Canada’s Whole-of-Government Approach to Fragile States: 
The Challenge of Gender Equality

Co-hosted by
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA),
Gender and Peacebuilding Working Group of the
Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (GPWG/CPCC),
International Development Research Centre (IDRC),
and The North-South Institute (NSI)

Report of a dialogue among government and civil society colleagues

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Canada’s Whole-of-Government Approach to Fragile States: The Challenge of Gender Equality

Report from a Government-NGO dialogue on this theme

Background

In early 2005, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) commissioned Stephen Baranyi and Kristiana Powell of The North-South Institute (NSI) to produce a series of papers investigating the role of gender equality in the fragile states strategies of several donor countries, as well as CIDA’s own emerging fragile states strategy. The results were somewhat surprising. NSI findings reveal that the six donor agencies are leaders in supporting gender equality in development policies and programs. These same donors are also leaders in developing robust strategies on fragile states. Yet, surprisingly, not one of them integrates their approaches to gender equality and fragile states. Reasons for this disconnect remain clouded; however, separate leadership on these two themes could play a role. Canada’s current whole-of-government approach toward fragile states provides a unique opportunity to ensure policy coherence across departments and to continue to demonstrate Canada’s leadership on gender equality and women’s rights throughout all international policy sectors.

Summary

On May 3rd, colleagues from the Department of National Defence (DND), Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and CIDA came together with colleagues from civil society to discuss the gender equality dimensions of Canada’s emerging whole-of-government fragile states strategy. The workshop opened with presentations by CIDA, DND and DFAIT on their respective contributions to whole-of-government approaches to state fragility. These were followed by a presentation on NSI’s research, with a focus on addressing the question why gender equality matters in fragile states. The plenary discussion centred on three questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How do we get there?

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1 For electronic versions of these papers, see “Linking Gender Equality and Fragile States” on the Research page of the NSI website: www.nsi-ins.ca.
2 Australia’s AusAID, the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development, the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee, selected United Nations’ agencies, the United States’ USAID, and the World Bank.
3 A complete list of participants can be found in Annex A.
Key findings and recommendations

Gender equality is about results and process. The goal is not to do gender-based analysis. The goal is to develop a better understanding of the interaction between gender inequalities, relations and identities - on the one hand - and interventions along the conflict spectrum, on the other.

- Recognize gender equality as a Canadian value and interest, as well as a factor in understanding state fragility. More work is required to ensure that this dimension is an essential determinant in Canada’s engagement with fragile states.

- Strengthen national and local capacities in fragile states for gender equality and women’s rights as one of many commitments which will strengthen state capacity and/or mobilize political will to provide basic services and protect populations.

- Increase the resources and capacities dedicated to understanding gender dimensions of state fragility and how to ensure this analysis influences Canadian analysis, policy and programs.

- Provide concrete examples of the linkages between gender inequalities and state fragility and document good practices at the operational level, so that there are clear programmatic options for staff.

- Conduct systematic gender-based analysis to develop a better understanding of the power relationships and social bridges/divisions that are drivers of peace and drivers of conflict in specific contexts.

- Identify and support agents of positive change (including equality-seeking organizations, women’s organizations, etc) who may help generate support for a reform agenda.

- Enhance pre-deployment gender analysis training and increase field-level support for gender-informed interventions.

- Ensure gender analysis is systematically carried out and informs strategies and operations, including at the field level. It is crucial that policy and program outcomes include specific results relating to gender equality, women’s rights, increased participation of women in decision making and women’s empowerment.

- Collect sex disaggregated data wherever possible across departments, and in the field. These data should inform all briefings by DND, DFAIT and CIDA.

- Increased coordination in information sharing and the distribution of decision making among departments and civil society partners is required, both domestically and when engaged in partner countries abroad.

- Make gender equality process and practice visible. It should be a stand-alone theme and a cross-cutting priority.

- Canada’s commitment to gender equality should go beyond political statements. This commitment requires ongoing investments to ensure that it is reflected across all of Canada’s actions in failed and fragile states. Canada is recognized internationally as being a champion of women’s rights and gender equality; Canada could leverage its renown along these lines for engagement in fragile states.
Why gender equality matters in fragile states

Unpacking the question ‘why’ gender equality matters is a crucial first exercise. We can all agree that women’s rights are human rights and thus inherent, universal and inalienable. The Government of Canada is legally committed – for example, as a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) – to integrating the principles of gender equality into its international policies and programs. Yet, the links between gender equality, women’s rights and state fragility are not clear to many of us, inside and outside of government. Research suggests that there are two basic ways in which gender considerations are important in fragile states:

**State fragility may have a differential impact on women and men.** For example, human rights violations affect men and women differently. Weak and fragile states are often unable to respond effectively to widespread human rights violations or, in some cases, perpetrate human rights abuses as a means of social control. Men and boys may be targeted by campaigns to recruit or eliminate potential combatants. Women and girls can be particularly vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence in addition to broader human rights violations. Also, limited access to justice affects men and women differently, especially when women’s human rights are not afforded the same recognition and protection under the law, and/or when legal institutions are weak. Finally, the extreme poverty usually associated with state fragility may affect men and women differently: for example, women may not have equal access to participation in the labour force, or equal rights to property, livelihood or inheritance which may affect their ability to lift themselves, and therefore their families, out of poverty.

**Gender, as one of many social organizing principles, can influence how people counteract or exacerbate state failure.** Both men and women can be champions of democratic participation, accountability and reform. Just as men and women are affected differently by fragility, they can also be both obstacles to, and agents of, positive change. An example of women as agents of positive change is Burundian women ensuring that judicial reforms were built into the Arusha peace accords. A contrary example -- women as obstacles to positive change -- is Janjaweed women singing songs which endorse violence and destruction as Janjaweed men raid villages in Darfur. Recognizing the roles, responsibilities and relations among men and women, both positive and negative, can reveal the dynamics of fragility and show us where engagement is required.

A final reason why gender equality matters to policy-makers drafting fragile states strategies is that it adds one more resource to our analytical toolbox. Gender-based analysis provides another lens through which we can analyse and plan interventions, one which gives us a more nuanced and context-driven perspective on the nature and direction of power relations in society and which thus provides critical insight into effective responses to state fragility. It was further noted in discussion that gender-based analysis helps us to understand masculinities -- the roles and contributions of men in society -- as well as femininities -- the roles and contributions of women in society -- for a more complete picture of social, political, and economic dynamics.
Where are we now?

NSI’s research reveals that a number of key donors have developed robust development-assistance and peacebuilding strategies which include gender-based analysis and work toward gender equality. However, most of these same states neglect to include gender equality principles, goals and analysis in their emerging fragile states strategies. We know that men and women contribute to the causes, and are affected by the consequences of, state fragility differently; how do we now integrate this knowledge into our fragile states strategies? What do we hope to achieve by integrating gender equality into a fragile states strategy? What would that strategy look like?

The presentations by DFAIT, DND and CIDA, as well as the ensuing discussion give us an idea of where we are now in terms of Canada’s whole-of-government approach to fragile states. The emerging whole-of-government fragile states strategy provides a unique opportunity to meaningfully consider the gender equality dimensions of state fragility and stability. The fragile states strategy is still in its development stages in relevant departments with the lead being assumed by CIDA, DFAIT and DND. Indeed, the role each department/agency should play, both in the planning stages and on the ground, is still being identified. Specific areas noted in which there is work still to be done include:

- Developing indicators for identifying and prioritizing fragile states for Canadian engagement;
- Developing and identifying tools for and areas of expertise in gender-based analysis within government and within partner institutions with a view to undertaking gender-based analysis in specific sectors such as security and stability, governance, livelihood, etc.;
- Motivating political will behind the issue.

Investigating these themes further would also lay a solid foundation for collecting much needed sex-disaggregated data in fragile states, data which could then be used to motivate Parliamentarians and senior decision-makers working on whole-of-government approaches to fragile states.

Where do we want to be?

A review of Canada’s gender equality commitments suggests that the challenge is not so much developing tools for gender-based analysis and the integration of gender equality considerations into policy and programming generally, but rather linking emerging work on fragile states to the interface of gender equality, conflict prevention, crisis response, and peacebuilding as well as to priority areas for engagement in fragile states like Afghanistan, Haiti, Iraq, and The Palestinian Territories. That is to say that we don’t just want to be doing gender analysis. We want to develop a better understanding of the interaction or intersection points between gender inequalities, relations and identities - on the one hand - and interventions along the conflict spectrum, on the other. In addition, we want to use this knowledge to develop more effective strategies that address human rights, including women’s rights, and the development and security challenges posed by fragile states. Two key ‘destinations’ were identified during the dialogue as endpoints for integrating gender equality into fragile states strategies:
• To increase gender equality and women’s empowerment in fragile states as one of many commitments which will strengthen state capacity and/or mobilize political will to provide basic services and protect populations.
• To strengthen Canada’s capacity to assist our development partners overcome state fragility.

In addition, it was stressed throughout the dialogue that gender analysis in fragile states may help us to:
• Develop a better understanding of the power relationships and social bridges/divisions that are drivers of peace and drivers of conflict in specific contexts.
• Support a sustainable reform agenda based on the priorities of vulnerable populations.
• Identify and support agents of positive change who may help generate support for this reform agenda.

Participants cautioned that gender analysis in and of itself is not an adequate goal; the objective of undertaking gender analysis is to promote gender equality. In addition, participants asked specific questions about the content and form of a whole-of-government strategy for engagement in fragile states that meaningfully integrated gender equality: What would such a strategy look like?

How do we get there?

Much of the May 3rd dialogue focused on ‘the how’ of gender equality and fragile states; that is, how do we meaningfully integrate gender equality concerns in whole-of-government approaches to state fragility? This led participants to identify several challenges facing the integration of gender equality into fragile states strategies.

Coordination among departments, both domestically and when engaged in partner countries abroad, can be difficult. One participant wondered how a CIDA program on gender equality might best be parlayed into a whole-of-government program in specific contexts. Challenges to coordination are exacerbated by lack of sufficient resources – including human, capital and financial resources, both in the field and at home.

Capacity to do gender-based analysis is an essential resource. One commentator noted that gender expertise tends to exist in a silo in government and there is a need for capacity-building in all relevant departments from the field to the corporate level. Strengthening capacity through a whole-of-government approach to fragile states needs to ask key questions to key departments/agencies, such as:
• How can DND strengthen pre-deployment gender-sensitive training, including through the Military Training Assistance Program? What kind of support will exist in the field for gender-informed interventions?
• How can START/DFAIT ensure gender equality is systematically integrated across strategies and operations, including at the field level? Who will undertake gender-based analyses for intervention planning within START?
• How can CIDA leverage its longer term role in development to enhance its ability to collect sex-disaggregated data? How could such data feed into DFAIT and DND?
Political will is another challenge, which feeds into the question of resources, and capacity: gender equality may not be a political priority in fragile states, nor among senior policymakers or parliamentarians in Canada. This challenge may also reflect the tensions that exist between Canada’s stated commitments to gender equality and cultural obstacles to promoting gender equality within fragile states whose political leadership may not share these priorities. Finding a balance between these two is challenging. Yet, as one participant noted, we are not “starting from scratch”: in many of our development partners – including those where gender inequalities are deeply entrenched in law and in practice – there exist elements of civil society advocating for women’s rights and gender equality. For example, in Iraq, women’s groups are amongst the most well-organized of non-governmental organizations. Supporting these groups cannot be easily dismissed as a form of “cultural imperialism” but rather may serve as a means of nurturing local agents of change and delivering on Canada’s commitments to gender equality at the same time.

Visibility is linked to the notion of political will and is a crucial element in increasing support for gender equality. Currently, gender equality has low visibility within some parts of government and “gender issues” often fall under the heading of protection of civilians or civil and political rights, rather than standing as a specific policy and programming objective. The recognition of gender equality and women’s rights within policy and programming frameworks is essential and should be commended. However, recognition alone is insufficient to fully deliver on Canada’s commitment to the advancement of the rights of girls and women, or to gender equality. This cannot be overstated: it is crucial that all programming be grounded in gender analysis and a concern for gender inequalities; as well, specific programming explicitly dealing with women’s rights, gender identities and gender inequalities is required. Embracing the principles of gender equality and integrating it into policy programming requires that it be both a cross-cutting theme and the basis of unique programming and policies to be effective.

Gender equality as defining both results and process was recognized by participants. One powerful question was how do we measure the success of our interventions in terms of human rights, including women’s rights? What are our benchmarks for success? Participants asked questions about the indicators of state fragility we use in our policy and programming decisions. The discussion often came back to the Country Indicators for Foreign Policy project at Carleton University. Many questions were raised regarding the inclusion of gender equality indicators in this influential data set. Currently, gender indicators are included as small parts of broad issue areas like “Governance and Political Stability” or “Human Development.” How would our definition of state fragility change if gender equality were more central to our analysis of fragility? Would our list of “crisis states” look somewhat different if gender equality were a central concern among decision-makers in this field? Would strategies for engagement in countries be different if gender equality was embedded as process and result?

Areas for Future Research and Issues for Further Dialogue

While the dialogue did advance thinking on ‘the how’ of integrating gender equality into fragile states strategies, it also raised many questions that require further reflection. Some of the most
salient and pressing research questions that come out of the discussions are listed below. Further investigation of these and other areas will help determine why and how Canada should consider the gender-equality dimensions of its emerging whole-of-government policies and programming in fragile states. Missing such opportunities to incorporate gender equality into emerging fragile states strategies, including Canada’s whole-of-government strategies, could be costly. Seizing the opportunity could help us achieve the twin goals of advancing gender equality and counteracting state fragility.

**Recommendations for Research**

- Linking strategies on fragile states with The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: What are the entry points for pulling in Canada’s commitments to gender equality – including CEDAW and UNSCR 1325 – in Canada’s emerging whole-of-government strategy on fragile states? What kind of interface would there be between Canada’s National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and fragile states policies? Should a joint data-gathering/research/monitoring mechanism or process be developed to provide sustained input on violations against women’s rights and state fragility? Who would be the key stakeholders within government departments and civil society organizations?

- Enhancing gender equality in early-warning and early-response: Do fragility indicators, such as the Country Indicators for Foreign Policy, adequately include gender-sensitive data? Should they? If they did, what would they look like? Would gender equality issues be weighted differently and how would that affect the determination of a state’s fragility? Could increased gender equality and women’s rights indicators reveal fragility earlier or could it help to reveal ‘who is most fragile’ within the given state/territory? What would this mean at the planning and operational levels? How could this link to the Responsibility to Protect, specifically, the responsibility to react?

- Whole-of-government best practices: What mechanisms, processes and best practices can the Government of Canada use to take the gender equality project beyond CIDA into whole-of-government approaches, in both policy and programming? What can we learn from our engagement in places like Haiti, Afghanistan and Africa’s Great Lakes region about the linkages between gender equality and state fragility as well as best practices for implementing a gender-equality agenda in fragile states? Has there been adequate research and analysis on monitoring of women’s rights and gender equality in fragile states and correlations to increasing state fragility and/or violent conflict? Could this analysis contribute to gathering a body of empirical data/country-specific examples of the intersection points between women’s rights, gender equality, conflict prevention, crisis-response and post-conflict reconstruction/peacebuilding?

- Bringing gender-based analysis into the security sector: How can the Canadian Forces (CF) initial assessment ‘checklist’ be changed to include a gender equality perspective? Should it? How can gender-based analysis be adapted to the specific challenges faced by the CF and their mandate? How could increased competencies to do gender-based analysis in operational planning contribute to the effectiveness of operations? Should CF employ and refer to
gender-based intelligence in their formulation of strategies and security briefings? What role could CF play in collecting sex-disaggregated data?

- Understanding masculinities in specific contexts: what best practices exist for using gender-based analysis to understand masculinities and plan programs that respond to these findings? What would such findings mean for the dynamics of state fragility? For example, what might be revealed through a case study of masculinities in the Great Lakes? Could this help us to understand conflict/fragility dynamics? How could this help us to understand the pervasiveness of sexual and gender-based violence in the region?

Recommendations for Dialogue on Policy, Capacity Development and Advocacy

- A gender niche: Should Canada develop a specific niche in gender-based analysis and the advancement of gender equality in fragile states? What would this look like? What is Canada’s value-added to these issues? What are the opportunities and obstacles in Canada and with our partners in the North and the South? How could Canada share its lessons learned and best practices with others?

- Whole-of-government coordination: What could be the capacity of decision-making centres in government -- such as within START, and DND -- to do gender-based analysis throughout their policy/program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation cycle? Where in government does this need to take place – at the headquarters and in the field? To this end, what capacities currently exist, and what further capacities are required?

- Throughout the dialogue, it was evident that a greater investment in capacities relating to gender equality and fragile states is required – both inside and outside of government. Many questions were posed without answers. The need for focused and dedicated expertise was repeatedly recognized. It is important to improve general awareness of these issues among a broad range of staff and policy leaders. It is equally important to dedicate specific resources to ensuring that the required technical expertise is part of ongoing work and discussions.

- Advocacy: Is there space to develop an advocacy strategy for gender equality and fragile states to lobby Parliamentarians, senior decision-makers and others? What would such a strategy look like? Who should it target? When? Should such a strategy or strategies be context/country specific? What could be the role of on-the-ground women’s organizations in influencing such strategies?
Annex A: Participants

Stephen Baranyi, Principal Researcher – Conflict Prevention, NSI – by telephone

Julie Delahanty, Senior Policy Advisor, Iraq, CIDA

François-Philippe Dubé, Senior Project Officer, Sudan Desk, CIDA

Tag Elkhazin, Sub-Sahara Centre

Charlotte Garay, Policy Analyst, START/IRC, DFAIT

Sanja Gavric, Development Officer, Sudan Desk, CIDA

Celine Heinbecker, Policy Advisor, Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Response, DFAIT

Farouk Jiwa, Policy Analyst, Democratic Institutions and Conflict, CIDA

Carol Kardish, Regional Manager, Africa and Middle East, Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Tarik Khan, Director, Democratic Institutions and Conflict, CIDA

Michael Koros, Senior Policy Advisor, Democratic Institutions and Conflict, CIDA

Serge Koskinen, Program Officer, Peace and Security Unit, Humanitarian Assistance, Multilateral Programs Branch, CIDA

David Lord, Coordinator, CPCC

Julie MacCormack, Project Officer, Peace and Security Unity, CIDA

Patricia McCullagh, Director, Gender Equality Unit, Policy Branch CIDA

Jodie McGrath, Policy Analyst, Gender Equality Unit, CIDA

Kristiana Powell, Researcher – Conflict Prevention, NSI / GPWG

Sophia Robinault, Senior Policy Advisor Human Rights, Gender Equality, Population and Health Division, DFAIT

Jennifer Salahub, Program Assistant – Conflict Prevention, NSI

Suzanne Taylor, Research Officer, IDRC / Co-Chair GPWG

Col. Denis Thompson, Director – Peacekeeping Policy, DND

Chantale Walker, Senior Policy Analyst, Gender Equality, Human Rights, Population and Health Division, DFAIT

Surendrini Wijeyaratne, Coordinator, GPWG / CPCC

Beth Woroniuk, Independent Consultant / Co-Chair, GPWG
Annex B: Agenda

AGENDA: NGO – GOV DIALOGUE

Canada’s Whole-of-Government Approach to Fragile States:
The Challenge of Gender Equality

Date: May 3rd, 2006
Time: 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Location: CIDA, Room 870, 200 Promenade du Portage, Gatineau, Québec.
RSVP: surendrini@peacebuild.ca

9:30 – 9:45 Welcome and introductions, Jodie McGrath, CIDA

9:45 – 10:15 Presentations on current approaches to Fragile States programs and policies by Government of Canada, (TBD)

10:15 – 10:30 Presentation of NSI research findings on why gender equality matters in fragile states; review of other donors’ policies and Canada’s commitments; lessons learned for CIDA, Foreign Affairs and DND. Kristiana Powell, NSI

10:30 – 11:45 Plenary discussion: Facilitated by Beth Woroniuk, GPWG
- How do you currently use gender analysis in existing policies and programs on conflict prevention, crisis response, and post-conflict/crisis reconstruction?
- If a whole-of-government approach to conflict prevention, crisis response, and reconstruction included a gender analysis mandate, what would it look like?
- What challenges do you currently encounter in undertaking gender analysis in fragile states programs and policies? Where are the opportunities to include gender analysis in fragile states programming and policies?
- What results or impacts would you be trying to achieve by improved gender analysis in programs and policies?

11:45 – 12:00 Summary and wrap-up, Suzanne Taylor, IDRC
- Identification of opportunities for further work

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