

Gender Mainstreaming in Peace and Security Policymaking

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Executive summary

Over the last two decades, gender mainstreaming has been adopted in a variety of forms, creating both opportunities and risks for advancing women's rights and gender equality. This policy brief reviews a selection of gender-mainstreaming practices implemented in the context of peace and security, and assesses their potential impact. It further calls for a more transformative model of gender mainstreaming that would utilize a gender perspective to challenge existing frameworks. For this to be achieved, the policy recommendations include the participation of women and women's organizations in designing and implementing gender-mainstreaming policies and the involvement of UN Women in strengthening the relationship between governments, and civil society in delivering gender-mainstreaming programs.

The findings draw partially from Jacqui True's and Laura Parisi's chapter "Gender mainstreaming strategies in international governance" of the book *Feminist Strategies in International Governance* (Caglar, Prügl and Zwingel (eds.) 2013). The policy brief offers new insights on gender mainstreaming in peace and security policymaking.

Introduction

The 1993 United Nations Vienna Declaration on Human Rights was the first international document that mainstreamed a gender perspective through the recognition of women's rights as human rights. A gender mainstreaming policy revolution officially started with the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which required incorporating a gender perspective into all programs and policies. The 1997/2 Economic and Social Council Agreed Conclusions further provided the framework for action and defined gender mainstreaming in terms of "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels".

The last two decades saw numerous state and international commitments to mainstream gender analysis across all public policies and at all levels of policymaking. However, the implementation and reality of gender mainstreaming in peace and security policymaking have so far failed to match the aspirations and directives set in 1995.

Models of gender mainstreaming implementation

Research on gender mainstreaming has spread in three main directions: (a) discussions on the meanings of gender, gender equality and gender mainstreaming in theory and practice; (b) in-depth cases studies of institutions with gender-mainstreaming mandates; and (c) studies of the factors enabling or constraining the adoption and implementation of gender mainstreaming in

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different national and international settings. Synthesis of this literature indicates the emergence of five main gender-mainstreaming models:

1. *Gender-as-sameness model*

Gender-as-sameness model is an example of an "add women and stir" approach in which gender concerns are simply added to existing frameworks without substantially challenging them. This approach usually highlights the necessity to include women in the areas in which they have been traditionally excluded. In the peace and security context, this model has prominently led to the increased emphasis on integrating women into armed forces, such as in Norway's approach extending compulsory military service to women or the US decision lifting the ban on women in combat roles. Seeking for gender neutrality, this model of gender mainstreaming tends not to question men/masculinity and its relationship to militarization but instead expects women to conform to the male norm.

2. *Gender-as-difference model*

While gender-as-sameness model focuses on women becoming like men, gender-as-difference approach revalues women/femininity as crucially different from men/masculinity. This approach refers to the distinct contributions of women and men in the society and calls for their equal valuation. In the context of peace and security, this model has resulted in the depiction of women as natural peacebuilders. The unique role of women in bringing about lasting peace and rebuilding post-conflict societies is affirmed but it is primarily justified in terms of their peaceful and caring feminine qualities. Similarly, in peacekeeping operations the argument for deployment of female soldiers is often dictated by the hope that women will have "a civilizing effect" on their male colleagues and in consequence, their presence will prevent sexual and gender-based violence within the military. Ultimately, gender-as-difference model commonly falls into the trap of essentialism and perpetuates gender stereotyping.

3. *Gender-as-intersectionality model*

In contrast to gender-as-sameness and gender-as-difference that both present integrationist approaches, gender-as-intersectionality model takes into account the complexity of gender relations. More specifically, it reflects on social inequalities that come into interplay with gender. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into peace and conflict analysis reveals, for instance, that sexual and gender-based violence is not targeted at all women in the same way. Rather, women belonging to ethnic and/or religious minority groups that are relatively disempowered vis-à-vis the state or dominant armed groups often become the main target.

4. *Transformationalist model*

In transformationalist model, a gender perspective is integrated to importantly challenge existing frameworks. This model calls for the transformation of gender relations and creating a new standard for both women and men. Mainstreaming gender analysis in the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty resulted in the inclusion of a gender criterion intended to prevent selling arms to areas where provoking the use of sexual and gender-based violence. Similarly, Margot Wallström's recent decision not to continue the cooperation on arms deals with Saudi Arabia, where the access to weapon is considered a driver of human rights abuses and violence against women specifically, presents the security policy which integrates a gender perspective in order to deliver equality and justice.

5. *Resistance to gender mainstreaming model*

The last model is based on resistance to or even rejection of gender mainstreaming. Organizations and institutions might develop superficial policies to integrate a gender perspective in their programs, while remaining ambivalent to gender-mainstreaming principles. Over the last decade, many Western countries launched National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace and Security with a solely external focus. These NAPs adopted selective approaches to gender mainstreaming and commonly geared toward conflict-countries, while not scrutinizing the gendered impact of their own policy-making processes on women's life at the national level.

Evaluation of gender mainstreaming

Although originally conceived as a gender equality strategy, in practice gender mainstreaming may detract from and indeed serve to *depoliticize* gender equality goals and outcomes. There are five main criticisms across which the practice of gender mainstreaming can be evaluated.

The *first criticism* argues that resistance to gender mainstreaming undermines its intended effects. Gender mainstreaming is often adopted as an empty signifier in the form of a checklist to satisfy external actors rather than to achieve gender equality goals. Alike, the 2012 launch of a Women, Peace and Security NAP by Australia might have been motivated by a desire to gain a seat on the UN Security Council, rather than to advance gender equality in peace and security policymaking.

Moreover, a gender perspective can be mainstreamed through practices that contradict gender equality principles. For instance, as part of its gender-mainstreaming policy many Western countries integrate women into armed forces where sexual and gender-based violence is rife. At the same time, their border protection policies that restrict the influx of immigration undermine responsiveness to violence faced by women fleeing from conflict countries.

The *second criticism* indicates that gender-mainstreaming practices often refer to a single normative perspective while neglecting the complexity of gender relations. In the peace and security context, gender is commonly used a synonym for women. By the extension, gender-mainstreaming policies might (intentionally or not) homogenize women as a group, ignoring other factors that contribute to gender inequalities. For instance, the assumption about women at the peace table is that they represent the voices of all women. Practice shows, however, that the interests of women from different ethnic or religious groups may be distinct. When leaving out the reflection on the diversity among women (and men), gender mainstreaming reinforces gender stereotyping.

The *third criticism* contends that the evaluation of the impact of gender mainstreaming is at best challenging. Gender mainstreaming is deployed in a variety of forms what makes it problematic to assess its intended and actual effects. What is more, the different meanings of gender and gender equality might limit the transformative potential of gender-mainstreaming efforts. For instance, understanding gender equality in terms of integrating women into the military in reality entails involving more women as agents of state sanctioned violence.

The *fourth criticism* points to the co-optation of gender mainstreaming as a means to achieve other goals such as security and development - that are only indirectly linked to gender equality. Gender mainstreaming in peace and security policymaking is often set as an objective so far as it brings lasting peace and stability and regardless of how gender-equal

these peace and stability are. For instance, women are included at the peace table not because they have a democratic right to be there but because they are expected to contribute with unique feminine qualities. Ultimately, the goal of gender equality is sacrificed for other institutional ends and gender mainstreaming in this form in fact maintains women in the subordinated position.

The *fifth criticism* points to the exclusion of women's civil society organizations in designing gender-mainstreaming strategies. Gender mainstreaming may therefore silence the voice of women's organizations by bureaucratizing feminism. In many countries, the development and adoption of Women, Peace and Security NAPs involved only minor consultation with women's civil society and little (if any) funding for their participation in evaluation and progress monitoring. This lack of partnership between governmental and non-governmental actors undermines the transformative potential of gender mainstreaming.

Moving beyond the shortcomings

The effects of gender mainstreaming have so far been limited. To overcome the shortcomings of gender mainstreaming policy, an integrated framework for action is required. This research report brings forth the following three recommendations:

1. Gender-mainstreaming practices should address both institutional and structural barriers to equality faced by different groups of women (and men). To do so, gender analysis should inform any gender-mainstreaming actions.
2. The expertise of women and women's civil society organizations must be substantially involved in designing, implementing and monitoring gender-mainstreaming programs for gender analysis to be credible and relevant.
3. UN Women can play a crucial role in strengthening relationships between governments, universities, and civil society actors for a transformative vision of gender mainstreaming in peace and security that would reconnect mainstreaming efforts with feminist goals of justice and equality.