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Gender Equality and Fragile States Policies and Programming: A comparative study of the OECD/DAC and six OECD donors

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Executive Summary

In 2005, a number of key international aid donors and their main coordination platform were developing strategies and tools for engaging so-called fragile states. Yet, at that time, few donors were drawing on their decades of experience promoting gender equality in development activities to integrate a gender perspective into these new fragile states strategies. Given their commitments to promoting gender equality in conflict-affected and similar countries under such documents as United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, this seems a missed opportunity. In 2005, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was at the forefront of donor thinking on these issues. CIDA commissioned two papers (Baranyi and Powell 2005a and 2005b) to explore these issues and evaluate donor performance. That research was updated in 2009 by Theo Hollander who found that little had changed, but that there was reason to be optimistic regarding donor policy and practice.

Our research confirms Hollander's assessment that little progress has been made on the policy front. At the level of country programming, however, some progress has been made though it does not appear to be systematic. No new fragile states policy which integrates gender has been developed among the six donors we examine. Nor has any donor revisited their original strategy with a view to updating it or adding on a gender analysis. Several new programming documents and tools for engagement with fragile states have been developed, though gender equality has been integrated into them unevenly. All donors seem to have positive examples of gender-sensitive programming in fragile states while at the same time not living up to their national and international policy commitments in that regard. Ultimately, donors need to take concerted action in partnership with fragile states to bridge the policy-practice gap and fully realize the potential of gender equality to reinforce weak state structures and contribute to sustainable peace, security and development.

1. Introduction¹

One billion people, including about 340 million of the world's extreme poor, are estimated to live in this small group of between 30-50 'fragile' countries, located mainly in Africa, that are 'falling behind and falling apart.'²

Fragile states continue to be a concern for the international community and a key priority for donors. Especially since 9/11, officials, policy makers and academics have been preoccupied with the multidimensional and multifaceted issues that characterize these states for they undermine not only security, but also efforts to reduce poverty and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).³

The concept of "state fragility" emerged in the 1990s against the backdrop of a changing international security environment defined by "new wars,"⁴ which brought to the fore new challenges at the nexus of security and development, such as the targeting of civilians by belligerents. Robust analyses of the security-development nexus take note of the key role gender equality plays in conflict situations and fragile contexts. For instance, without internal security, women and men can become victims/perpetrators of violence, undermining any development efforts. Similarly, security activities that fail to take into account the different roles of men and women in society, risk being unsustainable over the long-term. These dynamics are reflected through some donors' incorporation of a gender perspective into their whole-of-government strategies that bridge diplomacy, defense and development. This paper addresses two related subjects: how well certain key bilateral and multilateral donors and their primary coordination body – the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) – integrate gender equality principles into their fragile states policies, and – in a more limited fashion – how well some of those policies are implemented in actual fragile states.

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² Mcloughlin, Claire (2009). *Topic Guide on Fragile States*. Birmingham, UK: Governance and Social Development Research Centre: 6.

³ Cahill, M. Devin (2007). "Donor Engagement in Fragile States: A Case Study of Donors in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the OECD Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States," IPIS/Fatal Transactions Background Paper www.ipisresearch.be/download.php?id=195 (accessed January 27, 2011): 5. See also: McAskie, Carolyn (2010). "The Global Challenge of Fragile States: Is There a Role for Canada?" *The Mcleod Group*. <http://mcleodgroup.ca/docs/fragilestates.html> (accessed January 15, 2011).

⁴ "New wars" was coined by Mary Kaldor to characterize the conflicts of the 1990s: intra-state wars whereby civilians became targets of belligerents. For more information see: Kaldor, Mary (1999). *New Wars and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Cambridge: Polity: 1-12. See also: McAskie (2010).

Building on previous work, the paper examines the progress of certain multilateral institutions, the primary coordinating body for bilateral aid (OECD/DAC), and selected bilateral aid donors in embedding gender equality in their policies and programming in fragile states since 2005. Because it was at the leading edge of thinking on this topic previously, but has since been relatively silent, we focus in on the activities of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). We then draw conclusions and make policy recommendations for how donors might improve their performance in this area.

1.1 Methodology

The work presented here revisits and updates CIDA-commissioned work from 2005 by Stephen Baranyi and Kristiana Powell⁵ which sought to understand how – if at all – key donors were integrating their decades of experience and expertise in gender equality promotion from a development perspective with their emerging fragile states policies. In a 2009 paper for the University of Utrecht, Theo Hollander⁶ engaged with similar questions, essentially updating and expanding the Baranyi and Powell papers. We draw on and add to Baranyi and Powell’s original work and Hollander’s updated analysis and go beyond both exercises by addressing documents which are not discussed by Hollander or had not been produced at the time his study was conducted. We chose to begin our investigation with the original international actors addressed in the Baranyi and Powell papers – the Australian overseas aid program, AusAID, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the OECD DAC, the UN, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank. We made this decision with a view to updating that analysis and evaluating progress in the past five years among the key donors who were developing concerted strategies for engagement with fragile states as a distinct group of countries facing similar challenges. We examine the DAC as the primary platform through which the major bilateral donors harmonize their aid policies.⁷ We look at the work of the two multilateral institutions because of their unique position as brokers of diverse policy initiatives and resource inputs from both OECD and non-OECD countries and their programming in fragile states.

We also chose to include an analysis of CIDA’s policies and programming in this area because of CIDA’s forward thinking on the links between gender equality and state fragility in 2005. At

⁵ Baranyi, Stephen and Kristiana Powell (2005a). “Fragile States, Gender Equality and Aid Effectiveness: A Review of Donor Perspectives” Ottawa: The North-South Institute; and, Stephen Baranyi and Kristiana Powell (2005b). “Bringing Gender Back into Canada’s Engagement in Fragile States: Options for CIDA in a Whole-of-Government Approach.” Ottawa: The North-South Institute.

⁶ Hollander, Theo (2009). “Situating gender in the international discourse and policy development on Fragile States.” Unpublished report for the University of Utrecht, Centre for Conflict Studies, Working Group on Gender and Conflict.

⁷ The DAC is a platform for policy harmonization among bilateral aid donors. It does not develop its own independent policy, nor does it implement development programming; it does develop tools to help its members better implement and coordinate their own development policies and activities at the country level. We recognize this but for simplicity’s sake use the term “donors” to refer to all of the international actors we investigate in this paper. When discussing questions of specific policy and/or programming, we trust the reader understands that we do not include the DAC in our use of terms such as “donor policy or programming.”

that time, CIDA was involved in developing a Canadian whole-of-government strategy on fragile states. Because that strategy was never fully developed by the government of Canada, we were curious to see if and/or how CIDA was addressing gender equality in its fragile states programming, drawing on its experience and other tools, yet absent a whole-of-government fragile states strategy. Moreover, neither the Baranyi and Powell papers nor Hollander's contribution include CIDA in their analyses (though Hollander does address some donors with which we do not engage). Due to The North-South Institute's strong relationship with CIDA, we were well placed to contribute in this regard. In the analysis of CIDA presented below, we draw not only on CIDA policy and secondary literature, but also on a semi-structured focus group discussion with CIDA colleagues held at CIDA's offices in Gatineau, QC, in 2010. Importantly, we focus on experiences in Afghanistan and Haiti, two important fragile states and ones which are priority countries for Canadian aid.

The vast majority of the reports we draw on are the donors' own public documents and can be found on their websites. Consequently, it is difficult to highlight the extent to which the incorporation of gender equality in fragile state policies of the donors in question has been successful, given the potential bias in reporting. Moreover, a lack of independent evaluations of donor programming in fragile states makes it difficult to undertake any kind of thorough analysis with regards to their successes and/or failures.⁸ Finally, due to our small sample size and the limits of our ability to conduct primary research particularly in fragile states, we cannot draw generalizable conclusions from our analysis. What we do hope to provide is some insight into how the links between gender equality and state fragility are or are not being recognized and acted upon by several important aid donors in a few priority countries with a view to thinking about how those insights relate to other fragile situations and making recommendations which will encourage donors to better make those links in both their policies and programming.

2. Gender Equality and Fragile States Policies and Programming: Reality or mere rhetoric?

Women are central to weaving back the social fabric of life, to rebuilding shattered families and communities. Women are cornerstones in nation building. Their leadership and their human rights must, however, be accorded the space, the support and the resources necessary to sustain peace and development.⁹

Although donor definitions of what constitutes a fragile state vary, they all converge around the idea of "a state with weak capacity to carry out the basic state functions of governing a population and its territory and that lacks the ability or political will to develop mutually

⁸ It is interesting to note that DFID is currently (Spring 2011) commissioning a study of what kinds of programming (by both donors and NGOs) has worked to promote gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected states. Results should be available in the Summer of 2011 and will hopefully lead to further research.

⁹ UNIFEM (2005). "Towards Achieving the MDGs in Sudan: Centrality of Women's Leadership and Gender Equality." New York: United Nations: 44.

constructive and reinforcing relations with society.”¹⁰ In fragile states, “civil society lacks the capacity to cooperate, compromise and trust each other.”¹¹ When capacity deficits such as aptitudes and resources are extreme, states move toward failure, collapse, crisis and conflict – all of which are at best disruptive and at worst devastating to activities focused on human development.¹²

WHY IS GENDER IMPORTANT FOR UNDERSTANDING STATE FRAGILITY?

Because state fragility affects men and women differently, failing to understand dynamic social relations will undermine any reconstruction and rebuilding efforts. Gender differences in many fragile situations relate to human rights violations, limited access to justice, extreme poverty, weak social services, and authoritarian and discriminatory politics.

- While women and girls are more vulnerable to various forms of gender-based violence, men and boys may be targets of campaigns to recruit or eliminate potential combatants;
- Weak legal protection against domestic violence and weak protection for women’s property claims impact women’s ability to fully exercise their rights;
- Women are disproportionately over-represented among the poor, which means they are under-represented in the formal labour force and credit markets, situations exacerbated by state fragility;
- Women and children often have less access to already weak social services. Moreover, women and girls tend to take on greater household/family burdens as a result of male family members being recruited to fight or being killed; and,
- Authoritarian and discriminatory politics common to many fragile states limit women’s participation in policy-making and implementation, even when those policies directly affect them.

Likewise, understanding gender roles and relations is important for addressing fragility as women and men can be both obstacles to and agents of positive change. Women and their organizations might be champions of democratic participation and accountability while others may encourage large scale violence. For example, Darfuri women sometimes sing songs that encourage men to continue fighting. Just as men can be obstacles to state building, they too can be champions of reform (Baranyi and Powell, 2005a: 2).

¹⁰ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010). “About the Fragile States Principles.” <http://www.oecd.org/document/9/0,3746,en_21571361_42277499_42283112_1_1_1_1,00.html> (accessed September 9, 2010).

¹¹ Brinkerhoff, David (2010). "Dilemmas and Directions / Feature / Journal." *Capacity.org*. <http://www.capacity.org/en/journal/feature/dilemmas_and_directions> (accessed Oct 3, 2010).

¹² Ibid.

Numerous policies and initiatives have been developed and implemented by donors in their engagements in and with fragile states, yet the results in terms of pulling states out of fragility have been rather mixed.¹³ More than half of the forty most fragile states identified by the Country Indicators of Foreign Policy project in 1987 continued to be on that list in 2007.¹⁴ This can be attributed not only to the complex environments that characterize fragile states, but also to the donors themselves who continue to take a minimalist approach (e.g. secure war termination) in their interaction with fragile states, despite commitments to maximalist agendas, which include the promotion of gender equality, good governance, and human rights.¹⁵

In 2005, the OECD introduced its *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations*, which build on the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, endorsed that same year. The *Principles* act as guidelines for OECD members' engagement in fragile states and focus on state building. This should be achieved by supporting the legitimacy and accountability of states through addressing issues of democratic governance and human rights, and strengthening state capability to fulfill primary functions. Reaching such an objective requires a comprehensive understanding of the causes of fragility and its various manifestations, including entrenched political power dynamics, which are often highly gendered. As DFID notes,

Real or perceived discrimination is associated with fragility and conflict, and can lead to service delivery failures. Measures to promote the voice and participation of women, youth, minorities and other excluded groups should be included in state-building and service delivery strategies from the outset.¹⁶

The important roles that women and girls play at the nexus of security and development, and their potential to contribute to improved development and security have been well-documented over the past several decades through donor policy and programming and codified internationally through documents such as the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.¹⁷ This declaration was reinforced by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC),

¹³ Carment, David and Yiagadeesen Samy (2010). "International Security: Preventing failed, fragile states," *Embassy Magazine*, (April 21, 2010): 8.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Baranyi and Powell (2005a); Stephen Baranyi (2008). *The Paradoxes of Peacebuilding Post-9/11*. Vancouver: UBC Press: 11.

¹⁶ DFID (2010a). "Working Effectively in Conflict-affected and Fragile Situations Briefing Paper D: Promoting non-discrimination," <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/governance/building-peaceful-states-D.pdf> (accessed January 27, 2011): 1.

¹⁷ "The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted at the September 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) by representatives from 189 countries. The Platform reflects a new international commitment to the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere. It builds on commitments made during the United Nations Decade for Women, 1976-1985 and on related commitments made in the cycle of United Nations global conferences held in the 1990s." UNFPA (2010). "Background on Key

which subsequently passed several resolutions highlighting the important roles women have in building peace and achieving security: UNSC Resolutions 1325 (October 2000),¹⁸ 1820 (June 2008), 1888 (September 2009) and 1889 (October 2009).¹⁹ More recently, several independent quantitative analyses identify a clear link between high levels of gender equality and both intrastate and interstate peace, even when controlling for other likely factors.²⁰

Despite these benchmarks, OECD member states committed to gender equality in their development policies and programming have been slow to systematically embed gender equality in their engagement with fragile states, be they led by defence or foreign ministries, or whole-of-government approaches.²¹ This is somewhat disappointing especially since all donors identify gender equality as key to making progress in all other development domains in their policy statements and/or through their endorsement of initiatives such as the MDGs (MDG3 is, of course, Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women). And, donor endorsement of the UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security suggests a similar recognition among activities that do not traditionally fall under “development.” In order to better understand the paths each of the key organizations we study has taken over the past several years in this regard, we examine each one in turn in the following sections.

2.1 The World Bank

Prior to 2005, gender equality was not mainstreamed by the Bank in its reports pertaining to fragile states – what it called at the time “low-income countries under stress” (LICUS). In 2002, the World Bank LICUS Task Force published a guide for donors that discussed ineffective aid programs in LICUS due to a lack of will and/or capacity for funding poverty reduction. While the report suggests that donors need to develop context-specific strategies (e.g. analyze the socio-political situation) and be engaged consistently for the long-term, it does not mention gender equality in either its analyses or recommendations. This was attributed to its stance at the time that donors should avoid controversial or divisive reforms.²²

Since 2005, the Bank has not made significant progress. While Hollander’s analysis finds the World Bank to have produced several important documents in which gender is clearly linked

International Agreements and Declarations: Promoting Gender Equality.”

<http://www.unfpa.org/gender/rights.htm> (accessed Oct 4, 2010).

¹⁸ UNSCR 1325 is the first resolution that specifically addresses the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

¹⁹ Clingendael Conflict Research Unit (2010). “Aiming High, Reaching Low Four Fundamentals for Gender-Responsive State-building,” *CRU Policy Brief 13* The Hague: Clingendael.

²⁰ See for example: Hudson, Valerie et al (2009). “The Heart of the Matter: The Security of Women and the Security of States.” *International Security* 33.3 (Winter 2008/09): 7-45; Mary Caprioli (2003). “Gender Equality and Civil Wars” Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit Working Paper, Washington, DC: The World Bank; Erik Melander (2005). “Gender Equality and Intrastate Armed Conflict” *International Studies Quarterly*, 49: 695-714.

²¹ Harcourt, Wendy (2009). “Gender and Fragility: Policy Responses,” paper prepared for the Conference on “Moving Towards the European Report on Development 2009”, Florence, Italy, 21-23 June, 2009: 3.

²² Baranyi and Powell (2005a): 9.

to fragile states and vice versa,²³ our analysis suggests that this is not entirely the case. Hollander identifies the 2007 *Global Monitoring Report: Confronting the Challenges of Gender Equality and Fragile States* as the most important of the Bank's reports in this regard. Based on the subtitle alone, one could easily have high expectations of the report in terms of addressing the particular challenges of promoting gender equality in fragile states. However, while the report does make a few comments in that regard, it largely treats the two subjects as independent and fails to make strong linkages between them or provide guidance with regards to programming. This is a disappointing and missed opportunity given the Bank's recognition of the need to pay more attention to gender equality and women's empowerment issues in fragile states.²⁴

On a more positive note, in its 2006 *Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan* the Bank presents its four-point strategy to economically empower women, including in fragile states.²⁵ Another key Bank report is *Mainstreaming Gender in Conflict Analysis: Issues and Recommendations*, commissioned in 2006 by the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit to improve gender sensitivity in the Bank's Conflict Analysis Framework.²⁶ The report makes recommendations for adapting the Bank's existing conflict framework and indicators to better reflect the different ways women and men are affected by conflict.²⁷ In particular, it notes that,

The inclusion of gendered perspectives provides a more 'people-centered' approach, and stands a better chance of allowing analysts to explore the drivers of peace. Without a gender lens, the analysis can lead to a skewed understanding of the situation under study, and lead to overlooking critical elements in society that are withstanding or resisting conflict.²⁸

The report goes on to identify key reasons why gender-sensitive frameworks are lacking among donors: a general tendency to conflate gender with women; insufficient data and information on the 'gendered' impact of the development, conflict and poverty nexus; and, when and if gender is addressed, it is typically covered under social issues or indicators, rather than mainstreaming gender throughout the analysis.²⁹ These are important issues, which should be considered by donors in order to bridge existing gaps between their gender equality

²³ Hollander (2009): 29.

²⁴ Ibid: 30.

²⁵ World Bank (2006). *Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan (Fiscal years 2007–10)*. Washington, DC: World Bank: 13.

²⁶ Anderlini, Sanam Naraghi (2006). *Mainstreaming Gender in Conflict Analysis: Issues and Recommendations*. World Bank Social Development Papers Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Paper No. 33 Washington, DC: World Bank.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid: Summary Findings, n.p.

²⁹ Ibid: Summary Findings, n.p.

and fragile states policies and programming, including the tendency to see the two issues as distinct and unrelated.

Overall, the Bank's performance since 2005 in linking gender equality and fragile states, particularly at the programming level, appears to be limited. While the two 2006 reports provide a sound policy framework, the failure of the 2007 *Global Monitoring Report* to incorporate strong linkages between gender equality and state fragility raises questions as to whether or not the Bank is prepared to move forward, away from the pre-2005 stance that donors should avoid controversial or divisive reforms.

2.2 *The United Nations*

UN agencies have made some progress in integrating a gender perspective into their approaches to fragile contexts, though they tend not to refer to member states as "fragile;" rather, its focus is on peacebuilding and related activities. As Baranyi and Powell note, the UN Development Group (UNDG)/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Assistance (ECHA) Working Group on Transitional Issues' 2004 report recognizes that women play an essential role in peacebuilding processes. Yet, a gender analysis is absent from the 2005 UNDG Operational Note on Transitional Results Matrices, which builds on the 2004 report. Other UN bodies such as UNIFEM and UNDP have also developed gender-sensitive approaches that are relevant to fragile situations. For instance, UNIFEM promotes gender equality in the justice sector and women's participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts. Yet, in 2005, challenges remained, notably with regard to linking the UNDG/ECHA work on transitional situations to wider UN work on gender, peacebuilding and conflict prevention.³⁰

Through his research, Hollander did not find any updated versions of the two UNDG/ECHA reports reviewed by Baranyi and Powell. Nevertheless, he concludes that gender is an integrated part of many UN agencies in the realms of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In particular, he highlights the work of UNDP, UNHCHR and UNIFEM, as well as UNICEF all of which have made progress in understanding the differential impacts of conflict on women, men, girls and boys.³¹ Hollander particularly focuses on the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). He examines how DPKO has adopted UNSCR 1325 as a framework for integrating gender into its implementation of peacekeeping mandates,³² such as by appointing gender advisors to every new multidimensional peacekeeping operation since 1997.³³

³⁰ Baranyi and Powell (2005a): 7.

³¹ Hollander (2009): 26-27.

³² Ibid: 27.

³³ Ibid.; see also: OSAGI (2010) "OSAGI - Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women." *Welcome to the United Nations: It's Your World*. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/> (accessed September 9, 2010).

Hollander's analysis suggests that many UN bodies are making a significant effort to take a gender-sensitive approach to their engagements in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, particularly through the entry points of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. While Hollander acknowledges the importance UNIFEM places on promoting gender equality in conflict and fragile contexts, his argument is weakened in its failure to explore the myriad ways in which UNIFEM has been at the forefront of advancing gender equality and women's empowerment for some time now.³⁴ In its 2009-2010 Annual Report, which commemorates the 10th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, UNIFEM discusses its programming in various conflict-affected and fragile contexts, drawing on examples such as how it supports efforts to improve accountability in justice processes in places like Afghanistan and Haiti.³⁵

Hollander also neglects the importance and influence on UN agencies (and member states for that matter) of the three Security Council resolutions adopted in recent years: UNSCRs 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009). While 1820 recognizes the impact of war on women and calls for engaging women in peacebuilding and ending impunity for sexual violence as a tactic of conflict, the latter two resolutions strengthen the call for action through measures such as increasing the number of women that participate in peace processes.³⁶ We did not find any new reports or policy guidance documents produced by the UN apart from those addressed by Baranyi and Powell and Hollander, however, the activities of UNIFEM and some initiatives by the Peacebuilding Commission,³⁷ research conducted and supported by UN-INSTRAW,³⁸ the advent of UN-Women (and creation of an undersecretary general-level position to head it) as well as the many positive initiatives taken through UN missions to promote gender equality, improve living standards for women and reduce sexual and gender-based violence suggest that while there is certainly room for improvement in UN policy and program guidance, gender equality is far from absent in the UN's fragile states programming.

2.3 The OECD DAC

The DAC's 2005 *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations* draws on common donor experiences in fragile contexts and acknowledges the importance of taking a maximalist approach in its recommendations for donor engagement in fragile states.³⁹ This maximalist view includes commitments to long-term engagement, context-specific approaches, whole-of-government action, and preventing aid orphans and aid volatility.⁴⁰ However, the *Principles* do not systemically address gender equality. Instead, they suggest the promotion of non-discrimination to building inclusive and stable societies, placing

³⁴ Baranyi and Powell (2005a): 7.

³⁵ UNIFEM (2010). "UNIFEM Annual Report 2009-2010." New York: United Nations.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Tryggestad, Torunn L. (2010). "The UN Peacebuilding Commission and Gender: A Case of Norm Reinforcement," *International Peacekeeping* 17.2: 159–171.

³⁸ For example, Megan Bastick and Kristin Valasek, eds (2008). *Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit*. Geneva: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR and UN-INSTRAW.

³⁹ Baranyi and Powell (2005a): 5.

⁴⁰ Ibid: 6

an emphasis on the promotion of gender equity, human rights and social inclusion.⁴¹ While several DAC networks, including the Gender Equality Network, participated in the process, gender analysis is largely absent from most DAC fragile states documents, including the *Principles*.⁴²

Since 2005, the OECD has developed several other guidance documents for its members that demonstrate the extent to which gender equality has been mainstreamed in donors' approaches to fragile states, at least on paper.⁴³ *Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations: From Fragility to Resilience* (2008) explores the issue of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in post-conflict and low-capacity states.⁴⁴ The report acknowledges that "without substantial participation, by women and men, in the planning processes of PRSPs and other development planning mechanisms," donors may fail to secure the accountability and legitimacy needed to successfully carry out such measures.⁴⁵ The role of women in addressing fragility is also identified in *Service Delivery in Fragile Situations: Key Concepts, Findings and Lessons* (2008), which stresses, among other things, the important role women's organizations play in "maintaining services, in supporting social cohesion and in negotiating safe space between communities in conflict." Yet, according to the report, this can only happen once issues which disproportionately impact women such as domestic violence, unequal access to education and discriminatory family laws are addressed. To that end, the report outlines how women can become agents of change given their strengths in networking and their unique social positions.⁴⁶

Most recently, the DAC published a short review of donor spending entitled *Aid in Support of Gender Equality in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States*.⁴⁷ The data comes from donors' own reporting and so should be viewed accordingly. The report's main findings show that about one third of DAC members' aid spending in fragile states claims gender equality as a principal or significant objective. Importantly, this excludes spending by the largest donor (in amount of spending), the USA, which does not provide such information. It also does not speak to the outputs, impacts, results or outcomes of the aid, simply to its disbursement. Moreover, given the importance that donors ostensibly place on gender equality in their policy statements, their programming budgets do not seem to be living up to expectations. Finally, in the crucial

⁴¹ OECD DAC (2007). "Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations." Paris: OECD: 2.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ The following documents are not addressed in Hollander's analysis.

⁴⁴ OECD DAC (2008a). "Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations: From Fragility to Resilience." Paris: OECD.

⁴⁵ Ibid: 37.

⁴⁶ OECD DAC (2008b) "Service Delivery in Fragile Situations: Key Concepts, Findings and Lessons." Paris: OECD: 8 and 32-43.

⁴⁷ OECD DAC (2010). *Aid in Support of Gender Equality in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States*. Paris: OECD.

sector of peace and security in fragile contexts, the report notes that only 20% of spending in that sector integrates a gender perspective.⁴⁸

These three examples reinforce not only the importance of gender equality in programming in fragile states, but also the attention given to these two interrelated issues at the policy coordination level by DAC members and the disconnect between policy and practice that sometimes exists. Yet, because the DAC does not develop its own independent policy or program in fragile and conflict-affected states, we must look to the actions of its member states – the bilateral donors – to evaluate their performance in this regard.

2.4 AusAID

In 2005, AusAID began to develop its policy framework for engaging fragile states with the Statement to Parliament, *Australian Aid: An Integrated Approach*.⁴⁹ While this document acknowledged the importance of developing country-specific strategies that take into account culture and politics by examining topics such as power relations, it remained silent on gender issues, despite AusAID's commitment to mainstreaming gender into all of its development programs and strategies.⁵⁰

Today, AusAID continues to use the same gender-blind policy framework for its aid delivery overall. Nevertheless, the Agency has made significant progress in mainstreaming gender in its programming in conflict and fragile contexts. AusAID's Solomon Islands program serves as a good model for beginning to integrate gender equality in a country strategy for conflict-affected and fragile states.⁵¹ The program has established a method for gender analysis which assists in identifying existing gender equality initiatives and gaps across programs currently being implemented bilaterally and through the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands.⁵²

AusAID has also established clear gender guidelines for its peacebuilding programs which are discussed in *Gender Peacebuilding Guidelines* (2007). The guidelines clearly take note of the different ways in which men and women are affected by conflict, as well as the contributions women can make to peacebuilding processes – a key factor that has often been sidelined by donors and other stakeholders in such processes. According to AusAID, high levels of gender inequality are problematic because they increase the likelihood of violent intrastate conflict. As such, all peacebuilding initiatives – ranging from conflict risk assessments to peace negotiations to legal reform – undertaken by AusAID must acknowledge the need to promote gender equality.⁵³

⁴⁸ Ibid: 1-3.

⁴⁹ Baranyi and Powell (2005a): 3.

⁵⁰ Ibid: 3.

⁵¹ Ibid: 22.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Hollander (2009): 23-24.

On the policy side, the Agency has made significant efforts not to integrate gender equality into its fragile states policy, but rather to mainstream a conflict/fragile states analysis into its gender equality policies, an approach that is somewhat unique to AusAID and which demonstrates its commitment to linking these two themes, at least from a development perspective. In its 2007 policy statement, *Gender equality in Australia's aid program: why and how*, AusAID incorporates conflict and fragile contexts within the broader objective of reducing poverty by advancing gender equality and empowering women.⁵⁴ The report not only acknowledges the negative impacts conflict and disaster have on women and children, but also stresses the need to focus on gender equality given "the vital role women can play in economic development and the creation of peace and stability."⁵⁵ In one of its four themes, it also singles-out promoting the equal participation of women in decision making in fragile and conflict-affected states.⁵⁶

As for its actual progress, AusAID's *Gender Equality: Annual Thematic Performance Report 2006-2007*, an evaluation of Australia's progress in promoting gender equality in its programs, provides notable examples of how its gender policy has been implemented on the ground, including in fragile states.⁵⁷ One such example is a community empowerment program – Local Governance and Infrastructure for Communities in Aceh – that encourages and supports women's full participation in all development activities, thereby building their confidence and leadership skills and leading to greater representation of women in local government.⁵⁸

2.5 DFID

In 2005, DFID published a paper on why the UK needs to work more effectively in fragile states. That paper underscored, among other things, the importance of whole-of-government action in engaging in such contexts. However, the report was less ambitious with regards to state building, including gender equality due to DFID's position that politically and socially controversial issues should be avoided. The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit's report, which acknowledged the complex issues that characterize fragile contexts, was also silent on gender equality.⁵⁹

Since 2005, DFID has made promising steps towards linking these two priority themes, though this does not seem to be entirely systematic. On the programming side, in its 2007 report titled *Gender equality, at the heart of development*, fragile states are not systematically addressed, despite discussions on women's empowerment projects in Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁶⁰ However, in its 2008 annual report, DFID dedicated a whole

⁵⁴ AusAID (2007). *Gender Equality in Australia's Aid Program – Why and How*. Canberra: AusAID: 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid: 23.

⁵⁶ Ibid: 3.

⁵⁷ AusAID (2008). *Gender Equality: Annual Thematic Performance Report 2006–07*. Canberra: AusAID: 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid: 23.

⁵⁹ Baranyi and Powell (2005a): 4.

⁶⁰ Hollander (2009): 25.

chapter to “Conflict, Crisis and Fragile States” in which gender equality is singled out as an important issue that needs to be addressed when engaging in conflict-affected and fragile states situations. One approach used by DFID in supporting women’s engagement in peacebuilding is through UNIFEM, with which it has cooperated extensively.⁶¹ Similarly, the 2009 evaluation report on DFID’s engagement in fragile states acknowledges that “gender is an important consideration in programming in fragile situations, where gender inequalities are often pronounced,” and draws on examples such as support for gender budgeting in local governments.⁶²

Even more promising are a group of policy-relevant documents released in 2009 and 2010, including the UK’s most recent development White Paper, *Eliminating World Poverty: Building our Common Future*.⁶³ The White Paper includes a chapter dedicated to “Building Peaceful States and Societies” that effectively mainstreams a gender analysis and includes a specific action point on prioritizing measures to reduce gender based violence. These links are reinforced in a DFID Emerging Policy Paper published in 2009, “Building the State and Securing the Peace”⁶⁴ and subsequent associated documents. The policy paper highlights the fourth DAC Principle, *Prioritize Prevention*, and promotes “strengthening indigenous capacities, especially those of women to prevent and resolve conflict,” for instance, by including women and girl combatants in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs.⁶⁵

Following on the policy paper, a programming framework was developed in 2010. The framework is supported by briefing and practice papers. It establishes not only a preliminary integrated strategic framework for DFID’s engagement in fragile states, but also provides program officers and country offices with guidance on working more effectively in such contexts.⁶⁶ The framework currently consists of a series of briefing papers that are in line with the OECD DAC Principles. In one paper, DFID stresses the need to respond to gender inequality in the early stages of engagement with conflict-affected and fragile contexts as it is “a crucial element of state-building and peace-building strategies.”⁶⁷ In doing so, “the legacy of violent conflict (which often disproportionately affects women)” can be addressed, making it possible to build inclusive societies and states, which in turn “raise the prospects of a durable peace by maximizing the contribution that women can make.”⁶⁸ In order to help move

⁶¹ DFID (2008). *Annual Report 2008: Making It Happen*, London: DFID: 155.

⁶² Hollander (2009): 25

⁶³ DFID (2009a). *Eliminating World Poverty: Building our Common Future*. London: DFID.

⁶⁴ DFID (2009b). *Emerging Policy Paper: Building the State and Securing the Peace*.

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/SNAA-7TH9PS/\\$file/dfid-jun2009.pdf?openelement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/SNAA-7TH9PS/$file/dfid-jun2009.pdf?openelement) (Accessed January 27, 2011): 3.

⁶⁵ Ibid: 23

⁶⁶ DFID (2010a). *Working Effectively in Conflict-affected and Fragile Situations: Summary Note*.

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/governance/building-peaceful-states-D.pdf> (accessed January 27, 2011): 2.

⁶⁷ DFID (2010a): 6.

⁶⁸ Ibid: 6.

this policy idea to practice, DFID developed a Gender and Social Exclusion Analysis tool which can be used to analyze the gender-specific impacts of conflict-affected or fragile contexts, allowing it to develop comprehensive, targeted approaches.⁶⁹

In addition to these briefing papers, DFID also recently published a practice note on *Building Peaceful States and Societies*, which reinforces the policy-oriented briefing papers by providing comprehensive guidance to programming in fragile contexts. The report draws attention to the need to include marginalized groups such as women in peace processes in order to address the root causes of conflict and fragility, build conflict resolution mechanisms, and assist in state-building processes. The report goes on to analyze the role of gender in security sector reform (SSR), which is acknowledged as having been neglected in international responses to SSR. The report suggests that greater attention be given to preventive measures such as gender awareness-raising within police and military structures.⁷⁰ Though these policy and programming tools await revision and publication as official policy documents, they do suggest that DFID is moving away from the “good enough governance” approach codified in its 2005 policy towards one of “good governance” by bringing gender equality and fragile states under one policy and programming framework, along with other strategies.

2.6 USAID

In 2005, USAID released its *Failed States Strategy*, which provides guidelines for whole-of-government action and acknowledges the gender dimensions of state fragility, such as ensuring the participation of women in SSR through gender-sensitive recruitment. However, when discussing the Agency’s relevant experiences, the report is silent on the gender dimensions of its programming in fragile states. Consequently, the USAID Office for Conflict Management and Mitigation and the Women and Development office started to develop new tools to address such gaps.⁷¹

Like AusAID, USAID continues to use its 2005 policy framework which has not been updated since then and makes only two references to gender.⁷² On the other hand, like the other donors, USAID has published several reports since then that link gender equality and fragile states and provide guidelines for programming in such contexts.

In its 2006 report, *Women and Conflict: An Introductory Guide for Programming*, USAID systemically addresses gender and conflict by identifying:

- key issues and methods for understanding the common impact of conflict on women

⁶⁹ Ibid: 20

⁷⁰ DFID (2010b). *Building Peaceful States and Societies: A DFID Practice Paper*, <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/governance/Building-peaceful-states-and-societies.pdf> (Accessed January 27, 2011): 6 and 29.

⁷¹ Baranyi and Powell (2005a): 8.

⁷² Ibid.

- ways USAID can respond to address the most vital needs of those affected by conflict;
- ways in which conflict and fragility may increase gender inequities; and,
- programming approaches that address these issues while building on the strengths of women.⁷³

In addition to acknowledging the differing ways women are affected by conflict, the report offers operational guidance in addressing these differences such as supporting women's networks, addressing gender-based violence and conflict, developing a cultural understanding, promoting community-based participation, and increasing women's participation in decision-making processes.⁷⁴ In order to develop appropriate programs, the report singles out comprehensive situational analyses as key to identifying gender issues in conflict situations.⁷⁵ It also stresses how opportunities for addressing gender issues open up in post-conflict situations and how they can be lost if not addressed.⁷⁶

Other reports that bring gender equality and fragile states together are two USAID toolkits, which provide guidelines for working in such contexts. *Supporting Peace Processes: A Tool Kit for Development Intervention* (2009) discusses lessons learned about program success or failure, establishing best practices in engaging conflict-affected societies.⁷⁷ The report specifically states that women's organizations have been effective at bridging divides because women are perceived to be more trustworthy, less corruptible and have more collaborative negotiating styles.⁷⁸ USAID's *Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding: An Introductory Programming Guide* (2009) looks at "the opportunities and challenges inherent to development programming in conflicts where religion is a key component."⁷⁹ The report points out the need to understand local customs and traditions regarding gender roles and dynamics in order to design and implement effective programs.⁸⁰

⁷³ USAID (2006a). *Women and Conflict: An Introductory Guide for Programming*.

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/cmm_women_and_conflict_toolkit_december_2006.pdf (accessed January 27, 2011): 1.

⁷⁴ Ibid: 10.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ USAID (2009a). *Supporting Peace Processes: A Tool Kit for Development Intervention*.

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/Supporting_Peace_Process_Toolkit.pdf (accessed January 27, 2011).

⁷⁸ Ibid: 13.

⁷⁹ USAID (2009b). *Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding: An Introductory Programming Guide*.

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/Religion_Conflict_and_Peacebuilding_Toolkit.pdf (accessed January 27, 2011): 1.

⁸⁰ Ibid: 8.

In his review, Hollander argues that the one policy document in which gender equality and fragile states could have been incorporated to build on the 2005 *Failed States Strategy* is the *USAID Policy Framework on Bilateral Aid*.⁸¹ However, this remains a missed opportunity as the report mentions gender only once, suggesting that gender equality pertains only to reasonably stable developing countries. This raises serious concerns about USAID's commitments to addressing gender equality in fragile states.⁸² The paper was taken up by USAID's Africa Bureau and adapted to its 2006 *Strategic Framework for Africa*.⁸³ Despite extensive discussion on fragile states, the strategic framework is largely silent on the role of women in such contexts and the different ways men and women are impacted by fragility. For instance, the role of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction efforts is not mentioned once. This is surprising given that the Africa Bureau incorporated its 2005 *Africa Bureau Fragile States Framework: Gender Issues and Best Practice Examples* into its *Fragile States Strategy*.⁸⁴ The *Strategy* "highlights key gender issues at the pre-crisis, in crisis and recovering from crisis stages and best practice cases for all stages in order to assist the Agency and local partners in carrying out their own assessments and designs."⁸⁵ In these ways, USAID has made little progress in linking gender equality and state fragility in either its policy or practice, despite some strong and potentially powerful opportunities to do so.

2.7 CIDA

Similar to the five donors and the OECD DAC discussed above, in 2005 Canada was also developing a whole-of-government strategy for engaging fragile states. If a complete policy document was developed, it has never been made public and has yet to become official government policy. As part of its engagement with that interdepartmental process, CIDA sought to integrate a gender perspective into the policy, commissioning the Baranyi and Powell papers as a means to understand existing knowledge and practice and to solicit suggestions for how best to do so.⁸⁶

CIDA's internal gender equality policies and programming are based on its 1999 *Policy on Gender Equality*, which has at its core the integration of gender equality across all policies, programming and projects. This policy was taken up by CIDA as it developed its *Gender Equality and Peacebuilding Operational Framework* (1999) and its *Gender Equality and Humanitarian Assistance Guide* (2003). Both of these documents look at the different ways women and men are affected by conflict and other crises, for instance, "how men and women have differential access to peace negotiations that shape the future of countries and the distribution of resources at different levels of society." Together, these three documents also

⁸¹ Hollander (2009): 28.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ USAID (2006b). *Strategic Framework for Africa*. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACG573.pdf (accessed January 27, 2011): 1.

⁸⁴ USAID. *Africa Bureau Fragile States Framework: Gender Issues and Best Practice Examples*. www.usaid.gov/policy/cdie/framework.doc (Accessed January 27, 2011): 1.

⁸⁵ Ibid: 2

⁸⁶ Baranyi and Powell (2005a and 2005b).

provide programming tools for gender analysis, program design and implementation, sectoral entry points, policy dialogue and monitoring and evaluation.⁸⁷

Additionally, the Government of Canada committed itself to incorporating gender equality in development programming by endorsing:

- the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;
- UNSCR 1325;⁸⁸
- the DAC Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development Cooperation; and,
- the DAC Guidelines on Helping Prevent Violent Conflict.⁸⁹

Despite Baranyi and Powell’s suggestion that these documents could be used to strengthen CIDA’s existing gender equality strategies,⁹⁰ CIDA’s 1999 gender equality policy has not been updated to reflect today’s new realities, notably the particular challenges of fragile states which were a focus of Canada’s 2005 International Policy Statement.⁹¹

Apart from official policy, CIDA has made progress in developing internal guidelines for engaging fragile states, which include gender equality programming. In 2008, CIDA produced “An Internal Guide for Effective Development Cooperation in Fragile States.” This paper recognizes gender inequality as a cause of state fragility and making the case that gender-based analyses be employed in developing programs in fragile states.⁹² The guidelines recognize that women and men are affected differently by state fragility, making gender analyses important in the reconstruction and rebuilding of such contexts.⁹³ Moreover, the guidelines are quite ambitious, suggesting that CIDA should work in partnership, including with local and national governments, NGOs and women’s organizations to:

- adequately fund and conduct context-specific gender analyses for both policy and programming;
- support women’s participation in decision-making, including in public office;
- assist women in accessing social and financial benefits, including land;

⁸⁷ Baranyi and Powell (2005b): 2-3.

⁸⁸ It is encouraging to note that in late 2010, Canada released its official National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and associated resolutions. See: DFAIT (2010). “Building Peace and Security for All” Online: http://www.international.gc.ca/START-GTSR/women_canada_action_plan_plan_action_femme.aspx?lang=eng (Accessed March 2, 2011).

⁸⁹ Ibid: 5.

⁹⁰ Ibid: 5.

⁹¹ CIDA (2008). “An Internal Guide for Effective Development Cooperation in Fragile States: On the Road to Recovery Breaking the Cycle of Poverty and Fragility.” Gatineau: CIDA: 14.

⁹² Ibid: 14.

⁹³ Ibid: 12.

- work with development partners to view women and men as agents and create enabling environments for them to support conflict resolution and peacebuilding, democratization and economic development; and,
- meet commitments under conventions such as UNSCR 1325 and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women to promote and protect women's rights.⁹⁴

The report goes on to explain the importance of gender-based analysis as it sheds light both on women's agency and the positive contributions they can make to post-conflict reconstruction and development, as well as men's roles in both supporting progress and perpetuating inequalities and violence.⁹⁵ Yet, despite such robust treatment of gender equality issues in this document, it remains solely an internal document with no associated implementation budget and to which CIDA is not accountable through either internal or public reporting. Moreover, absent a whole-of-government strategy on engagement with fragile states, it remains a tool relevant only to CIDA staff rather than one which could be used by foreign or defence department staff in their work in important fragile states such as Afghanistan and Haiti.

On the programming side, CIDA appears to be making more progress, relative to the stagnation at the policy level. As a crosscutting issue, CIDA has reports on its integration of gender equality annually.⁹⁶ The reports – produced by the agency itself – document CIDA's activities such as establishing funds in priority countries to support local governments and civil society organizations in election support, legislative change, or public awareness-raising.⁹⁷ Independent assessments are less frequent, but do offer some insight into how CIDA is making some efforts to link gender equality and state fragility, outside of a dedicated policy framework. The cases of gender programming in Afghanistan and Haiti are discussed in The North-South Institute's *Fragile States or Failing Development? Canadian Development Report 2008*.

In Afghanistan, CIDA is part of Canada's whole-of-government approach and, until 2008, listed gender equality as an explicit sector of focus, notably in education, sustainable livelihoods, women's economic empowerment, legal protection and women's rights. CIDA's efforts not only focused on "integrating gender equality into all projects, programs and grants, and supporting specific gender equality programming to enhance the role of women and girls in society," but also acknowledged "the importance of working with men in Afghanistan to affect change in the role of women and girls in society. In 2008, of the 50 projects supported by CIDA

⁹⁴ Ibid: 22.

⁹⁵ Ibid: 22-23.

⁹⁶ CIDA (2005). "Canadian International Development Agency Estimates 2005–2006 Part III: Report on Plans and Priorities," Gatineau: CIDA: 20.

⁹⁷ CIDA (2007). "Canadian International Development Agency Estimates 2007–2008 Part III: Report on Plans and Priorities," Gatineau: CIDA: 9.

in Afghanistan, six were “women-specific” and supported by the bilateral program, including work on women in the Afghan National Police, developing small-scale horticulture, supporting civil society to engage on legal issues and directly funding local organizations to promote women’s rights.⁹⁸

In Haiti – a country in which Canada has been engaged since the 1960s – CIDA has promoted gender equality since at least 2004. The key avenue used by CIDA in promoting gender equality is the *Fonds Kore Fanm* (FKF), a funding envelope that supports projects in areas such as reducing violence against women and promoting women’s political participation. Through the FKF, civil society organizations and the Haitian women’s ministry have been able to make advancements in raising public-awareness, institutional capacity building and political participation.⁹⁹

Initiatives such as these illustrate how, despite not having an official gender-sensitive fragile states policy, CIDA can use its other policy and programming tools to incorporate gender equality at the programming level in fragile states. However, this practice is not systematized across the agency and depends to a large extent on the priorities of specific geographic programs and the capacities and motivations of individual program officers. Furthermore, there are few mechanisms to monitor, evaluate or learn from these experiences. Such challenges are further compounded by the paucity of gender specialists in other government departments, which makes it difficult to ensure that gender equality is made a priority in Canada’s programming in fragile states, writ large.¹⁰⁰ For example, while gender equality was a priority early in Canada’s engagement in Afghanistan, since 2008 this has changed. These factors also make it difficult to share and establish best practices among government departments with regards to addressing the gender dimensions of fragility in a more systematic and holistic manner.

3. Conclusion

In 2005, many international aid stakeholders were developing tools and strategies for donor engagement in fragile states. Yet, few of them were drawing on their rich knowledge and experience bases to integrate a gender perspective into these new strategies. Our research sought to re-examine donor approaches to fragile states to see if there had been some change in their policy making with respect to the promotion of gender equality. While we recognize that our sample size is quite limited and our research does not reflect any field-level work, we are confident that this modest analysis of some of the most influential donors and

⁹⁸ Farhoumand-Sims, Cheshmak (2008). “Canada’s Contribution to Gender Equity in Afghanistan,” in The North-South Institute, *Fragile States or Failing Development? Canadian Development Report 2008*. Ottawa: The North-South Institute: 37-38.

⁹⁹ Salahub, Jennifer Erin (2008). “Canada, Haiti, and Gender Equality in a ‘Fragile State,’” in The North-South Institute, *Fragile States or Failing Development? Canadian Development Report 2008*. Ottawa: The North-South Institute.

¹⁰⁰ Many of these concerns were raised in conversations with CIDA staff, Gatineau, QC, April 2010.

coordinating bodies makes a contribution to the policy-relevant literature. Overall, we found that since 2005, little progress has been made on the policy side of the equation, though some results on the programming side are more encouraging. Nevertheless, what results have been witnessed often rely on the initiative of concerned individuals, rather than being the result of systematically mandated and applied policies. This analysis supports the original Baranyi and Powell arguments, but shows that the options they put forward to CIDA – and like-minded organizations – have not realized their full potential.

Our analysis is less optimistic than Hollander's, who attributes a lack of progress to issues of leadership and bureaucratic coordination, rather than unpacking the often troublesome power imbalances among the government agencies or departments leading the development of fragile states strategies and/or engagement. That is to say that in many donor governments, gender equality expertise is housed in development agencies while fragile states policy and programming is led by much more powerful – in terms of resources, prestige and influence – foreign or defence ministries. In this way, gender issues are often ignored, overlooked or – at worst – used to justify or whitewash interventions that fall under a different agenda or an ulterior motive.

Moreover, the politics of gender relations in fragile states and as a point of contention between host country governments and their wealthy bilateral aid donors must not be overlooked. Too often gender equality promotion suffers as political decisions are taken which result in it being sacrificed as a priority to ensure cooperation in other areas deemed more strategic. Such situations reinforce and further entrench the disconnect between public policy statements and program implementation on the ground, often with very real and tragic results for local populations, particularly women and girls. More rigorous research that explores these dynamics while evaluating policy and programming on the ground is needed to better understand which policies and programs are having positive impacts and contributing to both the empowerment of women and girls and the reconstruction and development of democratically accountable state institutions and services.

Given that it is now more than five years since the donors we have examined developed (or were developing) their fragile states strategies and there has been little change in donor policy, but that some successes have been witnessed in individual country programs, we have reason to be more optimistic that positive change is occurring from the bottom-up than is likely to be led from the top-down. However, in order to maintain momentum and be sustainable, these processes must involve developing ownership of the activities among local men and women, a challenging task at the best of times, not least of all in the often fractured societies of fragile states. Ultimately, donors need to live up to their policy promises regarding gender equality, particularly in fragile states where the stakes are the highest, not only for the day-to-day lives of the women and men living in these countries, but also for global stability, peace and security.

4. Recommendations to the donor community

1. Develop or refine existing whole-of-government policy statements on engaging with fragile states. Initiate processes that ensure all relevant government departments and agencies have an equal seat at the table so that individual strengths in areas such as gender equality are fully integrated into the process and resulting documents.
2. Ensure that all fragile states policies reflect the OECD DAC *Principles for Engaging in Fragile States and Situations*, particularly the principles around local ownership.
3. Draw on existing expertise to develop tools for gender analysis, program design and implementation, sectoral entry points, policy dialogue and the like specific to situations of state fragility.
4. Invest in building and expanding the gender analysis capacity of civil servants, notably foreign and defence ministries where existing capacities tend to be weak.
5. Better collaborate with other international donors and their respective agencies and departments responsible for gender equality and/or fragile states policy to exchange information and establish good practices for engagement in such contexts.¹⁰¹
6. Work towards meeting national and international commitments to promoting gender equality by fully implementing gender equality as a crosscutting theme in engagements with development partners, particularly in fragile states.
7. Employ relevant OECD DAC networks, including the Gender Network and the International Network on Conflict and Fragility, to better share experiences and best practices in mainstreaming gender in fragile states programming and projects.

¹⁰¹ McAskie (2010).

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