterised by insecurity and patronage, all of which disadvantage women.²¹ Moreover, in post-conflict contexts women may lack capacity to operate politically²² and there can be great stigma against women who take on public roles.²³ In addition, there are often deep-rooted structural barriers related to specific economic, social and cultural legacies.

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17. Typically women are given ministerial portfolios on social issues and do not usually get to lead the most powerful ministries.

18. Cornwall and Goetz argue that in fact in many contexts "winning and keeping office can be contingent on downplaying feminist sympathies"; see Cornwall and Goetz, "Democratising Democracy: Feminist Perspectives", 2005.

19. In Northern Sudan there was an all women's list. In Kosovo there is an open list system that provides power to those heading the candidate lists, who are usually political party leaders or their associates.

20. See Molyneux, "Women's Movements in International Perspective", 2003

21. See Maley, "Enhancing women's participation in electoral processes in post-conflict countries", 2004.

22. For example a number of women MPs in Sierra Leone reported that they cannot carry out their oversight functions as they do not understand budgeting processes.

23. This seemed particularly pronounced in Sierra Leone and Guatemala, although it was also present in Kosovo. The General Secretary of Sierra Leone's ruling All Peoples Congress (APC) party told researchers that women in political life are viewed as "cheap and immoral like prostitutes".

Political violence is common in such contexts, and in both Sierra Leone and Guatemala women attempting to run for election faced harassment and violence. In Sierra Leone this came primarily from customary institutions, which are intimately involved in formal politics and view women's political participation as a threat to the "traditional" patriarchal order.²⁴ The higher levels of intimidation toward women running for election in Sierra Leone and Guatemala suggest that in the other three countries the existence of a quota makes women's participation less of a challenge to male candidates.

A major challenge faced by women entering politics in all the countries is the need to offer bribes and mobilise patronage networks in order to gain political support and votes. This seriously disadvantages women because of their limited access to financial or patronage resources. This was particularly severe in the non-quota contexts of Guatemala and Sierra Leone.²⁵ Moreover, in hybrid political systems such as Sierra Leone and Burundi customary leaders play a critical role in mobilising votes and their objection to women's political participation is a serious obstacle.

As well as the obvious increase in the numbers of women in politics that result from quotas, it does appear that barriers to women's participation in terms of cost, violence and stigma are lower where quotas are in place. However, in both quota and non quota contexts the ability of women to operate effectively and to develop a gender equality agenda once elected is severely limited.

● Political parties as gatekeepers

Across the countries political parties emerged as the main gatekeepers to women's political participation and policy influence. Parties control the selection of women candidates, the promotion of women into decision making roles within the party and government, and the policy agenda. Despite the critical role of political parties they receive surprisingly little focus within donors' governance agenda in fragile states. Wild and Foresti note that donors see work with political parties as highly sensitive and are cautious about working in this area.²⁶

The findings suggest that both the structure and culture of political parties exclude women. In post-conflict settings political parties are typically highly personalised around male leaders and do business through informal networks and in informal spaces which women cannot access. For example, Guatemalan women politicians described how political parties are "owned" by leaders, have no mechanisms for collective decision making, and are continually re-constituted in response to new opportunities for power. In Kosovo and Burundi women politicians complain that important party decisions are made in bars by male leaders. In these contexts it is unsurprising that parties do not include women within their leadership or develop policy agendas on gender equality.

24. In Sierra Leone women politicians reported being threatened and physically prevented from campaigning by male secret societies, as well as being obstructed by local chiefs.

25. In Sierra Leone women politicians reported that they had to first "buy" their selection by the political party, then provide bribes to customary leaders and "gifts" to their constituents, in addition to financing their campaigning activities. The sums involved are significant and many women politicians take out large loans to do this.

26. Wild and Foresti, ODI Briefing Paper "Support to Political Parties", 2010.

Women politicians and party members in Sierra Leone, Guatemala and Kosovo expressed deep frustration at the way they are sidelined within party structures. Their participation within political parties is largely mediated through “women’s wings”. As Cornwall and Goetz point out, women’s wings are not intended to provide space for women to emerge as leaders or shape policy, but instead to harness their support for the existing leadership and party structures.²⁷ Women in politics are aware that women’s wings exclude them from influence within the party. As one female politician in Sierra Leone put it, “Why should I be in a women’s wing? The men don’t have to be in a men’s wing!”

In many post-conflict settings political parties are vehicles for individual power and do not represent citizens’ interests or develop a meaningful policy agenda. This is deeply problematic, as parties should be a central mechanism through which citizens participate in politics, including in negotiations about the nature of the post-conflict state. Moreover, donors’ engagement with parties usually takes the form of top down technical assistance based on an ideal of what a political party should be.²⁸ Donors tend to address gender issues in their work with parties through promoting electoral quotas with party leaders, or providing capacity development for women party members. While these are important activities, they do not address the exclusionary power structures within party politics or the challenges of internal party democracy.

● **Lessons for donors on women’s participation in the politics of state building**

These findings suggest that donors need to rethink how they address gender within the politics of state building. As a starting point, donors must understand gender inequality as innately political and make gender analysis an integral part of their political analysis.²⁹ In particular, donors need to be aware of the multiple barriers that exclude women from politics in post-conflict contexts and nuance their support for political processes accordingly.

Donors face a tension between supporting an elite based political settlement that can provide stability and pushing for an inclusive settlement. This reflects a basic dilemma for donors in fragile states between pragmatism and normative commitments. However, even where donors have been in a position to press for women’s inclusion at the top table – for example in Kosovo - they have often failed to do so. Donors must find ways to incentivise elites to include women in negotiations around the political settlement, as well as support women to lobby for inclusion.

In all the countries donors provided support for political governance reforms to increase women’s political participation and for individual women to run for office. This emphasis on getting significant numbers of women into political institutions is extremely important. However, it has not yet resulted in gender sensitive policy making. Perhaps a useful starting point for donors is to ask how they can support women to influence the policy agenda and promote their interests. This would include getting women elected,

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27. Cornwall and Goetz, “Democratising Democracy: Feminist Perspectives”, 2005.

28. Wild and Foresti, ODI Briefing Paper, “Support to Political Parties”, 2010.

29. Donors tend to address gender equality as a “social issue” to be dealt with once the central politics of state building is in place. Of course such distinctions are ultimately false, as gender equality has political and social dimensions.

but would also involve equipping women to act effectively once in office, supporting coalition building among women politicians, linking women politicians with women's civil society movements, and high level dialogue regarding the inclusion of women in the executive.

Donors' technical support for electoral reform and quotas should take account of the impact of different electoral systems both on the number of women elected and on the likelihood that they will promote a gender equality agenda.³⁰ Likewise donors' emphasis on supporting elections in post-conflict settings must be accompanied by efforts to increase populations' demands for accountability from politicians. As political corruption and patronage particularly disadvantage women candidates and prevent women parliamentarians from developing a gender equality agenda, reducing these practices would have a significant impact on women's political voice. Although such a culture shift is highly complex, there are some interesting civil society initiatives in this area.³¹

Perhaps the clearest lesson for donors is that they must engage more effectively with political parties. In all five countries political parties emerged as the greatest barrier to women's participation in post-conflict politics. Donors must overcome their discomfort and find new ways to work with parties, including engaging with male party leaders on gender equality issues. In particular, donors should examine how they can support women party members to effectively promote a gender equality agenda within parties, as well as how they can incentivise party leaders to include women in decision making positions and make party structures and culture more democratic.³²

Building state structures that promote women's rights

»» Along with establishing political governance, the other priority areas for post-conflict state building are ensuring security, justice and the rule of law and building the administrative institutions of the state.³³ This research examined the way that reform of legal, justice and security structures has affected women's rights. It also looked at the establishment of administrative institutions with specific responsibility for gender equality, asking what role these play in promoting women's rights.

30. For example in Sierra Leone the move from a list system to a majoritarian system in 2007 resulted in a decline in female MPs. It is widely accepted that list systems are more favourable to women as they avoid gender discrimination by voters. However, the cases of Sudan and Kosovo show how some list systems can result in women politicians being less able to raise gender equality concerns within the party. In terms of making sure quotas are met, UNIFEM argues that constitutional quotas or election law quotas backed by sanctions are the best way to increase women's engagement in political competition. See UNIFEM, "Who Answers to Women?", 2008.

31. For example the work of Campaign for Good Governance on citizen education in Sierra Leone.

32. Possible options for donor action that were suggested by respondents included supporting links between women party activists and women's civil society to build a shared gender equality agenda; fostering gender equality champions among male party leadership; and linking women party members across party divides to discuss issues of political party governance.

33. See OECD DAC, "Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations", 2008.OM FRAGI

● Legal reform

In all five countries the post-conflict constitution provides women with new rights. For example, in Northern and Southern Sudan the interim constitutions recognise women's rights for the first time, although only to a very limited extent.³⁴ In contrast, Guatemala's peace accords gave women an impressive range of rights, although in practice these remain largely inaccessible.

As post-conflict constitutional reform often involves a radical re-writing of the formal "rules of the game", it offers the opportunity for a leap forward for women's rights. However, this can result in a large gap between women's new constitutional rights and the reality of national laws and justice institutions. This research suggests that how the state addresses this gap - whether trying to close it (Sierra Leone), allowing it to remain (Sudan, Burundi), or seeking to obscure it (Guatemala) – is related to the nature of the political settlement and the distribution of power and resources.

Critical to this is how customary legal institutions are addressed within the state building agenda. In many fragile contexts the personal and family issues that are crucial to women are delegated to customary authorities, which tend to discriminate against women.³⁵ For women's constitutional rights to become reality the state building project must include an expansion of state jurisdiction over these areas. This means challenging the idea that these are "private" or "cultural" issues and redefining them as areas in which citizens have rights that the state will uphold.

The case studies provide differing examples of how the state has addressed the gap between constitutional rights and discriminatory laws and justice institutions, as well as the role of customary legal institutions. In Sierra Leone the government enacted legislation to give women formal rights in relation to marriage, divorce, inheritance and domestic violence, which had previously come under customary law. This legal reform not only realised women's constitutional rights, but was part of a broader agenda to extend the boundaries of state authority and reduce the authority of chiefs.³⁶ Unsurprisingly, chiefs have resisted. Many chieftom courts continue to apply customary law and refuse to refer serious cases such as rape to the formal justice system. Most of the chiefs interviewed argued that women's rights threaten "tradition". However, in reality the threat is more to chiefs authority within the community, their revenue raising abilities through fines and payments to chieftom courts, and – critically – to the balance of power between formal and customary institutions. In this case women's rights are caught up in a broader conflict over the changing political settlement.³⁷

In Burundi, the relationship between women's rights and the political settlement can be seen regarding inheritance laws. Despite women's constitutional rights to equality,

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34. The recognition of women's rights was especially limited in the north, where Sharia was recognised in the constitution as the main legal order.

35. See Economic Commission for Africa, "Relevance of African Traditional Institutions of Governance", 2007.

36. This agenda can be seen most clearly in the decentralisation process in Sierra Leone. This established local councils with the power to raise local taxes, which had previously been the preserve of the chiefs. There is now significant conflict between local councils and chiefs regarding tax revenue and control of local decision making.

37. It is important to note that chiefs still remain the most powerful institutions at local level, despite the challenge from the expansion of formal governance and legal institutions. Chieftom institutions were seriously weakened by the conflict, but the international community (particularly DFID) strengthened them following the end of conflict, as they saw this as an easy way to reinstate security. This has had serious implications for governance reform. See Thomson, "Sierra Leone: Reform or relapse? Conflict and governance reform", Chatham House, 2007.

the issue of inheritance is delegated to customary law, which does not allow women to inherit. Lobbying by women's groups led to a draft bill giving women inheritance rights, but the government is now blocking the passage of this bill.³⁸ Under this bill patrimonial land could be divided between sons and daughters, thereby significantly altering land distribution patterns. Burundi faces severe land pressure due to its dense population and government practices of distributing state land to powerful actors as part of patronage relations. Burundi's national and local elites argue that women's exclusion from inheritance is justified by "tradition". However, they are deeply concerned that reform would create further land pressures, threatening practices of land distribution for patronage and causing insecurity. In this case women's lack of inheritance rights sustains a political settlement based on exclusionary patterns of land allocation.

In Northern Sudan restrictions on women's rights are also closely related to consolidation of power by the ruling regime, which uses a conservative interpretation of Islam to justify political repression. Since the 1989 coup the regime has strengthened Sharia as the main source of law and politicised the judiciary, appointing only conservative NCP members as judges. Women have been the main victims of this islamisation of the law, which has severely restricted their freedom. The new interim constitution reaffirms Sharia as the basis of the legal order, but also provides some rights for women, thereby creating a gap between constitutional rights and the reality of discriminatory laws.³⁹ Women are lobbying for legal reform to close this gap, although the current political climate seems unfavourable. In fact, women are concerned that there will be a retrenchment of conservative ideology to strengthen the regime's power following the South's succession.

In all the countries commitments to women's rights within post-conflict constitutions have provided an important framework for women to demand legal reform. Sierra Leone's gender bills and Burundi's draft inheritance bill were the result of women's lobbying, although donor support also played an important role in these highly aid dependent contexts. In Northern Sudan women are also using new constitutional rights as a basis to lobby for repeal of discriminatory laws.⁴⁰ However, in Northern Sudan women activists are divided, with some demanding secularisation while others support Sharia law. Donors have found it difficult to negotiate these divisions within the women's movement.

A key lesson is that for donors to be effective in promoting women's rights in fragile contexts, they need to understand how the denial of women's rights may be related to fundamental patterns of power and resource distribution. Donors should question whether arguments about "tradition" are part of a broader contestation over the political settlement. This requires gender analysis to be integral to donors' political and power analyses.

38. The government should now send this bill back to parliament to be debated and passed. However, the government has said it wants to have a grassroots consultation on the bill, which is widely seen as a delaying tactic. Burundi's donors have refused the government's request to fund such a consultation, responding that the bill should be passed without further delay as it is required to meet constitutional and international commitments.

39. Article 32 of the 2005 National Interim Constitution states that "The equal rights of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights and to all social, cultural and economic rights, including the right of equal pay for equal work will be ensured". See Tønnessen, "Gendered Citizenship in Sudan: Competing Perceptions of Women's Civil Rights within the Family Laws among Northern and Southern Elites in Khartoum", 2007; Tønnessen and Roald, "Discrimination in the Name of Religious Freedom: The Rights of Women and Non-Muslims after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan", 2007; and Tønnessen and Kjølsvædt "The Politics of Women's representation in Sudan: Debating Women's Rights in Islam from the Elites to the Grassroots", 2010

40. Women are campaigning for reform of three discriminatory laws which violate their constitutional rights. These are the 1991 Personal Status Act, the 1991 Criminal Act, and the 1996 Khartoum State Public Order Law.

Donors should also be cautious in promoting “grounded legitimacy” through hybrid political orders, an approach that currently has significant currency among donors.⁴¹ All evidence suggests that customary institutions discriminate against women and maintain exclusionary patterns of power and resource distribution. Therefore support for hybrid orders in the name of stability can end up formalising and further entrenching exclusion and ultimately undermining the durability of the state building project. OECD policy guidance acknowledges such tensions between endogenous state building processes and a normative agenda, but does not say how these tensions should be managed.⁴²

Donors can play an important role in supporting women to demand their rights. Firstly, donors supporting constitution drafting processes should push for the strongest possible commitments on women’s rights, as this provides the enabling framework within which women can demand reform. Donor support to raise awareness about constitutional rights and support the development of women’s rights campaigns is also critical, as in Sierra Leone. However, the example of Northern Sudan demonstrates the dilemmas donors face when there are competing women’s rights agendas. Donors need to decide whether their aim is to support a range of women’s voices to be heard, or only those who espouse a normative approach to women’s rights. Negotiating these dilemmas requires donors to engage with a range of women’s movements and to understand the political interests behind them.

● Justice sector reform

In addition to legal reform, reforms to improve access to justice institutions are a priority for donors in post-conflict contexts. Such justice sector reform presents an opportunity to address the barriers that make justice inaccessible to women. However, in these countries this opportunity has not been fully seized. Across all the countries women reported that they face serious barriers to accessing formal justice institutions in terms of cost, language, travel, lack of education, limited awareness of their rights and social stigma.⁴³ Justice reform, while improving the functioning of justice institutions, has mostly not addressed these structural barriers to access. In Guatemala and Sierra Leone, where post-conflict reforms have given women new formal rights, women continue to use customary legal institutions because they are more accessible, despite the discriminatory outcomes these provide.

For justice sector reform to work for women it needs to engage with informal as well as formal justice institutions and be sensitive to the particular barriers women face. An example of such a programme is the DFID-funded Justice Sector Development Programme in Sierra Leone, which works with formal and customary justice institutions and communities and has had some success in improving access to justice for women.⁴⁴ In contrast donor support for gender sensitive justice reform in Guatemala is undermined by the government’s constant changes in priorities and by

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41. See Clements, “Traditional, Charismatic and Grounded Legitimacy”, 2008.

42. OECD DAC, “Building Stable States: Policy guidance for good international engagement”, 2010.

43. Women who take legal action regarding domestic violence or other abuse within the family or who are victims of sexual crimes face high levels of social stigma.

44. This programme has had significant success in reducing some of the barriers that women face in accessing justice in the province where it was piloted. For example through circuit courts to bring formal justice mechanisms to remote areas and with work to sensitise customary justice officials on women’s rights. However, it will be difficult to scale up such an intensive approach to be nationwide.

the fact that significant funds are channelled through ineffective “gender” bodies that cannot bring about change.⁴⁵

Critically, donor support to justice reform should not just be focused on building institutions, but on addressing the structural barriers to access that affect women particularly severely. This requires a holistic approach to promoting women’s rights that recognises the indivisibility of civil and political and social and economic rights, and combines justice reform with initiatives for social and economic empowerment.

● Security sector reform

The research examined security sector reform (SSR) in Burundi, Kosovo and Sierra Leone. In these countries the gender focus within SSR is on increasing the numbers of women police officers and improving police response to gender based crimes. There is much less emphasis on including women in decision making about security, or addressing complex relationships between gender inequality and insecurity.

Police reform - and specifically improving the gender balance within the police force - was one of the commitments in Burundi’s peace agreements.⁴⁶ These peace agreements also integrated ex-rebel fighters into the police, including female ex-rebels, thereby raising the percentage of women police from nearly 0 to 2.9. Critically, the peace deal created political will to increase women’s presence within the police. However, progress remains slow, as the police regulations and practices have not been changed to accommodate women’s needs and there are strong taboos regarding women taking on such a public role.⁴⁷ Likewise, in Kosovo the establishment of new security institutions has allowed women to enter the police and they now make up 15 per cent of the Kosovo police force.

In all three contexts police reform has included establishing specific mechanisms to respond to gender based violence. In Burundi there are provincial level gender focal points, while in Sierra Leone special “Family Service Units” have been created in the district headquarters. In Kosovo there are special police units on domestic violence and trafficking. In Sierra Leone an information campaign about the new units resulted in enormous demand among women for their services.⁴⁸ However, despite these new structures, in both Sierra Leone and Burundi women still face serious barriers accessing police services, both in terms of corruption and police attitudes regarding gender based crimes.

This emphasis on increasing numbers of women police officers and improving police response to gender based crimes is very important. However, it has not been accompanied by measures to include women in decision making and oversight regarding security issues. For example, Burundian women police officers cannot enter senior roles because they do not have the formal educational qualifications required for promotion. In terms of policy making, the Kosovo Security Council refused to allow women’s CSOs to

45. For example significant funds for creating gender sensitivity within the justice system are given to the “Judicial Body’s Unit for Women and Gender Analysis”, which is reported to have limited impact.

46. The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, signed in 2000, commits to rebalancing the political, ethnic, regional and gender make up of the police force.

47. For example unmarried women police must live in the same camps as male police, making them vulnerable to sexual harassment from colleagues. Women’s heavy burden of domestic work also makes it difficult for them to work the long hours required in the police force.

48. For example in Koidu district police headquarters the FSU sends the highest number of cases to court, despite having only 6 officers out of a total of 200.

participate in drafting the Kosovo Security Strategy, resulting in a strategy that ignores women's security concerns.⁴⁹ Likewise, the parliamentary commission responsible for oversight on security matters in Kosovo has never formally discussed women's security.⁵⁰ Therefore, while the current emphasis of SSR undoubtedly improves service delivery for women at local level, national security institutions and policies continue to overlook women's security concerns at a more strategic level.

In all three countries women activists complained that state officials and donors have a very traditional approach to security. In particular they address the gender aspects of security through discrete projects rather than mainstreaming and do not recognise the complex relationship between gender inequality and insecurity. For example, in Guatemala donors have responded to the epidemic of gender violence with technical support to the justice system. However, this violence is part of the broader picture of Guatemala's fragility – its corrupt state, weak state-society relations, high levels of exclusion, and drug and gang crime. The response to this violence should therefore be situated within a holistic approach that addresses the multiple causes of fragility and involves not just justice institutions, but civil society and communities.

Another example of failure to understand the link between gender equality and security can be seen in the Burundian government's concern that women's inheritance rights will create land pressures that could cause conflict. In fact, women's economic empowerment has been repeatedly demonstrated to lower fertility levels, thereby reducing the poverty and population pressures that drive insecurity. Likewise, in Sudan donor approaches to domestic violence have not acknowledged the link between increasing domestic violence and broader DDR processes. In Sierra Leone the way that violence prevents women from participating in public life has not been addressed in donor support for women's political participation.

It appears that in these countries donors are having impact with their support for gender sensitive policing. However, they need to focus more on transforming security institutions to allow women to enter decision making roles, as well as on addressing the social and cultural barriers that prevent women from using police services. Critically, donors could develop a more complex understanding of the relationship between gender and security in a given context. This requires integrating gender into security analyses and engaging much more with local CSOs working on women's security.

● Gender equality institutions

State institutions for the promotion of gender equality are part of the range of democratic governance institutions established in post-conflict settings. This research examined gender equality institutions in three countries: the Agency for Gender Equality (AGE) in Kosovo, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs in Sierra Leone, and the Presidential Secretariat for Women (Secretaría Presidencial de la Mujer, SEPREM) in Guatemala. Each gender equality institution is mandated to implement a national policy on gender equality and promote gender equality across all government departments.

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49. For example, at the time of the research, domestic violence was not mentioned within this security strategy, despite being a widespread problem within Kosovo.

50. This is the Kosovo Assembly's "Commission on Internal Affairs and Security Issues".

All three gender equality institutions are chronically under funded and lack human capacity. This under resourcing is due to lack of political support for these institutions, resulting from a broader lack of political will to prioritise gender equality. Moreover, this absence of political support makes these institutions powerless and prevents them from fulfilling their mandate, as they cannot influence other government bodies. For example, SEPREM has not been able to convene a “consultative council” with all government departments since 2007, despite the fact that this is the key mechanism through which it should coordinate government gender policies. The result is that these institutions are unable to implement national gender equality plans, but instead carry out ad hoc activities, undermining the value of a comprehensive gender equality plan.⁵¹

These institutions mostly do not address the politics of gender equality, but focus on services and capacity building, in some cases without a clear agenda of what they are building women’s capacity for. As a Guatemalan activist commented in relation to SEPREM, “women need training that prepares us to participate in the political sphere ... not just a constant repetition of the fact that we have rights”. These organisations and their staff appear to lack a political understanding of gender equality or a strong policy agenda. This is partly because political leaders appoint non-threatening women to lead these institutions.

The lack of political agenda within these institutions may also be due to their disconnection from civil society. In all three countries there are strong women’s CSOs with clear political agendas. Greater engagement between such CSOs and gender equality institutions could help strengthen the political capacities of these institutions. There is a striking difference between the quality of staff in CSOs and gender equality institutions. This may be because in many post-conflict contexts pay and conditions for staff with a leading CSO are far better than within a state institution. This reflects a broader problem of how donor funding patterns can draw the best human capacity into civil society and away from state institutions.⁵²

In all three countries gender equality institutions receive significant funding and technical assistance from donors. However, given that these institutions are so politically marginalised, it is questionable whether this donor support can translate into improved gender equality policies and outcomes. For example, in Guatemala state funding for SEPREM has steadily declined and donors have stepped in to fill this gap. However, this reduction in funding reflects falling political support for SEPREM. In this context it is unlikely that any amounts of donor funds or training are going to empower SEPREM to fulfil its mandate. While SEPREM remains the main institution through which donors channel gender equality funding, it is reportedly through smaller gender projects that donors have had greatest impact.⁵³

51. For example Kosovo’s AGE has been unable to fully implement the Kosovo Programme on Gender Equality because of lack of funds. It relies on individual ministries to take on different elements of the programme if they have the political will to do so.

52. Donors are often very reluctant to fund state employees’ salaries, as this raises serious problems with sustainability. This means state employees salaries in post-conflict contexts are often very low and staff may not even receive regular payment (as was reported in a number of ministries in Sierra Leone). However, through projects and consultancies donors end up providing significant funding for the salaries of staff in leading CSOs, making civil society a more attractive employment option.

53. For example the US and Swedish funded project “Más mujeres, mejor política” (“More women, better politics”) was repeatedly mentioned by women activists as having had significant impact on improving women’s participation in public life.

This does not mean that donors should give up on gender equality institutions, which can play an important role in promoting women's rights across the institutions of the state.⁵⁴ However, they should be more realistic about the challenges these institutions face and what they can achieve in post-conflict contexts. Donor support to build up strong and politically effective gender equality institutions in the long term should be combined with engaging more forcefully on gender equality with those ministries where power is located (president's office, finance, planning etc), supporting women's civil society to develop a strong gender equality agenda, and linking state and civil society institutions on gender equality. Donors' aims should be to foster a network of actors within and outside the state that share a political agenda for women's rights and can act politically to promote this agenda.

Supporting women's agency and mobilisation

»» For post-conflict state building to result in a state that delivers for women, women's voices must be heard within negotiations between state and society. This section explores the extent to which state building processes have provided space for women's agency and how women have used this space to mobilise and voice their demands.

In all the contexts women mobilised in unprecedented ways to campaign for peace and for their interests to be included in peace agreements and post-conflict constitutions. In Sierra Leone and Southern Sudan, where there is a weak history of women's activism, this was the first time that women had mobilised to make political demands. This was in part made possible by the change in women's roles during the conflict.⁵⁵ In Northern Sudan, where a long tradition of women's activism had been experiencing a period of repression, the CPA process created space for women to reorganise and mobilise and to make claims for inclusion and rights. In Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Burundi, where the international community played a major role in peace building, women activists used SCR 1325 as a framework to demand inclusion in peace building processes. As seen in the previous section, new constitutional rights also provided an important framework for women's mobilisation in post-conflict contexts.

Following the consolidation of peace this activism has reduced and women are mobilising much less to influence state building processes than they did to influence peace building. In Kosovo, women activists, politicians and academics, who had jointly lobbied to demand inclusion in negotiations on Kosovo's status, no longer work together and their relationship is characterised by mistrust. Likewise, in Sierra Leone and Guatemala there is now less

54. In fact, in Guatemala women activists stressed that making SEPREM effective is vital to implementing the national gender policy and advancing the rights of women.

55. In both countries during the conflict women took on new non-traditional roles fighting with rebel forces, or as household heads and community leaders in the absence of men. Women also moved from rural to urban settings, where they experienced more freedom.

collaboration or political activism among women's CSOs. This seems to be a common pattern in post-conflict contexts.⁵⁶ It appears to be both because the motivating factor of conflict has gone, and because women's activism becomes formalised into NGOs that compete for funds in the post-conflict aid environment. In the case of Sierra Leone and Kosovo it was also suggested that the fall in activism is partly because the women's rights agenda has been – albeit very partially – adopted within government discourse.

Cornwall and Goetz make the point that donor support for civil society creates “new democratic spaces” in which women can pressure the policy process from outside formal political institutions.⁵⁷ This seems to be particularly true in post-conflict contexts where there was previously little space for women's political activity. In Sierra Leone, Southern Sudan and Burundi donor funding for civil society has provided women with resources, training and networking opportunities and led to the development of a range of women's CSOs that are able to participate in policy debates. In Northern Sudan, donor funding to civil society around the peace process has enabled women's CSOs, which had been facing severe constraints, to increase their activity. However, this activity is now potentially threatened by a conservative backlash following the South's succession.

Critically, it appears that women can take on leadership roles and promote gender equality within post-conflict civil society without facing the hostility and obstruction they face within formal politics. This is perhaps because civil society is a newer space with less links to traditional power and patronage relations, making women's participation less threatening. In those non-quota countries where women face serious barriers to entering politics, civil society activism provides a platform for women to enter formal politics without having to come up through political parties. In Sierra Leone, the majority of women parliamentarians and councillors interviewed had gained credibility as civil society leaders and had then been selected as political party candidates because of their local popularity. The flourishing of post-conflict civil society as a space for women's political action contrasts sharply with the unreformed nature of formal politics in these contexts. While donors have played a critical role in developing civil society space, they still need to find ways to incentivise such changes within formal politics.

Women's civil society activism appears to have far greater influence on social attitudes than on formal institutions and politics, apart from some notable examples such as lobbying for Sierra Leone's gender bills. For example, in Guatemala awareness raising by women's CSOs is changing social attitudes to domestic violence, while in Sudan women's activism has resulted in public discussion of sexual violence for the first time. However, this work to address social attitudes also has important implications for formal political institutions. For example, in Sierra Leone women's CSOs play a critical role in promoting social acceptance of women's political participation, in Sudan they mobilised women to vote in the 2010 elections, while in Kosovo women's CSOs mobilise women to participate in local consultation processes about decentralisation.⁵⁸

In all the countries there are concerns about the representativeness of women's CSOs, many of which are led by elite women with little connection to grassroots communities.

56. See Castillejo, “Strengthening women's citizenship in the context of statebuilding: Seminar report”, 2008.

57. Cornwall and Goetz, “Democratising Democracy: Feminist Perspectives”, 2005.

58. In some municipalities, such as Malisheva, this work is under threat as a reduction in donor funds for women's CSOs means there is now no women's organisation working in this province. The result is that women's voices are not being heard within local consultation processes.

This is unsurprising, given that in these contexts it is usually only elite women that have access to education and resources. However, in each country there also exist more rooted, local level women's organisations. The work of these organisations tends to be less visible and they are less able to access donor funds, because of lack of connections, capacity and ability to speak donor language.⁵⁹

In Northern Sudan the question of whose interests women's CSOs represent is complicated by deep ideological and political divides among women activists. There are three broad categories of women's CSOs, those that have a secular pro-democracy agenda, those that have an Islamic pro-democracy agenda, and those that have a conservative Islamic agenda and are politically close to the NCP. These categories hold radically different positions regarding women's rights and participation in public life. These divisions, combined with divisions based on elite or non-elite identity and rural or urban setting, make a complex picture. Donors have not fully recognised and responded to the plurality of the women's movement in Northern Sudan, instead tending to operate as though there were one unified women's voice and set of interests.

There is no doubt that in all these countries donor funding aimed at building up civil society following conflict has enabled women to organise, participate in state-society negotiations and begin to hold the state to account. However, the way that donors provide funding also skews the priorities of women's activism, as women's networks that emerged from peace movements have organised into formal NGOs that respond to donor agendas. A major problem is that donors are reluctant to provide core funding to women's CSOs, preferring to fund them on a short term project basis. This makes it difficult for these CSOs to develop their organisational capacity or political agenda. Instead they often develop projects that respond to donor priorities rather than constituents' needs and are unsustainable.⁶⁰ Another problem is that donors tend to channel most of their support to elite, capital based, English speaking women's CSOs who are able to use donor "language" and meet donors' bureaucratic requirements.

In Sierra Leone DFID has made an interesting attempt to address the challenges of funding civil society, through the establishment of ENCISS. This is an umbrella body through which donors can channel funds to CSOs for governance activities in a way that is strategic and removes some of the bureaucratic burden for small CSOs. However, this has had mixed success. Many CSOs resent ENCISS, which they see as a gatekeeper that dictates civil society agendas and blocks direct access to donors.

● **Lessons for donors on women's agency and mobilisation**

These findings highlight some key lessons on how donors can foster a vibrant women's civil society in post-conflict contexts. Firstly they demonstrate that donors need to look beyond their normal elite partners. A priority for donors should be to link grassroots women and their organisations into state building debates, building their understanding of how they can participate in these change processes. This requires taking risks by

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59. These CSOs lack the ability to speak English and/or use donor terminology.

60. In Sierra Leone many women's CSOs complained that they had to change their agenda to one that was less relevant to realities on the ground in order to receive enough donor funding to survive.

providing support to grassroots CSOs that do not speak donors' language or entirely share their agenda, but can genuinely represent local women. Despite its flaws, the ENCISS model provides some interesting lessons on how this could be done.

Donors also need to listen to a range of women's voices, understanding what they want rather than having a preconceived idea of what women's interests might be in a given setting. Critically donors should provide core funding to a variety of women's CSOs to allow them to build up their capacity and independent agenda. Particularly important is to foster the development of alliances across different types of women stakeholders.

Recognising that civil society leadership may be the best route for women to enter formal politics, donors should focus more on developing leadership skills, and particularly political capacities, among young non-elite women. For example, in Guatemala young indigenous women have been identified as force for change.⁶¹ In these post-conflict contexts, where there is a large youth population who may have very different experiences and aspirations to current leaders, it is important to build a broader and stronger spectrum of women activists for the future. However, in order to have impact such leadership development efforts must be connected to real political processes rather than undertaken in isolation.

Finally, these cases show that where donors put the weight of their policy influence behind the campaigns of women's civil society – as they did in relation to Sierra Leone's gender bills and are currently doing regarding Burundi's inheritance law – this can have real impact.

Conclusion

»» These research findings demonstrate that state building processes do offer important opportunities to strengthen women's citizenship. However, they also show that political and traditional elites often fiercely oppose such improvements in women's rights and political participation. Critically, the findings suggest that donors are not taking full advantage of opportunities to promote gender equality within the political, institutional and social change processes that follow conflict. While donors support a range of gender initiatives in these contexts, these are mostly not linked up to the broader state building agenda; have a technical rather than political focus; and are discrete "gender" projects rather than genuine mainstreaming. Moreover, donor approaches to gender often de-link gender power relations from broader patterns of power and resource distribution. Below is a summary of the key lessons for donors emerging from this research.

61. Indigenous Guatemalan girls are increasingly taking on leadership roles in youth groups, as well as improving their academic performance.

Donors need to understand gender as a political issue. This involves asking how patterns of gender inequality relate to the underlying political settlement and to broader patterns of power and resource allocation. It also requires examining how justification of women's exclusion as "tradition" is related to particular power interests, as well as how gender inequality relates to aspects of state fragility such as insecurity, poverty and corruption. In order to do this donors must adopt a political economy approach to gender analysis, as well as fully integrate gender issues into the political, conflict, security and economic analyses that they undertake in post-conflict contexts.

Donors should promote women's interests with the most powerful actors and at the most critical moments in the state building process, rather than making gender an "add-on" after political deals are done. In particular, donors could do more to promote women's participation in the "high politics" of the political settlement. They must provide incentives to encourage elites to include women in formal and informal negotiations around the political settlement, as well as support women to demand inclusion. Likewise donors must overcome their sensitivities to work with political parties on issues of internal democracy and women's leadership. The current focus of donors' gender work in post-conflict contexts is on institutional reforms, service delivery and technical assistance. These are important, but their impact is limited if women cannot participate at the highest political levels or shape the policy agenda.

Economic, social and cultural barriers emerge as a major factor preventing women from taking advantage of the new opportunities to claim rights and participate in politics that emerge following conflict. These include barriers related to human capability and social attitudes, as well as barriers related to the culture of politics and role of patronage within formal institutions. Donors should therefore combine their support for institutional reform with a focus on strengthening women's socio-economic position and political capacities. They also need to take account of the specific gender implications of work on patronage and corruption. A holistic approach to women's rights is useful, recognising the practical ways in which women's lack of economic and social rights influence their access to civil and political rights.

Finally, donor assistance to the women's movement should aim to foster broad coalitions across civil society, politics and public institutions. It should support these coalitions to develop their own policy agenda, to become effective political actors and to engage with political and institutional change processes. This involves taking risks by working with a much wider range of partners. In particular, donors need to reach out to grassroots and "non-westernised" women's organisations to link them into debates about the direction of the post-conflict state and society. Donors also need to move beyond a model of technical support and project funding, to provide core funding and political capacity building to women's CSOs in order to develop sustainable and politically effective organisations. Given the weakness of civil society in post-conflict settings, donors must tread very carefully in order to support women's civil society without dictating its agenda.

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