

Summary

At the request of the Directorate of Coordination Emancipation Policy at the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Conflict Research Unit (CRU) of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’ - in cooperation with International Alert London, Utrecht University, Wageningen Disaster Studies and various individual consultants - commissioned a research study into the roles of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.¹ With this purpose the CRU undertook a review of selected literature on the roles and positions of women before, during and after armed conflict.

In addition, the CRU embarked on an institutional analysis of sixteen (inter)national organizations that aim to improve the position of women in armed conflicts through peacekeeping missions, peace negotiation, peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, development assistance, and international tribunals and courts. The organizations included: 1) United Nations Security Council (SC); 2) United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO); 3) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); 4) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR); 5) World Food Programme (WFP); 6) International Labour Organization (ILO); 7) International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); 8) North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); 9) Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); 10) Council of Europe (CoE); 11) Gender Task Force (GTF) of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe; 12) International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY); 13) International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR); 14) International Criminal Court (ICC); 15) Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA); and 16) Netherlands Ministry of Defence (MoD).

The CRU analysed each organization’s mandate, policy, structure, expertise, activities and budget from the perspective of women and armed conflict. The individual profile of each organization is added in an appendix to this report. Each appendix includes recommendations for the Dutch government to support the work of these organizations in the field of women and armed conflict. The appendices also articulate how the Dutch government could strengthen its own performance on this topic.

A Review Panel consisting of representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Social Affairs and Employment monitored the research process. All organizations under study have had the opportunity to comment on the research findings, and their comments have been incorporated in the final report. The outcomes of the study have also been discussed at a round-table conference with academics, policy-makers and practitioners, whose observations have also been added to the report.

Literature Review

Policies

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) brought the topic of women and armed conflict to international attention. Another milestone is the acceptance of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Various other departments within the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organization

¹ For the sake of brevity, the basic focus of this study, namely ‘women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction’, will be referred to as ‘women in armed conflict’. Whenever the latter is used it should be realized that this encapsulates the activities mentioned in the longer formulation.

for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe have increasingly developed statements and policies on this topic, of which the report provides a short overview.

Roles and Positions of Women in Armed Conflict

Conflict and gender analyses must not only pay attention to the so-called gender characteristics of women and men respectively, but should also take into account the diversity among women and their different roles and positions in armed conflict. Women are a heterogeneous group of social actors, who on the one hand are determined to take on certain positions and roles in conflicts, but on the other hand deliberately choose to fulfil certain roles based on their strategies and goals. Women must thus not only be seen as passive victims of armed conflict, but as capable actors as well. They have even benefited from the windows of opportunity that conflict situations offer them. Although women do suffer in conflict, there are examples of women whose positions have improved during conflict, for instance through the expansion of women's economic and political responsibilities.

On the basis of selected literature, the CRU has developed a framework for analysis that analytically identifies seven major roles of women before, during and after armed conflict. In practice these roles could overlap or coincide, and obviously differ in place and time. Individual women could also take on various roles at the same time. The report analyses each role in depth and discusses the implications and challenges for policy-makers addressing these roles.

Women as Victims

Contemporary conflicts increasingly target the civilian population, whereby women often suffer from systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence. Since women are usually regarded as symbolic bearers of caste, ethnic or national identity, sexual violence against women is a deliberate strategy to humiliate an entire community. Sexual violence often continues in the post-conflict phase, shifting from the public to the private space of homes.

Women as Combatants

Women have actively participated in numerous wars. Their motives for becoming combatants appear to be as diverse as those for men, including enforced recruitment, agreement with the goals of war, patriotism, religious or ideological motives, and economic necessity. After conflict, female (ex-)combatants regularly encounter difficulties while reintegrating into society. Demobilization and reintegration programmes scarcely take into account their specific needs and interests. Neither does family. Female ex-combatants are often not accepted, despised, and traumatized socially.

Women as Peace Activists

Conflict situations often force women to organize themselves in order to safeguard their basic necessities and to carry out activities related to education, health care, food distribution and care for family, internally displaced persons and refugees. Due to the (temporary) absence of men, women also assume political responsibilities. In spite of the difficulties encountered, many of these peace activities do have an emancipating function and should therefore also be continued in the post-conflict phase.

Women in 'Formal Peace Politics'

Only a small number of women actually participate in formal peace negotiations. Usually their contribution to conflict resolution and peacebuilding is regarded as positive. Women bring diverse conflict experiences, they represent different interest groups and set other priorities than men. On

the basis of women's interests, they are able to form coalitions bridging deep political, ethnic and religious divides. Their participation in the actual peace talks often fosters a wider popular mandate for peace, making it more sustainable. It is of the essence that women participate in (re)writing the constitution and other legislation in a post-conflict phase in order to guarantee their long-term interests and rights.

Women as Coping and Surviving Actors

Women have shown the capacity to survive in extremely difficult circumstances such as conflict by developing ways of coping with life. They have thereby displayed a remarkable resilience in adapting to their new living conditions.

Women as Household Heads

Many conflicts have forced women to become household heads and breadwinners, taking over responsibility for various activities traditionally carried out by men. Women are often not equipped for this and lack access to education, training, land, credit, waged labour and other resources. The most common obstacle for female-headed households and widows is their limited land and property rights. They are usually prohibited from owning, renting and inheriting land and property in their own names. In the post-conflict phase, when husbands and male relatives return home, the traditional division of roles and tasks tends to be restored again.

Women and (In)formal Employment Opportunities

A substantial number of women are driven into badly remunerated work in the informal sector, which tends to expand rapidly in conflict situations as formal structures cease to function. Because of the great need for human resources in post-conflict rehabilitation activities, formal employment opportunities for women initially increase, although later they often decrease because of the return of men and the reintroduction of traditional labour divisions. In some post-conflict situations, neo-liberal economic policies imposed by the IMF and World Bank have negatively influenced women's working conditions.

Challenges in Policy and Practice

Intervening agencies that aim to address women's roles and positions in armed conflict face numerous challenges. One such challenge, for instance, is to employ more women as civil and military professionals in Multidimensional Peace Operations and also to sensitize these operations' male professionals for gender. Another challenge would be increasingly to adapt external interventions to the needs and interests of local women in armed conflict ('gender-sensitizing' policies). One condition for this is to formulate policies on the basis of a sound gender analysis, clarifying the interrelationship between women and men, the specific conflict situation and the potential differential impact of external interventions of women and men. The starting point for all such policies must be to aim for gender equality. In striving for gender equality in conflict situations, it is of the essence that international agencies develop instruments and methodologies that combine gender and conflict analysis. Another condition is that intervening agencies should already address women's needs and interests in the pre-conflict phase and not just in the post-conflict phase so that women's exposure to insecurity and violence is limited. Agencies must not only aim to reduce women's suffering in the short term, but must also intend supporting women's long-term strategic interests. They should support to the utmost women's changing roles, positions and identities in conflict situations, as long as these have an emancipating effect.

There are numerous interventions possible to target women increasingly and explicitly before, during and after armed conflict. For instance, agencies could involve more women in early-warning and response processes in order to protect them from an increased exposure to insecurity

and violence. Programmes to restore civilian security, such as security sector reforms, greater representation of women in police forces and judicial processes, de-mining and the non-proliferation of small arms programmes, form a unique opportunity to render the prevailing security actors and systems more gender-sensitive. Trauma counselling during and after the conflict could recognize the different ways in which women and men deal with traumas. Truth Commissions and National Reconciliation Processes should pay more attention to female-based violence and should equally consider women's and men's specific needs and interests in the formulation of reparation and rehabilitation policies. International Tribunals and Courts should continue and perhaps expand their special legal and social support to female witnesses and female victims of sexual violence. Agencies could prevent women from becoming combatants in conflict by for instance providing a safe space for non-war action and creating alternative economic sources to the military. They could make demobilization and reintegration programmes more equally accessible to female and male combatants and may possibly take women's and men's different experiences and interests into account. More intervention, particularly in the pre-conflict and actual conflict phases, could support the strengthening and formation of sustainable women's organizations that play an active and constructive role in the peace process. It is of the essence that interventions increase women's political participation through training, awareness-raising campaigns and quota systems ensuring a minimum participation of female politicians. Intervention might provide more female breadwinners, households with productive assets and legal assistance in the fields of housing, property and labour rights. They could simultaneously address women's needs for employment and income generation in the informal and formal sector, thereby avoiding gender-stereotyped activities. Instead they could preferably facilitate women's employment in 'non-traditional' sectors and skills, for instance through quick-impact but sustainable micro-credit schemes and initiatives to create women-friendly employment conditions.

The steps and interventions mentioned here to address women's roles and positions in armed conflict must not only be undertaken in the post-conflict phase, which many international agencies tend to do, but also in the pre-conflict and actual conflict phase. The practical challenge now is to translate these steps and interventions into concrete guidelines and procedures, and to stimulate intervening agencies to act in the field accordingly.

Institutional Analysis

Background

The sixteen organizations analysed vary substantially in their mandates, target groups, areas of competence and geographical coverage. Hence, the overall aim of the institutional analysis is not to compare the different organizations or to measure their performance, but instead to learn from their mutual experiences and to identify how lessons derived from one organization's practice can be of relevance to the others in strengthening the roles and positions of women in armed conflict. The aim of the institutional analysis is also to ascertain what pertinent components, both at policy and practical level, require further attention to reinforce the prevailing structures and practices of the organizations engaged in the field of women in armed conflict. Ultimately, this institutional analysis must facilitate the organizations under study, as well as the Dutch Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Social Affairs and Employment, to improve their performance on the roles and positions of women in armed conflict.

The main consideration of the institutional analysis has been to what degree and how women and/or gender mainstreaming have taken place in the policy practice of the organizations under study. *In concreto*, the analysis has scrutinized how the topic of women in armed conflict is incorporated in the organizations' mandate, policy, structure, expertise, engagement, activities, instruments, and budget.

Organizations and Women in Armed Conflict

Some organizations are evidently working in conflict but seem to lack a particular focus on women in conflict situations, while others put a heavy emphasis on the issue of women but tend to have a less articulated approach towards armed conflict. Other organizations explicitly focus on women in crisis situations, trying to emphasize particular women's roles or problems. It can be observed that the more explicitly and articulately the organizations relate to the topic of women in armed conflict, the more chance there is that they actually take it into account in their policies and concrete activities. Lack of explicitness may lead to 'women or gender blindness'. Particularly in multilateral organizations, a clear division of responsibility is sometimes lacking, which causes confusion about whether the organization or its member states should take up the issue of women in armed conflict. In some organizations there are different perceptions on the topic, whereby gender units or gender specialists often have a more comprehensive perception about women in armed conflict than the rest of the organization, which could be regarded as due to lack of mainstreaming of the issue. Most organizations do not address all women's roles and positions in armed conflict and usually encounter difficulties in linking women's short-term needs with women's strategic, long-term interests. Few organizations actually link relief, rehabilitation and development efforts. Equally, they do not address women in all conflict phases, but concentrate their efforts in the post-conflict phase. All in all, it can be concluded that most organizations address a few women's roles largely in the post-conflict phase.

Policy

In recent years a dynamic movement towards a more explicit and specific reference to women in armed conflict can be noticed in the organizations' policies. As shown in this report, the overall number of policy initiatives regarding women in armed conflict is huge and consequently there exists a considerable potential for fruitful exchange and mutual learning. It is acknowledged that there is no uniform path regarding the development of women and armed conflict policies. However, an important lesson learned is that to develop an effective and transparent policy on women in armed conflict, women and gender policies have to be translated into concrete plans of actions and qualitative/quantitative targets and benchmarks, which are continuously monitored and evaluated. It is also of the essence to develop mechanisms to hold states accountable for not taking on internationally agreed gender policies and objectives, such as the Security Council Resolution 1325. Moreover, sustainable gender policies, particularly of multilateral agencies, can only be achieved through steady (financial) contributions and coherent policy positions by member states.

Structure, Expertise and Engagement

Each organization analysed does have a gender structure and has to varying degrees developed in-house expertise on women, gender and armed conflict. Only one organization has mainstreamed gender into its structure in a nearly complete fashion by making all employees responsible for taking up gender in their activities. Typical gender structures are usually characterized by a combination of an intra-organizational and external gender policy, the employment of gender experts at headquarters and field level, and by the appointment of specialized gender experts, units and networks throughout the organization. A continuous challenge is to share the expertise on women/gender issues throughout the organizational structure, not only among the gender experts but among all staff. Another is to combat the lack of gender experts that are specialized in both gender and conflict. More specialized gender experts in the field of women and armed conflict, particularly males, should be educated and recruited. To create commitment to gender and particularly to the topic of women in armed conflict has been shown to be hard. Involvement of the top management has, however, given a strong impetus in various organizations. Some organizations have enhanced the commitment by upgrading the status, position and influence of

gender units, experts and networks. Other organizations have created commitment by ensuring that gender experts can spend enough time and resources on the topic, for example by limiting their portfolios and expanding the number of gender experts. Making gender-related achievements part of the organization's personnel recruitment and appraisal systems may also enhance the staff's commitment.

Activities and Instruments

The report discerns two sorts of gender-related activities and instruments: a) those that relate to women and gender in general; and b) those that the organization has specifically developed with respect to women in armed conflict. In the report, general gender-related instruments and activities include normative instruments, training and capacity-building, implementation of programmes and (pilot) projects, monitoring and evaluation, internal reporting and management, and consultation/research/communication. The report gives various concrete examples per type of instrument. Specific activities and instruments for women in armed conflict comprise *inter alia* special guidelines to enhance the protection and assistance of women affected by conflict, provision of material and psychological support to female victims of sexual assault by tribunals, and pre-deployment courses for peacekeepers and military observers. For a full overview of specific initiatives, refer to chapter 5 of part II.

A complete and wholehearted implementation of the available instruments and activities has rarely taken place. According to various organizations this has mainly to do with the relative novelty of the theme of women in armed conflict and misconceptions about the notion of gender. Proper information is needed to avoid such a situation. Furthermore, little information is available on the medium- and longer-term impact of gender-related initiatives, a condition that organizations could counter by developing a more coherent gender system, ranging from agenda-setting, policy development, implementation, and effective monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, the idea of 'the more activities on women in armed conflict the better' seems not to be valid. Gender-related information too often overloads staff. The challenge discerned here is to divide into doses the organization's women/gender guidelines and instruments.

Budget

In most organizations under study the gender budget is integrated into the overall budget. Although gender is then fully mainstreamed, the downside is that the gender budget is often no longer quantifiable and visible. To partly compensate for this, some organizations have in addition established separate gender trust funds. Recently some organizations have also taken the initiative of gender-sensitizing their budgets, aiming to combine the potentially broad coverage and effectiveness of mainstreaming, while promoting the visibility and transparency that is normally associated with gender-specific budgets.

Suggestions for the Dutch Government to Strengthen the Organizations' Performance on Women's Roles in Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-conflict Reconstruction

The institutional analysis identifies various suggestions and measures for the Dutch government - *in concreto* for the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Social Affairs and Employment - to facilitate the organizations under study to strengthen the roles and positions of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. These include to: 1) gather additional data on the exact roles of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict resolution; 2) collect more best practices of how women's roles in the field have been addressed so far; 3) further translate (existing) policies into practice by setting specific objectives and developing concrete guidelines; 4) monitor/evaluate/review the activities undertaken and outputs achieved so far in order to 'measure' whether and how women's roles have been strengthened; 5) increase the number of women and gender-sensitive men at all levels of the

organization and particularly in the field of conflict-related interventions; 6) increase the participation of local women in the preparation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of all field activities focusing on women's roles in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction; 7) enhance the commitment among all staff that deal with the issue of women in armed conflict; 8) enhance expertise in this field by providing staff training, but also training for local women and women's organizations. Training must be adapted to the specific mandate and activities of each organization, to the specific conflict situation, and to the specific traumas and vulnerabilities of the local women and men addressed in the field. Training should also include models for *inter alia* gender issues in general, women's roles in conflict situations in particular, cultural and historical backgrounds of the mission areas, and the scope and contents of International Humanitarian Law, which is of specific importance for all interventions in conflict-related situations; 9) increasingly incorporate gender and conflict issues into the organization's activities, instruments and tools, e.g. needs assessments, community participatory approaches, mapping of vulnerabilities and so on; 10) further link the fields of, experts in, and information on women, gender and armed conflict.

In chapter 7 of part II the suggestions and measures mentioned here are further elaborated by connecting them to specific conflict-related fields or themes, and to concrete intra-ministerial responsibilities. These fields or themes include peace-support operations, humanitarian or emergency assistance and development cooperation, international courts and tribunals, and the fields of democratization, human rights and (peace) politics. Intra-ministerial responsibilities concern the tasks and activities to be taken up by the Dutch ministries' different directorates and units.

Suggestions for the Dutch Government to Strengthen its own Performance on Women's Roles in Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-conflict Reconstruction

Relevant Dutch Ministries such as the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Social Affairs and Employment could further improve their own policies and practices on the topic of women's roles in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. The institutional analysis in chapter 8 of part II outlines specific measures that each Ministry could take in this regard.

The Ministry of Defence is strongly encouraged to start addressing the topics of women in peace-support missions and local women in armed conflict in its overall gender policy for 2002-2006. It should provide its new and existing emancipation coordinators and promoters with a concrete mandate, time and incentives to go deeply into these issues. It is of the essence that the Ministry starts thinking about increasing the number of gender-sensitive female, but also male, military and civilians in peace-support operations. Initiatives in this respect may include gathering more disaggregated gender data about women's participation in peace-support operations and assessing what characteristics peacekeepers in peace-support operations should preferably have. The findings may be used for selecting gender-sensitive female and male participants, and for gender training that might become a prerequisite for participation in peace-support operations. Current training courses may well pay more attention to the various roles of women in armed conflict. For this purpose, adding a gender specialist to the present training staff and increasing the exchange of information between the training staff and the board of the 'Defensie Vrouwen Netwerk' could be considered.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently appointed the Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) as its Gender Coordinator. This positive development requires follow-up in the form of allocating a specific budget and staff, a clear job description, proper delineation of responsibilities with other gender experts within the Ministry, and a review of his functioning after one or two years. The Ministry may well broaden interest for the topic of women in armed conflict. Apart from the

temporary specialist located at DSI/VR, the topic has not yet 'sunk in' at the other directorates or units dealing with armed conflict, a situation that could be tackled by including the topic in planning, recruitment and appraisal, and internal monitoring and evaluation systems. The Ministry might guarantee that existing gender experts, who are frequently called upon to combine their gender portfolio with other tasks or 'sectors', maintain enough time and incentives to deal specifically with the topic of women in armed conflict. The Ministry is furthermore encouraged to clarify to its own staff and outsiders the contents of its policy on women in armed conflict and to present a fairly complete overview of what are seen as its main policy goals and priorities and what activities are carried out in support of these. In this respect, the matrix drafted by the Interdepartmental Working Group on Resolution 1325, which identifies priorities for further implementation of Resolution 1325, could be a useful starting point. The Ministry could also consider how the interaction between the fields of gender and conflict could be intensified, for instance through common inter- and intra-ministerial dialogues, seminars or training sessions.

The Directorate of Coordination Emancipation Policy (DCE) of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment could innovatively contribute to the topic of women's roles in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. It is important that DCE considers taking a leading role in the development of gender-sensitive budgeting systems, ensuring both the mainstreaming and the visibility of funds for women or gender in the organization's overall budgets. Moreover, DCE may well become an (inter)national forerunner in the cross-fertilization between policy-makers, developers of tools and instruments, and practitioners in the fields of conflict and gender. Only through more interaction and exchange of information between these two fields will it become possible to address all aspects of the topic of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. The report outlines various concrete options for doing so. Finally, in close cooperation with the organizations under study, DCE is invited to assess the actual impact, *ex ante* and *ex post*, of interventions on the role and position of women in armed conflict. Information, however, is scarce, particularly on the middle-term and long-term impacts.