



Interpeace
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION
FOR PEACEBUILDING

Integrating gender in peace responsiveness

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Table of Contents

3 Acknowledgements

3 About this paper

6 **Section 1: Gender and conflict: concepts and principles**

6 Why is a gender lens important as part of peace responsiveness?

7 Conceptualising gender: shifting sands

9 International norms, principles and policy

11 Reflecting on policy impact

15 **Section 2: Integrating gender in peace responsiveness: a spectrum of ambition**

15 Mapping gender and peace responsiveness

17 The “Gender and Peace Responsiveness Spectrum of Ambition”

20 Case study 1: Gender-**aware** peace responsiveness in practice

21 Case study 2: Gender-**sensitive** peace responsiveness in practice

22 Case study 3: Gender-**responsive** peace responsiveness in practice

23 Case study 4: Gender-**transformative** peace responsiveness in practice

25 **Section 3: Considerations when applying the Gender and Peace Responsiveness Spectrum**

25 How to set a “level of ambition”

26 Creating cohesive change narratives

27 Scoring levels of gender integration and measuring impact

27 An enabling organisational culture and leadership

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About this paper

This paper provides a conceptual framing for understanding the integration of a gender lens into peace responsiveness. It offers a “Gender and Peace Responsiveness Spectrum of Ambition”, a tool intended to assist organisations in assessing the depth of their programming interventions’ gender integration, while also working to enhance this. The paper also includes practical, illustrative examples of different degrees of gender integration in conflict- and peace-related programming. Its final section reflects on commonly occurring issues and dilemmas that practitioners and organisations may face in applying the spectrum.

This paper posits that, substantively, neither “gender” nor “peace” outcomes can be fully advanced without consideration of each other: they each represent sets of issues and processes that are inextricably linked. However, it responds to the reality that to integrate what are each often thought of by international organisations as cross-cutting “lenses” may bring complexity. Regarding theories of change and other aspects of programming, to do so creates a sort of “double vision” –even a sense of competing priorities – which can be confusing. Challenges in relation to working across institutional capacities and structures can also come up. This paper aims to support agency staff in seeing more clearly through this double vision to achieve optimal peace impacts. It builds on an earlier paper by Interpeace, “Ten foundations for gender inclusive peacebuilding practice”, which was published as part of the *Peacebuilding in Practice* series of papers in 2020.¹



¹ Interpeace (2020). [Ten foundations of gender inclusive peacebuilding](#), Interpeace, *Peacebuilding in Practice* paper, No. 6.

What is peace responsiveness?

Peace responsiveness is an operational concept and approach to advancing conflict-sensitive and peace-contributing practice in development and humanitarian action AND ST. It has been developed by Interpeace to support practitioners, researchers, policy makers and donors looking to advance the implementation of the UN Sustaining Peace agenda policy commitments, conflict prevention approaches and the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. It is a holistic approach to transform the ability of humanitarian, development and stabilisation actors to act in a conflict-sensitive manner and to deliberately contribute to peace through their technical programming – in a way that is adaptive, enhances collective impact, supports inclusive, gender-responsive locally led change and strengthens societal resilience to conflict and violence.² Interpeace is working with several partners to advance peace responsiveness capacity and practice. A peace-responsive approach will achieve more positive impacts on peace (peace effectiveness) while also enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of technical programming (programme effectiveness).

A peace-responsive approach:

- puts conflict dynamics at the forefront to ensure that technical interventions are conflict sensitive first and then positively contribute to peace
- forges a strong contextual awareness and ability to adapt interventions to the realities and capacities on the ground, increasing their impact
- strives towards multidimensional and inter-sectoral ways of working – both among humanitarian, development and peace actors and between sectors
- aims to link short- and long-term needs in a deliberate way by maintaining a horizon-scanning perspective while addressing acute needs
- promotes a way of working whereby actors engage with each other on a complementary basis, address trade-offs in a constructive way, build meaningful partnerships and aim towards collective impact
- ensures the meaningful inclusion and empowerment of different groups in society (including women and young people) and acknowledges and aims to reduce structural power imbalances and inequalities
- harnesses local know-how and ensures locally led processes and responses, building on existing local capacities, skills and attributes
- prioritises resilience-enhancing responses and focuses on positive, functioning capacities that enable communities and societies to build back better.

² Ernstorfer, A., A. Stockman and F. de Weijer. (2022). [Peace responsiveness: A paradigm shift to deliver on conflict sensitivity and sustaining peace](#). Interpeace.

1

Gender and conflict: concepts and principles

Section 1: Gender and conflict: concepts and principles

Why is a gender lens important as part of peace responsiveness?

World events continue to underscore in real time the pertinence of the inextricable linkages between “gender” and “conflict” or “peace”. Gender dynamics are prominent in contemporary conflict settings of all types. For example, the powerful women- and girl-led revolution in Iran in 2023 exemplifies the intimate connections that exist between gender politics and political oppression and has profound global and regional implications for wider conflict systems and opportunities for peace. Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in Ukraine, including against men and boys, sits tragically alongside the prominence of Ukrainian women leaders, political figures and ordinary citizens in taking on a multitude of roles to advocate for an end to the current conflict and support their communities through it. A new cycle of violence in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo spotlights the shortfalls in national and international efforts to tackle CRSV and reinforces how crises of masculinity (and violent notions of masculinity) fuel violence against other genders. While beyond the scope of this paper, it is clear there is a spectrum of ways in which gender intersects with political ideologies, including some of the most extreme ones, across multiple contexts.³

Gender is an essential element of conflict and violence and thus an integral aspect of building sustainable peace. It is by now well recognised that conflict dynamics are fundamentally gendered and shaped by gendered norms and identities. Gender identities influence how people engage in conflict. They also affect individuals’ diverse vulnerabilities to violence in addition to their capacities for contributing to peace throughout the conflict cycle. Gender norms shape and are shaped by global, national and local power structures and institutions which, in turn, shape peace and conflict.

As outlined in Interpeace’s “Ten foundations for gender inclusive peacebuilding practice” paper, (echoing peer peacebuilding organisations across the sector), analysing the gendered nature of conflict dynamics deepens understanding of the root causes of conflict and conflict dynamics.⁴ It reveals a more comprehensive view of conflict, which enables the development of more effective strategies for countering violence and promoting peace. Attending to the gendered nature of conflict means unpacking the relationships between gender norms and expectations, and how these interact with other identity markers (e.g. class, race, geography), to situate people in conflict dynamics. Gender norms also invariably impact on how individuals and groups participate in, influence and shape peace processes. For gender-inclusive processes to enhance peacebuilding efforts, the former must include opportunities and strategies that challenge and transform power inequalities within societal structures that shape peace at all levels. And it is important to identify, understand and address specific gender-based vulnerabilities to prevent recurrent cycles of violence, provide alternatives for peace and build resilient societies. Meanwhile, engagement on gender-related programming can present opportunities to build in trust and cohesion outcomes (and conversely, gender programming can also be conflict insensitive and exacerbate divisions).

3 Mudde, C. (2019). [Why the far right is obsessed with “gender ideology”](#). *The New Statesman*; Makanda, J. (2019). The Jihad Feminist Dynamics of Terrorism and Subordination of Women in the ISIS. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies* 8 (2): 135-59.

4 Interpeace (2020). Op. cit.

In sum:

- I. Conflict dynamics are inherently gendered.
- II. Gender norms and their intersection with other identity markers influence how men, women, boys and girls engage in violent conflicts.
- III. Gender influences the types of vulnerabilities that individuals face before, during and after violent conflicts.
- IV. Gender influences the resilience capacities developed and exercised by individuals and groups in the face of violent conflict.
- V. Gender norms have an impact on how individuals, groups and organisations participate in, influence and shape peace process.⁵

This paper seeks to assist practitioners who wish to operationalise an integrated gender- and peace-responsiveness approach in their humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work. A first step is to dig a little further into these concepts.

Conceptualising gender: shifting sands

The term “gender” has varied meanings and generates contrasting perspectives across different institutions and stakeholders. At the same time, in the wider world outside of organisations, the language of gender is continuously evolving. Of note is the way in which younger generations, particularly but not exclusively in Western societies, are bound less and less by binary conceptions of gender. New language represents increasingly nuanced understandings and gender experiences.⁶ This semantic and linguistic evolution is exciting, but it can also be confusing, with newly created terminology and frameworks often meaning different things to different people and different institutions.

It is helpful to explicitly recognise that conceptual deepening in understanding about gender is also taking place in contemporary development discourse. The following provides an overview of this progression.

Classical gender approach. Gender is often taken as a primarily binary concept (distinguishing male and female) in what is referred to in this paper as the *classical* gender approach. Here, gender is seen to be socially constructed (and hence differs across places and historical times), around perceived and actual biological differences. It explicitly refers to the identities of men, women, boys and girls. In international development policy and practice, it is the touchstone concept through which the goal of empowerment of women in society has been advanced. Rooted in feminism, this approach is concerned with redressing the disadvantaged position of women and girls in society, politics, economics, and culture around the world. Classical gender policy and research typically prioritises inclusion of women, with “gender mainstreaming” referring to ensuring the needs and perspectives of women and girls are reflected across public policy sectors. This in turn informs efforts to ensure related resource allocation, and that impacts are monitored with data systems that track the position of women in society.⁷

At times, a classical gender approach is used in ways that are one-dimensional and simplistic. However, as it has evolved, gender equality discourse has looked more deeply into the power structures that enable women’s oppression, along with the ways in which gender intersects with race, class and other identities.⁸ Contemporary classical gender interventions focus on the connectivity between **intersectional power systems**. For peace-

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See, for instance, the Brook Institute’s [definitions of gender](#).

⁷ Subrahmanian, R. (2004). [Making sense of gender in shifting institutional contexts: Some reflections on gender mainstreaming](#). Institute of Development Studies.

⁸ As first theorised by American civil-rights activist and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s. See Crenshaw, K. (2010). *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Colour*.

builders, emphasising intersectionality is particularly relevant when engaging on gender, helping to identify, unpack and challenge conflict-sustaining power systems, and allowing for the complexity that shapes these.⁹ This means analysing the multiple ways that power systems – such as ethnicity, age, class and sexual identities – interact with gender to shape different actors’ engagement with conflict and peacebuilding.¹⁰ (Significant related momentum is building globally around decolonising aid and international development, bringing fresh attention to inherently racist power systems within the sector, and drawing linkages to gender politics).¹¹

Over time, concern with the advancement of gender equality has also generated recognition of **relational** factors. These focus on the dynamics that play out between genders within a local context.¹² Typically, within classical gender approaches, this refers to the relations between men and women that serve to reinforce women’s disadvantaged position, or that conversely can be leveraged to tackle this (for instance working with male champions of female education, or against domestic violence).

Experts and practitioners increasingly place emphasis on **gender and social norms** and gendered power systems – both to advance lasting change in women and girls’ equality,¹³ and, with regard to peacebuilding, highlighting the ways in which these can be a root cause of conflict.¹⁴ There is increasing evidence that patriarchal notions of masculinity can fuel conflict and insecurity.¹⁵ Gender norms analysis helps practitioners understand, respond to and potentially shift the gendered beliefs and values that lie behind the gender inequality driving conflict and discrimination, exclusionary politics, and violence.¹⁶ A norms lens can also help break down the divide between the private and public spheres and reveal how underlying power relations are embedded within societal structures and institutions, how they relate to conflict drivers and how they are affected by armed conflict and peacebuilding interventions. The emphasis on norms has fast become a fertile space for programming attention.

Deconstructive gender approach. The *deconstructive* gender approach expands the boundaries of thinking about gender. Building on and deepening reflection on relational dynamics, intersectionality and gender norms, deconstructive approaches conceptualise gender in ways that also deconstruct the sex binary and male–female categories and stereotypes.¹⁷ This can help policy makers and practitioners think about masculinities and femininities, including through an understanding of sexual and gender minorities (SGMs) that moves beyond binary categories of men vs. women.¹⁸ The deconstructive gender approach can deepen insights and critiques into the (interdependent) social, political, economic and cultural systems that shape violence and conflict, and help to explore how relational dynamics across multiple identity groups can be leveraged to reveal how gender works with other identity markers to shape power relations at large. Deconstructive perspectives on gender may or may not

9 Intersectionality understands that gender interacts with power systems such as age, class, race and sexuality, producing a multitude of masculinities and femininities in each context. See Conciliation Resources and Saferworld (2020). [Gender-sensitive conflict analysis: Facilitation guide.](#)

10 Conciliation Resources (2019). [Inclusion in practice: Examining gender-sensitive conflict analysis.](#)

11 As articulated for instance in the German Government’s new feminist development policy, which is based on partner orientation, participation, and a postcolonial, anti-racist understanding of development policy. See Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (2023). “[Development Minister Schulze presents feminist strategy](#)”.

12 Myrtingen, H., Naujoks, J. and el Bushra, J. (2014). [Re-thinking gender in peacebuilding.](#) International Alert.

13 Gender norms are not just about the attitudes and beliefs held by individuals, but are produced and perpetuated by political, economic, cultural and social structures, including education systems, the media, religious institutions, welfare systems, and security and justice systems. Their influence can be felt at multiple levels, from the individual to the global. See, for instance, United Nations Population Fund (2020). [How changing social norms is crucial in achieving gender equality.](#)

14 Conciliation Resources and Saferworld (2020). Op. cit.

15 See for example: Hudson, V. (2015). Summary of Research Findings: Establishing the Relationship between Women’s Insecurity and State Insecurity; Wright, H. (2014). [Masculinities, conflict and peacebuilding: Perspectives on men through a gender lens.](#) Saferworld; Birchall, J. (2019). Gender as a Causal Factor in Conflict. *Knowledge; evidence and learning for development*, Helpdesk Report No. 549.

16 Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation and Conciliation Resources (2021). [Integrating gender in the DNA of peacebuilding: Learning with peers.](#)

17 Reginold, R. and U. Vögeli (2021). [Gender Dimensions in Peacebuilding: Resource Paper,](#) Swiss Institute for Global Affairs.

18 Conciliation Resources (2015). [Gender and Conflict Analysis Toolkit for Peacebuilders.](#)

have women's empowerment as a starting point, although they are likely to share the critique of patriarchy and the power structures it sustains as put forward by the classical gender approach.

Classical vs. deconstructive approaches: opportunities for inclusion and deepening women's empowerment

The wider discourse on gender politics at times appears to pit classical feminist gender approaches and gender-deconstructive approaches against each other. There are vocal concerns from some feminists that "deconstructing gender" (in combination with an increased emphasis on working with men) risks draining scarce resources away from women's and girls' empowerment. There are equally vocal demands for recognition and inclusion from the non-binary community.¹⁹

Some perspectives, however, underline the ways in which the shifting sands in gender discourse towards a more deconstructive approach serves to reinforce work to advance women's and girls' empowerment, in a context of persistent marginalisation, and even backsliding of progress in some areas.

Notwithstanding its complexity, a deconstructive approach to gender and inequality – while keeping in focus that women bear the brunt of poverty and violence around the world – provides a more comprehensive picture of structural inequalities and the norms that maintain women and other disadvantaged groups in unequal positions. Such a lens can also help reveal hitherto unseen capacities and gender entry points for transforming conflict and building peace in more diverse and inclusive ways.

International norms, principles and policy

This paper now turns to briefly examine the extent to which "gender" and its relevance to peace and conflict have been taken up through international norms, principles and policy frameworks – and with which types of approaches. This section aims to provide contextual understanding of the policy space within which this paper is situated.

Gender mainstreaming agenda. Gender mainstreaming is a long-standing global agenda,²⁰ reflecting from its outset classical gender thinking, often of a limited nature, that does not cater to the richer strands of thought concerning intersectionality, norms or even relational dynamics.²¹ In recent years, dominant approaches to gen-

19 *The Economist* (2017). Making sense of the culture war over transgender identity; Douthat, R. (2022). "[How to make sense of the new L.G.B.T.Q. culture war](#)". *The New York Times*.

20 The elimination of discrimination against women has been an aspiration of stakeholders working towards sustainable development and human rights for decades. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, and built on the foundational principles of non-discrimination, state obligations and substantive equality, 189 of the 193 United Nations (UN) member states have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Related, the global gender-mainstreaming agenda dates to the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, which established gender mainstreaming as the global strategy for promoting gender equality. The Beijing Platform for Action identified 12 critical areas of concern for urgent action to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and equal opportunities for women and men. In each of these areas it called on governments and other actors to "promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively." As narrated in: UN Women (2020). [Gender mainstreaming: A global strategy for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls](#).

There are dedicated capacities for gender mainstreaming across the UN system, including that of UN Women, created in 2010 by merging four previously distinct parts of the UN system and combining resources and mandates for greater impact.

Most development agencies and many states also have dedicated departments and personnel focused on gender priorities. Building on these policy directives and efforts on gender mainstreaming by key advocates within the system, each UN agency has developed its own internal policies and frameworks on gender equality and mainstreaming.

21 Subrahmanian, R. (2004). Op. cit. Key UN intergovernmental resolutions use this framing, including the [Addis Ababa](#)

der have begun to be nuanced by practitioners responding to global discourse and factors such as: lessons from programming which have underscored the importance of intersectionality and a gender-relational approach for effectiveness,²² including for interventions focused on women's empowerment and rights (reproductive and others); experiences that have shown how critical it is to engage men and boys and understand ideas about masculinity; and emerging advocacy by non-binary sexual identity groups and individuals. Still, many of the more progressive ideas about gender have yet to be fully digested and reflected in policy, programming and tools.²³

Women, peace and security. The primary policy space where the linkages between gender and conflict/peace are recognised to intersect has been in relation to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, which has become well established since 2000 as an important area of focus among international partners. Mirroring the wider shifting sands in thinking about gender, its gradual shift from a classical approach to gender, concerned with protecting women and girls during conflict and empowering them as peacemakers, towards a broader conceptualisation of gender dynamics in conflict, can also be observed, as described in the box below.²⁴ The UN system is itself increasingly articulating that the need to broaden the conceptual scope of gender, while elevating its centrality, is key to tackling structural causes of conflict, as indicated in a recent thematic review by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (UN PBSO).²⁵

From Women, Peace and Security, to Gender, Peace and Security: an evolving agenda

UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 (2000) on WPS was the culmination of several decades of advocacy backed by a diverse and geographically representative coalition of member states and a strong global constituency of feminist civil-society organisations. This was the first Security Council resolution to link women to the peace and security agenda, looking at the impact of conflict on women and at women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace. The resolution consists of four pillars: 1) the role of women in conflict prevention; 2) women's participation in peacebuilding; 3) the protection of the rights of women and girls during and after conflict; and 4) women's specific needs during repatriation, resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.

A total of ten WPS resolutions have been adopted since. They can be divided into two groups. The first group, initiated by SCR [1325](#) and followed by SCR [1889](#) (2009), SCR [2122](#) (2013), SCR [2242](#) (2015) and [SCR 2493 \(2019\)](#), deals in short with the need for women's active and effective participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding. The second group focuses on preventing and addressing CRSV. The first dedicated resolution on CRSV, SCR [1820](#), was adopted in 2008. It acknowledges that sexual violence, when used as a tactic

[Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development](#), the [United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development](#) (into which gender is both mainstreamed and has a dedicated Goal 5 for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls), and the [Paris Agreement](#).

- 22 UN agencies and partners of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) have also begun to develop comparable mechanisms for ranking the gender sensitivity of their programmes and interventions, using variations of the [Gender Equality Marker](#) first put forward by the OECD DAC in 2008. These mechanisms are intended to guide effective tracking of resources that support gender equality results, with agreed-upon parameters and standards, and were recently [expanded and updated](#). [OECD DAC partners have both endorsed these norms and principles as member states and developed their own related strategies. Some governments have also led the way by committing to a feminist foreign policy \(these include, for example, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Mexico, Spain and Sweden\)](#). The feminist foreign policy space is nascent, with individual countries' approaches and performances varying considerably. See Chatham House (2022). [Undercurrents: Feminist foreign policy, and adapting to an age of crisis](#).
- 23 This point was emphasised in a [November 2022 high-level discussion](#) convened by the International Peace Institute (IPI) exploring masculinities in UN security discourse.
- 24 See also Myrtingen, H., Naujoks, J. and el Bushra, J. (2014). Op. cit.
- 25 UN PBSO (2021). [Thematic review on gender-responsive peacebuilding](#).

of war, can significantly exacerbate conflict and be a threat to international peace and security. Since 2008, four additional resolutions have been adopted on CRSV: [SCR 1888 \(2009\)](#), [SCR 1960 \(2010\)](#), [SCR 2106 \(2013\)](#) and [SCR 2467 \(2019\)](#).

In 2010, the UN Secretary-General issued a [Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding](#) intended to ensure momentum across all UN entities responding to these resolutions; more recent directives have also followed.

The central role of civil-society groups around the world in monitoring progress with this agenda and continually raising the perspectives and priorities of women and girls affected by violent conflict has continued. The WPS agenda is widely supported by development partners and has been incorporated across the UN peacebuilding architecture, with the UN Peacebuilding Commission's adoption of a gender strategy being a landmark, along with a dedicated funding window related to gender and youth peacebuilding initiatives established by the Peacebuilding Fund.

Other policy domains related to peace and security have also adopted a gender lens that takes this agenda as its cue. These include (controversially for many) the counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism space, in addition to security-sector reform and justice-focused interventions, governance, and peacekeeping.

From its beginnings as a feminist activist agenda on the periphery of international security, the WPS agenda has been integrated and then moved beyond the Security Council to be owned locally in national spaces. Some argue that through the course of this elevation there has been a constant need to resist reducing its framing of women and girls in conflict to a protection perspective infused with victimhood.

More recently, the gender, peace and security agenda has helped broaden the field beyond women's rights. The field is expanding significantly into addressing a range of considerations and aspects across a wider spectrum of gender priorities. Key among these is attention to different notions of masculinity as a critical factor shaping patterns of violence and opportunities for peace; recognition of men as victims of CRSV; and increasing attention to the rights, protection needs and activism of SGMs during conflict.²⁶

Reflecting on policy impact

The gender equality, gender mainstreaming and WPS agendas have contributed to positive outcomes across a range of development, political and humanitarian priorities – precipitating more effective, inclusive and equitable engagement by UN actors in conflict-affected states and wider programming around the globe. There has been measurable progress towards gender equality since the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing. Two thirds of countries worldwide are making headway on gender equality, and women and girls today are seeing increasing protection, service delivery, upholding of rights and enabling of opportunities. This is evident within education for example, where, globally, there have been transformative gains, with girls' learning outcomes catching up with those of boys.²⁷ Deaths during and after pregnancy dropped by 38% from 2000 to 2017,²⁸ and women are increasingly being elected to parliaments and holding public positions around the world.²⁹ There has also been significant normative and operational progress, elevating gender and gender equality as essential elements of all UN activity across the erstwhile male-dominated, gender-blind peace and security field, and across development.

26 Reginold, R. and U. Vögeli (2021).Op. cit.

27 UN Women (2022). [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2022](#).

28 World Health Organization (2019). [Trends in maternal mortality 2000 to 2017: estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division](#).

29 UN Women (n.d.). [Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation](#).

Despite manifest progress, the pace of change is slow and limited in scale, and there is fragility embedded in these advances. There is also evidence of a slow-down and even of backsliding. The UN Sustainable Development Goals Gender Index for the year 2023 published by Equal Measures 2030 found little progress on gender equality at the global level between 2015 and 2020.³⁰ A recent enquiry by Oxfam into the UN's ability to deliver a feminist future attributes the decision not to hold a fifth UN World Conference on Women to backlash against gender equality commitments and to avoiding the need for a multilateral review and consensus for future action.³¹ UN Women warns that progress that has been made on gender equality is at risk of reversal. Globally, compounding crises such as climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic and rising global insecurity are imposing significant renewal of pressures on the well-being of girls and women worldwide, further exposing intersecting inequalities.

While peacebuilding, women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming are each well-established policy domains at a global level, linkages between them are not always fully made. For instance, despite engagement in the WPS agenda, a review of UN agencies' organisational grey literature conducted by Interpeace to inform this paper found the linkages between these two frameworks to still be uneven, with organisation-wide gender equality frameworks and programming of leading agencies in some cases being conflict blind. Sustaining Peace frameworks and programming are often gender blind or prone to dealing with gender by superficially "counting women" only.

Observers have highlighted a constellation of obstacles both internal and external to the UN that impedes translation of norms to practice, and thus achievement. Broadly speaking, these obstacles fall into four categories: 1) technical; 2) institutional; 3) political; and 4) cultural.

Numerous reviews of progress on the implementation of the WPS agenda in the run-up to the 20th anniversary of SCR 1325 have revealed a major gap between agreed commitments and global action. As of 2019, while the number of gender equality provisions had increased, some 78% of peace agreements still did not include gender provisions that sufficiently address women's security and peacebuilding needs.³² The number of women included in formal peacemaking processes remains low: between 1992 and 2019, women constituted on average 13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators and 6% of signatories in major peace processes. Only 50% of the recommendations on WPS made through the 2014-15 peace and security reviews have progressed, and only 2 recommendations out of 30 have been fully implemented.³³

One stock-taking exercise identified patriarchal gender norms and political and cultural conservatism as being central to the marginalisation of women's voices and responsible for suppressing equal participation in decision-making processes. Failure to grapple with these norms is thus seen to be at the heart of the difficulties of fully implementing the WPS agenda.³⁴ Others have highlighted a failure of leadership at global and national levels and a lack, especially within public institutions, of gender-responsive leadership as also being partly to blame.³⁵

Politically, a global context that is increasingly conservative and hostile to broader forces of multilateralism, civil society and human rights has impacted on commitment to gender equality – in its classical form.³⁶ Deconstructive approaches to gender, while gradually appearing alongside classical approaches in different sectoral dis-

30 Equal Measures 2030 (2022). [Back to normal is not enough: 2022 SDG Gender Index](#).

31 Oxfam (2020). [Can the United Nations deliver a feminist future?](#)

32 UN (2020). [Women, Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General](#).

33 International Alert (2021). [Twenty years of implementing UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security agenda: lessons from the field](#).

34 Ibid.

35 IPI (2022). [Achieving sustainable peace and security through gender-responsive leadership](#).

36 Backsliding on WPS commitments became clear during the Russian Federation's presidency of the Security Council at the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325. Draft resolution (S/2020/1054) was deemed to dilute the agenda by omitting and watering down agreed standards on women's human rights, on prevention of CRSV, on support for diverse women's civil society and on women's participation in peace and security. Following global civil society and member states' advocacy, the resolution was voted down. See NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (2020). [Security Council members unite to protect the Women, Peace and Security agenda on its 20th anniversary](#).

cussions, remain marginal politically, outside of a handful of championing states.³⁷

This backdrop of mixed progress and backsliding, and a widening divergence between conservatism over gender on the one hand, and its re-definition on the other, creates a challenging context. It also renders compelling the arguments put forward that more far-reaching, transformative approaches to gender, which demand a deeper look at norms, power, relational factors and intersectionality, are essential to enrich and improve substantive advances around gender equality – and, in a peacebuilding context, to ensure lasting progress towards peace.

³⁷ Clear examples are countries with explicitly feminist foreign policies, among which (as of 2023) a few northern European states and Canada.

2

Integrating
gender in peace
responsiveness: a
spectrum of ambition

Section 2: Integrating gender in peace responsiveness: a spectrum of ambition

The wider global context of some equality gains having been made, in combination with observable backsliding and the manifest enmeshment of gender dynamics with contemporary conflict contexts, underscores the need for continued and deepening work to advance gender equality, to integrate gender into efforts to sustain peace, and to ensure that each of these efforts is informed by ever-deeper conceptualisations of gender that explicitly challenge oppressive, and thus conflict-inducing, power structures.

Despite their integral enmeshment, marrying the two perspectives, namely the evolving nature of gender discourse and its complex and often political nature along with the complex and multi-layered nature of violent conflict, is a challenge from the outset. This is particularly the case for organisations that are dedicated to peacebuilding, themselves operating in a state of continual grappling and momentum due to the complexity of the contexts they work in.³⁸ For staff at humanitarian, development or multi-mandate agencies whose primary organisational mandate is potentially neither “peace” nor “gender”, confronted by “multiple mainstreaming” pressures, this complexity may be overwhelming.

Discussions with UN agency staff among Interpeace’s peace responsiveness partnerships that were conducted as background to this paper underscored a lack of conceptual clarity and of practical guidance available on what it means to integrate gender in peace responsiveness, as gaps exist that hinder efforts to do so. (Other issues and dilemmas confronting agencies in this space are discussed in the following section.) The following conceptual tools, which form the primary offer of this paper, have been developed to respond to these gaps.

Mapping gender and peace responsiveness

The matrix in **Figure 1** represents diverse levels of ambition in regard to both gender and peace outcomes, mapped against each other. It provides a snapshot of how different levels of ambition on gender can overlay with different levels of ambition on peace responsiveness. The most ambitious, forward-leaning peace-responsive (peacebuilding) and gender-transformative interventions sit within the top-right quadrant (D). Peacebuilding and gender-transformative approaches both seek to transform norms, behaviours and structures that perpetuate conflict and violence. While this level of engagement on each of the gender-transformative and peacebuilding agendas may be beyond the scope of many humanitarian and development agencies, the policy and normative environment and evidence around quality and impact all suggest that there should be no interventions in the bottom-left quadrant (A).

³⁸ As evidenced through discussions at a dedicated learning event convening peacebuilding organisations, recorded in Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation and Conciliation Resources (2021). Op. cit.

Figure 1: Gender and peace responsiveness matrix

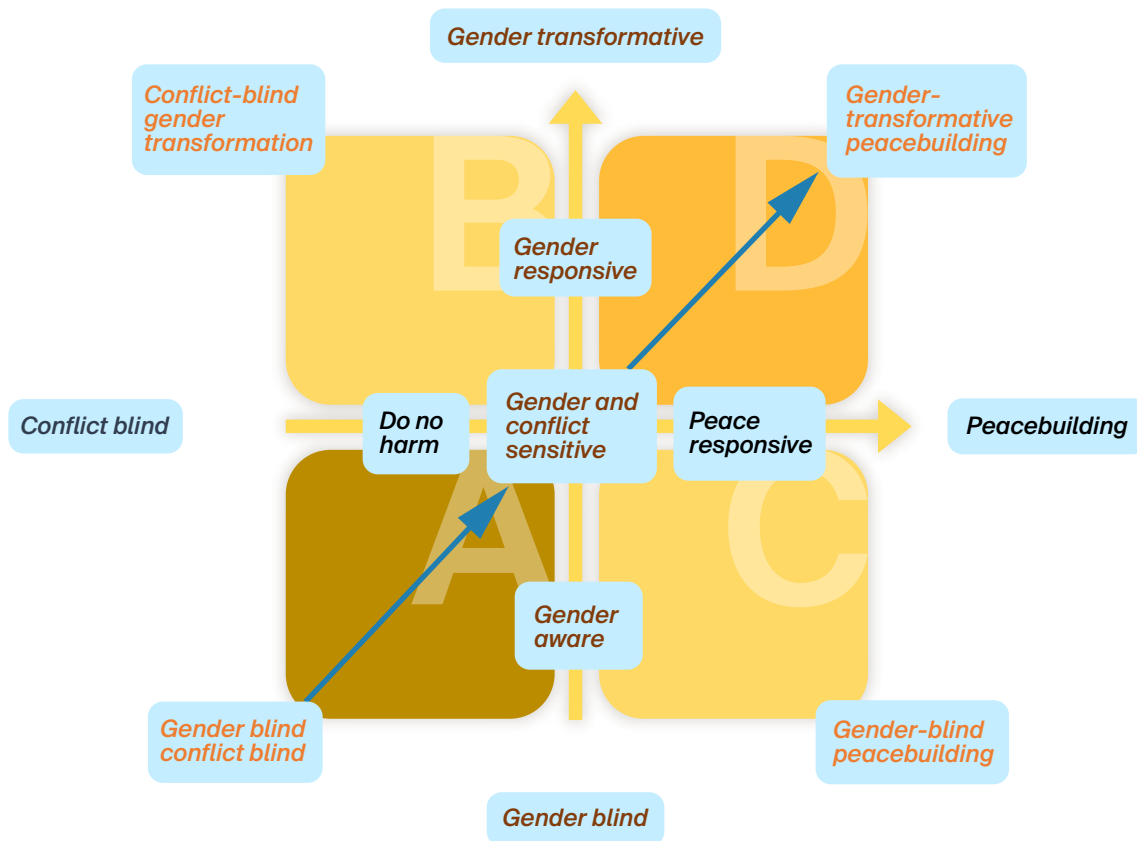


Figure 1 illustrates the range of performances possible in considering the intersection between gender and peace responsiveness. So, as well as assisting in thinking through integration of gender into peace responsiveness, it also allows organisations to identify where work focused on advancing gender goals may fall short in its consideration of conflict, and vice versa (see box). Programming (whether in health, education, economics, socio-politics or governance – and that related to peace) that takes as its starting point a gender sensitive or responsive, and gender mainstreaming agenda is by no means always sensitive to conflict or peace outcomes.

Example of gender-focused interventions failing to consider conflict risks

Early economic development interventions targeting low-income women in several countries in Asia did not anticipate their impact on gender norms and conflict dynamics, particularly at the household level. Micro-loan facilities designed to lift women and their families out of extreme poverty unintentionally led to a male backlash, including heightened levels of domestic sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), as women gained more independence. Current interventions are more nuanced, often working with men and women around gender norms and seeking to foresee, mitigate and respond to wider drivers of violence.

The “Gender and Peace Responsiveness Spectrum of Ambition”

Turning specifically to integrating gender into peace responsiveness, **Figure 2** presents a conceptual framework for understanding the level of ambition and achievement for joined-up gender- and peace-responsive work. The framework pre-supposes that the initiatives under consideration are already operating in a peace-responsive way and charts this dimension against different degrees of gender responsiveness. In so doing, it homes in on the trajectory from the bottom-left to top-right quadrant (A to D) of the matrix in **Figure 1**. The spectrum can serve as a ready-to-use checklist of criteria. This section closes with some case studies to help illustrate how to apply the spectrum.

Figure 2 recognises that terms are used differently by various organisations and can easily become jargonistic. In response, the framework anchors key terms for practitioners, so that they may use the tool to reflect on how gender is being integrated across their work.

The spectrum uses two tiers of performance: level of ambition, and indicative actions as ambition increases. It can be employed within either a classical or deconstructive conceptualisation of gender, so it is adaptable to the gender approach in each specific context – within or beyond the binary. Nonetheless, it is crucial for practitioners to note that even in contexts where gender is only understood within the binary, non-binary identities will still be present and negatively impacted.

The Gender and Peace Responsiveness Spectrum of Ambition builds on an earlier version outlined in Interpeace’s own “Ten foundations for gender inclusive peacebuilding practice”.³⁹ It also intentionally resonates with similar spectra put forward by gender advocates in the peacebuilding sector, for instance that of CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation and Conciliation Resources, which urges organisations to “set the level of ambition” as a starting point for gender integration in peacebuilding programming, policies, and operations.⁴⁰ This spectrum of ambition focuses on programming efforts, and can be adopted by peacebuilding, development and humanitarian actors. It does, however, remain cognisant of the wider institutional factors at play in enabling forward-leaning integration of gender, some of which are discussed in the final section of this paper.

The Gender and Peace Responsiveness Spectrum of Ambition is predicated on the following hypotheses and principles:

1. Violence and conflict are gendered processes, and thus, there is no peace responsiveness without a consideration of gender. So, while “gender-blind peace responsiveness” is a useful way of challenging practitioners to “see” gender, it is also, substantively, a misnomer.
2. Entry points and appropriate levels of ambition will differ across actors and settings. However, a deliberate attempt to understand and set the level of ambition is needed to avoid intervening in a “blind” way (and running the risk of reinforcing discriminatory practices).
3. “Do no harm” must be a foundational principle – with all interventions seeking to avoid negative impacts on either conflict dynamics or gender inequalities. This principle demands a certain level of analysis of both conflict and gender to inform programming.
4. Lasting progress in addressing gendered factors that underlie conflict requires transformative approaches that address harmful gender norms and other intersectional inequalities.
5. Transformative approaches require institutional and system-wide effort: no single programme or initiative will achieve the type of change that this level of ambition envisages.

39 Interpeace (2020). Op. cit.

40 Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation and Conciliation Resources (2021). Op. cit. The six-stage spectrum put forward in this report encompasses approaches that are: gender discriminatory, gender unaware, do-no-harm, gender sensitive, gender responsive, and gender transformative.

Figure 1: Gender and peace responsiveness matrix

	LEVEL 1 Gender-aware PR	LEVEL 2 Gender-sensitive PR	LEVEL 3 Gender-responsive PR	LEVEL 4 Gender-transformative PR
“Gender-blind PR” (a misnomer)	<p>Level of gender/PR ambition</p> <p>Aims not to exacerbate unequal gender relations between men and women or to perpetuate negative interlinkages between gender inequality, violence and conflict (basic “do no harm” approach).</p>	<p>LEVEL 1, AND...</p> <p>Aims to redress (indirectly) gender inequality and female marginalisation as relates to conflict and peace.</p> <p>Aims to foster (indirectly) women’s empowerment and improve women’s role and position in politics, economics and culture.</p>	<p>LEVELS 1, 2 AND...</p> <p>Aims to respond to differentiated gendered needs and leverage/strengthen gendered capacities for peace. Prominent in programme design but may be a second-order outcome.</p> <p>Aims for fair and equitable access to opportunities, resources and benefits provided by interventions across genders.</p> <p>Deeper “do no harm” approach explicitly takes gender norms and intersectionality factors and risks into account.</p>	<p>LEVELS 1, 2, 3 AND...</p> <p>Aims to explicitly frame interventions around twin goals of gender transformation and peace (in addition to first-order technical outcomes).</p> <p>Aims for lasting long-term change related to gender equality, potentially considering non-binary gender identities in addition to women’s and girls’ civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as part of a peaceful society.</p>
	Type of awareness and understanding of gender in relation to conflict			
Ignores gendered conflict and peace dynamics and their resulting effects on violence and peace outcomes.	<p>Recognises the principle that gender dynamics affect conflict and peace all while conflict and peace affect gender vulnerabilities and identities.</p> <p>Aware of fundamental gender inequality between women/girls and men/boys and the effects of this inequality on conflict and peace drivers, as well as the differentiated effects of conflict on people because of their gender identity.</p>	<p>LEVEL 1, AND...</p> <p>Recognises impacts of conflict on gender-relational dynamics and vice versa and sees attendant capacities for peace/ may seek to harness these in programming.</p> <p>Understands and engages on the peace-supportive impact of women’s empowerment.</p>	<p>LEVEL 2, AND...</p> <p>Understands more complex notions of gendered norms and gender intersectionality with other identity markers, and how these factors perpetuate or exacerbate conflict and violence/ yield opportunities for peace.</p> <p>Explicitly encompasses critical exploration of masculinities in analysis and response.</p>	<p>LEVEL 3 AND...</p> <p>Embraces the socially transformative potential of gender equality for institutions, wider society and for sustaining peace.</p> <p>Understands how gender inequalities intersect with other inequalities as related to gender inequality and conflict, including non-binary notions of gender.</p>

“Gender-blind PR” (a misnomer)	LEVEL 1 Gender-aware PR Indicative actions	LEVEL 2 Gender-sensitive PR	LEVEL 3 Gender-responsive PR	LEVEL 4 Gender-transformative PR
<p>No actions tailored to respond to gendered impacts of conflict nor to conflict impacts on gender.</p>	<p>Collects sex-disaggregated data, reporting on numbers participating.</p>	<p>Conducts classical gender conflict analysis of male and female roles, expectations and needs.</p> <p>Includes quotas of women and girls in project activities and reports on results accordingly.</p> <p>Collects and analyses sex-disaggregated data.</p> <p>Supports women’s groups in programming, for example, around dialogue and SGBV reduction work.</p> <p>May work with male “champions” in advancing women’s empowerment goals.</p>	<p>Conducts relational power analysis within a gender-responsive conflict analysis and unpacks relationships between gender norms, violence and conflict.</p> <p>Collects and analyses intersectional data around identity including gender, class, age, sexuality, marital status, and so on, to better understand intersecting inequalities – and reports on results/feeds into deepening of programme design accordingly.</p> <p>Harnesses active and meaningful participation of disadvantaged women, girls, men and, where contextually appropriate, other disadvantaged groups in programming, based on recognition of gender intersectionality and norms.</p> <p>Addresses masculinities that may serve to perpetuate gender inequalities and conflict-fuelling behaviours.</p>	<p>Analysis likely to be more sophisticated: bottom-up, participatory, multi-perspective conflict analysis, unpacking distinctive (intersectional) experiences, needs and political agendas.</p> <p>Awareness raising and dialogue with advantaged groups, such as elite men, to explore masculinity and work towards new perspectives on gender norms in relation to peacebuilding.</p> <p>May conduct programming that explicitly addresses non-binary notions of gender in conflict.</p>

The following is a series of anonymised case studies to help illustrate different levels of gender and conflict integration using the above framework. It should be noted that these are indicative only. Scoring initiatives against the spectrum requires a more in-depth appreciation and investigation of the programmes concerned.

Case study 1: Gender-aware peace responsiveness in practice

Gender stereotypes in PVE programmes

Increasing attention has been given to women in the framework of the prevention of violent extremism (PVE), particularly as potential de-radicalisers and “early warning systems” due to their gendered role in the household.

These type of PVE programmes normally adopt capacity-building models aimed at increasing women’s confidence and provide public spaces for women to discuss violence and violent extremism.

This approach is limited: 1) it risks further entrenching gender norms and perpetuating gender stereotypes for both men and women; 2) it is blind to women as actors of violent extremism; 3) it shifts the responsibility for de-radicalisation to women, not the state nor the men perpetuating the violence.

Moving beyond gender stereotypes and applying a more nuanced gender analysis would reveal women’s role as supporters or perpetrators of violent extremism, as well as men’s role in preventing or countering violent extremism. Designing programmes that incorporate male allies, in addition to addressing the root cause of women’s support for extremism, would support more sustainable peace- and gender-responsive outcomes.

- ✓ Gender analysis of women’s role as caregivers.
- ✓ Supports women’s empowerment through skills development and public discussion.
- × At risk of perpetuating gender norms and gender stereotypes that feed inequality at the root of violence and conflict.
- × Insensitive to the complex roles different men and women play in perpetuating and countering radicalisation and violent extremism.

Case study 2: Gender-sensitive peace responsiveness in practice

Rehabilitating survivors of CRSV in Ethiopia

Violent conflict erupted in northern Ethiopia in early November 2020 between Ethiopian federal forces and Tigrayan forces, following years of ethno-political tensions. Pervasive conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) was a key tactic of all warring parties, targeting individuals of different ethnic groups, of all genders and ages.

As part of a programme to ensure that women and girls at risk of CRSV or who have experienced CRSV can access quality services, a project was established in North Wollo Zone. Following the departure of Tigrayan forces from the area in early 2022, a local women's organisation established a safe house to provide accommodation, meals, medical services, counselling, and livelihood support to survivors of CRSV and SGBV in the Amhara, Afar and Tigray regions of Ethiopia.

Initially, women and girls did not participate. However, through female-led community mobilisation and a partnership with the local Office for Women and Children to raise awareness, the services were steadily accessed by over 400 CRSV survivors within nine months of opening.

- ✓ Identification of gender-specific conflict-related impact on women and girls.
- ✓ Addressing needs of local women and girls in conflict situations, with a focus on female survivors of CRSV
 - safety and security of women correlates with reducing other types of violence.
- ✓ Addressing the well-being of survivors helps to mitigate harmful consequences of CRSV on social cohesion at large.
- ✓ Intervention works across ethnic groups and conflict-affected areas.
- ✓ Supporting the capacity and empowerment of women in conflict contexts to improve their decision-making roles in provision of women's services; may open the door to decision making in society more broadly.
- × No direct aim to shift harmful gender norms to address root causes of violence and conflict.
- × No focus on intersectional inequalities.

Case study 3: Gender-responsive peace responsiveness in practice

Community-driven dialogue to strengthen conflict prevention and local peace in Central Africa

For over ten years, a community-driven development model of self-organised rural dialogue clubs across sub-Saharan Africa, led by a UN agency, has been showcasing how development interventions can contribute to gender-responsive peace outcomes.

In the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, clubs work to facilitate the empowerment of people living in rural areas, enhance women's leadership, and contribute to improved livelihoods and gender equality. Partnerships with local and international NGOs are leveraged to work on four sets of issues: inclusive participation, reflection and dialogue between opposing social groups; transforming social norms around gender roles and equality; agricultural and economic opportunities; and community mobilisation and collective action.

Food security has improved thanks to increased agriculture and economic opportunities, and through targeted programmes to teach diverse farming techniques. Women's confidence has grown as they have become more active in engaging in new markets and entrepreneurial activities. The creation of collective fields and vegetable gardens by clubs has been instrumental in promoting inter-ethnic collaboration. Topics around women's insecurity and social norms linked to male violence have emerged and have been addressed by creating safe spaces for communication and understanding between men and women. Behaviour change has been noted: for example, male family members have reportedly been supporting women in the traditionally female activity of food harvesting.

- ✓ Holistic intervention with rural livelihoods and food security goals at the fore.
- ✓ Intersectional understanding of gender directly linked to other conflict-related identities.
- ✓ Intervention explicitly designed to address discriminatory norms leading to behaviour change.
- ✓ Integration of gender and conflict lenses into the wider intervention has evolved through a learning approach.
- × Despite being tightly woven into the overall intervention, the elements of gender and peace are secondary outcomes.

Case study 4: Gender-transformative peace responsiveness in practice

Creating peaceful societies through women's economic empowerment and increased involvement in natural resource management

In 2019-20, a programme in Sierra Leone led by two UN development agencies set out to address two linked conflict drivers identified through a gender-responsive peace and conflict analysis: rural women's marginalisation, and uneven land governance. Gender-discriminatory and fragmented land governance had been found to be a key underlying cause of conflict, which led to women's political, legal and economic marginalisation in addition to the underuse of land, and food insecurity. The project supported the creation of peace outcomes through improving women's involvement in the management of natural resources, increasing women's land tenure rights and economic empowerment. The intervention was focused on building skills, knowledge, gender-sensitive financial services and organisational capacity – through an intentional social-cohesion and inclusivity approach, which brought families and communities to work together.

By working with male traditional leaders and local authorities as change agents, the agencies were better able to secure women's land rights, as their involvement was instrumental in communities accepting the changes. Local leaders were also incentivised to become more gender sensitive in their community roles. Working closely with local civil society and authorities such as the Ministry of Lands, project implementation was locally rooted and worked with existing groups to build on community knowledge and to ensure the work could continue after project completion. The Ministry of Lands' role in the project implementation was key to ensuring sustainability.

Through reflective learning, the programme staff recognised that active inclusion of women was only the start and that, while women might know their rights, their meaningful participation in spaces where they could shape conversations and decisions required more concerted, yet often simple, adaptations. Ideas such as rearranging seating and nominating specific women to speak worked well to improve participation. Secondly, the focus on gender equality and women's participation and empowerment meant that some male-dominated youth groups felt marginalised by the intervention, and youth activity continued to destabilise some communities. The follow-up design responded to this by empowering at-risk male youth through sustainable livelihoods opportunities and capacity development on peacebuilding.

- ✓ Seeks first-order outcomes around shifting intersectional gender inequalities, norms and peacebuilding, including as relate to each of women and men.
- ✓ Twin peace and gender goals.
- ✓ Direct effort to redress discrimination against women as linked to conflict dynamics and including by challenging underlying social and gender norms.
- ✓ Informed by a gender-responsive conflict analysis.
- ✓ Predicated on a binary conceptualisation of gender, with intervention focused on empowering women, yet includes consideration of intersectional identity factors, gender and social norms, and explicit social-cohesion factors across communities.
- ✓ Engagement of traditional leaders, local authorities and young men as male champions to further this agenda.
- ✓ A deepening, learning approach to programme design, responding to gender and conflict dynamics.

3

Considerations
when applying the
Gender and Peace
Responsiveness
Spectrum

Section 3: Considerations when applying the Gender and Peace Responsiveness Spectrum

Evolving concepts of gender makes gender- and peace-responsive programming complex from the outset. Many of the issues involved are politically and culturally profound and sensitive in equal measure, reaching to the heart of power structures that shape all levels of human interaction. These features of the debate challenge agencies' efforts to respond. This final section reflects on commonly occurring issues and dilemmas that practitioners and organisations may be confronted with when applying the spectrum.

How to set a “level of ambition”

Matching feasibility and ambition. The above spectrum and matrix integrating gender responsiveness and peace responsiveness are intended to serve as tools for agencies to better assess their own interventions, while inspiring them to better address structural gender and conflict issues where possible. Peace responsiveness can be thought of as a spectrum whereby not all agencies will, in all interventions, put peacebuilding outcomes at the front and centre of their work. Similarly, in integrating gender into peace responsiveness, different levels of ambition according to the above schema will be appropriate and feasible for each agency.

Realising a target of gender responsiveness. The essential relationship between gender and conflict suggests the notion of two distinct “lenses” to be a false analogy. Similarly, as noted above, “gender-blind peace responsiveness” is a misnomer. It becomes apparent that peace-responsive efforts that are “gender aware” or “gender sensitive” will fall short by overlooking the critical ways in which gender intersects with other identity markers in shaping conflict narratives and systems, as well as by overlooking the underlying norms that drive these. Gender-transformative intention may not always be at the fore for strategic reasons, taking into consideration different agencies' missions, mandates and capacities, in addition to the degrees of sensitivity of the issues in the contexts where they are working. **The target level of gender integration for peace responsiveness should thus be “gender responsive”, with those who are able to reaching explicitly towards gender-transformative outcomes, the highest level of ambition. The lowest threshold should be “gender sensitive”, with explicit intention to work beyond it.** However, deliberate effort to understand complex, intersectional gender issues is critical, to avoid reinforcing gendered power dynamics that are integral to conflict. An intentional, yet nuanced approach is needed that demonstrates awareness of intersectional gender considerations and underlying norms – even if these issues are not taken up in all interventions. The objective should be to be consciously realistic, while committing to incrementally deepening practice towards gender-transformative and peacebuilding outcomes.

Understanding sensitivities of gender minorities in conflict. As discussed in this paper, one key feature of the gender-deconstructive approach posits its non-binary nature, in addition to the ways in which it intersects with other identity markers, including age, ethnicity, rural/urban, class and underlying sociocultural norms. Taking a transformative gender approach to peace responsiveness also draws attention to sexual and gender minorities (SGMs). This may need, but does not necessarily require, direct programming on SGM issues. Frontier changes to social norms related to SGMs are taking place. Yet, in many conflict-affected societies, these issues remain entirely taboo and tightly – even violently – controlled or overlooked, despite the brave activism of new social movements demanding to be heard. The needs, perspectives and possibilities for including SGMs in peacebuilding activity should always be considered, with attitudes shaping cultural perspectives about non-binary identities or lesbian, gay and bisexual people and other SGMs (LGBT+) being a critical aspect of the wider normative environment. In some cases, peacebuilding activities may be led by SGM activists or in other ways

engaged on these issues.⁴¹ However, given the weight of cultural sensitivity, these types of activities are likely to represent at most a strand of peace work, and often will not be the most immediate entry point for working on peace outcomes.

Creating cohesive change narratives

The issues brought to the surface through gender-responsive peace responsiveness are profound, sensitive and will, more often than not, imply long-term and multi-faceted change agendas. Meanwhile, most agencies are bound by annual programming cycles and are under pressure to show proximate and more immediate results. Navigating between these realities remains one of the most challenging dilemmas and inconsistencies faced in this field.

Systematising gender-responsive conflict analyses. The practice around designing meaningful theories of change and results frameworks in peacebuilding has evolved substantially over the past decade and has yielded insights that are directly applicable.⁴² A critical starting point is analysis. For the purposes of achieving gender-responsive peace responsiveness, leveraging gender-responsive conflict analysis (GRCA) as a standardised methodology is a crucial first step.

While the principle of including gender in conflict analysis is obvious, gender analysis and gender sensitivity have been poorly articulated and mainstreamed. Where gender has been incorporated, the focus is often on the *impact* of conflict on different gender categories of men and women. To understand root causes and drivers of exclusion, conflict and violence, and to design effective strategies to address these, GRCA needs to be more comprehensive and methodical.⁴³ Advanced GRCA frameworks use a systems approach for analysing gender and conflict to explore the interconnectedness of structures, behaviours and relationships and to help unpack invisible norms.⁴⁴ GRCA underpins both gender-responsive and gender-transformative peace responsiveness programming, with increasing levels of sophistication and depth of the analytical processes envisaged.

Analysis as intervention. The analysis process used to design programming can itself be thought of as an intervention capable of yielding gender-responsive peace-responsive outcomes. The process of GRCA can present opportunities to facilitate more significant engagement and participation in peacebuilding. Localising peace and conflict analysis and ensuring these are participatory in their design helps fill knowledge gaps and allows the needs and ideas of the marginalised to be included in implementation and monitoring the impact of interventions.⁴⁵ To prevent violent conflict and build peace, analyses and interventions must be shaped by the views and experiences of those directly affected. Unpacking and responding to gendered systems of power with communities can support inclusion and help address unequal power systems by identifying and giving a platform to excluded and diverse voices. Ongoing GRCA processes can help build trust across divides and allow⁴⁶ teams to move beyond extractive or tokenistic consultations towards meaningful dialogue. Furthermore, the process of

41 See discussion for example in Myrtilinen, H. and M. Daigle (2017). [When merely existing is a risk: Sexual and gender minorities in conflict, displacement and peacebuilding](#). International Alert.

42 See for instance resources at [ConnexUs](#); and Corlazzoli, V. and White, J. (2013). [Measuring the unmeasurable: Solutions to measurement challenges in fragile and conflict-affected environments](#). UK Department for International Development.

43 Conciliation Resources (2015). Op. cit.

44 See for example Close, S., H. Groenewald and D. T. Mora (2020). [Facilitation guide: gender sensitive conflict analysis](#). Saferworld and Conciliation Resources. Also: Watson, C., H. Wright, and H. Groenewald (2017). [Gender analysis of conflict toolkit](#). Saferworld and Uganda Land Alliance.

45 Garred, M., C. Booth and K. Barnard-Webster (2018). [Do no harm & gender: Guidance note](#). Collaborative for Development Action.

46 Conciliation Resources (2019), [Inclusion in practice: Examining gender-sensitive conflict analysis | Conciliation Resources \(c-r.org\)](#)

GRCA can be used and integrated into monitoring, evaluation and learning processes, to allow partners to progressively promote more meaningful engagement.⁴⁷

Developing theories of change that blend peace and gender outcomes. The process of analysis can reveal entry points for targeted interventions that are able to shift societies towards peaceful and gender-responsive or -transformative outcomes. Having consciously set the level of ambition and identified issues and dynamics, agencies can develop coherent theories of change to guide interventions that blend peace and gender outcomes, with gender impacts ideally articulated as either first- or second-order results (if targeting “gender transformative” or “gender responsive” on the spectrum of ambition).

Scoring levels of gender integration and measuring impact

Organisations must be accountable for assessing the level of gender integration in their interventions. To recap, for programming to score as “**gender responsive**”, it must be based on analysis of **intersectional** gender power systems and include **addressing underlying gender norms** that shape gender relations as **at least second-order outcomes**. For it to score as “**gender transformative**” it must further **explicitly to seek to influence these factors** as they relate to conflict and peace as **first-order outcomes**.

The Spectrum of Ambition and accompanying matrix presented in this paper are schema distilling complex ideas and processes to offer a practical framework for thinking through positioning and entry points. The realities of programming on conflict and in conflict-affected settings challenge such schema. Once the level of ambition has been set and a coherent intervention logic has been designed, the question of how to assess performance swiftly arises. There will be different depths for doing so – for while appropriate language may be included in programme documents in how an intervention is described, a quite different reality may unfold during the course of programme delivery. An initiative may have blended transformative, responsive and sensitive elements, yet some degree of judgement will be required in assessing against these criteria. Evaluation teams should be skilled in understanding the interplay of gender and conflict and be tasked to examine these issues as they have played out, with learning being consciously fed back into ongoing and future programming cycles.

Improved performance and delivery require robust accountability and reporting mechanisms, enabling organisations to track results. For gender-responsive peace responsiveness, this requires building gender-responsive indicators into results frameworks, with monitoring and evaluation lessons flowing back into programme design and delivery. Measurement tools in the international system, such as the Gender Equality Marker, are widely used to track resources and results related to gender equality. These remain foundational for continued efforts to advance gender parity as articulated in Sustainable Development Goal 5 and elsewhere. However, gender-responsive results frameworks will include not only levels of participation in activities but also more nuanced outcomes relating to intersectional marginalisation, power, and changing attitudes and behaviours related to gender norms.

An enabling organisational culture and leadership

As defined by peer peacebuilding organisations:

When discussing “gender integration” we mean that an organisation takes deliberate actions to achieve equal outcomes for women, men and SGMs, while taking into account their different starting points. It is a core part of the process of achieving gender equality and may include work across all areas of an organisa-

⁴⁷ Women for Women International (2019). [Beyond consultations: A tool for meaningfully engaging with women in fragile and conflict-affected states](#).

tion – governance (leadership and decision-making processes and policies), operations (internal systems, processes, policies and strategies) and programmes (which includes research, analysis, and monitoring, evaluation and learning).⁴⁸

While this paper has largely focused on approaches to integrating gender into peace responsiveness programming, the wider organisational setting in which teams and programmes sit will ultimately be critical to enabling optimal outcomes. Research informing this paper confirmed that for many humanitarian and development or multi-mandate organisations, “peace responsiveness” is a relatively new agenda, which may have only begun to find traction since the twin Sustaining Peace resolutions created new momentum. It continues to face its own institutional challenges. As highlighted in a recent article by Interpeace, a paradigm shift is required for peace responsiveness to truly advance, implying momentum across four interlinked building blocks: individual, programmatic, organisational and systems level.⁴⁹

For development, humanitarian and multi-mandate organisations, gender equality capacities are likely to be more substantially established, experienced and resourced than those that are peace focused. Integrating gender and peace perspectives can be complicated by internal competition over resources. Efforts to integrate these agendas meaningfully and creatively can be further complicated in a context of multiple mainstreaming priorities, with teams at times feeling pressured to respond to other important issues and lenses including, among others, localisation, accountability and youth.

Interpeace’s review of grey literature conducted to inform this paper confirmed these difficulties. It found the linkages between “gender” and “peace” to be uneven, with organisation-wide gender equality frameworks and programming of leading agencies in some cases being conflict blind. Interviewees pointed to institutional dynamics and barriers, fatigue towards mainstreaming agendas, and a lack of conceptual clarity as major obstacles pulling against the effective integration of gender into peace responsiveness work.

The institutional factors at work are ultimately shaped by political and cultural dynamics. Just as advancement of the peace responsiveness approach itself has been identified to rest ultimately with leadership, shifting internal organisational power systems have also been identified as being integral to successful gender integration. Gender-transformative work is not simply a technical activity but a complex and inherently a political process of shifting power systems within the sector. Its advancement comes at a time when silence about other inherent power structures replicated by the international system are also being challenged, including embedded racism and colonialist mindsets and practices. Strong leadership committed to honest and open reflection about organisational power and culture, as well as to delivering change where needed, is critical for the success of gender-transformative peacebuilding in the long term in the areas where agencies operate.

To this end, the importance of “gender-responsive leadership” is gaining ground within international development, peace and security organisations.⁵⁰ It implies a range of behaviours and actions aimed at embedding gender equality and responsiveness at the heart of organisations. This includes leading by example, setting clear priorities, managing staff accordingly, and being ready to hold leadership itself to account for implementing this agenda.⁵¹ Taken together, closer integration of gender in peace responsiveness has direct implications for leadership engagement and prioritisation, helping to unblock institutional obstacles and proactively steer teams towards “seeing clearly through double vision”.

48 CMI and Conciliation Resources (2021). Op. cit.

49 Ernstorfer, A., A. Stockman and F. de Weijer (2022). Op. cit.

50 As highlighted by experts at a September 2022 event hosted by the International Peace Institute. See: IPI (2022). Op. cit.

51 Ibid.



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