

Proceedings International Expert Seminar

Gender, Violent Conflict and Development:
Issues for Theory, Policy and Practice

16 and 17 October 2003

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A. Planning

Rationale and the Objectives of the Seminar

There are several sources of motivation and inspiration that led to the organization of the Seminar. One is theoretical. Critical interventions into development theory from an explicit feminist perspective, and with gender as an analytical tool are not new. In the last few decades, feminist scholars from the Third World have not only showed the economic, social and political downside of mainstream development practices for women, but also critically re-conceptualized development, by linking it to issues of justice, peace and sustainability. Equally substantial is feminist knowledge about women as agents in, and victims of war and about how specific femininities and masculinities are produced by violent conflicts, or contribute to mitigating or flaring up of wars. These insights, however, have not yet found their firm place in mainstream development thinking.

Marginalization and exclusion of feminist insights from development theorizing seem particularly poignant when it comes to linking the field of gender studies to the fields of conflict studies and development studies. Since a decade ago, mainstream analyses of links between armed conflict and economic development have been fast growing. Especially the links between poverty and natural resources have been minutely explored. A lot of attention has also been given to the state collapse and bad governance as contributing factors in violent conflicts. However, these insights have hardly ever taken a gender perspective or considered the huge feminist body of knowledge in respective fields.

Thus, while the last few decades have witnessed a growing theoretical concern with conflict and development, and their interrelationships, the conceptual links between these two fields and gender have not been sufficiently explored. *With regard to this, our objective was to provide a space where new conceptual linkages between the three fields could be made, where old definitions and study fields could be re-visited, and where new fields of theorization could be explored.*

The second motivation rose from a growing frustration of policy makers as well as activists and practitioners with the existing tools through which the policies should be designed, implemented, measured, monitored and at the end - provide visible results. The three fields of practice and intervention - gender, violent conflict and development - stand all too often separate, un-informed by each other. In these fields, furthermore, different actors - from national to international bodies and agencies, from civil to military organizations and institutions, from government ministries to offices of (I)NGOs, from academics to activists - all too often stand alone and separate, instead of building partnerships. At the same time, numerous individuals, groups and organizations are actively engaged in creating strategies for achieving peaceful and sustainable development with gender justice in its base.

We set an objective for the seminar to offer - to a limited number of actors - an inspiring and encouraging space for a discussion on strategies for cooperation and programming options through which they could join forces, and especially, through which grass root perspectives could be linked to national and international politics and policies. It is especially our admiration for the determination of the grass root groups, and our realization of the complexity they face in their daily work that inspired this seminar, and helped us formulating our objectives.

Finally, our motivation comes from an urge to address current political and economic processes, and their impact on the intersections between gender, violent conflict and development thinking and practice. Neo-liberal economic demand for cash crops and goods for export has brought about destruction of agriculture and economic self-sufficiency to many national economies around the globe. Privatization of public and social sectors such as health, education, transport, in many places effectively meant their destruction, or their appropriation by the rich and powerful. Deterioration of labour conditions and protection, growing unemployment of male work force and growing exploitation of female and child labour are a matter of everyday life for large sections of population all over the world.

What we found especially worrying is that the neo-liberal economic globalization goes hand in hand with the militarization on a global, regional and national level. The involvement of multinational corporations in extracting economies and violent conflicts in Western Africa and the Great Lake Region is one of the most blatant examples of this global condition. But there are other worrying effects: the emergence of the so-called ‘humanitarian wars’, ‘pre-emptive wars’, and the ‘war against terrorism’; the global and regional restructuring of political and military alliances; increased budgets for national security and the military; introduction of laws and legislation that curtail civil liberties and labour rights.

Our foremost concern has been with the gender dimensions of this global condition of neo-liberal economy-cum-militarism, and its differential impact on women and men, especially, women and men who belong (or are perceived to belonging) to different categories by class, caste, religion, ethnicity or race. We have also been concerned with links between this global condition and increased militarization of both masculinities and femininities, whereas, for example, soldiering, ‘security’ jobs and violence have been offered as viable options for both individual and community development. *Our objective in this respect was to provide an open and critical forum for a conceptualization of these links, from an explicit feminist perspective.*

Choice of Themes and Issues

The rationale and the objectives helped us decide on the issues to be addressed: theory, policy and practice. These issues, of course, could have been addressed through many different themes and topics. A few of these seemed obvious: defining the field, for example, is something everybody in the field of development, violent conflict and gender deals with, be it through theory, policy or practice. Furthermore, the way we define our field in many ways determines our approach and our actions. Some of the definitions are a matter of (national and international) conventions and/or laws (‘civil war’, ‘refugee’, ‘weapons of mass destruction’, ‘war crime’...), others are left to scholars, practitioners, policy makers and activists to grapple with.

The themes of post-conflict reconstruction and local-global relations emerged as an outcome of our concern with the processes of globalization as described above: local, national and international (economic, political, cultural...) engagements and interests, both in mitigating and in continuing fighting, are often far from distinct; violent conflicts today often last for decades, with fighting subsiding and flaring up, thus undermining the neat time-lines and distinctions on pre-war, war and post-war conditions. These complex intersections of local and global conditions of perpetual violence indicate that 'development' cannot be seen as something that happens only in 'peace'. Actually, development may be implicated in conflict and violence.

The inclusion of the fourth theme - on masculinity - is an outcome of the ever growing awareness among activists as well as academics that an exclusive focus on women and femininity has its limits, that roles of men in both development practice and in violent conflict need to be addressed and that dealing with masculinity is as significant for a peaceful and sustainable society as dealing with femininity.

Organization and Participation

The original plan was that the Seminar would have a maximum of 50 participants, including the speakers. This limit was related to the type of the event - not a conference where a few people speak and the majority listens, but a seminar in which each participant is seen as an expert whose contribution is crucial to the overall quality of the discussions and the success of the event.

The participants were scholars, activists, independent practitioners and policy makers working in at least two out of the three fields (gender, violent conflict or development). Most of them were from Dutch and European NGOs working in the field of development, often heading the 'gender desk' or regional desks, or NGOs working in the field of violent conflict, again, with specific responsibilities for regional and gender issues. Limited financial resources have meant that only a small number of participants from outside Europe could be invited. However, we took great care that these were from grassroots groups and women's NGOs working directly in the field of violent conflict, development and gender. All eight speakers had expertise in all three fields, and often combined theoretical, practical and policy work.

The seminar was planned in such a way that each day was divided in two sessions, morning and afternoon. Each session had a specific theme. Themes were introduced by two presentations, during plenary sessions which were followed up by small group discussions. For example, the first theme was dedicated to the (re)definition of the fields of gender, violent conflict and development. The speakers (El-Bushra and Kirleis) approached the theme from a policy and activist perspective respectively. Discussions in the small groups then followed, dealing with the definitions of the fields.

Work in small groups was an essential element of the event. The groups were pre-designed so that we had equal distribution of people with different backgrounds (both in terms of type of work and the country of origin) in each group. After the group discussions plenary sessions were held again with reports from the small groups, so that everybody knew what was discussed in those groups.

Funding

The seminar was made possible thanks to a grant by the Women and Development Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The organizing institutions, the Women, Gender and Development Program of the Institute of Social Studies and the Conflict Research Unit of the Netherlands Institute of International relations 'Clingendael' provided research and organizational capacity, accommodation and logistic and administrative support.

Outcome

This report reflects the contents of the seminar and is written as a feedback to the participants and to fulfill our reporting obligations to the funding agency. In addition, it is envisioned to publish an edited book with the contributions from the speakers from the Seminar. The book is supposed to offer the discussions to a wide audience interested in the fields of gender, violent conflict and development, and engaged in theoretical, policy and activist work. At present the organizers are exploring possibilities to realize this idea.

B. Proceedings

Opening

For the opening ceremony we invited several participants to share some of their rich experiences with the audience and offer all of us some inspiration for the coming two days of work (see Appendix 3).

Presentations

Day One - Session 1: (Re-)Defining the Field(s)

In the first session Judy El-Bushra and Edda Kirleis gave two challenging and inspiring introductory presentations in which they focused on the fields of policy making and grassroots activism respectively. El-Bushra examined the meanings of gender, violence, conflict and development currently in use among practitioners in large (international) NGOs and agencies, and concluded that there is much to be wished for in their current methods of work and ways of thinking. She challenged the common-sense definition of peace and its juxtaposing to war, and provoked the audience to think could there be an ‘unacceptable peace’, and ‘justified, even necessary violence’. Who defines what is acceptable and justifiable, she asked, in the current condition of globalization that co-opts development and humanitarian work?

Kirleis used the concepts of gendered agency and politics to examine how thinking about, and working on development and violent conflict all too often disregard women’s contributions as non-political, and thus irrelevant. Giving numerous examples from South Asian women’s grassroots actions, she showed how dominant notions of masculinity and femininity link men to soldiering and women to victimhood, disregarding complexities and multiplicity of their actual roles and relations. He discussed consequences of the dominant notions of masculinity and femininity for women, for men, and for the future of the societies in question.

Day One - Session 2: Through and Beyond Violent Conflict

Ruth Jacobson and Sunila Abeysekera had a presentation about problems facing societies that experience long lasting conflicts. Talking about Angola and Mozambique, and Sri Lanka, respectively, they challenged some of the assumptions widely accepted by development workers, both mainstream and feminist. Jacobson showed how problematic are the assumptions of modernity and progress embedded in development thinking and practice. In Angola and Mozambique the external Western agencies acted as the carriers of modernity and progress, while sidelining the local actors. She also questioned whether mere inclusion of women into the peace negotiations and the politics of settlement in themselves change anything, if these political processes have already been pre-defined without a gender lens.

Abeysekera addressed the issues of reconstruction of Sri Lanka in the conditions of un-stable peace (cease-fire and negotiations) and un-finished war (with both violence and recruitment of the LTTE militants still going on). Drawing a history of the conflict in all its complexity, she explained the dead-lock in the country's access to (international) funds for development, as well as in the decision making power and control over the funds. She also questioned the logic of Millennium Goals in the light of the power of big funders (WB, ADB, UNDP, UNICEF, EU). Abeysekera further pointed out that feminist, anti-nationalist and anti-war women's groups in Sri Lanka worked for decades to bring women into peace negotiations. However, she also stated that for some time now most of these groups do not work with women only. In the light of all the destruction, devastation and in-justices facing the majority of the population they saw no logic in working with women only and are working on a community base at present.

Day Two

The cancellation by Ancil Adrian-Paul left space for the organizers to review the first day discussions. After the review, the Vanessa Farr had a bit longer presentation, without small group discussions. This was because the participants preferred to discuss this theme all together in a plenary session. In the afternoon there was group work again.

It was obvious that several actors relevant for the three fields under discussion were identified: people, CSOs, (I)NGOs, the state, and international and multinational institutions, organizations and agencies. Our impression was that the discussions were centred mostly around the field of development, the issues of policy, and actors such as (I)NGOs, the state and international agencies. This is not to say that issues of activism and grass root practice were not present, or that theoretical issues were not addressed. Nor does it mean that the fields of violent conflict and gender were not explored. Rather, it means that development policy work(ers) in the fields of violent conflict and gender received most attention. Conceptualisations of violent conflict and peace, of relationships between gender and other kinds of inequalities, of links between violence and dominant notions of masculinity and femininity or of links between different kinds of violence were less prominent. The organizers invited the participants to further discuss some of these issues in the second day of the seminar. Some of these conceptual issues were indeed addressed later, during the session on masculinities, doing justice to the different dimensions of the seminar.

ACTORS

PEOPLE

CSOs

(I)NGOs

STATE

INTER-/MULTINATIONAL

Institutions

FIELDS

GENDER

VIOLENT CONFLICT

DEVELOPMENT**ISSUES**

T	<i>P</i>	P
H	<i>O</i>	R
E	<i>L</i>	A
O	<i>I</i>	C
R	<i>C</i>	T
Y	<i>Y</i>	I
		C
		E

Day Two - Session 3: Linking Local and Global

Vanessa Farr's presentation addressed the issues of disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, reintegration and reconciliation (DDRRR), in the context of production and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and small arms (SA). International trade in WMD and the SA not a widely known topic. International legislation and protocols controlling the production and trade are done by governments or specialized institutions, often far from public eyes. Thus sharing the intricacies of these processes at the Seminar was extremely appreciated. She explained the state of the matter in weapons affairs, and looked at some of the consequences of these affairs for women in conflict zones. Farr also looked at impact of SA on women in societies in peace, but with different legislation on and access to arms (such as USA and Canada, for example). Finally she pointed out the (local, national and international) spaces and activities within these processes where women's participation and intervention is necessary.

Day Two - Session 4: Masculinities in Question

Chris Dolan and Dubravka Zarkov made a similar point from two different perspectives - a local and a global - on the role of men and masculinity in the context of violent conflict and development. Dolan presented a case study from his work in northern Uganda. He showed how dominant notions of masculinity - defined through marriage, property, and participation in local community life - become un-accessible for a vast majority of men during a violent conflict. Destruction of economic resources and activities, forced migration, separation from one's usual social networks mean that many men will be prevented from achieving the kind of masculinity that is socially and culturally sanctioned as proper. However, war at the same time offers an alternative: soldiering. Looting and violence secures access to property and women (or women as property), while having a gun allows for the exercise of power and control over others. This means that civilian men may 're-deem' their manhood by joining militaries. The vicious circle produced by this process has devastating consequences on both men and women, and on the social norms and notions of masculinity. Militarization becomes an integral element of masculine power, the entire society becomes more militarized, while gender injustice and inequality are perpetuated and deepened.

Zarkov looked at similar processes, asking what happens when violent conflict provides what development denies. She perceived both violent conflict and development as social processes in which specific kinds of gender hierarchies and specific kinds of masculinities and femininities are produced and argued that this process of production of gender is crucial for the current global condition, marked by the hegemony of the neo-liberal economy and its interlinking with militarism. This globalization of gender, however, is a contradictory process. On the one hand, an ever more brutal neo-liberal economy threatens dominant gender hierarchies (with men as bread-winners and women as home-keepers) by forcing men out of labour and exploiting cheap female and child labour. On the other hand, normalization and justification of militarization and violence create conditions in which the dominant notions of masculinity can be upheld.

Discussions

It is difficult to do justice to the wide range of discussions inspired by the presentations. Thus we give here only a list (and probably, despite our efforts, not even a complete list) of issues and problems addressed:

- Complexities of violent conflict: its relation to other issues, such as problem of integrating poverty issues and poverty reduction strategic planning into projects dealing with conflict and violence; questions of dealing with perpetrators and victims in the situations when perpetrators of today are victims of yesterday or tomorrow; relationships between development and humanitarian work, development and emergency interventions, and development and violent conflicts (development as violence; development-induced violence in the case of neo-liberal economic development; development against violence); relationships between different kinds of violence - domestic, sexual, organized, mass violence; possibilities for non-violent change and resolutions of conflict; involvement of men committed to gender equality into the struggles; problem of working with men on community level;

- Problems in addressing the issues of femininity and masculinity, next to the issues facing women and men in conflict; challenging the links between masculinity and violence, or femininity and victimization, by supporting alternative (non-violent) masculinities and recognizing agency and subjectivity as a part of femininity; problem in recognizing and dealing with changes in gender roles and relations due to conflict (what to support and how); a problem in translating complex theories and concepts into workable policy and practice; the problem of cooperation between academics and activists (with South Asia as an example of a reasonably good history of cooperation); problems in maintaining the double focus: gender aware policies on conflict, conflict aware policies on gender; meanings of peace, justice and accountability for different actors in the society;
- Change in conditions of work: shifts in agendas of NGOs after terrorist attacks on the USA towards security and militarism and their implications for policy; relations with the mainstream - learning and using its language for strategic reasons; here the concept of 'in and against' was seen as useful (separatism does not work, cooperation with the state, or the inter-/supra-national agencies and organizations is necessary; people committed to the issues have to work simultaneously with/in these organizations, and against them - i.e. to be critical of them); problem of building alliances;
- Bureaucratization of NGOs as well as of the state: lack of institutional memory due to short-term shifts of personnel and policies; moving from an existing 'good paper work' and 'make believe world' on gender policies to implementation, verification and monitoring; relations with donors and beneficiaries (problem of trust, loyalty, obedience); NGO practice of 'region hopping' (following the new emergencies, forgetting the old ones) and changes of priorities;
- Relationship between ethnicity and gender, and double discrimination of women from marginalized groups (both during the conflict and after its end); manipulations along the lines of identity politics (religion, ethnicity) and problems of working in/with identity based groups; need for historical analysis of a conflict (relevance of colonialism), and problems associated with one-sided histories of conflict (when entire history of a region or a society is reduced to 'history of ethnic hatred'); need for knowing histories of women's movements in different regions and countries;
- Mechanisms that exclude/include women from/in processes of peace and development; basis on which women can play a meaningful role in peace, conflict prevention and conflict resolution; difference between formal and informal peace processes and politics; the role of the state as a beneficiary of the aid, and in opening possibilities for women's participation in formal politics (in many places women are trained by NGOs to take leadership positions, but this is still not happening); relations between internal and external actors (civil society, donors, the state) in decision making processes over development priorities and objectives; problem in creating tools for communicating between different actors and activities;

- Problems of dealing with gender issues on different levels of action - from grassroots/local to national, regional, global - in the conditions of a neo-liberal economy; effects of structural adjustment policies on women, as well as on potentials for violent conflict; body politics in different conflicts (violence against both women and men); socio-economic aspirations of young men as a factor in recruiting soldiers (lack of other opportunities vs. soldiering as a paid job); change of gender relations and roles in the conflict; dealing with different gains and losses of women and men; addressing different needs and priorities of women and men who participated in fighting.

Closing

At the closing session participants discussed about the ways they can integrate the issues discussed at the seminar in their work, gave suggestions for the follow-up and evaluated the seminar (see below, section C). As to the follow-up, numerous topics were suggested:

- Economies of war/violence;
- Media;
- Health (mental and physical; trauma);
- Civil-military cooperation;
- Fundamentalism;
- Humanitarian aid and agencies, and their code of action;
- Coercive humanitarianism and violence;
- Culture, development and conflict.

Participants also indicated the benefit of organizing seminars with a focus on one country, or a region. We hope to be able to answer some of these requests in the future.

C. Evaluation

Rationale and the Objectives of the Seminar

At the closing of the seminar, as well as throughout the event, we have asked participants for comments and suggestions. According to the reactions of the participants, the framework of the globalization, within which the Seminar was set, was very well chosen. Participants also expressed that all three objectives were met with success: the Seminar did provide an open and critical space for rethinking, strategizing and networking. The atmosphere was judged as exceptionally open, constructive and cooperative.

Choice of themes and issues

Participants welcomed the choice of themes that were addressed by the speakers. It was also very explicitly stated that themes on masculinity and on gendered dimension of weapons proliferation locally and globally (be it small arms or weapons of mass destruction) were significantly under-represented in the every-day work of the participants, and they appreciated very much an opportunity to engage in the discussions on these themes, as well as to learn more about them.

The interrelatedness of different themes and topic came to the fore, and many problems facing both the population in the war zones and development practitioners working in areas of violent conflict were addressed. Several of these were suggested by the participants as possible topics for a follow-up seminar (more on this in the section on outcomes): economies of violence (which we initially planned to address, but could not find a speaker), mental and physical health and trauma, and media.

As to the quality of the presentations by the speakers, and the discussions about the chosen themes and issues, the Seminar received high marks. Sincerity, openness and expertise of all participants contributed to the high quality of the presentations and discussions.

Organization and Participation

Interest in the Seminar was far beyond our expectations. While we restricted the number of participants, and never sent an open call, people found out about it and continued to contact us. We had 63 registered participants, with many more individuals and organizations expressing interest in receiving seminar material (final report and the transcripts of the talks). The final address list for sending the proceedings grew to almost 100.

During the first day there were more participants than during the second day, with people in advance reporting that they could not take two days off their work. Some NGOs sent different participants for the two days.

Work in small discussion groups proved extremely useful. Considering that groups had about 10-12 people, each participant had an opportunity to take part in the discussion directly. In this way everybody could talk and be heard. The composition of the groups was here put to test. We took great care that the numbers of NGO representatives, academics, policy makers and independent practitioners were well balanced. The reporting from the small groups during the plenary showed the richness and variety of the discussions, as well as differences and similarities in perspectives.

The diversity of experiences and expertise that the participants brought with them proved to be crucial for the richness of the discussions. However, it also had a somewhat scattering effect, especially during the first day: the discussions were sometimes so diversified that it was difficult to find a focus. So at the beginning of the second day, the organizers presented a review of the first day discussions, pointing out where the focus of the discussions has been that far, and what could still be addressed (see section B). This was a good strategy, because the second day was more focused.

Out of eight speakers who initially accepted the invitation, one (Mazurana) canceled two weeks before the Seminar, and one of the organizers (Zarkov) took over. While with this absence the otherwise highly invisible problem of girl-soldiers remained un-addressed, the change of speaker provided more focused attention to the theme of men and masculinity, which was highly appreciated by the participants.

Another speaker canceled a day before the Seminar. This cancellation allowed organizers to have a special review session on the discussion of the first day, as a kick-off for the second day. This was also very well received by the participants.

Thus organization was flexible enough to adjust to new situations and make the best out of them. In general, the Seminar was evaluated as very well organized.

Outcome

Apart from this report, a book will be prepared on the basis of seminar presentations and discussions. Negotiations with the publishers are in process. Next to the authors from the Seminar, the book will include a few other themes that participants deemed significant (such as health and trauma, media and economies of violence).

Already during the Seminar it was very clear that there will be other outcomes. Co-operations were planned, partnerships established, and several initiatives suggested: to organize a national (Dutch) network of experts in the field, who would cooperate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Development on a more systematic basis. It was also very clear that participants felt a great need for a follow-up. They already suggested themes and topics that could be picked up next time. One of the ideas was to organize both smaller, more focused (one theme; one country; one issue) meetings and training, and to continue with this kind of expert seminars.

Overall Assessment

Among the issues addressed at the Seminar - theory, policy and practice -it was noticeable that most attention was given to the latter two, with theoretical issues being less explored. This may be due to the fact that academics were a bit less represented among the participants, or the fact that there are as yet few conceptual tools by which the three fields could be inter-related. However, it was also noticed that difference in languages of theory, policy and practice does not always allow easy communication between these fields of work.

It was also noticeable that for many participants it was still much easier to talk about women and men than about gender - masculinities and femininities, the processes and practices through which they are produced, gender relations and power. More discussions, seminars and trainings are needed and much more systematic efforts in order for all of us to acquire and incorporate gender as an analytical tool of our work.

Finally, participants noted that a better representation of grass root activists from the countries where armed conflicts are going on, and into which the development aid is going, is absolutely necessary at all levels of engagement in the West (in academic fields, in policy realms and in NGO work). We hope to be able to achieve this in the follow-up seminars and trainings.

Overall, the Seminar was very positively assessed by all participants, in terms of organization, contents, atmosphere and outcome. It was seen as a significant step in a direction that is both unexplored and needed. Participants stated over and over again that it provided them with an opportunity to discuss issues and problems for which there is often no space, no time, and all too often, no understanding. Being among people who struggle with similar problems was both motivating and encouraging. Having an opportunity to re-examine one's own field of work in an open, inspiring and critical atmosphere provided at the Seminar was highly appreciated.

D. Appendices

1. Program of the Seminar

Thursday, 16 October 2003

08.30 - 09.00 Registration (coffee/tea)

09.00 - 09.30 Opening and Welcoming

Session 1: (Re-)Defining the Field(s)

09.30 - 10.05 Judy El-Bushra: The Culture of Peace, or the Culture of the Sound-bite? Development Agencies and the 'Black Hole' of Methodology

10.05 - 10.40 Edda Kirleis: Rethinking Gender, Violent Conflict and Development: Reclaiming Political Agency and Practice

10.40 - 11.00 Coffee/tee break (Atrium)

11.00 - 12.15 Small group discussions

12.15 - 13.00 Plenary reports and discussion

13.00 - 14.00 Lunch break (Atrium)

Session 2: Through and Beyond Violent Conflict

14.00 - 14.35 Ruth Jacobson: Analyzing Gender, Development and Conflict in Angola and Mozambique

14.35 - 15.10 Sunila Abeysekera: Engendering Development and Peace Negotiations in Sri Lanka

15.10 - 15.30 Coffee/tea break (Atrium)

15.30 - 16.45 Small group discussion

16.45 - 17.30 Plenary reports and discussion; closing of the day;

19.00 - 22.00 Diner (Restaurant *De Catacomben*, Grote Halstraat 3, Den Haag)

Friday, 17 October 2003*Session 3: Linking local and global*

09.30 - 10.00 Review of the First Day by the Organizers

10.00 - 10.40 Vanessa Farr: The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons: Gendered concerns

10.40 - 11.00 Coffee/tee break (Atrium)

11.00 - 13.00 Plenary discussion

13.00 - 14.00 Lunch break (Atrium)

Session 4: Masculinities in Question

14.00 - 14.35 Chris Dolan: The Proliferation of 'Small Men': Collapse of Masculinities and the Field of Gender and Conflict

14.35 - 15.10 Dubravka Zarkov: Globalizing Gender? Production of Masculinities and Femininities in Armed Conflict and Development

15.10 - 15.30 Coffee/tea break (Atrium)

15.30 - 16.45 Small group sessions

16.45 - 17.30 Plenary reports and discussion; Closing;

17.30 - 18.30 Reception (Atrium)

2. Address List

Registered Participants, Interested Individuals and Institutions

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3. Opening Statements

Georg Frerks, Head of the Conflict Research Unit of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

On behalf of the organizing institutions the Institute of Social Studies and the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', and more particularly on behalf of my co-organizer Dubravka Zarkow, I want to say how pleased we are to have all of you present at this seminar 'Gender, Conflict and Development: Issues for Theory, Policy and Practice'.

Whereas convention has it, that seminars be opened by a highly placed person from politics, bureaucracy or academics, we felt we wanted it to do it differently this time. There are two reasons for this. First, gender is not a traditional academic subject of study that is located outside us and can be studied from a distance. It is inherently about ourselves, our relationships, how we are structurally and cognitively positioned in this world. It is also how we are acting and changing that world and our relations in our daily practices and struggles. It is something that requires self-reflection as much as it does need distanced analysis of the world around us. Secondly, you all are the biggest asset we have at this conference, representing experience from the academic, policy and practitioners' perspective. On the basis of your expertise and practice we have to make this seminar a success. These reasons led Dubravka and me to think that the opening could as well be performed by ourselves and we therefore have asked four participants of the seminar to share their thoughts, ideas, wishes and perhaps dreams with you at the beginning and as the beginning of our seminar.

Leif Ohlsson (Sweden), researcher at the Department of Peace & Development Research, Gothenburg University:

Part of my work involves reviewing news bulletins and reports from the international humanitarian community on a daily basis. It is often depressing work, since so much of it is about human suffering, conflict, and cruelty. But sometimes it is also a salutary experience, and there is one instance that I would like to share with all of you at the very start of this conference.

It has to do with the work of the World Food Programme, WFP, which under the leadership of former director Catherine Bertini became the most efficient organization of the whole UN family, in the sense that they have the largest proportion of their staff in the field, as compared to staff in headquarters. What WFP under Catherine Bertini came up with was a school feeding programme, which in many ways epitomizes what this conference is about.

The problem in the world, identified by theory, was not only that children were not sent to school, but that young girls in particular were not sent to school, since they were commonly used as spare labour in the home sphere. How could one design a practice, and a policy, which would ameliorate this problem?

The answer was a school feeding programme with particular gendered aspects. Each school in the programme was in principle given two "bags" of food; one for the boys, and one for the girls. If the girls did not turn up for school, the food would not be distributed.

Today that programme is successfully carried forward not only by WFP, but also by UNICEF, the UN Children's Fund, under the leadership of Carol Bellamy. It is so simple, yet so self-evident and ingenious. And my greatest wish for this conference is to come up with some small additional piece of practice and policy which in a similar way would address some of the very difficult problems in the world we deal with in theory.

Cynthia Cockburn (UK), feminist activist and researcher at the City University London:

Most often we talk about what war does to love. This is a poem about what love - the big word - does, or could do, to war. It was written by Nese Yasin, a young woman poet from Cyprus, and translated by Zeki Ali. Cyprus is an island country in the Mediterranean sea, between Greece and Turkey, divided for decades now into north with a majority Turkish population, and south with a majority Greek population:

The Big Word

When the poem utters the big word
all the weapons will hush at once
the word that's the voice of
the spilled blood and the cry of suffering
the word that's uttered by the chorus of the dead
and by the exiled crowd of history.

It will be whispered by the flower
the weeping cloud in the sky
the rapturous waves of the sea
and the children who do not want
to join the army.

That day, a new love will emerge
from the foams of the sea
that is indistinct in nationality.

War will die of shame
as the silence starts taking revenge from history
and the magic words
will kiss the wind of love.

If being disloyal to the half
will bring me the whole native land
your nationalism will be a cuckold's egg
I shall betray you
even with your bloody armies after me
I shall make love with all the enemies

I shall betray you
on all the continents of this earth.

When the poem utters the big word
all the deals and negotiations
will come to an end with nothing left to say
all the mediators will be unemployed.

The history will surrender
under that big word which carries
the stars and the rivers
the endless love making of all times
the sounds, the rain, and the seas.

When the big word
will be uttered by the poem
either all the poets will be executed
or peace will descend on earth.

Welmoed Koekebakker (The Netherlands), independent consultant, photographer and artist:

The organisers of this seminar invited me to present some of my photographs made during my recent stay in Iraq, and I am happy to meet their request. I have been in Iraq just before the war, in January 2003, to organise two workshops for local NGOs, relief organisations and local authorities on contingency planning.

Immediately after the war, from May to July, I went again, to identify the needs of the most vulnerable people affected by the war, and to formulate a support programme and get people together to work on a peace building and reconciliation programme.

I worked in the conflict ridden areas of Mosul, Kirkuk, Khanaqeen and Biyara and surroundings. I concentrated on the homeless, the displaced people, and first of all on women. I visited numerous shelters of displaced people, and spoke to a large number of women. Some of them told me their life stories.

For this seminar I selected a few photographs of these displaced and war affected women, and I hope the photographs speak for themselves.

Katan is a fifty years old lady; she is one of 800 refugees seeking shelter in the Kirkuk stadium. She made herself a living in the bathroom of the stadium. Her husband and two of her children were killed 15 years ago and since then she has been homeless. She is traumatised and often ill. She tells how women support each other in these circumstances. Her life story stands for the stories of thousands of women in northern and central Iraq.

Some of the pictures show children playing. All over Iraq one sees former military camps, bombed by the Americans, and now populated with displaced families, in majority women and children. The immediate surroundings of these camps are full of land mines and unexploded ordnances (UXOs). An extremely dangerous playground for these children.

In Biyara we see Rabee and Haseeba and Shewa. These women are originally from Halabzhah. During the chemical attack on their village by Saddam Hussein, Haseeba lost 70 family members. They were forced to live in collective towns, then fled to Iran, then came back to settle in Biyara, and there they experienced the fundamentalist regime of an organisation associated with Al Qaeda. The Americans destroyed their village by air raids and had informed the villagers 24 hours in advance. These women experienced not just one conflict, but decades of violence, low intensity warfare and terror. When dealing with women in violent conflict situations, we find that this is often the case.

The women in Biyara now want rest, freedom, and peace. They want to live with dignity, and make sure their daughters will enjoy the education they have missed.

I hope that the presence of these women is felt here in this seminar, and with them the many men and women you all have met and worked with, in similar circumstances.

What they bring in, the people we have worked with, is in the first place their strength, the tremendous resilience of these women. Their persistence, their dignity. And sometimes also their humour.

Another reality these pictures stand for is the appalling gender-blindness of the emergency aid machinery. Each and every photograph has a gender sub-text, which is a story of the reluctance by emergency aid actors to integrate the lessons learnt in the development sector, in women's studies, in the feminist movement. Each of these stories is about political, institutional and personal stumble blocks we come across when trying to support women in conflict situations and when trying to prevent war and violent conflict.

I am very grateful to Dubravka and Georg for having organised this seminar, and I hope that we will all leave this conference more equipped to face the harsh realities of the violence and conflicts in our world and to contribute, each in our modest way, to make this world a more just and peaceful place.

Abha Bhaiya (India) feminist activist working (among others) with South Asian Network of Gender Trainers and feminist NGO Jagori (Delhi), spoke about her experiences and recited a small poem.

Georg Frerks, Head of the Conflict Research Unit of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'

After this opening I want to say a few words about our seminar and its rationale. We have set ourselves definitely a difficult task, as we have in a way to perform a double triple linking act. The first triple linking refers to linking the three fields of gender, conflict and development and the second triple linking obviously to our ambition to relate this to the three domains of theory, policy and practice.

Whereas the interrelationship of gender and development has been studied fairly in-depth the last couple of decades, and this is partly true for the nexus development and conflict, the relationship between gender and conflict is less well articulated both theoretically, as well as in terms of policy and operational practice. It is however a quickly developing field, that cannot be ignored any longer due to global and economic changes and trends, and their drastic impact on development perspectives, gender relations and possibilities for sound policy practice. I do hardly have to add that many of those trends constitute a matter of grave concern to the organizers of this conference, as we have explained in our little piece on the seminar's rationale and objectives sent to you in advance.

We feel that the nexus gender, conflict and development needs further study and critical reflection. Its articulation in mainstream development thinking and everyday policy practice is still insufficient and if I may say rather unsophisticated. We feel that it could gain considerably from adopting insights from feminist thinking, but also more simply by taking a real gender perspective beyond the understandable and justifiable concern about female victims of conflict. We shall have to appreciate more fully the multifaceted roles of both women and men in relation to conflict as well as development. We shall have to include more explicitly the role of men and masculinities in our endeavors. We shall have to reintroduce politics and - as one of our titles today indicates - to reclaim political agency and practice, and we shall to effect local-global linkages in our analysis and action. In one word, we shall have continuously have to engender development and peace both in our analyses and policy practice, because too often it is unfortunately still only an add-on. Mainstream answers to many of those questions are not enough and the question is even whether one could ever expect them to be. We invite you therefore to consider also more radical and creative lines of thought and alternative solutions. On behalf of Dubravka I want to say that we look forward to listening to your contributions and discussions. We hope that these two days will prove to be inspiring, productive and of consequence.